Protestant Theological University

Real Slavery and the Earliest Palestinian Jesus Movement

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Under the supervision of
Professor dr. Annette B. Merz

Assessed by
dr. Martijn J. Stoutjesdijk

by
Norbert Nagy
ID: 2301148
Amsterdam-Groningen the Netherlands
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For those who do not believe in themselves.
Providence exists.

"He looked at me with puzzlement, perhaps with pity. 'But there are no other slaves who play a major role in the New Testament,' he insisted. My interlocutor's appraisal of my project only distilled what others had suggested obliquely–that there just wasn't that much to say about slavery in the New Testament.

I knew that couldn't be right."

Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity. Expanded Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2024), 235.

Abstract

In studies about slavery and the New Testament, references to the Gospels are under-represented compared to the Pauline letters. Moreover, focusing on studies about slavery and the Jesus movement in the Gospels, there is a clear unbalance between the representation of the real slavery compared to metaphorical. Based on historical analysis, memory studies and aligning with the perspectives of the 'Next Quest for the historical Jesus', this current research tries to (re)explore the traditions from the Gospels where Jesus might have been in touch with real slavery. Consequently, by analysing Jesus' relation to wealth and his proclamation of the Kingdom of God, this work intends to find what Jesus' answer could be to the slaves. After an in-depth analysis of the context of his ministry and the exegesis of the concept of the Kingdom of Father, this research presumably points to an incredibly intriguing novelty. Namely, that there might be a perspective in which Jesus' mission was to the slaves.

Keywords

slavery, historical Jesus, Next Quest, memory studies, real slaves, Kingdom of God, wealth

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Preface and Acknowledgements

A year ago, I would not have dared to dream of even a small fraction of what is happening to me as I write these lines. It was probably the most intense year of my life. It was a year in which I experienced what it was like to be alone and hopeless, but a year in which so many people stood by me, supported me and gave me the wings to move towards my most secret dreams.

My story is a very special one. As far as I know, no student has ever before been allowed by his professors to study abroad without having to interrupt his year at his home institution. I am extremely grateful to my professors at the Protestant Theological Institute of Cluj-Napoca for giving me this opportunity and rewarding me with such a scholarship.

The start of my studies in the Netherlands was helped immensely by Albert Nijboer, whose optimistic, problem-solving attitude helped me a lot in the administrative process.

In the first week of my time in the Netherlands, I experienced both the depths and the heights. After the initial Greek and Hebrew assessments, which I didn't completed satisfactory and which would have led me to change my course profile, divine providence took me under its protection through the generosity and care of the two professors. It was a life-changing experience when Dr. Marjo C. A. Korpel and Dr. Pieter B. Hartog gave me permission to continue my path in Bible studies specialization and thereby to pursue my dreams. I will never forget when they looked me in the eye and said, "Passion values more than skills". This not only saved me, but it also greatly supported my church, the Hungarian Unitarian Church, which needs in the future professors, and thus I can continue my path to help my community.

At the Protestant Theological University, I have not only been exposed to the highest level of academic excellence, but also to a people-friendly educational system, which I will carry on promoting and which I would like to implement in the place where life takes me.

During the first week of the academic year, when I met Annette B. Merz, I could not believe it could really happen. I had known her name for a long time, their common work with Gerd Theissen had been a part of my undergraduate course material for many years. When I realized that I was in the same place as the person whose work I had studied for years and whose research I looked up to so much, I stopped in wonder, but never in my deepest dreams did I think I would have the opportunity to work with her. It was obvious from the first moment that she was doing an outstanding professional work, and that she

must not have any free time. And yet, she accepted the supervision of this thesis, and changed everything I thought about the workload by giving her time and energy to our common cause. If anything, she is surely the greatest professor of devotion. I am grateful that it is through her I can begin the journey of historical Jesus research that I have dreamed of since my first year of theology. I would like to thank her for introducing me to the members of the Slavery Project and for giving me the opportunity to have a presentation in front of such an outstanding group of researchers. I believe everyone who works on making a step towards stopping the oppression and the silencing of the slaves is doing a work that is invaluable. I am grateful to her who inspired me to begin on this path. I am sure that 50 years from now, when I will be at the very end of my career, there will never be a moment when I will not remember her and say that she was the one who set me on this path, and that I owe everything to her.

Addressing this topic was not a sudden impulse but was rooted in a calling that has always encouraged me to stimulate and contribute to the uncovering of uncomfortable truths. Therefore, this work is only the first step of a very long but essential journey in which, thank God, I am not and will not be alone. I am grateful for that I can be a fellow to scholars like Annette Merz, with whom we look forward to continuing our work together.

I thank my parents for always standing by me and supporting me. I can never be grateful enough for their sacrifice and unconditional belief in my calling.

Finally, I thank my fiancée Ilka for keeping me strong for months we were apart and for reminding me to persevere, saying that we endure hardship now so that we can make others' paths more bearable later. May she be right and so be it. May all that I have learned this year, and all that I have been strengthened in, serve to support those who are discouraged in life. Let this work be for those who do not believe in themselves. As the story told here demonstrates, providence exists.

17th of August,
Cluj-Napoca – Groningen

With gratitude,
Norbert Nagy

Note to the Reader

All quotations from the Bible are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), unless otherwise indicated.

Greek from the Bible is quoted from the Novum Testamentum Graece, 28th edition (NA 28).

The orthography and grammar are in line with the standards of British English.

1. THE MULTIPLE ABSENCE OF THE REAL SLAVES IN THE GOSPELS AND IN THE RESEARCH

1.1. Introduction and research questions

The issue of slavery has been discussed from many perspectives intensively over the past decades and has now grown into a separate field of study named 'doulology'.[1] Although, in the 20th century, many positions were taken about slavery, especially from Christianity's point of view, this discussion will always be a divisive issue. Focusing particularly on the New Testament studies, thematising slavery most of the time resulted in references to the Pauline letters, which phenomenon highly dominated the discourse up to the present day. As a result, there is a significant lack of scholarly attention given to the topics of slavery in relation to the Gospels. Furthermore, set in the historical Jesus research and focusing on real slavery, the absence of references in the Gospel sources focusing on Jesus' relation with the slaves, but also the lack of scholarly literature thematising this absence, presents further challenges, since it leaves several vital concerns unresolved.

Nevertheless, in recent years, scholars seem to have turned their attention to questions about Jesus' relation to slaves. Therefore, in line with this commitment, this current work tries to raise a few of the unanswered questions. Furthermore, by thematizing several significant aspects that should not be overlooked, it may also point to a few possible answers.

Prior to beginning, it is recommended to provide a concise clarification of the main phrases and concepts used in the study. Under the term "real slavery", I understand the historically enslaved women and men who might have been in the presence of the ministry of the historical Jesus. The phrase also opposes the references to the slave characters present in parables of Jesus i.e. in metaphoric language. Consequently, it also excludes the different references to metaphoric slavery in the sayings of Jesus. Thus, when talking about real slaves, I refer to enslaved people in reality who were subjected to real oppression and,

[1] The term was coined by Chris L. de Wet, who wrote: "Doulology is a term of my own, made up from two ancient Greek words, doulos (slave) and logos (word, argument, discourse). Doulology is therefore the discourse of slavery—that is, when slavery as a constitution of knowledge, a language, and a social practice is used to produce and reproduce meanings and behaviors in various contexts." Chris L. de Wet, *Preaching Bondage. John Chrysostom and the Discourse of Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 3. For another important introduction to doulology, see Chris L. de Wet, *The Unbound God. Slavery and the Formation of Early Christian Thought* (London-New York: Routledge, 2018), 1–39.

therefore, to individuals who needed real answers and real solutions from Jesus. Under the term "earliest Palestinian Jesus movement", I refer to the time period of Jesus' activity described and remembered in the Gospels. Thus, even the references to early Christians appear in the very last chapter when discussing the further possibilities of extending this research.

Turning our attention to the conspicuous multiple absence of the real slaves in the gospels and in research, we face ourselves with the core question of how Jesus is remembered: how he and his relationship with slavery are remembered in the Gospels by the evangelists and how he is remembered in the present through the works of the scholars. In trying to answer these questions, it is advisable to mention a few core issues.

The initial point is that there is not even one single mention in the gospels or the whole New Testament of Jesus being remembered as having any contact or engaging in conversation with slaves. Regarding this conspicuous absence of Jesus' relationship with the slaves in the gospels, we can enumerate several possible reasons that are also important to contextualise the present research.

As a first possibility (and probably this would be the easiest choice), it might be assumed that Jesus was not interested in the lives and struggles of the slaves. This may seem a radically divisive possibility, and demonstrating such a view would be a tough truth to handle. Nevertheless, based on the character and activity of the remembered Jesus, I claim this is not a real possibility. Jesus is remembered as a healer (e.g. the blind man in John 9:1–13; the leper in Mt 8:1–4; the paralyzed man in Mk 2:12), as a teacher who discusses ethics and encourages people to be good (e.g. in the sermon on the mount Mt 5–7); as one who calls people for a new way of life (e.g. proclaiming the Kingdom of the God and servitude); advocating for social justice and against hypocrisy and bad use of wealth (e.g. the story of the young rich ruler in Mk 10:17–31). Thus, these characteristics of the remembered Jesus suggest that Jesus was not uninterested in social inequity and oppression but rather who encouraged people to live for each other. Of course, these examples contain questionable topics regarding Jesus' relation with the issue of slavery, for instance, his urging to be the slave of all (Mk 10:42–47). Therefore, his proclamation of the Kingdom of the Father and its required way of life, which is built on the imagery of real and metaphorical slavery, must be discussed later.

The second possibility regarding the lack of traditions reporting Jesus being in a relationship with slaves is that there may not have been as many slaves in the areas where he was active. Based on historical and archaeological evidence, Galilee seems to have relied

less on slave labour than other regions of the Roman Empire in the time of Jesus. Jesus did, however, need to be aware of the system of slavery since slaves could be found in nearly every sector of society. Nuancing this second possibility further, it's also plausible that Jesus never encountered slaves. This might be explained by the fact that, according to the stories found in the Gospels, Jesus did not go to Sepphoris or Tiberias, two significant Roman towns that most likely included the use of slave labour. This also applies to the other Hellenistic cities of that era that the Gospels do not mention. However, as we will discuss later, visiting wealthy people and attending the different banquets raise the probability of Jesus being in contact with household slaves who served the meals.

A third possibility is connected to the fact that even though slaves could listen to Jesus' teaching in the crowds, and it is also probable that slaves might have been among those whom Jesus healed, since a person's legal status couldn't be decided from the outside, it is not specified by the gospels whether people in the crowds were slaves or not. Since slaves could obtain even higher positions, it might have been unclear for the members of the Jesus movement the identity and unfree status of some of their participants.

A fourth possibility is based on the fact that enslaved people were totally dishonoured persons. Although they were likely present in various situations, nobody saw it necessary to point out their presence because of their dishonour.

Turning our attention to the rhetoric of the Gospels, the question arises whether the lack of slaves could be the intention of the authors of the Gospel.

Therefore, as a fifth possibility, we might ask if the absence of the slaves could be the consequence of the rhetoric of silencing and erasing history intentionally.[2] Moreover, a sixth and additional option might be that the absence of the slaves is connected to the act of forgetting. Additionally, to include two more contemporary views on the formation of the gospels, we shall discuss as a seventh alternative the possibility that the gospels were written by educated slaves whose abilities were evaluated by how invisible they could stay.[3] As an eighth possibility, we might add a new theory that suggests that the gospels are literary works

[2] In his article, Michal Beth Dinkler examines the function of silencing, the rhetorical power of silence in the narratology. See Michal Beth Dinkler, "New Testament Rhetorical Narratology: An Invitation toward Integration" *Biblical Interpretation* Volume 24 (2016): 203–228, especially 221.

[3] Recently, Candida Moss argued that there is a large group of anonymous, enslaved coauthors and collaborators behind the people identified as the authors of the New Testament writings. Later, we will address the topics she raised. See Candida R. Moss, God's Ghostwriters: Enslaved Christians and the Making of the Bible (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2024).

with other objectives, such as character representation. According to this theory, such an aim can result in the omission of facts that do not contribute to the primary objective.[4]

A ninth possibility raises our awareness of theological issues and raises the question of whether the absence of slaves is a sign of a theological editing and redacting of texts based on the belief that the institution of slavery cannot be in connection with the Jesus movement and church. However, as the history of humanity shows, people always found arguments in the Bible to accept and use the institution of slavery.

Turning our direction towards scholarship on slavery and addressing the conspicuous absence of references to the gospels and Jesus in the research on slavery, an answer could be that the apostolic letters contained more concrete teachings about slavery (for example, the story of Onesimus), therefore, Christianity relied on these letters more than the Gospels to form its religious teaching.

Focusing only on the lack of works on real slavery in historical Jesus studies, one explanation might be in connection with the fact that in the 20th century, there was a strong connection between parable research and historical Jesus research, which contented that parables are the surest traditions where we can find the historical Jesus.[5] Consequently, since numerous slaves appear in the parables of Jesus in the Gospels, scholars who have studied the relationship between Jesus and slavery have almost always discussed these instances in which slavery appears metaphorically without thoroughly analysing the reality behind these parables. As a result, discussing the subject of the overlap between real and metaphorical slavery is crucial, and I will return to it in the final section of this work. [6]

Nevertheless, it is necessary to emphasise that this study purposely concentrates only on real slaves, whether they are apparent or invisible in the Gospels, since this is a topic that is not well addressed in academic literature. Moreover, it is essential to specify that the

[4] In her divise book, Robyn Faith Walsh argues that Robyn Faith Walsh contends that the Synoptic gospels were authored by elite and highly skilled individuals who were part of a vibrant group of educated professionals interested in Jewish teachings. See Robyn Faith Walsh, *The Origins of Early Christian Literature. Contextualizing the New Testament within Greco-Roman Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

[5] There are lots of references discussing this question. See Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent. A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 31; Ruben Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables of Jesus. Methods and Interpretation (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015)*, 58. See also Ruben Zimmermann, "Memory and Jesus Parables" Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus Volume 16 (2018): 156–172; Klyne Snodgrass, „Are the Parables Still the Bedrock of the Jesus Tradition?" Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus Volume 15 (2017): 131–146.

[6] It is worth noting Mary Ann Beavis's point, who examined how slave parables continually adopt the viewpoint of the kyrios, saying that it is essential for slaves to abide by their masters' commands. See Mary Ann Beavis, "Fables, Parables and Slaves Epictetus, Aesop and the Gospels in Conversation with North American Slave Narratives" in Overcoming Dichotomies Parables, Fables, and Similes in the Graeco-Roman World, ed. Albertina Oegema, Jonathan Pater, and Martijn Stoutjesdijk (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022).

omission of Jesus' parables in this study does not imply that they are devoid of historical plausibility.[7] In the last chapter, when I discuss the potential future developments for this work, I will highlight how parables become indispensable when evaluating Jesus' relationship with slaves. Therefore, this choice is merely driven by the objective of this endeavour to concentrate on the neglected aspects of the research.

Of course, we can mention contemporary scholarly works that address and examine the issue of real slavery as noteworthy efforts and counterexamples to the trends above-mentioned. Two such instances are the works of Ronald Charles and Candida Moss, which we will discuss in more detail in the following. Unfortunately, until the voices and presence of such works are strengthened within the scholarship, the real slaves tend to remain invisible. However, there *are* real slaves in the Gospels. Jennifer Glancy's statement should be a guideline for all of us: "Jesus and his followers interacted with both slaves and slaveholders."[8] Hence, this statement will be a leading focus in this work.

In taking up this mission, and considering the numerous explanations for why Jesus' interaction with real slaves is notably missing from the Gospels and the absence of scholarly work addressing this issue, the following research questions arise:

> *Given the conspicuous absence of real slaves and the institution of slavery in the narratives about Jesus and his disciples in the Gospel and research, in which ways could the relationship between Jesus and the real slaves be reconstructed? Consequently, based on the materials remembering Jesus, how could Jesus' ministry be seen in connection with slavery, and what could his answer to the slaves be?*

To answer the questions raised, based on the traditions of remembering Jesus, this research aims to reconstruct and analyse the relationship between real slavery and the earliest Palestinian Jesus movement based on the framework and methodology of historical Jesus research.

Firstly, in the first chapter (1.), I argue that researchers in slavery and New Testament studies should turn their focus to the Gospels and the real slavery, because this subfield is underrepresented in the current state of art.

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[7] I agree with Jennifer Glancy's statement: "Jesus drew his metaphors from the culture in which he lived, and he lived in a slaveholding culture." See Jennifer A. Glancy, Slavery in Early Christianity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 122–123.

[8] Jennifer Glancy, "Slavery and the rise of Christianity," in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery. Volume I. The Ancient Mediterranean World*, ed. Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 457.

Secondly, in the second chapter (2.), I intend to depict the social, historical, political and religious context in which we can place the research on real slavery and the historical Jesus. To build this context, I use social-scientific criticism which I will supplement with different perspectives of doulology arguing that not only we have an immensely complex context on a macro level, but so is the identity and the status of the slaves on a micro level. Thus, I argue that on the historical foundations of the research, we have a multiple complexity that is strongly interconnected making the endeavour of reconstructing Jesus' relation to slaves highly difficult.

Thirdly, in the third chapter (3.), based on the historical context I reconstructed in the previous chapter, and in addition to the few rare real slaves that are present in the Gospels, through a (re)exploration I will try to map out the different places where the historical Jesus could have been in touch with real slavery. Consequently, I intend to shed light on the "invisible slaves"– a term coined by Annette B. Merz–of the Gospels that could have been present on those previously explored places.[9] Then, by the exegesis of the story of the young rich ruler and the concept of the Kingdom of God, I intend to search what Jesus' answer could be for the slaves, and in the light of this message how can his mission be understood when including slaves in his audience.

An attempt such as this, contains many difficulties, almost impossibilities thanks to the significantly deficient sources. Thus, the radically new questions that have not been asked before requiring new and innovative approaches and methods. Therefore, in the next chapter, when I justify my choices of methodologies, I will give special attention to presenting the process of critical fabulation, which became indispensable in recent research working with fragmentary sources.

Nevertheless, despite all these difficulties, the value of this endeavour could be seen in its attempt to draw attention to the unheard voices and unseen bodies of the earliest Jesus movement, which can presumably be found between the lines of the Gospels.

To do so, an interdisciplinary approach with a broader field of methodologies is required when studying slavery in the Gospels. As Martijn Stoutjesdijk in his recent work also suggested, the history of research on slavery in early Christianity is strongly connected with the history of ancient slavery in general.[10] This challenge can be perceived even more

[9] "Zulke 'onzichtbare slaven' kunnen historisch geschoolde imaginatie dus zeker veronderstellen". See Annette Merz, "Jezus en de onzichtbare slaven," *De Bijbel en slavernij Schrift 2024 nr. 1*
See https://www.theologie.nl/jezus-en-de-onzichtbare-slaven-schrift/

[10] Martijn J. Stoutjesdijk, *"Not Like the Rest of the Slaves"? Slavery Parables in Early Rabbinic and Early Christian Literature* (PhD diss., Tilburg University, 2021), 17.

in the case of this current work. It is hard to find secondary sources that focus exclusively on Jesus and real slavery.

Hence, from an academic standpoint, this research, along with the work of very few others like Annette Merz, might potentially provide an innovative viewpoint to this non-existing (or just about to be born) subfield.

1.2. Overview and justification of the methodology

Examining the relationship between real slavery and the Jesus movement is complex and challenging. As noted above, there is not one single tradition in which Jesus is depicted to have a relation or conversation with real slaves. However, the knowledge and historical data we have of the Roman Empire's dominion in Palestine and Galilee underscores that Jesus lived in a society where slavery was an everyday experience. Nevertheless, as Candida Moss emphasised in her work, the historical records only have fragmentary accounts of the lives of enslaved individuals who lived in the ancient Roman world".[11]

Considering this statement, several challenging questions emerge: Given the conspicuous absence of real slaves in the gospels, how can we reconstruct the relationship between Jesus and the real slaves? Given the total lack of traditions showing Jesus interacting with slaves, how can we reconstruct his mission and message for the slaves?

Therefore, from a standpoint based on the dedication to unravelling the unhidden truth and bringing to the surface the unheard voices and unseen bodies of the invisible slaves in the Gospels, researchers must demonstrate remarkable creativity and originality when analysing their sources by using interdisciplinary methodologies. Doing so, it is highly important to align with the approach summarised most recently by Candida Moss:

> "Reconstructing the experiences of enslaved people […] requires both that historians use different tools and methods and that they adjust their expectations. This process involves reading into the gaps, engaging in what historian of Atlantic slavery Saidiya Hartman calls critical fabulation: a form of history-telling that is imaginative, and not untrue. The evidence is fragmented but is itself evidence"[12]

Employing critical fabulation developed by Saidiya Hartman, we can address the gaps, silences, and erasures in the gospels, which might lead to the discovery of the enslaved

[11] Moss, *God's Ghostwriters*, 3.
[12] Moss, *God's Ghostwriters*, 3.

individuals between the lines.[13] Therefore, this whole work will be based on this approach and its perspectives from critical historiography.[14]

The methodologies used in the current study cover a wide range of study fields and are strongly connected to and based on each other. In the following part of this first chapter, I will present the history of research on slavery and New Testament studies implementing a critical and comparative overview of the secondary sources.

The second chapter embodies multidisciplinary perspectives by exploring biblical studies primarily via the use of approaches derived from social sciences and humanities. For reconstructing the Galilean social, historical, political and economic context of real slavery and the earliest Palestinian Jesus movement, I will use social-scientific criticism. Through this approach, at a macrosociological level, the concept of stratum directs our focus towards the factors of power, privilege, and prestige. At a microsociological level, the concept of intersectionality, together with the concept of status inconsistency and the concept of agency, remind us of the numerous types of oppression that slaves could encounter. These examinations are based on the complexities of ancient slavery revealed and defined by Orlando Patterson. By using a combination of these methodologies and approaches, I meticulously reconstruct the social framework of the Jesus movement, with a particular emphasis on the economic and political context. By doing so, we may uncover numerous places where slaves were present in Galilee throughout the first part of the first century.

The third chapter is on reconstructing the specific places and situations in which Jesus may have interacted with real slaves. Building upon the historical background established in the second chapter, I will examine and assess the plausibility of numerous traditions found in the gospels. Using the methodologies of historical Jesus research, I will evaluate these traditions using the double criterion of historical plausibility and the criterion of coherence. This approach will be extended by using the most recent developments in historical Jesus studies, namely by utilising memory theory to provide weight to the materials remembering Jesus.[15]

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[13] For an in-depth explanation of his method, see Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* Volume 12 (2008): 1–14; Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008), 16; Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Referred in Moss, *God's Ghostwriters*, 277.

[14] I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Gert J. van Klinken for reviewing my work and providing valuable insights that could only be observed by the eyes of an exceptional historian.

[15] For the recent development of the methodologies in historical Jesus research, see Jens Schröter, "The 'Remembered Jesus': Memory as a Historiographical-Hermeneutical Paradigm of Research on Jesus" in *The*

Furthermore, in the third chapter this analysis will use the theories of the act of silencing, erasing, or forgetting addressing the notable absence of real slaves in the Gospels. Employing an examination of several places where Jesus may have interacted with real slaves, such as agricultural areas, industries, and banquets, I will attempt to fill in the gaps by implementing critical fabulation. The last section of the chapter provides an exegesis of chapter 10 from the Gospel of Mark. In this section, I will discuss the topic of wealth and explore the potential connection between the metaphorical language of the Kingdom of the father and Jesus' mission and answer to the slaves.

Thus, through the interconnectedness of the above-mentioned multidisciplinary methodologies we might reconstruct the relationship between the historical Jesus and the real slaves in this surrounding. To understand that such an aim is significant and suppletory, we should first review the scholarly works that discuss the relationship between slavery and the New Testament.

1.3. History of research

1.3.1. Slavery and New Testament Studies

Contemporary concerns of how biblical studies can usefully contribute to the discourse about ancient slavery and what biblical studies can embrace from the currents of doulology are vital issues. Therefore, this chapter's main interest is locating its research question into the history of research of slavery and New Testament studies, particularly slavery and Gospel studies, or more specifically, slavery and historical Jesus studies. As a result of this specific focus, I will investigate strikingly little on tracing back in detail the history of ancient slavery. Although many of the authors I will present in the following started their work by analysing ancient Greco-Roman slavery as an introduction before their research in New Testament studies, I don't want to expand on their lines and reproduce well-written research histories. Since there are numerous remarkable works with a broad overview of the scholarship starting from antiquity, I consider being more concentrated on the relationship between real slavery and the earliest Palestinian Jesus movement can

Jesus Handbook, ed. Jens Schörter and Christine Jacobi, trans. Robert L. Brawley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2022).

contribute better to the actual discourse about slavery in Biblical studies.[16] Nevertheless, when it comes to examining works on slavery and New Testament studies, I will not selectively present only those works that are important for my research. It is precisely the main objective of this chapter to emphasise the significance of discussing real slavery and the historical Jesus by highlighting the absence of such investigations in academic scholarship. Therefore, in the subsequent section, I will provide a comprehensive history of research on the New Testament and slavery, aiming to demonstrate the severe under-representation of questions regarding real slavery and the historical Jesus in academia.

Perspectives on slavery in academia have changed drastically in the last half-century, and modern scholarship on slavery and New Testament studies demonstrate this transition well.

The beginning of modern scholarship on slavery and New Testament studies is generally traced back to the work of S. Scott Bartchy: *ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ: First-Century Slavery and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21*, published in 1973. Bartchy is known as the first or one of the most influential authors to research slavery and New Testament studies.[17] However, Bartchy is also known as one who is quite permissive to ancient slavery. In his book, he uses twisted language to remark that: "Slavery was by no means an ideal situation, but it was often much better than modern men are inclined to think".[18] He supports this idea by arguing that people in the ancient world often sold themselves to be slaves to have an "easier" life, to secure "special jobs", or even "to climb socially".[19] The other argument Bartchy invoked for presenting an acceptable and positive depiction of slavery was by describing the procedure of manumissions in antiquity. Bartchy, in his subchapter, *The slave's view of his situation*, demonstrates through various references that the anticipation of manumission also played a crucial role for ancient slaves seeing their life as good. Building on Siegfried Lauffer's ideas,[20] Bartchy concludes that: "Certainly good

[16] For example, Martijn J. Stoutjesdijk's work has a detailed and well written history of research on slavery. See Stoutjesdijk, *"Not Like the Rest of the Slaves"?,* 17–49.
[17] However, this fact has recently been called into question by Martijn Stoutjesdijk, who, in his book, when presenting how the topic of slavery and New Testament studies withdrawn from the discussions of slavery and Early Christianity, drove attention to a forgotten author of these discourses. Stoutjesdijk introduces the work of Henneke Gülzow from 1969 entitled *Christentum und Sklaverei in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, and in his argumentation notes that although "Gülzow remains rather unknown", this work may be a "standardwerk" as the authors in the foreword of the book's second publication point. See Stoutjesdijk, *"Not Like the Rest of the Slaves"?*, 41–42.
[18] S. Scott Bartchy, *ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ: First-Century Slavery and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21* (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973), 46.
[19] Bartchy, *First-Century Slavery*, 46; 116.
[20] Bartchy referring to: Siegfried Lauffer, "Die Sklaverei in der griech.-röm. Welt," *Gymasiun* 68 (1961): 370–395.

treatment and personal security were big factors in this contentment."[21] After all this, he also underpins his presented line of thoughts by mentioning that there were no large slave revolts in that time. Here, I shall quote his conclusion entirely because it will be important for my investigation in chapter two when presenting the materialist reading of the Jesus movement. Bartchy ends the topic of slave revolt by noting that: "For neither the climate of unrest among those in slavery nor the kind of class-consciousness presupposed by Marxist theorists existed at that time."[22]

Dale B. Martin is another author who is usually enlisted beside Bartchy and is criticized for using a positive tone in presenting ancient slavery within New Testament studies. In his work about the slavery metaphors and the Pauline letters: *Slavery as Salvation*, Martin researched mainly the retainer group or managerial slaves. Similarly to Bartchy, he highlights the range of opportunities that a slave could have, for example, families, free occupations, wealth, or power.[23] Stoutjesdijk, with reference to John Byron's book,[24] summarizes the work of Dale B. Martin as one that, although it made a serious impact in the field of New Testament Studies, and although focused on middle-level slavery, in the end, still is „a very positive interpretation of first century slavery."[25]

The first radically different presentation of slavery within New Testament studies comes from J. Albert Harrill, who strongly criticised the benign depiction of slavery written by his predecessors. In his work, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity*, published in 1995, Harrill notes that the classic legal definitions of slavery methodologically are questionable, showing an immensely misleading model of slavery. Therefore, Harrill relies on both lines of thought from recent ancient slavery studies, which strongly condemned slavery.[26] By making use of the hermeneutic of chattel slavery represented by M. I. Finley, Harrill, on the one hand, draws attention to slavery in the New Testament as a system of dependent work.[27] On the other hand, Harrill is one of the first scholars to incorporate Orlando Patterson's new perspective on slavery. Patterson, in his monograph *Slavery and Social Death*, published in 1982, paying attention to the multidimensional aspect and the

[21] Bartchy, *First-Century Slavery*, 82–86.
[22] Bartchy, *First-Century Slavery*, 87.
[23] Dale B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation. The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University, 1990), 11–22.
[24] Stoutjesdijk referring to John Byron, *Recent Research on Paul and Slavery* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008).
[25] Stoutjesdijk, *"Not Like the Rest of the Slaves"?*, 44.
[26] J. Albert Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 17.
[27] M. I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery & Modern Ideology* (New York: The Viking Press, 1980), 68–69.

social death of slaves, gave a new definition for slavery, claiming that: "slavery is the permanent, violent domination of natally alienated and generally dishonored persons."[28] In 2006, Harrill published a new book on slavery underscoring his previous claims.[29] It could have been hoped that a thorough analysis would begin in New Testament studies after Patterson's new definition. However, it happened another way. Although Albert J. Harrill took up the banner of this new direction and greatly impacted biblical scholarship, his work wasn't enough to change the whole perspective of the research.

Responses from Biblical studies to Patterson's groundbreaking new definition were delayed. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that in 1998, a whole issue of *Semeia*, the official journal of the Society of Biblical Literature, titled *Slavery in Text and Interpretation,*[30] was dedicated to bringing Patterson's definition into Biblical studies. In the Introductory article of this *Semeia*, Allen Dwight Callahan, Richard A. Horsley, and Abraham Smith begin their presentation by mentioning that before Patterson's definition, academics of New Testament studies contended, in line with classical scholars, that slavery in antiquity was in some ways "better, more humane, than the institution in its modern forms."[31] After this, the editors critically claim that while Patterson's analysis was rapidly valued in political sciences and sociology, New Testament studies either denied or overlooked its significance.[32] On the one hand, it is important that the editors have set themselves the goal of incorporating Patterson's analysis in New Testament studies. However, on the other hand, it should be mentioned as proof for the initial problem statement of this current work, namely that discourses about slavery within New Testament studies are significantly dominated by Pauline studies, that this Semeia Issue demonstrates drastically this problem as well. It is meaningful information that a search in the Issue shows that there are 172 references to the name Paul but only 37 to Jesus. More striking is that from the total of 13 articles in the issue, some are general overviews of ancient slavery, and some specifically focus on Paul, but none is about the relationship between slavery and Jesus!

The above-presented two major views about slavery in New Testament studies are sharply contrasted in the works of John Byron. In an article published in 2004 and later in

[28] Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social* Death (Cambridge-Massachusetts-London, 1982).
[29] J. Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).
[30] Allen Dwight Callahan, Richard A. Horsley and Abraham Smith, ed., *Slavery in Text and Interpretation*. Semeia 83/84 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1998).
[31] Allen Dwight Callahan, Richard A. Horsley and Abraham Smith, "Introduction: The Slavery of New Testament Studies," in *Slavery in Text and Interpretation*, Semeia 83/84, ed., Allen Dwight Callahan, Richard A. Horsley and Abraham Smith, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1998), 2.
[32] Callahan, Horsley and Smith, "Introduction", 2–3.

his monograph, *Recent Research on Paul and Slavery*, published in 2008,[33] Byron presents the major shift between the legal and social definitions of slavery. Although he focuses on Paul, particularly on the First Corinthians, he makes a useful contribution to the history of research by his nuanced description. After presenting the works with different perspectives on slavery and the New Testament, Byron makes four suggestions for different areas in which the contemporary investigation of slavery studies could understand Paul better. According to Byron's article, the four areas that may usefully contribute to the discourse about slavery were revisiting the ancient sources, more precisely, the Roman legal texts; analysing the conditions of the slaves; clarifying the statements about the self-selling of the slaves; and rethinking the illusion of upward mobility or manumission of the slaves.[34]

During the last decades of the 20th century, thanks to the rise of feminist critique and the ongoing thematization of issues related to gender and sexuality, slavery studies were complemented by new perspectives.

1.3.2. Slavery and Gender Studies

As a forerunner of slavery and gender studies, we shall mention Renate Kirchhoff's work: *Die Sünde gegen den eigenen Leib: Studien zu porne und porneia in 1 Kor 6,12-20 und dem sozio-kulturellen Kontext der paulinischen Adressaten*, published in 1994.[35] In her book, Kirchhoff analysed how Paul condemns the practice of sexual relations with women in 1 Corinthians 6:12–20. In her analysis, Kirchhoff examines the socio-historical aspects of the lives of women and the social approval of sexual intercourse with a woman known in the Corinthian community and the semantic spectrum of porneia. She delves into Paul's response to the text and his dedication to the prohibition of sexual intercourse for Christian males in her book.

Another important book that builds on this perspective is Winsome Munro's *Jesus, Born of. The Social and Economic Origins of Jesus' Message*, published in 1998.[36] Munro's book delves into the social origins and location of Jesus in the society of his day. Based on the methodologies of historical Jesus research, she contends that Jesus was of slave status

[33] Byron, *Recent Research on Paul and Slavery*.
[34] John Byron, "Paul and the Background of Slavery: The Status Quaestionis in New Testament Scholarship," *Currents in Biblical Research*, Volume 3, Issue 1 (2004): 116–139.
[35] Renate Kirchhoff, *Die Sünde gegen den eigenen Leib: Studien zu porne und porneia in 1 Kor 6,12–20 und dem sozio-kulturellen Kontext der paulinischen Adressaten* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994).
[36] Winsome Munro, *Jesus, Born of. The Social and Economic Origins of Jesus' Message* (Lewistone-Queenstone-Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1998).

due to his mother's origin. Munro's hypothesis relies on the notion that Jesus' ministry outside of his family was that of a "freedman" who remained obliged to his earlier master. This hypothesis clarifies a significant amount of the confusion that is present in the early Christian writings about Jesus and allows a new understanding of his lifetime and crucifixion.

As we progress in the research history, Jennifer Glancy's major work stands as the next great milestone. By her thorough analysis, Glancy presented slavery systems as brutal oppression by which she made a long-lasting impact on the scholarship. In her most known work, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, published in 2002, by focusing on numerous literary sources, she drew attention to a forgotten aspect of slavery.[37] In her argumentation, Glancy shows that many times, slaves were considered only as bodies, the sources mentioning them as τα σώματα δουλικά. By highlighting the importance of slave bodies, Glancy brings many new aspects into the slavery discussions, such as slaves being surrogate bodies to their owners or being "tools" harshly oppressed.[38]

Commenting on the importance of her work, we shall note that through her works, Glancy made significant steps in slavery and New Testament studies. On one hand, she is among the first to discuss slaves in the Gospels at length. However, although her work provides an in-depth analysis of slaves in the Gospels, she answered her research questions about real slaves with the parables of Jesus. More importantly, Glancy started the gender and sexuality discourse in slavery and New Testament studies, which encouraged many scholars to change their perspectives and focus on questions that had never been addressed. Therefore, feminist and later intersectionality hermeneutics had a good basis in Glancy's work.

When the concept of intersectionality emerged in slavery and New Testament studies, numerous authors contributed usefully to the questions raised. One of them is Bernadette Brooten, who, in the book she edited, invited several scholars to circumnavigate the relationship between ancient slaves, women, and children.[39]

Going further in the history of research, Elizabeth V. Dowling made two contributions to the topic of slavery and the New Testament studies. In her most recent article, she analysed the Gospel of Luke with a perspective that reads Luke and Acts as

[37] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 4–6.
[38] Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery as Moral Problem: In the Early Church and Today* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 7.
[39] See further, Bernadette Brooten, ed., *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).

writings proclaiming the good news for the oppressed. Dowling mentioned both the real slave characters of the Lukan narrative, whom she calls "actual slaves," and the metaphoric slaves from the parables as well. At the end of her investigation, Dowling leaves the readers with a sorrowful conclusion:

> "Any snippets of good news which a slave might receive upon hearing Luke-Acts seem to be overshadowed by the predominant reinforcement of slavery, both implicit and explicit. The good news for the poor which is at the heart of the Gospel of Luke extends to the free poor, but not so clearly to slaves. Ultimately, it would seem that Luke accepts the reality of Christians owning slaves and the slaves' non-status without any great challenge."[40]

One of the most important assistance to my research was provided in an article by Jonathan Hatter, whom I will discuss later, who wrote the following: "Mark Allan Powell moved away from the question of enslaved persons in the parables and explores real enslaved persons who may have interacted with the historical Jesus."[41] According to Hatter, Powell is the first to intentionally focus on the relationship between real slavery and the historical Jesus. Therefore, Powell's work indeed becomes the most interesting part of this comparative analysis, whereas he addresses research questions similar to mine. Another reason Powell's article becomes interesting at this point in the research history is that his conclusion makes a good contrast to the one just presented by Elizabeth Dowling.

In her article "Jesus and the Pathetic Wicked. Re-visiting Sanders's View of Jesus' Friendship with Sinners" published in the *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* in 2015,[42] Powell thinks further a dividing statement by E. P. Sanders.[43] In the works referred to by Powell, Sanders claims that Jesus promised the Kingdom to sinners without requiring repentance. Powell's main point is that many of the people who were considered sinners in the first centurion context, in fact would have been slaves or, at the very least, expendables:[44]

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[40] Elizabeth V. Dowling, "Luke-Acts: Good News for Slaves?," *Pacifica: Australasian Theological Studies* Volume 24, Issue 2 (2011): 123–140, 140. See also her previous work: Elizabeth V. Dowling, "Slave parables in the Gospel of Luke - Gospel 'texts of terror'?," *Australian Biblical Review* Volume 56, Issue 1 (2008): 61–68.

[41] Jonathan Hatter, "Currents in Biblical Research Slavery and the Enslaved in the Roman World, the Jewish World, and the Synoptic Gospels," *Currents in Biblical Research* Volume 20, Issue 1 (2021): 97–127, 120.

[42] Mark Allan Powell, "Jesus and the Pathetic Wicked. Re-visiting Sanders's View of Jesus' Friendship with Sinners," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* Volume 12, Issues 2–3 (2015): 186–206.

[43] The referred works by Powell: E.P. Sanders, "Jesus and the Sinners," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* Volume 6, Issue 19 (1983): 5–36; E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 174–211; E.P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993), 225–35.

[44] Reference to the analysis of the social strata made by the Lenski. See Gerhard E. Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966).

"I think it is likely that many of the 'tax collectors and sinners' with whom Jesus dined were slaves."[45] Powell argues that the meaning of Sanders' statement is that these people could not practice the religious rituals that should have driven them to repentance traditionally because they economically and sexually exploited slaves, but the radical exclusivity of Jesus exempted them from these requirements and promised them as well the Kingdom of God.[46]

Going further with the perspective of feminist and gender studies, Christy Cobb's work must be mentioned. Cobb, in her work *Slavery, Gender, Truth, and Power in Luke-Acts and Other Ancient Narratives*, published in 2019, makes a valuable contribution to the field of study.[47] Based on Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's feminist hermeneutics, contemporary literary theory and a comparative analysis with ancient novels, Cobb analyses three female slave characters from the Luke-Acts narrative. In her work, Cobb makes an exegetical, literary and theoretical analyses of the Lukan account of Peter's denial underscoring the relevance of the female slave character who is not usually considered when analyzing this story. Her approach and eagerness to highlight the underrepresented slave characters makes a valuable contribution to the field and shows directions for this current work.

The works included in this section demonstrated that studying slavery had to be done so in accordance with the most recent insights from the social sciences and that the oppression that slaves endured was undoubtedly a complex and intertwined aspect of their existence. In the next chapter, I would like to add to the discussion these academics have begun by analysing slaves in connection with Jesus using the concepts of intersectionality and agency.

1.3.3. Slavery Between Reality and Metaphor

Thematizing the overlap of real and metaphorical slavery has always been an important part of slavery and gospel studies. In 1992, Mary Ann Beavis was among the first to embrace the new multidimensional perspective about ancient slavery in Biblical studies that we just presented. In an article, she noted that ancient slavery should be taken as a

[45] Powell, "Jesus and the Pathetic Wicked…", 204.
[46] Powell, "Jesus and the Pathetic Wicked…", 205.
[47] Christy Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth, and Power in Luke-Acts and Other Ancient Narratives* (London: Palfrace Macmilaan, 2019).

historical context for interpreting the slavery parables.[48] This perspective constantly strengthened until the overlap of reality and metaphor became a general topic in slavery and New Testament studies.

It is also among the history of this tendency that in 2017, at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature at the Historical Jesus program unit, there was a panel organized with the title *Slavery and Jesus*. Mark Allan Powell, whom I already presented, was its preside, and the lecturers were Ronald Charles, Mitzi J. Smith, J. Albert Harrill, and Anders Martinsen. Since then, several of the lectures held have been published. Therefore, I will present them at length soon.

The first interesting perspective brought into the discussion about reality and metaphoricity is K. Edwin Bryant's monograph, *Paul and the Rise of the Slave. Death and Resurrection of the Oppressed in the Epistle to the Romans* released in 2016. Bryant argues, based on the Letter to Romans, that by implementing a slave language connected to God, slaves in early Christianity could release themselves from the actual social death they had been. The focal point of this theory is the participation in Christ's death by which slaves are detached from the legal boundness because their self-identification got connected to another "reality".[49]

Chris de Wet's name is well known within slavery studies since he is referred to as the scholar who coined the term "doulology" in his book *Preaching Bondage. John Chrysostom and the Discourse of Slavery in Early Christianity*, published in 2015.[50] In his most recent book, *The Unbound God. Slavery and the Formation of Early Christian Thought*, De Wet analyses the phrase "slave of God", about which he notes that it is part of a larger thinking that sees slavery as a discourse "which covers the metaphorical, religious, cultural, social, and political manifestations of slavery."[51] Therefore, he argues that "slavery was an indispensable conceptual and intellectual tool for nascent Christianity."[52]

Martijn Stoutjesdijk's overview drew my attention to another interesting scholar whose work could be useful for the current study from a methodological point of view. Edward Noble Kaneen, in his thesis, *Discipleship is Slavery: Investigating the Slavery*

[48] Mary Ann Beavis, "Ancient Slavery as an Interpretive Context for the New Testament Servant Parables with Special Reference to the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-8)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* Volume 111, Number 1 (1992): 37–57, 38.
[49] See futher, K. Edwin Bryant, *Paul and the Rise of the Slave. Death and Resurrection of the Oppressed in the Epistle to the Romans* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).
[50] De Wet, *Preaching Bondage.*
[51] De Wet, *The Unbound God*.
[52] De Wet, *The Unbound God*.

Metaphor in the Gospel of Mark from 2017, Kaneen uses the Conceptual Blending Theory– which he claims as preferable than the Conceptual Metaphor Theory– to present how slavery language was used as a source for reaching discipleship in the Gospel of Mark.[53] He distinguishes between "actual" and metaphorical slavery and goes into great detail on the tenth chapter of Mark's gospel, which I will also cover in the last chapter.

Mitzi Smith's work is intriguing from both gender and metaphoric perspectives. In the chapter *Slavery, Torture, Systematic Oppression, and Kingdom Rhetoric*: An African American Reading of Matthew 25:1–13 from her 2017 book *Insights from African American Perspectives,* Smith explores the parables from the Gospel of Matthew. In this work, Smith is mainly interested in how the parables found in the Gospels retell the stereotypical characterization of the slave systems.[54] As I already mentioned, Smith gave a lecture in the Slavey and Jesus panel at the 2017 SBL Annual Meeting. Her topic is related to the work I just presented. However, it's hypotheses from the abstract are worth citing in total:

> "In this paper, I propose that the parables that construct analogies between the Kingdom of God and the stereotypical master-slave relationship (e.g., unconditional obedience and loyalty, unbridled access to slave bodies and labor, the slave body as a site of physical abuse, sleep deprivation) did not originate from the historical Jesus. In the first stage of the tradition Jesus did employ the master-slave relationship in parables, but he did not explicitly link slave parables and the Kingdom of God. The direct connection that is made between the Kingdom of God/heaven in Luke and Matthew's Gospels derives from the early church and may be an expression of author's apologetic toward the Roman Empire as a slave society and/or inherent in Q."[55]

In a more recent chapter written by her entitled *Roman Slavery and the New Testament* in the book *Toward Decentering the New Testament,* Smith brings further the started line of thought, focusing more on the social-historical context of slavery in the New Testament. By presenting the Roman slave society, she demonstrates again how the parables share the stereotypical relationship between masters and slaves."[56] Smith is also interesting for her present research about Jesus being the son of a slave.[57] She presented her thoughts at the *The Next Quest for the Historical Jesus Conference* in 2022 at The Centre for the Critical Study

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[53] Edward Noble Kaneen, "Discipleship is Slavery: Investigating the Slavery Metaphor in the Gospel of Mark" (PhD diss., Durham University, 2017), 6–8.
[54] Mitzi J. Smith, *Insights from African American Interpretation*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 86.
[55] Mitzi J. Smith, *The Historical Jesus and the Problem of the Kingdom of God and Slavery*, SBL Annual Meeting, 2017, Boston, Historical Jesus Panel. For the abstract, see: https://www.sbl-site.org/meetings/abstract.aspx?id=44636
[56] Mitzi J. Smith, Yung Suk Kim, Michael Willett Newheart, To*ward Decentering the New Testament: A Reintroduction* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018).
[57] Smith builds on Winsome Munro's infamous and divisive book, *Jesus*, *Born of a Slave. The Social and Economic Origins of Jesus' Message*. See, Winsome Munro, *Jesus*, *Born of a Slave: The Social and Economic Origins of Jesus' Message* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1998).

of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements (CenSAMM). She also published a chapter on the topic,[58] which caused intense discussion in several online blogs.[59] Recently, she noted in an interview that she is working on a book on the same topic titled *Re-Reading the Lukan Jesus for Liberation: Anointed Abolitionist Born of a Doule Called Mary*, [60] and a new contribution to an upcoming book with the title *Born of a Doule* is also signed by her.[61]

Another known author for representing gender studies and metaphoricity is Marianne B. Kartzow. In the past few years, her work has also become significant in slavery and New Testament studies. At first, in her articles[62] and recently in her published book published in 2018, *The Slave Metaphor and Gendered Enslavement in Early Christian Discourse. Double Trouble Embodied*,[63] Kartzow argues for the inseparable connection between real and metaphorical slavery.[64] She bases her argumentation on a methodology of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Kartzow's work is also noteworthy, thanks to the fact that she implements the hermeneutics of intersectionality with which she draws attention to the complex power and social reality of ancient slavery. Besides the abovementioned book, Kartzow also published an article on a topic similar to this current work. In her article, "Slave children in the first-century Jesus Movement," Kartzow addresses the different roles of the slave children in antiquity and in the New Testament.[65]

The most recent work on the overlap of real and metaphorical slavery comes from Ronald Charles. In his recent book, *The Silencing of Slaves in Early Jewish and Christian Text*, Charles argues that slaves in the Gospels are used for theological purposes within the context of Parousia, and that the stories are told from the perspective of the masters. Charles is immensely noteworthy as he brings in a new aspect into slavery and New Testament

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[58] Mitzi J. Smith, "Abolitionist Messiah: A Man Names Jesus Born of a Doulē," in *Bitter the Chastening Rod*, ed., Mizti J. Smith, Angela N. Parker, and Ericka S. Dunbar Hill (London: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2022).
[59] Ian Paul, "*Was Mary (and therefore Jesus) a slave?*," March 24, 2023.
https://www.psephizo.com/biblical-studies/was-mary-and-therefore-jesus-a-slave/
[60] "The Theologist / Mitzi J. Smith / Reading the Writing You Admire," February 14, 2023.
https://wipfandstock.com/blog/2023/02/14/the-theologist-mitzi-j-smith-on-writing-and-publishing/
[61] Mitzi J. Smith, "Born of a Doulē," in *The Next Quest for the Historical Jesus*, ed., James Crossley and Chris Keith (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2024 upcoming).
[62] Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, "Navigating the Womb: Surrogacy, Slavery, Fertility—and Biblical Discourses," *Journal of Early Christian History* Volume 2, Issue 1 (2012): 38–54., Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, "Striking Family Hierarchies: Luke 12:35–48, Gender and Slavery," *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* Volume 21, Issue 2, (2010): 95–108.
[63] Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, *The Slave Metaphor and Gendered Enslavement in Early Christian Discourse. Double Trouble Embodied* (London-New York: Routledge, 2018).
[64] Kartzow, *The Slave Metaphor and Gendered Enslavement*…, 1–3.
[65] Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, "Slave children in the first-century Jesus Movement," in *Childhood in History Perceptions of Children in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, ed., Reidar Aasgaard, Cornelia Horn, and Oana Maria Cojocaru (London-New York: Routledge, 2018): 111–126.

studies, namely the question of silencing. As my research question addresses the issue of the conspicuous absence of real slaves from the Gospels, Charles' work will be very useful. He notes that:

> "The exercise of (re)imagining the slaves means recognizing the tension in the gospels between the prevailing culture that values the interests and viewpoints of slaveholders and the stifled voice and perspectives of those at the service of others".

Charles is also important because he mentions explicitly that he is not interested in the parabolic slaves. However, he concludes the chapter about slavery and the Gospels by mentioning that "I wanted to reimagine the slaves in the gospels, but it turns out few slaves are present, and fewer actually speak in the gospels."[66] My objective with this current work is to take up the thread of Ronald Charles and, with a similar methodology, try to find those invisible slaves that he may not considered as participants in the Gospel narrative.

The problem of this current work has recently been touched on in a comprehensive article by Jonathan Hatter, who wrote that: "While slavery in the Pauline material has been a topic of intense discussion, slavery in the Gospel texts has received comparatively little consideration."[67] Hatter chose an intriguing way of proving the above-quoted problem. He surveys the major commentaries on the synoptic gospels published in the last 25 years with a twofold aim. Firstly, Hatter not only wants to prove that works on slavery lack references to the synoptic Gospels, but he also wants to prove that in the last 25 years since there has been a "new consensus"–as he calls it–in slavery studies after Patterson's new definition, authors still refer mostly to the legal definitions of slavery leaving out the social death aspect introduced by Patterson.[68] From the dozens of commentaries consulted, Hatter finds only one worth noting because of its correct treatment of slavery. Barbara Reid's and Shelly Matthews' commentary on Luke from the Wisdom Commentary series "make the most of numerous opportunities not only to inform their readers about the nuances of ancient enslavement but also to problematize the way Luke's slave texts have been read in the past"–writes Hatter.[69]

Jonathan Hatter's analysis of the history of research summarizes sharply the works of slavery and synoptic Gospels, but it also has some weak points. First, Hatter focuses almost only on Jesus's parables when discussing the slaves in others' work. Second, omitting

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[66] Charles, Roland, *The Silencing of Slaves in Early Jewish and Christian Texts* (London- New York: Routledge, 2020), 121.
[67] Hatter, "Currents in Biblical Research Slavery…", 116.
[68] Hatter, "Currents in Biblical Research Slavery…", 116–117.
[69] Hatter, "Currents in Biblical Research Slavery…", 119.

the Gospel of John seems like a rash decision, considering the current efforts by several historical Jesus scholars to rehabilitate John's Gospel.

The most recent contribution to slavery and the New Testament, particularly Historical Jesus Studies, comes from a broader movement in the scholarship. The last years in Historical Jesus research have been loud since more and more scholars started to thematize the renewal of the Quest for the Historical Jesus. Advocates of this new desire propose new subjects and approaches by reconstructing the discipline to align with recent advances in the humanities.

What is intriguing in this tendency is that slavery becomes a major, even a central topic in this Next Quest for the Historical Jesus research. James Crossley, the catalyst of the movement, published an article in 2021 that enlisted the subjects that require more attention in the future.[70] Slavery was one of his agenda. Consequently, in 2023, the recently elected co-executive editors of the *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, Sarah E. Rollens and Robert J. Myles, presented their *Inaugural Editorial*, which included a programmatic list of subjects they would be happy to have in the journal starting with their editing onwards.[71] One of their five-point agendas was The Next Quest, which specifically mentioned the inclusion of slavery.

The first outcome of this new movement, which put the Next Quest for the Historical Jesus research on its flag, was a monograph written by James Crossley and Robert G. Myles titled *Jesus. A Life in Class Conflict*, published in 2023. In this book, the authors present a historical-materialist analysis of the Jesus movement with a special focus on the oppressed groups of a class conflict, including the slaves. In what follows, this current work tries to engage in a discourse with Crossley's and Myles' book.

The second latest issue of the *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, released in April 2024, was dedicated to Crossley's and Myles' book. The special issue of this Journal, with the title exactly matching the book just mentioned, *Special Issue: Jesus: A Life in Class Conflict*, contains several responses to the topics brought up by the book. As slavery is a key motif in the book, it appears in several articles in this special issue of JSHJ.

Christopher B. Zeichmann, in his article *He's No Spartacus: Jesus, Slavery, and the Utopian Imagination* analyses how Jesus could treat the enslaved persons. By criticizing one

[70] James Crossley, "The Next Quest for the Historical Jesus," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* Volume 19, Issue 3 (September 2021): 261–264.
[71] Sarah E. Rollens and Robert J. Myles, "Editorial," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* Volume 21, Issue 3 (November 2023): 163–169.

of the author's ideas, Zeichmann places slavery in the larger societal structure and argues that they cannot be compared to any other worker category, like fishermen. Another interesting line of thought in Zeichmann's article is that he addresses the question to Crossley and Myles of did Jesus was a utopian egalitarian prophet or did he indeed have a social program for the oppressed class, for slaves.[72] This current work might have an answer which I will elaborate on in one of the last subchapters (3.4.5.).

Neil Elliott, in his article *Jesus, the Crowds, and Historical Agency* highlights the perspective of the co-authors of the book about Galilee being a turbulent place in the time of the Jesus movement, which must have got to the point where the exploited people, slaves could have thought about revolts. Among the two scholars, Elliott also addresses the issue of the presentation of the Jesus movement, which might silence minor participants like the slaves. Elliot claims that such topics deserve more attention in the future.[73] As a response to his thought, in this current work, I will also touch upon the subject of memory distortion, silencing, and forgetting (3.1.2.)

In their response article, *What Made the Jesus Movement Tick?*, James Crossley and Robert G. Myles try to answer all the questions raised by the articles in the Special Issue, the ones just referred to as well. For the subject of slavery, the authors even dedicated a whole subchapter of their article in which they admit that:

> "Obviously, more needs to be done on reconstructing the social worlds of such figures but they do provide alternative and potentially fruitful analogies for understanding attitudes towards slaves in the Jesus movement."[74]

Therefore, it is not a hidden intention that this current work tries to be an answer to the proposition of the authors and the editors of the *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*. As we have seen in this section, in the last few years, there has been an emerging effort to concentrate on the real slaves and their relationship with the historical Jesus. However, we have also seen that it is rare to address this subject without including the overlap of real and metaphorical slavery. Thus, first and foremost, this current work will intentionally try to concentrate specifically on the real slaves since such endeavours are underrepresented in the presented history of research.

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[72] Christopher B. Zeichmann, "He's No Spartacus: Jesus, Slavery, and the Utopian Imagination," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* Volume 22, Issue 1 (2024): 7–24.
[73] Neil Elliott, "Jesus, the Crowds, and Historical Agency," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* Volume 22, Issue 1 (2024): 72–94.
[74] James Crossley and Robert G. Myles, "What Made the Jesus Movement Tick?," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* Volume 22, Issue 1 (2024): 95–115, 99.

1.4. Summary of the Chapter

In conclusion of this survey, I shall remark the following. At the beginning of the subfield, New Testament scholars depended on the works that depicted slavery as being and positive. This problem sadly remained unresolved after Orlando Patterson's new definition as well. Another issue that could be proven by this investigation is that in the past fifty years, references to Pauline letters indeed dominated the discourse about slavery in New Testament studies. Besides these, the biggest problem for a long has been that although scholars had a new definition of slavery, and although many of them addressed the question of real slaves, there has not been one single work that focuses on the real slaves of the gospels. This feeds significant concerns, and I can strongly agree with the thoughts of Jennifer Knust, who asserted that:

> "To fail to notice a discourse that naturalizes contract torturers, slave collars, flogging, and sexual exploitation, even for the sake of preserving Christian sacred texts for a better day or a more just moral program, is to participate in a dangerous taking for granted that repeats the terms of the discourse, albeit in another guise. In a world where torture has once again become acceptable practice and where so many lost lives have yet to be mourned, this is, I think, the more urgent moral, political, and interpretive point."[75]

Therefore, the most important aim of this investigation is to stop participating in a discourse that doesn't take seriously the multidimensional oppression of the slaves. The challenge is not just to defend the known slave characters from the Gospels but also to shed light on the invisible slaves who deserve their unheard voices and unseen bodies to be brought up to the light. This intention required a more detailed presentation of the history of research on slavery and New Testament studies specifically for the reason to show how works on real slaves and the historical Jesus are severely under-represented in academia. Since we have just proven this, we shall begin our analysis to counteract this tendency.

[75] Jennifer Knust, "Review," *The Journal of Religion* Volume 89, Number 3 (2009): 406–409.

2. THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF ROMAN GALILEE AS FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCHING REAL SLAVERY IN THE JESUS MOVEMENT

2.1. Introduction to the chapter and its core methodology

Reconstructing the Galilean social, historical, political and economic context of real slavery and the earliest Palestinian Jesus movement is highly complex and challenging. In this chapter, I argue that analysing slavery in Galilee requires a multidimensional perspective on both macro and microsociological levels. Building on these, I argue that approaches that do not cover as many aspects of slavery as possible tend to be useless for reconstructing Galilean real slavery. Consequently, I claim that the various forms of oppression and privilege of slavery were interconnected and that these, at the same time, were also correlated with the different social, historical, and economic aspects of their context, which, again, can't be analysed separately. Therefore, what I do in this chapter is place slavery in a web of factors and aspects linked endlessly to each other.

To resolve this, I will use social-scientific criticism as a ground methodology through which we have the possibility to analyse slavery in its ancient context with all the different aspects that made it a system of multidimensional oppression and inconsistent holder of privilege. To examine these various aspects of domination, in this second chapter, I base my understanding of slavery on the definitions made by Orlando Patterson and Jennifer A. Glancy (2.2). Consequently, through the concept of intersectionality and agency, I will connect the different aspects of ancient slavery revealed by these definitions. By doing so, the inconsistency of slaves' status will become evident and an aspect that we will have to keep in mind throughout this work.

Elaborating further, in the following subchapter (2.3.), I will define the ministry of the Jesus movement and place it with a social-scientific critical analysis of the different renewal millenarian movements with a short excursus on banditry to find out what common desires these movements could have with slavery. In the subsequent subchapter (2.4.), I will reconstruct Galilee's social, historical, and economic context for slavery and Jesus' ministry. This is mainly concerned with analysing Galilee in the first half of the first century, an investigation requiring the involvement of Roman politics and economy. Both forms of power are highly connected to the slavery system and the activity of the Jesus movement.

By demonstrating this, at the end of the chapter, I touch upon the topic of the next big chapter (3.), where I will delve into the question of what kind of answer could the Jesus movement offer for slaves in the first half of the first century.

2.1.1. The context of slavery through social-scientific criticism

While the recognition of the social context of Biblical texts has become significant since the development of historical criticism and strengthened in the second part of the 20th century, there has been a noticeable revival among biblical scholars focusing on social studies in the last decade. The close connection between biblical studies and social sciences constantly leads scholars to expand and nuance their methodological tools, which enables a more detailed analysis of the social and historical background of the Bible.[76] In the case of slavery, a nuanced analysis of the different layers of their social reality is indispensable since the various forms of suppressions were rooted in the different organizational parts of the ruling power.

Social-scientific criticism is often associated with the increasing interest in the social aspects of the Biblical texts that emerged in the 1970s as part of a larger intellectual movement called the "cultural turn" in the humanities. Dale B. Martin explains that while this scientific orientation was not initially created to study the time period of the New Testament, biblical scholars have tremendously profited from it.[77] John H. Elliot, who is credited with coining the term "social-scientific criticism," acknowledges that this approach of interpretation builds upon the historical-critical analysis of Biblical texts. Furthermore, he emphasises that the dissemination of social-scientific criticism stems from scholars' endeavours to incorporate the methodology of social sciences in the analysis of the Bible, which is rooted in a broader scientific movement.[78] Moreover, Halvor Moxnes suggested that biblical studies should be seen as engaging with the human sciences more comprehensively, because the term "social sciences" might be considered too limited.[79]

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[76] The following chapter contains parts of two essays I uploaded as final assignments for the *Overcoming Slavery and Racism* and *The Bible in its Ancient Context* courses at the PThU when I already knew my master's thesis topic and decided to work ahead. Although I rephrased every sentence, the argumentation and the order of the references had to remain the same, which may be detected by the similarity checker. In that case, I claim that these are my own thoughts, which are developed further from two earlier papers.

[77] Dale B. Martin "Introduction," in *The cultural turn in late ancient studies. gender, asceticism, and historiography*, Dale. B. Martin and Patricia Cox Miller, ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 1.

[78] John H. Elliot, *Social-scientific Criticism of the New Testament* (Augsburg: Fortress, 1995), 18.

[79] Halvor Moxnes, "Social-scientific readings of the Bible," in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible. Volume 4: From 1750 to the Present*, ed. John Riches (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 170.

Social-scientific criticism has improved biblical readings by incorporating new perspectives and methodology derived from the subdisciplines of social sciences. Initially, insights were drawn from sociology and cultural anthropology and subsequently expanded to encompass theories from the fields of economy, politics, and psychology.[80] Yet, in the 21st century, there is an urge to expand the framework of social-scientific criticism with new perspectives.[81] Moxnes suggests that in order to fulfil this requirement, we should enhance our exegetical approaches by incorporating memory studies, cognitive sciences, spatial theory, and ethnicity studies.[82] By adhering to these methodologies, Moxnes notes that examining historical figures in an isolated way is no longer possible, because it requires the analysis of complex social-historical-economic situations that served as a background for the rise of period's different movements.[83] Similarly to Moxnes, James Crossley addressed questions about the nature of historical Jesus research and its place within the field of humanities studies.[84] According to their perspective, it is crucial to analyse the Jesus movement as part of a broad and intricate framework that includes multiple factors such as social class, race, gender, and sexuality.[85]

Agreeing with all these, I contend that analysing slavery and the Jesus movement could not be possible without reconstructing their historical context by adapting the abovementioned perspectives. As a starting point, a definition of the earliest Palestinian Jesus movement and a comparison to other related millenarian social groups such as banditry is needed. Since both slavery and Jesus' ministry were rooted in the complex interconnectedness of the social, political, economic and religious impacts around them, these influences shall all be presented. To do this, defining the various aspects of the Jesus movement will be useful, whereas it can reveal those aspects of Galilee that require an in-depth analysis later on in this chapter to reconstruct an appropriate context for slavery.

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[80] Szabolcs Czire, "Social Scientific Interpretation. Foundation and Perspectives," in *Hermeneutik Oder Versionen Der Biblischen Interpretation Von Texten*, ed. György Benyik (Szeged: SZNBKA, 2023), 645.
[81] See also Philip F. Esler, "Social Scientific Criticism," in *The New Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Ian Boxall and Bradley C. Gregory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).
[82] Moxnes, "Social-scientific readings of the Bible", 170.
[83] As a summary of the approach, James Crossley wrote: "it is better […] to rethink some of the ways we approach the historical Jesus, or, as I prefer, the earliest Palestinian tradition. The main thrust of the argument here is that rather than seeing Jesus as a Great Man who, implicitly, changed history by himself, we should investigate what happened when the social upheavals in Galilee and Judea intersected with a range of different ideas and interests and if, or how, this contributed to the generation of historical change." James Crossley, *Jesus and the Chaos of History. Redirecting the Life of the Historical Jesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1.
[84] Crossley, "The Next Quest for the Historical Jesus", 261.
[85] James Crossley, "Social Sciences, Social History, and Ideology," in *The Cambridge Companion to the New Testament*, ed. Patrick Gray (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 385. See also Moxnes, "Social-scientific readings of the Bible", 170.

2.2. The Complexity of Ancient Slavery. Definitions and Methodological Observations

As introduced in the first chapter, after Orlando Patterson's new definition in 1982, views on ancient slavery changed entirely. Patterson highlighted the complex relations of dominance that existed between masters and slaves, emphasising the exposed and exploited position of the powerless slaves. Building on the concept of social death, Patterson underlined the various power relation conditions of slavery: "In his powerlessness the slave became an extension of his master's power. He was a human surrogate, recreated by his master with god-like power in his behalf."[86] Through his work, Patterson demonstrated how permanent, violent domination and natal alienation could take away the enslaved person's status, dishonouring them. As he put:

> "The slave could have no honour because of the origin of his status, the indignity and all-pervasiveness of his indebtedness, his absence of any independent social existence, but most of all because he was without power except through another."[87]

Patterson's questions about power, class, alienation, honour, and status have been addressed and supplemented, most notably by Jennifer Glancy, within New Testament studies. Besides elaborating on the above-mentioned, Glancy stressed that slaves in the Roman Empire were considered "not as persons but as things, as *ta somata doulika*, slave bodies."[88] With this addition, Glancy not only underscored that the slaves were properties but also highlighted the way these bodies (τα σώματα δουλικά) were vulnerably used due to power dependence. Stressing the vulnerability of the bodies, i.e. the corporeality of slaves, Glancy broadened the definition of ancient slavery:

> "Slaves in the Roman Empire were vulnerable to physical control, coercion, and abuse in settings as public as the auction block and as private as the bedroom. Since slavery was identified with the body, it is not surprising that the experience of slavery was conditioned by gender and sexuality."[89]

By connecting slavery with questions of gender and sexuality, Glancy also highlighted how slave bodies considered as properties functioned as surrogate objects, double bodies for

[86] Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 4.
[87] Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 10.
[88] Glancy, *Slavery in early Christianity*, 7.
[89] Glancy, *Slavery in early Christianity*, 9.

sexual or violent aims for their masters.[90] Furthermore, she also emphasised the vulnerability of the children, presenting how the Greek word παῖς (*pais*) could have meant young slave bodies for sexual purposes. An appropriate combination of Patterson's and Glancy's definition comes from Mitzi J. Smith, who wrote:

> "Slaves possessed no honor in Roman society; no socially recognized honor was attributed to slaves. The enslaved were forcefully uprooted from their family, homeland, and culture, and had no rights. Enslavers possessed total access to the bodies, sexuality, and labor of the slaves they owned."[91]

In the current work, when reconstructing the historical context of slavery in the first half of the first century Galilee, I will rely upon the aspects brought up by Patterson, Glancy and Smith. To take into consideration all the different interconnected aspects of ancient slavery mentioned by them, I will use the concept of intersectionality primarily.

2.2.1. Slavery Through the Lens of Intersectionality and Agency

The institution of real slavery in the Roman Empire was rooted in several forms of power abuse, resulting in various forms of oppression. The complex interaction of the multiple types of abuse can only be understood through a comprehensive study that considers every possible aspect. The concept of intersectionality, which has emerged in the past three decades, offers arguably the most effective approach for doing such an analysis. Drawing on the words of Gale A. Yee, an eminent scholar of postcolonial criticism:

> "Intersectionality has been used as a hermeneutical prism for many years in a number of disciplines to study inequality by examining power dynamics in their multiplicity, complexity, and interrelations".[92]

After its coin in 1989 in legal fields by an African American lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw, the concept of intersectionality spread slowly until scholars of biblical studies adopted it.[93] While the perspective has not yet gained widespread awareness, there are still

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[90] Glancy, *Slavery in early Christianity*, 15

[91] Mitzi J. Smith, "Roman Slavery and the New Testament," in *Toward Decentering the New Testament: A Reintroduction*, ed., Mitzi J. Smith, Yung Suk Kim, (Eugene: Cascade, 2018), 46.

[92] Gale A. Yee, "Thinking Intersectionally: Gender, Race, Class, and the Etceteras of Our Discipline," *JBL* Volume 139, Number 1 (2020): 7–26, 8.

[93] For general introduction, see Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall, "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis," *Signs Volume* 38 (2013): 785–810; Vivian M. May, *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality. Key Concepts* (Oxford: Polity, 2016); Ange-Marie Hancock, *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

valuable applications available within Biblical Studies.[94] Yee notes that intersectional studies emphasise that individuals possess several dimensions of identity that are influenced by various forms of oppression and privilege, resulting in different effects based on the specific components of their identities. Discussing further, Yee quotes Patricia Hill Collins, an African American sociologist, who, building upon Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality, developed her own theory named "the matrix of domination" to explain the organisation of these overlapping systems of oppression.[95] In a later article, based on a research on power, Collins highlighted six assumptions regarding intersectionality. I decided to draw on the first three from her list because these could serve as good basis for studying of ancient slavery, but also because the second part of her list is more concentrated on contemporary issues. Collins' first three assumptions on intersectionality are:

- "Race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, nation, ethnicity, and similar categories of analysis are best understood in relational terms rather than in isolation from one another.
- These mutually constructing categories underlie and shape intersecting systems of power; the power relations of racism and sexism, for example, are interrelated.
- Intersecting systems of power catalyze social formations of complex social inequalities that are organized via unequal material realities and distinctive social experiences for people who live within them."[96]

By incorporating the concept of intersectionality into our current study, we acknowledge the need to analyse numerous aspects of slavery. Being submitted to "the matrix of domination" the different layers of the slaves' suppression in the Roman Empire were interconnected. Particularly, this means that analysing slavery in its ancient context must be done by taking into consideration their natal alienation, constant dishonour, use of their bodies as surrogated objects, their variable place in the class hierarchy, and the status they filled. Besides the above-mentioned, we also must consider the question of agency which examines how certain individuals act on behalf of others. This theory also helps us

[94] See, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Democratizing Biblical Studies: Toward an Emancipatory Educational Space* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009); L. Juliana M. Claassens and Carolyn J. Sharp, eds., *Feminist Frameworks: Celebrating Intersectionality, Interrogating Power, Embracing Ambiguity* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017); and the special issue of *Biblical Interpretation* from 2010, particularly its introductory article: Denise Buell, Jennifer Glancy, Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, and Halvor Moxnes, "Introduction: Cultural Complexity and Intersectionality in the Study of the Jesus Movement," *Biblical Interpretation Volume* 18, Issue 4-5 (2010): 309–312.

[95] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought. Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston-London-Sydney-Wellington: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 225.

[96] Patricia Hill Collins, "Intersectionality's Definitional Dilemmas," *Annual Review of Sociology Volume* 41 (2015): 1–20, 14.

understanding relationships of authority and responsibility.[97] Therefore, we need to pay attention to the fact that these aspects were deeply entangled with each other.

In addition to those mentioned above, we must raise awareness to a forgotten, but highly important aspect that must supplement the categories presented. Although the concept of intersectionality is used to take into consideration as many aspects of a person as can, no work used it from the above-presented mentioned religion. Nevertheless, religion is an aspect that cannot be forgotten when analysing real slavery in the first half of the first century Galilee. As Annette Merz pointed out in an article, the social reality that determined slaves' everyday lives was interconnected with a long tradition of religious use of slavery imagery. Calling God as Lord and being the slave of God had a long religious history and wasn't unknown to people in the first century.[98] This is why the religious use of calling someone a slave can become an identity-forming detail which is in accordance or not with the reality. This factor will become highly significant in our analysis, and it will be analysed in detail later in the subsequent chapter (3) when discussing the Kingdom of God and the place of slaves in the familia Dei.

The interconnectedness of the multiple aspects of dominion and abuse of the slaves centred on the constant loss of honour, whereas at the same time, in many cases, they filled high positions. A complex controversy like that created a dissonance in their status and makes their analysis more difficult.

2.2.2. Slavery, Status Inconsistency, and the Concept of Stratum

The different forms of status that slaves could fulfil were rooted in the correlation of the numerous aspects of their historical context. Examining slavery from the perspective of status is challenging because the inconsistency of their status becomes evident.

In their article on status inconsistency, Sheldon Stryker and Anne Statham Macke draw the roots of the perspective back to Max Weber's critique of Karl Marx's economy-based and class-focused social stratification.[99] As the authors present, Max Weber argued that the roles that influence differentiation between the different groups of people are more

[97] For a more detailed introduction, see Walter Johnson, „On Agency" Journal of Social History Volume 37, Number 1 (2003):113–124. See also Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *American Historical Review* Volume 114 (2009):1231–1249.
[98] Annette Merz, "Believers as 'Slaves of Christ' and 'Freed Persons of the Lord'. Slavery and Freedom as Ambiguous Soteriological Metaphors in 1 Cor 7:22 and Col 3:22-4:1," *NTT* Volume 72, Issue 2 (2018): 96–110, 96.
[99] Sheldon Stryker and Anne Statham Macke, "Status Inconsistency and Role Conflict," *Annual Review of Sociology* Volume 4 (1978): 57–90, 59.

compound than class, and aspects like status and power should be taken seriously beside class. The study of status inconsistency emerged with Lenski's work in 1954 who, built on Weber, but who also focused on the political responses that grow from status inconsistency.[100]

The concept of status inconsistency was applied in New Testament studies within the firsts by Wayne Meeks in 1983, who set out an even stronger criticism of the economy-based social stratification. Although Meeks' analysis focuses on the first Christians, his methodological insights are useful. Meeks, presenting M. I. Finley's aspects for ranking the different social stratum (class, *ordo*, and status) asserts that: "Of these, class is not very helpful."[101] Arguing that although Finley changed the determination factors of class stated by Marx from the relation to the means of production to that of "chances in the market", Meeks notes that none of those definitions are accurate for analysing ancient societies.[102]

Looking at the social, historical, political and economic complexities that correlatedly defined slavery in Galilee, Stegemann and Stegemann note that the most difficult phase in determining the different stratum is the choice and interconnection of the factors that make people comparable.[103] Stegemann and Stegemann after weighting various factors that could come into discussion, based on Lenski defined their concept of stratum on three factors: power, privilege, and prestige. They contend that these factors provide a more accurate depiction of an individual's social standing, because a person's status may differ based on the specific stratum they are related to, which makes people able to have more statuses. According to them, status "implies a strong role for social *esteem* and serves to locate the social position of a person in relation to *various* social systems in his or her society".[104] Building on these, in their view "*status inconsistency* is basically found when the central traits of stratum membership (power, privilege, prestige) are incongruent".[105]

Stegemann and Stegemann explain status inconsistency precisely by using the example of slaves. Trying to locate slaves in the social hierarchy is indeed difficult due to the risk that one's social status does not align every time with one's actual authority or privileges. As they correctly presented, based on their personal skills, position and relations,

[100] Sheldon and Macke, "Status Inconsistency and Role Conflict", 61.
[101] Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians. The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 53.
[102] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 53.
[103] Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement. A Social History of Its First Century*, trans. O. C. Dean, Jr. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 58.
[104] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus movement*, 58.
[105] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus movement*, 60.

slaves gained influence and privileges that exceeded their legally designated status. Slaves were part of high-ranking elite Roman families and, in many cases, were authorized by their masters to oversee properties, in which case it may have occurred that these managerial slaves could also control other slaves with lower ranks. Stegemanns also mention that certain emancipated slaves possessed greater political power than numerous senators. Nevertheless, they note that besides all these, the stigma of being born into slavery, i.e. being unfree, remained the most important aspect in their self-awareness. This not only affected their lives, but it influenced the whole society.[106] Mary E. Sommar in the chapter *New Testament and Slavery* from her work *The Slaves of the Churches* underscores this gap between being slave or free by a quote from the Emperor Justinian. Although her argument is based on a law from the sixth century, it is still useful to demonstrate the total opposition of being free or slave in front of the law. As she highlights Justinian's statement: "All persons are either free of slave"[107] Demonstrating further the impossibility of bridging this gap, Sommar also points out that:

> "In Rome there was a vast divide between slave and free—a divide so vast that in law slaves were frequently categorized as "things" rather than as "persons." In fact, in many documents, slaves were listed along with the cattle and durable goods. Slaves were "tools with voices."[108]

Therefore, in the following reconstruction of the historical context of slavery in the first half of the first century Galilee, I will use the presented concepts in a twofold examination. On the one hand, in what comes, firstly, I will analyse Galilee from a macrosociological perspective. Taking into consideration the critiques against the one-dimensional economy and class-based reconstructions presented earlier, I will reconstruct Galilee on a macrosociological level based on the concept of stratum that focuses on the multiple and interrelated factors of power, privilege and prestige, which are strongly related also to honour. Building on Lenski, Stegemann and Stegemann gave the following definition for the concept:

> "Here we understand with Lenski the primary variable to be *power*, which 'determines how a society's surplus [the excess of production over need] will be divided.' Dependent on power are the *privileges*, which are understood as the 'possession or control of a part of the

[106] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus movement*, 60.
[107] Mary E. Sommar, *Slaves of the Churches. A history* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 12. Referring: "Institutiones Justiniani 1.3.pr. Attributed to the second-century jurist Gaius".
[108] Sommar, *Slaves of the Churches*, 13.

> surplus that a society produces.' Finally, *prestige* is above all a function of power and privilege".[109]

Analysing slavery through these concepts will reveal how the dishonoured position of the slaves served as a factor for their total exclusion from the interactions of power, privilege and prestige. As Orlando Patterson explained it:

> The idea that a person's honor is more valuable than his life, and that to prefer life to honor betrays a degraded mind, comes close to being a genuinely universal belief.[110]

On the other hand, power is an adequate factor to narrow our focus and direct it to the microsociological level, where different forms of power can also be found. Remembering the aspects of the concept of intersectionality introduced earlier, I stress that power can have even stronger realisations on the micro level. The concept of status inconsistency is a relevant aspect to enter a slave's individual level of his or her identity, but, and at the same time, also requires to be complemented by other individual questions about class, gender, sexuality. Doing so can reveal the multidimensional oppression that they faced on the individual level.

As slaves' different layers of oppression and privilege were interconnected in their status, so were the various aspects of their historical context. Their surrounding reality was built by different social, historical, economic, cultural and religious aspects that all had an impact on the institution of slavery itself. To analyse these layers, I will use social-scientific criticism that was developed for the accurate analysis of social contexts.

2.3. Slavery, Millenarianism and the Jesus movement

As Roman Empire's dominion became permanent, different reactions emerged to respond to the impacts brought by the new authority. The suppression of slaves, which already had a long history, was complemented by various new forms of oppression that the Roman Empire brought to Galilee. Political, economic, and religious factors strengthened and fuelled these different uprisings and movements in the first half of the first century.

Nevertheless, the resistances that first appeared primarily were in relation to religion. However, here, we must differentiate between the impacts that affected Judaism in urban

[109] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 61.
[110] Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 78.

and rural side of the country. In urban zones, the connection between the political elite and the religious leaders rapidly found a common interest, therefore, coexistence wasn't that difficult. Stegemann and Stegemann note that: "the religion of Judaism was supported in the Hellenistic-Roman period especially by the *temple* in Jerusalem."[111] However, on countryside, impacts were felt differently.

According to Stegemann and Stegemann, this epoch was characterized by different religious developments that became active in 1) various group formations (such as Pharisees, Essenes or Sadducees); 2) fundamental currents; 3) prominent charismatic movements. As they put: "On the whole, the tendencies here toward identity-preserving delineation and the religious renewal of Jewish society probably overlapped with those of the retreat from its crises."[112] Stegemanns second group, the fundamental currents were focused on the increasing concentration on Torah; apocalyptic, messianic ideas; and the aim to sanctify their life. According to them, these fundamental currents influenced other movements from those of focusing on social-revolutionary resistance to those of charismatic and messianic prophetic groups such as that of John the Baptist or Jesus.[113]

The reactions these different movements elicited varied from religious-focused to pre-political, but often, these initiations overlapped. As the Stegemanns comment on these movements, their originality consisted in integrating religion into socio-economic tensions and among dissatisfactions that were stratum-related.[114] Thinking similarly, James Crossley and Robert J. Myles note that non-elite Jews living in rural Galilee during the first century CE, had two distinct and closely related options for recognising and expressing their anger and dislike towards economic, social, and political challenges: Jewish millenarianism and banditry.[115]

Crossley and Myles use the term "millenarianism",[116] where traditional scholarship would often use "apocalypticism", to describe the widespread expectation of imminent destruction, significant and possibly revolutionary social, economic, and political changes, and a belief in a new world order that would involve unprecedented supernatural participation and divine influence that emerged in Galilee.[117] According to them, in the first

[111] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 137.
[112] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 138.
[113] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 138.
[114] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 138.
[115] Crossley and Myles, Jesus..., 5.
[116] For a lengthy introduction see, Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth. Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1998), 78-94.
[117] James Crossley and Robert J. Myles, *Jesus. A Life in Class Conflict* (Winchester-Washington: Zero Books, 2022), 5.

decades of first century CE two significant "millenarian" movements can be named: the movement of John the Baptist and the Jesus movement.[118]

The rise of the concept and term "Jesus movement" can be related to the phenomenon presented earlier in the methodological grounding of this chapter, when I highlighted how the connection of biblical studies and social sciences underscores that the Jesus research could not separate anymore the figure of Jesus from its broader sociological context. The first pioneer of such work was Gerd Theissen, whose monograph *Soziologie der Jesusbewegung* published in 1977 was the first that analysed the Jesus movement from a sociological perspective.[119] In this current study, I will use the English translation of Theissen's introduced work. As a definition at the book's beginning, Theissen wrote, "the Jesus movement is the renewal movement within Judaism brought into being through Jesus and existing in the area of Syria and Palestine between about AD 30 and AD 70."[120] About the type of movement, he noted: "The internal structure of the Jesus movement was determined by the interaction of three roles: the wandering charismatics, their sympathizers in the local communities, and the bearer of revelation."[121] Not long after, as a summary Theissen highlighted the importance of the wandering charismatics in this movement: "Jesus did not primarily found local communities, but called into being a movement of wandering charismatics."[122]

A decade later, in 1989, Richard Horsley, as a response to Theissen's perspective, published his book *Sociology and the Jesus Movement.* In his conclusions, Horsley depicted the Jesus movement locating its aim differently: "the vast majority of those involved in the Jesus movement remained rooted in local communities."[123] In a more recent article, he sustained his view claiming that: "Whereas the other popular prophets called their followers away from their village communities into the wilderness, […] the Jesus movements focused on renewal of village communities themselves."[124]

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[118] In the following, I will use the terms "earliest Palestinian Jesus movement" and "Jesus movement" interchangeably to refer to the period in which Jesus was active as described in the four Gospels.
[119] Gerd Theißen, *Soziologie der Jesusbewegung. ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Urchristent* (München: Kaiser, 1977).
[120] Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*, trans., John Bowden (Philadephia: Fortress Press, 1978), 1.
[121] Gerd Theissen, *Sociology…, 7.*
[122] Gerd Theissen, *Sociology…, 8.*
[123] Richard Horsley, *Sociology and the Jesus Movement* (New York: Continuum, 1989), 54.
[124] Richard Horsley, "Early Christian movements: Jesus movements and the renewal of Israel," *HTS Teologiese Studies* Volume 62, Number 4 (2006): 1201–1225, 1224.

Taking into consideration these definitions of the Jesus movement, several questions arise regarding the context of slavery in Galilee but also in the Jesus movement. If we take Theissen's work as a basis and understand Jesus' ministry as one that focuses more on the wandering and moving charismatics, the question arise about how the Gospels do not mention any connection or possible join of slaves in the movement? Thinking about it as a movement in move, slaves could have a desire to participate in it and leave their place of oppression or dishonour behind. Couldn't be this type of the Jesus movement a shelter for runaway slaves or manumitted slaves? Moreover, couldn't have been possible that some wealthy masters joined the movement and their slaves being tied to them had to follow the movement as well? Considering Horsley's view and defining the Jesus movement as one that focuses on local communities, the question of whether slaves don't seek Jesus and his movement, or the other way around arises. Because slaves resolving the various tasks given by their owners, could have the possibility to get in touch with the movement that was active in a local community. Besides these two appropriations, one might also ask, on a general level, that if the Jesus movement indeed had some socio-economic motivations and a desire to give justice to the poor, why didn't we see explicit stories where slaves benefited from these aims? One answer, which needs more discussion in the following, could be that the slaves personified the most exploited stratum in the social hierarchy. Moreover, remembering Patterson's thoughts about honour, we shall also add as another argument for their exclusion that they had no honour. As Patterson summarised it:

> "The real sweetness of mastery for the slaveholder lay not immediately in profit, but in the lightening of the soul that comes with the realization that at one's feet is another human creature who lives and breathes only for one's self, as a surrogate for one's power, as a living embodiment of one's manhood and honor".[125]

Therefore, although there are several possible reasons for slaves being unable to be the primary addresses of the movement, their dishonour can be mentioned above all as a clear explanation for their lack in these scenes. As we will see in subchapter 3.3.1, the issue of honour and dishonour can be most notably shown through the examples of the banquets Jesus' attended.

Recalling the definition of the millenarian movements, there is one more detail we shall address before going further in the argumentation and asking what slaves' place and role might be in it. Besides the religious motivations, millenarian movements were also

[125] Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 78.

described by having various political aspects. This aspect places them beside the so-called banditry movements in the first century that are commonly linked to peasantry and slavery. Thus, a quick excursus on banditry movements might answer some of the questions raised previously about the addressees or participants of the Jesus movement having in focus the real slaves.

2.3.1. Banditry in Galilee

The definition and examination of banditry originate from the comparative analysis of revolutionary social phenomena by E. J. Hobsbawm. Hobsbawm defines social banditry as a widespread phenomenon where peasants, facing oppression and poverty, participate in protests to seek retribution to the wealthy and oppressors. Hobsbawm observes that the goals of this attempt are modest: developing an ordinary society where men are treated justly rather than pursuing an idealistic and revolutionary new world. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that social banditry is devoid of any considerable organising, and that it is labelled together with millenarian movements as "pre-political".[126]

Expanding upon Hobsbawm's comparative examination of revolutionaries, Richard Horsley attempted to refine the views of social banditry. Horsley argued that social banditry, according to Hobsbawm, is better characterised as a "primitive rebellion" rather than a well-organized political revolution driven by religious aspirations,[127] as previously alleged by Freyne.[128] Horsley argues that societal banditry is primarily characterised by individual actions rather than organised collective rebellions. Thus, Horsley used the concept of social banditry to describe Galilee's internal economic dissatisfactions. He argued that Galilee was a region where people, like bandits, sought to change the current situation. The only difference was that they did so without a formal and organised approach.[129]

[126] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (Manchester: The University Press, 1959), 5.
[127] Richard Horsley, "Bandits, Messiahs, and Longshoremen: Popular Unrest in Ralilee Around the Time of Jesus," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1988 Seminar Papers*, ed. David J. Lull (Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1988), 184.
[128] Horsley referring to Sean Freyne, "Bandits in Galilee: A Contribution to the Study of Social Conditions in First Century Palestine," in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism: Essays in Tribute to Howard Clarke Kee*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Peder Borgen, Ernest S. Frierichs, and Richard Horsley, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).
[129] Horsley, "Bandits, Messiahs, and Longshoremen…" 184–185. See also Richard Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular movements in the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1988).

2.3.2. Galilee's building projects as hub for revolutions and slave work

In his monograph from 1996, Richard Horsley expanded his viewpoints about banditry and observed that the political-economic conflict in Galilee with high possibility was intensified by Antipas' building of the royal capitals at Sepphoris and Tiberias, which resulted in significant material impacts on the people of the region.[130]

Sepphoris was a Jewish town that was first known for the riots after Herod the Great's death. The inhabitants of Sepphoris saw the ruler's death as a key moment in their history and tried to break free under Roman rule. However, the uprisings were defeated by the Roman force, who also burned down the city and sold the people into slavery. As Sakari Häkkinen explains it, the rebuilding of the town became of high importance for Herod Antipas, Herod the Great's successor tetrarch in Galilee.[131] He also comments that the archaeological evidence analysed by John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L Reed are resonating in what Josephus wrote about the rebuilding of Sepphoris.[132]

Tiberias was a new city established under the rule of Herod Antipas. As part of Antipas' urbanisation project, Tiberias became the centre of economy and monetization. Based on William Arnal's analysis, Rene Alexander Baergen, in his PhD thesis underscores the importance of Tiberias in the change of the countryside near Tiberias which caused impoverishment.[133]

2.3.3. "Revolutionary Millenarianism"

Turning our attention to the possible consequences these building projects in Galilee could brought, we shall bring up again the question of banditry and millenarianism. In 1999, Richard Horsley elaborated how Antipas's direct rule in Galilee, which encompassed political-economic and cultural dimensions, must have had a significant impact, particularly

[130] Richard Horsley, *Archaeology, History, and Society in Galilee. The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 36.
[131] Sakari Häkkinen, "Poverty in the first-century Galilee," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* Volume 72, Number (2016): 1–9, 6.
[132] Häkkinen, "Poverty in the first-century Galilee", referring to Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.288–289 and John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 65–66.
[133] Rene Alexander Baergen, "*Re-Placing the Galilean Jesus: Local Geography, Mark, Miracle, and the Quest for the Jesus of Capernaum"* (PhD. Diss., University of St. Michael's College, 2013), 47. Baergen referring to: William E. Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes: Galilean Conflicts and the Setting of Q* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 200), 149–150.

during the era of Jesus and his followers.[134] Horsley asserts that Antipas's architectural endeavours likely worsened the economic pressure on the rural inhabitants of Galilee because of the heavy taxes, and the exploitation of the construction materials and human resources, and asserts that the rise of various social movements, can be attributed to this underlying cause. However, we must also mention that there is a perspective in which these changes are explained as ones which made significant positive effects. I will elaborate on that view later in subchapter 2.4.2.

Horsley argues that Israelites carried a significant history of resistance against harsh foreign rule; therefore, when confronted with the exploitation prompted by Antipas, they inherently possessed the resilience gained from their previous experiences to face it.[135] Hence, it appears doubtful that the criticism of Antipas by John the Baptist and the emergence of Jesus and his movement in Galilee occurred by no coincidence during Antipas' reign. This also indicates that the anger expressed by the Galilean peasantry against their urban rulers appears to have been unusually intense, exceeding what is normally seen in traditional rural communities, and had a lasting influence.[136] Even if we treat with resistance these strong connections between the building projects and the uprisings or the different movements, we shall not forget the fact that such building projects more than likely were done by the work of enslaved people. As Sakari Häkkinen noted: "When the Romans built Sepphoris they certainly used local people, both slaves and waged labourers from nearby villages"[137]

A decade of his initial ideas, Horsley became more cautious in making statements about the economic impacts that could have been on the rise of these movements and emphasised the need to give more weight to the religious aspects.[138] Strengthening this argument, in one of his recent writings, Horsley argues that Jesus strategically used Passover in Jerusalem to express his subversive ideas.[139] With this cautious step backwards, Horsley indirectly acknowledges the criticism he received decades ago from the Stegemanns, who wrote: "In our opinion, the pre-political element in the Jesus movement is overestimated by

[134] Richard Horsley and Jonathan A. Draper, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me. Prophets, Performance, and Tradition in Q* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 59.
[135] Here Horsley refers to the riots after Herod the Great's death which I mentioned earlier. See, Horsley and Draper, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me,* 59.
[136] Horsley and Draper, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me,* 59.
[137] Häkkinen, "Poverty in the first-century Galilee", 8.
[138] Richard A. Horsley, "Rural Galilee and Rapid Changes: An Investigation of the Socio-Economic Dynamics and Developments in Roman Galilee," *Biblica* Volume 93, Number 1 (2012), 66.
[139] Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2014), 52.

R. A. Horsley 1989".[140] In trying to balance between the political and religious motivations of these movements, particularly in the case of the Jesus movement, it is also useful to bring in Sakari Häkkinen's view, who wrote that if Jesus was familiar with the exploiting forms of work from the "pagan" building project of Sepphoris, which was very close to Nazareth, then, his movement had to offer some form of livelihood within the Kingdom of God he proclaimed.[141] By claiming this, Häkkinen joins those scholars who highlight the interconnectedness of the social issues with religion in Jesus' activity.

The development of Horsley's perspective also illustrates how the religious and political aspects of the different first-century social movements clash in the interpretations. This prompts the inquiry of whether we can distinguish between religiously motivated millenarian movements and those with pre-political objectives, and if not, how these were connected, especially in the case of the Jesus movement. Could this increase the chances of slaves being closer to the movement since they had both religious and economic reasons? Could Jesus' message be something that offered a new reality based on religious norms against the oppressed social and economic state of the slaves?

A recent example of analysing the two aspects as interconnected features of the Jesus movement comes from James Crossley and Robert J. Myles. Based on E. J. Hobsbawm, Crossley and Myles develop further the ideas of Richard Horsley, arguing that millenarianism and banditry are connected and can be classified as "revolutionary millenarianism" of which the Jesus movement is a prominent example. As they wrote: "This embodiment of millenarianism envisaged a radical overthrow of the existing world order but also tended to hit hard at class exploitation in the present."[142] Hence, the authors expanded the depiction of the Jesus movement, and by connecting the two aspects, they created the image of an economically motivated millenarian revolutionary movement in Galilee that was likely connected to a strong religious message about a new, restored and cleansed world.

Although their perspective about how revolutionary millenarianism combined political and religious aspirations seems to be a useful contribution on the level of definition, on the methodological level, it might contain a few pitfalls. Crossley and Myles based their reading of the Jesus movement on a historical materialist approach which places the movement between economic exploitation and class struggle. However, based on the concepts introduced at the beginning of this current argumentation, such as intersectionality,

[140] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 436.
[141] Häkkinen, "Poverty in the first-century Galilee", 8.
[142] Crossley and Myles, *Jesus*, 5.

their reconstruction seems to be erroneous and reductionist. Reconstructing ancient societies requires more factors, such as presented in the stratum concept: who held the power, what kind of privilege did the movement had (if any), and did it have some prestige in the society? When it comes to the slavery issue and a microsociological view, the pointlessness of what they propagate becomes even more apparent. As previously stated, the various types of oppression were interrelated in ancient times. Consequently, addressing simply class suppression to give justice to the exploited would be counterproductive, as it would suggest that there are no other forms of oppression besides that of economic. Since intersectionality and status inconsistency provide a framework for a thorough and fair analysis of the enslaved people, we must conduct an accurate examination of the institution of slavery. Failing to do so would diminish the importance of other crucial elements of oppression, such as honour or sexuality, as it seems to have happened in the book by Crossley and Myles.

Thus, a more detailed analysis of slavery and the Jesus movement's historical context is indispensable for discovering their aspects. Knowing how ancient Galilee looked in the first half of the first century CE, with all its social, political, and economic aspects, gives us the opportunity to situate both the Jesus movement and the institution of slavery in their historical context.

2.4. Galilee studies and the historical Jesus Research

The more we can know about Galilee,
the more we know about Jesus.[143]

During the latter part of the 20th century, researchers specialising in the study of the historical Jesus became increasingly bold in claiming that a comprehensive understanding of Jesus' life necessitates an examination of the historical and cultural background.[144] Consequently, the field of archaeology, which was thriving during that period and had a growing fascination with Galilee, and the Third Quest for the Historical Jesus, soon intertwined.[145] The expanded curiosity of biblical academics into the socio-historical

[143] Halvor Moxnes, "The Construction of Galilee as a Place for the Historical Jesus: Part I," *Biblical Theology Bulletin: Journal of Bible and Culture* Volume 31, Issue 1 (February 2001), 26.
[144] Sean Freyne, "Politics, and Economics of Galilee and the Quest for the Historical Jesus," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of the Current Research*, ed. Bruce Chilton, and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 75.
[145] Morten Hørning Jensen, "Herod Antipas in Galilee: Friend or Foe of the Historical Jesus?," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* Volume 5, Issue 1, (January 2007), 8.

contexts of the Jesus movement incorporated recent discoveries of archaeologists,[146] leading to the emergence of significant publications on *Jesus and Galilee*.[147] Sean Freyne, a catalyst for the merging of these fields, even expressed concerns that the quest of Jesus in New Testament studies is in danger of shifting into the quest of Galilee.[148]

According to M. H. Jensen, whose research regards Herod Antipas and the changes this ruler's actions brought forth when he made the tetrarchy of Galilee (and Perea) a political entity of some relevance during his reign (4 BCE - 39 CE), two factors can be attributed to the rising interest in Galilee. The first pertains specifically to Sean Freyne, who, in 1980, conducted a groundbreaking study that examined Roman Galilee through the lens of culture, history, economy, and politics.[149] Furthermore, in conjunction with this, there was a significant shift in the theoretical approaches employed in archaeology. The "New Archaeology" transformed from a descriptive phase to an explanatory one,[150] prompting archaeologists to not only seek knowledge about the past through their discoveries but also to comprehend the processes and reasons behind them.[151] To accomplish this, archaeological surveys were supplemented by experts in the fields of anthropology and sociology. In relation with this interconnectivity, two significant excavation projects can be highlighted. The first is the Meiron Excavation Project, which executed a survey on the land of Upper Galilee and Golan Heights in 1973 and 1976.[152] The second one is the excavation of Sepphoris, which was initiated in 1983 and is regarded as the most comprehensive study carried out in Galilee.[153] As a consequence, the discoveries made during these excavations shifted the attention of biblical academics towards Galilee. This led to numerous conferences and publications that extended the ongoing social-scientific critical research on the historical Jesus conducted mostly by the representatives of the Third Quest.

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[146] For an overview of the research before the Third Quest, see also Halvor Moxnes, "The Construction of Galilee as a Place for the Historical Jesus: Part II" *Biblical Theology Bulletin: Journal of Bible and Culture* Volume 31, Issue 2 (May 2001).
[147] For example, see Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*.
[148] Freyne, "Politics, and Economics of Galilee and the Quest for the Historical Jesus," 76.
[149] Sean Freyne, *Galilee, from Alexander the Great to Hadrian, 323 B.C.E. to 135 C.E: A study of Second Temple Judaism* (Wilmington: Notre Dame University Press, 1980).
[150] William G. Dever, "The Impact of the 'New Archaeology' on Syro-Palestinian Archaeology," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* Number 242 (Spring 1981), 15.
[151] Jensen, *Herod Antipas in Galilee*, 130.
[152] For the results, see Eric M. Meyers, James F. Strange and Dennis E. Groh, "The Meiron Excavation Project: Archaeological Survey in Galilee and Golan, 1976," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* Number 230 (April 1978), 1. See also Eric M. Meyers and James F. Strange, *Archaeology, The Rabbis, and Early Christianity* (Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1981).
[153] Jensen, *Herod Antipas in Galilee*, 4.

Based on this multidisciplinary investigation, Jensen has identified four primary topics that emerge from the discourse about Galilee and the Jesus movement.[154] These four are: 1) whether Galilee was a special hotbed for revolutionary tendencies; 2) what are origins of the Galileans; 3) how was Galilee's cultural milieu; 4) how the internal relationship between town and village should be pictured in Ancient Galilee.

In the coming investigation, I will briefly overview these main issues in Galilee studies, drawing from Jensen's research. Since the first point in this list regarding the relationship between Galilee's atmosphere and its different social movements is the most important topic for this current study from the perspective of slavery, I will be discussing it last (2.4.1.).

The second issue in Jensen's analysis presents the dispute that emerged concerning the ancestral heritage of the people living in Galilee. Jensen explores multiple historical perspectives and ultimately reveals a surprising conclusion based on current archaeological findings. The recent archaeological discoveries suggest that the inhabitants of Galilee migrated from Judea during the siege of Jerusalem in 63 BCE. The theory is mostly linked to the research conducted by Sean Freyne.[155]

The third topic covered the cultural milieu of Galilee. Jensen concludes his analysis by claiming that until new material sources, it can be concluded that Galilee during the Early Roman period wasn't showing the same amount of Hellenization as other regions. Instead, it maintained a Jewish culture similar to that of Judea and had a level of urbanisation that cannot be compared to larger urban centres like Caesarea Maritima and Scythopolis.[156]

As a fourth issue, Jenson brings up the topic of the internal relationship between Galilee's villages and towns. Researchers focusing on the social-economic perspectives highlight that a conflict existed between rural and urban areas during the rule of Antipas.[157]

2.4.1. Questions regarding the internal politico-economic dynamics of Galilee

Back to the first out of the four major topics in Galilee studies summarised by Jensen, the primary dispute among scholars concerns whether the region functioned as the centre of fierce revolutionary attempts. More than fifty years after the surge of interest in Galilee

[154] Jensen, *Herod Antipas in Galilee*, 6.
[155] Jensen, *Herod Antipas in Galilee*, 6.
[156] Jensen, *Herod Antipas in Galilee*, 8.
[157] Jensen, *Herod Antipas in Galilee*, 8.

generated by the New Archaeology, there is still disagreement among Biblical scholars over the characterisation of the internal dynamics of Galilee. Halvor Moxnes highlighted that the most significant difficulties in this study field are perceiving Galilee as a key part of its broader geographical context and examining Jesus' influence in shaping Galilee's culture as a result of his challenging activity to the established power systems.[158]

Whether Galilee was turbulent and how this became evident in the Jesus movement and within the slavery system requires a complex analysis. In the following, I intend to reconstruct Galilee's internal atmosphere, building on two pillars that are mostly connected: the political and economic situation. Because of the overall focus of this current work, I will give a special focus on how the institution of slavery could be a significant part of these parts of Roman Galilee. Thus, by the following analysis, I try to contribute to the Galilee research by adhering the previous findings to questions about slavery (2.4.2.; 2.4.3.; 2.4.4.).

2.4.2. Politics of Roman Galilee as context for real slavery

After the death of Herod the Great in 4 BCE, the territory he ruled was divided between his sons by Caesar Augustus. Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, became the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea in 3 BCE.[159]

M. H. Jensen, a scholar who is mostly known for his research on Antipas, offered a source-oriented-contextual method and based his analysis on archaeology, coin study, Josephus's writings, and other literary sources attempted to differentiate between two strata in this investigation by employing these many methodologies. According to him, there is an external level that emphasises Antipas' influence on the region and an internal one that concentrates on his character.[160] Jenson argues that to understand Antipas, we must consider the wide range of perspectives on his character, which can vary from portraying him as a peaceful ruler to a cruel one. However, due to the complexity of these perspectives, it is more reliable to focus on the external level that examines his influence on Galilee. Yet, the portrayals of Galilee's social-economic and political dynamics are also controversial, ranging from a peaceful Galilee to a Galilee characterised by significant tension based on the impacts brought by Antipas' rule.

[158] Moxnes, "The Construction of Galilee as a Place for the Historical Jesus: Part II," 64.
[159] John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus. The Life of a Mediterranean Peasant* (San Fransisco: HarperSanFransisco, 1991), 18.
[160] Jensen, "Herod Antipas in Galilee: Friend or Foe of the Historical Jesus," 11.

The depiction of a calm Galilee has a rich history and has consistently gained popularity over time. In his book "The Historical Figure of Jesus," E. P. Sanders concludes, based on Josephus' accounts, that there is no documented instance where Antipas had to use force to suppress a rebellion.[161] In the same manner, Mordechai Aviam portrays a Galilee region lacking any potential for internal conflict.[162] In addition, Douglas R. Edwards discusses a highly dynamic economic environment in which all opportunities were provided for wealth.[163] After his extensive research, Jensen also suggests that the Jesus movement in Galilee was not a result of resistance to Antipas' rule. He argues that there is no evidence to suggest Antipas' rule provoked Jesus, and that his rule likely had minimal influence on Galilee's political and economic conditions in the early first century.[164]

Recently, Helen K. Bond provided a similar depiction of Galilee and the Jesus movement. Drawing on Jensen's work, Bond also challenges the conclusions given by R. Horsley, D. E. Oakman, and Theissen and Merz about a period of tension[165] and instead argues for a peaceful Galilee under Antipas.[166] A similar view was expressed by David A. Fiensy, who contends that no evidence supports the claim that the economy of the Lower Galilee had a large disruptive impact on society. According to him, the economic difficulties in Galilee possibly emerged only during the conflict that began in 66.[167] He also claims that the economic impacts made by the Roman Empire on Galilee weren't that high so that it can give reason to overexaggerate their influence on the born of bandit movements.[168]

Placing slavery in these complexities of the historical political reality of Galilee might solve one question regarding the concerns about the internal unrest. Keith Bradley in

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[161] Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, 21.
[162] Mordechai Aviam, "First Century Jewish Galilee. An archaeological perspective," in *Religion and Society in Roman Palestine: Old Questions, New Approaches*, ed. Douglas R. Edwards (New York-London: Routledge, 2004), 21.
[163] Douglas R. Edwards, "Identity and Social Location in Roman Galilean Villages," in *Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in Ancient Galilee*, ed. Jürgen Zangenberg, Harold W. Attridge, and Dale B. Martin (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 373.
[164] Jensen, "Herod Antipas in Galilee: Friend or Foe of the Historical Jesus?," 32.
[165] Bond referred to the author's whole chapter, but their conclusion is on page 175, "All in all, it can hardly be said that the political situation in Galilee was peaceful. Also, "The conclusion must be that Galilee was riven by deep structural tensions." Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus. A Comprehensive Guide*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988), 175.
[166] Helen K. Bond, *The Historical Jesus. A guide for perplexed* (London-New York: T&T Clark Internation, 2012), 75–77.
[167] David A. Fiensy, "Ancient economy and the New Testament" in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*, ed. Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 204. For a more detailed explanation, see Fiensy's monograph on Ancient Economy: David A. Fiensy, *Christian Origins, and the Ancient Economy* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014).
[168] David A. Fiensy, "Bandits and the Galilean Economy: Was the Galilee Prosperous or Desperately Poor?," in *Taxation, Economy, and Revolt in Ancient Rome, Galilee, and Egypt*, ed. Thomas R. Blanton IV, Agnes Choi, and Jinyu Liu (London and New York: Routledge Taylor&Francis Group, 2022), 126–139, 135.

his monograph published in 1994 highlighted that although Roman slaveowners took advantage of all of their enslaved, even those with higher hierarchical status, and although there were several methods in which this exploitation was opposed, the slave population never formed a sense of shared identity or class consciousness that would have given rise to an radical social change.[169] Thus, from this perspective it seems that we might exclude slavery from the initiators of social unrests. Though, many other aspects remained unanswered that need to be discussed. In the following, I will continue to engage with this topic from the perspective of the economy (2.4.3.), the other factor besides politics named as the reason behind the turbulence.

2.4.3. Economy of Roman Galilee as context for real slavery

Contrary to the perspectives presented above about a calm Galilee, several other reasons suggest reconstructing a Galilee that was turbulent because of political and mostly economic reasons. The Roman Empire being a slave-holding society was never a question; however, how strongly this was present in Galilee is still a matter of debate. In the following argumentation, I will recall the criteria for social stratum by the Stegemanns presented at the beginning of this chapter. Analysing the place of slavery within the economic and political framework of Roman Galilee, having a specific focus on the questions of power, privilege and prestige, can also serve as an answer to the questions of upheavals discussed above.

The sociocultural theory proposed by Gerhard and Jean Lenski in 1966 is crucial for understanding the economy and the social stratification of ancient societies, particularly as it refers to the peasantry.[170] Several scholars, including G. E. M. Ste. Croix,[171] Richard Horsley,[172] Douglas E. Oakman,[173] R. L. Rohrbaugh,[174] and John Dominic Crossan,[175] have contributed to this study by incorporating the social stratification model developed by Lenski and Lenski into their economic and political perspectives.[176]

James Crossley summarised in a book chapter, that in the eastern Mediterranean agrarian societies, like Palestine, urban elites controlled the power and resources, while rural

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[169] Keith R. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 72.
[170] Lenski, *Power and Privilege*.
[171] G. E. M. Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World: From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981).
[172] Horsley, *Sociology and the Jesus Movement*.
[173] K. C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine of the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988).
[174] Richard L. Rohrbaugh, "Methodological Considerations in the Debate over the Social Class Status of Early Christians," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Volume 52, Issue 3 (September 1984).
[175] Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 43–71.
[176] See also Douglas E. Oakman, *Jesus and the Peasants* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2008).

populations supplied them. Such relationships influenced class conflict and disruptions between the urban and rural areas. Besides this, urbanization initiatives in Galilee and Jerusalem led to conflicts and disruptions as they altered rural employment needs. Significant social and economic transformations, like the Jerusalem Temple enlargement and Sepphoris reconstruction, elicited many responses.[177]

In their common book, Crossley and Myles noted that peasantry represented a diverse and broad group of rural workers and persons who were not members of the privileged social class but were deeply engaged in agricultural activities.[178] According to Lenski's idea, this group made up an important segment of the population in ancient times and can be viewed as being in direct opposition to a mostly urban-based minority of the privileged class.[179] Building on this, Crossley and Myles assert that the ruling class sustained their relatively luxurious lifestyles by using the labour of the peasants through, a system that relied on slave labour, land ownership, and payment of tribute.[180]

Similarly, Douglas E. Oakman, in a recent article, highlighted the political importance of money in Roman Palestine and called the economy of Galilee a "political-economy". In his analysis, Oakman presented that Romans demanded control of bigger cities where financial and administrative work was done. The importance of this is that by doing so, Romans (in the case of Galilee a Roman client ruler) displaced peasants located in villages from the fair trades in the market and consequently pushed them in debt.[181] The question arises of how far these debts could push down people on a scale of subsistence? On which level did their dependence grow? Could this be a way through which Romans might also push people into enslavement? Oakman noted that, through the different taxes and unjust use of power, the elites exploited people till debt and enslavement.[182]

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[177] James Crossley, "Jesus and John Ball: Millenarian Prophets," in *"To Recover What Has Been Lost" Essays on Eschatology, Intertextuality, and Reception History in Honor of Dale C. Allison Jr. e*d. Tucker S. Ferda, Daniel Frayer-Griggs, Nathan C. Johnson, (Leinden-Boston: Brill, 2020), 51–76, 64.
[178] Crossley and Myles, *Jesus*, 4.
[179] Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 284.
[180] Crossley and Myles, *Jesus*, 4.
[181] Douglas E. Oakman, "Execrating? or Execrable Peasants!," in *The Galilean Economy in the Time of Jesus*, ed. David A Fiensy and Ralph K. Hawkins (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 139–164, 159. See also Oakman's other contribution on Palestine's economy Douglas E. Oakman and Andrew Overman, "Was the Galilean Economy Oppressive or Prosperous?" in *Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods. Life, Culture, and Society.* Volume 1, eds. David A. Fiensy and James Riley Strange (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 346–365; For another work on Palestine's economy, see Philip A. Harland, "The Economy of First-Century Palestine: State of the Scholarly Discussion," in *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches*, ed. Anthony J. Blasi, Paul-André Turcotte, and Jean Duhaime (Walnut Creek: Alta Mira Press, 2002), 511–527.
[182] Oakman, "Execrating? or Execrable Peasants!", 159.

Therefore, in the following, I try to reveal a more nuanced view of the subject and the place of slavery in this economic context through a short analysis of this phenomenon with the tenants' participation.

In their book entitled *Time of Troubles. A New Economic Framework For Early Christianity*, Roland Boer and Christina Petterson when discussing the slave regime of Roman Palestine, claim that the Greco-Roman markets were shaped and reserved for slavery, and since slavery represented the primary tool for extracting surplus, this is of high importance.[183] Discussing the forms of slavery, the authors mention that slaves fulfilled numerous tasks from household duties to even government roles.[184] Furthermore, they also call it meaningless to distinguish between the different categories of slavery.[185] Boer and Petterson reach their conclusions about the exploitations based only on pure economic perspectives, which might be too narrow to cover the whole picture of oppression these enslaved people underwent. What we must add to their view based on the foundations previously laid (2.2.1.; 2.2.2.) is that we must take into consideration also the intersected forms of status, power, privilege, prestige, and honour, and that in the end, for the slaves what mattered the most was that they were unfree. Therefore, if we adjust a more multidimensional view that I presented in the introduction (2.2), we might understand that the benefits slaves meant to their masters were not only driven by economic desires but also sexual, oppressive or other forms of suppression which concluded in a matrix of dominion.

To understand the multidimensional presence of slavery in this context, the analysis made by the Stegemanns seems to be more appropriate. Stegemann and Stegemann place slavery in more nuanced way in the economy of the Roman Empire. According to them, ancient Palestinian economy was based on "free farmers, tenant farmers, day labourers, and their families, as well as slaves".[186]

The Stegemanns highlight that other models categorise this economic system as "slave labour," considered the standard form of dependent labour. According to them, based on this ruling, the nature of Mediterranean societies can be described as "(highly developed) slave-holding societies". In response to such reconstructions, the Stegemanns note that they consider this characterisation erroneous primarily due to the excessive emphasis on the

[183] Roland Boer and Christina Petterson, *Time of Troubles. A New Economic Framework for Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 102.
[184] Boer and Petterson, *Time of* Troubles, 109.
[185] Boer and Petterson, *Time of* Troubles, 111.
[186] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 7. David A. Fiensy summarises the same, See David A. Fiensy, *Christian Origins and the Ancient Economy* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014), 15.

significance of slave labour.[187] Regarding how deeply slaves could have been connected to the different economic activities of Galilee, the Stegemanns conclude:

> "It would be much better to say that the most important production factors of Mediterranean societies lay in the possession of land and in the labor of more or less economically dependent small farmers, leaseholders, and wage earners. In this context, naturally, slavery also played an important—but not absolutely crucial—role."[188]

As Stegemann and Stegemann pointed out, in an agricultural culture like Palestine, redistribution leads to a higher level of land ownership and wealth. Yet it also resulted in an increased number of impoverished and dependent tenants.[189] According to them, the social and economic incentives for property development were a significant economic force in Galilee, simultaneously resulting in a more unfair distribution of land and the corresponding economic prospects. An increasing number of small farmers experienced the loss of their property, leading to their transformation from being independent farmers to becoming dependent tenants: γεωργός (geōrgós).[190] Consequently, the authors also point out that the consolidation of this economic model based on debt has resulted in many of these people becoming tenants or day labourers on the constantly growing estates, and has also led to their imprisonment or enslavement due to their inability to repay their debts.[191] However, it must be mentioned that in Ancient Palestine the number of big *latifundia* estates were not common, though, this not excludes what Finesy presented about medium-sized *latifundia* based on archaeological data.[192]

The above-presented analysis showing how peasants were treated during the urbanisation and monetisation of Palestine reveals the nuances of the impoverishment in Galilee. The interpretation provided by the Stegemanns underscored that the role of tenants in Galilee's economy was more significant than that of slaves. Though they also revealed that the overindebtedness resulted in imprisonment or slavery, this was rarer.

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[187] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 8.
[188] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 8.
[189] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 36.
[190] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 43. On the presence and role of tenancy, see also John S. Kloppenborg, "The Growth and Impact of Agricultural Tenancy in Jewish Palestine (III BCE–I CE)," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* Volume 51, Issue 1 (2008): 33–66.
[191] For a detailed discussion about the estates in Galilee, See David A. Fiensy, "Did Large Estates Exist in Lower Galilee in the First Half of the First Century CE?" *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, Volume 10, Issue 2 (2012): 133–153.
[192] See David A. Fiensy, *Christian Origins and the Ancient Economy*, 103. See other treatments of Roman Palestine's economy, see David A. Fiensy, *The Social History of Palestine in the Herodian Period: The Land is Mine* (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991).

Having said all this, we must clarify one more detail regarding the agricultural economy of Galilee. The intersectional analysis of the above economic model reveals the hidden nuances of slavery's role. Though slaves were less significantly present, their role and place should not be overlooked.

In their book, Crossley and Myles argue that although the term "peasantry" refers to several socioeconomic groupings with different traits, it is crucial to acknowledge that they all showed an overall feeling of class solidarity when faced with the ruling elite. They argue that despite their differences, the ruling class regarded all of these people as non-elite individuals, fostering a sense of closeness.[193] At first glance, we might agree with their proposition, however keeping in mind the complexity of ancient slavery, the matrix of dominion presented at the beginning of the chapter and their status inconsistency based on the fact that in the eyes of the law they were being unfree, we shall refute this idea by Crossley and Myles. However, I claim that even though slaves could indeed be found in various high social strata, from fieldworkers to the highest elite house members, having no freedom excludes the possibility of incorporating and discussing them with other groups, having class solidarity with them or even among themselves. As pointed out earlier in the subchapter (2.4.2.), where I interpreted Keith Bradley's view, there is no evidence that slaves developed a common consciousness in antiquity. What seems probable is that slaves could (and must) have solidarity with only one person: their masters.

However, for a more nuanced reflection, we shall admit that because there is no evidence for presenting slaves in the first part of first century Galilee with a shared consciousness (which might have escalated into unrest), it is almost impossible to understand in dept from the present their thinking and worldview. They might have developed feelings of solidarity with their fellows; they also could have thought of a new life and community where they would serve and help each other without being subjected to a master. Nevertheless, critical reflection should again stop us from hypothesising and should raise our attention to how widely divergent positions slaves could fulfil in the social hierarchy. This was probably a significant factor in hardening their striving to form a common consciousness and the intensity of their solidarity.

[193] Crossley and Myles, *Jesus*, 4.

2.4.4. The dissonant position of slaves in the interrelation of class and status

Building on the above-presented idea about class solidarity of the poor in opposition to the elites (2.4.3.), Crossley and Myles, when discussing the disciples and Jesus, wrote that:

> "Fishers collectively came out of, and would to some extent identify with, the exploited classes of agricultural laborers, *slaves*, and ancillary workers, including artisans like Jesus, building and transport workers, and so on".[194]

Christopher B. Zeichmann, an eminent scholar of the Roman army, slavery and queer readings of the New Testament, rightly gave voice to his doubts in a response article to Crossley and Myles's book. Zeichmann, in line with the argumentation of this current work, noted that presenting slaves among groups as fishers or peasants who could share common economic interests is a mistake. Zeichmann expresses his critique based on the argument that it is difficult to imagine that in ancient societies, a Jewish person who was born into freedom could truly identify as a slave. At the peak of its critique, Zeichmann rightly observes that the authors are not aware of or forget the multidimensional reality of slavery when he clarifies:

> "To be clear, Crossley and Myles do not make much of slaves when they include such laborers in this list – their list seems more exemplary and a collective synecdoche for the Palestinian peasantry".[195]

In the following, I will expand on my argument about the impossibility of analysing slavery without considering the correlation of different forms of status, oppression or, in a larger view, the absence of power, privilege and prestige that characterised them. What Crossley and Myles miss, and in fact, is the main point here, is that factors that determine people's lives appear in a multiplied form in the case of slavery. Among the economic aspects they focus on, examining slavery always deals with the issue of honour and status or, more precisely, with status inconsistency. As already highlighted, it is a mistake to place dishonoured and unfree persons among others who legally had the right to decide over themselves, even if, in terms of wealth or position, an enslaved could have outranked his peasant or fieldworker fellows. Such reading from below, based on an attempt to understand the nuances of slaves' identity, demonstrates how difficult it could have been for them to share a common identity not only with people of higher honour but also among themselves.

[194] Emphasis added by me. Crossley and Myles, *Jesus*, 83.
[195] Zeichmann, "He's No Spartacus: Jesus, Slavery, and the Utopian Imagination", 4.

We will also see later in subchapter 3.3.3. and 3.3.4 that fishers, for example, who are presented in a community with slaves by Crossley and Myles, whenever they had the possibility, wished to reach and connect with entrepreneurs higher than them to marketize and distribute their fish.

Based on this perspective, I claim that the authors are not sufficiently cautious when they characterise contemporary biblical studies that pay attention to the concept of status as ones that "romanticise" reality.[196] It is just about the status that can give us answers for several of the questions raised during the previous subchapters about slavery. As one example, let us think about whether, in the question about Galilee's unrest, where slaves would take place—answered shortly, in a normal case, nowhere. Since slaves had no independent status and couldn't form a separate common identity like peasants, therefore it is highly possible they couldn't be the instigators of any social movement like banditry revolts unless they had escaped. However, based on the analysis of Oakman on the political-economy, there is a small chance for this, whereas, as he showed, the exploited had been frightened by even bigger economic oppression.

Referencing the works of Max Weber, M. I. Finley, Gerhard Lenski, Wayne Meeks, and Stegemann and Stegemann, at the beginning of this chapter, I highlighted that it is indispensable to incorporate the concept of status into the analysis of slavery. Zeichmann also strengthens this line of thought when he criticises Crossley and Myles for ignoring the questions about status. Recalling Finley's thoughts, Zeichmann highlights that:

> "the major criticisms of class-oriented analysis of antiquity is the tendency to conflate free and unfree laborers under the conception of a unified peasantry".[197]

Elaborating further on this argument, Zeichmann formulates his critique on class consciousness and states that slaves were excluded 'from the alliances and shared interest that kept "the peasantry" together.[198]

Based on the multifaceted aspects slaves fulfilled, more and more arguments arise that make the struggle of locating slavery in its historical context more difficult. As seen during this analysis, slaves can't even be placed on one single level of status because they can't share a common identity, and they don't have honour either. Nevertheless, considering the constant suppression they suffered, there must have been something which could have

[196] Crossley and Myles, *Jesus*, 1.
[197] Zeichmann, *He's no Spartacus, 6.*
[198] Zeichmann, *He's no Spartacus, 8.*

addressed them. The main question is, could the Jesus movement have a special answer for slaves? What context could the Jesus movement be offering for slavery situated in this endlessly related web of relations of domination?

2.5. Slavery and the Jesus movement in Galilee. Social questions, religious answer?

The concept of revolutionary millenarianism proposed by James Crossley and Robert J. Myles, introduced earlier in this study, might offer an answer to the above-raised questions. The authors concur that the Jesus movement formed on a socio-economic-political foundation, but it had a strong religious message that was communicated through the imperial language.[199] This means that if the movement opted to give an answer for the different types of oppression and exploitation around them, they needed concepts, words, i.e. a language that reflected the world known by these people.[200] Teaching about the relationship between rich and poor, telling parables about slaves were all rooted in this strategy. As Crossley put in at a different place: "The main point here is that apocalypticism, millenarianism, and banditry had a shared language which could voice potential socioeconomic or political agitation in very *different settings*".[201] One could legitimately ask what these "different settings" could be in the realm of the Jesus movement.

2.5.1. Not so revolutionary "revolutionary millenarianism"?

According to Crossley and Myles: "The Jesus movement's millenarianism was revolutionary in that it envisaged a new social and political order that would wipe away the old one and replace it with a new hierarchy to serve the interests of the *peasantry*."[202] Looking at this definition, their depiction of the movement doesn't really seem to describe a very revolutionary movement. In fact, the reversal they are talking about preserves the same hierarchical structure, where, similarly to the previous form, there will be firsts and

[199] Crossley and Myles, *Jesus*, 2.
[200] James Crossley, "Jesus within the Political and Social Circumstances of His Time," in *The Jesus Handbook*, ed. Jens Schörter and Christine Jacobi, trans. Robert L. Brawley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2022), 277.
[201] Emphasis by me. Crossley, *Jesus and John Ball*, 67.
[202] Emphasis by me. Crossley and Myles, *Jesus*, 99.

lasts, with the only difference that the peasantry will sit on the top of the new hierarchy. The authors summarised their concept as follows:

> "In envisaging a new world order where the last would be first and the first would be last, the movement was, ultimately, unable to conceive of a world beyond autocratic (or agrarian) models of leadership."[203]

Thus, in a new world like that, nothing would change. According to this perspective, I claim that Jesus' revolutionary millenarianism was not so revolutionary at all.[204] To understand my critique, we shall look at a quote from another article where Crossley expanded this vision:

> "There should be little doubt that Jesus (or at least the earliest ideas about him) challenged the socioeconomic hierarchies of his day and even had a "subversive" attitude towards empire, wealth, inequality, and even social norms. But [...] it is a vision of an alternative hierarchy and kingdom which would benefit those who previously did not benefit."[205]

One may legitimately ask the question of what kind of Kingdom could this be in the imagination of the addressees. Could slaves also be part of it? If yes, in what manner? It is also relevant to ask what chances this Kingdom could have had in the Roman Empire. Therefore, in what follows (3.4.; 3.5.), I will examine Jesus' invitation to the Kingdom of God and analyse who could be the main targets of his proclamation and whether he understood it also for slaves. For such an analysis, I will delve into the question of wealth, particularly with Jesus's relation to the rich and poor (3.4.1.; 3.4.2.).

2.6. Concluding remarks and outlook for the next chapter

In this chapter, I intended to reconstruct and examine the context of Galilean slavery and the earliest Palestinian Jesus movement in the first half of the first century. At the beginning of the chapter, I laid down the definitions I was to use throughout the chapter for slavery and the Jesus movement (2.2.; 2.2.1). Presenting the different methodological and hermeneutical concepts like status inconsistency, intersectionality and agency, I introduced the microsociological aspects with whom I complemented with the macrosociological

[203] Crossley and Myles, *Jesus*, 99.
[204] Crossley and Myles, *Jesus*, 99.
[205] Crossley, *Jesus and John Ball*, 69.

stratum analysis in the second part of the chapter (2.2.3.). In that second part, having a larger perspective of Galilean society, I discussed questions regarding slavery based on Roman politics and economy.

The outcomes of the chapter are, in more way, interesting. Based on the multilevel analysis in which I placed slavery in a web of factors and aspects linked endlessly to each other, I concluded that even though the various forms of privilege slaves could earn, the most significant experience for them and for the society who was interacting with them was that they were unfree and had no honour. Building on this, I argued that slaves could not initiate social uprisings in Galilee because they could not share a common identity because of the inconsistent status among them (2.4.2.). The reconstruction of the economic context based on several analyses also underscored this by highlighting the role of tenants in the economic model contrary to slavery. By approaching the conclusion which suggested that the historical context of slavery was so determined for them that there was no possibility to escape, I touched upon a possible answer, which I will analyse in detail in what follows, that the Jesus movement could have for slavery but also for all in their surrounding: the proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom of God (2.5.1.).

Thus, to summarize this chapter, I shall note the following. The previous examination of first-century Galilee's social, economic, and political contexts that supplemented the religious preserving desires, showing how these factors relate to millenarian and bandit movements, offers the following arguments. The emergence of different millenarian movements, among which the Jesus movement can be placed, seems to be in relation to the social changes that had occurred in Galilee. Consequently, these socially motivated movements are also connected with a vision of a new world, which, in the case of the Jesus movement, is the coming of the Kingdom of God. As pointed out, this vision and its terminology are intertwined with the language of the actual dominant power, the Roman Empire. This raises the question of the possible intermediate fields or overlaps between the language known for slaves and used for the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, which I will delve into in the following chapter.

3. JESUS, THE WEALTHY AND SLAVERY

3.1. Introduction to the chapter and methodological observations

The argumentation in the previous chapter demonstrated that the institution of slavery in first-century Galilee was characterized by a double complexity that was inextricably interconnected. At the microsociological level, the experiences and identities of enslaved persons were shaped by the intricate dynamics of social status, personal freedom and honour. These factors created a complex web of relationships and hierarchies within the enslaved population itself (2.2.1). Simultaneously, from a macrosociological perspective, slavery was influenced by the compound factors of social stratification, political power, and economic endeavours (2.2.2.). These larger societal forces intersected and influenced one another, creating a complex web of power structures and economic incentives that sustained the institution of slavery.

Importantly, these two levels of complexity were mutually dependent and affected each other in an ongoing cycle. The macro-level factors shaped the complexities at the micro level, while the experiences of enslaved individuals, in turn, influenced the larger societal structures. This reciprocal relationship resulted in a situation where slavery was situated at the intersection of endless complexities, making it a multifaceted and deeply entrenched institution in ancient Galilean society.

The earliest Jesus movement, situated within the multifaceted web of complexities of ancient Galilee during the first century CE, likely had significant interactions with real slaves who played a crucial role in society. Besides the numerous examples where we find Jesus telling parables about slaves, the Gospels contain few cases where real slaves are mentioned. Consequently, this study aims to provide an overview of the narratives mentioning real slavery in the Gospels to identify common themes and motifs (3.2.). Subsequently, by understanding the factors that unite these narratives, persons and teachings, this analysis will extend to other parts of the Gospels where similar situations and motives are present, but slaves are not explicitly mentioned (3.3.). Having collected the possible situations where Jesus might have been in touch with slavery and having answered difficult questions about him or his disciples having a close connection with slaves (3.3.2.; 3.3.3.; 3.3.4.), I redirect our focus to his relation to wealth. Through the example of the young rich ruler (3.4.1.), I analyse the background content of Jesus' opposition to mammon

(3.4.2.; 3.4.4.) and argue that entering the Kingdom of God mostly depended on the willingness of the addressees (3.4.3.). In addition, by examining Jesus' use of the metaphor of Father and that of the familia Dei, the family of God, we face an intriguing aspect of Jesus' ministry that might haven't been discussed until now. The exegesis done in the last part of the chapter thematises the overlap of real and metaphoric slavery, however, in a way in which slaves could indeed feel as real experience the Kingdom of the Father. Therefore, by showing that the proclamation of the Kingdom of the Father could be an existential experience for the slaves, we might unravel what Jesus' answer for the slaves could be. Doing so, the findings of this current chapter might point to a view where we can interpret Jesus' activity as a mission to the slaves (3.4.5.; 3.5.).

3.1.1. The coherence and plausibility of the materials regarding Jesus' relation to slaves. Methodological grounding.

During the previous century, scholars of historical Jesus research developed the methodological framework known as the criteria of authenticity. By these criteria, scholars attempted to separate the specific authentic traditions, words and deeds that can be traced back to the historical Jesus from layers later obtained in the Gospels and called inauthentic. However, despite their noble attempt, scholars constantly questioned these criteria. Already in the 1970', Morna D. Hooker evaluated them as naive expectations and asserted that demonstrating Jesus' authenticity through their use is seriously problematic.[206] As decades passed, the view constantly strengthened, and the demise of the criteria was recently thoroughly examined in a book edited by Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne.[207] Moreover, in the first page in the book's introductory article, Le Donne states that:

> "In recent research, almost all Jesus historians mention the impossibility of absolute objectivity or of the nonexistence of "bare facts" devoid interpretation. […] In the same vein, almost all contemporary Jesus historians who employ the traditional authenticity criteria do so with repeated reservations and qualifications".[208]

[206] For one of the first sceptical voices, see Morna D. Hooker, "Christology and Methodology," *New Testament Studies* Volume 17, Issue 4 (July 1971): 481. See also Morna D. Hooker, "On Using the Wrong Tool," *Theology* Volume 75, Number 629. (November 1972).
[207] See, Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne, ed. *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity* (T&T Clark: London-New York, 2012).
[208] Antony Le Donne, "The Rise of the Quest for an Authentic Jesus: An Introduction to the Crumbling Foundations of Jesus Research," in Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity, ed. Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne (T&T Clark: London-New York, 2012), 3.

But is it impossible to find signs in the Gospels that plausibly point to a historically supported and authentic tradition that shows Jesus in relationship with real slavery?

Fortunately, there are scholars who evaluate the multiple changes the criteria underwent during these times and show their usability by focusing on their functional parts. Consequently, I argue that some reformulated criteria of authenticity used besides the memory theory, one of the newest methodological approaches in biblical studies, can serve as a reliable basis for finding historically plausible data for the relationship between Jesus and slavery.

Turning the obsolete use of the authenticity criteria upside down, Gerd Theissen and Anette Merz argued in a 2007 article that the criterion of coherence can be used independently when it is supplemented by the criterion of contextual plausibility. Though the previous stream of scholars argued that the criterion of coherence should be based on the criterion of dissimilarity, Theissen and Merz reformulated their use and claimed that: "What is coherent in independent sources or in different currents of tradition or in different genres and forms of the Jesus tradition, may indeed be authentic".[209] Based on Martin Dibelius, the authors argue that the researcher should "look at *the totality of the tradition"* instead of overvaluing a specific individual tradition. After this, the authors highlight that the criterion of coherence should be seen as a subcriterion of the criterion of effective plausibility, which analyses the different currents of tradition that correspond, but at the same time, it is also important to take into consideration the other subcriterion that looks for the oppositions in these traditions.[210]

In their book, which first appeared in German then later in English, Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter argue that when analysing the authenticity of the different traditions about Jesus, general statements have greater certainty than the particular parts of the tradition.[211]

As the criteria mentioned above look for the effects Jesus has made and how they appear in the different forms of tradition, Theissen and Merz also underlined the importance of contextual plausibility, to search for the factors that impacted Jesus himself. As they summarized elsewhere:

> "Traditions of Jesus have a plausible historical context when they fit into the Jewish context of the activity of Jesus and are recognizable as individual phenomena within this

[209] Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, "The Delay of the Parousia as a Test Case for the Criterion of Coherence," *Louvain Studies* Volume 32 (2007): 49–66, 53.
[210] Theissen and Merz, "The Delay of the Parousia as a Test Case for the Criterion of Coherence", 54.
[211] Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 200.

context. Contextual correspondence and contextual individuality are complementary criteria for the plausibility of the historical context."[212]

Thus, based on the methods mentioned above, there is a possibility of finding historically tested information demonstrating the coherence and plausibility of the materials regarding Jesus's relation to slaves. Therefore, based on the social, historical and political context I laid down in the previous chapter (2.), and based on the common motifs of these, such as wealth or power, in the following, I will try to (re)explore those places in the Gospels where these factors are intertwined. Hence, the main focus of this chapter will be those parts of the Gospel narratives where Jesus, the wealthy and slavery (visible or invisible) are apparent together.

3.1.2. Constructing a Jesus in relationship with real slaves. Memories against silencing.

The main obstacle in finding materials regarding Jesus' relation to slaves is the lack of any such resources. As argued in the first chapter of this current work (1.1.), there is a conspicuous absence of traditions presenting Jesus in relation to slaves. Jesus has no direct contact in the Gospels with slaves; he is not presented even once as having a discussion or any kind of relation with them. So, it might be assumed that the presence of the slaves from the Gospels has been erased, and their voices have been silenced intentionally.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, in his work *Silencing the Past*, underscored the fact how narratives could serve the aim of silencing the past and how contemporary appropriations should combat such phenomenon.[213] Thus, with the exercise of (re)imagining the past, based on the hermeneutics of suspicion, we might be able to unravel hidden truths and shed light on those slaves in the Gospel narratives that are yet invisible.[214] As Ronald Charles highlighted, an investigation like this demonstrates how emphasising overlooked and silenced slaves in the texts can contribute to rebuild and challenge certain concepts put forth by early followers of Jesus.[215]

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[212] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 117.
[213] See, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1995).
[214] For an introduction in hermeneutics of suspicion-faith-restoration-demystification, see Ruthellen Josselson, "The Hermeneutics of Faith and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion," *Narrative Inquiry* Volume 14 Number 1, (2004): 1–28.
[215] Charles, *The Silencing of Slaves…*, 3.

The aim to reconstruct Jesus' relation to slaves is supposedly difficult because filling the space from the presupposed authentic history and what we have as preserved tradition brings up several challenges. In the transmission from oral tradition to the written Gospels, we can enumerate more phases, namely silencing (memory distortion), natural forgetting, and remembering, which steps I will introduce very shortly in the following.

A possible answer and bridge between the silence we find in the Gospels about slavery and the stories we can reconstruct from the preserved fragments through memory theory is the act of forgetting. After the fast emergence and spreading of memory theory within biblical studies, more cautious voices also appeared rapidly.[216] Zeba A. Crook's works on memory theory frequently touched upon the topic of forgetting, which, as he noted, can be of two types. The first one, which aligns with the previously introduced thoughts from Trouillot, is called memory distortion. Laying on the ideas of Roy F. Baumeister and Stephen Hastings, Zeba Crook notes that:

> "Centrally important here is the agency exercised by groups in manipulating memory; this is different from accidental forgetting, which does not presume agency. This manipulation is deliberate because it is done for a purpose, usually to reflect well on the group."[217]

Based on these thoughts, we might ask whether the accounts given by the Gospels are a sign of the striving of the early Christian community, who might have thought that remembering a Jesus movement with no interest in and relation to slaves might be more comfortable for them in the fight for survival.

The other view, besides intentional forgetting or memory distortion is the act of accidental or natural forgetting, which is a more optimistic perspective. Reviving the ideas

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[216] For introductions of memory theory and biblical studies, or particularly memory theory and historical Jesus studies, see Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher, ed., *Memory, Tradition and Text*. Semeia Studies 52 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005); Anthony Le Donne, *Historical Jesus. What can know and how can we know it?* (Grand Rapids-Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011); Alan Kirk, *Memory and the Jesus Tradition* (London-New York: T&T Clark, 2018); Chris Keith, "Memory and Authenticity: Jesus Tradition and What Really Happened," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde des Urchristentums* Volume 102, Number 2 (2011): 155–177.; Chris Keith, "Social Memory Theory and Gospels Research: The First Decade (Part One)," *Early Christianity* Volume 6, Heft 3 (2015): 354–5376.; Chris Keith, "Social Memory Theory and Gospels Research: The First Decade (Part Two)," *Early Christianity* Volume 6, Heft 4 (2015): 517–542. See also more critical voices of the memory theory: Zeba A. Crook, "Memory and the Historical Jesus," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* Volume 42, Number 4 (2012): 196–203; Zeba A. Crook, "Matthew, Memory theory and the New No Quest," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* Volume 70, Issue 1 (2015): 1–11; Ernest van Eck, "Memory and historical Jesus studies: Formgeschichte in a new dress?," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* Volume 71, Issue 1 (2015):1–10.

[217] Crook, "Matthew, Memory theory and the New No Quest", 2. See also the referred work: R.F. Baumeister and S. Hastings, "Distortions of collective memory: How groups flatter and deceive themselves," in *Collective memory of political events: Social psychological perspectives*, ed., J.W. Pennebaker, D. Paez, and B. Rimé (Mahwah: Erlbaum, 1997), 277–293.

of James D. G. Dunn, Richard Bauckham, Anthony Le Donne, and Robert K. Mclve, Zeba Crook, in another article, expresses his doubts even more strongly about the reliability of the memories. These enlisted authors represent a view in which they claim that memory is naturally trustworthy and that any distortions in memory are essentially harmless due to inherent limitations on memory. Consequently, the formation of memories is restricted by a connection to true events, plausibility, and a collective correction, but in the end, they are a good source for the historicity of the Gospels. Against this line of thought, Crook notes that collective memory can enhance our comprehension of the transmission and formation of Gospel materials during both the oral and writing stages. However, it should be noted that this theory does not offer safety in the debates regarding the reliability of these materials.[218]

Therefore, given the uncertainty about silencing, forgetting, and remembering, we shall rely on a methodology grounded in the previous criteria of authenticity but also incorporate the methods of memory theory.

Starting from the coherence and plausibility of the tested traditions, Dale C. Allison, a recognized scholar from the past centuries of the historical Jesus research, complemented and modified the criteria of authenticity and asserted that the reconstruction should always start with the general impressions because those contain the most significant chance to have preserved through the transmission of memories the authentic Jesus' tradition:

> "certain themes, motifs, and rhetorical strategies recur again and again throughout the primary sources; and it must be in those themes and motifs and rhetorical strategies—which, taken together, leave some distinct impressions—if it is anywhere, that we will find memory."[219]

Therefore, building on memory theory but using perspectives from the authenticity criteria, Allison argues that a coherent general picture of Jesus has more significance when it comes to historicity. Thus, in the current work, searching for possible connections between the historical Jesus and slavery, we will underscore those themes and motives that could be

[218] Zeba A. Crook, "Collective Memory Distortion and the Quest for the Historical Jesus," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* Volume 11, Issue 1 (2013): 53–76, 76. For a deeper understanding of the optimistic perspective defending natural forgetting and the reliability of memories which has been questioned by Crook in this article, see James D.G. Dunn, "Eyewitnesses and the Oral Jesus Tradition," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* Volume 6 Issue 1 (2008): 85–105.; Le Donne, *Historical Jesus*; Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eye Witnesses* (Grand Rapid: Eerdmans, 2006); Robert K. Mclver, *Memory, Jesus, and the Synoptic Gospels* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011). For a more detailed version of Dunn's perspective, see James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*. Christianity in the Making Volume 1, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003).

[219] Dale C. Allison, *Constructing Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 15.

highly probable at the interconnection of Jesus' ministry and the institution of slavery from the first half of the first century.

As argued, the difficulty of this endeavour is not only that the Gospels rarely mention real slaves, but there are even fewer situations where Jesus is presented with slaves. Nevertheless, a few examples should be examined. Since only the analysis of these very few could serve as a basis for further investigation in finding the themes and motives that show coherence (3.2.), hence in approaching the invisible slaves, we need to search carefully for those aspects that bound these examples together (3.3.).

As the main focus of this work is to shed light on the invisible slaves of the Gospels, in the following, in the next subchapter (3.2.), I will give only a short presentation of the three explicitly mentioned slaves: the slave of the roman centurion, Malchus; the high priest's slave; and the female slave character present at the courtyard of the high priest. These characters were examined more times by other scholars; therefore, instead of reproducing such materials, I will instead focus on those characters that haven't come yet into the academic discussions due to their invisibility but who must have been present in various situations Jesus was engaged. Through a (re)examination of the narratives, places, and characters that possibly were in connection with both real slaves and Jesus, I highlight that there are numerous situations of household banquets, agricultural work and industrial presence in which we can imagine Jesus being in relation with real slaves.

Through the (re)exploration done in the first part of this chapter, I will argue that most of the times when Jesus is presented in situations where slaves could also be present, there is a wealthy or at least a modestly affluent person (3.3.). Therefore, I highlight the importance of analysing Jesus' relation to wealth to get closer to his regard for slaves. However, thematising this also brings up two important side questions: could Jesus' disciples having a fishing business and being beyond subsistence level, own slaves (3.3.3.; 3.3.4.), and could Jesus' family as tektons have slaves or work in contexts where slaves have been forced to work as well (3.3.2)? After analysing these questions, I delve into the main question of this chapter: who were the addressees of Jesus' mission (3.4.3.)? To find this, I will analyse how the core of Jesus's activity, the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, is related to the wealthy, but also could it be connected to the real slaves present in the Gospels. The conclusions might seem too provocative but are well supported: Jesus' ministry can be understood as a mission to the slaves.

3.2. Jesus and the real slaves present in the Gospels

3.2.1. Healing the slave of the roman centurion

The most cited example when searching for real slaves in the Gospels is the story about the healing of the slave of the Roman centurion in Capernaum which appears in both the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (Mt 8:5–13; Lk 7,1–10), that probably traces back the story to the Q, but it is also present in the Gospel of John (Jn 4:46–54).[220] In the case of Matthew and Luke we see a ἑκατόνταρχος (hekatontarchos), a centurion of the Roman army (Mt 8:5; Lk 7:2) who evidently was a powerful and wealthy elite member that owned at least one slave (παῖς in Mt, δοῦλος in Lk).[221] In the case of John's Gospel, we read about a βασιλικός (basilikos), an officer of the king (Jn 4:46) who asks for healing his son (υἱός). However, as Annette Merz pointed out, it is possible that both versions point to the same person, whereas masters commonly fathered children to their slave women.[222] Another argument for this is the use of παῖς (pais) in Matthew, that means both slave and young boy.[223] The other significant detail besides the coming of a wealthy asking for the healing of his slave, is that in all three Gospels, Jesus explained his healing in relation with faith and obedience. Subsequently, reading Luke 7:8 in context, we might raise the question: Could this obedience be one of an enslaved? In Matthew and Luke, Jesus praises the faith of the ἑκατόνταρχος "Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith" (Mt 8:10; Lk 7:9). In John the βασιλικὸς when arriving home and realising the miracle "he himself believed, along with his whole household." (Jn 4:53). Although in this case faith seems to be a consequence, it is a common motif in both narratives that the healing was done to a slave of a wealthy elite person who had/have come to faith.[224]

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[220] For a significant novel monograph about the healing of the centurion's slave see, Christopher B. Zeichmann, *Queer Readings of the Centurion at Capernaum Their History and Politics* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2022).

[221] As Niko Huttunen pointed out with many references, centurions were overly rich since they had fifteen times the salary of a legionary. See, Niko Huttunen, "The Centurion's Faith in the Gospels and Soldiers in Early Christian Imagination," in *Christ and the Emperor: The Gospel Evidence.* ed. Gilbert Van Belle and Joseph Verheyden, 301–314 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 306.

[222] Merz, "Jezus en de onzichtbare slaven".

[223] For further details of how παῖς has more definitions (*boy, girl, child, son, daughter, slave, handsome young man, beloved*) and how this can point to a single person with multiple identities which was common in antiquity, see Erik Koepnick's analysis within Historical Jesus research: Erik Koepnick, "The Historical Jesus and the Slave of the Centurion: How the Themes of Slavery, Sexuality, and Military Service Intersect in Matthew 8:5–13," *Oshkosh Scholar* Volume 3 (2008): 82–92, 86.

[224] A good support for the right combination of wealth and faith of another centurion is given by Luke in Acts 10:31 "He [Peter] said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms have been remembered before God." As this passage also shows, the correctness of wealth came under judgement regarding its use.

3.2.2. Slaves of the high priest

Other slaves who are owned by members of the Jewish priestly elite are mentioned in the narratives about Jesus's Passover week. The first is the high priest's slave, named Malchus (Jn18:10), who had been struck by „one of those who stood near" Jesus (Mk 14:47), or according to John, whose right ear was cut off by Peter (Jn 18:10). The situation is also presented in the other two Gospels with negligible differences (Mt 26:51; Lk 22:50). What is important here is that as Jennifer Glancy explained, slaves in antiquity belonged to their masters, and an attack against a slave meant attacking his or her owner.[225]

The second slave present in Jesus' passion narrative is the female slave of the high priest at courtyard (Mk 14:66; Mt 26:69; Lk 22:56; Jn 18:26), who is presented as a relative of Malchus in the Gospel of John (Jn 18:26). Though she is not presented as having direct contact with Jesus, she is the female interrogator who asks Peter whether he is a disciple of the detained Jesus, and to whom Peter responds with a denial.[226] In Mark's version it is with specific focus that this παιδίσκη, the female slave belonged to a high priest and was part of his wealthy household.[227] Both stories about slaves related to the wealthy and powerful high priest in the last days of Jesus were analysed in detail recently by Ronald Charles.[228]

3.3. (Re)exploring the invisible slaves of Gospels. Important narratives, places, and characters with a possible connection to the relationship between real slavery and the historical Jesus.

In addition to the three slaves who are explicit characters in the Gospel narratives, numerous scenarios exist where Jesus' activities may have occurred among real slaves despite their absence in the Gospel accounts. The Gospels describe various narratives in which Jesus is depicted in locations where he could have been close to or among real slaves. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, slaves were an integral part of first-century Galilean society.

[225] Glancy, Slavery, 12
[226] Recently Christy Cobb made a thorough examination of the Lukan narrative highlighting the interconnectedness of questions about slavery, gender and power. See Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth, and Power*…,81–124.
[227] Charles, *The Silencing of Slaves*, 108.
[228] Charles, *The Silencing of Slaves*, 107–122.

Analysing the social stratification of ancient Palestine revealed that the society was dominated by the elite, and the examples above indicate that both religious and military/political elites owned slaves. As discussed, the exercise of power was interconnected across different domains. Although there is debate regarding the extent to which Galilee's economy relied on slave labour, we might enumerate a few different places where slaves might have been present in the various dimensions of the society.

The presence of the slaves probably becomes more traceable when examining the elites, whose dominion extended into personal, religious, political, and economic spheres. Therefore, in exploring the potential interactions between Jesus and real slaves, it is essential to investigate religious spheres, household settings, agricultural sectors, and industries. Given that two of the aforementioned explicit examples confirm the high priests' ownership of slaves and Jesus' connection to these individuals, the subsequent analysis will leave out the religious places and characters and will concentrate on the three remaining areas: household banquets, agricultural workfields, and industries, to trace the possible relationships between Jesus and the invisible slaves (3.3.). It is important to mention that my aim here is not to analyse the historicity of these events, only to enlist as many potential situations as possible that the Gospels depict. Later, in subchapter 3.4.1., I will delve into one specific example, namely the story of the young rich ruler (Mk 10:17–27) where I will use the criteria of authenticity for the historical Jesus and real slavery laid down in the first chapter (3.1.). Until then a (re)exploration comes of the potential places for the relationship between Jesus and slaves.

3.3.1. Household and labour slavery. Banquets, agriculture and industries.

In (re)exploring slavery in the Gospels, various places come into consideration based on the historical analysis we made in the previous chapter. The clearest situations where Jesus could have been directly in contact with real slavery was through the wealthy elite at the different banquets. As argued earlier, being seen as properties, slaves were a cardinal part of the households, and their tasks varied. Besides the sexual desires of their masters that we already presented in the previous chapter, it is evident that they had served at every kind of event happening at their owner's house. As Glancy summarizes: "In smaller households the very slaves who contributed to the production of commodities would also have been involved in household tasks, including food preparation, cleaning, removing waste, and

caring for children."[229] Since Jesus is depicted many times as visiting different wealthy household, it is highly probable that he could have met slaves who fulfilled these tasks.

According to the Gospel of John, Jesus started his ministry at a wedding feast in Cana (Jn 2:1–10), where it is highly probable that slaves helped the organizers in serving the goods. This situation foreshadows a characterization of the prophet in which table communities and sharing meals were highly important. It is by no chance that Jesus is depicted in the Gospels as one who eats with tax collectors, prostitutes and other sinners (Mk 2:15–17 / Mt 9:10–13 / Lk 5:29–32; Lk 19:7). Regarding this characterization, the question arises: how wealthy these tax collectors were? Could they have owned slaves? Or who were the prostitutes? Were they slave women seen as bodies and forced to sexual work? Who were the sinners? Were they labelled as sinners based on the religious and purity aspects of their lives, or were they considered sinners from an economic standpoint due to their wealth? We will analyse these questions later through a specific case study about the rich young ruler (Mk 10:17–27) that contains all these concepts in subchapter 3.4.1. For now, we shall mention the other situations in which Jesus attended banquets. Levi invited Jesus to eat with him and many other tax collectors (Lk 5:29), went to the home of Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1–10) for the same reason, and he also ate with the leader of the Pharisees (Lk 14:1–24). Besides these, we have the complex tradition of the anointing of Jesus, which is one of those very few stories appearing in all four canonical Gospels.[230] The evangelists preserve the tradition differently. According to Luke, Jesus ate with Simon the Pharisee (Lk 7:36–50), called Simon the Leper in Mark and Matthew (Mk 14:3–9 / Mt 26:6–13,). However, in the Gospel of John, they are in Lazarus' home (John 12:1–3). In Mark, Matthew and John the event is taking place in Bethany (John 12:1–3), but Luke doesn't mention this detail. The woman who is anointing Jesus is named Mary in John; in Luke, she is a woman from the city, and Mark and Matthew don't mention her name. In Mark and Matthew, the woman anointed Jesus' head and in Luke and John, his feet. Nevertheless, the tradition of anointing also tells a story about Jesus being at someone's house and probably having a meal with its inhabitants.

The other similar story we shall mention here is when Jesus goes to the house of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus (Jn 12:1–8). There are a few signs that these people who gave

[229] Glancy, *Slavery*, 44.
[230] Teresa J. Hornsby, "Anointing Traditions" in *The Historical Jesus in Context*, ed., Amy-Jill Levine, Dale C. Allison Jr., and John Dominic Crossan (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 339–343, 339.

dinner to Jesus might also be a little above others regarding wealth. Judas Iscariot even mentions this by observing the perfumes in the house.[231] Martha and Mary also appear and welcome Jesus in the Gospel of Luke when he enters their village; however, in Luke, the story is about the differences between the sisters. (Lk 10 38–42).

What is evident from these situations is that Jesus often had a close connection with affluent people who could have among themselves their household slaves who presumably served at these banquets. The conspicuous absence of real slaves from these stories could be explained through the issue of honour and dishonour introduced in the introduction of subchapter 2.3. These invitations and Jesus' presence at different banquets show that he and his activity was seen with honour, at the same time the total lack of real slaves from these stories also point to the fact that they were absolutely dishonoured. As Martijn Stoutjesdijk explained, inviting someone to dinner is not solely about the food; it also refers to the status and honour of those present.[232]

From all these examples, a significant question arises: Was Jesus really this close to the wealthy, rich or affluent as these participations suggest, and therefore, was he this close to slavery even though they are not mentioned even once in these situations?[233]

Going further with our (re)exploration of possible connections between Jesus and real slaves, we shall look at the agricultural sectors of Galilee. Though in Jesus' parables, there are many situations about harvests and farming, in the non-parabolic discourses, no slaves are mentioned regarding farming or agricultural activities. However, based on the context that we reconstructed in the previous chapter's historical analysis, we were able to name those places where slave labour could have been used.

In first-century Galilee, the larger estates and farming places were the roots of the economy where landowners possibly used slave work. However, as the Stegemanns summarise: "Among small farmers, family operations predominated, and even on the larger farms (except for Italy and Sicily) slave labor played no dominant role".[234] A similar depiction is given by Llewellyn Howes, who notes that "mass slavery was simply not a feature

[231]According to Greg Stanton the myrrh which Mary and Martha put on Jesus' feet was 300 denarii which is a labourer's payment for an entire year. See Greg Stanton, "Wealthier Supporters of Jesus of Nazareth," *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* Volume 12 (2016): 120.
[232] Stoutjesdijk, *"Not Like the Rest of the Slaves"?*, 246, 253.
[233] An answer could be that slaves often had separated rooms and routes in ancient houses since the ideal was for these slaves to be invisible. For an archaeological support of this, see the excavations of Ostia and Pompeii in Alec Robinson ed. Decio Cusmano, "The Experience of the Enslaved: A Comparative Study of Ostia and Pompeii" in *Fields, Terrains* Volume 13 (2023):45–55.

[234] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 28.

of Roman Palestine, especially the countryside",[235] and he adds that the estates were more commonly cultivated by tenants and hired workers. Martijn Stoutjesdijk also addresses this: "While vast numbers of slaves were active on the Roman latifundia (estates), wide-scale use of slaves was rare in ancient Palestine".[236] Nevertheless, among these activities, we might mention grain farming: Jesus went through the grainfields on Sabbath (Mt 12:1); vineyards and winemaking: besides the wedding in Cana and the Last supper, Jesus' teaching on the new and old wine (Mk 2:22; Mt 9:17; Lk 5:37–38); or olive cultivation: Jesus on the Mount of Olives with his disciples (Lk 22:39). Looking for animal husbandry, we can mention the situation when Jesus chased the people selling cattle, sheep and doves in the temple courts (Jn 2:14–15). According to these references, the agricultural sphere seems minor, and we might also be hesitant to place slavery within all of them. However, there is no question that in specific parts of agriculture like the grain farms or vineyards, wealthy owners made use of slave labour.[237] As Sakari Häkkinen pointed out, a majority of the lands was under the ownership of a limited group of wealthy and elite people. The landowners leased the property to tenant farmers, who, along with their households and possibly enslaved people, actively cultivated the land.[238] Thus, if we are searching for possible places for the connection of real slavery and Jesus, the abovementioned references represent a fair starting point.

The third place in our (re)exploration of possible relationships between slavery and the Jesus movement is given by the industries present in the first half of the first century Galilee.

Though Galilee was a region rather in poverty, economic trading and commerce were a constant basis for everyday life. We read in the Gospels that these marketplaces could even be inside the temple courts (Mt 21:12). Thus, people should have had goods to sell, which were fabricated in bigger or small industries. For example, we can think of pottery making. Whereas Jews need different jars and pots to their ceremonial washing. Such tools could also be used for keeping wine as the wedding at Cana depicted (John 2:6). As suggested in the previous chapter, some construction industries also had to be in Galilee. The major

[235] Llewellyn Howes, "The Agricultural Background of the Harvest Logion in Matthew 9.37–8 and Luke (Q) 10.2," *New Testament Studies* Volume 69, Issue 1 (2022): 57–75, 64.
[236] Stoutjesdijk, *"Not Like the Rest of the Slaves"?*, 96.
[237] For a detailed historical analysis of agricultural slavery see the article of Llewellyn Howes who made a reconstruction with the aim for parable interpretation. Llewellyn Howes, "Agricultural Slavery and the Parable of the Loyal and Wise Slave in Q 12:42-46," *Acta Classica* Volume 58 (2015): 70–110.
[238] Sakari Häkkinen, "Poverty in the first-century Galilee" *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* Volume 72, Number (2016): 1–9, 2

building projects of Antipas in Sepphoris and Tiberias possibly needed different construction materials and workforce. Although there are no references to such industries in the Gospels for the time of Jesus' ministry, some of his sayings might refer to them: for example, the wondering of his disciples about the big stones at the temple (Mk 13:1–2), or the rhetorical question of Jesus about a presupposed building of a tower (Lk 14:28).[239] As mentioned in the previous chapter (2.3.2), we get a similar account of these building projects from Josephus, who also highlights the presence of the big stones of Jerusalem,[240] and also that the rebuilt Sepphoris became "the ornament of Galilee".[241] Again, although there are no explicit references to slaves in these passages, they could be present in more levels at the same time.

On the one hand, it is easy to imagine that at these markets, not only could slaves manage and sell the goods of their owners, but also that slaves themselves could have been sold. A thorough examination of the slave trade was done recently by Martijn Stoutjesdijk, who noted that there is a little chance that Roman Palestine had specific slave markets. However, Stoutjesdijk also observes that "Since specialized markets were lacking, transactions with slaves would have taken place on an *ad hoc* basis in 'normal' markets or between purchasers and buyers in private".[242] Thus, although we are not talking about a big slave trading culture in Roman Palestine, there might be a chance that slaves were present in different smaller markets Jesus could also be visiting.

On the other hand, we can also imagine that in different industries, such as pottery, products, such as jars, were made by slaves for the economic benefit of their masters.

The two most important references to industries in the Gospels are carpentry and fishing. Jesus is said to be a carpenter (Mk 6:3) and a major part of his close disciples to be fishers (Mt 4:18–22). References to these two industries appear more times in the Gospels; therefore, they are worth taking a closer analysis. If Jesus was close to these kinds of industries and the people doing them, and if these industries by any chance used slave labour, Jesus would have known about it. In what follows, we will examine Nazareth, Jesus'

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[239] Jonathan L Reed summarized the following about Lower Galilee's potential for constructing materials: "The geological formations in Lower Galilee and especially around Sepphoris are mostly limestone, which is relatively easy to quarry into building blocks that harden with exposure to the sun, making it an ideal material for large-scale construction projects" See, Jonathan L Reed, *The HarperCollins Visual Guide to the New Testament: What Archaeology Reveals about the First Christians* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2007), 55. I got the reference from Rene Alexander Baergen, who also made other important analyses about Sepphoris and Galilee. See, Baergen, "Re-Placing the Galilean Jesus", 47.
[240] Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.219–222. Referenced in Crossley and Myles, *Jesus*, 44.
[241] Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.27. Referenced in Crossley and Myles, *Jesus*, 42.
[242] Stoutjesdijk, *"Not Like the Rest of the Slaves"?*, 103.

hometown and his connections to carpentry. Afterwards, we turn our focus on Capernaum, the presupposed centre of Jesus' ministry and the centre of his disciples' fishing activities. By analysing these two places and their industrial sectors, we will address two important questions: Could Jesus have been in touch with real slaves through his family's carpentering activity in Nazareth? Could Jesus' disciples, through their implication in fishing activities, have owned slaves?

3.3.2. Nazareth: Jesus' roots to slavery? – Could Jesus' family have owned slaves?

According to the narratives of the Gospels, before Jesus started his ministry, he and his family lived in Nazareth (Mt 2:23; Lk 2:39, Lk 2:51; Lk 4:16). According to Mark's account, this was the town Jesus came from to John to be baptized (Mk 1:9), and according to the Gospel of John, this was the town that was noticed by Pilate on Jesus's cross (Jn 19:19). Besides these life events, during his ministry Jesus is addressed or talked about as *one from Nazareth* many times in the Gospels (Mk 1:24; Mk 10:47; Lk 4:34; Jn 1:45–46; Jn 18:5; Jn 18:7). On the top of these, Peter is addressed in the Gospels as the friend or follower of Jesus of Nazareth (Mk 14:67). In addition, the women at the empty tomb are being asked if they are looking for the body of Jesus of Nazareth (Mk 16:6).

With an identical verse, the Gospel of Mark and Matthew saved the single attribute we can attach to Jesus' early ages, namely that he was a carpenter. (Mk 6:3; Mt 13:53). Greg Stanton, in a provocative article about the historical Jesus, raised more difficult propositions we must address one by one. One of these is that Joseph and Jesus could have had a construction business.[243]

Building on an exegetical analysis of the word τέκτων (tekton), Stanton claims that "Joseph and Jesus operated a father-son small business that constructed buildings and it is possible that Jesus and his father came from an entrepreneurial sector of society".[244] Based on the various papyri from Egypt, Staton shows that the τέκτων had countless different types of work besides the generally thought carpentering, for example, brickmaking. What is more important, through these papyri, Stanton suggests that the τέκτων perhaps hired slaves.[245]

[243] Stanton, "Wealthier Supporters of Jesus of Nazareth", 120.
[244] Stanton, "Wealthier Supporters of Jesus of Nazareth", 126.
[245] "Again, it seems to be a business operated by a father and his sons. In a private letter (P.Oxy. 18.2190.49-51 [late first century CE]), a son advises his father to hand over a troublesome worker (perhaps a slave) to a τέκτων, where someone as young as he is could earn two drachmas a day. Clearly, a τέκτων is expected to employ people." See Stanton, "Wealthier Supporters of Jesus of Nazareth", 122.

Therefore, if there is a smallest chance that Jesus was familiar with such type of work, he definitely could have been in personal contact with hired slave workers. However, Stanton's argumentation is too hypothetical to support his claims and make us believe anything like this with high probability. We must raise against his arguments that Jesus is referred to only in one single verse to be a carpenter (Mk 6:3), which verse appears almost without change in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 13:53). There are no other references neither to Jesus' occupation nor his family's, thus, there are little chances to claim anything for sure based on the Gospels. Moreover, we can neither find supporting arguments from the archaeological data from Nazareth for such *businesses.*

Ken Dark, an archaeologist devoted to exploring Nazareth, summarized his two-decade-long archaeological work and academic publications on Nazareth in his recently published book. Among his well-supported conclusions, Dark asserts that though it was a small village, Nazareth was composed by "well-built" houses with more rooms and filled with objects that "indicate everyday life beyond a basic subsistence level".[246] From an agricultural and industrial perspective, Dark notes that Nazareth was a high identity preserving, self-conscious village having own centres for the crops, craftworking and stone quarrying places.[247] Dark's argument can be supplemented by the minor observation that most names connected to Nazareth in the Gospels have strong roots in Old Testament tradition and Hebrew or Aramaic etymology, reflecting the common practice of naming children after notable ancestors and figures in Jewish history. For example, Jesus's name is related to the Hebrew יֵשׁוּעַ (Yeshua), Mary to מִרְיָם (Miryam), Joseph to יוֹסֵף (Yosef), and the brothers of Jesus: James to יַעֲקֹב (Yaakov, it is also Ἰάκωβος in Greek), Joses to יוֹסֵף (Yosef), Judas to יְהוּדָה (Yehudah).

T These conclusions, based on the prosperous inner economy of the village, might give the impression of the presence of a wealthy stratum who might have owned slaves. For example, the multiroomed houses could support this argument, though it doesn't seem to have a strong basis. The important question here is what we call a level of subsistence and how high someone had to be in order to be called wealthy.Could carpenters be among these wealthy?

Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann wrote in their book about the Jesus movement that "the household economy as subsistence economy within a household,

[246] Ken Dark, *Archaeology of Jesus' Nazareth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 161.
[247] Dark, *Archaeology of Jesus' Nazareth*, 161.

[is] in which all members of the family worked for self-sufficiency (including necessary tools and clothing)"[248] Based on this, wealth should be considered when families had a bigger surplus from their crops, and they marketized those. However**,** as the authors elaborate, the majority of the society lived in a situation where their agricultural work permitted a low subsistence level, and in many cases, the ruling elite took advantage of people's possessions.[249] In the case of Nazareth, based on the dimensions of the village and the archaeological data, there is a little chance either for a high surplus or for developed marketizations. It is much more probable that Nazareth's big houses were lived by high-numbered Jewish families who worked together the in fields and crafted their materials.

What is intriguing for our current analysis is that according to Dark's summary, there was almost no contact between Nazareth and Sepphoris, mainly based on Nazareth's ethnic and religious unity and closedness.[250] This conclusion can be used for arguing against two thoughts that support the presupposed idea that Jesus' relation to wealth and slavery already started in Nazareth. If Dark's findings are true, and the people from Nazareth indeed persisted highly in their own religious and ethnic character by refusing to have contact with Sepphoris, where possibly the Hellenization was at a much higher level, including gentile inhabitants and slave work as well, then, this self-preserving attitude could answer the large multi-roomed houses, where we could (re)imagine big Jewish families. On the other hand, considering this possible symbolic border between Nazareth and Sepphoris, the chances Jesus could have been in contact with slaves during his life in Nazareth are even fewer. Even if Sepphoris has been built through slave work as suggested in the previous chapter, a family like Jesus' strongly rooted in their Jewish roots might have dropped the possibility of becoming wealthy by their carpenter work at another city and instead choose to live at subsistence level they have been in their own village among people form their own nation and religion.

What is clear from the Gospels and these archaeological findings is that there is almost no supporting evidence for Jesus or his family being wealthy or being close to slavery. Moreover, there are data that we can interpret exactly as an opposition to wealth. If Nazareth was a small village where average families lived mostly on their own possibilities, we see the presence of a strong, self-preserving Jewish identity. Consequently, if few elites controlled the lands and the few markets Nazareth could have, there is a raised chance that

[248] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 18.
[249] Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 20.
[250] Dark, *Archaeology of Jesus' Nazareth*, 162.

ordinary people would feel hostility towards the wealthy. Could these findings be grounds for Jesus' hostility towards the rich?

3.3.3. Capernaum: Residence of Jesus and hub of slave industry?

Turning our attention to the other major industry that can come into consideration when looking for slavery, Capernaum and its fishing industries should be analysed. The Gospel of Mark and Matthew report that Jesus started his ministry in Capernaum (Mk 1:21; Mk 3:1–5; Mt 14:13). John C. H. Laughlin wrote in a Biblical archaeological journal, Capernaum was a prominent commerce centre in the Gennesaret region, characterised by liveliness and with a significant number of people that were engaged in the fishing industry.[251] Therefore, as Rene Baergen and based on his work Christopher B. Zeichmann also noted, Capernaum was of particular importance at the different phases of the study of the historical Jesus.[252] However, as Zeichmann pointed out recently, Capernaum's importance might tell us more about the Markan editing than about the historical Jesus. Nevertheless, Capernaum and its related fishing industries are significant factors in analysing the relationship between slavery and Jesus.

Jesus is depicted many times in relation to fishing activities: the calling of his disciples at the Sea of Galilee (Mk 1:16–20; Mt 4:18–22), the miraculous catch of fish (Lk 5:1–11), or at the second great catch after his resurrection (Jn 21:1–14). All these suggest that the reality of fishing was not unknown to Jesus and that in the Lake of Gennesaret it was an everyday reality to be close to fishing industries.

Sharon Lea Mattila recently *revisited* Jesus' Capernaum in an article and refuted many previous conclusions drawn by prominent scholars like Jonathan L. Reed, John Dominic Crossan, Seán Freyne, Richard Horsley, and James H. Charlesworth. While the enlisted authors depicted Capernaum's economy as modest, Mattila, in her archaeology-supported article based on the excavated luxury items and the basalt stone walls, conclude that:

[251] John C. H. Laughlin, "Capernaum: "From Jesus' Time and After," *Biblical Archaeology Review* (1993, sept-oct).
[252] Rene Alexander Baergen, *Re-Placing the Galilean Jesus: Local Geography, Mark, Miracle, and the Quest for the Jesus of Capernaum* (Ph.D. Dis.: University of St. Michael's College, 2013), 19–22; Christopher B. Zeichmann, "Capernaum: A 'Hub' for the Historical Jesus or the Markan Evangelist?" *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* Volume 15 (2017): 147–165, 148, 150.

> "Hence, it is likely that at least some of the villagers in the Capernaum of Jesus' time—fishers and farmers though many of them probably were—enjoyed wealth beyond subsistence."[253]

In this case, we shall again be cautious of the concepts the author uses. Wealth beyond subsistence is a broad expression. We can't measure with concrete units what wealth could have meant and how far beyond subsistence it should have been to be called rich. Nevertheless, based on Greg Stanton's introduced article and a different view suggested by John S. Kloppenborg, we will delve deeper into the question.

If Capernaum indeed enjoyed a more vibrant economy in Jesus' times and many wealthy people could have lived there, including the fisher disciples, as Mattila suggested, there were numerous different situations when Jesus could have been in touch with slaves: enslaved people coming with their master to help to carry their products, managerial slaves entrusted with economic tasks, bigger houses of fishers or wealthy persons that may have owned slaves, or owned shores where slaves could work within the fishing industry.

Thus, the question arises: was Jesus aware of all the minor details regarding fishing, like the high income that made fishers beyond the subsistence level or the identity and status of the workers who possibly were slaves too? Could he be in connection with Zebedee's or with Simon Peter's fishing industry, or could he himself be a person who may have been in touch with slaves around these places? Since there are too many hypothetical assumptions in these questions, a deeper analysis must be done in what follows.

3.3.4. Could Jesus' disciples have owned slaves?

One of the most provocative suggestions in the research about slavery and Jesus is that some of Jesus' disciples owned a fishing industry, which highly likely used slave labour. In his article, Greg Stanton, based on the Gospels (Mk 1:16–20; Mt 4:18–22; Lk 5:1–11) and on a comparative analysis of different papyri from Egypt, claims that Zebedee, James, John, Andrew and Simon owned a fishing partnership that „owned at least two boats, employed hired labourers, although Mk 1.20 does not state whether they were slave or free".[254] With this statement, Stanton is giving the impression that the first disciples should have been wealthier than normal people based on the presupposed owning of the boats and

[253] Sharon Lea Mattila, "Revisiting Jesus' Capernaum: A Village of Only Subsistence-Level Fishers and Farmers?" in *The Galilean Economy in the Time of Jesus*, ed., David A. Fiensy and Ralph K. Hawkins, 75–138 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2013), 130.
[254] Stanton, "Wealthier Supporters of Jesus of Nazareth, 126.

the hired workers. In addition, by hypothesising about whether the hired workers were slaves or not, Stanton also makes the impression Jesus' first four disciples could have worked with hired slaves and thus made use of the institution of slavery.[255]

The first argument by which Stanton makes the impression that the disciples could be wealthy is that he underscores the presence of two boats. Stanton wrote: "In the Markan account of the calling of four disciples by Jesus (1.16–20), there is evidence of wealth in the family of Zebedee."[256] Stanton argues that the Zebedee had a boat which was made at the disposal of Jesus' ministry.

First, there is again an uncertainty about what we can call wealth and how wealth is related to slavery. Does this only refer to people working for their own goods, or does it also include the possibility of a smaller amount of stored goods that made it possible for them to survive a few more weeks? But how long should such insurance be called wealth? We find no clues in the Gospels nor historical data to argue besides such views strongly. It is also of question what we can call an income, and in an economic context that we presented in the previous chapter, how big a percentage of the incomes remained at the workers and how much they should have to pay forward in the forms of taxes? Owning a boat doesn't make someone instantly wealthy, nor is it as rich to be called a possible slaveowner. Such possession might only point to a level where people have enough conditions to hire a few slaves from time to time. Thus, by his claims, Greg Stanton might be too easy to call someone wealthy. Second, although Capernaum was a hub of the fishing industry, and the disciples worked as fishers before their calling to follow Jesus, there is little evidence to call them wealthy. Moreover, in this tradition, we are talking about the wealth and leading of a father; thus, in a narrow sense, the sons cannot be accused of being wealthy.

Going further, Stanton still gives the impression that among their wealth and properties of these families, it is possible that slaves were also included. He claims that "at least one of the apostles owned slave".[257] Stanton bases his affirmation on one of Jesus's questions that he addressed to his disciples: "Who among you who owns a slave that has been plowing or tending a flock will say to him when he comes in from the paddock...?" (Lk 17:7) Stanton's single argument is that in Lk 17:5 Jesus is talking directly to his disciples therefore "we must conclude that some of Jesus' inner circle owned a slave and sufficient agricultural land or flocks to employ a slave gainfully on plowing or tending livestock".

[255] Stanton, "Wealthier Supporters of Jesus of Nazareth, 107.
[256] Stanton, "Wealthier Supporters of Jesus of Nazareth, 107.
[257] Stanton, "Wealthier Supporters of Jesus of Nazareth", 112.

However, his argument can be refuted in several ways. The question Jesus addresses in this passage is hypothetical, which only imagines or envisions a situation. Examining the other appearances of formula *who among you* (*Τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν*), which is an authentic logion from Q, shows that Jesus only uses the form to catch the attention of the audience.[258] In regard to this, we shall also mention that on a metaphoric level in Lk 17, this formula is an introduction to a parable, which means that it appears in a metaphoric discourse.[259] Even though it is not a question that for his parables Jesus' took its imagery from everyday life, in this specific case we are dealing with a parable, an imagined situation expressed through literary, artistic language. The start of a parable is already part of the parable, and this is not considered by Stanton. Subsequently, as this current his current work focuses on reexploring the real slaves in their historical context, we try to focus on traditions that are not metaphoric in the Gospels. Consequently, this current argument must be strengthened and clarified that this formula is a rhetorical tool to bring reality closer to the audience, but it does not mean it strictly tells the truth. Put differently, it does not describe reality only contains images based on facts taken from reality.[260] The *Τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν* introductory formula is just like the other typical beginnings used by Jesus before starting the narrative story in the parables.[261]

From a methodological perspective, we shall raise awareness that this formula *Τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν* appears in various places in the Gospels. Thus, laying on form criticism, we can assume that we are dealing with a particular example of oral tradition preserved by the hand of the redacting evangelists who had the freedom to place the formula wherever they wanted

[258] For a thorough analysis of how τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν is part of Q even though it was not included in the *Critical Edition of Q see,* David B. Sloan, "The τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν Similitudes and the Extent of Q" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 2016 Volume 38 Issue 3 (2016): 339–355, 352.

[259] I wish to clarify that Jesus' parables should not be dismissed as invalid evidence when discussing the authenticity of various events, such as master-slave interactions. This work's premise and initial aim is to search for Jesus' possible relation with slaves based on different traditions than those metaphoric. As also stated in the introduction and as I will develop it more in the final conclusions, I consider it inevitable to analyse the overlap of real and metaphoric aspects of slavery in the Jesus movement. Such questions and desires inspire this work towards a new quest where the metaphoric traditions will also be analysed with similar thoroughness. Until then, I warmly recommend a few works from the top of parable research, including slavery parables. See Stoutjesdijk, "Not Like the Rest of the Slaves"?. See also Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent. A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of* Jesus; Ruben Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables of Jesus. Methods and Interpretation*.

[260] Klyne Snodgrass, an eminent parable researcher wrote that: "the category of interrogative parables concerns more than introductory and internal questions; rather it groups those parables that are presented entirely as questions. Interrogative parables [...] set up a hypothetical situation, force the hearer/reader to answer a question, and obligate one to transfer that answer to another arena. [...] The question "Who from you?" always expects a negative answer: no one would act as the parable describes." Snodgrass, *Stories with* Intent, 26.

[261] We shall mention as similar examples other parable introductory formulas like: „ a certain man/there was a man" (Lk 10:30; Lk 15:11); "listen/ hear this" (Mk 4:3; Mt 13:3); „what do you think" (Mt 18:12); or the expression before Kingdom parables: „the kingdom of God is like/ the kingdom of Heaven is like" (Mt 13:24; Mk 4:26)

in their Gospels. In this specific case, Luke put it before a parable about the master and servant.[262] Another detail that should be taken into consideration building on form criticism is that by the freedom of putting different traditions at places they wanted, the Gospels writers also could play with the audience of certain sayings. Stanton argues that this question was addressed directly to the disciples. However, we shall not be so certain about this, because it may only show Luke's aim. Luke tells it in a discourse between Jesus and disciples, where the topic is that leaders must serve.

After this short refutation, let us focus back on the question of what wealth could have meant in the context of the fisher disciples and how wealthy they would have to be to keep slaves. The connections between Jesus and the Galilean fishing industries were also discussed by John S. Kloppenborg, who pointed out even more interesting details regarding fishers and wealth. Kloppenborg states that fishermen in ancient Palestine "were necessarily connected with multiple 'upstream' suppliers of materials essential to fishing and also intensive supervision and surveillance of landlords and tax officials".[263] This claim places fishermen like Zebedee, his sons, Simon and Andrew in a web of relations among wealthy people connected by the different material benefits. Building on this, Kloppenborg notes that "fishermen enjoy a level of income well above subsistence".[264] Building on the earlier presented, the question arises whether a higher income beyond subsistence level could really mean an amount of wealth that would have made possible the owning or hiring of slaves? While in Sharon Mattila's above-presented article we read wealth beyond subsistence, Kloppenborg here only talks about income beyond subsistence. The two certainly are not identical, which makes it really hard to position Jesus' disciples on a scale of wealth.

A view that can bridge these two perspectives is suggested by Edd S Noell, who analysed Jesus' relation to wealth in the context of Roman Palestinian marketization. In his article Noell demonstrates how carpenters and fishers were submissive to the power of the

[262] According to Joel B. Green, in this passage, Jesus wanted to encourage his disciples for servitude, which is based not on earthly rules, but on God's: "Jesus opposes any suggestion that obedience might be construed as a means to gain honor, or that one might engage in obedience in order to receive a reward. Remembering those in need with justice and compassion, working for the restoration of the sinner into the community of God's family (vv 1-4) – practices of this nature are simply the daily fare of discipleship." The traits, willingness and the motivation of the disciples will be of high importance in what follows. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 614–615.

[263] John S. Kloppenborg, "Jesus, Fishermen and Tax Collectors. Papyrology and the Construction of the Ancient Economy of Roman Palestine," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* Volume 94, Number (2018): 571–599, 599.

[264] Kloppenborg "Jesus, Fishermen and Tax Collectors…", 599.

ruling elite and how they too were forced to pay taxes.[265] Thus, although they might earn above the poorest peasant, they were far from the wealthy elite. What their calling highlights is underscored by a citation Noell brings from Schneider, who wrote that "Jesus called his disciples to leave but not exactly to become poor in material things".[266] From this perspective, the most important detail regarding the wealth of the disciples is their willingness to leave it behind, their declaration of whom they are truly following: God or Mammon. Thus, it may seem that in the eyes of Jesus the wealth of a person or a disciple is an adiaphoron, the important thing is how they relate to it and what they are willing to give up.

3.3.5. Wealthy people around Jesus who possibly owned slaves

As presented, there are numerous situations in which Jesus could have been in connection with real slaves through the wealthy people he had contact with. Besides the narrative situations, the Gospels mention numerous other elites who were either part of the wealthy Roman political or Jewish religious elites. These wealthy persons, with a high probability, owned slaves, even if they are not explicitly mentioned in the Gospels. As Jennifer Glancy gave a concise overview,[267] among these individuals, we can mention a leader of a synagogue, who is named Jairus in Mark and Luke (Mk 5:21–34; Lk 8:40–55), and whose daughter is restored to life by Jesus (Mt 9:18–25). We could also mention here Zacchaeus, the wealthy chief tax collector (Lk 19:1–10); Nicodemus, who was a member of the Sanhedrin (Jn 3:1–10); the faithful Syrophoenician woman who is healed by Jesus (Mk 7:24–30; Mt 15:21–28), and the young rich who asks Jesus about the eternal life (Mk 5:21–34; Mt 9:18–25; Lk 8:40–55).

Besides these mentioned by Glancy, numerous other possibly wealthy persons were slaveowners. Highest above all is Herod Antipas, who possibly used slave labour in his building projects, but few slaves had to be also there when Jesus was sent to him for the trial (Luke 23:7-12). Pontius Pilate, the fifth governor of the Roman province of Judea who also had an influential political role (Mt 27:11–26; Jn 18:28–40). Caiaphas, *the* high priest during

[265] Edd S. Noell, "An Examination of Wealth and Exchange in the Gospels and First-Century Palestine," *Journal of Markets & Morality* Volume 10, Number 1 (2007): 85–114, 100.
[266] John R. Schneider, *Godly Materialism: Rethinking Money & Possessions* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 132. Quoted by Edd S Noell in Edd S. Noell, "A Marketless World? An Examination of Wealth and Exchange in the Gospels and First-Century Palestine," *Journal of Markets and Morality* Volume 10, Number 1 (2007), 103.
[267] Glancy, *Slavery as Moral Problem*, 13.

Jesus' activity and who had a significant role in Jesus' trial and crucifixion (Mt 26:57–68; Jn 11:49–53), and the Sanhedrin (Mt26:59). These persons were among the top leaders of the religious and political elite in the times of Jesus. If the examples of lower rank rulers like the centurion or the high priests show that those had slaves, then it is unquestionable that these had to own many slaves. Joseph of Arimathea, who, gave his own funeral tomb for the burial of Jesus (Mt 27:56–61; Mk 15:42–46; Lk 23:50–53). The tax collector Levi, who we already mentioned and who, „gave a great banquet for him [Jesus] in his house, and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others reclining at the table with them" (Lk 5:29, see also Mk 2,13–17; Mt 9:9–13); Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward (Lk 8:1–3. She also appears in 24:10 bringing spices with Mary and Martha to the tomb of Jesus, however, at his anointing she is not mentioned), and the young rich ruler (Mk 10:17–31; Mt 19:16–30, Lk 18:18–30), whom we will present in the following as the symbol of the wealthy elite.

Regarding this group of people, we might see that a big part of this group is part of the political or religious elite. This is the point where our argumentation becomes more interesting. The people we enlisted in the subchapter 3.3.1. from the banquets, agriculture, or industries were all ordinary people regarding their wealth with some exceptions as the tax collectors. However, in this subchapter (3.3.5.) we have seen members of the synagogue, the Sanhedrin, the tetrarch, or the governor. We might accept that the previously presented people were not that wealthy that could afford a slave. As Martijn Stoutjesdijk carefully presented, a price of a slave was immensely high in the first century, so high that it could be the basis of a modest family for more years.[268] In the contrary, most of the persons enlisted in this subchapter (3.3.5) were highly likely in a financial position that could afford slaves. What is even more interesting regarding these wealthy people and slavery is how these categories of wealthy people could make use of slave labour on the highest level of hierarchy.

Recently, Candida Moss published a book entitled *God's Ghostwriters: Enslaved Christians and the Making of the Bible*.[269] The book, which was preceded by a longer article on the same subject, presents in a new light the affluent strata from the first century and their relation to the institution of slavery and Christianity. In her article based on comparative analyses with classic Greco-Roman literature, Moss argues that:

[268] Stoutjesdijk, *"Not Like the Rest of the Slaves"?*, 104.
[269] Moss, *God's Ghostwriters*.

> "Roman secretaries were often enslaved or formerly enslaved agents whose work was deliberately erased from the texts to which they contributed".[270]

Through her argumentation, Moss shows in her book how the slave schools in Greco-Roman culture prepared slaves for the highest skills of writing to become secretaries. Going further, Moss observes that such workers must have also helped the writers of the New Testament. Moss asserts that:

> "What is clear, however, is that he was remembered and memorialized in this way by early generations of followers who themselves may have been enslaved and trafficked. This is particularly true with respect to the Gospel of Mark, the first life of Jesus. It is not insignificant that Mark himself was remembered as a servile secretary"[271]

Such claims are provocative and instantly redirect our attention to the first subchapter where we discussed the topic silencing (3.1.2) and urges us to ask: if these writers really could have been slaves too, how could they write a work where their presence is totally missing? Candida Moss answers that the value of the slaves who were entrusted with writing, e.g. secretary slaves, was measured in the capability of how strongly they could mimic the style of their master and how punctual they could be.[272] Therefore, an important question is raised. Could these valuations also include the capability of how invisible a secretary slave could be? These questions should lead scholars to write about the possible relation between slave work and the 'making of the Biblical texts'. What is surely of high importance is that by her work, Moss highlighted how slaveholders used this work as well to strip slaves of agency.[273]

To summarise this subchapter (3.3), we shall note that the individuals mentioned in the Gospels, whether they were officials of the Roman Empire, Jewish religious leaders, or simply rich people, all shared one common characteristic that connected them: their elevated social status likely afforded them significant wealth. Consequently, as the explicit examples within the Gospels, such as the Roman centurion and the high priest from the capture of Jesus, show, these wealthy individuals probably owned slaves. It is not by chance, then, that Jesus deliberately addresses the topic of wealth in numerous instances, urging the wealthy to repent and relinquish their possessions. The question is, to what extent did these efforts could also mean the liberation of slaves? To answer this, in the following, we will engage

[270] Candida R. Moss, "The Secretary: Enslaved Workers, Stenography, and The Production of Early Christian Literature," *The Journal of Theological Studies* Volume 74, Part 1 (2023): 20–56, 36.
[271] Moss, *God's Ghostwriters*, 112.
[272] Moss, "The Secretary: Enslaved Workers…", 54
[273] Moss, "The Secretary: Enslaved Workers…", 55.

with a specific case study analysing the discussion between the young rich and Jesus about wealth and the Kingdom of God (Mk 10:17–31). I intend to lay down a different reading than usual, focusing on the possible connections between this passage and slavery. This reading might give a new understanding of Jesus' ministry, and the possibility that Jesus' mission was to the slaves might be considered from now onwards.

3.4. Kingdom of God and the real slaves. Recontextualising the position of real slavery in the Kingdom of God, an existential new concept of family.

> For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?
> (Mt 16:26, NKJV)

Jesus' relation to wealth is not controversial. Based on a methodological framework with coherence as its basis, as I presented in the first subchapter (3.1.1), Dale C Allison collected the 17 most general characteristics that can be authentic in the Gospels about the historical Jesus. The constant recurring of similar or same motives and patterns in different traditions suggests that the topic of hostility to wealth can be traced back with high probability to the historical Jesus.. As Allison collected the references, we can see that there are at least 7 references from Q, 8 from Mark, 1 from Matthew, 7 from Luke and 6 from the Gospel of Thomas:

> "See Q 6:20, 30; 10:4; 11:34–36; 12:22–31, 33–34; 16:13; Mk 1:16–20; 2:14; 4:19; 6:8–9; 8:34–37; 10:17–31; 12:41–44; 14:3–9; Mt 13:44-46; Lk 6:24–26; 11:41; 12:13–21; 14:12–14; 16:1–9, 10–12, 19–31; Gos. Thom. 36, 42, 54, 56, 63, 64, 78, 81; P Oxy. 655; etc."[274]

However, Jesus' hostility to wealth can be interpreted in several ways. In the following, I will argue that Jesus was not particularly against wealth, whereas he had more wealthy supporters, but the way wealth was used. I claim that Jesus believed the use of wealth is a good test of a person's character and willingness to submit himself to the requirements of the Kingdom of God. To analyse this topic, I will delve into the story of the young rich, where we can find an explicit example of how wealth and the Kingdom of God

[274] Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth. Millenarian Prophet*, 47.

are connected. Later, the interpretation got from the analysis of the young rich will be replaced in the larger context of Jesus' addressees and his teaching about wealth. Consequently, the chapter will be concluded by the interpretation of the concept of the Kingdom of God seen in the previous findings on Jesus' mission.

3.4.1. Jesus and the young rich ruler

The Synoptics preserve a story when a young rich man ran to Jesus and knelt before him, asking what he must do to inherit eternal life (Mk 10:17–22; Mt 19:16–22; Lk 18:18–25 A parallel reading of the Synoptic versions reveals some seemingly minor but crucial differences between the three versions that will be highly important during the coming argumentation. The first important difference is present in the Gospel of Mark, where in his answer to Jesus, the young rich adds a new line to the list of the commandments when he says "You shall not defraud" (Μὴ ἀποστερήσῃς) (Mk 10:19). This supplement and change to the Decalogue text in the Markan version must hold a reason.[275] This added line is in relation with the wealth of the young rich, which will be evident in the following two verses when Jesus reminds the young rich that he lacks one more thing to be prepared for the eternal life, even if he thinks he kept all the commandments (Mk 10:20). As the solution, Jesus sends him to go and sell his possessions (Mk 10:21). Here another difference appears. While Mark and Matthew share that the young rich was grieving after Jesus' response to him because „he had many possessions" (κτήματα) (Mk 10:22; Mt 19:23), Luke simply wrote that "he was very rich" (πλούσιος) (Lk 18:23). Thus, we can presuppose that his wealth was measured in his possessions. Building on the socio-historical analysis driven in the previous chapter, we can assume that among his possessions, slaves most certainly must have been too. Could then the sticking to his possessions mean his denial to manumit his slaves as well? This line of thought is strengthened in the verses that follow. There are two important discourses in all three synoptics after Jesus' discussion with the young rich.

After the young rich went away, Jesus turned to the disciples and said to them, "How hard will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God". (Mk 10:23 / Lk 18:24) or in Matthew: "it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 19:23). The statement was complemented by Jesus telling them that "it is easier for a camel to go

[275] James Crossley noted that this added commandment points to a "virtual equating of wealth with wickedness" James Crossley, "The Damned Rich (Mark 10:17–31)," *The Expository Times* Volume 116, Issue 12 (2005): 397–401, 398.

through eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God". (Mk 10:25 / Mt 19:24 / Lk 18:25).[276]

The claim perplexed the disciples, and Peter answered that they have left *everything* and went to follow him (Mk 10:28). The biggest question here is what Peter refers to by everything. Building on the reconstruction made in the previous subchapters, even if the disciples couldn't be called wealthy by their contemporary norms, they could have owned a boat and be with a little beyond the subsistence level, as the references suggest. But could the hired workers working on the boats of Zebedee be slaves, meaning that the sons of Zebedee who became disciples, left slaves as well? As argued above, from the perspective of slaves, any kind of leaving behind done by the disciples would only count if they would have manumitted their slaves. Since fishing was the only occupancy of these families, the chance is small that they would have let free all their slaves, sold the boats and given their money to the poor, as Jesus requested from the young rich. Thus, it seems that on a material and economic level, this "everything" could not mean freeing the slaves even if they would have owned. Moreover, since they had a father who was still alive, they would not have been allowed to do anything like this. Nevertheless, references point to the view that Zebedee, the father, might only hire these workers but was not a slave owner.

However, we must not forget about the willingness of the disciples, that they left away their life to follow one requested by Jesus. Thus, the question arises: could it be more convenient for them to leave everything behind since they had no power to do anything else? This could also point to their willingness. This question of willingness is also of particular importance in the case of the young rich. According to the Gospels, the young rich lacked such traits even though he possibly was a *paterfamilias*, a man in charge of his own wealth.

What enters our horizon by the answer given by Peter about their *willingness* and Jesus' reply to him is that the present and coming of God's rule also contains another dimension that might be called symbolic or utopian. Jesus answered to Peter that:

> "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the good news who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life". (Mk 10:29–30).

[276] According to Crossley, this saying underscores that it is *impossible* for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God because they couldn't reach to a level when they would give up their behaviour got by the fact that they have wealth: the oppressiveness. See, Crossley, "The Damned Rich, 399.

The answer given by Jesus brings up the topic of a new family type. If we understand it as a new dimension of life, in this kind of Kingdom of God, there will be all kinds of relations except one that of a father. This points to the thought that there will be only one Father in the coming rule of God. But if the disciples get a new Father, will the slaves also get it? Does this affect and change their status of being unfree somehow? How could the proclamation of this new world order containing a new concept of the family become an existential reality that indeed could help the slaves?

3.4.2. Is wealth equal with sin?

To examine the potential relationship between Jesus and the slaves who were connected to people called wealthy, it would be most effective to first study the notion of wealth within the framework of Jesus' mission. Wealth has been interpreted in various ways throughout the history of research. In their new book, James Crossley and Robert J. Myles recently argued that Jesus' mission was to the rich because, in the view of authors in the period under analysis, to be wealthy meant to be a sinner. (ἁμαρτωλός). They base this claim on the observation that in Jewish literature sinners were lawbreakers, and "whenever their socio-economic status is mentioned, it is *always* to designate oppressive rich".[277] ased on this view, the authors seem to equate sin with wealth. Without the aim to engage too deeply with this claim, we must mention two arguments against it.

On one hand, there are a lot of references in the Old Testament from the Jewish tradition, where wealth is understood as a gift of God, which came because of a person's wisdom. Think for example of the numerous examples from the Old Testament, probably beside the most known example of Solomon, when other wisdom or prophetic sayings relate wealth with wisdom (Job 1:10; 42:10; Ps. 128:1–2; Isa. 3:10). Based already on this we think that it is too reductionist to equate wealth with sin. The New Testament has a slightly different emphasis on wealth and wisdom than the Old Testament. While it acknowledges the relationship between wise living and blessings, it also frequently warns against the dangers of wealth and emphasizes spiritual riches over material wealth. Exactly the example of Jesus' relation to wealth shows how wealth became more like a tool than a concrete characteristic. Based on Jesus' teachings, the New Testament redefines wealth, emphasizing that true riches are found in spiritual wisdom, faith, and a relationship with God (Mt 6:33).

[277] Crossley and Myles, *Jesus*, 116–117.

While material wealth is not condemned, it is treated with caution, as it can be a stumbling block to spiritual growth. Those who are wealthy in the eyes of the New Testament are those who prioritize spiritual matters, live righteously, and use whatever resources they have—whether material or spiritual—for the benefit of others (Mt 6:19–21; 2Cor 9:6–11; 1 Tim 6:9–19; James 2:5; 3:13–17).

On the other hand, narrowing down sin only to material content is unjust. In the period discussed, sin was also understood in religious and cultic terms, being related to the concept of purity, perhaps even more often than wealth. Crossley argued in the earlier article that the young rich' biggest sin was that he had prominent wealth, which he couldn't leave behind. Building on that, Crossley states that "it is *impossible* for the rich to enter the kingdom."[278] However, Ernest Van Eck rightly wrote in a review of Crossley's book *Jesus and the Chaos of History*, in which Crossley bounds together his previous thoughts on wealth and sin, that although it is understandable to interpret sinners as wealthy from a socio-economic perspective, it is also reductionist.[279] As Eck noted correctly:

> "Certain people in first-century Palestine were also labelled as 'sinners' from a cultic perspective, being 'pure' or 'polluted'. One can therefore not read all references to 'sinners' in the Synoptics only from a socio-economic perspective".

Other scholars also provide support for the nuanced interpretation of sin. In his analysis of the historical Jesus, E.P. Sanders contended that Jesus allowed sinners into the Kingdom of God without requiring them to repent because his teachings were centred on "compassion toward frailty".[280] The point to be highlighted here is that there is a clear criterion in Sanders' view of entering the Kingdom of God, namely, that these sinners *wanted* to join: "the novelty and offense of Jesus' message was that the wicked *who heeded him* would be included in the kingdom even though they did not repent as it was universally understood".[281] Taking under serious examination Sanders' view, Mark Allan Powell in his article claims that these sinners in the Gospel who are shown as tax collectors or prostitutes, with high probability were, in fact, slaves.[282] Powell basis his argumentation on a social analysis of the world Jesus lived in. Explaining the life and work of tax collectors, Powell notes that there were two categories of these: ἀρχιτελώνης, a chief tax collector as Zacchaeus was, and a τελώνης,

[278] Crossley, "The Damned Rich, 399.
[279] Ernest Van Eck, "The Construction of Jesus as an Historical Person," *Histos* Volume 12 (2016): 18–22, 22.
[280] Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, 202.
[281] Emphasize added by me. E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 207.
[282] Powell, "Jesus and the Pathetic Wicked…", 200.

who are simple tax collectors.[283] Based on the work of Luise Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann, Powell argues that: "The identification of tax collectors as slaves is clearly established in the Roman Digests of the Corpus iuris civilis".[284] The example Powell presents is about persons who won the contracts to collect taxes but put their slaves to do the work instead they doing it. The validity of Powel's arguments for the period of the Jesus movement needs a more thorough examination, which is outside the scope of this chapter. However, showing his perspective was useful in interpreting Jesus' relation to sinners who might have been slaves from his viewpoint. Powel's article is essential to our subject because he emphasizes how these people were blocked from fulfilling the religious and cultic requirements. Speaking from the perspective of intersectionality, I contend that these sinners were totally dishonoured persons lacking status, freedom and agency. Thus, they were caught in multidimensional oppression, in other words, in the matrix of domination. As Powell suggests:

> "In a culture that valued honor above life itself, they were people who lived in shame. These are the people to whom Jesus promised the kingdom without insisting on repentance in the usual sense…"[285]

Powels' reconstruction of Jesus' addressing the sinners (tax collectors, prostitutes, slaves) also confirms Jesus' (and John the baptizer's) ministry of calling people to repent: "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of [the kingdom] God and saying,[286] 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news'". (Mk 1:14–15) What Powell is doing rightly here is that he underscores that these tax collectors, prostitutes –thus, in his argumentation, sinners and slaves– did at least the only thing they could do: showed a willingness to join the Kingdom of God.

This willingness is missing in the story about the young rich who might be a good example of piety, but not of a person willing to submit himself to the will of God, and maybe this is why he is depicted in opposition to the Kingdom of God. Crossley's reading can only be accepted if it is nuanced. In the story of the young rich, Jesus didn't show hostility one-to-one to wealth but showed hostility to the behaviour of the rich, particularly the lack of willingness to sell his properties. As Sanders and Powell showed, sinners were also

[283] Powell, "Jesus and the Pathetic Wicked…", 198.
[284] Powell, "Jesus and the Pathetic Wicked…", 200.
[285] Powell, "Jesus and the Pathetic Wicked…", 204–205.
[286] Neste-Aland enlists other ancient sources that contain: κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον^{T}τοῦ θεοῦ (^{T}τῆςβασιλείαις).

considered in God's coming rule when they showed a desire to participate. Still, they couldn't fulfil all the requirements that would erase the sinner label from them, this is why Jesus approached them. However, the young rich had these possibilities. Jesus wanted the young rich to give his money to the poor, but he lacked such a trait. If we deconstruct the concept of wealth and understand the types of behaviour behind it, such as the oppressiveness, wickedness and the lack of the will to give up everything, as the disciples did, then we can accept Crossley and Myles' understanding of Jesus' mission.

3.4.3. Jesus' addressees and the proclamation of the Kingdom of God

Identifying the addressees of Jesus' ministry has always been difficult for researchers. Taking the proclamation of the Kingdom of God as his central message is a matter of debate. However, the meaning of the concept is widely debated. Some like James Crossley and Robert J. Myles argue that Jesus' vision meant a realisable existential new world order that would subvert the ruling Roman dominion and give power to those who were currently oppressed.[287] Such an understanding views Jesus' ministry as one that addressed mainly the rich because they were the ones who mostly needed to take actions of repentance.[288]

Others argued that Jesus' mission was to the poor. Scholars such as Luise Schottroff, Wolfgang Stegemann and Richard Horsley characterised Jesus as the hope of the poor.[289] This view brought into relation to the Kingdom of God was most notably done by Mary Ann Beavis, who defined the Kingdom of God as a utopian symbolic universe that could shelter in all its members.[290] These definitions show Jesus as one who came for the liberation of the oppressed.[291]

However, the position of the slaves in the new Kingdom is questionable in both ways. In the case of a hypothetical social reversal, they would get into the societal ladder's top, but such a position was not unknown for slaves, whereas they could hold high positions, for example, as retainers. Again, as agreed in the previous chapter, we must stress that any

[287] Crossley and Myles, *Jesus*, 146.
[288] For a detailed treatment of Jesus' mission to the rich, see Crossley and Myles, 116–121.
[289] See Luise Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope of the Poor*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Eugene: wipf and stock, 1986); Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Powers. Conflict, Covenant, and the Hope of the Poor* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).
[290] Mary Ann Beavis, "The Kingdom of God, 'Utopia' and Theocracy," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* Volume 2, Issue 1 (2004): 91–106; Mary Ann Beavis, "Christian Origins, Egalitarianism, and Utopia," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* Volume 23, Number 2 (2007): 27–49; Mary Ann Beavis, *Jesus and Utopia. Looking for the Kingdom of God in the Roman World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).
[291] For a critique of this perspective, see the article of John H. Ellitot, who argues that Jesus' ministry was more driven by familial norms than that of economic egalitarian. John H. Elliot "The Jesus Movement Was Not Egalitarian but Family-oriented," *Biblical Interpretation* Volume 11, Issue 2 (2003): 173–210.

reversal for slaves would only have had significance if that would have meant manumission, a change in their status from unfree to free. From the second perspective, the utopian new kingdom would also only count if it had been considered based on the level of status and not only the level of wealth. This means that the Kingdom of God has only relevance for slaves if the utopia it announces contains the erase of different statuses between people, where there *would be neither slave nor free*, only one king and all the people below him equal or put differently there would be only one father, and all the people would be brothers and sister e.g. his equal children. But how can people enter a utopian desire under realisation that is only symbolic? What happens with the slaves in a Kingdom like this? Can someone be a slave and free at the same time? Moreover, can the Kingdom of God be existential and utopian simultaneously? The (re)exploration of the context of its proclamation and the analysis of its addressees might reveal some answers.

3.4.4. God and Mammon. Jesus' mission was neither to the poor nor to the rich

When analysing Jesus' relation to wealth and the Kingdom of God, we find ourselves in the form of a teaching that categorically asks a choice between two poles where there is no in-between. Jesus is clear about this teaching when saying that no one can serve two masters (Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13). These two verses are nearly identical, both appearing in the context of Jesus' teachings about wealth and priorities. The Aramaic word mamona (ממון) translated as "money" in these passages is "mammon" (μαμωνᾶς) in Greek and refers to material wealth or possessions.[292] By having an Aramaism in this logion, we have another support for the authenticity of the saying. As James Crossley asserted, the criterion of historical plausibility, which I presented earlier, supplemented with the criterion of "Aramaic influence" may provide us with a more comprehensive perspective on the early Palestinian tradition.[293] Similarly, Theissen and Merz also note that the Aramaic logia are the beginnings of the tradition.[294]

What is important to understand through these passages is that Jesus is not condemning wealth itself but rather prioritizing material possessions over devotion to God. As seen previously (3.4.2.) Jesus' understanding of wealth differed from the previously shown

[292] See, Walter Bauer, Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.* Fourth Edition (Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 545.
[293] Crossley, *Jesus and The Chaos of History*, 42.
[294] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 28.

examples of Jewish understanding of wealth in the Old Testament. Building on the double criterion of historical plausibility introduced in the first subchapter (3.1.1.), Jesus' unique relation to wealth might be seen as plausible because it is connected to both: the former Jewish understanding of wealth and to a new form which will become more developed later in the New Testament and early Christianity. This reading of Jesus' understanding of wealth strengthens the argument introduced by Dale C. Allison on the coherence and authenticity of the material (3.4.).

Jesus' teachings emphasize the need for his followers to have undivided loyalty to God above all else. While these are the only direct references to choosing between God and wealth/mammon (μαμωνᾶς), Jesus frequently taught about the dangers of prioritizing wealth over spiritual matters. The story of the young rich and the related discussion with Peter afterward, analysed earlier, is a good case study of how these teachings can or cannot become reality.

In his thorough article about Jesus' relation to wealth, Roland Deines highlighted that Jesus does not specifically address individuals who are extremely wealthy or severely poor in terms of their economic status. The warnings regarding wealth are directed towards people who possess enough goods or money for themselves and even an excess to provide and distribute to others who may require supplementary help.[295] As Deines underscored, there is ample support in the Gospels where Jesus urged his addressees to give help and support for those who are in need (Mk 14:7; Mt 6:2–5; 10:40–42; 25:35–37; Lk 6:30, 36; 12:33; 14:12–14).[296] What is most important in his analysis is that Deines raised awareness of the fact that these teachings whoever they are addressed to are all warnings of the potential dangers of material possessions. These can become obstacles that hinder one's complete dedication to answering the invitation to enter the Kingdom of God and living a life devoted to it.[297]

The example of the young rich ruler and the disciples also showed that the obstacles related to material possessions are perceived differently depending on an individual's economic circumstances, and those who are wealthier have a bigger possibility of refusing the invitation to give up their possessions. Though, as Deines noted, the teachings of Jesus regarding wealth and helping those in need are not specifically targeted towards wealthy

[295] Roland Deines, "God or Mammon. The Danger of Wealth in the Jesus Tradition and in the Epistle of James," in *Anthropologie und Ethik im Frühjudentum und im Neuen Testament*, ed., Matthias Konradt und Esther Schläpfer, 327–386 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 355.
[296] Deines, "God or Mammon", 345.
[297] Deines, "God or Mammon", 347.

individuals but rather challenge everyone. Thus, Jesus' mission was neither to the poor nor to the rich because each person must decide about their life's priorities in light of the imminent Kingdom of God.[298] As Roland Deines concluded: "In these more sapiential than prophetic teachings wealth is not described primarily as sinful but as dangerous with regard to the Kingdom of God."[299]

The major question here is how we can interpret a wealthy person's behaviour, holding on to his wealth, if this also included slaves. Because, based on the above-presented, sticking to anything but not to God meant an obstacle in entering the Kingdom of God. Thus, the only way for the slave owners, based on Jesus' teachings on wealth, was to release their slaves, or as Jesus put it to the young rich, to "go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven" (Mk 10:21).

Such a reading poses another difficult question. What could the Kingdom of God mean to the slaves, who were not in a position to decide on their own life, and who may not have had any wealth.

3.4.5. Egalitarian or Utopian? The Family of God as a new existential Kingdom for the slaves.

As already touched upon several types during this chapter, the concept of the Kingdom of God has been interpreted in various ways based on the different perspectives on Jesus' mission or his addressees. Some, like Crossley and Myles or Bruce Malina, interpreted it as a new political structure implying a reversal in the social hierarchy. Others, such as Mary Ann Beavis, see it as a utopian new symbolic world order. These different understandings are based on how we interpret Jesus' mission and whom we see as his main addressees. As the presented works show, the more oppressed the recipients of his message, the more symbolic and utopian understanding of the Kingdom of God is needed. So, neither of these views could give a valuable new dimension to the lives of the slaves. Nevertheless, there is a way to bridge these two approaches and connect its side of reality with the utopian aspect.

Gert J. Malan, building on a well-developed philological examination of the processes of how people create metaphors, developed a different understanding and use of the concept of the Kingdom of God. Malan based his theory on three pillars. Firstly, he revived Immanuel Kant's thoughts, who argued that knowing the metaphysical dimension in itself

[298] Deines, "God or Mammon", 347.
[299] Deines, "God or Mammon", 356.

is impossible, so the transcendental can only be understood and communicated through symbols. Secondly, he introduced Rudolf Bultmann's idea, which claimed that all language concerning God is inherently metaphoric. Thirdly, Malan presented the views of Kelly Bulkley, who asserted that metaphors derive their meaning from particular, context-specific concepts as they are connected to the reality of people in specific cultures. Thus, through combining these three theories, Malan developed his own theory regarding Jesus' use of the Kingdom of God.[300] After presenting how metaphorical language works, through the hermeneutics of Paul Ricœur, Malan argued further that metaphorical discourses are always based on root metaphors, that are those language tools which can present the reality most.[301] By adding the term "symbolic universe" or "world hypothesis" to his argumentation, Malan asserts that these symbolic universes always have at their base a root metaphor. So consequently, Malan contended that: "Jesus' use of the metaphor kingdom of God often demanded existential decisions from people, suggesting it to be an existential style root metaphor underpinning a contextual kind of world hypothesis (symbolic universe)".[302]

In the subsequent parts of his study, based on the works of Bruce Malina, Malan argues that proclaiming God's rule in the first-century Mediterranean societies meant seeing God as patron.[303] After that, searching for the contextual root metaphors of the Kingdom of God's symbolic universe that describe God's patronage, Malan claimed that the metaphors of king and father serve as good example.[304] Consequently, Malan highlighted that such a view emphasises that the God is not acting as a ruler, but rather as a Father on behalf of his people. However, this perspective carries a significant drawback that needs to be addressed in the subsequent discussion. Until then, to recap Malan's thoughts introduced until now, it is important to highlight that he sees two kinds of root metaphors that are based on each other. The first (the broader) is an existential root metaphor: this is the metaphor of the Kingdom of God that represents the system of patronage. The second (the narrower) is the metaphor of king and father representing God's presence and ruling *in* the Kingdom of God.

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[300] Gert J. Malan, "The kingdom of God: Utopian or existential?," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* Volume 70 Number 3 (2014): 1–9, 2. For the works Malan used, see Jeffrey Hopper, *Modern theology: Cultural Revolutions and New Worlds*, Volume 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); Rudolf Bultmann, "Neues Testament und Mythologie: Das Problem der Entmythologisierung der neutestamentlichen Verkündigung", in *Kerygma und Mythos: Ein theologisches Gespräch*, ed. H-W. Bartsch (Hamburg-Bergstedt: Herbert Reich Evangelischer Verlag, 1967), 15–48; Kelly Bulkley, "Dreams, spirituality and metaphors", Journal for Religion and Health Volume 31, Issue 3 (1992): 197–206

[301] Malan, "The kingdom of God", 2.

[302] Malan, "The kingdom of God", 2.

[303] Malan, "The kingdom of God", 2.

[304] For a more detailed version of his argumentation, see Gert J. Malan, "God's patronage constitutes a community of compassionate equals", *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* Volume 76, Issue 4, 2020.

However, the well-grounded philological and cognitive scientific-based theory of Gert Malan cannot be used in its entirety for discussing slavery because it misrepresents the core aspects of slavery. Based on the concept of intersectionality and the complexity of ancient slavery we introduced in the previous chapter (2.2.), we must note that the patron-client model Malan discusses is inaccurate to represent the matrix of domination slaves were undertaken in Jesus' times or in general. Hence, the larger, existential root metaphor, the Kingdom of God as patronage system he introduces cannot be used for analysing the relationship between slavery and the Kingdom of God. The most intense critique of using patron-client model for understanding slavery was developed by Jennifer Glancy.

Formulating her argument against the views of John Dominic Crossan, Bruce Malina (the main reference for Malan's theory) and Bernard Brandon Scott, authors who, according to Glancy, view slavery primarily or exclusively as a subclass of patron-client models, she states that the: "representation of the slave as body to be used and abused serves as counterevidence to the categorization of master-slave relationships within the patron-client rubric".[305] Later on, Glancy dedicates a whole subchapter for deconstructing and refuting the views of the authors who see the patron-client model as a framework for understanding slavery in Jesus' teachings and parables. Glancy is straight in her argument:

> "Although crucial to Roman social relations, the patron-client structure is an unsuitable category for the analysis of slavery […] Despite certain similarities, including the asymmetry of power relations, a slave was not a client, and an owner was not a patron".[306]

Building her argumentation, Glancy relies, among others, on the thoughts of Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, who underscores the gulf between the clients and the enslaved people:

> "What is equally important to remember is that patronage in antiquity was only one of the available forms of inequality. That of master and slave … was far harsher, less flexible and nuanced, and was legally enforceable".[307]

Through Jennifer Glancy's argumentation, it is made clear that the patron-client model distorts the vulnerability of slavery. Therefore, based on Glancy's comprehensive portrayal of slaves as mere possessions, bodies completely subjected to the desires of their owners, and considering the arguments previously presented in this work regarding the complete absence of honour and agency of the slaves, we can conclude that the Kingdom of God

[305] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 115.
[306] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 124–125.
[307] Wallace-Hadrill, Andrew. "Introduction" in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, (London: Routledge, 1990), 1–13, 8. Referred by Glancy in Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 125.

should not be interpreted as a metaphor of patronage for slavery. Thus, this part of Gert Malan's application of his theory does not apply to our further argumentation.

Nevertheless, Malan's philological theory is of high value; therefore, we will use it by setting the accents differently. Malan was right when he introduced the contextual root metaphors of father and king for God.

In the first half of the first century, the metaphor of the Kingdom of God didn't need another analogy, as Malan asserted by relating it to the system of patronage. For Jewish people, the image of a kingdom was not an unknown concept at all. This was also stressed by James Crossley, who wrote that the language used for building the concept of the Kingdom of God is a language that is strongly related to the pictures known by the people of kingdoms, which are theocratic and territorial. Therefore, Jesus' use of the metaphors king and father was based on well-established and known cultural knowledge. Nevertheless, we must inevitably emphasise how Jesus used these metaphors.

The importance of Jesus' combined use of the metaphor of king and father has been stressed most notably by Gerd Theissen, who wrote:

> "Jesus combines this talk of the kingly rule of God, i.e. a political metaphor, with a second, family, metaphor: the image of God as father. Both images come from the collective store of images in Judaism. This produces a void for him which he fills with the metaphor of father: in God's kingly rule God comes to power not as 'king' but as 'father'. As familia dei, the 'family of God', his sons and daughters have a privileged relationship to him and take part in his rule."[308]

Therefore, in the following, we will look for the relevance of the father metaphor for analysing it as Jesus' possible connecting point with the slaves. In doing so, we will also use Gert Malan's developed theory of how people create metaphors and how those metaphors function for them.

3.4.6. The Familia Dei – the Kingdom of the Father as real experience for the slaves

The exegesis of the story of the young rich ruler and Jesus's discussion with Peter from Mark 10 reveals that Jesus proclaimed the reality of a new family, the *familia Dei*. As explained, although people left everything behind, in this new family, they will all get brothers and sisters, mothers and children, houses or fields (possibly meaning protection and

[308] Gerd Theissen, *The Religion of The Earliest Churches, Creating a Symbolic World*, trans. John Bowden. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 23–24.

food). Consequently, since no new father is explicitly mentioned in the passage, it was concluded that there will be only one father for everyone: God (Mk 10: 28–30). In the gospel of Matthew, we find support for this line of thought: "And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father, the one in heaven". (Mt 23:9).

These statements must have been puzzling, controversial and immensely paradoxical at the time of their proclamation. How could someone leave everything behind for the unknown? How could slaves imagine getting everything: family members, brothers and sisters, protection and food, when they were socially dishonoured, alienated, and deprived of status and freedom? How could the presence of this new father and his protection become a reality for the slaves who possibly rarely or never were treated like that? Furthermore, how could the familia Dei, the kingdom of the father, become an existential experience for the slaves? All these hard questions would suggest that it is impossible. However, there might be an option in which all these could become reality.

Before analysing the metaphor of the Father, we should redirect our attention to Gert Malan's argumentation and his theory. After explaining how root metaphor functions, Malan supplemented his argumentation with the thoughts of Marcus Borg, who noted that that Jesus employed paradoxical and reversal terminology when discussing the kingdom of God, so challenging established beliefs and leading to chaos; and with the theory of Stephen Lankton, who argues for the therapeutic character of paradox through which the subconscious gets liberated for choosing a possible solution that was before unnoticed.[309] Based on these approaches, Gert Malan reached to the important conclusion:

> "The paradoxical metaphor kingdom of God is purposefully left undefined in order to allow followers to fill it with their own meaning. In this way the subconscious opens up new possibilities by reframing. Reframing can be defined as changing the conceptual and/or the emotional meaning attributed to a situation (Davies 1995:144). In this way Jesus gave the concept kingdom of God a new conceptual and emotional meaning, which had a therapeutic value for his followers by giving their lives new meaning and hope".[310]

Therefore, we shall raise the question of what core beliefs were questioned and changed for the slaves by the symbolic universe of God as being father in Jesus's proclamation.[311] To answer this question and reconstruct the possible meaning of the

[309] Malan, "The kingdom of God", 2. See also his referred work: Marcus Borg, *Jesus: A new vision. Spirit, culture, and the life of discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper, 1984); Stevan L. Davies, *Jesus the healer: Possession, trance and the origins of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1995).
[310] Malan, "The kingdom of God", 2.
[311] Malan, "The kingdom of God", 4.

Kingdom of God, the familia Dei, for the slaves, we shall look firstly to the metaphor of the Father.

The concept of familia Dei is based on this understanding of God as father. In their book, Crossley and Myles presented how the understanding of God as father has a long history in memory of Israel, where God has acted as a helper when his people needed (Psalms 68:5–6). The authors argue further that these thoughts likely struck a chord with many members of the early Jesus movement who were facing their own challenges at the time.[312]

Jesus' use of the metaphor of father implemented changes in its old meaning, announcing a closer and more caring father-child relationship. This was reflected in the way Jesus treated others to give an example of the type of behaviour he wished his followers would embody towards each other.

Broadening our analysis of the familia Dei, we shall recall what Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz wrote about it in their book. The authors note that apart from "discipleship" in a more specific meaning, Jesus knew another sort of a helpful fellowship, which was the participation in the familia dei, the "family of God". Furthermore, they argue that this "family of God" above all was built on the "hearers of the word" and the supporters of wandering charismatics.[313] Theissen and Merz, take this idea further and explain that the hearing the word of Jesus also should have been followed by the fulfilment of teachings of Jesus. As Theissen and Merz put:

> "The wide dispersion of this tradition guarantees that it originates with the historical Jesus: Jesus himself already called those who heard his words 'family of God', but within this circle there is emphasis once again on the bearers of the word: his disciples, men and women, with whom he shared his mission".[314]

However, critical reflection again raises several questions regarding how this understanding of the Family of God could become a real experience for slaves, who were totally dishonoured, exploited, used, and above all, who were unfree to decide anything about themselves. How could such an understanding of the kingdom of the Father become a reality when the social-historical contexts would not allow it? Could somehow slaves become members of the familia Dei?

[312] Crossley and Myles, *Jesus*, 149.
[313] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 218.
[314] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 219.

To answer these questions, we shall look once again at Gert Malan's approach to the concept of the Kingdom of God as an existential new world order, which, according to him, is based on the therapeutic effects of the paradoxical language. In that way, a social reality can be questioned based on the challenging ideas of subconsciousness and can result in a change in how people view the world and how they behave. As Malan concluded: "The concept kingdom of God was neither utopian nor merely political. It was a powerful and existential type of root metaphor describing and establishing a radical new symbolic universe…".[315] I contend that this new existential universe of God was built on the understanding God as the Father. Consequently, it was built on how God was reflected in Jesus' treatment of others and how Jesus inspired people also to behave similarly. As Theissen and Merz noted, this meant taking up his mission and continuing it. As Malan suggested, the concept of the kingdom of God can be understood as the household or family of God, which operates as a symbolic or substitute family and fulfils the same roles as a biological where the members served as a protection for each other, formed strong bonds and developed relationships like to those between brothers and sisters.[316]

Thus, if all the listeners who heard and understood the words of Jesus, understood his healing, his inclusive approach to people, and his faith in God as a loving father, and based on these, they changed their worldview in the smallest percentage and created a community on familiar values of care, the familia Dei could become real experience.

Therefore, translating all this to slavery would have meant that in the family of God, they had only one Father, and everyone became his equal children. Consequently, being equal in a status relationship meant that in the family of God, there were neither free nor slaves. This new existential world order that was based on root metaphors known to all the people could mean to the slaves a new world where their status could be different from that present.

However, since there are no slaves mentioned in Jesus' answer in Mark 10:28–30 pointing to a family without slaves, few questions are raised on the possibility of the slave's renewed presence that shall not remain unanswered. This is a question we already raised in subchapter 3.4.1: "How could the proclamation of this new world order containing a new concept of the family become an existential reality that indeed could help the slaves?". Therefore, in the next subchapter, the last and concluding one, I will analyse how the

[315] Malan, "The kingdom of God", 9.
[316] Malan, "The kingdom of God", 9.

proclamation of the family of God might have been Jesus' answer for the slaves and how the family of God could have become a real experience for the slaves.

3.5. Summary of the chapter. Jesus' mission to the slaves.

By addressing the conspicuous absence of real slaves from the narratives about Jesus, the third chapter of this work contributed in several ways to the research. Implementing the methodologies of the historical Jesus research, we could find different traditions that are plausible regarding Jesus' relation to the slaves. Moreover, the most important contribution of this work is that we might found the answer for the question regarding Jesus relation to slaves and his possible answer for them.

Through the concept of the Kingdom of God Jesus constructed an alternative new world that was based on root metaphors known for his audience. Therefore, this new world could become an existential experience for the slaves as well. As Theissen and Merz wrote: "God as 'Father' is associated with care in the present."[317] Having such an awareness of the presence of God in the familia Dei may, in fact, be of support to the slaves in believing that there is a new reality, a new family that is built on care, assistance, and equality.

This interpretation of Jesus' understanding of the family of God is supported in the interpreted story from Mark 10. After his discussing with Peter drawing the conclusions about the behaviour of the young rich ruler and proclaiming the reality of a new family type, Jesus called his disciples around him and explained clearly how the "hearers of the word" of the word should live. Jesus' message takes up the langue of slavery and turns the focus of his listeners towards a new way of life that is based on servitude:

> "So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; instead, whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many". (Mk 10:42–45)

Interpreting the above quoted passage, Annette Merz noted that in this section, the term "slave" is used metaphorically to refer to leaders who willingly serve others, and that Jesus presents himself as a model of this type of servitude. Thus, according to Merz,

[317] Theissen and Merz*, The Historical Jesus*, 263.

considering this interpretation, it would be clear that within the familia Dei, there should be no differentiation between slaves and those who are free, and the lowest people should be especially elevated. According to her, this argument is reinforced by the fact that in Mk 10:31, the principle of the first becoming the last and the last becoming the first is told to summarize the understanding of this new family.[318]

In conclusion, we can say that Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God, or more specifically for the current context: the Kingdom of the Father[319] made a possibility for the slaves to become members of a family where there are no status inequities between people. Thus, we might say Jesus' mission was also to the slaves.

[318] Merz, "Jezus en de onzichtbare slaven,"
[319] The Kingdom of God is also called the Kingdom of the Father in the book of Theissen and Merz. See Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 40.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Our research on the relationship between real slavery and the earliest Palestinian Jesus movement has revealed that this subject is inadequately addressed in academic literature. In the first chapter, I emphasised that while researching the New Testament, the topic of slavery is often discussed in relation to the Pauline letters, while the Gospels and Jesus are not addressed. I demonstrated that this dominance of the Pauline letters in the discourse on slavery continues to be prevalent today. However, a new movement within the historical Jesus research tries to contribute to the discourse. With the aim of adding to this discussion by researching the historical Jesus real slavery, my attention was directed exclusively towards the Gospels. Due to the absence of visible slaves in the Gospels, my objective was to identify and uncover the invisible slaves in the Gospels and within the Jesus movement. Through this endeavour, I sought to initiate a dialogue with the authors of The Next Quest for the historical Jesus.

In the second chapter of the thesis, I provided a comprehensive analysis of the social, historical, political, and religious background with which the research on real slavery and the historical Jesus can be placed. To construct this setting, I employed social-scientific criticism. Using the historical framework I rebuilt, I have mapped out several places where the historical Jesus may have experienced real slavery through. The chapter's analysis illustrated that the institution of slavery in first-century Galilee had an intricately interrelated dual complexity. Slaves' experiences and identities were influenced by the complex interaction between social position and personal freedom at the microsociological level. The interplay of these elements resulted in intricate interconnections and hierarchies among them. From a macrosociological standpoint, slavery was impacted by the combined forces of social stratification, political power, and economic interests. The interaction of these broader cultural factors intertwined and impacted each other, resulting in a complex web of power dynamics and economic motivations that upheld the system of slavery. This intertwined relationship led to a situation where slavery was positioned at the intersection of numerous complexities, making it a complicated and solidly established institution in ancient Galilean society.

Later, I argued that the Jesus movement, which emerged in ancient Galilee around the first century CE, undoubtedly had significant interactions with real slaves who held an

important position in society. The second chapter also showed that the rise of many millenarian movements, including the Jesus movement, appears to be connected to the socioeconomic transformations that took place in Galilee. I demonstrated that, as a result, these movements driven by social motivations are linked to a vision of a new world. In the case of the Jesus movement, this new world refers to the arrival of the Kingdom of God. I argued that the vision and its terminologies are closely connected to the language used by the Roman Empire, which was the prevailing power at the time. This prompted the inquiry into the potential intermediary domains or connections between the language employed by slaves and the language utilised to proclaim the Kingdom of God.

In the third chapter, after compiling the potential situations in which Jesus may have encountered slavery and addressing challenging questions regarding Jesus' and his disciples' connection with slaves, I turned our attention to Jesus' relationship with wealth. I explored the underlying meaning of Jesus' hostility to wealth through the story of the young rich ruler from the Gospel of Mark. Through the exegesis, I suggested that the ability to enter the Kingdom of God is largely determined by the willingness of those listening.

When considering these data together, I showed that we discover an intriguing aspect of Jesus' ministry that may not have been previously considered. The findings of the third chapter suggested that Jesus' ministry can be seen as a mission to the slaves.

Therefore, the thesis proposed that Jesus utilised the concept of the Kingdom of God also to address the issue of slavery among other subjects. Through it, he attempted to enhance slaves' daily existence. The various analyses demonstrated that such a proclamation may had an important impact on them. Jesus encouraged them and promised that in the new world he is announcing, there is one father, and all individuals will be regarded as brothers and sisters. From this, I concluded that the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, or more precisely, the proclamation of the Kingdom of the Father, provided a chance for slaves to become part of a family where there are no social inequalities among people. Thus, at the end of the thesis I have expressed my conviction that there is a possibility in which Jesus' mission was to the slaves.

The value of this endeavour could be seen in the way it tried to draw attention to the unheard voices and unseen bodies of the earliest Jesus movement, which can be found between the lines of the Gospels. Consequently, what is more important is that it tried to reconstruct a possible answer that Jesus could give for the slaves with whom he was in relation. However, several questions remain unanswered, which inspires us to further research.

After the current historical analysis, it would be advisable to make a literary-critique driven reading of the narratives, which presumably contain invisible slaves. Such an endeavour might tell us something about the intentions of the Gospel writers. This point leads us to another question, namely, that research on how the gospels were written, what could have been intentionally erased from the memories of the remembers, what had been forgotten and what tell us the traditions that are preserved point to several new questions. The continuation of this work would also profit from a comparative analysis with other sources, for example from the writings of Josephus.

Going further, as the current analysis demonstrated, Jesus was encouraging those around him, including the slaves, by the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. We can imagine how hard he believed in a community where there were no masters and slaves, only a father and his children. We find such a vision later in the Letter to the Galatians 3:8, which might be the closes written document to Jesus' ministry, where Paul says: "There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus". I consider Jesus envisioned a future like this. Therefore, further research with a more extensive scope would also be fundamental about how the teachings of Jesus became the first Christians' driving power.

What we can say preliminary to such a question is that we are still waiting and fighting every day for a world like that, but we are not alone. We have a 2000-year-old encouragement that we are all one, and God takes care of us all. We just must feel again somehow what it means that the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Father is present.

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