

## METHOD AND MEANING



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METHOD AND MEANING:  
ESSAYS ON NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION  
IN HONOR OF HAROLD W. ATTRIDGE

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ESSAYS ON NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION  
IN HONOR OF HAROLD W. ATTRIDGE

Edited by

Andrew B. McGowan and Kent Harold Richards

Society of Biblical Literature  
Atlanta

## METHOD AND MEANING

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- 1Q22 *Dibre Moshe (Words of Moses)*, in D. Barthélemy and J. T. Milik, *Qumran Cave 1* (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert [of Jordan] I; Oxford: Clarendon, 1955), pls. XVIII–XIX
- 1QH<sup>a</sup> *Hodayot<sup>a</sup> or Thanksgiving Hymns<sup>a</sup>*, in E. L. Sukenik, *The Dead Sea Scrolls of the Hebrew University* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1955), pls. XXXV–LVIII; figs. 14–17, 29–30
- 1QpHab *Pesher Habakkuk*, in M. Burrows (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery 1* (2 vols; New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1950).
- 1QS *Serek Hayayad (Rule of the Community)*, in M. Burrows (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery 2* (2 vols; New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1951).
- 2 Bar (2 Apoc. Bar) *2 Baruch (Syriac Apocalypse)* translated by A.F. J. Klijn in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha 1* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; 2 vols; New York: Doubleday, 1983), 615–52
- 4Q368 *Apocryphal Pentateuch A* in E. Schuller et al., in consultation with J. VanderKam and M. Brady, *Qumran Cave 4.XXVIII: Miscellanea, Part 2* (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert [of Jordan] XXVIII; Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 131–50.
- 4Q369 *Prayer of Enosh* in H. W. Attridge et al., *Qumran Cave 4. VIII: Parabiblical Texts, Part 1* (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert [of Jordan] XIII; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 353–416.
- 4Q377 *Apocryphal Pentateuch B* in E. Schuller et al., in consultation with J. VanderKam and M. Brady, *Qumran Cave 4.XXVIII: Miscellanea, Part 2* (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XXVIII; Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 205–18.
- 4Q541 *4QApocryphe de Lévi<sup>b</sup> ar* in E. Puech, *Qumran Cave 4.XXII: Textes araméens, première partie: 4Q529-549* (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XXXI; Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 225–57, pls XIII–XIV.
- 4QMMT *Miqsat Ma'asé ha-Torah (Some of the Torah Observations)*, in E. Qimron and J. Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4.V: Miqsat*

	<i>Ma'ase ha-Torah</i> (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert X; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), I–VIII
AAS	<i>Acta apostolicae sedis</i>
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992.
<i>Abr.</i>	Philo, <i>De Abrahamo</i> ( <i>On the Life of Abraham</i> )
AcBib	Academia Biblica
ACNT	Augsburg Commentaries on the New Testament
<i>Aen.</i>	Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i>
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentum
ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
<i>Anima et res.</i>	Gregory of Nyssa, <i>De anima et resurrection</i> ( <i>On the Soul and the Resurrection</i> )
<i>Ann.</i>	Tacitus, <i>Annales</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> . Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin, 1972–
<i>Ant.</i>	Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i> ( <i>Antiquities judaicae</i> )
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ANTF	Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung
<i>Ap. Jas.</i>	I,2 <i>Apocryphon of James</i>
ArBib	The Aramaic Bible
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
AYB	Anchor Yale Bible
<i>Bacch.</i>	Euripides, <i>Bacchae</i>
BAGD	Bauer, W., W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Second ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
<i>Barn.</i>	<i>Barnabas</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>b. B. Bat.</i>	<i>Baba Batra</i> (Babylonian Talmud)
BDAG	Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Third ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999
BET	Beiträge zur evangelische Theologie
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BGBE	Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese
<i>b. Hag.</i>	<i>Ḥagigah</i> (Babylonian Talmud)
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie

BINS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
<i>b. Meg.</i>	<i>Megillah</i> (Babylonian Talmud)
<i>b. Sanh.</i>	<i>Sanhedrin</i> (Babylonian Talmud)
<i>b. Shab.</i>	<i>Shabbat</i> (Babylonian Talmud)
<i>b. Soṭah</i>	<i>Soṭah</i> (Babylonian Talmud)
<i>b. Taʿan.</i>	<i>Taʿanit</i> (Babylonian Talmud)
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BTS	<i>Bible et terre sainte</i>
<i>b. Yebam.</i>	<i>Yebamot</i> (Babylonian Talmud)
<i>b. Yoma</i>	<i>Yoma</i> (=Kippurim) (Babylonian Talmud)
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>C. Ap.</i>	Josephus, <i>Contra Apionem</i> ( <i>Against Apion</i> )
<i>Cant.</i>	Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Commentarius in Canticum canticorum</i> ( <i>Commentary on the Song of Songs</i> )
<i>Carn. Chr.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De carne Christi</i> ( <i>The Flesh of Christ</i> )
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CCSA	Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum
CD	Cairo Genizah copy of the <i>Damascus Document</i>
<i>C. du. ep. Pelag.</i>	Augustine, <i>Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum ad Bonifatium</i> ( <i>Against the Two Letters of the Pelagians</i> )
<i>Cels.</i>	Origen, <i>Contra Celsum</i> ( <i>Against Celsus</i> )
CH	<i>Church History</i>
<i>Civ.</i>	Augustine, <i>De civitate Dei</i> ( <i>The City of God</i> )
ConBNT	Coniectanea neotestamentica or Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series
<i>Conf.</i>	Augustine, <i>Confessionum libri XIII</i> ( <i>Confessions</i> )
<i>Conf.</i>	Philo, <i>De confusione linguarum</i> ( <i>On the Confusion of Tongues</i> )
<i>Contempl.</i>	Philo, <i>De vita contemplative</i> ( <i>On the Contemplative Life</i> )
<i>Corrept.</i>	Augustine, <i>De correptione et gratia</i> ( <i>Admonition and Grace</i> )
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CSCO	Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium. Edited by I. B. Chabot et al. Paris, 1903–
CSSH	<i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i>
<i>Cur.</i>	Augustine, <i>De cura pro mortuis gerenda</i> ( <i>The Care to Be Taken for the Dead</i> )
CurBS	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>



<i>Cult. Fem.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De cultu feminarum</i> ( <i>The Apparel of Women</i> )
<i>Decal.</i>	Philo, <i>De decalogo</i> ( <i>On the Decalogue</i> )
<i>Descr.</i>	Pausanias, <i>Graeciae description</i> ( <i>Description of Greece</i> )
<i>Det.</i>	Philo <i>Quod deterius potiori insidari soleat</i> ( <i>That the Worse Attacks the Better</i> )
<i>Deus.</i>	Philo, <i>Quod Deus sit immutabilis</i> ( <i>That God Is Unchangeable</i> )
<i>Dial. Adam.</i>	<i>Dialogue of Adamantius</i>
<i>Dial. d.</i>	Lucian, <i>Dialogi deorum</i> ( <i>Dialogues of the Gods</i> )
<i>Dial.</i>	Justin, <i>Dialogus cum Tryphone</i> ( <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i> )
<i>Did.</i>	<i>Didache</i>
<i>Div. quaest. Simpl.</i>	Augustine, <i>De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum</i>
DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert
D.L.	Diogenes Laertius, <i>Lives of Eminent Philosophers</i>
DNP	<i>Der neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike</i> . Edited by H. Cancik and H. Schneider. Stuttgart, 1996–
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
EAC	<i>Écrits apocryphes chrétiens</i>
<i>Ebr.</i>	Philo, <i>De ebrietate</i> ( <i>On Drunkenness</i> )
<i>Eccl. Rab.</i>	<i>Ecclesiastes Rabbah</i>
EKK	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar
<i>Enchir.</i>	Augustine, <i>Enchiridion de fide, spe, et caritate</i> ( <i>Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love</i> )
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistolae</i> , <i>Epistle/s</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	Pliny the Younger, <i>Epistolae</i>
<i>Ep.2.</i>	Demosthenes, <i>Epistle 2</i>
<i>Ep. Pet. Phil.</i>	VIII,2 <i>Letter of Peter to Philip</i>
ErFor	Erträge der Forschung
ET	English translation
ETS	Erfurter theologische Studien
<i>Exod. Rab.</i>	<i>Exodus Rabbah</i>
FG	Fourth Gospel
<i>Fid. symb.</i>	Augustine, <i>De fide et symbolo</i> ( <i>Faith and the Creed</i> )
<i>Flor.</i>	Ptolemy (the Gnostic), <i>Epistula ad Floram</i> ( <i>Letter to Flora</i> )
<i>Fort.</i>	Augustine, <i>Contra Fortunatum</i> ( <i>Against Fortunatus</i> )
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>Fug.</i>	Philo, <i>De fuga et invention</i> ( <i>On Flight and Finding</i> )
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship
<i>Gen. litt.</i>	Augustine, <i>De Genesi ad litteram</i> ( <i>On Genesis Literally Interpreted</i> )
<i>Geogr.</i>	Strabo, <i>Geography</i>
<i>Gest. Pelag.</i>	Augustine, <i>De gestis Pelagii</i> ( <i>Proceedings of Pelagius</i> )

GNO	<i>Gregorii Nysseni Opera</i> , The Works of Gregory of Nyssa. Edited by W. Jaeger et al. Leiden: Brill.
Gos. Bas.	<i>Gospel of Basilides</i>
Gos. Pet.	<i>Gospel of Peter</i>
Gos. Thom.	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>
Haer.	Irenaeus, <i>Adversus haereses</i> ( <i>Against Heresies</i> )
Hel.	Euripides, <i>Helena</i> ( <i>Helen</i> )
Her.	Philo, <i>Quis rerum divinarum heres sit</i>
Hist.	Cassius Dio, <i>Historiae Romanae</i>
Hist.	Tacitus, <i>Historiae</i>
Hist. eccl.	Eusebius, <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
Hom.	<i>Homily</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HTK	Herders theologischer Kommentar
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HvTSt	<i>Hervormde teologiese studies</i>
IAA	Israel Antiquities Authority
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDBSup	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume</i> . Edited by K. Crim. Nashville, 1976
Ign. Eph.	Ignatius, <i>To the Ephesians</i>
Ign. Smyrn.	Ignatius, <i>To the Smyrnaeans</i>
Inf. Gos. Thom.	<i>Infancy Gospel of Thomas</i>
Inst.	Quintilian, <i>Institutio oratoria</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JSHJ	<i>Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
JSJSup	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period Supplements Series</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series</i>
JSPSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
Jub.	<i>Jubilees</i>
J.W.	Josephus, <i>Jewish War</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar)

LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
<i>Leg.</i>	Philo, <i>Legum allegoriae</i> ( <i>Allegorical Interpretation</i> )
<i>Let. Aris.</i>	<i>Letter of Aristeas</i>
<i>Life</i>	Josephus, <i>The Life</i> ( <i>Vita</i> )
LIMC	<i>Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae</i> . Edited by H. C. Ackerman and J.-R. Gisler. 8 vols. Zurich, 1981–1997
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LSJ	Liddell, H. G., R. Scott, H. S. Jones, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford, 1996
<i>Marc.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Adversus Marcionem</i> ( <i>Against Marcion</i> )
<i>Mart. Polyc.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i>
<i>m. 'Abot</i>	<i>Mishnah 'Abot</i>
<i>m. Ber.</i>	<i>Mishnah Berakot</i>
<i>m. Bik.</i>	<i>Mishnah Bikkurim</i>
<i>Met.</i>	<i>Apuleius Metamorphoses</i> II (trans. J. Arthur Hanson; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).
<i>Metam.</i>	Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i>
<i>Migr.</i>	Philo, <i>De migratione Abrahami</i> ( <i>On the Migration of Abraham</i> )
<i>Mor.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Moralia</i>
<i>Mor.eccl.</i>	Augustine, <i>De moribus ecclesiae catholicae</i> ( <i>The Way of Life of the Catholic Church</i> )
<i>Mos.</i>	Philo, <i>De vita Mosis</i> ( <i>On the Life of Moses</i> )
<i>m. Sukk.</i>	<i>Mishnah Sukkah</i>
MTS	Marburger Theologische Studien
<i>Mus</i>	<i>Muséon: Revue d'études orientales</i>
<i>m. Yad.</i>	<i>Mishnah Yadayim</i>
NA27 (NA <sup>27</sup> )	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland, 27th ed.
<i>Nat. d.</i>	Cicero, <i>De natura deorum</i>
<i>Nat. grat.</i>	Augustine, <i>De natura et gratia</i> ( <i>Nature and Grace</i> )
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NETS	New English Translation of the Septuagint
NGS	New Gospel Studies
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
NPNF	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i>
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTL	New Testament Library
NTS	New Testament Studies

NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
<i>Num.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Numa</i>
<i>Num. Rab.</i>	<i>Numbers Rabbah</i>
OLZ	<i>Orientalistische Literaturzeitung</i>
<i>Opif.</i>	Philo <i>De opificio mundi</i>
<i>Onir.</i>	Artemidorus Daldianus, <i>Onirocritica</i>
<i>Orat. cat.</i>	Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Oratio catechetica</i>
OTP	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by J. H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985
<i>Pan.</i>	Epiphanius, <i>Panarion (Adversus haereses) (Refutation of All Heresies)</i>
<i>Parm.</i>	Plato, <i>Parmenides</i>
<i>Pecc. merit.</i>	Augustine, <i>De peccatorum meritis et remissione (Guilt and Remission of Sins)</i>
<i>Pesiq. Rab.</i>	<i>Pesiqta Rabbati</i>
PG	Patrologia graeca [= Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca]. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–1886
PGM	<i>Papyri graecae magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri</i> . Edited by K. Preisendanz. Berlin, 1928
<i>Phaedr.</i>	Plato, <i>Phaedrus</i>
pl.	plate
<i>Plant.</i>	Philo, <i>De plantatione (On Planting)</i>
<i>Post.</i>	Philo, <i>De posteritate Caini (On the Posterity of Cain)</i>
<i>Praep. ev.</i>	Eusebius, <i>Praeparatio evangelica (Preparation for the Gospel)</i>
<i>Princ.</i>	Origen, <i>De principiis (Peri archōn) (First Principles)</i>
<i>Prob.</i>	Philo, <i>Quod omnis probus liber sit (That Every Good Person Is Free)</i>
<i>Prot. Jas.</i>	<i>Protevangeliū of James</i>
<i>Ps.-Mt.</i>	<i>Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew</i>
<i>Ps.-Phoc.</i>	Pseudo-Phocylides
PTMS	Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series
<i>Resp.</i>	Plato, <i>Respublica (Republic)</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
<i>Rhet. Her.</i>	<i>Rhetorica ad Herennium</i>
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
<i>Sat.</i>	Juvenal, <i>Satirae</i>
SB	Sources bibliques
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLRBS	Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study
SBLSP	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SC	Sources chrétiennes. Paris: Cerf, 1943–
SEA	<i>Svensk exegetisk årsbok</i>

<i>Sem</i>	<i>Semitica</i>
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
<i>Serm.</i>	Augustine, <i>Sermones</i>
<i>Sib. Or.</i>	<i>Sibylline Oracles</i>
SJ	Studia judaica
SNTS	Society for New Testament Studies
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>S. 'Olam Rab.</i>	<i>Seder 'Olam Rabbah</i>
<i>Somn.</i>	Philo, <i>De somniis (On Dreams)</i>
<i>Song. Rab.</i>	<i>Song of Songs Rabbah</i>
SP	Sacra Pagina
<i>Spec.</i>	Philo, <i>De specialibus legibus (On the Special Laws)</i>
<i>Spir. et litt.</i>	Augustine, <i>De spiritu et littera (The Spirit and the Letter)</i>
STDJ	<i>Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah</i>
<i>StPatr</i>	<i>Studia patristica</i>
Str-B	Strack, H. L., and P. Billerbeck. <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> . 6 vols. Munich, 1922–1961
<i>Strom.</i>	Clement of Alexandria, <i>Stromata</i>
<i>SubBi</i>	<i>Subsidia biblica</i>
SubsHag	Subsidia Hagiographica
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti pseudepigraphica
<i>Tanḥ.</i>	<i>Tanḥuma (Tanhuma)</i>
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964–1976
TENT	Texts and Editions for New Testament Study
<i>Tg. Onq.</i>	<i>Targum Onqelos</i>
<i>t. Hullin</i>	<i>Tractate Hullin (Tosefta)</i>
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>Tim.</i>	Plato, <i>Timaeus</i>
<i>T. Mos.</i>	<i>Testament of Moses</i>
<i>T. Naph.</i>	<i>Testament of Naphtali</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
<i>t. Soṭah</i>	<i>Tractate Soṭah (Tosefta)</i>
TSR	Texts and Studies in Religion
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
UBS	United Bible Societies
UBSGNT	United Bible Societies Greek New Testament
Vatican Inv.	Vatican Inventory Number, Vatican Museum
VC	<i>Vigiliae christianae</i>

<i>Vir. ill.</i>	Jerome, <i>De viris illustribus</i> , <i>Lives of Illustrious Men</i>
<i>Virt.</i>	Philo, <i>De virtutibus</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WGRW	SBL Writings from the Greco-Roman World Series
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>y. Mak.</i>	<i>Makkot</i> (Jerusalem Talmud)
<i>y. Ned.</i>	<i>Nedarim</i> (Jerusalem Talmud)
<i>y. Shab.</i>	<i>Shabbat</i> (Jerusalem Talmud)
<i>y. Ta<sup>c</sup>an.</i>	<i>Ta<sup>c</sup>anit</i> (Jerusalem Talmud)
ZDPV	<i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

# MANY METHODS: THE DIVERSITY OF NEW TESTAMENT SCHOLARSHIP

*Andrew B. McGowan and Kent Harold Richards*

There has never been a more diverse set of possibilities for understanding the canonical texts of the New Testament, other early Christian literature, and the history of the emergent Christian movement that was to become the Church.

Diversity in methods of reading the New Testament is of course as old as or older than the texts themselves. The first few generations of Christians struggled with basic questions of method and meaning in their own attempts to read and respond to the scriptures of Judaism. These attempts, various elements of development, interpretation and controversy, are documented both in the processes of composition as well as in canonization; without them the New Testament itself would not exist.

If the New Testament documents are themselves inscribed efforts at understanding the Jewish scriptures as well as the person and teaching of Jesus, they quickly became the objects of renewed interpretive debates, and the catalyst for further literary production. From arguments over esoteric and philosophically ambitious interpretation such as that of so-called Gnostics in the second century, through the methodological differences between the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools in the fourth century, the key doctrinal and other disputes that characterized ancient Christianity were centered on just how to read Christian and Jewish scripture.

## CANONS AND CONTROVERSIES

Fundamentalisms, casual or assertive, are perhaps never more vulnerable than when faced with the pluriformity of canonical scripture itself. While theological debates both mirrored and fueled the ways Christian social formations developed, the emergent institutional and cultural divisions between churches were mani-

fested not only in preference for distinct interpretive methods, but in decisions even about the actual canons to which those methods are to be applied.

Debates over the extent and content of scripture reflected contention over the authentic borders of Christianity itself. This can be seen as when Marcion championed a Gospel without supposed accretions, or when “Montanists” claimed the ongoing reality of the Paraclete outside as well as inside the written word. From the ancient divisions between groups aligned with Chalcedonian Christology on the one hand and others such as Armenian, Ethiopian, and Egyptian Christians on the other, through the millennial schism between Eastern and Western Churches, and on to the Reformation, each large and enduring division has been accompanied by the entrenchment of discrepancies between canons. Those discrepancies as well as the subtler, more diffuse, but equally profound cultivation of differences in how to read those books accepted, has lead to a lively debate.

Modern scholarship has added to these dilemmas, not only because of the increased awareness of cultural and canonical diversity through more immediate contact with different cultures and peoples, but also as a result of the discovery and publication of new sets of ancient documents pertaining to, or even purporting to be, scripture.

The Dead Sea Scrolls have raised unprecedented but unresolved problems in the presentation of extra-canonical Psalms interspersed with the familiar ones. The appearance of Ben Sira in Hebrew both there and in the documents of the Cairo Genizah has forced new perspectives. The Nag Hammadi codices shed remarkable light on the ways scripture could be re-written in the process of being read, as well as providing the now-famous *Gospel of Thomas*.

## A BIBLE AT THE CENTER

Despite the differences just noted, the varied Christian traditions of the late-antique and medieval periods had in common tendencies to weave biblical traditions organically into their complex liturgical, spiritual, and doctrinal constructions. They continued to use earlier methods such as allegorical interpretation, if in new ways and with a new sophistication, tending at times to sophistry. They continued to use biblical texts for devotional practices such as *lectio divina*, and in the communal settings of eucharistic and other liturgies.

The Reformation brought the Bible to a quite new centrality in the West, via the principle of *sola scriptura* and the explosion of biblical translations, exemplified in the King James Version published four-hundred years before this volume, and provided its own layer of complexity to canonical issues. While an accompanying emphasis on “plain sense” of scripture was common, the exposure of



the Bible to the light both of the resources of emergent humanism such as that of Erasmus and of new emphases on evidence and rationality also heralded the arrival of modern critical scholarship, whether undertaken in pursuit of new theological wisdom, skepticism, or intellectual curiosity.

Like any other aspect of western thought, understanding of the New Testament and biblical literature generally was impacted profoundly by the Enlightenment and its successors such as Romanticism. Figures such as Spinoza and Hobbes noted issues that later scholars were to pursue more systematically. For the Hebrew Bible this was often the problem of Pentateuchal sources or the authenticity of Isaianic prophecies; the equivalent seed-bed for New Testament studies was the Synoptic problem and the closely related issue of the historical Jesus.

To a significant extent this volume reflects the current state of the modern biblical scholarship that emerged in the West from that time forward. This has come to include an array of technical and hermeneutical processes sometimes worked out as distinct “criticisms” but in fact often overlapping and interdependent. These have been used to establish the textual detail, as well as the canonical scope, of the New Testament; to consider its sources, literary composition, influences, and historicity; and to examine it in its ancient social, cultural, and religious contexts. This set of interdependent disciplines constitutes classical biblical criticism, which, while not necessarily a complete set of tools for considering the significance of the ancient texts in the modern world, cannot be dispensed with by any serious reader.

Before the mid-twentieth century, critical New Testament scholarship as a tool for exegetical and hermeneutical purposes was a largely Protestant phenomenon, enabled or allowed by the diffuse authority structures of those religious traditions but not universally accepted. The arrival of Roman Catholic scholarship in this modern sense was heralded by the encyclical *Divino afflante spiritu*, which affirmed the use of philological, historical, and literary studies to support faithful reading and understanding. This and other developments in scholarly ecumenism have meant that debates in the academy around biblical interpretation often have little correlation with expected confessional loyalties, and that even in New Testament studies the contributions of Jewish and secular scholars can and must have their acknowledged place, based on criteria of adequacy applicable in any discipline.

The second half of the twentieth century saw the emergence not only of additional methods, but also of approaches that generally assumed and often acknowledged established critical scholarship, yet sought to go beyond it. One broad set of methods has emerged from more recent philosophical and literary theory, wherein the literary character of the text has been reasserted not merely

as historic artifact for genre analysis, but as a dynamic reality whose life is interdependent with the act of contemporary reading. There have also been renewed calls for theological engagement, in particular with the canonical text, with what has been termed a “second naïveté” that acknowledges the results of critical study without reducing the text to them.

Scholars and readers have also become more aware of what was culturally specific and historically conditioned in pursuit of method, even in studies undertaken with “scientific” rigor and intent; that the assumptions of western modernity were not absolutes, and that the reality of Churches and academies dominated by white males was not irrelevant to the limits of scholarship or to its future prospects. The relationship between such new readings emphasizing diversity and liberation and what has been termed classical scholarship is not always clear, and their interaction along with debate continues.

This volume seeks to draw many, but of course not all, of these methodological threads together. Its aim has not been an exhaustive representation or description, but an attempt to present the *status quaestionis* for many disciplines and approaches. One of its purposes in doing so is to honor a scholar whose work encompasses a remarkable breadth of method and content. Harold W. Attridge is widely admired for his acuity and erudition, which has contributed authoritatively to textual criticism, exegesis, comparative literary and historical studies, and numerous other areas in New Testament and cognate fields. He is also a valued and respected colleague whose leadership has made a great contribution to the academy, and the editors and contributors offer this as a tribute, with thanks.

To some, and indeed to many readers of those texts today, such complex interpretive possibilities may seem confusing or unnecessary. This volume in its collective voice suggests something rather different, namely, that careful attention to questions of method in interpretation offers possibilities for fruitful readings of the texts themselves, and insights into other unavoidable issues for any who would read with understanding.

More than this, it suggests that interpretive method is not simply an issue that arises after the text, when as in every period individuals and communities have considered and contended about proper ways to read; rather, the individual writings and the canon of scripture are actually the products of such interpretive questions, and cannot adequately be understood except with attention to them.

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## HISTORICAL JESUS RESEARCH: THE CHALLENGE OF SOURCES AND METHODS

*Craig A. Evans*

Study of the historical Jesus is not like study of one of the writings in the New Testament. When we study one of these writings we usually speak of *exegesis*, that is, “leading the meaning out (of the text).” But Jesus is not a text; he cannot be exegeted, the way we can exegete one of the Gospels. By way of contrast, study of Paul is not limited to what is said of him in the book of Acts; we actually possess several of the apostle’s letters. And so it is when we study other writings in the New Testament: we have the writings before us. Although we would like to know who wrote the book; and if that is known, then we may explore additional data relating to the author and the circumstances in which the author wrote. But when we study Jesus we have nothing that he wrote—no letters, no memoirs, nothing. This would be like trying to deduce the life and thought of Paul on the basis of three or four books of Acts. To be sure, we could learn a lot, but it would not come close to what we are able to learn of Paul’s thought—the intricacies of his arguments, his passion, his fears—because we have at our disposal several writings from his own hand.

It is this lack of direct evidence—writings from Jesus himself—that makes study of Jesus so unlike the rest of New Testament interpretation. Nowhere does Jesus himself tell us what he thinks, in his own words. What we have instead are accounts, written about a generation or so after his public activities, in which his teaching is edited and arranged, in keeping with the respective writers’ purposes. The best known of these writings are the four New Testament Gospels. Other Gospels and Gospel-like writings have survived, either whole or in part, but they are later.

The difficulties and complexities involved in our sources require us to think carefully about our criteria for assessing them and our methods for putting them to good use. Our first step, then, is to assess our sources and give thought to how they might assist us in our study of the historical Jesus.

## HISTORICAL JESUS RESEARCH: SOURCES AND METHODS

Jesus may not have written anything, but we are in possession of a number of things written about him. These comprise mainly the New Testament writings themselves, the most important being the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In some of his letters Paul refers to sayings of Jesus, though scholars are not always sure if the apostle is referring to public words of the historical Jesus or to private, post-Easter revelation.<sup>1</sup> There are a few other references here or there in the New Testament writings, as in 2 Pet 1:16–18, in reference to the transfiguration. The letter attributed to James, “the Lord’s brother” (Gal 1:19), is replete with echoes of Jesus’ teaching.<sup>2</sup>

Outside and generally later than the New Testament are several early Christian writings. Preeminent among them is the *Didache*, which, as its name implies, has preserved a significant body of Jesus’ teachings, whose relationship to the Synoptic tradition is not clear. We may have here a very early collection, at points independent from the literary sources utilized by the Evangelists.<sup>3</sup> Closely related are the fragmentary remains of several Jewish Christian—or Ebionite—Gospels, whose distinctive traditions bear an uncertain relationship to the Synoptics (esp. Matthew).<sup>4</sup>

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1. See James D. G. Dunn, “Jesus Tradition in Paul,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (ed. Bruce D. Chilton and Craig A. Evans; NTTS 19; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 155–78; idem, *Jesus Remembered* (Christianity in the Making 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 181–84.

2. See William F. Brosend II, *James and Jude* (NCBC; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Peter H. Davids, “Palestinian Traditions in the Epistle of James,” in *James the Just and Christian Origins* (ed. Bruce D. Chilton and Craig A. Evans; NovTSup 98; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 33–57; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James* (AB 37a; Garden City: Doubleday, 1995); idem and Wesley H. Wachob, “The Sayings of Jesus in the Letter of James,” in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus* (ed. Bruce D. Chilton and Craig A. Evans; NTTS 28.1; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 431–50.

3. For major studies of the *Didache*, see Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); Huub van de Sandt and David Flusser, *The Didache: Its Jewish Sources and Its Place in Early Judaism and Christianity* (CRINT 3.5; Assen: Van Gorcum; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002). On the specific question of the Jesus tradition in the *Didache*, see Willy Rordorf, “Does the *Didache* Contain Jesus Tradition Independently of the Synoptic Gospels?” in *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition* (ed. Henry Wansbrough; JSNTSup 64; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 394–423; Jonathan A. Draper, “The Jesus Tradition in the *Didache*,” in *The Didache in Modern Research* (ed. Jonathan A. Draper; AGJU 37; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 72–91. The answer is “yes,” the *Didache* seems to contain some material that is independent of the Synoptic Gospels.

4. See Albertus F. J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition* (VCSup 17; Leiden: Brill, 1992); Craig A. Evans, “The Jewish Christian Gospel Tradition,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 241–77.

We also have fragments of various harmonies and lost Gospels.<sup>5</sup> Among these one of the most interesting is the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 840, which narrates a dispute between Jesus and a ruling priest in the temple precincts. The Syrian church produced several writings, many of them focused on the disciple Thomas. Best known among these is the *Gospel of Thomas*, of which three Greek fragments and a complete Coptic translation were found in Egypt.<sup>6</sup> Familiar with Tatian's *Diatessaron* (written ca. 175) and other distinctively Syrian traditions, *Thomas* probably cannot be dated earlier than the second half of the second century.<sup>7</sup>

Other Christian Gospels are far more dubious. First, Papyrus Egerton 2, which should be dated to the middle of the second century, is probably another early example of a Gospel harmony. Attempts to date this document to the middle of the first century, independent of the Synoptic Gospels, are not persuasive.<sup>8</sup> Second, the Akhmīm Gospel fragment, which many scholars assume is the *Gospel of Peter* mentioned at the beginning of the third century by Bishop Serapion, may not be this Gospel.<sup>9</sup> Even if it is, its fantastic details (such as the talking cross that exits the tomb with the risen Jesus, whose head reaches above the heavens) argue for a date no earlier than the middle of the second century.<sup>10</sup> And finally, the so-

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5. The most important material is gathered in Dieter Lührmann, with Egbert Schlarb, *Fragmente apokryph gewordener Evangelien in griechischer und lateinischer Sprache* (MTS 59; Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 2000).

6. For Coptic and Greek texts, see Harold Attridge, "The Greek Fragments," in *Gospel according to Thomas, Gospel according to Philip, Hypostasis of the Archons, and Indexes*. Vol. 1 of *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7 together with XII, 2 Brit. Lib. Or. 4926 (1), and P. Oxy 1, 654, 655* (ed. Bentley Layton; NHS 20; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 95–128; Uwe-Kartsen Plisch, *The Gospel of Thomas: Original Text with Commentary* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2008).

7. This late date flies in the face of the contention of some scholars, who in my opinion do not take the Syrian tradition in *Thomas* sufficiently into account. Nevertheless, a late dating of the composition does not preclude the possibility that some of the sayings that found their way into the *Gospel of Thomas* circulated much earlier. On the Syrian tradition in *Thomas*, see Norman Perrin, *Thomas and Tatian: The Relationship between the Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron* (AcBib 5; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002); idem, "NHC II, 2 and the Oxyrhynchus Fragments (P.Oxy 1, 654, 655): Overlooked Evidence for a Syriac *Gospel of Thomas*," *VC* 58 (2004): 138–51.

8. One of the fragmentary stories in Papyrus Egerton 2 resembles a fantastic story in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (no earlier than the end of the second century), where we are told of the boy Jesus who sowed a handful of seed that yielded a remarkable harvest (*Inf. Gos. Thom.* 10:1–2 [Latin version]).

9. On just how slender the evidence actually is, see Paul Foster, "Are There Any Early Fragments of the So-Called *Gospel of Peter*?" *NTS* 52 (2006): 1–28.

10. Many scholars have concluded that the Akhmīm Gospel fragment presupposes most if not all of the New Testament Gospels. On this point, see Karlmann Beyschlag, "Das Petrus-evangelium," in *Die verborgene Überlieferung von Christus* (Munich and Hamburg: Siebenstern

called *Secret Gospel of Mark*, allegedly discovered by Morton Smith at the Mar Saba monastery in the Judean desert in 1958,<sup>11</sup> has so many parallels with Smith's pre-find publications, that a number of scholars suspect it is the work of Smith himself.<sup>12</sup>

There are several other late, fanciful works, such as the *Infancy Gospel*, the *Protevangelium of James* (which tells of the miraculous birth of Mary, her upbringing, and betrothal of Josephus), the *Acts of Pilate* (which among other things tells of Christ's descent into and triumph over hell), and others.<sup>13</sup> These writings tell us much about popular Christian piety and imagination in the second–fourth centuries, but they tell us nothing about the historical Jesus.

There are additional sources, if we include references to Jesus outside of the Christian tradition. These include the various versions of Josephus and early rabbinic traditions. Since none of the rabbinic tradition regarding Jesus can with confidence be dated before the third century, it really has nothing of historical significance to offer.<sup>14</sup> Josephus the first-century Jewish historian and apologist is another matter. Josephus mentions Jesus twice in his twenty-volume work *Jewish*

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Taschenbuch, 1969), 27–64; Édouard Massaux, *The Influence of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on Christian Literature before Saint Irenaeus* (ed. Authur J. Bellinzoni; 3 vols., NGS 5.1–3; Macon: Mercer University Press, 1990–93), 2:202–14; Paul Foster, *The Gospel of Peter: Introduction, Critical Edition and Commentary* (TENT 4; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 169–72. Foster recommends “a date sometime in the second half of the second century” (p. 172). The mid-first century date proposed by a few scholars in the 1980s and 90s seems to have little or no following in current critical scholarship.

11. For an account of the “discovery” of the Clementine letter containing the quotations of *Secret Mark*, along with text, notes, and commentary, see Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973); idem, *The Secret Gospel: The Discovery and Interpretation of the Secret Gospel according to Mark* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

12. For recent studies that conclude that the Mar Saba letter of Clement, in which are imbedded two quotations of a longer, “mystical Mark,” is a hoax, see Stephen C. Carlson, *The Gospel Hoax: Morton Smith's Invention of Secret Mark* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2005); Peter Jeffery, *The Secret Gospel of Mark Unveiled: Imagined Rituals of Sex, Death, and Madness in a Biblical Forgery* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); and Francis Watson, “Beyond Suspicion: On the Authorship of the Mar Saba Letter and the Secret Gospel of Mark,” *JTS* 61 (2010): 128–70.

13. These writings are conveniently gathered in James K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation based on M. R. James* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993); idem, *The Apocryphal Jesus: Legends of the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *Gospels and Related Writings*. Vol. 1 of *New Testament Apocrypha* (rev. ed., Cambridge: James Clarke; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991).

14. These traditions have been carefully assessed in Johann Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung* (ErFor 82; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978);

*Antiquities*. One passage concerns James, the brother of “Jesus called Christ” (*Ant.* 20.200). Although this passage provides useful information about James (i.e., the year of his death, that he was regarded as a “lawbreaker”), it tells us nothing about Jesus. Of course, it does provide us with non-Christian attestation that Jesus had a brother named James. However, the second passage (*Ant.* 18.63–64) provides important corroboration of the main outline of Jesus’ ministry, arrest, and execution, as these elements are found in the New Testament Gospels. Although it is widely acknowledged that the passage has been glossed by Christian scribes, most of it goes back to Josephus.<sup>15</sup> For our purposes, what is significant is that the Jewish apologist describes Jesus as “a doer of amazing deeds” and “teacher,” a description that coheres well with what we find in the New Testament Gospels. The testimony of Josephus will be taken up below.

Jesus is mentioned a few times in Greco-Roman sources. Julius Africanus (early-third century) refers to one Thallus, who mentions the darkness at the time of Jesus’ death (*Chronography* frag. 18). Mara bar Serapion (late-first/early-second century[?]) refers to Jesus as the wise king of the Jewish people (*bar Serapion’s letter to his son*). Suetonius (ca. 110) refers to the name *Chrestus*, by which he probably means Christ (*Claudius* 25.4), but he tells us nothing more. Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia, writes to Emperor Trajan (ca. 110), saying that Christians sing hymns to “Christ as to a god” (*Epistles* 10.96). Tacitus (ca. 112) explains: “Christus, the author of their name, had suffered the death penalty during the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate” (*Annals* 15.44). Celsus provides a series of slanders and distorted traditions in his polemic against Christianity (*apud* Origen, *Contra Celsum*). Justin Martyr quotes Trypho the Jew (ca. 160), who describes Jesus as a “magician and deceiver of the people” (*Dialogue with Trypho* 69.7). Lucian of Samosata (ca. 160) mockingly describes Christians as a people who worship “that crucified sophist” (*Peregrinus* 13), even “the man who was crucified in Palestine” (*Peregrinus* 11). Some of this material contains a modicum of importance, but it adds nothing to what we have in the New Testament Gospels.

Finally, we have several gnostic writings, many of them called “Gospels” or “hidden books.” Here I have in mind especially the *Gospel of Philip*, the *Gospel of Mary*, the *Apocryphon* (or *Hidden Book*) of *John*, and the recently published *Gospel of Judas*. These writings all date to the second century and do not con-

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Graham Twelftree, “Jesus in Jewish Traditions,” in David Wenham, ed., *The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels* (Gospel Perspectives 5; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 289–342.

15. On the authenticity of the passage (minus the glosses), see John P. Meier, “Jesus in Josephus: A Modest Proposal,” *CBQ* 52 (1990): 76–103; Steve Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament: Second Edition* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 225–36.



tain data that are of any value for study of the historical Jesus. Their unhistorical, mythological orientation is recognized for what it is by scholars, though not always by popular writers.<sup>16</sup>

Most scholars agree that the best sources for constructing a portrait of the historical Jesus are the first-century New Testament Gospels, especially the three Synoptics. A few of the other sources surveyed above may contribute a few details, but these sources are not early enough and do not enjoy the support of the criteria historians normally follow to rival or supplant what we know of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels.

Because most New Testament scholars agree that the Evangelists Matthew and Luke made use of the Gospel of Mark, scholars rightly infer the existence of a non-Markan source of Jesus' teaching, which we call Q, on which the Evangelists Matthew and Luke also drew. The Q source is literarily independent of the Gospel of Mark, which in turn means that scholars have access to at least two independent streams of tradition, with additional independent elements known to the Matthean and Lukan Evangelists. It is therefore possible to identify multiply attested traditions. Traditions such as these, which cohere with other materials that enjoy the support of a number of other criteria, provide a relatively firm foundation on which a portrait of the historical Jesus may be constructed.

The example that will be treated below is multiply attested and is supported by a number of criteria. There are also parallels in some of the other literatures surveyed above. For these reasons and others it will serve very well as a test case.

### AN EXAMPLE

The memory of Jesus as an exorcist is well-attested in the Synoptic tradition.<sup>17</sup> It is also well-attested outside of the New Testament and early Christian literature. As noted above, Josephus referred to Jesus as "a doer of amazing deeds"

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16. For current assessments of all of these materials, see James H. Charlesworth and Craig A. Evans, "Jesus in the Agrapha and Apocryphal Gospels," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (ed. Bruce D. Chilton and Craig A. Evans; NTTS 19; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 479–533; Craig A. Evans, "Jesus in Non-Christian Sources," in Chilton and Evans, *Studying the Historical Jesus*, 443–78; Robert E. Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence* (Studying the Historical Jesus; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Martin Hengel, "Jesuszeugnisse ausserhalb der Evangelien," in *Testimony and Interpretation: Early Christology in its Judeo-Hellenistic Milieu. Studies in Honor of Petr Pokorný* (ed. Jiří Mářek and Jan Roskovec; LNTS 272; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 143–58.

17. For survey and critical study, see Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (WUNT 2.54; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993).



(*paradoxōn ergōn poiētēs*). The choice of the word *paradoxos* is interesting. Although the word is not negative, it leaves the mighty deeds of Jesus in a somewhat ambiguous light.<sup>18</sup> By this I mean that the Gospels and Acts normally do not employ *paradoxos* in reference to the mighty deeds and miracles of Jesus (or in the Old Testament, in reference to God's mighty deeds). However, there is one exception. When Jesus heals the paralyzed man who had been lowered through the roof, the people exclaim: "We have seen strange things [*paradoxa*] today" (Luke 5:26). Luke's *paradoxa* captures well Mark's "We never saw anything like this" in the parallel passage (Mark 2:12) but does nothing to remove the ambiguity of the exclamation. After all, things never seen before could be good or bad. The ambiguity of the exclamation in Mark is probably why the Matthean Evangelist omits the report of direct speech, opting instead to say of the crowd's reaction: "they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men" (Matt 9:8). There is little doubt that the Evangelist Luke understood the crowd's description of Jesus' power as *paradoxa* in very positive terms. But the Evangelist was content to allow the ambiguity to linger—in Luke 5 in any event. Later in Luke crowds will exclaim the greatness and identity of Jesus in unambiguous language (cf. Luke 7:16; 9:43; 18:43).

With the noted exception of the one instance in Luke, the New Testament Gospels and Acts use words that place Jesus' deeds in an unambiguously positive light, words such as *dynamis* ("mighty work"; about three dozen occurrences in the Synoptics), *sēmeion* ("sign"; more than one dozen occurrences in John), and *teras* ("wonder"; cf. Acts 2:22, where all three words occur together: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs [*dynamesi kai terasi kai sēmeiois*] which God did through him"; as well as 4:30). In the LXX *teras* occurs many times, often paired with *sēmeion*, and usually in the plural (cf. Exod 7:3 "I will multiply my signs and wonders in the land"). But in the LXX *paradoxos* usually has a neutral meaning, such as "remarkable" (Jdt 13:13), "unusual" (4 Macc 2:14), "unexpected" (2 Macc 9:24; 3 Macc 6:33; Wis 5:2; 16:17), or "incredible" (Sir 43:25).

Josephus may have used *paradoxos*, instead of one of the biblical words normally used to refer to a miracle, perhaps to avoid an unqualified endorsement of Jesus' works (see the appearance of the word in *Ant.* 2.285, in contrast to the use of *sēmeion* in 2.280, 283–84). Jesus' "amazing deeds" could just as easily be

18. Cf. R. Kittel, *TDNT* 2:255: παράδοξος (*paradoxos*) "always denotes an 'unusual event contrary to belief and expectation'; LSJ: "contrary to opinion, incredible." See also J. Reiling and J. L. Swellengrebel, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Luke* (Helps for Translators 10; Leiden: Brill, 1971), 247 (on Luke 5:26).

translated “unusual” or “unexpected deeds.”<sup>19</sup> Even describing Jesus as a *poiētēs* (“doer” or “maker”) is a bit odd. By the time of Jesus and Josephus the word primarily referred to a poet (and in fact is used this way in its other occurrences in Josephus).<sup>20</sup> There is some ambiguity in the next sentence, where Josephus says that Jesus “won over many Jews and many of the Greeks.” What is translated “won over” (so Feldman) is *epēgageto*, which could also be translated “drew over” or “brought over.” The word is often used in negative contexts (cf. BAGD, LSJ). The emendation *apēgageto* (“seduced”) has also been suggested.<sup>21</sup> Even without the emendation the text as it stands is at best ambiguous.<sup>22</sup> “Winning over” Jews and Greeks is not necessarily a good thing.

The employment of this language could suggest that whereas Josephus was aware of Jesus’ reputation as teacher and miracle worker, he deliberately avoided positive language, the kind of language one encounters in Scripture in reference to miracles. One may rightly wonder if Josephus had heard the accusation that Jesus’ “amazing deeds” were sourced not in the Spirit of God but in another power. The accusation that Jesus was empowered by Beelzebul comes to expression in later rabbinic tradition. It is not implausible that Josephus knew something of this accusation, as it circulated among Jewish teachers in the second half of the first century. We shall now consider how this accusation arose and what issues came into play.

One of the most interesting stories in the dominical tradition concerns the accusation that Jesus’ exorcistic prowess was enabled by the power of Beelzebul, or Satan, not by God. The tradition is as complex as it is interesting, with overlapping Markan and Q materials. Here is the tradition as the Evangelist Mark presents it:

<sup>22</sup> And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul, and by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.” <sup>23</sup> And he called them to him, and said to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? <sup>24</sup> If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

<sup>25</sup> And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

<sup>26</sup> And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand,

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19. This may well account for Henry St. J. Thackeray’s emendation, “a teacher of such people as accept the *unusual* [reading *taēthē* (τὰήθη), instead of *talēthē* (τὰληθη), *truth*] gladly” (emphasis added). See Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus IX: Jewish Antiquities Books XVIII–XX* (LCL 433; London: Heinemann; Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 50 nn. 1 and a.

20. Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 231.

21. Robert Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist* (London: Methuen, 1931), 61–62.

22. See Ernst Bammel, *Judaica: Kleine Schriften I* (WUNT 37; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), 179–81, esp. 180 n. 25.

but is coming to an end.<sup>27</sup> But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man; then indeed he may plunder his house. (Mark 3:22–27)

The Markan Evangelist frames the story in an abrupt, even awkward manner. It is introduced with the confusing notice that “the crowd came together again,” with the result that “they could not even eat” (v. 20). As odd as this sounds, the Evangelist goes on to say that when those with him heard it, “they went out to seize him, for people were saying, ‘He is beside himself’” (v. 21). This introduction is so fraught with ambiguities it is no surprise that it is replaced by the Evangelists Matthew and Luke with simpler ways of introducing the story. More will be said about Mark's introduction shortly. Here is how the story is told in Matthew and Luke, who evidently have drawn upon a parallel version in Q:<sup>23</sup>

#### Matthew 12:22–30

<sup>22</sup> Then a blind and dumb demoniac was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the dumb man spoke and saw.<sup>23</sup> And all the people were amazed, and said, “Can this be the Son of David?”<sup>24</sup> But when the Pharisees heard it they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.”<sup>25</sup> Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand;<sup>26</sup> and if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?<sup>27</sup> And if I cast out demons by Be-elzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.<sup>28</sup> But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

#### Luke 11:14–23

<sup>14</sup> Now he was casting out a demon that was dumb; when the demon had gone out, the dumb man spoke, and the people marveled.<sup>15</sup> But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons”;<sup>16</sup> while others, to test him, sought from him a sign from heaven.<sup>17</sup> But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls.<sup>18</sup> And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Be-elzebul.<sup>19</sup> And if I cast out demons by Be-elzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.<sup>20</sup> But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.<sup>21</sup> When a strong man, fully armed,

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23. For discussion of what precisely constitutes Q in these parallel passages from Matthew and Luke, see John S. Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels: Synopsis, Critical Notes and Concordance* (Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1988), 90–93; James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg, eds., *The Critical Edition of Q* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress; Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 222–37. For detailed analysis, see Harry T. Fleddermann, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary* (BTS 1; Leuven and Paris: Peeters, 2005), 475–88.

<sup>29</sup> Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. <sup>30</sup> He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

guards his own palace, his goods are in peace; <sup>22</sup> but when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoil. <sup>23</sup> He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

Both Matthew and Luke omit all of Mark 3:20–21 and about half of v. 22 (the notice that scribes had come down from Jerusalem). Matthew and Luke begin the narrative with mention of the healing of a demonized man who was mute (Matt 12:22; Luke 11:14). Matthew adds that the demonized man was also blind, which is probably a Matthean gloss to the Q material that he has accessed (cf. Matt 15:30–31, where blind and mute are linked). There are other differences. Whereas Luke notes only that “the people marveled,” Matthew expands the account with the people asking, “Can this be the Son of David?” The epithet “Son of David” occurs ten times in Matthew, compared to three times in Mark and three times in Luke. The Evangelist Matthew is interested in accentuating Jesus’ identity as Son of David and healer.<sup>24</sup>

Matthew replaces Mark’s “scribes” with “Pharisees” (Matt 12:24). Luke only says, “some of them” (Luke 11:15). In contrast to Mark’s “He is possessed by Beelzebul” (Mark 3:22; lit. “He has Beelzebul”), Matthew and Luke read “by Beelzebul” (Matt 12:24; Luke 11:15), which probably reflects Q. Both Matthew and Luke preface Jesus’ reply with “knowing their thoughts” (Matt 12:25; Luke 11:17). Matthew and Luke share a core of non-Markan (i.e., Q) material in what follows (Matt 12:25–30; Luke 11:17–23). The one major difference between Matthew and Luke in this part of the story is that at 12:29 (“Or how can one enter a strong man’s house. . .”) the Matthean Evangelist seems to have followed Mark 3:27 (“But no one can enter a strong man’s house. . .”), rather than Q, as seen in the similar but clearly not the same analogy in Luke 11:21–22 (“When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace. . .”).

That Matthew and Luke are following Q more than they are following Mark is also seen in what follows in the Matthean sequence. What we see in Matt 12:33–37, which has no parallel in Mark, appears in Luke, but in different locations (cf. Luke 12:10 [= Matt 12:32]; Luke 6:43–45 [= Matt 12:33, 35]). The warning about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (cf. Mark 3:28–30) appears at Matt 12:32—thus in the same context and sequence—but elsewhere in Luke (cf.

24. On this theme, see Lidija Novakovic, *Messiah, the Healer of the Sick: A Study of Jesus as the Son of David in the Gospel of Matthew* (WUNT 2/170; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

Luke 12:10). The Matthean and Lukan forms of the warning are much closer to one another than either is to the Markan form, suggesting, once again, that the Matthean and Lukan Evangelists have followed Q, rather than Mark.

It is probable that the accusation against Jesus was preserved independently in Mark and Q and so we may speak of multiple attestation.<sup>25</sup> The story also enjoys some support from the criterion of coherence, for elsewhere in the Synoptic Gospels Jesus is depicted as casting out evil spirits (Mark 1:23–26; 3:11; 5:2–13; 7:25–29; 9:17–27) and in what seems to be an independent saying at Matt 10:24–25 (cf. Luke 6:40; John 13:16; 15:20) Jesus refers to those who call him “Beelzebul” (cf. Luke 6:40; John 13:16; 15:20). Moreover, the saying about casting out demons by the “finger” or “Spirit” of God (Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20) is widely regarded as authentic because of its distinctive features.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to coherence and multiple attestation the Beelzebul controversy is likely authentic on the grounds of embarrassment, for it is hard to see why the early Christian community would invent such a story. It is not difficult to imagine critics—be they Jewish or non-Jewish—suggesting that Jesus’ remarkable powers were sourced in the devil. We can see in the book of Acts great care to distance the miracles performed “in the name of Jesus” from any hint of magic.<sup>27</sup> It is highly unlikely, therefore, that Christian tradents would read a post-Easter controversy of this nature back into the pre-Easter public ministry. It is more probable that the controversy began in the pre-Easter setting and then continued after Easter.

There is yet additional indirect support for the Beelzebul controversy. This is found in the interesting story of the disciples who complain of the exorcist who invokes Jesus’ name but is not part of Jesus’ following. Jesus orders his disciples not to forbid this man (Mark 9:38–40). That this story flies in the face of early Christian views is seen in Acts, where a similar attempt on the part of the seven professional exorcists ends in disaster (cf. Acts 19:13–17). The story of the strange exorcist in Mark 9 can hardly be a post-Easter creation.<sup>28</sup> Its authenticity virtually

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25. The parallel at Matt 9:32–34 is probably a doublet, based on Matt 12:22–24.

26. Not too many critics have challenged the judgment uttered by Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972), 162: The saying (Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20) “can, in my view, claim the highest degree of authenticity which we can make for any saying of Jesus.”

27. On this interesting feature, see Hans-Josef Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity: The World of the Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

28. Not all will agree. For example, it has been suggested that saying “he was not following *us*,” instead of “he was not following *you*,” points to the post-Easter community. On this point, see Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 448. The choice of the personal pronoun perhaps could point in this direction, but the story as a whole, in which Jesus expresses openness to outsiders using his name, is hardly the view of the post-Easter

guarantees the historicity of Jesus' reputation as an exorcist, an exorcist so powerful that other professional exorcists invoked his name much as they invoked the names of other worthies, such as Solomon (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 8.45–49).

In short, the evidence for Jesus as exorcist is early and widespread and the charge that he was empowered by Beelzebul is in all probability part of that authentic tradition. As we shall see, Jesus' reputation as exorcist was both an asset and a liability.

The accusation that Jesus was in league with Satan or that he was a magician did not end with his death on the cross. The accusation continued and is attested in the second century in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*:

this Christ, who also appeared in your nation, and healed those who were maimed, and deaf, and lame in body from their birth, causing them to leap, to hear, and to see, by his word. And having raised the dead, and causing them to live, by his deeds he compelled the people who lived at that time to recognise him. But though they saw such works, they asserted it was magical art. For they dared to call him a magician, and a deceiver of the people [*phantasian magikēn ginesthai elegon. kai gar magon einai auton etolmōn legein kai laoplanon*]. . . . (*Dialogue* 69.7)

Similarly, in *1 Apology* 30 Justin Martyr asks: "What should prevent that he whom we call Christ, being a man born of men, performed what we call his mighty works by magical art [*magikē technē*], and by this appeared to be the Son of God?" Justin believes that he can refute the charge that Jesus practiced sorcery and so falsely appeared to be the Son of God by appealing to a number of Old Testament prophecies (*1 Apology* 31–36). Jesus did not perform mighty works through black magic, reasons Justin, but through the power of the Spirit, the Spirit that had inspired the prophecies that foretold his mighty works.

In this connection one should also consider the *Quadratus* fragment: "But the works of our Savior were always present, for they were true. Those who were healed and raised from the dead were not only seen when healed and raised, but

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community. See R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), 375–77; Joel Marcus, *Mark 8–16* (AB 27A; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 685–86. In any case, because Jesus has commissioned and empowered his disciples, so that they too can cast out evil spirits (Mark 6:7–13), it is hardly inappropriate to the pre-Easter setting for the disciples to speak of "following us" in reference to exorcism. At some stage in the ministry of Jesus the disciples themselves had become part of the ministry. The saying in Matt 7:22 ("On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'" ) may well represent a post-Easter qualification of Mark 9:38–40. See R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 294–95.

they were always present—and not just while the Savior was here, but even when he had gone they remained for a long time, so that some of them have survived to our own time” (*apud* Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.3.2).<sup>29</sup> This comment reflects the apologetic value that Christians attached to the miracles of Jesus, as recounted in the Gospels, and to the miracles that continued to take place in his name.<sup>30</sup> Tradition such as this, along with ongoing exorcism, prayer, and healing “in the name of Jesus,” would have been an integral part of the controversy with the synagogue. Of course, it hardly helped the Christian cause that the name of Jesus was in fact invoked in a variety of magical contexts, by exorcists and by writers and producers of magical texts, whether written on papyri, metals, or ceramic bowls. The name of Jesus was invoked by Jews and Pagans, not simply by Christians as one would expect.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, the apologetics of Quadratus and Justin Martyr did not settle the matter. In his *True Discourse* (ca. 178 C.E.) the philosopher Celsus, critic of Christianity, renewed the charge that it was through sorcery that Jesus performed his miracles. Perhaps as much as ninety percent of this work is preserved in quotations in Origen’s spirited mid-third-century rebuttal *Contra Celsum*.

Celsus, according to Origen, claims that Mary committed adultery and then

disgracefully gave birth to Jesus, an illegitimate child, who having hired himself out as a servant in Egypt on account of his poverty, and having there ac-

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29. See Bart D. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers* (2 vols., LCL 24–25; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 2:118–19. On Quadratus, see Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 219–20.

30. On the apologetic value of the miracles, see G. W. H. Lampe, “Miracles and Early Christian Apologetic,” in C. F. D. Moule, ed., *Miracles: Cambridge Studies in their Philosophy and History* (London: Mowbray, 1965), 203–18. In the same volume, see M. F. Wiles, “Miracles in the Early Church,” 219–34. See also Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire (A.D. 100–400)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 27–29. MacMullen believes that healing and exorcism, especially the latter, was the “chief instrument of conversion” and “the most highly rated activity” in the first two centuries of the Christian Church.

31. Some of the pagan texts include *PGM* IV.3007–86 (late-third century), where Jesus is referred to as the “god of the Hebrews,” *PGM* IV.296–44 (late-third/early-fourth century), where Jesus seems to be called the “Great Lord,” and a recently discovered ceramic magician’s cup (first century[?], Alexandria), where “through Christ” the magician derives his power. Some of the Jewish texts include Aramaic Magic Bowl 155 (fifth/sixth century), where “Christ” is one of several magical names, and Aramaic Magic Bowl 163 (fifth/sixth century), where there we find “in the name of Jesus who conquered the height and depth by his cross.” For discussion of Magic Bowl 163, see Dan Levene, “. . . and by the name of Jesus . . .” An Unpublished Magic Bowl in Jewish Aramaic,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 6 (1999): 283–308. For discussion of both magic bowls, see Dan Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls: Incantation Texts in Jewish Aramaic from Late Antiquity* (London: Kegan Paul, 2003), 110–15, 120–38. Christian texts are numerous.



quired some miraculous powers, on which the Egyptians greatly pride themselves, returned to his own country, highly elated on account of them, and by means of these (powers) proclaimed himself God. (*Cels.* 1.28)

Celsus echoes the Jewish slander that Mary's pregnancy was due to a Roman soldier named Panthera (cf. *Contra Celsum* 1.32, 69; *t. Hullin* 2.22, 24; *y. Shab.* 14.4, 14d; *b. Sanh.* 106a).<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, the second-century critic of Christianity compares the miracles of Jesus and his disciples

to the tricks of jugglers, who profess to do more wonderful things, and to the feats performed by those who have been taught by Egyptians, who in the middle of the market place, in return for a few obols, will impart the knowledge of their most venerated arts, and will expel demons from men, and dispel diseases, and invoke the souls of heroes.... (*Cels.* 1.68)

Elsewhere Origen complains of Celsus's accusation that Jesus and his disciples stood in the tradition of Egyptian sorcerers (*Cels.* 2.32, 48–49). Celsus is dependent on Jewish slanders dating to the time of Jesus, slanders that continued on through the first century (as reflected in the Gospels) and on into the second century and beyond. Here are some of these materials:

Jesus fled to Alexandria of Egypt.... And a master has said, "Jesus the Nazarene practiced magic and led Israel astray." (*b. Sanh.* 107b [uncensored manuscript])

Rabbi Eliezer said to the Sages: "But did not Ben Stada bring forth witchcraft from Egypt by means of scratches (in the form of charms) upon his flesh?" (*b. Shab.* 104b)

On the eve of Passover they hanged Jesus the Nazarene. And a herald went out, in front of him, for forty days saying: "He is going to be stoned, because he practiced sorcery and enticed [*hysyt*; *היסית*] and led Israel astray. Anyone who knows anything in his favor, let him come and plead on his behalf." But, not having found anything in his favor, they hanged him on the eve of Passover. Ulla retorted: "Do you suppose that he was one for whom a defence could be made? Was he not a *mesith* [*מסית*], concerning whom Scripture says, 'nor shall you spare him, nor shall you conceal him' [Deut 13:8 (Heb

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32. See the discussion of this tradition in Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 15–24.



9)]?” With Jesus, however, it was different, for he was connected to the kingdom. Our Rabbis taught: Jesus had five disciples.... (*b. Sanh.* 43a)

Jesus is called a *mesith* (“enticer”) because he “practiced sorcery and enticed and led Israel astray.” This description alludes to Deut 13:6–10 (Heb. 7–11): “If your brother ... entices you [*yēsītēkā*; יִסֵּיתְךָ] secretly, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods,’ ... you shall kill him ... you shall stone him to death.”<sup>33</sup>

This interesting passage asks why there was effort to find someone to plead on his behalf. After all, he was a *mesith* and according to Deut 13:6–10 he was not to be heard or pitied. Nevertheless, people were invited to “come and plead on his behalf.” Why this exception? Because, we are told, Jesus “was different, for he was connected to the kingdom.”

What we may have here is a summary of the passion story. Jesus is charged with leading Israel astray, which could reflect his trial before the Jewish high priest and court, in which Jesus is condemned for blasphemy for daring to suggest that he was the Son of God and would sit on God’s throne (Mark 14:61–64; cf. John 10:33b “we stone you ... for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God”). But the Jewish court in fact cannot condemn Jesus to death by stoning but must hand him over to the Roman governor who will crucify (or “hang”) him. The invitation to come forward and “plead on his behalf” may reflect the governor’s offer to release Jesus, in keeping with the annual Passover pardon (Mark 15:6–15). Unfortunately for Jesus, no one called for his release.

The rabbinic passage explains that an exception was made for Jesus “for he was connected to the kingdom [*mlkwt*; מַלְכוּת].” That is, Jesus proclaimed the kingdom (Mark 1:14–15) and was condemned by the Roman governor for claiming to be the “king of the Jews” (Mark 15:1–5). I doubt that the reference to the “kingdom” (or “government,” as some translate) has anything to do with Jesus’ Davidic or royal descent (as in the Synoptic genealogies or in Paul’s “descended from David according to the flesh” in Rom 1:3). It probably has to do with his well-known proclamation of the kingdom. Indeed, this could explain the reference to his disciples, to whom Jesus delegated the authority to proclaim the kingdom during his ministry and after his death and resurrection. The talmudic passage goes on to say that these disciples, as had their master, also met their doom, no doubt because like their master they continued to proclaim the kingdom (and Jesus as its king) and perform works of power, including exorcisms.

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33. On the tradition of Jesus as enticer and false prophet, see Graham N. Stanton, “Jesus: A False Prophet Who Led Israel Astray?” in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ. Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 164–80; Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 34–40.

What we find in the interesting tradition that Jesus was accused of sorcery is well-attested tradition. It is early, it is widespread, and it took on a life of its own in diverse post-Easter settings, invoked and applied in a variety of ways and in variety of religious settings and contexts. The “exegesis” of Jesus tends to be like that, for the historical figure generated a number of oral stories and literary texts and stimulated a rich and diverse legacy of debate and practice. The exegesis of the historical Jesus will inevitably be more complex than the exegesis of a written text. Accordingly, investigation of the historical Jesus requires careful consideration of a number of closely related fields of study. It cannot be purely literary. The task is daunting, but it is also rewarding.

### FOR FURTHER READING

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## FORM CRITICISM AND NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION\*

*Edgar V. McKnight*

Form criticism is designed to enable scholars to get behind the written sources of the synoptic Gospels and the life of Jesus identified by early literary criticism and to describe what was happening as the tradition about Jesus was handed on orally from person to person and from community to community. Form critics have worked out criteria for distinguishing those strata in the Gospels that reflect the concerns of the church (both Jewish Christian and Gentile Christian) from the stratum that might be thought to go back to the historical Jesus. Critics showed that the church's vital life exerted a creative influence on the form as well as the content of the tradition. This makes it possible to classify much of the material in the Synoptics according to literary form.

### THE PIONEERS IN NEW TESTAMENT FORM CRITICISM

With the necessity for a study of the preliterate period of Gospel origins established by New Testament scholars and the possibility for preliterate study established by Hermann Gunkel in his research on Genesis,<sup>1</sup> it was inevitable that the form-critical approach would be applied to the Gospel tradition. Three scholars are credited with beginning this new effort in the study of the Gospels

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\* The first parts of this essay are drawn from Edgar V. McKnight, *What Is Form Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969; repr. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 1997), 13–33, 38–51. Used by permission of Wipf and Stock Publishers. [www.wipfandstock.com](http://www.wipfandstock.com).

1. Hermann Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis: The Biblical Saga and History* (trans. W. H. Carruth; New York: Schocken, 1964). For insight into the work of Gunkel and its influence on New Testament Form Criticism and additional information about the form-critical study of Jesus, see McKnight, *What Is Form Criticism?*

in the years 1919 through 1921. In 1919 came *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu* (*The Framework of the Story of Jesus*) by Karl Ludwig Schmidt and *Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (*From Tradition to Gospel*, 1935) by Martin Dibelius. These were followed in 1921 by Rudolf Bultmann's *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (*History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 1963).

Schmidt carefully studied the entire Synoptic tradition from the perspective of the framework that the Gospel writers gave to the life of Jesus. He also gave some helpful suggestions as to the nature and origin of the individual units making up the Synoptic tradition. But Schmidt did not really utilize the tools of form criticism to pry back into the oral period of Gospel origins. This task was left for Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann.

Dibelius was the first to apply form criticism to the Synoptic tradition. Indeed the term "form criticism" came to be used in biblical studies because the title of his 1919 volume was *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*. Dibelius's purpose was to explain by reconstruction and analysis "the *origin* of the tradition about Jesus, and thus to penetrate into a period previous to that in which our Gospels and their written sources were recorded" and "to make clear the intention and real interest of the earliest tradition."<sup>2</sup>

Bultmann's volume first appeared in 1921, two years after that of Dibelius, with the purpose of "discovering what the original units of the synoptics were, both sayings and stories, to try to establish what their historical setting was, whether they belonged to a primary or secondary tradition or whether they were the product of editorial activity."<sup>3</sup> Bultmann submitted the entire Synoptic tradition to a searching analysis and, although Dibelius was the first of the two writers, Bultmann's name and method of analysis have been more closely associated with form criticism than has the name of Dibelius.

## PRESUPPOSITIONS OF THE EARLY FORM CRITICS

Form criticism moves from the existing text of the Synoptic Gospels to an earlier stage that does not now exist. In order to do this, certain things must be established or presupposed about the nature, origin, and transmission of the materials.

The early form critics accepted and built upon the conclusions of *source criticism*. Source criticism, however, is merely the starting point for form criticism,

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2. Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (trans. Bertram Lee Woolf; New York: Scribner's, 1935), iii.

3. Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. John Marsh; New York: Harper, 1963), 2-3.

for when form criticism is seen as the task of discovering the original units of the Synoptic tradition and of establishing the earlier history of the units, the written source of any particular unit is a matter of indifference.

The “fundamental assumption,” and in some sense the assumption that makes form criticism both necessary and possible, is that the tradition consists basically of individual sayings and narratives joined together in the Gospels by the work of the editors.

One body of material is seen as an exception to the rule that there were no connected narratives of the life of Jesus in the earliest period. This exception is the Passion narrative. The earliest Passion story, however, is not the Marcan story. Both Dibelius and Bultmann hold that the Marcan story is the end result of a very early process of transmission of tradition and that even in the earliest Passion story that we can reconstruct we do not have pure history.

*The tradition served the needs and purposes of the church.* This assumption is vital for Dibelius since he follows a constructive method and reconstructs the history of the Synoptic tradition from a study of the early Christian community. Even though Bultmann follows an analytical method that begins with the text instead of the church, he admits that he cannot “dispense with a provisional picture of the primitive community and its history, which has to be turned into a clear and articulated picture in the course of [his] inquiries.”<sup>4</sup> Dibelius sees the Christian movement as originating with the Aramaic-speaking Palestinian circle of Jesus, of course. Then comes a pre-Pauline Hellenistic Christianity in close proximity to Judaism. These pre-Pauline Christian churches were in Greek-speaking regions such as Antioch and Damascus and grew out of Jewish churches without making a logical break with Judaism. Still later comes the Pauline church, which is much less closely related to Judaism.

Dibelius declares that the Synoptic tradition did not acquire its form in the Aramaic-speaking Palestinian church or in the later Pauline church. The tradition acquired its form in the pre-Pauline Hellenistic churches closely associated with Judaism.

Bultmann’s approach does not demand as detailed a picture of the church as does the approach of Dibelius, hence Bultmann is satisfied to divide early Christianity into two basic phases: Palestinian Christianity and Hellenistic Christianity.

Dibelius and Bultmann assume that the materials can be classified as to form and that *the form enables the students to reconstruct the history of the tradition*. Dibelius says that a careful critical reading of the Gospels shows that the Gospel writers took over units of material that already possessed a form of their own. Dibelius is speaking of the “style” of a unit—a style or form that has been created

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4. Ibid., 5.

by its use among early Christians. The specific use to which a unit is put determines its form, and in the case of the early church the forms developed out of primitive Christian life itself. The units, therefore, have a form that is related to their place in the life of the church.

Bultmann is in complete accord with this assumption. "The proper understanding of form criticism rests upon the judgment that the literature ... springs out of quite definite conditions and wants of life from which grows up a quite definite style and quite specific forms and categories."<sup>5</sup> Every literary category then will have its own "life situation" (*Sitz im Leben*), which is a typical situation in the life of the early Christian community.

### THE "FORMS" OF DIBELIUS AND BULTMANN

Both Dibelius and Bultmann, following the example of a form critical study of the Old Testament, find a variety of forms in the Synoptic Gospels.

#### THE "FORMS" OF DIBELIUS

The main concern of Dibelius is with the narrative material of the Gospels, and he finds three major categories of narrative material in addition to the passion narrative: paradigms, tales, and legends.

*Paradigms.* The sermons of the early Christians did not contain simply the bare message of the gospel "but rather the message as explained, illustrated and supported with references and otherwise developed."<sup>6</sup> The narratives of the deeds of Jesus were introduced as examples to illustrate and support the message. These *examples* constitute the oldest Christian narrative style, and hence Dibelius suggests the name "paradigm" for this category of narrative.

*Tales.* The tales in the Gospels are stories of Jesus' miracles that originate in their present form not with preachers but with storytellers and teachers who related the stories from the life of Jesus "broadly, with colour, and not without art." Indeed, "*literary style in reporting miracles*, a feature that we missed on the whole from Paradigms, ... appears in the Tales with a certain regularity."<sup>7</sup> The style of the tales compares with the style of similar stories from ancient to modern times: first comes the history of the illness, then the technique of the miracle, and finally

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5. Ibid., 4.

6. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 25.

7. Ibid., 70, 82.

the success of the miraculous act. Tales belong to a higher grade of literature than paradigms.

*Legends.* Legends, “religious narratives of a saintly man in whose works and fate interest is taken,”<sup>8</sup> arose in the church to satisfy a double desire: the desire to know something of the human virtues and lot of the *holy* men and women in the story of Jesus, and the desire that gradually developed to know Jesus himself in this way. The story of Jesus when he is twelve years old (Luke 2:41–49) is the story of Jesus that shows most clearly the qualities of legend. “A narrator of legends is certainly not interested in historical confirmation, nor does he offer any opposition to increasing the material by analogies. But how much historical tradition he hands on in a legend depends on the character of his tradition only.”<sup>9</sup>

*Myth.* Dibelius is convinced that the story of Jesus is not of mythological origin; the paradigms, the oldest witness of the process of formation of the tradition, do not tell of a mythological hero. The only narratives that describe a mythological event, “a many-sided interaction between mythological but not human persons,” are the records of the baptismal miracle, the temptation of Jesus, and the transfiguration.<sup>10</sup>

*Sayings.* Although Dibelius emphasizes the narrative material of the Synoptic Gospels, he does deal with the sayings of Jesus. He finds preaching, especially catechetical instruction, as the place of formulation of such teachings, but he presupposes a law different from the law concerning narrative material to be at work in the sayings of Jesus. Just as the Jews of Jesus’ day took the rules of life and worship more seriously than they took historical and theological tradition, so the Christians treated the sayings of Jesus more seriously than the narratives. As the sayings of Jesus were transmitted, however, some modification took place. The tradition emphasized and strengthened the hortatory character of the words of Jesus and thereby altered the meaning and emphasis of words that were not originally hortatory. There was also a tendency to include christological sayings so as “to obtain from the words of Jesus not only solutions of problems or rules for one’s own life, but also to derive from them some indications about the nature of the person who had uttered them.”<sup>11</sup>

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8. *Ibid.*, 104.

9. *Ibid.*, 108.

10. *Ibid.*, 271.

11. *Ibid.*, 246.

## THE "FORMS" OF BULTMANN

Bultmann provides a detailed analysis of all the Synoptic material within the two general divisions of (1) the discourses of Jesus and (2) the narrative material. The discourses of Jesus are divided into two main groups: apophthegms and dominical sayings; but Bultmann also gives a separate treatment of "I sayings" and parables although by content they belong to the dominical sayings. The narrative materials are also divided into two major groups: miracle stories and historical narratives and legends.

*Apophthegms.* Bultmann's category "apophthegms" is basically the same as Dibelius's "paradigms." It applies to short sayings of Jesus set in a brief context. But Bultmann does not agree that the form arose in preaching in every case. Because of this he uses the term "apophthegm" instead of "paradigm," for it is a category from Greek literature denoting merely a short, pithy, and instructive saying that does not prejudice the matter of origin. Bultmann sees three different types of apophthegms characterized by the different settings or causes for the sayings: controversy dialogues; scholastic dialogues; and biographical apophthegms.

In Bultmann's opinion all three types of apophthegms are "ideal" constructions of the church. They are not historical reports. It is true that Jesus engaged in disputations and was asked questions about the way to life, the greatest commandment, and other matters. It is also true that the apophthegm could easily contain a historical reminiscence and that a decisive saying of a dialogue may go back to Jesus himself. But the apophthegms as they stand are church constructions—Palestinian church constructions, as may be seen by comparison with similar rabbinic stories.

*Dominical Sayings.* The sayings of Jesus are divided by Bultmann into three main groups chiefly according to their actual content, although formal differences are also involved. The three groups are: proverbs; prophetic and apocalyptic sayings; and laws and community regulations. The *proverb* shows Jesus as the teacher of wisdom comparable with teachers of wisdom in Israel, Judaism, and throughout the Orient. Three basic "constitutive" forms are used for the proverbs, forms conditioned by the sayings themselves. These forms exist in all proverbial literature, not only in the proverbial sayings in the Synoptic Gospels. The proverb in a *declarative form* sets forth a principle or a declaration concerning material things or persons: "The laborer deserves his wages" (Luke 10:7). Exhortations are placed in an *imperative form*: "Physician, heal yourself" (Luke 4:28). Proverbs also exist in the *form of questions*: "And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life?" (Matt. 6:27).

In regard to the genuineness of the proverbs, Bultmann sees several possibilities: that Jesus himself coined some of the proverbs that the Synoptics attribute



to him, that Jesus occasionally made use of popular proverbs of his time, and that the primitive church placed in Jesus' mouth many wisdom sayings that were really derived from the storehouse of Jewish proverbial lore. Bultmann's judgment is that the wisdom sayings are "least guaranteed to be authentic words of Jesus; and they are likewise the least characteristic and significant for historical interpretation."<sup>12</sup> *Prophetic and apocalyptic* sayings are those sayings in which Jesus proclaimed the arrival of the reign of God and preached the call to repentance, promising salvation for those who were prepared and threatening woes upon the unrepentant.

Bultmann sees proof in the little apocalypse of Mark 13:5–27 that Jewish material has been ascribed to Jesus by the church and he asks to what extent the rest of the material must be similarly judged. In some sayings the immediacy of eschatological consciousness is so different from Jewish tradition that Jesus himself must have been the origin (Luke 10:23–24). But there are other passages that contain nothing specifically characteristic of Jesus and where it is most likely that there was a Jewish origin (Matt 24:37–41). Not all sayings that are judged unlikely to have originated in Judaism come from Jesus, for the early church formulated some passages. Such a church origin is more likely the more there is a relationship of the saying to the person of Jesus, or to the lot and interest of the church. Bultmann asserts that "one may with perfect right recognize among them authentic words of Jesus; and though the Christian community itself produced many a prophetic saying, as may be clearly shown, it must nevertheless be recognized that, according to the testimony of the earliest Christians themselves, they owed their eschatological enthusiasm to the prophetic appearance of Jesus."<sup>13</sup>

The third group of sayings is made up of statements regarding *the law and Jewish piety* and *regulations of the early community*. Bultmann declares that the history of the sayings can be seen "with desirable clarity" in the legal material. He indicates that the church possessed a stock of genuine sayings of Jesus. Especially important and genuine are the brief conflict sayings that express Jesus' attitude to Jewish piety (Mark 7:15; 3:4; Matt 23:16–19, 23–24, 25–26). Concerning these Bultmann says that "this is the first time that we have the right to talk of sayings of Jesus, both as to form and content." The tradition gathered these genuine sayings, "gave them a new form, enlarged them by additions and developed them further; it collected other (Jewish) sayings, and fitted them by adaptation for reception into the treasury of Christian instruction, and produced new sayings from its consciousness of a new possession, sayings that they ingenuously put

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12. Rudolf Bultmann, "The Study of the Synoptic Gospels," in *Form Criticism: Two Essays on New Testament Research* (ed. and trans. Frederick G. Grant; New York: Harper, 1962), 55.

13. *Ibid.*, 56.

into the mouth of Jesus.”<sup>14</sup> Bultmann especially attributes to the church the Old Testament citations that are frequently found in combination with debating sayings, the sayings that contain rules for the discipline of the community and for its mission, and the sayings in which the church expressed its faith in Jesus, his work, his destiny, and his person.

The “I sayings” are those sayings attributed to Jesus in which he speaks of himself, his work, and his destiny. Bultmann admits that it is impossible to prove that Jesus could not have spoken in the first person about himself, but he brings such serious considerations against so many of these sayings that “one can have but little confidence even in regard to those which do not come under positive suspicion.”<sup>15</sup> The sayings as a whole express the retrospective point of view of the church. The “I sayings” were predominantly the work of the Hellenistic churches.

The *parable* is a concise and simple story that is much like a popular story in its concrete language, its use of dialectical language and soliloquy, and its repetition. It is a story told to call forth judgment on the part of the hearer; a judgment is made regarding the story of everyday human affairs and relations, then the judgment is applied in the realm of the spiritual life. Jesus, of course, spoke in parables, but the church transmitted the parables and used them for its own purpose. It is clear that here and there the form has been changed and applications added to the parables to make them more relevant to the later church. Such alterations are even seen in Matthew’s and Luke’s use of their written sources. But Bultmann sees more radical alteration by the church. The parables have been placed into particular contexts and given introductions that affect the *meaning* of the stories. At times the church placed a new parable alongside an older independent story. The church also enlarged parables by providing allegorical additions and explanations. Parables from the Jewish tradition were also used to augment the store of parables of Jesus.

The history of the parables in the tradition makes it clear that the original meaning of many of the parables of Jesus has become irrecoverable and that some of the parabolic material does not go back to Jesus but to the church. Bultmann concludes with a rule that enables us to discover genuine parables of Jesus. “We can only count on possessing a genuine similitude of Jesus where, on the one hand, expression is given to the contrast between Jewish morality and piety and the distinctive eschatological temper which characterized the preaching of Jesus and where on the other hand we find no specifically Christian features.”<sup>16</sup>

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14. Bultmann, *History*, 145–47.

15. *Ibid.*, 155.

16. *Ibid.*, 205.

*Miracle Stories.* Bultmann divides the narrative material of the Synoptic Gospels into two main groups: miracle stories and historical narratives and legends. He means by "miracle stories" what Dibelius means by "tales," namely, stories of healings and nature miracles in which the miracle constitutes the main theme and is described with considerable detail. Miracles occur among the apophthegms, but there the miracle is subordinated to the point of the apophthegm.

Bultmann compares the Synoptic miracle stories with the miracle stories of Jewish and Hellenistic origin and discovers that the Gospel stories have exactly the same style as the Hellenistic miracle stories. The condition of the sick person is described, the healing is recounted, then the consequences of the miracle are unfolded. Bultmann asks at what stage the tradition was enriched by the addition of miracle stories and concludes that a Palestinian origin is probable for several miracle stories. "Judging Mk. 4:35–41 (Stilling of the Storm) by its content, a *Palestinian* origin seems probable if the Jewish parallels are taken into consideration." The same holds true for the feeding stories and the healing of the leper. But "for the rest, the Hellenistic origin of the miracle stories is overwhelmingly the more probable."<sup>17</sup> The similarity between the miracle stories in the Synoptic Gospels and those in Hellenistic literature forces the conclusion that miracle stories by and large do not belong to the oldest strata of tradition.

*Historical Stories and Legends.* Legends, in Bultmann's definition, are religious and edifying narratives that are not properly miracle stories, although they may include something miraculous, and are not basically historical, although they may be based on historical happenings. Bultmann treats historical stories and legends together because he sees no possibility of separating the two. He acknowledges that some passages are purely legendary. An example is the narrative of the temptation of Jesus (Mark 1:12–13). But even the stories with a historical basis, in the view of Bultmann, "are so much dominated by the legends that they can only be treated along with them."<sup>18</sup> The historicity of Jesus' baptism by John, for example, is not to be disputed, but as the story is told in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 1:9–11) it must be classified as a legend. Its purpose is not historical but religious and edifying. It tells of Jesus' consecration as Messiah and is a faith legend. When the context is the faith or worship of the community, the result is a faith or cult legend; when the context is the life of some religious hero, the result is a biographical legend.

Bultmann observes that the legendary motifs in the narratives are of diverse origin. Some materials show the influence of the Old Testament and Judaism,

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17. Ibid., 240.

18. Ibid., 245.

others show Hellenistic elements, still others have motifs that have grown up within the Christian tradition itself.

The comprehensive form-critical studies of Dibelius and Bultmann and their application of form criticism to the life and teachings of the earthly Jesus continue to influence studies today. The discipline and its application to the life of Jesus have been modified by the work of scholars following Dibelius and Bultmann, however, and the following pages will sketch the scholarly evaluation and use of form criticism following the earliest work in the field and provide an illustration of a form-critical approach to a synoptic text.

### EARLY SCHOLARLY EVALUATION AND USE OF FORM CRITICISM

New Testament scholars differed widely in their reaction to form criticism. Some scholars continued to emphasize source criticism, accepting Mark as history, and virtually ignored form criticism. Others defended the *basic* historicity of Mark and the other sources of the Synoptic Gospels but were increasingly affected by form criticism.

#### BURNETT HILLMANN STREETER

B. H. Streeter was a source critic who summed up the results of the scientific study of the Gospels to his day in a great book, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins*. Streeter first published his work in 1924 and took no account of the work of form criticism. The analysis of sources was his object, and he saw the analysis of sources as extremely important in several respects. It assists in the study of the authorship, date, and locality of origin of the Gospels. But more important, it also enables us to evaluate the Gospels as "historical authorities for the life of Christ." Streeter feels that the range of sources (Mark, Q, M, and L) used by the Gospel writers very materially broadens the base for historical study of the life and teachings of Jesus and that the Gospels themselves must be seen as generally reliable historical documents because of the sources used by the Gospel writers.<sup>19</sup>

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19. Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (rev. ed.; London: Macmillan, 1930), 2.

ARTHUR C. HEADLAM

The year before Streeter's book appeared, A. C. Headlam published a work, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus the Christ*, which utilized the results of the analysis of the sources of the Gospels. Headlam sees himself as a defender of the "general credibility of the traditional account of the life and work of our Lord" against a school of critics that, while accepting Jesus as a real person and founder of Christianity, holds that the greater part of the contents of the Gospel tells us not what he taught, but what the Christian Church that grew up after His death thought."<sup>20</sup>

C. H. DODD

Although Streeter and Headlam wrote *after* the work of men like Wrede, Schweitzer, Schmidt, Dibelius, and Bultmann, they were still basing their work upon nineteenth-century presuppositions. After the work of the earliest form critics, however, it could not simply be presupposed that Mark was essentially a historical presentation of Jesus of Nazareth that, when supplemented from the other sources, would represent a reliable history of the life and teachings of Jesus. Such a thing must be *proved*, and the basic postulates of the form critics must be disproved. It is not surprising, therefore, that scholars attempted to refute the postulates that would deny to them the use of the sources as authorities for reconstructing a life of the earthly Jesus.

In 1932 C. H. Dodd challenged the assumption of form criticism regarding "The Framework of the Gospel Narrative."<sup>21</sup> In particular, he dealt with the work of K. L. Schmidt. Dodd acknowledged that "Professor Schmidt seems to have made out his case that the main stuff of the Gospel is reducible to short narrative units, and that the framework is superimposed upon these units."<sup>22</sup> Dodd denied, however, that the order of the units is arbitrary and he denied that the framework is only an artificial construction. The conclusion Dodd drew is that "we need not be so scornful of the Marcan order as has recently become the fashion ... there is good reason to believe that in broad lines the Marcan order does represent a genuine succession of events within which movement and development can be traced."<sup>23</sup> But it is clear that Dodd acknowledged a great measure of the presup-

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20. Arthur C. Headlam, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus the Christ* (2nd ed.; London: John Murray, 1927), 9.

21. This is the title of an article by Dodd appearing in *Expository Times* 43 (1932): 398–400. It was reprinted in C. H. Dodd, *New Testament Studies* (New York: Scribner's, 1952), 1–11.

22. *Ibid.*, 3.

23. *Ibid.*, 11.

position of Schmidt and the form critics as far as the nature of the tradition is concerned.

#### T. W. MANSON

T. W. Manson, a noted English New Testament scholar and teacher, whose career continued until his death in 1958, remained throughout his lifetime much more confident of the historicity of the Gospel tradition than did the form critics. Manson's first and most important work, *The Teaching of Jesus*, is an admirable study of Jesus' teaching from the perspective of source analysis. It was first published in 1931 and it was written as if form criticism did not exist.

Manson's overall judgment on form criticism is that the discipline should deal strictly with the *form* of the various units. "In fact if form-criticism had stuck to its proper business, it would not have made any real stir. We should have taken it as we take the forms of Hebrew poetry or the forms of musical composition."<sup>24</sup>

#### HARALD RIESENFELD AND BIRGER GERHARDSSON

In maturing reaction to form criticism, two Scandinavian scholars, Harald Riesenfeld and Birger Gerhardsson, attempted to prove false the postulate upon which the discipline of form criticism most depends, that the formation of the material took place in the later Christian community. They attempted to demonstrate that Jesus delivered fixed material, both teachings and narrative, to his disciples to hand down to others.

Harald Riesenfeld stated the basic arguments in an address delivered at the opening session of the congress on "The Four Gospels in 1957" at Oxford.<sup>25</sup> He admits that form critics had made some permanent achievements in their research: they made a formal analysis of the individual units in the Gospel material. These units originally circulated in an oral form but were eventually written down, first in small groups of independent units and then in our Gospels. The elements of tradition were influenced by the life of the church, which passed them on or gave them their final written form. But Riesenfeld holds that when form criticism went further and explained the *beginning* of the Gospel tradition by the activity of the early church it went astray. He asserts that the original source of the Gospel tradition was not preaching, catechetical instruction, or controversy,

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24. T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus: Studies of its Form and Content* (2nd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 6.

25. Harald Riesenfeld, *The Gospel Tradition and its Beginnings: A Study in the Limits of "Formgeschichte"* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1957).

but that “the beginning of the Gospel tradition lies with Jesus himself.” In Jesus’ day Jewish tradition was transmitted in accordance with firmly established laws. There was not a vague, uncontrolled diffusion of stories, tales, and anecdotes, but a rigorously controlled transmission of material from a master to a specially chosen student.

A pupil of Riesenfeld, Birger Gerhardsson, in his book *Memory and Manuscript*, carried forward Riesenfeld’s work by presenting in great detail the evidence from Judaism and early Christianity that supports their case.<sup>26</sup> The first half of the book is a helpful discussion of how both written and oral Torah was transmitted in Judaism. The second half of the book uses the writings of Paul, Luke, and the early church fathers to try to find evidence of a transmission of tradition in early Christianity similar to that in Judaism.

#### BURTON SCOTT EASTON

Cautious acceptance and use characterized the attitude and practice of most New Testament scholars regarding form criticism. This was true of American and particularly of English New Testament scholars. Burton Scott Easton was one of the earliest American scholars to have evaluated form criticism. In December 1927, he gave a series of lectures at the General Theological Seminary, New York, in which he dealt with form criticism.<sup>27</sup> Some of the units of the tradition, in the estimation of Easton, may be classified as to form. The form known to Dibelius as paradigm and to Bultmann as apophthegm is an obvious form; the miracle story is also a “definite type of story with abundant parallels throughout the ancient world everywhere”;<sup>28</sup> and the parable is a highly distinctive form of teaching. But attempts to classify other narrative and teaching material have not proved helpful, and form critics violate the “rule” when they classify in any way other than by form. “When Dibelius speaks of ‘myths,’ for instance, he violates this rule, for the myth has no set form of any kind. The name describes not the outward structure but the contents of a narrative.”<sup>29</sup>

The value of discovering the form is not nearly so great in the estimation of Easton as it is in the estimation of Dibelius and Bultmann. The very form that a narrative takes, paradigm and tale, for example, is taken by Dibelius to indicate date and historical value. But Easton, while agreeing that there are different ten-

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26. Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Tradition in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (trans. Eric J. Sharpo; Lund: C. W. K. Gleup, 1961).

27. Burton Scott Easton, *The Gospel before the Gospels* (New York: Scribner’s, 1928).

28. *Ibid.*, 67.

29. *Ibid.*, 61–62.

dencies in the paradigms and tales, says, "Neither need be the outgrowth of the other, ... why might not the preacher, the storyteller, and the teacher be one and the same person?"<sup>30</sup> Form criticism as a tool to establish the history of the tradition, therefore, has a very limited utility.

#### VINCENT TAYLOR

Vincent Taylor very cautiously evaluated form criticism as a legitimate tool, in lectures given at the University of Leeds in 1932. He does not see the discipline as a totally negative tool at all. In fact, he declared, "Form-Criticism seems to me to furnish constructive suggestions which in many ways confirm the historical trustworthiness of the Gospel tradition."<sup>31</sup> It is obvious that Taylor has to modify the basic postulates and procedures of the earliest exponents of form criticism in order to come to his conservative results. Although he is in basic agreement that the earliest tradition consisted of small isolated units, he finds evidence of longer connected blocks of material and affirms that Mark is no "formless collection," although "the outline is less complete than has been supposed" by earlier critics.<sup>32</sup> Taylor traces the historical materials in the Gospel back to eyewitnesses. The influence of eyewitnesses must be qualified; everything in Mark's Gospel does not go back to Peter's testimony. "But when all qualifications have been made, the presence of personal testimony is an element in the formative process which it is folly to ignore."<sup>33</sup> If the form critics who deny the influence of eyewitnesses are right, in the opinion of Taylor, "the disciples must have been translated to heaven immediately after the Resurrection."<sup>34</sup>

Taylor's view of the *origin* of the tradition differs from the view of Dibelius and Bultmann. The church did not *originate* the tradition although it did take the recollections of the words and deeds of Jesus and apply them to its needs. As the church did not originate the tradition, it did not greatly alter the tradition. At times an "ideal" element entered into the tradition, circumstances were misunderstood, and words of Jesus colored by ideas and beliefs of those passing along the tradition. But "what is this beyond that which we might reasonably expect? ... A

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30. Ibid., 80.

31. Vincent Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (London: Macmillan, 1933; 2nd ed., 1935), vi.

32. Ibid., 47.

33. Ibid., 43.

34. Ibid., 41.



reconstruction which implies the untrustworthiness of the greater part of the tradition is wanting in probability and is not just to the Gospel records.”<sup>35</sup>

Some “forms” in the tradition are found by Taylor, but he does not feel that all of the materials can be analyzed on the basis of forms. The paradigm or apophthegm is a form “in which oral tradition naturally clothes itself.”<sup>36</sup> But Taylor is not satisfied with the names used by Dibelius and Bultmann. “*Paradigmen* ... is too general and is too exclusively associated with the theory that the stories were formed under the influence of preaching,” and “*apophthegmata* is literary rather than popular and, by concentrating attention too much on the final word of Jesus, it almost invites a depreciatory attitude to the narrative element.”<sup>37</sup> Taylor suggests the term “Pronouncement-Stories.” This leaves the possibility of origin open and it emphasizes the main element, a pronouncement of Jesus on some aspect of life, belief, or conduct. Taylor also sees good reason to assume the existence of another popular narrative form, called “miracle stories” by Bultmann and “tales” by Dibelius. He chooses to use Bultmann’s term “miracle stories.”

The general expression “Stories about Jesus” is used by Taylor for the remaining narratives about Jesus, for the material has no definite structural form. Although there is no one narrative form for these stories about Jesus, the narratives do have some common characteristics. “In almost all cases Jesus stands in the centre and usually secondary characters are not named or described. Conversations take place between two persons, or between Jesus and a group; in a few stories only, like the Penitent Thief, are three speakers introduced.”<sup>38</sup> Taylor suggests that these speeches show that practical aims rather than narrative interests were responsible for the formation of the stories. He also suggests that the formative process of the stories about Jesus is more one of shortening than one of embellishment. Since “this is exactly what ought to be the history of genuine historical tradition ... the result ... of a study of the formal aspect of the Stories about Jesus is to strengthen confidence in their historical value.”<sup>39</sup>

Little justification is found for Bultmann’s classification of the sayings of Jesus into proverbs, prophetic and apocalyptic sayings, laws and community regulations, “I sayings,” and parables. “The terms do little more than describe stylistic features; they do not denote popular forms into which an individual or a community unconsciously throws sayings.”<sup>40</sup> The parable, however, is a form that is

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35. Ibid., 38.

36. Ibid., 29.

37. Ibid., 30.

38. Ibid., 166.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., 31.

important. Taylor sees parables as circulating orally, singularly or in pairs, and later collected. Introductions were added by the Evangelists and sayings of similar character added to the original parables. But Taylor is very critical of Bultmann's skepticism of the authenticity of the parables, and in general Taylor is more confident of the authenticity of the Synoptic sayings than Dibelius or Bultmann. He acknowledges that there was a creative power of the community and that the tradition has been influenced in its transmission. But "substantially the sayings tradition is historically trustworthy," and "the tradition of the words of Jesus is far better preserved than we have any right to expect, and with much greater accuracy than is to be found in the record of the words of any great teacher of the past."<sup>41</sup> "A limited tool" is Taylor's evaluation of form criticism. But he reminds us that a tool is something to be used, whatever its limitations may be.

#### ROBERT HENRY LIGHTFOOT

Form criticism received a champion in England in R. H. Lightfoot at the University of Oxford. Although Lightfoot disclaims the title of "champion" of the claims of form criticism, in the Bampton Lectures of 1934 he introduced the insights of the form critics to his countrymen,<sup>42</sup> and in this series of lectures and later works he applied the method to the Gospel of Mark.

In a later work Lightfoot questioned whether form criticism "will help us to draw nearer to the central Figure of the Gospels, in His historical manifestation."<sup>43</sup> This is true because the church preserved the tradition not primarily for historical interests but for religious interests. The most valuable aspect of form criticism, then, is the way it seeks to relate the individual stories to the life of the church that preserved them and used them to give its message to the world. "In this way the gospels can be to us . . . within limits that need to be carefully guarded, a mirror of the hopes and aspirations, the problems and the difficulties, of the early Church."<sup>44</sup>

The fact that the tradition had virtually no order and arrangement before being set down in the Gospels brought Lightfoot to ask what the writers sought to convey by their selection and arrangement of the material. This question placed more emphasis upon the personality and intention of the individual Evangelists than had earlier form critics, and Lightfoot's interest in the total purpose of the

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41. Ibid., 110–13.

42. Robert Henry Lightfoot, *History and Interpretation in the Gospels* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935).

43. Robert Henry Lightfoot, *The Gospel Message of St. Mark* (Oxford Clarendon, 1950), 105.

44. Ibid., 102.

Evangelists led him to apply form criticism to the Gospels in a different way than the earlier scholars. The purpose of Mark, according to Lightfoot, is not simply or chiefly biographical; it is doctrinal. Although Mark deals with history and contains materials that are important in a study of the life of Jesus, his chief purpose is "to show the history in the light in which he himself sees it, and wishes his readers also to regard it . . . to interpret the history and to set forth . . . its meaning and significance."<sup>45</sup> Lightfoot became a pioneer in yet another method of Gospel study, redaction criticism.

#### THE CHALLENGE OF STRUCTURALISM

In the 1960s and 1970s a number of different models of reading and interpretation attempted to complement or replace the form-critical model. Synchronic literary approaches used structural linguistics as a model. Diachronic historical models used historical linguistics as a resource. The most radical linguistic approach was offered by Erhardt Güttgemanns. His 1970 book<sup>46</sup> was not only a series of "candid questions," it was a declaration that the whole tradition of New Testament scholarship has to be shelved. Historical criticism had to be replaced by a linguistic exegesis based on the principle of structural linguistics. Form criticism was the first opponent to be demolished in Güttgemanns' work, for (according to him) history and the sociological situation of the early church had nothing to do with the essence of the self-contained small units or forms of the synoptic Gospels. The forms on a deep level grow out of nonhistorical anthropological and linguistic factors.

The power of the historical model was tested by the structuralist perspective, and form criticism will not be the same after this testing. Güttgemanns was influenced by French narratology to stress the profound level of the literary structure. An earlier East European formalism provided theoretical and practical resources for development and use of a view of textual unity or structure that is energetic and dynamic and capable of responding to cultural and individual development and valuation. Nonliterary factors influence literature not in a direct way or in a way to change the nature of literature. Literary structure is dynamic and not

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45. Ibid., 98.

46. Erhardt Güttgemanns, *Offene Fragen zur Formgeschichte des Evangeliums: Eine methodische Skizze der grundlagenproblematic der Form und Redaktionsgeschichte* (BET 54; Munich: Christian Kaiser, 1970); English edition: *Candid Questions Concerning Gospel Form Criticism: A Methodological Sketch of the Fundamental Problematics of Form and Redaction Criticism* (trans. William G. Doty; Pittsburg Theological Monograph Series 26; Pittsburg: Pickwick, 1979).

static, capable of responding to its different contexts and maintaining the nexus of internal relationships. The “determinant” structure of meaning is not a static “summative whole,” but it exists in a ceaseless stage of movement.

A comprehensive New Testament study will be open to all sorts of questions: the different levels and kinds of historical and literary structures, the dynamic relationship between the nexus of literary factors and the reader, the dynamic relationship between the reader and the community, and the dynamic structure of the readers themselves. Nevertheless, the conventional form-critical approach to reading the New Testament text has not been effectively challenged by the linguistic and literary approaches.

### A FORM-CRITICAL READING OF A SYNOPTIC TEXT: MARK 2:13–17; MATTHEW 9:9–13; LUKE 5:27–32

A form-critical reading in the conventional sense is concerned with what the reader can discover and/or imaginatively reconstruct historically about the meaning and function of the unit of tradition passed down in the biblical text. The analysis and evaluation of the analysis will concentrate on the steps that are acknowledged as helpful and legitimate by the form-critical conceptualization. Central are the questions of “form” and *Sitz-im-Leben*.

An initial approach to the text will attempt to find the earliest written form so that the reader can concentrate upon that form. In the case of the double narrative of the call of Levi and the meal with tax collectors, the earliest form is Mark, so attention may be focused on Mark.

The reader has the task of moving behind the text of Mark by distinguishing between the traditional material and the framework provided by the Evangelist. Verse 13 is the redactional introduction of the Evangelist. This introduction situates the unit temporally (“again”) and locally (“by the sea”). As is common (see for example 2:2; 3:7–9, 20; 4:1), it is stated that a large crowd comes to Jesus and Jesus teaches them. Verse 13 introduces the following unit and ties together the two narratives of the call of Levi and the meal with tax collectors in terms of action and locale. The two narratives are united in an external way by means of the word “tax collectors” but they are brought together in terms of content as in both Jesus accepts tax collectors and sinners in his community and thus makes visible the forgiveness of God.

The unity of the two narratives is shaped by the Evangelist—with the notice “and he got up and followed him” concluding the first narrative and the second connected to the first with a simple “and.”

The time of the meal is not given so it is not evident why one should think of a direct succession of events. The change of scene from the tax booth of Levi

(verse 14) to the house in which “many tax collectors and sinners were sitting with Jesus and his disciples” is not spelled out. It is to be understood from the relationship set up in the narratives.

In whose house does the meal take place? When the two narratives are taken as a unity, the house is taken to be that of Levi. But when the emphasis is on the second narrative, it is natural to think of the house as that of Jesus.

For the first time the disciples of Jesus are mentioned. Their unexpected entry is made clear in the sentence “and there were many who followed him,” a redactional statement of the Evangelist. Just as unexpected is the “scribes of the Pharisees” as opponents of Jesus. And it remains unclear when and where they direct their questions to the disciples.

We have here a combination of the paradigm and the controversy dialogue. In his example of a form-critical analysis, Heinrich Zimmerman notes the marks of the paradigm in the narrative of Levi’s call: the rounding off of the narrative, its brevity and simplicity, its style of construction, the clear impression of the word of Jesus, and finally its conclusion and the simple exemplary action. It is a paradigm showing how the Lord calls and indicating what the one who is called is to do. Thereby the original *Sitz im Leben* of the narrative is indicated.<sup>47</sup> The second narrative is to be defined formally as a controversy dialogue. That is, it contains the report of a controversy of Jesus with his opponents, which is resolved through a definite act. That act is the sharing of the meal of Jesus with tax collectors and sinners. The opponents are characterized as scribes of the Pharisees. They take offense at the action of Jesus and challenge his disciples. Jesus himself pronounces that it is not the well who need the physician but the sick and affirms that he has not come to call the righteous but sinners.

The scheme of the controversy dialogue is easily seen: the unusual action of Jesus gives impetus to the challenging question of his opponents. Jesus’ basic answer brings them to silence. The question of the opponents, “why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners” allows us to recognize that according to the opinion of his opponents Jesus should act otherwise than he has acted and shows that a complete separation from the opponents has not yet taken place.

Zimmerman cites D. Daube’s conclusion: “The form dates from a time when it was vital to defend the ways of the new community—revolutionary actions—in a technical scholarly Pharisaic manner.”<sup>48</sup> Zimmerman concludes: “Mark has formed the call of Levi and the meal with tax collectors as a unity. The originally

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47. Heinrich Zimmerman, *Neutestamentliche Methodenlehre: Darstellung der historische Kritischen Methode* (Stuttgart: Kathologisches Bibelwerk, 1978), 184.

48. D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (Jordan lectures 1952; London: The Athlone, 1956), 175.

independent story of call is made into an introduction for the controversy dialogue that is to follow in which the word of Jesus carries the emphasis. In other words, out of the two originally independent narratives one paradigm has developed.”<sup>49</sup>

### FOR FURTHER READING

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49. Zimmerman, *Neutestamentliche Methodenlehre*, 186.

## SOURCE CRITICISM OF ACTS

*Joseph B. Tyson*

In its simplest manifestation, source criticism is the study of a text with an effort to determine the sources used by the text's author. In some cases the alleged sources consist of other texts that are available to us, while in others the possible sources are hypothetical. For the most part, a source designates a written text, whether extant or not. But many practitioners of source criticism also include an author's use of traditions, which are usually thought to have existed orally. Others cite documents that may have influenced an author in the composition of the text.

Source criticism of the Synoptic Gospels is a classic illustration of the study of the interrelationships of extant documents. Since three Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—having substantial similarities are available to us, questions about their relationships are inevitable. Did all three Gospel writers draw on an earlier text that is no longer extant, or is one of the three a source for the other two, or is some other explanation to be sought? Source criticism of the Synoptic Gospels is a special study called the Synoptic Problem, a topic to be dealt with in another contribution to this *Festschrift*.<sup>1</sup>

Here our attention will be focused on the source criticism of the Acts of the Apostles, where the literary situation is entirely different from that pertaining to the Synoptic Gospels. Acts is the earliest-known narrative of Christian beginnings, dealing with the activities of Jesus' followers in the years 30–60 C.E. Only the letters of Paul remain for us now as writings from the Jesus movement that deal with approximately the same period. Unless Paul's letters can be regarded as sources for data in Acts, source criticism of Acts is almost altogether confined to theories about alleged hypothetical texts and traditions.

It would seem obvious that the author of Acts would have used sources for his composition. If, as it is universally believed, this author also wrote the Gospel of Luke, it stands to reason that he would have used basically the same procedures

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1. See the essay by Mark Goodacre on pp. 177–92.

in the composition of both books. Although there are various solutions to the Synoptic Problem, it is clear that the author of the Gospel of Luke made abundant use of other texts, usually determined to be Mark and Q. It seems reasonable to assume that, in writing the Acts of the Apostles, the author did not depart from his procedure of drawing on other written texts. Further, the scope of Acts is such that its author would seemingly be required to draw on a variety of materials produced by others from earlier times and distant regions.

There are, however, good reasons to avoid being overly hasty in drawing conclusions about the sources of Acts. Although we might expect an author to use similar methods in the composition of two books, we need to recognize that, for the composition of books of a different character, different methods may be required or useful. Furthermore, the literary situation with respect to Luke and Acts is not the same. In the case of Luke, we know that other texts were in existence. The author says so in his preface to the Gospel (Luke 1:1). But we have no evidence that the same was true in reference to narrative documents dealing with the period covered by the book of Acts. To repeat: the only extant Christian literature from this early period consists of letters of Paul, and we shall return to their significance for the source criticism of Acts later in this essay. Ernst Haenchen suggested that a lack of material from this early period is just what we should expect. He observed that the expectation of an imminent return of Jesus provided no motivation for believers to write stories about his followers.<sup>2</sup>

The history of criticism on sources for Acts has been adequately covered in a number of studies and needs no rehearsal here.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, a focus on selected approaches proposed by leading scholars may illustrate the assumptions and methods that have been at work. In what follows I make no attempt to be exhaustive but only to focus attention on those approaches to the sources of Acts that represent major distinctions in terms of method and provide support for diverse interpretations of Acts. It seems desirable to treat these approaches under three headings: hypothetical sources; traditions; and extant sources. By hypothetical sources, I mean to designate those theories that cite written but no longer extant texts that are thought to underlie the book of Acts. For the most part, such sources are thought to be connected accounts of a series of events. By traditions, I mean fragmentary bits of information that probably circulated in primarily

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2. Haenchen famously observed that "a generation which thinks itself the last does not write for posterity" (Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* [trans. Bernard Noble and Gerald Shinn; Oxford: Blackwell, 1971], 84).

3. See, e.g., Jacques Dupont, *The Sources of Acts* (trans. K. Pond; New York: Herder & Herder, 1964); Richard I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Polebridge, 2006), 347–58.



oral form and came to our author in a variety of ways. By extant sources, I mean to designate actual texts that are still available to us and, in one way or another, informed or influenced the writing of Acts.<sup>4</sup> In each section below, I will describe the methods used and then illustrate the resulting interpretations by examining the approaches to Acts 15.

## HYPOTHETICAL SOURCES

Over a century ago Adolf Harnack declared that it was all but impossible to determine the sources of Acts by using linguistic evidence. He wrote, “As for the first half of the book, every attempt to make a scientific analysis of the sources on the basis of vocabulary and style has proved abortive. A most thorough and detailed investigation has taught me that everything here is so ‘Lukan’ in character that by the method of linguistic investigation no sure results can be attained.”<sup>5</sup> Harnack did not, however, abandon the source criticism of Acts but rather proposed different criteria for the study. His analysis had a remarkable influence on the study of Acts, although one sees little reference to it in the twenty-first century.

Despite his evident despair at the negative results of previous scholarship, Harnack did not hesitate to propose that the author of Acts drew on certain sources. Actually, Harnack was convinced that the “we-sections” of the book (Acts 16:10–17; 20:5–16; 21:1–18; 27:1–28:16) showed that the author was present with Paul at least for some of the episodes he described. So, he wrote:

If St. Luke the Physician is the author of the Acts, the question of sources is simply and speedily settled for the whole second half of the book. So far as a considerable portion of this second half is concerned, he has written as an eye-witness, and for the rest he depends upon the report of eye-witnesses who were his fellow-workers.<sup>6</sup>

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4. Dennis R. MacDonald, in a number of publications, has made a compelling case for understanding the Homeric epics as models that the author of Acts used in shaping some of his narratives. See especially, MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer? Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). Clearly the LXX was also a source for Acts both as a model and a source for quotations. Unfortunately, space does not allow for the treatment of these texts here, and we must confine our attention to those materials that may have provided data for the author’s narratives.

5. Adolf Harnack, *The Acts of the Apostles* (NTS 3; trans. J. R. Wilkinson; London: Williams & Norgate, 1909; repr., Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2000), 163.

6. *Ibid.*, 162.

Thus the problem of sources applies only to the first half of Acts, and here Harnack asserted that the search for sources must not depend on an analysis of the language. Traditional narratives, he maintained, are always related to persons and places, and so he set out to discern the sources of Acts mainly in terms of the location that appears to be central to each narrative. Harnack was quite specific in citing the alleged sources for each of the narratives in the first half of Acts, that is, through chapter 15. He had the greatest confidence in what he called Source A (Acts 3:1–5:16; 8:5–40; 9:31–11:18; 12:1–24). It is basically a unified written text that is, for the most part, historically dependable. Harnack recognized that it contained legendary elements, but he was confident that these elements can be discerned and claimed that “beneath the whole there lies a nucleus of historical fact.”<sup>7</sup> Source B, however, including Acts 1–2; 5:17–42, consists of duplicates of material in Source A and is far inferior. About Source B Harnack wrote that, “apart from some few details, as compared with A it is worthless; where it is trustworthy in its record the order of events is confused, it combines things that have no real connection with one another, it omits what is important, it is devoid of all sense of historical development.”<sup>8</sup>

But Acts 1–15 has more material than is contained in Sources A and B. As observed above, Harnack despaired of sorting out the sources of Acts on the basis of linguistic analyses. Sources, he claimed, should be determined by their identification with places or persons, and Harnack set out to do just that. But one may ask if this task can be accomplished definitively. Harnack’s own analysis illustrates that this is not a simple matter. He begins by taking a survey of Acts 1–15, and then draws a conclusion:

*This survey seems to teach us that, with the exception of xiii.1–xiv.28, a section that begins and ends in Antioch, we are throughout concerned with traditions connected with Jerusalem, for even where the action of the narrative is carried on in other scenes, Jerusalem still remains the place whence it proceeds and to which it in many instances returns. We might accordingly formulate the very simple conclusion that the Acts in its first half, with the exception of chaps. xiii and xiv., presents us with tradition purely connected with Jerusalem.*<sup>9</sup>

But he immediately observes that things are not so simple, and he notes an Antiochean interest that begins as early as chapter 6. Indeed, many items in this section should be identified with persons—Stephen, Barnabas, and Saul. Harnack

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7. Ibid., 244.

8. Ibid., 194.

9. Ibid., 166; italics original.

provisionally designates the third source as Antiochene, but then amends the designation:

We have described the source as "Antiochean." But we may, indeed we must, also call it "Jerusalem-Antiochean"; for, as has been shown, the bond of connection between Jerusalem and Antioch is in it most carefully noted and recorded, and it includes accounts concerning the primitive history of the Church of Jerusalem which are quite unique, important, and trustworthy, and even more detailed than those concerning Antioch."<sup>10</sup>

The Jerusalem-Antiochean source consists of Acts 6:1-8:4; 11:19-30; 12:25-15:35, a source that, in Harnack's view, originated with Silas.

Finally, we have the narrative of the conversion of Saul in Acts 9:1-30, which, according to Harnack came from the apostle's personal recollections. We may recapitulate Harnack's source criticism of Acts as follows:

Source A: Acts 3:1-5:16; 8:5-40; 9:31-11:18; 12:1-24.

Source B: Acts 1-2; 5:17-42.

Jerusalem-Antiochene Source: Acts 6:1-8:4; 11:19-30; 12:25-15:35.

Paul's Personal Recollection: Acts 9:1-30.

Luke's Records and Recollections: Acts 16-28.

Clearly, Harnack's chief interest was in the historical reliability of Acts. The great majority of episodes in the second half, depending on no sources other than the author's memory and that of other eyewitnesses, are reliable. The reliability extends to the characterization of Paul, which, in Harnack's judgment, should not depend solely on his own writings. For the first half of Acts we have written sources that emerged from the early days of the Jerusalem and Antioch churches and which Harnack regarded as basically dependable. Harnack was, however, aware of mistakes that the Lukan author made. He discussed the grammatical, linguistic, and historical errors in Acts but concluded that they do not prohibit the conclusion that the author was a companion of Paul: "The few historical mistakes in matters of detail, with which it is possible to charge the author, are not at all to the point; for St. Luke has the right to make a mistake, especially when he was not an eyewitness and was dependent upon the reports of others."<sup>11</sup>

Harnack's interpretive method may be illustrated by reference to Acts 15. Although he found most of the chapter to be historically reliable, he maintained

10. Ibid., 201.

11. Ibid., 235.

that this reliability did not extend to the so-called Apostolic Decree in Acts 15:20, 29. As a part of the narrative of the council of apostles, the verse would have come from his Jerusalem–Antiochene source, a source in which Harnack had great confidence. This source, he says, has a high historical worth. “But there is *one* account in this source which seems to threaten its trustworthiness—I refer to the Apostolic Decree of the Council of Jerusalem.”<sup>12</sup> The rest of the chapter presents no difficulties, but the decree is inconsistent with statements in the Pauline letters, most notably Gal 2:1–10. In addition, there is nothing in the rest of the Acts that demonstrates any interest on the author’s part in dietary regulations, not even the vision of Peter in chapter 10. Making use of textual-critical studies, Harnack concludes that the original decree did not include a prohibition of eating meat from an animal that had been strangled, that is, the Greek word *pniktōn* was an early interpolation. Thus, “these three ordinances against Idolatry, Murder, and Fornication are intended to exclude the whole sphere of non-moral conduct.”<sup>13</sup>

A method of source criticism that depends on hypothetical sources does not dictate a conservative interpretation such as Harnack’s, but it does support those approaches that probe for the history that may lie behind the book.

## TRADITIONS

By the middle of the twentieth century, confidence in Harnack’s solution to the source problem of Acts had waned, but there was still an interest in ferreting out the materials that the author may have used in compiling his narrative. At a time when form criticism was widely embraced as a method for reconstructing the historical Jesus, Martin Dibelius virtually ignored source theories for Acts such as Harnack’s.<sup>14</sup> He was intent on determining the usefulness of form criticism for uncovering the sources that may have been used by the author of Acts but was, nevertheless, aware that some adjustments needed to be made in order to make use of this method. Form criticism of the Gospels assumed that sayings and stories of Jesus circulated orally for some time before they were set in writing, but the same assumption could not be made about the materials that we find in Acts. Dibelius wrote:

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12. Ibid., 248.

13. Ibid., 258.

14. See Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (ed. Heinrich Greeven; trans. Mary Ling; New York: Scribner’s, 1956; repr., *The Book of Acts: Form, Style, and Theology* [ed. K. C. Hanson; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004]).

In Acts we are not at all entitled to presuppose the same state of affairs that prompted the examination of the Gospels from the form-critical point of view—the fact that authors preserve the forms created by tradition. For we have yet to consider whether the author of Acts had any such tradition at his disposal. So we cannot, in the first place, consider this work from the aspect of form-criticism, but only from that of its style.<sup>15</sup>

For example, Dibelius excludes paranesis, as being inappropriate in Acts. Moral teaching is sometimes included in the speeches, but these, he claimed, are Lukan compositions, and there is no evidence that the author drew on traditional forms for this material. The *novellen* or tales, as in the Gospels, are not found in Acts. Dibelius notes that these forms are associated with “Christological-cultic interests” connected with Jesus but not with his followers. Instead, we have legends about them, and Dibelius lists several.

Dibelius was able to identify one important item that did not originate with the author of Acts. He maintained that underlying the central section of Acts (13:1–14:28; 15:35–21:16) there is an itinerary of Paul. It probably included “notes of his [Paul’s] journeys, of the founding of communities, and of the results of evangelization.”<sup>16</sup> Evidence that an itinerary was a source for Acts is to be seen in the uniformity of the designations of place. Moreover, locations are mentioned that seem to have no interest for the author, in that he includes no narrative materials about them. Dibelius is confident that Luke did not invent this list of stations.

Had the writer worked without such a source and used only local traditions of the communities, he would probably have considered certain stations more fully, but excluded others. And if he had been anxious to invent something for the edification or entertainment of his readers, we should certainly not read in his book the reports from Derbe (14:21), Thessalonica (17:1–9), and Beroea (17:10–15), which serve neither to edify nor to entertain.<sup>17</sup>

Dibelius insists that the “we-sections” did not constitute a source used by the author of Acts. “The frequently used ‘we’—which, under the influence of modern historical ideas, used to be taken at one time as the earliest element of the whole account of the journey—was, perhaps, only introduced by Luke into his version in order to make it clear that he himself took part in Paul’s journeys.”<sup>18</sup> “The ‘we’

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15. Dibelius, *Book of Acts*, 34.

16. *Ibid.*, 35.

17. *Ibid.*, 35.

18. *Ibid.*, 29.

would then be, not as was once thought, an original element, but an addition.”<sup>19</sup> The sea voyage in Acts 27:1–28:16, which is narrated in the first-person plural and is often taken as the prime illustration of its basis in a source, “is taken from the numerous accounts of sea-voyages in literature and not from experience.”<sup>20</sup>

The hand of the author is especially to be seen in the speeches in Acts. Dibelius maintains that Luke followed the strategies of his literary predecessors in writing speeches for his characters. He would not have had access to real speeches, and there is little probability that a written source or oral tradition would have preserved the wording or even the gist of these speeches. Moreover, for Greek writers, the main function of a speech was to further the action or to provide insight into the situation or the character of the speaker. After a survey of selected ancient writers, Dibelius comments:

This survey was merely intended to show concerning historical writing in ancient times that, where it contains speeches, it follows certain conventions. What seems to the author his most important obligation is not what seems to us the most important one: establishing what speech was actually made. To him, it is rather that of introducing speeches into the structure in a way that will be relevant to his purpose. Even if he can remember, discover, or read somewhere the text of the speech that was made, the author will not feel obliged to make use of it. At most he will use it in composing the great or small pattern of the speech with which he provides his account. . . . In any case, the tradition of ancient historical writing teaches us that even the interpreter of historical speeches of such a kind must first ask what is the function of the speeches in the whole work.<sup>21</sup>

Into the brief itinerary source at Luke’s disposal he inserted materials that originated from traditional stories. These are, for the most part, oral traditions about pious people; they are fragmentary and brief. For the most part they may be described as legends, and, in some cases, they resemble the form of paradigms in the Gospels. These traditions include:

The lame man at the gate of the temple (3:1–10)  
Ananias and Sapphira (5:1–11)  
Simon the sorcerer (8:9–24)  
Conversion of the eunuch (8:26–39)  
Raising of Tabitha (9:36–42)

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19. *Ibid.*, 26.

20. *Ibid.*, 31.

21. *Ibid.*, 53.

Cornelius (10:1–11:18)  
 Peter's release from Prison (12:5–17)  
 Death of Herod (12:20–23)  
 Elymas (13:8–12)  
 Release of Paul and Silas in Philippi (16:25–34)  
 Sons of Sceva (19:14–16)  
 Reviving of Eutychus (20:7–12)  
 Paul on Malta (28:1–6)

In each case Dibelius includes a brief analysis in which he attempts to separate traditional material from Lukan additions and to identify the type of tradition involved, that is, legend, tale, or anecdote.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast to Harnack, Dibelius almost totally discards any theory of sources, understood as connected written accounts. The only "source" is the itinerary, which served Luke as a structural device, but it did not include Acts 1–5, and it ceased after Acts 21:16. The "we-sections" do not form any similar source. But Luke did have a number of fragmentary oral traditions that he used to fill in the itinerary source. Even in making use of the traditions, Luke included his own additions, consisting of redactional material and, frequently, speeches. The result for the interpreter of Acts is that, except for the speeches, it is very difficult to separate the Lukan from the traditional materials. This may be done only by a close analysis of each individual narrative, and Dibelius has given some illustrations of this method. The method turns out, however, to be similar to his form-critical treatment of the Gospels. Dibelius is right to note that the book of Acts is of a different genre from the Gospel of Luke and that the situation facing the author was different in the cases of the two books. Believers may have preserved sayings of and stories about Jesus, but they were unlikely to have developed traditions about the apostles. Thus, Dibelius distinguishes between form criticism, appropriate for the Gospels, and style criticism, appropriate for Acts, although in the applications the methods sometimes overlap.

The most important contribution of Dibelius was to deny that significant written sources underlay the Acts of the Apostles. Only the bare itinerary that noted places and achievements of Paul was available to him, and that only for the central part of his book. Otherwise, the author made use of various oral traditions to fill out the itinerary, and to these he added considerable material of his own composition. Dibelius rarely raised questions of historicity when dealing

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22. Ibid., 39–48.

with the traditional materials, but we might observe that, in contrast to Harnack, he left very little that might even be considered as historically based.

Dibelius's interpretation of Acts 15 may serve to illustrate his methods. This chapter of Acts, which tells of the meeting of the apostles in Jerusalem to determine the requirements for Gentile admission into the group of believers, rests on no source, written or oral. It has no claim to historicity. Only Gal 2 has historical worth as an account of such a meeting. Luke's report is literary-theological, as may be seen by the reference to the conversion of Cornelius in Acts 15:5–7. Here Peter refers to this event as the opening to Gentiles. It is only readers of Acts who may even understand the reference, and so Peter's remarks could not have stood independently of Acts. The same is true of the allusion to the work of Barnabas and Paul (Acts 15:12): the readers of Acts understand the allusion, but the characters within the narrative had no access to it. James's reference to Cornelius (Acts 15:14), likewise, is understandable only to the readers of Acts. Dibelius asks, "Who would recognize the allusion if he did not know the story already?"<sup>23</sup> In regard to the decree in Acts 15:20, 29, Dibelius did not think that Luke constructed it but that he came across it somewhere and attached it to the end of the council meeting as a seemingly appropriate conclusion. It was not, in fact, the conclusion of the council, since it is next to impossible to believe that Paul could have agreed to it, nor could he have concluded that "those leaders contributed nothing to me" (Gal 2:6). Dibelius is abundantly clear in asserting that the only historical source for the apostolic council is that of Paul. Luke's account should be understood as a representation of his theological position in a literary form.

We need no division into sources in order to understand the text. We need only be clear as to Luke's intention and follow the indication that he gives in twice mentioning the story of Cornelius. The thesis that he has upheld by his treatment is fulfilled here; God himself, by causing the Gentile centurion to be accepted into Christianity, has revealed his will that the gospel should be freely carried to the Gentiles. This, not the course taken by the convention, is important to Luke. He simply tells the story of what went before and adds to the end the decree with its four clauses, which he had come across somewhere in Antioch, Syria or Cilicia.<sup>24</sup>

Gerd Lüdemann may be regarded as a recent analyst of Acts who works along the lines set out by Dibelius.<sup>25</sup> Lüdemann's procedure is to distinguish between the

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23. Ibid., 137.

24. Ibid., 138–39.

25. See Gerd Lüdemann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary* (trans. John Bowden; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); idem., *The Acts of the Apostles: What*



redactional activity of Luke and the traditions available to him. He then makes judgments about the historical authenticity of the traditions, observing that only the traditions behind Acts can be so examined, not the book of Acts itself. Lüdemann defines tradition broadly, as “written sources, oral tradition, and also general information which Luke had ...,”<sup>26</sup> but rarely does he actually cite written materials as tradition.

Lüdemann accepts most of the basic conclusions of Dibelius, including the contention of Luke’s access to a bare-bones itinerary and his authorship of the speeches. He acknowledges the difficulty in separating redaction from tradition in Acts, but maintains that it is possible to identify Lukan themes and usages and compare them with material in various episodes. Tradition may be discerned where there are “indications of tensions which do not derive from Luke’s evident intention, for example, or by un-Lukan expressions. Nevertheless, the possibility of tradition must always be demonstrated separately. . . Still, it is important to recognize that elements of tradition *can* be discovered as the basis of *individual* sections without resorting to broad-spectrum source theories.”<sup>27</sup>

Lüdemann’s approach, although similar to Dibelius’s, demonstrates the fact that similar source theories do not always lead to similar interpretations. Lüdemann finds more evidence of tradition and history behind Acts 15 than does Dibelius. Relying mainly on the account of Paul in Gal 2, he lists a number of historical elements that populate the two accounts. He emphasizes that the speech of Peter in Acts 15:7–11 is not historical and that Luke predates the conference and suggests that the conflict ended with it. But the presence of Barnabas and Paul at the conference, as well as the issues and the outcome, are historical. Even the decree in Acts 15:20 may be historical. Lüdemann writes:

It may well be that the decree (or some similar protocol) applied primarily to the mixed community of Antioch represented by Barnabas, whereas Paul’s predominantly Gentile-Christian communities were little if at all affected. If in fact Barnabas returned to Antioch following the conference, perhaps he and Judas carried the rule for mixed communities to the fellowship there.”<sup>28</sup>

Contrary to Dibelius, Lüdemann concludes: “All in all, then, a high degree of historical reliability attaches to the elements of tradition underlying Acts 15:1–29.”<sup>29</sup>

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*Really Happened in the Earliest Days of the Church* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus, 2005).

26. Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*, 9.

27. Lüdemann, *Acts*, 20, italics original.

28. *Ibid.*, 191.

29. *Ibid.*

## EXTANT SOURCES

Lurking behind the approaches described above is the assumption, implicit or explicit, that in composing Acts the author did not have access to the letters of Paul and so made no use of them. The assumption is plausible since Luke makes no reference to Paul's writing a single letter and betrays little knowledge of his theology as represented in the authentic letters available to us.

Although F. C. Baur and his associates had dated Acts in the second century and laid grounds for assuming that the author of Acts was acquainted with some letters of Paul, this view had long fallen out of favor by the time of Harnack and Dibelius.<sup>30</sup> But in 1966, John Knox forcefully raised again the question of Luke's acquaintance with the Pauline letters.<sup>31</sup> He confronted an apparent impasse: he recognized that Luke made no use of Paul's letters in Acts but also acknowledged that Luke must have been acquainted with at least some of the letters. Knox wrote:

This impasse should lead us to examine the hidden major premise of both sides, namely: If Luke knew the letters of Paul, he must have used them. I believe we are forced by the literary evidence (or rather, by the lack of it), on the one hand, and by the a priori probabilities, on the other, to question this premise and to consider seriously the possibility that Luke knew, or at least knew of, letters of Paul—even *the* (collected) letters of Paul—and quite consciously and deliberately made little or no use of them.<sup>32</sup>

Knox maintained that Acts was composed in the early-second century as an anti-Marcionite text and that one of the author's purposes was to disassociate Paul from Marcion. He noted that the use of Paul's letters may have been counter-productive to this purpose and would have seriously detracted from the image of Paul that the author wished to convey.

Several recent studies have questioned the very premise that leads to this difficulty and have provided grounds for believing that Luke both knew and made

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30. Baur's discussion of the historical value of Acts as a source for the story of Paul stressed the contrasts between it and Paul's letters. He understood Acts as a post-apostolic document that was intended to reconcile the differences between Pauline Christians and Jewish Christians. He had a very low regard for the historical value of Acts. See, e.g., Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, his Life and Work, his Epistles and his Doctrine: A Contribution to the Critical History of Primitive Christianity* (2 vols.; 2nd ed.; trans. Allan Menzies; ed. Eduard Zeller; London: Williams & Norgate, 1876), 1:1–241.

31. See John Knox, "Acts and the Pauline Letter Corpus," in *Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays Presented in Honor of Paul Schubert* (ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn; Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 279–87.

32. *Ibid.*, 284.

use of Paul's letters. William O. Walker, Jr., followed a lead of Morton S. Enslin and cited evidence that Luke both knew and used some of Paul's letters.<sup>33</sup> He agreed with Enslin that Acts 15 was a deliberate alteration of Gal 2 and concluded that Luke wanted to rescue Paul from those who would misuse him in order to support their own points of views, notably Gnostics and Marcionites.

In a later article, Walker subjected Acts 15 and Gal 2 to a detailed comparison and maintained that Luke made use of this letter of Paul.<sup>34</sup> Walker stressed the remarkable ideational and verbal similarities between Peter's speech in Acts 15:7–11 and Gal 2, the entirety of which he took to be Paul's account of the Jerusalem conference. Walker concluded that Luke almost certainly used Galatians as his source for the Jerusalem conference. He noted that in Acts Peter has taken over the role of Paul, in proclaiming to Gentiles a gospel free of Torah. Further, Walker listed ten ideational and verbal similarities between Acts 15 and Gal 2 that, in his judgment, can best be explained by assuming that Luke used Paul's letter as a source, and he concluded:

In short, virtually every idea and much of the actual wording of Peter's speech in Acts 15:7–11 have parallels either in Paul's report regarding the Jerusalem Conference (Gal 2) or elsewhere in the Galatian letter. Indeed, the Acts passage is so remarkably similar to the material in Galatians as to suggest that the author of Acts almost certainly knew this letter and, indeed, used it as a source in constructing Peter's speech at the Jerusalem Conference.<sup>35</sup>

The most exhaustive and comprehensive argument for the use of Paul's letters in Acts is that of Richard I. Pervo.<sup>36</sup> Pervo draws on the work of Walker and others to form a comprehensive argument for the use of Paul's letters in Acts and for their influence on the Gospel of Luke. He cautions that scholarship on the Synoptic Problem is not an adequate guide in studying the relationship between Acts and the Pauline letters, even if certain broad observations are possible. One may say that since Luke omitted sections of Mark and altered others, we should expect

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33. See William O. Walker, Jr., "Acts and the Pauline Corpus Reconsidered," *JSNT* 24 (1985): 3–23. See also Morton S. Enslin, "'Luke' and Paul," *JAOS* 58 (1938): 81–91; idem., "Once Again, Luke and Paul," *ZNW* 61 (1970): 253–71. See also Heikki Leppä, "Luke's Critical Use of Galatians," (Ph.D. diss., University of Helsinki, 2002).

34. See William O. Walker, Jr., "Acts and the Pauline Corpus Revisited: Peter's Speech at the Jerusalem Conference," in *Literary Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays in Honor of Joseph B. Tyson* (ed. Richard P. Thompson and Thomas E. Phillips; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1998), 77–86.

35. *Ibid.*, 82.

36. See Pervo, *Dating Acts*; idem., *Acts: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; ed. Harold W. Attridge; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009).

much the same procedure in the case of his use of the Pauline letters. But linguistic analyses of Mark and Luke can show that entire pericopes are parallels, that within individual pericopes there is significant verbal agreement, and that there is often agreement in sequence in a string of pericopes. Studies of Acts and the Pauline letters are necessarily more subtle. They must focus on fragments and short phrases, rather than full sentences or paragraphs. Pervo calls attention to a number of unusual expressions that occur in similar contexts or treat similar situations. He is aware that no single pair of passages, taken by itself, can prove that Luke was acquainted with Paul's letters, but he is convinced that the presence of a significant number of apparent parallels constitutes a weighty cumulative argument.

Altogether Pervo treats some 86/87 places in Acts that exhibit traces of Pauline letters, including Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 Thessalonians. The presence of Ephesians and Colossians in this list is significant in showing that what was available to Luke was a collection of letters assumed to be by Paul. It means that Luke wrote after the publication of the deuteropauline letters and that, unlike modern scholars, he was unable to distinguish between authentic and inauthentic Pauline letters. This observation virtually excludes contentions that Luke may have known the real Paul. The Paul known to Luke was the Paul who had been filtered through the deuteropauline school.

Pervo makes no claim that all the citations he analyzes are of equal weight. Some he characterizes as small traces or random echoes. But some passages are weighty. He pays significant attention to a comparison of Acts 15 and Gal 2. Here we meet, as he fully recognizes, some of the thorniest issues in all of NT scholarship, but Pervo is convinced that Acts 15 was written with Galatians in mind. Indeed, the letter to the Galatians was Luke's chief source of information about this meeting of Paul and the Jerusalem leaders. Pervo calls attention to similar descriptions of the cause of conflict, the participants at the meeting, the sequence of events, and similar verbal expressions as evidence of literary dependence. He agrees with Walker's conclusions about the speech of Peter in Acts 15:7–11, but he adds an important qualification: "The Peter of Acts conveys the ideas of Paul in Galatians, but he does so with the accents of Ephesians. In short, the speech of Peter in Acts 15:7–11 is a paraphrase of Galatians as Galatians could be understood in a later period. The speaker is a 'Deutero-Pauline Peter.'"<sup>37</sup> Pervo has in mind passages such as Eph 2:8, where "salvation" is substituted for "justification," the term we frequently meet in the authentic Pauline letters. He notes further that

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37. *Ibid.*, 94.

Luke shares the deuteropauline concern to flatten out differences between Peter and Paul.

A major reason that earlier scholars did not conclude that Luke used Galatians in constructing his narrative about the apostolic council is not that they ignored the similarities but that they misperceived Luke's intent. Pervo maintains that one of Luke's purposes in Acts 15 was to subvert Gal 2. He writes, "To put it rather sharply, in the matters of the dispute at Antioch Luke has turned Galatians 2 upside down. Galatians appears to be his major source, but what he claims is quite opposed to what Paul says in Galatians. In other words, Luke can sometimes use Galatians as he sometimes rewrites Mark."<sup>38</sup>

This recent line of scholarship has succeeded in mounting a serious counter-argument to the usual assumption about the non-use of Paul's letters by the author of Acts. It has shown that there is now sufficient reason to question the conviction that Acts was written in ignorance of the Pauline letters. The implications for the interpretation of this book are significant. Luke is to be seen not so much as a collector of anonymous traditions or hypothetical sources, but as a sophisticated author who has not only a story to tell but a theology to advance.

For Harnack, Acts 15 is a basically reliable report of an apostolic meeting drawn from a written, albeit hypothetical, source. For Dibelius it is a literary creation of Luke aimed at supporting his view of the admission of Gentiles into the believing community. For Lüdemann it is based on a group of anonymous traditions that contain an impressive bit of historical information. For Pervo, Acts 15 is based on Gal 2, its chief source, and this means that it is to be interpreted as a subversion of the Pauline report of the meeting. Although Paul is a hero in Acts, it is necessary for Luke to mold his character so that it accords with his own theological and ecclesiastical principles. So Paul and Barnabas are not led to go up to Jerusalem by a revelation; they were commissioned to meet with the apostles. They are not the chief spokespersons at the meeting. Rather Peter, as representative of the apostles, defends the Pauline point of view. James, as the leader of the Jerusalem community, gives the final judgment, and the meeting concludes with a decree that, if we read Paul rightly, he could not have accepted. For the author of Acts 15, matters of great magnitude affecting church order are to be decided by the apostles, under the guidance of the spirit. This body cannot conclude, as Paul maintained, that "those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those leaders contributed nothing to me" (Gal 2:6 NRSV). Nor could a gospel free of Torah be fully acceptable. Rather, the constituted leaders (see Acts 1:21), with

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38. *Ibid.*, 92.

the concurrence of the spirit, determined that some minimal requirements from Torah must remain for Gentile converts to the Jesus movement.

If we are to accept the view that Luke knew and made use of some Pauline letters, we will need to de-emphasize the use of Acts in the quest for the history of Christian beginnings, but we may then develop an understanding of the author as a skilled writer with a specific theological agenda. Acts 15 becomes a part of the author's attempt (1) to portray Paul as a major Christian missionary who acts with fidelity to the apostles and remains a loyal Pharisaic Jew; and (2) to portray the early Christian movement as led by the spirit and united under the leadership of a group of duly constituted apostles.

### CONCLUSION

If it does nothing else, this essay should demonstrate some of the complexity involved in the source criticism of Acts. Decisions about sources are closely related to decisions about the date, authorship, and purpose of Acts, issues that have not been our concern here. The connections should, however, be noted. For Harnack, the author of Acts was a contemporary and companion of Paul, who travelled with him on some occasions. He drew on his own resources for the latter half of the book and made use of sources, some written connected accounts, some oral and fragmentary, for the first half. Although Harnack's early studies dated Acts late in the first century (80–93 C.E.), he gradually moved it to an early date and finally concluded that it was written in the early sixties before the death of Paul. Dibelius and Lüdemann agreed that Acts was written toward the end of the first century, but, as we have seen above, they came to different conclusions about the historical value of the traditions used by the author of Acts. Pervo and those scholars who think that Luke knew and used the letters of Paul necessarily date the composition of Acts to a late date (ca. 115 C.E.), at least to a date following the generally accepted date for the collection of Paul's letters—90 C.E. A major contribution of this group is the understanding of an author who wrote in order to caution his readers against what he conceived to be a false interpretation of Paul and his gospel.

The study of Acts is a notable illustration of the fact that source criticism is not done in a vacuum, without interrelationships to decisions about dates, authors, and purposes. Nor is it carried out without producing major consequences for interpretation.

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## REDACTION CRITICISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

*Adela Yarbro Collins*

Although coined for the study of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), John Barton's definition applies to New Testament studies as well:

Redaction criticism is a method of biblical study that examines the intentions of the editors or *redactors* who compiled the biblical texts out of earlier source materials. It thus presupposes the results of source and form criticism and builds upon them.<sup>1</sup>

He also notes that Willi Marxsen appears to have invented the term “Redaktionsgeschichte,”<sup>2</sup> which may be translated either “redaction history” or “redaction criticism.” Barton pointed out that “redaction-critical analysis of OT texts is considerably older” than the term invented and applied to Mark by Marxsen.

Similarly, students of the New Testament must observe that, in practice, redaction criticism was an aspect of form criticism. For example, Martin Dibelius began by isolating and naming the main forms of the Synoptic tradition: paradigms, tales, and legends.<sup>3</sup> After discussing analogies in other bodies of literature and the passion narrative, he turned to the phenomenon of “synthesis.”<sup>4</sup> Earlier in the book, he articulated the view that:

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1. John Barton, “Redaction Criticism (OT),” *ABD* 5: 644–47; quotation (slightly modified) from p. 644; emphasis original.

2. Willi Marxsen, *Der Evangelist Markus: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956); English edition: *Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969); Barton, “Redaction Criticism (OT),” 644.

3. Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Scribner's, 1935; 1st German edition 1919), chs. 3–5.

4. *Ibid.*, ch. 8.

The position taken by the evangelists in forming the literary character of synoptic tradition is limited. It is concerned with the choice, the limitation, and the final shaping of the material, but not with the original moulding.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, he endeavored to show that the interests of the author of Mark as collector and editor "can be recognized in the biographical motives at the beginning of each section." It was Mark who "began to transform the tradition into a narrative of Jesus' work." His narrative aim can be seen in "the predominance of narrative pieces of tradition and by the 'historicizing' of complexes of sayings." The rest of the chapter entitled "Synthesis" attempts to show "how the evangelists [made] a book out of the traditions."<sup>6</sup> The techniques in the case of Mark include the introduction of pragmatic and incidental remarks, the interpretation of tradition, the editing of the parables, the presentation of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus, and the construction of the messianic secret.

The other great pioneer and practitioner of form criticism, Rudolf Bultmann, proceeded in a similar way. The first major part of his book treats "The Tradition of the Sayings of Jesus." The second concerns "The Tradition of the Narrative Material." Part 3 treats "The Editing of the Traditional Material." Section A of this last major part discusses "The Editing of the Spoken Word." This discussion includes the collection of the material and the composition of speeches, as well as the insertion of the speech material into the narratives of each of the Synoptic Gospels. In section B, the editing of the narrative material and the composition of each of the three Gospels is treated.<sup>7</sup>

### REDACTION CRITICISM EMERGES AS A DISTINCT METHOD

In 1954 Hans Conzelmann published a study of Luke. The German title, in English translation, is *The Middle of Time: Studies on the Theology of Luke*.<sup>8</sup> Although Conzelmann did not use the term "redaction criticism," he declared in the introduction:

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5. Ibid., 3.

6. Ibid., 223.

7. Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (rev. ed.; New York: Harper & Row, 1968; translated from the 2nd German ed. (1931) with corrections and additions from the 1962 German supplement), 319–67.

8. Hans Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit: Studien zur Theologie des Lukas* (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 17; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1954). The English translation was based on the second edition of 1957: *The Theology of St Luke* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960; copyright 1961).

The first phase in the collection of the traditional material (up to the composition of Mark's Gospel and the Q sayings) has been clarified by Form Criticism. Now a second phase has to be distinguished, in which the kerygma is not simply transmitted and received, but itself becomes the subject of reflection. This is what happens with Luke. This new stage is seen both in the critical attitude to tradition as well as in the positive formation of a new picture of history out of those already current, like stones used as parts of a new mosaic.<sup>9</sup>

The "kerygma" is understood here as the proclamation of the early church, which focused on Jesus. Karl Ludwig Schmidt had shown clearly that "the framework of the life of Jesus" found in the canonical Gospels is not historically reliable.<sup>10</sup> In Conzelmann's view, following C. H. Dodd, "the narrative [of Mark] itself provides a broad unfolding of the kerygma."<sup>11</sup> In contrast:

Luke defines the narrative as the historical foundation, which is added as a secondary factor to the kerygma, a knowledge of which he takes for granted (Luke i, 4). The factual record is therefore not itself the kerygma, but it provides the historical basis for it.<sup>12</sup>

In part 1 of the book, Conzelmann discusses the geographical elements in Luke, indicating their distinctive significance by constant comparisons with Mark and Matthew.

Part 2 of the book is devoted to Luke's eschatology. On this subject, Conzelmann famously concluded, "The main motif in the recasting to which Luke subjects his source [Mark], proves to be the delay of the Parousia, which leads to a comprehensive consideration of the nature and course of the Last Things."<sup>13</sup> At the time Conzelmann wrote, it was generally accepted that apocalyptic expectation was a major factor in the origins of the early Christian movement. This conclusion was highly problematic, however, for many in the twentieth century and was dealt with in various ways by exegetes and theologians. As we look back

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9. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke*, 12. The phrase "the Q sayings" in the English edition is an imprecise translation of *Logienquelle* in the German, i.e., "the Sayings Source" (*Mitte der Zeit*, 4; 1st ed. 1954).

10. Karl Ludwig Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu: literarkritische Untersuchungen zur ältesten Jesusüberlieferung* (Berlin: Trowitzsch, 1919); Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke*, 9.

11. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke*, 11. Charles Harold Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936).

12. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke*, 11.

13. *Ibid.*, 131.

on this situation, it now seems that Conzelmann dealt with the issue by overstating the way in which the End has receded into the distant future for the author of Luke.<sup>14</sup> The overstatement, for example, is especially clear in Conzelmann's treatment of Luke 21:32, "Truly I say to you that this generation will surely not pass away until all things happen."<sup>15</sup> He is right that Luke's omission of *tauta* from his source (Mark 13:30) transforms the saying from a reference to the things that have just been narrated to a statement about the whole divine plan. His inference, however, that "this generation" in the Lukan version means "humanity in general," is unwarranted.<sup>16</sup>

Willi Marxsen's redaction-critical study of Mark appeared after Conzelmann's of Luke. Marxsen's work, however, had already been submitted to the Theology Faculty of the University of Kiel when Conzelmann's was published.<sup>17</sup> Marxsen noted that the method, in his case, was inspired by Gerhard von Rad's studies of the Pentateuch. With regard to the interpretation of Mark, he saw himself as drawing upon some ideas of Ernst Lohmeyer and taking them further.<sup>18</sup>

In the introduction to his book, Marxsen contrasts the form-critical and the redaction-critical approach to Mark. He questions Bultmann's conclusion that the composition of the Gospels "brings nothing new in principle but only completes the process that was already begun by the earliest oral tradition."<sup>19</sup> He notes that even Conzelmann considered the first phase, the collection of traditional material, to extend to and include the Gospel of Mark.<sup>20</sup> Marxsen argues, on the contrary, that the tendency of the anonymous oral tradition is toward multiplicity and diversity. It uses a saw, as it were, to cut the unity of the person and significance of Jesus into bits, into different forms with different purposes. The unity achieved by the Evangelists, first of all by Mark, is of a completely different kind from that which gave rise to the oral tradition. This literary unity implies the work of an individual, an author who works to achieve a particular goal.<sup>21</sup>

Marxsen argued that the form critics paid insufficient attention to the way in which the Evangelists appropriated tradition in composing their Gospels. The

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14. Ibid., 131–32.

15. All translations from the Greek New Testament (NA27) are by the author.

16. Ibid., 131.

17. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist* (2nd rev. ed; 1959), Foreword to the 1st ed., 5. The 2nd edition is cited in what follows.

18. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*. Cf. Ernst Lohmeyer, *Galiläa und Jerusalem* (FRLANT, n.f. 34; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1936).

19. My translation of Marxsen's German citation of Bultmann's *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*, 8).

20. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*, 8, n. 1.

21. Ibid., 9.

“form criticism of the individual units of tradition” needs to be complemented by a “form criticism of the work as a whole.” In order to avoid confusion, he proposed that the latter effort be called “redaction criticism.”<sup>22</sup> He chose the name “redaction criticism” or “editorial criticism” for two reasons. There was a consensus at the time that the Evangelists were (at least) “editors.” The general term would not prejudge the outcome of the method. He commented that, strictly speaking, “redaction criticism” is not a method. It is rather the bringing together of a variety of methods for the purpose of studying the editorial work of the Evangelists.<sup>23</sup>

The focus of this “method” should be, not primarily on the “stuff,” but on the “framework” (*Rahmen*) of the Gospel. The latter should be understood broadly, that is, to include the itinerary, the editorial scenes created for the older material, and the reshaping of the wording of that material, insofar as it can be determined. This “framework” should not then simply be declared “unhistorical” as the form critics often did. Rather, one should seek to define the social setting of such editorial work. This is the third “social setting” to be sought, the first being the life of the historical Jesus and the second the situation of the early community. The social situation of the Evangelists should not be conceived too narrowly, for example, as a local community. The emphasis should be on what is typical of the Evangelist’s “community,” on its views or perceptions, its time, perhaps also its makeup.<sup>24</sup>

It is of course relatively easy (though problems remain) to study the editorial activity of Matthew and Luke on the basis of the consensus that they used a form of Mark (close to but not identical with the Gospel of Mark as we have it). With Mark the situation is more difficult. Marxsen lays two points of consensus as a foundation for his work on Mark: the Evangelist used sources; none of his sources consisted of a narrative of the life of Jesus that could be defined as a “Gospel.”<sup>25</sup>

In his concluding remarks, Marxsen emphasizes the importance of the endings of the Gospels for understanding their primary conceptions and aims. He interprets the orientation to Galilee in Mark 16:1–8 as signifying the imminent return of Jesus to Galilee, that is, the parousia.<sup>26</sup> Finally, he characterizes Mark as a theologian, entirely of his own “coinage,” standing between Paul and the any-

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22. To be precise, Marxsen discussed “the history of individual units” (*Formgeschichte*) and “the history of the process of editing” (*Redaktionsgeschichte*).

23. *Ibid.*, 10–11 and n. 1 on p. 11.

24. *Ibid.*, 12–13.

25. *Ibid.*, 14–16.

26. *Ibid.*, 142. In my view it is more likely that the allusion to Galilee concerns the resurrection appearances, which are mentioned though not narrated.

mous oral tradition, on the one hand, and the later Evangelists, on the other. In his view, it may be too much to claim that he is “the theological center of the New Testament,” but he certainly deserves greater attention.<sup>27</sup>

Marxsen was the pioneer in Markan redaction criticism. Norman Perrin should also be mentioned in this context. His short introduction to the method, illustrated with regard to the Gospel of Mark, is generally agreed to be a classic.<sup>28</sup>

Günther Bornkamm initiated redaction critical study of Matthew. Along with two of his students, he authored the classic work on the subject.<sup>29</sup> In the introduction they accept the consensus that the first three Evangelists “were, in the first place, collectors and editors of traditions handed on to them.” At the same time, the Synoptic Gospels “are documents expressing a definite, though in each case very different theology.” Since the means employed by the Evangelists in conveying their theologies are modest, there is often recognizable tension between “their handling of the tradition and the theological views it is made to serve.” Nevertheless, by editing, construction, selection, inclusion and omission, and by characteristic treatment of traditional material, they show themselves to be “by no means mere collectors and handers-on of the tradition.” They are “also interpreters of it.”<sup>30</sup> Like Marxsen, Bornkamm, Barth, and Held acknowledged the similarity of this new method in New Testament studies to the approach of Gerhard von Rad in Old Testament research.<sup>31</sup>

The most striking example of the studies in this volume is Bornkamm’s analysis of the stilling of the storm in Matt 8:23–27.<sup>32</sup> Mark and Luke present the story in a biographical context as a nature miracle (Mark 4:35–41; Luke 8:22–25). Matthew takes the nature miracle out of that context and places it in a series of healing miracles that present the “Messiah of deed” after the Sermon on the Mount, the presentation of the “Messiah of word.”<sup>33</sup> In Matthew the story is still a vivid account of a miracle, yet a new motive is brought out. The Evangelist places the story before two sayings of Jesus about discipleship (Matt 8:19–22). Both are concerned with “following” (*akolouthein*) Jesus. The simple statement (only in Matthew) that the disciples “followed” (*ēkolouthēsan*) Jesus into the boat

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27. Ibid., 147.

28. Norman Perrin, *What Is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969).

29. Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963; German 1960). The English edition is cited here.

30. Ibid., 12.

31. Ibid., 12, n. 6.

32. Günther Bornkamm, “The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew”, in Bornkamm, Barth, and Held, *Tradition and Interpretation*, 52–57.

33. Ibid., 53.

is given a deeper and figurative meaning in this context. Bornkamm shows by a number of observations that Matthew has not only handed on the story but has interpreted it in terms of discipleship with reference to “the little ship of the Church.”<sup>34</sup> The story has become “a kerygmatic paradigm of the danger and glory of discipleship.”<sup>35</sup>

As is the case with all other methods, the practice of redaction criticism involves a subjective dimension. For this reason redaction critics do not always agree in their results.<sup>36</sup> Joachim Rohde has defended redaction criticism as a method yet criticized many individual applications of it, for example, because of their excessive subtlety.<sup>37</sup>

### REDACTION CRITICISM WHEN SOURCES DO NOT SURVIVE

The Gospel of Mark is an example of a work that is most likely based on oral and written sources that do not survive as independent works. The problem in such cases is how to identify redactional activity. One approach in a case like this is to infer the author’s rhetorical aims from the composition of the work: from its structure, main themes, and emphases. This is the approach taken by Perrin in the work mentioned above.

Another approach is to infer the use of a source and the ways in which the author has adapted it. For example, many scholars have argued that the passion narrative in Mark is based on a written source.<sup>38</sup> A way to distinguish source from redaction is to look for differences in style. One may ask, for example,

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34. Ibid., 55.

35. Ibid., 57.

36. Carl Clifton Black, *Disciples according to Mark: Markan Redaction in Current Debate* (JSNT Supplements 27; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989).

37. Joachim Rohde, *Rediscovering the Teaching of the Evangelists* (London: SCM, 1968; 1st German ed. 1966).

38. Karl Ludwig Schmidt, “Die literarische Eigenart der Leidensgeschichte Jesu,” *Die Christliche Welt* 32 (1918): 114–16; reprinted in Meinrad Limbeck, ed., *Redaktion und Theologie des Passionsberichtes nach den Synoptikern* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981), 17–20; Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 22–23, 178–80; Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 275–79; Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to Mark* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966) vii, 526, 654–64. Other scholars argue that Mark composed the passion narrative in the same way as the rest of the Gospel, that is, by using short units of tradition: Eta Linnemann, *Studien zur Passionsgeschichte* (FRLANT 102; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 24–28, 44–52, 146–58, 162–63, 169–70, 173–74; Werner Kelber, ed., *The Passion in Mark: Studies on Mark 14–16* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).

what parts of the passion narrative are similar to other parts of Mark that can be identified as editorial? In this regard, one may conclude that the author of Mark composed the beginning of the passion narrative, 14:1–31, by combining short units of tradition, in the same way that he composed the rest of the Gospel. From 14:32, however, through 15:38, he seems to have used a continuous written source, since the narrative in this section is much more coherent and proceeds smoothly from one incident to the next.<sup>39</sup>

#### GETHSEMANE (MARK 14:32–42)

Most of the Gospel of Mark is episodic and based on short units of oral tradition, including 14:1–31. The shift to a more continuous narrative style begins with the story of the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane. Thus the pre-Markan passion narrative probably began with this story. On this assumption the element that stands out most clearly as Markan redaction is the last part of verse 41, “The Son of Man is about to be handed over into the hands of the sinners.” This addition emphasizes the fact that the first part of the passion predictions is about to be fulfilled (9:31; 10:33). “The sinners” referred to are probably the chief priests and scribes who condemn Jesus to death and “the nations,” in particular, the local Roman authorities, who execute him. The term “sinners” evokes certain psalms.<sup>40</sup>

Another likely Markan addition is the remark, “He took with him Peter, James, and John,” the first part of verse 33. The special role of these disciples is a Markan theme. The other passages that mention these three as singled out are probably also Markan compositions. In 5:37, they are the only ones allowed to go with Jesus to the house of Jairus. According to 9:2, only they witness the transfiguration of Jesus. In 13:3 they are singled out as the sole audience within the narrative of Jesus’ apocalyptic discourse. It follows then that “Sit here while I pray” is also a Markan editorial remark, added in the process of distinguishing the three from the other disciples in the Gethsemane account.

Although threefold repetition is a common feature of storytelling, there is slight but significant evidence that the threefold return of Jesus in verses 37–41 is a Markan construction. The source had only the one return narrated in verse 37. That the second and third returns in verses 40–41 are secondary is indicated

39. Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 621–27; Ludger Schenke, *Studien zur Passionsgeschichte des Markus: Tradition und Redaktion in Markus 14, 1–42* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1971); idem, *Der gekreuzigte Christus* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1974).

40. Pss 35:12; 70:4; 81:4 LXX; for discussion of this part of v. 41, see Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 682.



by the use of the aorist tense in the reproof of Simon in verse 37 (*ouk ischysas*). This tense is used here to refer to a past action as a point in time. This usage suggests that the disciples will not have another chance to stay awake. In contrast, the present tense is used in verse 38 in an expression of exhortation ("Keep awake and pray"). The contrast between this reference to repeated or continuous time and the previous allusion to simple past time makes it likely that verse 38 was added at the same time as the threefold return.

The addition of the threefold return transformed the rhetorical impact of the story significantly. The narrative structure involving a single prayer and a single discovery of the disciples sleeping places the emphasis on Jesus as one who is alone and unsupported by friends yet willing to accept the suffering ordained by God. The triple return shifts the emphasis to the disciples and their inability to stay awake and watch. The new emphasis fits well with the Markan theme of the failure of the disciples. This narrative link supports the hypothesis that the Evangelist added the threefold elaboration and the command to keep awake and pray.

The end of the Gethsemane narrative in the source was probably verse 42, "Get up; let us go. See, the one who is about to hand me over has drawn near." This ending follows well on the rebuke of Peter in verse 37. Verse 35 reads, "And he went a little farther on, fell upon the ground, and prayed that, if it was possible, the hour would pass away from him." This passage is likely a secondary summary of the prayer quoted in direct speech in verse 36, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for you; remove this cup from me. But (let) not what I want (be), but what you want." If this is so, then the references to the "hour" in both verses 35 and 41 probably belong to Mark's editorial rewriting of his source.

If, as seems likely, verse 42 is the original ending of the Gethsemane account, then the Gethsemane story and the account of the arrest of Jesus were already linked in the source: "Get up; let us go. See, the one who is about to hand me over has drawn near." The exclamation *apechei* in verse 41 goes logically with the third reproof uttered by Jesus, whether it is translated "The account is closed!" or "It is enough!"<sup>41</sup> If the triple return is secondary, then so is this exclamation.

Although Eta Linnemann has argued that the Gethsemane story circulated independently, it is hard to imagine that it ever did. The wording of the account as partially reconstructed here clearly leads to the next scene. Linnemann reconstructed the original ending as "The account is closed. The hour has come."<sup>42</sup> This ending, however, leaves the audience hanging and does not result in the typically well-rounded story of the oral tradition. Nevertheless, her argument that

41. Our colloquial "That's it!" seems to fit the force of the exclamation well.

42. Linnemann, *Studien zur Passionsgeschichte*, 547.

the story interprets the whole passion of Jesus is insightful. In the pre-Markan passion narrative especially, but also in the Markan one, it does interpret the whole passion of Jesus as an introduction to the passion narrative proper. Mark expanded this “prelude” by composing, using individual units of tradition, and prefixing the account in 14:1–31.<sup>43</sup>

#### THE ARREST (MARK 14:43–52)

The second scene in the pre-Markan passion narrative was an account of the arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane. On the assumption of the use of a source, the passage as it stands in Mark 14:43–52 seems to contain a number of secondary expansions. One of these is the statement, “Now a certain one of those standing by drew his sword, struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear” (v. 47). Another is the incident of the young man who fled naked (vv. 51–52). Both of these passages depict reactions on the part of disciples to the arrest of Jesus, but neither incident is prepared for or followed up. The strike with the sword portrays the failure of a disciple analogous to that of Peter when he rebukes Jesus for predicting that the Son of Man must suffer. This similarity suggests that the incident in 14:47 is a Markan elaboration of the source. Likewise, the flight of the naked young man (vv. 51–52) is a vivid image of the flight of all the disciples (v. 50).

In verses 48–49, Jesus responds to his arrest with the remark, “You have come out to seize me with swords and clubs as you would (come out) against a robber.<sup>44</sup> Every day I was with you in the temple precinct teaching and you did not arrest me. But (it is occurring) in order that the scriptures may be fulfilled.” This statement also seems secondary. The first part of the response reflects the situation of the Evangelist and his aim of contrasting Jesus with the revolutionaries who engaged in the revolt that led to the first Jewish war with Rome. The second part may be read as a taunt or reproach to the arresting party for not having the courage to arrest him in the temple because of his popularity with the crowd.<sup>45</sup> The reproach may extend also to the conspiracy to arrest him “by deceit” or “treachery” instead of openly (14:1).

43. Cf. *Ibid.*, 552.

44. Or “bandit.” The word *lēstēs* was regularly used by Josephus for insurrectionists or rebels who carried out politically motivated raids and robberies. See the discussion of the Barabbas story below.

45. Cf. 11:18; 12:12. The phrase “teaching in the temple” (*en tō hierō didaskōn*) is probably redactional; cf. 12:35.

The reference to the fulfillment of Scripture at the end of verse 49, without mentioning any particular text, points to Markan redaction. We find similar statements in the sayings about the Son of Man in 9:12 and 14:21. The strong correspondence between verse 43 and verse 48 can be explained by the Evangelist's imitation of verse 43 in composing verse 48. These observations are supported by the fact that verse 50 follows well upon verse 46. The disciples' immediate response to the arrest of Jesus is to flee before they also are arrested. Verse 50 could well have been the conclusion of the arrest story in the pre-Markan passion narrative.

#### THE SEQUEL TO THE ARREST (MARK 14:53–72)

According to the Markan passion narrative as it has come down to us, the chief priests interrogate Jesus twice (14:53, 55–64, and 15:1). His captors also mistreat him twice (14:65 and 15:16–20a). The insertion of the denial of Peter into the trial before the Jewish council (Sanhedrin) is a typically Markan technique. These observations can be explained by the hypothesis that Mark added the denial of Peter and the trial before the Judean council to the earlier passion narrative.<sup>46</sup> A corollary of this hypothesis is that 15:1 was part of the pre-Markan passion narrative. It would have followed the statement in 14:53a that they took Jesus to the high priest. The remark, "all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled," in verse 53b is probably redactional, composed by Mark as an introduction to the trial before the Judean council (14:55–65). Similarly, in 15:1, the phrase "with the elders and scribes and the whole council" is probably Markan redaction. This sentence in the source may have read, "Early in the morning the chief priests took counsel, bound Jesus, took him and handed him over to Pilate."

The episode concerning Barabbas (15:6–15a) is inserted into the account of Pilate's interrogation of Jesus (15:2–5, 15b). The literary technique again suggests Markan redaction. This hypothesis is supported by the connection between Jesus' remarks at the time of his arrest and the story about Barabbas. As argued above, the Evangelist probably added Jesus' remarks in the arrest scene (14:48–49) to his source. They distance Jesus from the category "bandit" (*lēstēs*). It is clear from Josephus's work *The Jewish War* that this term was used in the first century as a designation of a kind of insurrectionist.<sup>47</sup> In 15:7 Barabbas is associated

46. On the secondary character of the trial before the Sanhedrin and its composition (using older traditions) and insertion by Mark, see John R. Donahue, *Are You the Christ? The Trial Narrative in the Gospel of Mark* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1973), 5–102.

47. Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), 48–87.

with rebels (*stasiastai*), and Jesus is contrasted with him in the unit as a whole.<sup>48</sup> Instead of seeking mercy for “the king of the Jews,” the crowd demands the release of a dangerous revolutionary. Since it was apparently Mark who added 14:48–49, it is likely that he inserted 15:6–15a as well.

#### THE TRIAL BEFORE PILATE (MARK 15:1–15)

Bultmann, as did others before him, argued that Pilate’s question to Jesus (“Are you the king of the Jews?”) and his answer (“You say so”) in 15:2 are secondary additions to an early account of Pilate’s interrogation of Jesus. This short dialogue, like the trial before the Judean council (14:55–64), is characterized by a later view of the death of Jesus, namely, that Jesus was executed because of his messianic claims.<sup>49</sup> This view, however, is not necessarily secondary with regard to the composition of the pre-Markan passion narrative. It is unlikely that, as Bultmann thought, the earliest passion narrative was a simple historical report.<sup>50</sup>

The point of this part of the pre-Markan narrative could well have been that Jesus was crucified as the Messiah. In an outsider’s language, he was executed as a royal pretender. Although Pilate’s question (in an outsider’s language) may be shaped by an insider’s perspective, it is also possible—even likely—that the general point of the narrative reflects historical fact. If a significant number of his followers thought that Jesus was or might be the messiah and if he was attracting large crowds, Pilate would have thought it expedient to condemn him to death to preserve order. He did not technically need to charge him with a crime, but if he did, the charge of sedition would make sense in the historical context.<sup>51</sup>

Bultmann also concluded that the original account of Pilate’s interrogation contained a statement of the sentence. The ending was displaced by the Barabbas story, and 15:15b (“and he had him whipped and handed him over to be crucified”) is a remnant of the original conclusion.<sup>52</sup> This hypothesis is not necessary. The interest of the author and tradents of the pre-Markan passion narrative may have been primarily in depicting Jesus being interrogated as the Messiah, from a Roman point of view, as a pretender to kingship (15:2) and in portraying Pilate as

48. Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, 714–21.

49. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 272.

50. *Ibid.*, 275 (“a short narrative of historical reminiscence”).

51. Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, 636.

52. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 279. Schenke followed Bultmann in arguing that the original ending of the story has been displaced but held that v. 2 is part of the original narrative, although it was moved forward from its original position after v. 5; *Der gekreuzigte Christus*, 53–54.

“handing him over” to be crucified (the latter a probable allusion to Isa 53).<sup>53</sup> The transition from verse 5 to verse 15b is rough, but it may be deliberately so. The narrative as reconstructed portrays Pilate’s response to Jesus’ ambiguous reply (v. 2b) and silence (vv. 4–5), as handing him over to be whipped and then crucified.

#### THE MOCKERY BY ROMAN SOLDIERS (MARK 15:16–20A)

Bultmann concluded that the mocking “is a secondary explanation of verse 15b (φραγελλώας [*phragellōsas*]) to which some traditional military custom lent some colour.”<sup>54</sup> More illuminating than “military custom” are the reports about the public mockery of Agrippa I by the Alexandrian Greeks, which may have been based on popular street theater.<sup>55</sup> There is some repetition involved in the transitions (compare v. 15b with v. 20b), but this could just as easily be an earlier narrative device as a sign of redactional expansion.

More persuasive is Schenke’s conclusion that only “that is, the governor’s residence” (*ho estin praitōrion*) in verse 16 is secondary.<sup>56</sup> The rest of the scene follows well on the interrogation of Pilate without the Barabbas story. It picks up the important theme of the “king of the Jews” in verse 18 (compare v. 2) and then leads logically into the account of the crucifixion. All this speaks for the originality of this scene in the narrative context.<sup>57</sup>

#### THE CRUCIFIXION (MARK 15:20B–32)

Bultmann considered the journey to the cross and the crucifixion (verses 20b–24a) to be part of the primitive passion narrative, which, as we have seen, he regarded as an ancient, reliably historical account.<sup>58</sup> Schenke, however, argued that the reference to Simon of Cyrene and his two sons (v. 21) and the translation of Golgotha into Greek (v. 22b) are later additions to the earliest narrative. These conclusions are based on the premise that Aramaic-speaking members of the

53. Alternatively, Mark added the language of “handing over,” in keeping with his elaboration of Isa 53:12 LXX; Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, 721.

54. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 272. So also Erich Klostermann, *Das Markusevangelium erklärt* (HNT 3; 4th ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1950), 161.

55. Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, 636–37, 723.

56. Schenke, *Der gekreuzigte Christus*, 54–55; Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (HTK 2.1–2; Freiburg: Herder, 1976–1977; 5th ed. of vol. 1 1989; 5th ed. of vol. 2 1991) 2.468; Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, 723.

57. Schenke, *Der gekreuzigte Christus*, 55.

58. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 273, 279.

oldest community of followers of Jesus created the earliest account of the passion in Jerusalem for that Aramaic-speaking community. A second premise is that this early narrative was later expanded with the mention of Simon and his sons, who would have been of interest to the Hellenistic-Jewish disciples in Jerusalem. The translation of Aramaic place names, like Golgotha, would also serve their needs.<sup>59</sup>

The mention of Simon and his sons and the translation of the name Golgotha, however, do not necessarily imply that the earliest recoverable form of the narrative was composed in Aramaic and only for Aramaic speakers. It could just as well have been composed by bilingual followers of Jesus (or Christ believers) who translated Aramaic expressions for members of the audience who did not speak Aramaic. Since the arguments for judging verses 21 and 22b as secondary are not compelling, it is better to consider them part of the earliest recoverable part of the journey to the cross and the crucifixion (15:20b–24a). The brief reference to Simon and his sons may well be historical reminiscence.

Bultmann took the position that all strongly interpretive elements were later legendary elaborations of the earliest narrative. Thus he concluded that verse 24b is secondary with its depiction of the soldiers casting lots for the clothing of Jesus thereby evoking Ps 21:19 LXX. Schenke and Wolfgang Reinbold, however, included it in their reconstructions of the earliest narrative.<sup>60</sup> Although the portrayal of the incident is cast in scriptural terms, it is credible that it is based on a historical event.<sup>61</sup> Verse 24b should thus be included in our reconstruction of the earliest recoverable narrative.<sup>62</sup>

Bultmann and Detlev Dormeyer have identified the statement, “Now it was the third hour when they crucified him” (v. 25), as Markan redaction.<sup>63</sup> The features noted by Bultmann and Dormeyer, however, do not compel the conclusion that verse 25 is secondary.<sup>64</sup> Linneman’s argument is the most illuminating: the

59. Schenke, *Der gekreuzigte Christus*, 83–84, 90–92. Linneman also concluded that v. 21 is secondary for some of the same reasons (*Studien zur Passionsgeschichte*, 146).

60. Schenke, *Der gekreuzigte Christus*, 137; Wolfgang Reinbold, *Der älteste Bericht über den Tod Jesu* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 166.

61. Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 745.

62. For a discussion of the significance of this allusion to Scripture, see Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 745–46.

63. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 273; Detlev Dormeyer, *Die Passion Jesu als Verhaltensmodell* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1974), 194; cf. 67. Schenke takes the verse as secondary but attributes it to pre-Markan redaction (*Der gekreuzigte Christus*, 84, 92, 95). The evidence does not support such confidence about the reconstruction of a three-stage literary history of the passion narrative.

64. For critical discussion of Bultmann’s and Dormeyer’s arguments, see Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992; reprinted Eugene, Ore.: Wipf

schema of hours in 15:25, 33, 34 was used in the oldest account as a narrative device, as a way of noting the passage of time and moving the narrative along.<sup>65</sup>

Bultmann considered 15:26, the comment about the inscription of the charge against Jesus, to be editorial, like 15:2.<sup>66</sup> As previously noted, this judgment is dependent on the conviction that any passage indicating that Jesus was executed for his messianic claims is necessarily secondary. As we have seen, there is no compelling argument why such a perspective could not have characterized the earliest passion narrative. The crucial questions are how soon after the death of Jesus did his followers conclude that he was the Messiah and how early the earliest passion narrative was written. Such questions cannot be answered with any certainty. It is noteworthy, however, that in his letters Paul speaks of Jesus as the Messiah in a way that makes clear that such a designation is already an established tradition.<sup>67</sup>

The depiction of Jesus as crucified between two robbers or bandits (*lēstai*) evokes the description of the suffering servant in Isa 53:12 LXX. It is likely that the Evangelist added this verse for several reasons. The passage evoked is the main source of the Markan theme of the divine activity of “handing over,” which involves John the Baptist, Jesus, and the followers of Jesus, to human adversaries who kill them.<sup>68</sup> This theme, however, also appears in the earliest recoverable version of the pre-Markan passion narrative (Mark 14:42, 44; 15:1, 10). So this reason alone would not be sufficient to establish the likelihood that Mark added this passage. Another reason is the role that “robbers” or “rebels” (*lēstai*) play in the Markan account of Jesus’ time in Jerusalem and the contrast that he draws between them and Jesus (11:17; 14:48–49; 15:6–15).<sup>69</sup> Finally, the portrayal of Jesus as crucified between two robbers, one on his right and one on his left, reprises the request of James and John in 10:37 and Jesus’ reply in 10:40. The evocation of the earlier text in the account of the crucifixion elaborates the ironic portrayal of Jesus as king that already characterized Mark’s source. Jesus hangs on a cross with a placard mocking and ironically announcing his kingship, but James and John are not with him. Because of their fear of suffering and death, they abandoned him, and men who are unworthy take the places of ironic honor.<sup>70</sup>

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and Stock, 2001), 111–13.

65. Linnemann, *Studien zur Passionsgeschichte*, 146, 155–57.

66. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 272.

67. See Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), chapter 5.

68. Mark 1:14; 3:19; 9:31; 10:33; 13:9, 11, 12; 14:10, 11, 18, 21, 41; 15:10. On this Markan theme, see Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 223–24, 440–41, 644–45.

69. *Ibid.*, 531–32, 686, 714, 718–19, 721.

70. Mark 15:28 is probably not part of the earliest recoverable text of Mark but was added

Like the allusion to Psalm 21 LXX in verse 24b, the remark in verse 29a that the passersby derided the crucified Jesus, shaking their heads, is probably original.<sup>71</sup> The Evangelist, however, has expanded this scene of mocking at the cross in several ways.<sup>72</sup> One important way involves the introduction of the chief priests and the scribes to the scene at the cross. These two groups play a major role in the passion of Jesus according to Mark (8:31; 10:33; 11:18, 27; 14:1). Finally, Mark probably added the remark in verse 32b that those crucified with him also reviled him. If Mark added the statement that two bandits were crucified with him (v. 27), he added verse 31b as well.

#### THE DEATH OF JESUS (MARK 15:33–39)

As argued above, the temporal schema in 15:25, 33, 34 was part of the pre-Markan passion narrative. According to verse 33, darkness covered the whole land from the sixth to the ninth hour. This portent is multivalent.<sup>73</sup> Schenke argued that the cry of Jesus in verse 34a (“Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?”), consisting of an Aramaic version of the Hebrew of Ps 22:1a, must be original because it derives from the oldest stage of the passion narrative, which was composed in Aramaic. The Greek version of the cry in verse 34b (which translated is “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”) was added very early when the account was first translated into Greek. He also argued, however, that verses 35, 36b (the bystanders’ comment that he was calling Elijah and the suggestion of one of them that they wait to see whether Elijah comes) are secondary because the misunderstanding of the cry of Jesus is meant to be deliberate in the context of mockery.<sup>74</sup>

The Evangelist probably added the discussion of Elijah in verses 35–36 since these verses continue the Gospel’s Elijah theme. That theme begins with the depiction of the attire of John the Baptist, which recalls the biblical description of the physical appearance of Elijah.<sup>75</sup> It continues in the dialogue of Jesus with Peter, James, and John in 9:9–13.<sup>76</sup> If verses 35–36 are Markan redaction, then the

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either to make the allusion to Isa 53:12 LXX explicit or to harmonize the Markan text with Luke 22:37.

71. On the significance of these allusions, see Yarbrow Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 749.

72. For a more detailed discussion, see Yarbrow Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel*, 113–14.

73. For discussion of the main interpretive options, see Yarbrow Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 751–53.

74. Schenke, *Der gekreuzigte Christus*, 99. For a more detailed discussion of Schenke’s analysis of this passage, see Yarbrow Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel*, 115–16.

75. Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, 145.

76. *Ibid.*, 429–32.



cry of Jesus in verse 34 may also have been added by the Evangelist to prepare for the mockery involving the apparently deliberate misunderstanding of *Eloi* ("My God") as "Elijah." The cry must be given in Aramaic, as well as in Greek, so that the wordplay may be manifest. After the statement about the darkness, the source may simply have continued, "And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice and expired" (15:37).

Verse 38 was probably the ending of the pre-Markan account of the death of Jesus.<sup>77</sup> The splitting of the veil of the sanctuary is a multivalent image.<sup>78</sup> It does not necessarily allude to the destruction of the temple, especially not in the context of the source.<sup>79</sup> If it was the ending of the whole pre-Markan passion narrative, as seems likely, it must have been intended as an interpretation of the death of Jesus. The splitting of the veil of the temple signifies the opening or removal of something that normally hides the divine presence. Thus it suggests a theophany or an opening of access to the divine presence. As part of the source, it implies, at a minimum, divine vindication of Jesus in spite of his shameful death.

The conclusion that verse 38 was the ending of the pre-Markan passion narrative is supported by two main arguments. The first is that the centurion's statement in verse 39 is clearly a Markan editorial addition. Its purpose is to make the point that it is precisely the crucified Jesus who is God's son. This point expresses the heart of Markan Christology.<sup>80</sup> The second argument is that beginning with 15:39 or 15:40, the tightly sequential narrative style that began with 14:32 ends. From 15:40 to 16:8, the style once again becomes episodic, like the rest of Mark.<sup>81</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In practice redaction criticism originated as an aspect of source criticism and form criticism. Part of the task of the source critic is to distinguish one or more sources from the editorial work of the compiler, editor, or final author. Similarly, the form critic attempts to discern passages in the Synoptic Gospels that had a

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77. With Linnemann and against Bultmann and Schenke; see Yarbrow Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel*, 116.

78. The use of the verb "split" (*schizō*) in 15:38 may be due to Mark's rewriting of his source in order to connect this event with the baptism of Jesus, where the same verb is used (1:10). Or the verb may be original in the source of 15:38 and have inspired Mark to use the same verb in 1:10 in order to link the two passages.

79. Yarbrow Collins, *Mark*, 759–64.

80. *Ibid.*, 764–71.

81. *Ibid.*, 626–27, 773–74.

previous life as oral units and to separate these from the editorial work of the Evangelists. Some practitioners of source criticism of the Gospels are content to reconstruct two stages: the editorial work of the Evangelist and his sources.<sup>82</sup> Redaction-critical studies have even been made of sources, most notably the Synoptic Sayings Source (Q).<sup>83</sup> A number of scholars have attempted to reconstruct several stages of redaction in this source,<sup>84</sup> as others have done with the pre-Markan passion narrative.<sup>85</sup> Other scholars have argued that distinguishing more than two layers or stages of redaction is simply too speculative a process to be helpful.<sup>86</sup>

Redaction criticism originated, in name and theory, in the 1950s.<sup>87</sup> From the beginning the explicit practice of "redaction criticism" included attention to the structure and main themes of the work. Such instances may thus also be called works of "composition criticism."<sup>88</sup> Attempts to reconstruct the author's "theology" also played at times a prominent role, as is reflected, for example, in the English title of Conzelmann's work.

As illustrated by the discussion of the pre-Markan passion narrative in the second part of this essay, it is possible, though difficult, to discern a source that does not survive independently. The main ways of doing so involve looking for differences in style, theme, and vocabulary. One must apply these methods carefully because the later editor or author may have adopted a theme or a key lexical term from the source.

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82. See, for example, the excellent reconstruction of two collections of miracle stories used by the evangelist in Paul J. Achtemeier, "Toward the Isolation of Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae," *JBL* 89 (1970): 265–91.

83. Dieter Lüthmann, *Die Redaktion der Logienquelle* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969).

84. John S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); Arland D. Jacobson, *The First Gospel: An Introduction to Q* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1992); Burton L. Mack, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993).

85. Schenke, *Der gekreuzigte Christus*, 135–45; Till Ahrend Mohr, *Markus- und Johannespassion* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1982), 404; Matti Myllykoski, *Die letzten Tagen Jesu* (2 vols.; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1991, 1994) 1.36–37.

86. With regard to Q, see Christopher M. Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996), 75–82. With regard to the pre-Markan passion narrative, see Yarbro Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel*, 111, 115–16 (with reference to Schenke); *Mark: A Commentary*, 622 and n. 24 (with regard to Mohr); 622–23 and n. 30 (with regard to Myllykoski). See also note 63 above regarding Schenke.

87. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*; Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*; Bornkamm, Barth, and Held, *Tradition and Interpretation*.

88. See especially Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*; and Perrin, *What Is Redaction Criticism?*

An analogous reconstruction has been carried out with regard to the Synoptic Sayings Source (Q).<sup>89</sup> Such work is important for two main reasons. It gives us historical and literary information about an earlier stage of the tradition than the work of the later author. It also helps us see more clearly the aims of the Evangelists as we reconstruct their adaptations of the sources in question.

### FOR FURTHER READING

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- Taylor, Vincent. *The Gospel according to Mark*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966.

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89. See especially James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, John S. Kloppenborg, and Milton C. Moreland, eds., *Critical Edition of Q* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).



# TEXTUAL CRITICISM AND NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION

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## 1. THE NATURE AND GOAL OF NEW TESTAMENT TEXTUAL CRITICISM

### 1.1. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN TEXTUAL CRITICISM

New Testament textual criticism enjoys a time-honored position as basic in the interpretation of the Greek New Testament, for it affords access to the rich manuscript tradition behind the New Testament writings and also opens paths toward discovery of their earliest attainable texts. In older times—with some advocates still with us—textual criticism was viewed entirely as a negative process: the removal of scribal error so as to reveal and to restore the pristine “original” text. In 1882, Fenton John Anthony Hort, for example, stated: “Where there is variation, there must be error in at least all variants but one, and the primary work of textual criticism is merely to discriminate the erroneous variants from the true.”<sup>1</sup> A century later, Kurt and Barbara Aland expressed it more succinctly when, in their list of “Twelve Basic Rules for Textual Criticism,” the first was “Only *one* reading can be original.”<sup>2</sup> Bruce Metzger’s manual, *The Text of the New Testament*, for nearly half a century through four editions, has carried the subtitle, *Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, thereby emphasizing that the goal is to

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1. Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (2 vols; London: Macmillan, 1881–1882), vol. 2: *Introduction, Appendix* (2nd ed., 1896), 2.3.

2. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 280 [italics in original].

restore the text after removing the corruptions that have accrued during transmission. Then followed the assertion that the textual critic must “rectify the errors.”<sup>3</sup>

*Textual alterations: unintended.* Manuscripts, of course, have many errors, and, to the extent that they produce nonsense, they need to be identified and set aside. This procedure requires acquaintance with scribal functions and readers’ interactions that influenced the transmission process. Straightforward unintended scribal errors, often characterized as errors of the eye, of the ear (if copying by dictation), and of the memory or unthinking judgment, include (1) confusion of letters or letter combinations having similar appearance (or sound); (2) mistaken word division (since majuscule manuscripts, using uncial letters, were written without spaces or punctuation); (3) misread abbreviations or contractions; (4) interchanges in the order of letters or words (metathesis); (5) omission of one word when it occurred twice, or skipping material between two similar words or letter groups (haplography or homoeoteleuton); (6) repetition of a letter, word, or passage when, in copying, the eye returns to a place already copied (dittography); (7) careless spelling and failure to correct such errors; and (8) unconscious, unintended substitution of a more familiar word for a less familiar one, or writing a synonym when the meaning but not the exact word is in the copyist’s mind, or assimilation to similar wording in a parallel passage or lectionary, including harmonization with wording in the immediate context (though sometimes these alterations may be intentional).

*Textual alterations: intended.* A second category of textual variants consists of intended scribal alterations or notations made by readers of manuscripts. Sometimes, as noted, separating unintended variations from those intended will be fraught with difficulties, but the latter will have shaped the transmission process far more directly and broadly than accidental alterations. It is important to recognize, however, that intentional variations by scribes and readers inevitably were made in good faith to correct or otherwise to improve the text in accordance with those persons’ beliefs as to what constituted the original or intended reading, or to offer meanings or interpretations more relevant to their own contemporary ecclesiastical context. At times, therefore, changes were made to promote an ideological or theological view not present in the text being copied or read. Intentional alterations include (1) changes in grammar, spelling (often proper names), and style; (2) conscious harmonization with parallel passages (often in the Synoptic Gospels, in Old Testament quotations, or in lectionaries); (3) clarification of

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3. Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (4th ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005; 1st three editions by Metzger, 1st ed., 1964; 2nd ed., 1968; 3rd ed., 1992), for the quotation, 3rd ed., 186; 4th ed., 250.

geographical or historical points (e.g., time, location, or place names); (4) conflation of differing readings in two or more manuscripts known to the copyist; (5) addition of seemingly appropriate material (such as expanding “Jesus” to “Jesus Christ” or to the “Lord Jesus Christ”); and (6) theological or ideological alterations, often in the interest of presenting “correct” christological or trinitarian doctrine (as exemplified in Bart Ehrman’s now classic *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*), or where variants reflect apologetic motivations, pro-apostle interests, anti-women and anti-Judaic sentiments, and other tendencies.<sup>4</sup>

*Variants as access to Christian worship, thought, and practice.* Contemplation of the varying modes of textual change makes clear that New Testament textual criticism cannot be confined to the simple correction of errors. Rather, interpreters of these early Christian writings in their search for the earliest attainable text will come face to face with hundreds upon hundreds of variation units—discrete places with two or more variations in the text—that open windows upon the thoughts and concerns of church people as they worshiped and practiced their faith in real-life situations over hundreds of years. For instance, we know that aspects of liturgy came into play when early witnesses (at Luke 11:2) embellished the so-called “Lord’s prayer” with “... and let your Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us,” and when (at Matt 6:13) they appended the lofty, dignified, and elegant doxology, “For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever and ever. Amen.” Moreover, we can glimpse extended discussion and controversy in the early church over anguishing social issues by observing, for example, twenty-some variants in the four passages on divorce/remarriage in the Synoptic Gospels. David Parker’s analysis of this tangled complex of readings shows that some variants concern Jewish, others Roman provisions for divorce; some condemn divorce but not remarriage, while others permit divorce but prohibit remarriage; some variants describe adultery as remarriage, others as divorce and remarriage, and others as marrying a divorced man; and some variants portray Jesus as pointing to the cruelty of divorcing one’s wife—thereby treating her as if she were an adulteress, though she was not. Some variants, therefore, focus on the man, others on the woman, and still others concern both. Sometimes the divorcing man commits adultery, sometimes not; sometimes the divorced or divorcing

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4. Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Also, David C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Wayne C. Kannaday, *Apologetic Discourse and the Scribal Tradition: Evidence of the Influence of Apologetic Interests on the Text of the Canonical Gospels* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004); Eldon J. Epp, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts* (SNTSMS 3; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966); and many others.

woman commits adultery, sometimes she commits adultery if she remarries, and, finally, sometimes a man marrying a divorced woman commits adultery. “The main result of this survey,” says Parker, “is to show that the recovery of a single original saying of Jesus is impossible.” Nor can we say that one variant is more original than the others, he adds, for “what we have is a collection of interpretative rewritings of a tradition.” So, the collection of writings destined to become the New Testament was not a closed book, but, through textual variation, “it is open, and successive generations write on its pages.” What textual criticism—and the church today—can learn from such cases of multiple variants, where no earliest reading or other resolution is evident, is that there is no one right path or answer, no single directive, but the multiple variants reveal an array of differing situations and solutions. An insight, however, is that multiple options thereby are opened for today’s church as well, as Parker affirmed: “The People of God have to make up their own minds. There is no authoritative text to provide a short-cut.”<sup>5</sup>

Suddenly textual criticism comes alive and becomes relevant in ways that no one might have imagined. These variants are not errors to be corrected or chaff to be whisked away by the wind, but they bring us into direct contact with real-life contexts showing how early Christians made meaning out of the *living* text as they nurtured and shaped it in worship and in life through textual variants.

It was appropriate, then, to name this new emphasis “narrative textual criticism,” for all variants have a story to tell—not only those accepted for the text of a critical edition, but also those rejected yet meaningful variants relegated to the netherworld of the apparatus at the foot of the page. For this reason, it was proper also to call for a “variant-conscious” approach to textual criticism so as to reclaim the enriching narratives of early Christian spirituality and controversy from what was, to many, merely a trash bin full of cast-off textual variants.<sup>6</sup> After all, the variants in the examples cited, and many hundreds of others, were all “canonical”—authoritative—for some Christians somewhere as the manuscripts containing them were used in worship and teaching.

## 1.2. THE GOAL OF NEW TESTAMENT TEXTUAL CRITICISM

The discussion of variants above was not intended to diminish the traditionally-stated, single goal of textual criticism: to recover and to establish the original text

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5. Parker, *Living Text of the Gospels*, 77–94; quotations from 92; 93; 174; 212, respectively.

6. For “narrative textual criticism,” David C. Parker, review of Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, *JTS* 45 (1994): 704; for “variant-conscious” textual criticism, Eldon Jay Epp, “It’s All about Variants: A Variant-Conscious Approach to New Testament Textual Criticism,” *HTR* 100 (2007): 275–308 (esp. 298–308).



of the New Testament writings. Now, however, that statement needs to be qualified and enhanced because in recent decades the term “original text” has been problematized, obliging scholars to think in terms of multiple originals and no longer—or at least only rarely—of a single original text, either of a writing as a whole or in a variation unit. Space precludes this discussion here, but thought about the issue must begin with the recognition that no two manuscripts of the New Testament are identical; that each copy of a manuscript (and each translation of a text) is, in reality, a new “original”; and that every manuscript with a variant—indeed, every variant in a variation unit—creates a fresh “original.” The fact that writings destined for the New Testament collection became authoritative documents complicates the matter, because, as noted, every manuscript (Greek or versional) was “canonical” for the person or group employing it in worship and teaching. The presumption, therefore, is that each manuscript also was considered “original” (if such sophisticated issues arose), and even a manuscript “corrected” by a scribe to what he or she “knew” it to mean doubtless would have been considered the “original,” that is, restored to its proper and original form. As a result, our manuscripts represent various text forms, which might be described loosely, for example, as follows: an “autographic” or “authorial” text form or “original,” the form in which an author actually wrote it—although we have no autographs and the term “author” also is problematic now; an “interpretive original,” the form of a writing as altered by scribes or readers; a “canonical original,” the form a writing had when placed in the ecclesiastical public domain or when accepted officially as canonical; and so on. Hence, there will be a considerable lack of clarity if the goal of textual criticism is stated simplistically as the recovery or reconstruction of *the* “original text.”<sup>7</sup>

Rather, most textual critics now speak of seeking the “earliest attainable text,” a purpose to which virtually all can subscribe, even if some think they can reach farther back toward the elusive (and perhaps illusive) “original.” Yet, establishing the earliest available text forms constitutes only one dimension of the task, and any goal also must allow the newly recognized voices of rejected variants to be heard. The following definition intends to unite these two objectives:

New Testament textual critics, employing aspects of both science and art, study the transmission of the New Testament text and the manuscripts that facilitated its transmission, with the unitary goal of establishing the earliest attainable text (which serves as a baseline) and, at the same time, of as-

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7. See Eldon J. Epp, “The Multivalence of the Term ‘Original Text’ in New Testament Textual Criticism,” *HTR* 92 (1999): 274–79; repr. in idem, *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism: Collected Essays 1962–2004* (NovTSup 116; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 584–90.

sessing the textual variants that emerge from the baseline text so as to hear the narratives of early Christian thought and life that inhere in the array of meaningful variants.

## 2. THE TRANSMISSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT AND ITS WITNESSES

### 2.1. GREEK MANUSCRIPTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS

As with all ancient writings, those that would become the New Testament were transmitted through copies of copies of copies, although their contents have been preserved in far more numerous and much earlier copies than generally is the case with classical and other ancient literature. Currently extant are 5,550 different Greek manuscripts of the New Testament,<sup>8</sup> and they fall into two categories:

(1) *Continuous-text manuscripts* have running texts of at least one writing, classified as follows:

(a) *Papyri*: 124 different manuscripts, written in uncial letters on papyrus from the second to the seventh century. Sixty-two (plus five early majuscules) date up to and around the turn of the third/fourth century, that is, prior to the famous Codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. Among the papyri are five (P<sup>45</sup>, P<sup>46</sup>, P<sup>66</sup>, P<sup>72</sup>, P<sup>75</sup>) averaging sixty-seven leaves each and containing portions of seventeen of the twenty-seven New Testament writings. Fragmentary papyri contain six more writings, leaving only 1–2 Timothy and 2–3 John unrepresented in this group of earliest manuscripts, which is remarkable when both the preservation and discovery of manuscripts is random. In assessing textual witnesses, most text critics will look first for support of variants by early papyri.

(b) *Majuscules*: 282 different manuscripts in uncial letters on parchment, dating from the second/third century into the eleventh. Five fragmentary copies, dating before the mid-fourth century, rank with the earliest papyri (0189, 0220, 0162, 0171, and 0312), and doubtless several that stem from the fourth to sixth centuries are the most valued manuscripts—not only because of their age, but

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8. For the following data, updated here to mid-2011, see Eldon J. Epp, “Are Early New Testament Manuscripts Truly Abundant?” in *Israel’s God and Rebecca’s Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado and Alan F. Segal* (ed. D. B. Capes et al; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 77–117 with notes, 395–99. Basic is Kurt Aland, with Michael Welte, Beate Köster, and Klaus Junack, *Kurzgefasste Liste der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments* (2nd ed.; ANTF 1; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 3–16. Continuing updates are available from the Münster Institute for New Testament Textual Research: <http://www.uni-muenster.de/NTTextforschung>.

also because their coverage of the New Testament is more comprehensive. They include the only two majuscules presently containing all twenty-seven New Testament books: Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲙ, 01, mid-fourth century) and Codex Alexandrinus (A, 02, fifth century). Codices Vaticanus (B, 03, mid-fourth century) and Ephraemi Rescriptus (C, 04, fifth century) are nearly complete, while Codex Bezae (De<sup>a</sup>, 05, ca. 400) has the Gospels and Acts; Codex Washingtonianus (W, 032, fifth century) the four Gospels; and Codex Claromontanus (DP, 06, sixth century) the Pauline Letters. These majuscules range in length from 142 to 533 leaves, and seven additional majuscules with more than 100 leaves are extant from the first eight centuries (plus one papyrus, P<sup>74</sup>). Textual critics will pay most attention to early papyri and majuscules.

(c) *Minuscules*: 2,790 different ones, written in cursive script on parchment and paper, from the ninth to the nineteenth century, representing 50 percent of all manuscripts available. While early textual witnesses generally are most highly valued, it should not be assumed that all early readings are in the earliest manuscripts, for later copies often contain earlier texts. For instance, minuscule 1739 of the tenth century appears to have a text from around 400, and other examples are minuscules 33, 81, 579, 614, and 892. Hence, what is significant is not always the date of a manuscript, but the date of the text within it, and on occasion a variant found only in a late witness may accredit itself as the earliest attainable text in its variation unit.

(2) *Lectionaries*, portions of New Testament writings extracted for liturgical use, consist of 2,354 different manuscripts, written in majuscule and minuscule letters on parchment and paper, from the fourth to the eighteenth century. Among these, only twenty-seven survive from the first eight centuries, but lectionaries increase almost exponentially from then on, constituting 42 percent of all Greek manuscripts. Correctly or otherwise, the role of lectionary texts in textual criticism is not proportionate to their large quantity, though they deserve more attention, for they have influenced readings in continuous-text manuscripts and are useful in studying the transmission of the New Testament text.

By way of summary, later manuscripts—from the ninth century on—comprise almost 94 percent of our Greek manuscript inventory because only 355 (6.4 percent) date up to the period around 800. Among this 6.4 percent, only thirty-two continuous-text manuscripts (10 percent) survive in more than twenty-five leaves, and, as to content, only 18 percent contain two or more New Testament writings, which means that 82 percent preserve only a single book, and often are highly fragmentary. As a description of surviving manuscripts during seven centuries—more than halfway toward the invention of printing—these figures may appear meager indeed, yet the earliest papyri and majuscules, though relatively few, offer rich resources.

## 2.2. OTHER TEXTUAL WITNESSES: VERSIONS AND PATRISTIC CITATIONS

*Versions of the New Testament.* Versions occur in all the languages of Christianity through Late Antiquity: Syriac, Coptic, Latin, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic, Arabic, Nubian, Persian, Sogdian, Caucasian-Albanian, Gothic, Old Church Slavonic, Anglo-Saxon, Old High German, and Old Low German or Saxon, plus the Diatessaron (which involves also Old French, Middle Dutch, Middle High German, and Middle Italian). There are some eight thousand Latin manuscripts and, at minimum, some three thousand in other languages. This vast material introduces additional layers of complexity, for it is no simple matter to determine equivalents to Greek readings in these various languages, since no language mechanically reproduces another. For instance, Syriac has no comparative or superlative; Syriac and Coptic have no case endings and the latter employs strict word order to show subject, object, indirect object, etc.; Gothic has no future form; and even Latin—generally a fine medium for translating Greek—does not distinguish between the aorist and perfect tenses and lacks a definite article. The study of these versions, indeed of each version, is a discipline in itself, requiring individual critical editions so that the data resulting can be fed into the text-critical process and, in turn, cited in the critical editions of the New Testament. Such tasks require teams of scholars and years of work. The most important versions for text-critical purposes are the Syriac, Latin (both stem from the late-second century), and Coptic (which originated in the early-third century), hence their special relevance.

*Patristic citations.* Finally, patristic citations furnish numerous variants, though they must be evaluated carefully to determine, if possible, whether the ancient writer was consulting New Testament manuscripts and copying out citations, or, for example, was citing from memory or simply alluding to a text. The Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament offers citations only of Greek and Latin writers of the early centuries, and a random sampling suggests that this hand-edition provides perhaps three thousand citations. Again, given the vast material and the difficult decisions, as well as the necessity for critical editions and ideally for a reconstructed New Testament text employed by each writer, the resources are far from complete. Further uncertainties arise, of course, if copyists or readers of patristic writings, intentionally or otherwise, happened to “correct” the New Testament citations being copied—most likely to conform to readings known to them.

*Quantity of textual variants.* How many variants are there? The first major critical edition of the Greek New Testament, by John Mill in 1707, alarmed many ecclesiastics with its thirty thousand textual variations, but Cambridge University’s Richard Bentley, in 1713, quickly calmed many by his positive assessment:

“Make your 30,000 as many more, . . . all the better to a knowing and serious Reader, who is thereby more richly furnish’d to select what he sees Genuine.”<sup>9</sup> In 1882, Hort spoke of 300,000 variants in the known witnesses, but today no reliable estimate is forthcoming for the extent of variation among our Greek manuscripts or in the eleven thousand or more versional copies, to which patristic citations must be added. A wild guess might place the total somewhere between two-fifths to three-quarters of a million variant readings. These startling figures do not alarm current textual critics because they probably have to deal with only(!) about thirty thousand variants. Moreover, they treat variation units, each of which contains two to a half-dozen different readings. This presents a more realistic view of the actual workload. The highly selective apparatus of the United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament* (4th ed., 1993) contains 2,051 variation-units, but a sampling suggests that the Nestle-Aland text, with a more comprehensive apparatus, has about six times as many, or some twelve thousand. This calculation could be far off the mark, but it shows, on the one hand, that the problem is not nearly as large as first appeared, though, on the other hand, that there are more than enough variants to cause consternation among scholars who work with the New Testament text—and enough to keep a cadre of textual critics busy for years to come. Most textual critics, however, choose to view this profusion positively and call it an embarrassment of riches when compared with most other ancient writings, and, as noted above, they like to say also that, comparatively, the Greek New Testament has perhaps the highest proportion of *early* witnesses.

*Summary.* The grist for the text-critical mill, then, includes some sixteen thousand manuscripts in numerous languages, plus a few thousand patristic citations. Palaeographical dating of literary manuscripts is not by any measure a precise procedure, operating with a traditional rule that the assigned dates could vary by fifty years either way. The provenance of manuscripts—the place of their copying, use, or discovery—is unclear for most, and this, unfortunately, applies to the vast majority of early manuscripts. Yet, far exceeding any other single site, fifty-nine New Testament manuscripts, mostly fragmentary, were uncovered at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt, though it is not certain how many were produced in that regional capital. Many other early manuscripts were purchased from antiquities dealers, and their narratives about them must be scrutinized carefully.

The approximate date and provenance of a reading is more clearly known, however, when a manuscript carries some sort of notation of place or date,

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9. Adam Fox, John Mill, and Richard Bentley, *A Study of the Textual Criticism of the New Testament 1675–1729* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1954), 114–15.

though the earliest dated is minuscule 461—copied in 835—which helps little with the more crucial early manuscripts. Patristic quotations are more helpful, for a writer (if known for certain) can be located geographically within a limited time frame. Therefore, citations, for example, from Irenaeus (ca. 125–ca. 200), Clement of Alexandria (150–215), Tertullian (ca. 155–ca. 220), Origen (ca. 185–ca. 254), and Cyprian (ca. 200–258) are more assuredly dated and often more precisely located.

In the final analysis, the obstacles facing the textual critic are well balanced by the opportunities that the available materials afford.

### 3. METHODS IN NEW TESTAMENT TEXTUAL CRITICISM

The “raw materials” of textual criticism just summarized must be placed in some order because of their vastness and diversity, and then ways of assessing their value in pursuing the goal must be formulated. The central focus, in the past and at present, rests on the production of a critical edition, that is, a running text of one or several writings or of the entire New Testament with variants displayed at each point of significant variation. Normally, though not always, the running text, or baseline text, will represent what its editors believe to be the most likely “original” text, or (now more often) the earliest attainable text. Traditionally, the variants not selected for the base-line text will be placed in a critical apparatus (*apparatus criticus*) at the foot of each page, which, unfortunately but due to the complexity of an apparatus, often obscures the rejected variants and turns them into demoted readings—“second-class citizens.” This happens even though a great many were placed there as the result of very close editorial decisions and despite the fact, emphasized earlier, that texts with meaningful variants without doubt were considered canonical in some churches somewhere. Advocates of “narrative textual criticism” would prefer that significant, meaning-changing variants be granted a higher status by standing out more obviously from the apparatus. This might be accomplished by placing them a line above or below their fellow variants in the baseline text,<sup>10</sup> or perhaps, in an online edition, pre-identified major variants could be called up and highlighted by a keystroke.

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10. See the example in Epp “It’s All about Variants,” 301–7.

### 3.1. CRITICAL EDITIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

A long and rich legacy stems from Erasmus in 1516, who first published a critical text of the Greek New Testament, that is, a text formed from more than one manuscript. The trend continued through the rudimentary critical editions, namely, a text with an apparatus of variants, by Stephanus (1550), Brian Walton (*Polyglot Bible*, 1655–1657), Curcellæus (1658), and John Fell (1675). Later, major critical editions, with extensive prolegomena and apparatuses, began with John Mill (1707) and were continued by J. A. Bengel (1734), J. J. Wettstein (1751–1752), J. J. Griesbach (1775–1807, three editions), Karl Lachmann (1831), Constantin von Tischendorf (<sup>8</sup>1869–1872), S. P. Tregelles (1864), B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort (1881–1882), and many others until the universally used hand editions appeared: the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (ed. Eberhard Nestle, <sup>1</sup>1898–<sup>9</sup>1912; Erwin Nestle, <sup>10</sup>1914–<sup>21</sup>1952; Kurt Aland, *et al.*, <sup>22</sup>1956–<sup>27</sup>1993; and Barbara Aland *et al.*, 1998–); and, with an identical Greek text but a differing apparatus, the United Bible Societies *Greek New Testament* (ed. K. Aland, *et al.*, <sup>1</sup>1966–<sup>4</sup>1993; B. Aland *et al.*, 1994–). Currently a new major critical edition (*Novum Testamentum Graecum: Editio critica maior*) is in preparation by the Münster Institute for New Testament Textual Research (*Catholic Letters* published 1997–2005) and now jointly with the International Greek New Testament Project. The Gospel of John should appear soon, to be followed by Acts.

Indispensable also is the UBSGNT companion volume, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (<sup>1</sup>1971, <sup>2</sup>1994), edited on behalf of the UBSGNT Committee by Bruce M. Metzger. The first edition, still useful, provided text-critical discussions and assessments of the 1,440 variation units treated in the critical apparatus of UBSGNT <sup>3</sup> and of six hundred additional units of textual or exegetical importance, providing reasons in each case why the committee selected the variants for the baseline text. The second edition of the *Commentary* has been accommodated to the fourth edition of the UBSGNT (1993), dropping treatment of 273 variation units removed from its apparatus, but with comments on 284 added units, for a total coverage of 2,051 sets of variants. The introductory sections of the two hand-editions and the *Commentary* assist the user in understanding the materials and methods of New Testament textual criticism.

### 3.1. METHODS FOR ESTABLISHING THE EARLIEST ATTAINABLE TEXT

Now comes the hard part: methods. The descriptions of the goal, of the primary source material available to meet that goal, and of the medium in which the results will be presented (a critical edition) lead to the methods employed to accomplish the task. The development of these procedures not only reaches back

to Erasmus—five hundred years ago—but actually had rudimentary beginnings with Irenaeus, Origen, Jerome, and others in the early centuries of Christianity. Any attempt to outline all this in a few thousand words would be the height of audacity, but it will be tried here nonetheless.

*Variation Units and the Local Genealogical Approach.* All textual criticism begins at the local level, that is, with individual variation units throughout the text. Each unit is a segment of text with at least two variants, each of which might consist of a word (noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, conjunction, etc.) or a combination of words that regularly go together (noun plus verb, verb plus object, adjective plus noun, prepositional phrase, etc.), or two or more words in different order, or a longer, more complex segment consisting of phrases or clauses, or even entire sentences, and so on. When there are variants within variants, for example, conjunction + noun + verb + adjective + object in different order, but also with differing conjunctions and adjectives, the variation unit would consist of five words and the apparatus first would show the witnesses supporting each word order and then, in succession, treat the differing conjunctions and the varying adjectives. Naturally, this can become highly complex, so the text critic looks for the shortest segment that can accommodate and display all relevant variants at one point in the text. The attestation—the support—for each variant usually is listed in this order: papyri, majuscules, minuscules, lectionaries, versions, and patristic citations.

Variants are of several kinds, each marked in the text of the critical edition by superscript sigla, indicating, for example, whether the witnesses indicated in the apparatus have, at this point in the text, an “omission,” an “insertion,” a “replacement” or “substitution,” or a “transposition” in the word order. The best critical editions, using the sign *txt*, will also list the witnesses supporting the reading in the baseline text at the top of the page. Some forty such signs occur in the Nestle-Aland and UBSGNT, plus abbreviations for manuscripts, etc.

How are text-critical decisions made in view of the massive manuscript, versional, and patristic sources available, and considering the often complex array of variants at thousands of variation units? Central in the process is a set of principles that assist in moving toward the earliest attainable New Testament text, working variation unit by variation unit. Textual critics realize, of course, that the text they construct is one that never existed in any single manuscript. That result may unsettle some, but it does not invalidate the methods employed. Clearly, many textual choices result from close decisions, yet our standard practice appears to be “binary”—a variant is either in or out—and the one rejected joins an underclass of readings in the apparatus. It should be kept in mind, however, that judgments made in critical editions must not be taken readily as definitive, nor should significant variants be set aside and simply forgotten.



*Criteria for the Priority of Readings.* Naturally, full agreement on methodology has been elusive, but virtually all agree that an eclectic method is essential, that is, utilizing all relevant measures that might help to identify the earliest attainable text, even if some procedures at times may conflict with others. Accordingly, over time a set of “criteria for the priority of readings” has emerged during nearly two millennia of attention to the text of writings now in the New Testament. An example—not particularly significant, but interesting for its illustrative value—will illuminate some of these important criteria.

Origen, for instance, rejected the reading at Matt 27:16–17, which has “Jesus” before “Barabbas” in the name of the imprisoned insurrectionist (v. 16), and he justified the decision for two reasons: “Jesus” was absent “in many copies,” but primarily, he stated, because the name Jesus would not be attributed to an evil person (as Barabbas would have been viewed)—a theological criterion. Specifically, Origen presumed that a “heretic,” wishing to compromise the revered status of “Jesus, who is called Christ” (v. 17), prefixed “Jesus” to “Barabbas.”

In Nestle-Aland,<sup>27</sup> although “Jesus” appears in brackets to mark a very difficult decision, the double name, “[Jesus] Barabbas,” remains in the baseline text to indicate that the editors preferred that reading. Normally, the minimal support for the presence of “Jesus” (Θ f<sup>1</sup> 700\* pc sy<sup>s</sup>)<sup>11</sup> over against the strong support from six major majuscules and other witnesses for its absence (⋈ A B D L W 0250 f<sup>13</sup> 33 ℳ latt sy<sup>p,h</sup> co; Origen<sup>lat</sup>)<sup>12</sup> would give preference to its omission. Actually, however, “Jesus Barabbas” is the more likely earlier text, once a basic question is raised: Which reading can better account for the rise of the other? If “Barabbas” were earlier, what would prompt the addition of “Jesus” by a scribe in a monastery or by a reader preparing a teaching lesson? No compelling answer is forthcoming, and Origen’s blaming a heretic (a frequent villain in early Christianity!) is implausible. If, however, “Jesus Barabbas” was noticed in a manuscript being copied, a scribe who wished to maintain the christological point about Jesus of Nazareth (made unwittingly by Pilate in v. 17: “Jesus, who is called Christ”) very well might feel obliged to delete “Jesus” from Barabbas’s name, perhaps for the very reason Origen suggested: the sacred name should not be ascribed to an evildoer. So

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11. Θ = majuscule with Byzantine text, ninth century; f<sup>1</sup> = family 1, an important minuscule group; 700\* = minuscule 700, first hand; pc = a few other manuscripts; sy<sup>s</sup> = Sinaitic Syriac, early Syriac version.

12. ⋈ A B D W (all mid-fourth to fifth century) L (eighth century) = significant early majuscules; 0250 = majuscule (eighth century); f<sup>13</sup> = family 13, important minuscule group; 33 = minuscule 33, with text like B; ℳ = majority of all manuscripts; latt = entire Latin tradition; sy<sup>p,h</sup> = Peshitta and Harklean Syriac; co = all Coptic versions; and Origen<sup>lat</sup> = citation preserved in Latin.

“Jesus Barabbas” is the prior reading, readily accounting for the variant omitting it.<sup>13</sup> After all, Jesus = Joshua, a common Jewish name.

This example highlights what most recognize as the preeminent criterion for discerning the prior and presumably earliest reading, namely, local genealogical priority, which states that:

The earliest attainable text most probably is the variant that is able to account for the origin, development, or presence of all other readings in its variation unit.

Logically, of course, such a variant must have preceded all others that can be shown to have evolved from it. The process is not often as simple as in our example, however, when the variant prior to others has to be sorted out from three or more variants. A main reason for designating this the preeminent criterion is that it functions concomitantly with virtually all other internal criteria (see below). For instance, often a difficult reading, unless it is an obvious scribal error, can easily be recognized as an earlier reading that has been “improved” or “corrected” by scribal clarification.

#### Examples for Study: Priority of the reading explaining the others<sup>14</sup>

Matt 14:24; 15:4; 15:14; 21:29–31; 25:15–16; 27:9; Mark 1:1; 1:2; 8:26; Luke 2:33; 4:44; 9:54; 10:41–42; John 1:28; 7:39; 9:35; Acts 2:12; 2:38; 4:25; 4:33; 6:8; 8:37; 8:39; 18:26; 25:17; 1 Cor 15:51; 2 Cor 4:6; Gal 1:15; Phil 1:14; Col 2:2; 1 Thess 3:2; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 9:4, cf. 9:2; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 1:8; 14:8; 18:3; 19:11; and a vast number of others.

Some fifteen additional criteria are employed in textual criticism, and they fall into two classes:

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13. For further, rhetorical justification of the double name, see Epp, “It’s All about Variants,” 288–89.

14. The examples provided after each criterion include both major and minor variants, somewhat randomly selected. They appear, of course, in the Nestle-Aland and UBS Greek New Testaments and most are discussed in one or more of the following convenient volumes: Bruce M. Metzger, ed. for the UBSGNT Committee, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1994; 1st ed., 1971); Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, 250–71, 316–43; Aland and Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, 280–316; Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*. See also critical commentaries, such as *Hermeneia* volumes on Mark (Adela Yarbro Collins, 2007), Acts (Richard I. Pervo, 2009), Romans (Robert Jewett, 2007), Hebrews (Harold W. Attridge, 1989), 1 Peter (Paul J. Achtemeier, 1996), and the vast text-critical literature.

- *External evidence*, which assesses factors such as the age, quality, geographical distribution, and groupings of manuscripts and other witnesses; and,
- *Internal evidence*, which assesses what authors were most likely to write and what scribes and readers were likely to transcribe.

Local genealogical priority involves internal evidence, and second to it in importance is perhaps the oldest formally stated internal criterion:

*The earliest attainable text most probably resides in the variant that is the hardest/hardest [that is, the more/most difficult] reading in its variation unit.*

Why? Because scribes tend to smooth or otherwise remedy rough or difficult readings, rather than create them. (Obvious scribal errors and nonsense readings do not qualify.) Erasmus (1516) appears first to have developed and utilized this criterion, though it can be traced farther back, even to Galen, the physician (second century C.E.). In New Testament criticism, it was formulated more precisely by Jean Le Clerc (1697), used by John Mill (1707), championed by Bengel (1725), and has been prominent ever since.

#### Examples for Study: Priority of the more difficult reading

Matt 9:8; 27:9; Mark 1:2; 1:27; 1:41; 6:2; Luke 2:14; 2:33; 4:44; 10:1,17; 10:41–42; 22:14; John 1:18; 4:51; 7:1; Acts 1:26; 5:9; 7:12; 9:43; 11:20; 12:25; 14:8; 16:7; 20:28; Heb 2:9; Rev 14:6.

Does this criterion apply to the “Jesus”/“Jesus Barabbas” variation? Most certainly, because “Barabbas” without “Jesus” is the easiest reading, for it raises no issues, while “Jesus Barabbas” is problematic immediately. So the latter is the more difficult reading, in line with its ease in explaining the origin of the simple “Barabbas” reading. This is typical, for often the reading that explains the rise of the others is also the more difficult—since difficult readings are very likely to be smoothed.

Another venerable internal criterion might be invoked, for, when more words than one are involved, the (so-called) shorter reading criterion might apply, which states, on the assumption that scribes were more likely to lengthen a reading than to shorten it (now increasingly doubted), that the shorter variant is likely to be earlier. Actually, scribes commonly did both—shorten and lengthen readings—depending on the situation. Haplography and more specifically homoeoteleuton shorten readings through unintended error, while dittography lengthens them. Also, unintended or intended harmonization with parallel passages will shorten or lengthen a text depending on the relative lengths of the two readings involved,

as will purposeful correction or clarification. So, the criterion should be named “the shorter/longer reading criterion,” and explained as follows:

*The earliest attainable text most probably is the variant—depending on circumstances—that is the shorter/shortest reading or that is the longer/longest reading in its variation-unit.*

Why the indecisive statement? Because (a) scribes tend to shorten readings by omission due to *parablepsis* (when their gaze wanders to the side and returns to the text), especially as a result of homoeoteleuton, in which case the longer reading is preferable. But (b) scribes also tend to add material through interpretation, harmonization, and grammatical or stylistic improvement, in which cases the shorter reading is preferable. In all cases, both readings must be tested also by the other criteria. This criterion currently is debated, but the compromise formulation above accommodates the range of known textual phenomena, which were recognized in Griesbach’s 1796 classic statement of this criterion. Unfortunately, however, textual critics most often have quoted only the opening sentence of the first part of his definition and have largely ignored the second, longer part. Griesbach began: “The shorter reading (unless it lacks entirely the authority of the ancient and weighty authorities) is to be preferred to the more verbose, for scribes were much more prone to add than to omit.” Quoting only this was misleading and unfortunate for two additional reasons: First, many quoted it even more briefly: “The shorter reading is preferable, for scribes were more prone to add than to omit,” leaving aside five qualifying conditions; and, next, most often the second part was ignored, though it offered six situations in which the longer text was to be preferred.<sup>15</sup>

Examples for Study: Priority of the shorter/longer reading—  
depending on circumstances

Matt 6:13; 8:25; 18:29; 18:35; 23:7; 24:6; 25:13; 27:49; Mark 1:1; 9:29; Luke 4:4;  
8:45; 9:54; 11:2–4; 22:17–20; 24:3; 24:6; 24:12; 24:36; 24:40; 24:51; 24:52; Col  
1:23; Gal 6:17; Rev 22:21.

In the Origen example above, however, “Jesus Barabbas” was no simple error for “Barabbas,” nor can its shortening to “Barabbas” be assigned readily to any other

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15. Johann Jakob Griesbach, *Novum Testamentum Graece: Textum ad fidem codicum versionum et patrum* (2nd ed.; 2 vols.; London: Elmsly; Halle: Haeredes, 1796–1806) 1.lxiii–lxiv = ‘Prolegomena,’ §III, ¶1; a translation appears in Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament* (4th ed.), 166–67.

motivation but theological. This variation set, however, illustrates a further significant methodological aspect of eclectic textual criticism: not all criteria will be applicable to every situation, and some will even contradict others. To expand this point, observe another criterion that emerges in the Origen example: He spoke of “many manuscripts” that attested only “Barabbas,” which was a rudimentary reference to what currently are our two leading *external* criteria, namely:

*The earliest attainable text most probably is the variant supported by the earliest manuscripts, patristic citations, or versions, or by manuscripts (or other witnesses) assuredly preserving early texts.*

This is plausible because historians of the text conclude that ancient manuscripts less likely have been subject to conflation, conformity to ecclesiastical texts or traditions, or other scribal alterations, though this must be recognized as relative because scribal and reader alterations intrude from the earliest time. Nevertheless, *mutatis mutandis* and except for the local genealogical criterion, this criterion carries the most weight for most textual critics.

#### Examples for Study: Priority of the earliest attested reading

Matt 1:18; 6:13; 9:34; 22:35; Mark 1:41; 6:3; Luke 1:46; 4:44; 9:35; 20:1; 22:17–20; 22:43–44; 24:12; 24:42; 24:50–53; John 1:18; 1:28; 1:34; 4:51; 6:23; 7:1; 7:53–8:11; 9:35; 12:8; Acts 4:25; 12:25; 28:16; 1 Cor 7:5; 1 Thess 2:7; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 2:9; 1 John 4:3; 5:7–8; 5:18; Rev 1:6; and a vast number of others.

The second external criterion deals not with the age of manuscripts but their quality:

*The earliest attainable text most probably is the variant supported by the “best quality” manuscripts (or other witnesses).*

Although “best” is both relative and subjective, this criterion is justified because manuscripts evidencing careful copying and transmission are less likely to have been subject to textual corruption or contamination, and because manuscripts that frequently and consistently offer readings accredited as the earliest attainable text thereby acquire a reputation of general high quality. A cautionary note, however, is that internal criteria—which have their own subjective aspects—are heavily utilized to reach the conclusion that certain manuscripts are consistently “best.” Naturally, all manuscripts are open to scribal alterations in the copying process and when used in churches. Codex Vaticanus (B), has long been considered among the “best,” leading long ago to a common view that it was edited and refined in the early-fourth century. The discovery of P<sup>75</sup> in the mid-1950s, how-

ever, nullified that view because the extant texts of Luke and John in P<sup>75</sup>, dating some 150 years earlier, were virtually identical with those in Codex B—revealing meticulous transmission over a lengthy period.

Examples for Study: Priority of the reading in the “best” witnesses

Matt 1:16; 1:18; 22:35; 25:15–16; Mark 6:3; Luke 1:46; 4:44; 11:2; 20:1; 22:17–20; 24:12; 24:50–53; John 1:13; 1:18; 1:28; 1:34; 6:23; 7:1; 7:53–8:11; 9:35; 12:8; Acts 11:5; 12:25; Rom 1:7, 15; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 2:9; 1 John 5:7–8; and many others.

Nothing is known, of course, about the manuscripts employed by Origen for his many commentaries, etc.—their quantity, their quality, their dates—but, in discussing variant readings, his reference to “few,” “many,” “most,” or “almost all” manuscripts shows his close acquaintance with New Testament manuscripts, their variations, and how combinations of them support various readings. Actually, Irenaeus earlier had referred to “old and good” manuscripts and used them in text-critical decisions, thereby anticipating the two external criteria just discussed.<sup>16</sup>

As for the “Jesus”/“Jesus Barabbas” variation, among the witnesses supporting “Barabbas” alone are some of the oldest and generally considered “best” Greek manuscripts, especially Codices  $\aleph$  and B, a fact, by itself, that would favor “Barabbas.” Once again we see how criteria can conflict with one another, adding complexity to textual decisions.

The two remaining *external* criteria for the priority of readings come into play when the attestation for the “Jesus”/“Jesus Barabbas” variation is evaluated, namely:

*The earliest attainable text most probably is the variant supported by manuscripts (or other witnesses) with wide geographical distribution, or otherwise diverse.*

This has validity because readings attested in more than one locality are less likely to be accidental or idiosyncratic. However, the provenance of relatively few manuscripts is certain, though the general locale of versions and patristic citations is more frequently known. Also, it is difficult to determine whether witnesses from different locales represent genuinely separate traditions.

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16. On Irenaeus, Origen, and others, see Bruce M. Metzger, “The Practice of Textual Criticism among the Church Fathers,” *StPatr* 12.1 (1975): 340–43.

Examples for Study: Priority of the reading with wide geographical support or otherwise diverse

Matt 1:18; 9:34; 18:35; 19:11; 22:35; Mark 1:1; 1:41; 3:21; 6:3; Luke 1:46; 3:22; 7:39; 11:2; 20:1; 22:17–20; 22:43–44; 23:34a; 24:12; 24:50–53; John 1:13; 1:28; 1:34; 7:1; Acts 6:8; Rom 1:7, 15; 1 Thess 2:7; Heb 2:9; 1 John 4:3; 5:18; and many others.

Some of the witnesses supporting “Barabbas” alone (without “Jesus”) can be located geographically, though not always with certainty. There are no papyri extant for this variation unit, but Codices  $\kappa$  and B most likely stem from Caesarea Maritima; Codex A traditionally has been placed in Alexandria; D in Beyreuth; *M* designates the majority of all manuscripts and includes the extensive Byzantine or Koine text, associated with Constantinople; *latt* signifies the entire Latin tradition, hence the West; the Syriac versions represent Syria, hence the East; *co* signifies all the Coptic versions, hence Egypt, and Origen wrote his commentary in Caesarea. This, like the preceding two criteria, would support “Barabbas” alone, given that its witnesses are older, “better,” and more widely distributed than those attesting “Jesus Barabbas.” Those keeping score will think “Barabbas” is winning out, yet, we need to await the final outcome.

The remaining external criterion states:

*The earliest attainable text most probably is the variant supported by one or more established **groups** of manuscripts (or other witnesses) of recognized antiquity, character, and perhaps location, i.e., of recognized “best quality.”*

The rationale is that not only individual manuscripts (and other witnesses), but families and textual clusters can be judged as to age, quality, and (sometimes) location. Again, internal criteria contribute to these judgments. The highly complex issue of textual groupings cannot be treated here. The older term is “text types,” a concept currently being questioned by a small group among the most prominent textual critics; at the Münster Institute for New Testament Textual Research, they have developed the Coherence Based Genealogical Method. It begins with and employs the traditional criteria, locates the prior readings in each variation unit, and then (using highly sophisticated computer programming and analysis) compares the “states of the texts” in all Greek manuscripts, drawing conclusions about the closeness to or distance from each state of the text compared with those in all other manuscripts. The method has been applied to the Catholic Letters and currently is being refined, but at this juncture, due largely to its complexity, it remains to be embraced broadly by the text-critical community. The older structure of text types is the context of this last external criterion,

though it should retain its validity with whatever conclusions may be drawn in the future with respect to textual clusters or other kinds of groupings of manuscripts or texts.

Examples for Study: Priority of the reading supported by established  
groups of witnesses

Matt 1:18; 9:8; 22:35; 24:6; 24:36; 25:13; Mark 1:1; Luke 1:46; 11:2; 15:16;  
24:12; 24:50–53; John 1:13; 6:23; 7:1; Rom 1:7, 15; 1 Thess 2:7; Heb 2:9; 1  
John 5:18.

When the “Jesus”/“Jesus Barabbas” variation is evaluated, how would its two sets of textual supporters fare? Once again the witnesses for “Barabbas” alone can be sorted by traditional textual clusters:  $\kappa$  and B for a century and a quarter have been the leaders of the B-text cluster (Westcott-Hort’s “Neutral” text, or the Alexandrian); and D<sup>ca</sup> is the leading Greek witness to the D-text cluster (formerly the “Western” text), joined by the Old Latin (part of *latt*). Supporting “Jesus Barabbas” are  $\Theta$  and *f*<sup>1</sup>, long taken together as part of a “midway text” between the B-cluster and the D-cluster. Once again, this criterion would favor “Barabbas” alone.

The result for this Matthean textual variation nicely illustrates the eclectic method: Some criteria will favor one variant, while others support a differing variant. In the present example, “Barabbas” standing alone has far superior attestation by external criteria, being favored by all four. “Jesus Barabbas,” on the other hand, has the support of the preeminent criterion—it best accounts for the rise of the other variant—and it is the “harder,” more difficult reading. Most, if not all textual critics undoubtedly would affirm that, in this case, these two significant internal criteria “trump” the impressive external support, for scribes and readers rather readily would be troubled by “Jesus Barabbas” and would not hesitate to alter what they assumed to be an error or, on theological grounds, a demeaning association of “Jesus the Christ” with an imprisoned criminal.

The remaining eight traditional internal criteria can be presented in two sets. First, four apply to cases in which the prior reading conforms to aspects of the New Testament writings:

*The earliest attainable text most probably is the variant that conforms to the author’s recognizable style and vocabulary.*

This is reasonable because the earliest reading is likely to follow the author’s style as observed in the bulk of the writing. Yet, to the contrary, scribes may conform



aberrant stylistic features to the dominant style in a writing, thus changing what would have been a “harder” reading into a smoother reading.

Examples for Study: Priority of the reading conforming to an author’s style

Matt 22:35; 25:15-16; Mark 1:4; 1:27; 6:23; 6:41; 10:2; 14:4; 16:9–20; Luke 2:14; 22:19b-20; John 5:3–4; 7:12; Acts 1:19; 3:11; 5:9; 8:37; 10:16; 16:7; Rom 7:14; 14:19; 1 Cor 13:3; 15:49; 1 Thess 2:7; 1 John 5:18; Rev 14:8; 20:2; 21:3.

*The earliest attainable text most probably is the variant that conforms to the author’s recognized theology or ideology.*

The thought here is that the earliest reading is likely to display the same convictions or beliefs found in the bulk of the work. As in the preceding criterion, however, a scribe may conform apparently aberrant theological statements to an author’s theology—as perceived by that scribe or reader—thus changing what would have been a “harder” reading into a smoother reading.

Examples for Study: Priority of the reading conforming to  
an author’s theology/ideology

John 1:13; 1:34; Rom 5:1; 7:14; 1 Cor 13:3; Heb 2:9. See also (below) the criterion on nonconformity to contemporary theology/ideology.

*The earliest attainable text most probably is the variant that conforms to Semitic forms of expression.*

The logic here is that the New Testament authors, being either Jewish or familiar with Septuagint/Greek Old Testament style, are likely to reflect such Semitic expressions in their writings. Once again, however, scribes also might conform extraneous readings to known Semitic forms.

Examples for Study: Priority of the reading conforming to  
Semitic expression

Matt 20:30; Mark 1:5; 1:27; 2:30; 4:30; 11:24; 14:25; Luke 2:14; 11:11; John 7:8; 8:51; Acts 2:47–3:1; 3:2; 7:12; 10:33; 13:25; 15:4; 16:28; Rev 1:5.

*The earliest attainable text—depending on circumstances—most probably is the variant that conforms to Koine (rather than Attic) Greek—or vice versa.*

This criterion, long debated, remains indecisive because (a) scribes were thought to show a tendency to shape the text being copied to the more elegant Attic Greek style, but (b) scribes also may tend to alter Attic words and phrases to the more contemporary and popular Koine. This criterion, like that on the shorter/longer reading, is under debate, but the compromise formulation given here accommodates the relevant range of known textual phenomena. Recent analysis indicates that Greek usage in the first two centuries shows scribes moving in both directions without one dominant direction of change, requiring further clarity on development of the Greek language in this period.<sup>17</sup> The criterion favoring Koine over Attic Greek was developed and employed by George D. Kilpatrick and has been practiced and defended by J. Keith Elliott ever since.

Examples for Study: Priority of the reading conforming to  
Koine/Attic Greek—depending on circumstances

Mark 1:27; 15:19; John 4:23, 24; 5:25; 6:51, 57, 58; 10:34; 11:25; 13:24; 13:26;  
13:38; 14:19; Acts 4:30; 10:30; 11:5; 12:5; 13:1; 17:15; 1 Cor 10:28; 13:3; Col  
2:16; Rev 13:15; 14:7; 16:2; 19:20.

Second, four other criteria concern instances in which the likely prior reading shows no conformity to certain entities in New Testament texts or their contexts:

*The earliest attainable text most probably is the variant that **does not** conform to parallel passages or to extraneous items in the context generally.*

This criterion arose because scribes tend, consciously or unconsciously, to shape the text being copied to familiar parallel passages, especially in the Synoptic Gospels (harmonization), or to words or phrases just copied in the more immediate context.

Examples for Study: Priority of the reading not conforming to  
parallel passages

Matt. 4:10 (//Matt 16:23); Matt 5:44 (//Luke 6:27-28); Matt 20:16; (//Matt 22:14); Matt 22:35 (//Luke 10:25); Matt 27:21 (//Mark 9:29); Matt 27:49 (//John 19:34); Mark 1:27 (//Luke 4:36); Mark 6:3 (//Matt 13:55); Mark 7:16 (//various); Mark 10:7 (//Gen 2:24); Mark 11:26 (//Matt 6:15); Mark 15:28 (//Luke 22:37); Luke 4:44 (//Matt 4:23; Mark 1:39); Luke 8:45 (//Mark 5:31);

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17. See Timo Flink, *Textual Dilemma: Studies in the Second-Century Text of the New Testament* (University of Joensuu, Publications in Theology 21; Joensuu, Finland: University of Joensuu, 2009), esp. 129, 213.

Luke 9:35 (//Mark 9:7; Luke 3:22; Matt 17:5); Luke 11:4 (//Matt 11:2-4); Luke 11:11 (//Matt 7:9); Luke 17:36 (//Matt 24:40); John 4:51 (//various); Rev 21:3 (//various); and very many more.

*The earliest attainable text most probably is the variant that **does not** conform to Old Testament passages.*

Likewise, since scribes and readers, who were likely to be familiar with the Jewish Greek Bible (the Septuagint = LXX), tend to shape their copying to the content of familiar passages, as in the preceding criterion.

Examples for Study: Priority of the reading not conforming to Old Testament passages

Matt 2:18 (//Jer 38:15 LXX); Matt 19:4 (//Gen 1:27); Mark 9:49 (//Lev 2:13); Luke 3:22 (//Ps 2:7); Luke 4:4 (//Deut 8:3); Luke 10:1,17 (various); Acts 2:17, 18 (//Joel 3:1-5 LXX); Acts 2:26 (//Ps 15:9 LXX); Acts 13:18 (//Deut 1:31); Acts 20:28 (//LXX use); Rom 13:9 (//Exod 20:16; Deut 5:20); Rev 21:3 (//various).

*The earliest attainable text most probably is the variant that **does not** conform to liturgical forms and usages.*

Christian scribes, especially in monasteries, and readers in monasteries and churches, tend to shape the text being copied to phraseology of familiar liturgical expressions used in devotions and worship. For example, monks working as scribes, who began their copying after a few or several successive hours in prayers and worship, would be particularly susceptible to this tendency.

Examples for Study: Priority of the reading not conforming to liturgical usages

Matt 20:31; Mark 2:41; 2:47-3:1; Luke 24:42; John 6:23; Acts 3:11; 8:37; 8:39; 10:30; 28:31; 1 Cor 10:2; Rev 1:6.

*The earliest attainable text most probably is the variant that **does not** conform to extrinsic theological, ideological, or other socio-historical contexts contemporary with and congenial to a text's scribe.*

This broad criterion recognizes that scribes and readers unconsciously, but more likely consciously, would tend to bring a text into conformity with their own or their group's doctrinal beliefs or with accepted socio-cultural conventions. Naturally, difficulties exist in identifying both the contemporary context and the copyist's time frame and provenance.

Examples for Study: Priority of the reading not conforming to  
theology/ideology congenial to a text's scribe

Matt 1:16; 1:18; 24:36; 27:49; Mark 1:1; 6:3; 9:29; 15:34; Luke 1:35; 2:33, 41, 43; 2:40; 3:22; 9:35; 22:14; 22:17–20; 22:43–44; 23:34a; 24:3; 24:6; 24:12; 24:36; 24:40; 24:50–53; John 1:18; 1:34; Acts 1:2; 1:23; 2:17; 3:17; 4:13–16; 4:19; 4:24; 9:20; 10:30; 11:2; 14:2–7; 14:19; 15:29, 32; 17:34; 18:26; 19:6; 20:28; 24:10; 26:1; Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 7:5; Eph 4:15; 5:5; Phil 2:9; Col 2:2; 1 Tim 3:16; 1 John 4:3; 5:10.

Finally, a less traditional criterion that values and operates with cumulative evidence:

*The earliest attainable text most probably is the variant with multiple attestation, that is, support by two or more of the preceding criteria.*

This recognizes the cumulative weight in decision making that issues from multiplied support by the earliest witnesses or groups of witnesses, by witnesses shown to be most reliable in quality, or most diverse in location, and/or by multiple internal criteria.

Examples for Study: Priority of the reading supported by multiple criteria

For samples, scan the preceding boxes to find multiple occurrences of the same reference (e.g., Luke 4:44).

*Summary.* The “Jesus”/“Jesus Barabbas” variant, whether prudently chosen or not, calls up about half of these standard criteria, which might be typical, though the internal criteria on an author's style or theology; on Semitic or Koine/Attic expressions; and on conformation to parallel passages, or Septuagint citations, or liturgical and theological formulations appear not to be relevant. This is partly due, no doubt, to the brevity of the variant—only two different words—thus offering little opportunity for various kinds of alteration, whether unconscious or conscious. As a general principle, however, all criteria require consideration of all others in each variation unit, recognizing that scribal actions or readers notations can move in both directions. For instance, an earlier rough reading is likely to be smoothed by a scribe, but a rough reading may have been created by a scribal error, so that the “harder” reading criterion, if applied, would opt for what was actually a later reading. Reasonable limits, therefore, must be recognized in applying the criteria: years ago Edward Hobbs carried the point to the extreme of absurdity, stating: “If you follow the harder readings, you will end up with an

unintelligible text; if you follow the shorter readings, you will end up with no text at all.”<sup>18</sup>

The textual critic, therefore, always operates on the basis of the balance of probabilities: What most probably has occurred? Considering numerous probabilities (that is, criteria) usually will sift out the most probable probability, though differences of judgment will exist among scholars. If selecting one probability among many appears to be highly subjective, it is largely because textual transmission involves human skill but also human frailties, with the result that textual criticism has its “scientific” aspects (especially in measuring manuscript/textual relationships), but also is very much an art as it attempts to determine what causes lie behind the effects left in our myriad texts and manuscripts.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Does New Testament textual criticism have any consequences for today, beyond arriving at the earliest attainable text and observing early Christians nurturing and debating their doctrinal issues and their day-by-day community and ethical concerns? The two longest textual variants are poignantly instructive, especially since they deal with life and death issues. The *pericope adulterae* (169 words), the narrative of the “woman caught in adultery” [What about the man?] appears in the Gospel of John at different places (after 7:52; 7:36; 7:44; or 21:25) in various manuscripts, and also after Luke 21:38 in some (*f*<sup>13</sup>). It is present first in Codex Bezae (D, 05, ca. 400), joined by Old Latin copies, but it was absent from the oldest and “best” manuscripts, such as P<sup>66</sup> (ca. 200), P<sup>75</sup> (third century),  $\aleph$  and B (mid-fourth century) and a host of others, so it is not accredited as part of the earliest attainable text of John (or Luke). Many view it as an ancient piece of floating tradition, but if it were not for textual variation the church would not possess as part of its tradition the wisdom and compassion expressed in the alleged saying of Jesus, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.”

The most lengthy textual variant is the so-called “longer ending of Mark” (Mark 16:9–20, 171 words), which has no manuscript support until the fifth century, though it was known to Irenaeus in the late-second century. Again, the text is absent from  $\aleph$  and B—the oldest and “best” witnesses here. Later the vast

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18. Edward Hobbs, “An Introduction to Methods of Textual Criticism,” *The Critical Study of Sacred Texts* (ed. W. Doniger O’Flaherty; Berkeley: Berkeley Religious Studies Series, 1979), 19 (stated in reverse order).

majority of witnesses contain it, but it cannot be reckoned part of the earliest attainable text of Mark, not only on text-critical but also literary-critical grounds.

Every semester for thirty years, my large university course on Christian origins included one or two dozen pre-medical or Bachelor of Nursing candidates, and I made sure that they knew about this passage and hoped they would have it in view during their medical careers. Permit me to remind you of the insidious portion of this long ending to Mark, allegedly reporting the words of the risen Christ (Mark 16:17–18):

And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; [18] they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.

Inevitably during any given semester, I would bring in recent newspaper clippings of the tragic results of these “acts of faith.” I realized, of course, that physicians and nurses are not likely to persuade an ultra-fundamentalist Christian that Jesus never said these words or that they are not appropriately in their King James Bible. Yet, I thought it worthwhile to stress the issue if we could save only one child whose parents were about to turn away when a surgeon told them their son or daughter might die without an operation, to which they responded that the folk in their church would lay hands on the child and she would recover. I thought it worthwhile to discuss this variant if some over-zealous preacher could be prevented from handling a poisonous snake or drinking arsenic during a worship service. Is textual criticism relevant beyond seeking the earliest attainable New Testament text? Just look at these “rejected” variants and the stories they have to tell.

Jerome McGann, University Professor at the University of Virginia, undoubtedly the leading theorist in the textual criticism of English literature, focuses on textual instability and its variations:

The textual condition's only immutable law is the law of change.... Every text enters the world under determinate sociohistorical conditions, and ... they establish the horizon within which the life histories of different texts can play themselves out. The law of change declares that these histories will exhibit a ceaseless process of textual development and mutation—a process which can only be arrested if all the textual transformations of a particular work fall into nonexistence.<sup>19</sup>

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19. Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton Studies in Culture, Power, History; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 9.

Every text has variants of itself screaming to get out, or antithetical texts waiting to make themselves known. These variants and antitheses appear (and multiply) over time, as the hidden features of the textual media are developed and made explicit. . . . Various readers and audiences are hidden in our texts, and the traces of their multiple presence are scripted at the most material levels.<sup>20</sup>

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20. Ibid., 10.





# NARRATIVE CRITICISM OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

*David Rhoads*

Narrative criticism is a methodology that makes use of tools of literary analysis to interpret the narratives in the New Testament, including the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Book of Revelation. Narrative criticism focuses on the world of the story and the way it is told, including settings, plot, characters, standards of judgment, and the implied rhetorical impact on ancient audiences. The discipline has its roots in contemporary literary criticism<sup>1</sup> and, at its best, makes use of ancient narrative theory.

Narrative criticism emerged in the 1970s when redaction critics, accustomed to separating out the changes that Gospel writers made to their sources, began to realize that the Gospel writers were crafting holistic stories meant to have a narrative impact on their audiences. By the mid-eighties, there were full-blown narrative analyses of each of the Gospels.<sup>2</sup> Since that time, the field has burgeoned with thematic studies around plot, characters, settings, and discourse features, as well as detailed interpretations of individual episodes. Today, narrative criticism is part of mainstream New Testament studies.

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1. See, for example, Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structures in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987); Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. J. F. Lewin (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980); Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (New York: Methuen, 1983).

2. David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999); Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts* (vol. 1; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); and Jack Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

## FOUNDATIONS OF NARRATIVE CRITICISM

Prior to narrative criticism, scholars of the Gospels were primarily interested in reconstructing the history behind the text. Source critics teased out the source materials behind the Gospels as a means to reconstruct the history of the early church and to recover the historical Jesus. Form critics treated an episode as a free-floating oral tradition in the early church isolated from its narrative context in a Gospel. Redaction critics focused on the Gospel writers' changes to their traditions as means to reconstruct the community that the author addressed and the message that the author sought to convey. Narrative criticism shifted the focus from the world outside the text to the story world within the Gospel narrative. It also shifted the focus from the history behind the text to the implied audiences in front of the text who were hearing the story. In so doing, narrative criticism moved from an approach that fragments the text to a holistic approach that honors the integrity of the final text.

## THE NARRATIVE WORLD

The key to understanding narrative criticism is to recognize that the focus is on the world created by the narrative, much as we might think of the world made accessible in imagination by a modern novel or a film. The world of the story has its own dynamics: cosmology, an historical time with particular cultural realities, settings of time and place, characters, and plot. Each of the Gospels has its own distinct story world. To experience the story world of a Gospel, read the whole story through from beginning to end. When we do this and stay on the level of story, we suspend historical questions and we think of Jesus and the disciples as characters portrayed in a narrative world. When we experience events such as a healing or conflict, we see these as occurrences in the developing plot of the story world. When we experience houses and Nazareth and a Sabbath, we treat them as settings presented to us in the world of the narrative. In addition, the characters in the story will have a distinctive past, represented, for example, by the traditions of Israel as depicted in the story. And the characters will anticipate a future, such as the persecution of disciples or the return of Jesus.

To appreciate the distinctiveness of each Gospel story, we need to bracket out what we know of Jesus outside that Gospel—from other Gospels as well as from our general knowledge of Jesus. We also need to bracket what later theology posits about Jesus, such as the doctrines of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ. The same is true of all characters, events, and settings. Unless we bracket out extra-narrative matters, we will be changing the Gospel under study and losing the distinctiveness of its narrative world.

To say that we bracket out other materials about Jesus is not, however, to say that we view a Gospel in a vacuum. Each Gospel was a first-century narrative; and we interpreters need to make use of what we know of the first century, not by adding information to the story but as a means to help us understand the story better—much as an interpreter of a Shakespearean drama would employ what is known of sixteenth century English society, language, and culture as an aid to comprehending the characters, events, settings, and language of the play. Therefore, understanding what New Testament writers assumed of their contemporary audiences as a basis for them to grasp the story is not a matter of changing the story but of using social and cultural information to explicate the story world and to understand its potential impacts. The focus remains on the narrative world in its historical context, not on the historical world.

#### IMPLIED AUTHOR AND IMPLIED READER/HEARER

Narrative analysis does not seek to recover the intentions of the actual composer of a Gospel. Rather, we think of the author as a construct implied by all the values and beliefs implicitly put forth by the story. Similarly, we do not have access to how actual readers/hearers received a Gospel. Nevertheless, we can infer the implied responses that the story itself suggests for an ideal response to the narrative. Such a construct of implied readers/hearers is a mirror reflection of the implied author in the sense that the implied author is seeking to lead ideal readers/hearers to embrace the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior implicitly promoted by the story.

#### NARRATOR AND NARRATEE

The implied author has a narrator tell the story. In general, there can be a first person narrator (“I”) who is a character in the narrative world. Or there can be a third person narrator. In the case of the Gospels, apart from a few exceptions such as Luke 1:1–2 and John 21:24–25, the distinct narrators of the different Gospels commonly function in a way that is external to the story world (narrators that are part of the text but not characters in the story); they are omniscient (can tell what is in the minds of characters); and they are not bound by time and place (can go wherever the action is in order to depict what may be in private). A third person narrator guides the hearers by asides—giving to audiences privileged information not known by the characters in the story and demonstrating beliefs and values by which the narrator guides audiences to adopt the point of view of that narrator. The narratee is also part of the text. Like the narrator, the narratee is not a character in the story. Rather, the narratee is constructed from all the implied responses

that ideal readers/hearers might make to the telling of the story. The implied narratee responds in ways consonant to what the narrator seeks to engender in the readers/hearers.

The construction of narrator and narratee are simply heuristic devices designed to explore the diverse meaning potential and the various rhetorical possibilities of a narrative. The narrator and narratee need not be identical to the implied author and the implied readers/hearers. However, in the case of the New Testament writings, it is generally assumed that the narrator shares the values and beliefs of the implied author and that the narratee is identical with implied readers/hearers.

## TOOLS FOR ANALYZING THE NARRATIVE WORLD

We now turn to elements of the story world: settings, plot (events), characters, standards of judgment/point of view, and rhetoric.

### SETTINGS

Settings provide a narrative with a context where events take place and characters act. They are not incidental backdrops. They provide the conditions—the possibilities and the limitations—for the events in the story to take place. Settings include the portrayal of the cosmos, the socio-cultural ethos, geographical locations such as a wilderness or a sea, human habitations like cities and villages, specific material settings such as houses and synagogues, and occasions such as a trial or Passover. Settings are seldom neutral. They have cultural and religious meaning and associations for the characters within the story. They provide themes and motifs, such as mountains in Matthew and “the way” in Mark. They can serve to generate atmosphere (hostility in Jerusalem), create suspense, drive an episode (storm at sea), provide the reason for a conflict (Sabbath), reveal traits of characters as they interact with the settings (such as a lack of bread in a desert), and provide public and private space for events and interactions. In narrative criticism, it is important to ask about the nature and function of settings.

### PLOT

Plot deals with the sequence of events as they unfold in the developing story. Plot is the movement of events in time moving toward either resolution or lack of closure. Plots have a beginning, middle, and end that narrow the choices for characters. Each Gospel has its own distinctive ways of organizing and developing

plot. Mark develops his narrative using a journey motif. Matthew plots his Gospel by alternating a series of episodes with five lengthy teachings by Jesus. John has a series of extended episodes around symbols that are correlated with monologues by Jesus about his identity, episodes that are piled one upon another to amplify and trigger an audience's understanding and experience of Jesus.

It is important to ask how specific events within a Gospel relate to other events that precede or follow in the plot, related by causality and consequence, by juxtaposition, or by repetition with variation. Events serve different functions in the plot. They can propel a plot forward (the descent of the Spirit at Jesus' baptism), set up expectations (Jesus' call to the disciples to "become fishers for people"), represent turning points (Peter's recognition of Jesus as the Messiah), or climax a series of developments (Jesus' trial before Pilate). Less important events may lead to climactic episodes, while others are consequences of turning points.

In analyzing an episode, narrative critics can identify the presenting problem (paralysis, demon possession), what obstacles occur to address the problem, how those obstacles are overcome, how the presenting problem is addressed (healing, exorcism), and what the outcome is (acclamations, increased opposition). Or an episode may lend itself to conflict analysis: who is engaged in conflict; what is at stake in the conflict; what is the point of view and strategy of each side; and what power each side has and how it is used. Narrative critics also trace the development of the conflict: how the conflict is initiated, how it escalates, if it is resolved, how it is resolved, and what events the resolution or lack of resolution produces. Such analysis helps to unpack the dynamics of a story, clarify the flow of the narrative, and suggest what potential impact it may have on audiences.

## CHARACTERS

An analysis of characters overlaps with an analysis of plot: characters are agents in the plot, and the actions of the plot reveal the characters. It is critical to identify all characters: Jesus, authorities, disciples, minor characters, crowds, God, Satan, angels, and demons. While characters often act as a group, not all disciples and not all authorities are the same. Consider also characters portrayed in parables and characters referred to from the past, such as Abraham and David.

The narrator introduces and develops characters in a story in ways that lead audiences to make judgments about them. The narrator can "tell" an audience if a character is good or bad; or the narrator can "show" the words and actions of a character and let the readers/hearers make inferences. Readers/hearers understand characters in a story much as we understand real people—what they look like (little is said about this), what they do, what they say, what others (including the narrator) say about them, how they interact with other characters, and

how they react to settings and events. When we encounter a character, we get initial impressions and then we have these impressions confirmed, overturned, or deepened as the narrative progresses. Some characters change and develop while others remain stereotypically the same. We also note their place in the society portrayed in the story: male or female, peasants or part of the elite, from Jerusalem or a rural village, clean or impure, poor or wealthy, as well as the power and influence they may have and how they use them. In light of all these characteristics, readers/hearers make inferences about the traits and reliability of the characters in the story.

#### STANDARDS OF JUDGMENT

Each Gospel has its own distinctive standards of judgment—the values and beliefs embedded in the narrative by which audiences are led to evaluate the characters and their actions. These standards are inferred from asides by the narrator, the teaching of Jesus, the characters who model the norms or transgress them, and the plot and its outcomes. These standards represent the moral fabric of a narrative, namely, the positive values and beliefs that the narrative promotes and the negative behavior that the narrative condemns. Usually these positive and negative standards are contrasting: Matthew promotes integrity and condemns hypocrisy; Luke promotes compassion and condemns greed; John promotes belief in Jesus and condemns disbelief.

Standards of judgment are closely related to “point of view.” Narrative critics identify the point of view of each character—beliefs, values, what they seek, and what they are willing to do to attain it. The critic also infers the overarching point of view of the narrator in telling the story. The narrator is not neutral. The narrator favors some characters and disfavors others, leading the ideal readers/hearers to identify with reliable characters, distance themselves from others, and perhaps have ambivalence toward others. Clarifying the overarching point of view and sorting out the differing points of view of the characters and how they relate to each other will bear much fruit in understanding the story.

#### RHETORIC

With a study of rhetoric, we are shifting from *what* the story is to *how* the story is told, from what the story *means* to what the story *does*. Gospel writers make use of storytelling features and techniques to engender certain impacts upon readers/hearers—parables, quotations from the Scriptures, questions, prophecies, symbols, metaphors, and irony. Storytelling strategies include verbal threads, foreshadowing and retrospection, type scenes, dialogues of misunderstanding,

episodes embedded in other episodes, episodes in concentric patterns, episodes in a series of three, episodes that frame material, and varieties of parallelism. Attending to these features of discourse helps us to grasp the rhetorical impact.

Rhetoric is related to the concept of implied readers/hearers insofar as we are determining the ideal impact the story seeks to have on its audience. There are many potential ideal impacts of a Gospel—awakening faith, fostering integrity, generating compassion, evoking sympathy, instilling values, or inviting awe. Each Gospel has rhetorical potential to lead hearers through various experiences so that they are different by the end of the story than they were at the beginning. For example, Mark leads hearers to overcome fear so that they will be able to follow Jesus. Matthew engenders the experience of being “discipled” by Jesus so that the audience will obey his teachings. Luke generates compassion for the downtrodden so that readers/hearers will act on behalf of the vulnerable. John uses symbols to trigger a spiritual experience of abundant life.

#### REAL READERS/HEARERS

Texts do not have meaning in themselves apart from readers/hearers. As such, meaning is negotiated between the story or speech (with its potential for meaning), and real readers/hearers. Scholars today do not escape what they bring to the text from their context. Nevertheless, we seek to place ourselves hypothetically in the position of different first century audiences in specific contexts as means to imagine how ancient hearers may have experienced a particular Gospel—based on whether they belonged to certain cultural groups (Jewish or gentile), knew certain traditions (peasant or elite), shared a particular political circumstance (under the Roman Empire), and were hearing shortly after a significant historical event (The Roman Judean War).

Narrative criticism interacts well with other methods of New Testament study. Reader-response critics embrace approaches that range from the responses implied by the text to the actual experiences of real contemporary readers. The reader-response approach most compatible with narrative criticism proper is that which seeks to understand the rhetorical strategies and discourse features of the text itself that would have an implied impact on audiences. Social science critics do a cultural anthropological analysis of the dynamics of the story world—kinship patterns, purity and defilement, patron-client relationships, honor and shame, and so on. One can determine in what ways the narrative mirrors cultural patterns and in what ways the narrative subverts those patterns and promotes alternative ones. Ideological critics do an analysis of the narrative world in terms of such issues as gender interactions, ethnic relationships, oppressor/oppressed dynamics, and wealth and poverty as means to determine the power dynamics

of the story—whose interests are served by the story and whose interests are ignored or suppressed. Performance critics immerse a Gospel narrative in orality, with the recognition that the Gospels arose as oral compositions meant to be proclaimed as a whole in lively ways by a flesh and blood performer before communal audiences in a predominantly oral culture—experienced in sound (pace, volume, inflection), with gestures, facial expressions and movement.

### A TEST CASE: THE MAN WITH THE WITHERED HAND (MARK 3:1–6)

This case study demonstrates how one might do a narrative analysis of an individual episode in the Gospel of Mark. In so doing, it reveals the incredible richness and the many facets of New Testament narratives. What we learn from a detailed analysis of this episode contributes to our understanding of the overall Gospel story of Mark. And what we know of the whole Gospel story contributes to our understanding of this episode. This is one of several narrative interpretations that can be proposed for this episode. I will first analyze the episode itself and then I will discuss its role in the Gospel of Mark as a whole.

#### EXPERIENCING THE NARRATIVE WORLD

One way to begin analysis of a story is to read it several times, each time looking for a different narrative feature. Also, we might memorize the story by learning it and recounting it from memory, then looking to see what we missed or added or changed. In this way, we notice details that we might otherwise have overlooked. In addition, we may work through the story slowly, asking questions without trying to answer them. Here is the story.<sup>3</sup>

He (Jesus) entered again into a synagogue. And there was a man there who had a withered hand.

And they [Pharisees] were watching him closely, whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so they might bring charges against him.

And he said to the man with the withered hand, “Rise, to the center.”

And he said to them, “Is it legal on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm? To save a life or to put to death?”

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3. For a full set of exercises in a narrative analysis, see Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 151–59.



But they kept silent.

And looking around at them with anger, deploring the hardening of their hearts, he said to the man with the withered hand, "Stretch out the hand."

And he stretched it out. And his hand was made new!

And the Pharisees went out and held a council with the Herodians, how they might destroy him.

#### A STORYTELLING SCENARIO

This is a rather amazing story. Before we begin a formal narrative analysis, I want to share an imaginary scene of this story being performed to an audience in an ancient setting as part of a recounting of the entire Gospel.

Imagine a peasant audience listening to someone telling Mark. Jesus has already been presented as the chosen one of God who is bringing in the kingdom of God. He has already done healings and exorcisms. The listeners have been told that Jesus teaches with authority, unlike the scribes. They have seen the opposition to Jesus from the scribes and Pharisees. Now this opposition is coming to a climax. There is a man with a withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath. This is quite suspenseful, because the authorities are carefully watching to see if Jesus will do work on the Sabbath by healing this man, so they can indict him and presumably arrest him for a flagrant violation of the Judean Law by a teacher with disciples. The peasant audience may have grumbled audibly over the attitude of the Pharisees. Nevertheless, they are probably also very quiet as they listen for what will happen. The suspense increases as Jesus brazenly tells the man to get up and come to the center. Is Jesus going to heal him right in front of the authorities? Then Jesus addresses the authorities directly, asking almost tauntingly whether it is legal to do this good deed on the Sabbath or to do harm? But they keep quiet—more interested in indicting him than debating him. Then Jesus, angered at their silence, addresses the man with the withered hand. The listeners expect that Jesus is about to lay hands on him or declare him healed, as he has healed every other person who has come to him—and then what will happen to him?

Then comes a surprise. Jesus does something very clever. He does nothing more than tell the man to "Stretch out the hand." The man does so, and his hand is made new! Jesus did it. Jesus healed him—and without doing anything that could be considered work on the Sabbath! We can hear the cheers and laughter of the peasant audience as they celebrate the way in which this fellow peasant has outwitted the authorities and thwarted their efforts to indict him. These authorities see the man healed on the Sabbath, and they cannot do anything about it! As the noise of the audience subsides, the narrator adds an ominous note. The

Pharisees, frustrated in their efforts, go off to meet with supporters of King Herod Antipas in order to plot how they might destroy Jesus. The suspense in this episode is over, but the tension in the Gospel story as a whole has risen to a new level.

#### ANALYZING THE EPISODE

This is a powerful story. Just how can we analyze the story to understand it? How does the story work to have its impact on audiences? Here we make use of the tools of narrative analysis to unpack the episode feature by feature.

*Settings.* The settings are three-fold. The first is the material setting of the synagogue as the public place for a gathering of Jews for teaching and worship. The synagogue is also a place where Jews bring charges against offenders and hold local court. The second is the temporal setting of the Sabbath day. That it was illegal to work on the Sabbath is the basis for the charges that might be brought against Jesus. The third setting is the Galilean village with cultural traditions and practices that inform the story.

*Plot.* There are two intertwined plot dynamics. First, there is the plot of a healing story. A problem presents itself. There is a man with a withered hand. There is an obstacle, because he cannot request an illegal act of healing on the Sabbath. The obstacle is overcome when Jesus calls him to the center. Jesus then resolves the problem by restoring his hand. A consequence of the healing is that Pharisees plot with others against Jesus.

The second plot dynamic is a conflict story embedded between the beginning and ending of the healing. The conditions for the conflict are set by two factors. A man with a withered hand is present on the Sabbath. And there are people (Pharisees) watching Jesus to see if he will act illegally and heal this man on the Sabbath, “so they might bring charges against him.” The narrative implies that the character Jesus is aware of this threat. The conflict begins when Jesus tells the man to come to the center, presumably to heal him in front of everyone. The conflict escalates when Jesus challenges the Pharisees with the question: “Is it legal on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save a life or to put to death?” The conflict continues when they refuse to respond. Angered by their lack of response, Jesus addresses the situation by healing the man. He resolves the problem but not the conflict, because they cannot bring charges against him for this. The result is that the conflict intensifies.

*Characters.* Jesus, the protagonist, initiates the conflict but then leaves it unresolved by healing the man in a way that does not constitute “work” on the Sabbath. Jesus shows himself to be a person who has an interpretation of the Sab-

bath that allows for “doing good,” who demonstrates courage to act in the face of opposition, who is compassionate by being angered at their response, and who expresses power and authority by healing the man. He is also clever in avoiding indictment.

As the antagonists, the Pharisees are local functionaries with the authority to enforce the Judean legal traditions. They are presented as guardians of their interpretation of the Sabbath, ready to bring serious charges against Jesus, and plotting against him. The narrator tells us that Jesus sees the progressive rigidity of their opposition to him as a “hardening of their hearts.” The Herodians are supporters of Herod Antipas, king over Galilean territory, who alone had the legal capacity in Galilee under the Romans to execute people, as indeed we learn later when Herod Antipas beheads John the Baptist.

The man with the withered hand is a marginal figure. Audiences would have understood that his healing in the world of the story would restore him to full participation in his family life and to his right as an Israelite to worship in the Temple. In the story, the crowd provides the public witness to the healing and the public context for the conflict, which would bring shame on the Pharisees—because Jesus has outwitted them by escaping their efforts to indict him.

*Standards of Judgment.* The story bears standards by which audiences are led to evaluate the characters and their actions in the story. The episode promotes a set of positive standards and discourages a contrasting set of negative standards. The story favors Jesus’ interpretation and his actions and disfavors the interpretation and action of the authorities. Jesus believes it is right to heal on the Sabbath and he acts on that conviction. The Pharisees believe that it is illegal to heal on the Sabbath (as work) and they are prepared to bring charges against Jesus, charges that might result in his arrest and/or death. Jesus articulates the interpretation of the Sabbath that is at stake: “Is it legal on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to put to death?” The question has some precedence in that some Judeans in the midst of war determined that it was permissible to fight (do work) on the Sabbath if such fighting was necessary to save the Sabbath as a religious way of life. The story suggests that, from Jesus’ point of view, it would be permissible to “to save” this man’s (wholeness of) life by healing (working) on the Sabbath.

In the story, this teaching has implications for Jesus’ interpretation of the Judean Law as a whole. In the previous episode in the story, Jesus has said that “The Sabbath was made for humanity, not humanity for the Sabbath.” For the authorities, the Sabbath (and, by extension, the entire Law) was made to be obeyed by humans as God’s will, despite the impact on humans. For Jesus, the laws were made to benefit people and they should be interpreted so as to do good, to save life. As such, Jesus’ disciples picked grain to meet their hunger on the Sabbath, and Jesus healed on the Sabbath.

The contrasts evident in this episode comprise the positive and negative standards by which the narrator leads an audience to evaluate the characters and their behavior. Jesus is the one who lives by the honorific norms. The authorities manifest the dishonorable norms. The irony is that the Pharisees actually behave in a way that contradicts their prohibition of work on the Sabbath. They travel (clearly a violation of the Sabbath work laws) in order to hold a council (another violation) with the Herodians against Jesus. The actions of the Pharisees on the Sabbath were designed to “do harm” and to “put (Jesus) to death.”

*Rhetoric.* In terms of rhetorical techniques, the narrator tells this story in a way that moves back and forth between Jesus and the authorities.

*Jesus*

There is a man needing restoration.  
Jesus challenges the accusers.  
Jesus heals the man.

*Authorities*

They are ready to indict Jesus if he heals.  
They are silent.  
The Pharisees go off to plot Jesus' death.

This back and forth movement makes the story easy to follow and highlights the following contrasts between Jesus and the opponents.

*Positive standards*

A. to do good  
A. to save a life  
A. Jesus heals

*Negative standards*

B. to do harm  
B. to put to death  
B. The Pharisees plot to destroy Jesus

At the beginning of this test case, I offered a scenario that depicts my understanding of the impact of this episode on an audience. Here's how it works. The introduction of Jesus entering the synagogue on the Sabbath and the presence of the man with the withered hand raise expectations, uncertainties, and suspense. The conflict that ensues intensifies the uncertainties. The suspense draws audiences in and makes them eager to find out what will happen next. The twist in the plot brings humor and delight, especially for a peasant audience in relation to authorities. The final word about a plot against Jesus creates a sense of foreboding. The audience is led to adopt the point of view of Jesus about the interpretation of the Sabbath. They identify with the man with the withered hand and applaud his healing—even on the Sabbath. And they are led to see the irony and the disgrace of the Pharisees, frustrated at their failed efforts to indict Jesus, going off to “do harm” and to plot to “put to death” the man they oppose—on the Sabbath. This is a brief story that is told in a powerful way so as to bring an audience to beliefs and values different from what they may have embraced before they heard it.

## THE ROLE OF THIS EPISODE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE STORY AS A WHOLE

This story does not stand alone and should not be interpreted as such. The entire Gospel of Mark leading up to and following this episode gives it meaning and force. In what follows, I will first of all show the role of this episode in relation to a series of episodes that precede it and then make some observations about how this episode relates to the Gospel story as a whole.

*The Role of this Episode in a Markan Ring Composition.* This episode is the climactic episode in a series of five episodes that were very carefully composed to form a concentric pattern. Joanna Dewey first identified this pattern. What follows is based largely on her work.<sup>4</sup>

- (A) The healing of the man with paralysis (2:1–12)
- (B) Eating with tax collectors and sinners (2:15–17)
- (C) Controversy over fasting (2:18–22)
- (B') Picking grain to eat on the Sabbath (2:23–28)
- (A') The healing of the man with the withered hand (3:1–6)

Episodes in a ring composition were common in the ancient world, because the pattern prompted the performer to remember the episodes and helped audiences to recall the stories. The composition is a temporal pattern in the telling. First, there is an opening episode (A), then a second related episode (B), then a third episode (C) that explains the first two episodes and anticipates the episodes that will follow, then a fourth episode (B') that is similar the second episode, which it recalls and repeats with variation, and finally a fifth story (A') that is similar to the first episode, which recalls and repeats it with variation. The final episode also brings all the episodes to a climax.

*The Healing of the Man with the Withered Hand (A').* In regard to the final (our) episode, the setting is indoors (synagogue). There is a healing. Embedded in the healing story is a conflict over the legality of Jesus' action (work on the Sabbath). There are three characters: Jesus, the authorities, and a man with an impairment, plus the crowds. The narrator reports accusations that the Pharisees have in their hearts (their intention to charge Jesus). Jesus knows what they are thinking. Jesus' response is in the form of two rhetorical questions: "Is it legal on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm? To save a life or to put to death." There is a

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4. Joanna Dewey, *Markan Public Debate: Literary Technique, Concentric Structure, and Theology in Mark 2:1 to 3:6* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1980). This series anticipates a similar series of seven episodes in a ring composition later in the Gospel; Dewey, *Markan Public Debate*, 152–67.

serious legal issue (flagrant disobedience of the Sabbath by a teacher). Jesus cleverly evades indictment (by doing nothing that constitutes work).

*The Healing of the Man with Paralysis (A).* You can notice here the structural and verbal similarities of our episode (A') to the first episode (A). The setting is indoors (house). There is a healing of a man. Embedded in the healing story is a conflict over the legality of Jesus' action (blasphemy). There are three characters: Jesus, the authorities, and a man with an impairment, along with those who bring him, plus the crowds. The narrator reports accusations that the Pharisees have in their hearts. Jesus knows what they are thinking. Jesus' response is in the form of two rhetorical questions: "Which is easier? To say to the man 'Your sins are forgiven' or to say 'Take up your mat and walk?'" There is a serious legal issue (blasphemy, the charge for which Jesus was later handed over to the Romans). Jesus cleverly evades indictment (instead of declaring forgiveness, he heals the man, which implies that his sins have also been forgiven). Furthermore, both episodes begin with the words "And he entered again into ..." and both share the catchwords "their hearts" to depict the internal state of the authorities.

*Eating with Impure Tax Collectors and Sinners (B).* Similarly, consider the similarities in the second (B) and fourth (B') episodes. In B, the setting is about eating (a meal). Jesus' action precipitates the conflict (eating with tax collectors and sinners). The characters are Jesus, disciples, and the scribes of the Pharisees. The tax collectors and sinners are the occasion for the conflict. The authorities express verbal opposition to Jesus' action with a single accusatory question: "Why is he eating with tax collectors and sinners?" There is a legal issue (impurity, because of eating with those considered unclean). Jesus answers with a proverbial maxim: "Those who are healthy have no need of a physician, but the sick do." He ends with a statement about his purpose: "I came not to call the righteous but sinners." This statement ends the conflict but not the opposition to Jesus by the authorities.

*Working by Picking Grain to Eat on the Sabbath (B').* In B', the setting is about eating (picking grain on the Sabbath). The action of Jesus' disciples precipitates the conflict (work on the Sabbath). The characters are: Jesus, disciples, and the Pharisees. The authorities express verbal opposition to Jesus' action with a single accusatory question: "Why are your disciples doing what is illegal the Sabbath?" There is a legal issue (work on the Sabbath by the disciples for whom the teacher is responsible). Jesus poses a rhetorical question that explains and justifies their action: "Haven't you ever read what David did when he and those with him were hungry, how he entered into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest and ate some of the bread of the Presence, which it is illegal for anyone to eat, except the priests?" He concludes this justification with a proverbial maxim: "The Sabbath was made for humanity, not humanity for the Sabbath." He ends with a statement about his purpose: "So, the son of humanity is lord also over the

Sabbath.” This statement ends the conflict but not the opposition to Jesus by the authorities. Both episodes begin with the words “and it happened that . . .” and both share the same authorities, “the scribes of the Pharisees” (B) and “the Pharisees” (B’).

*Controversy over Fasting (C).* This episode is different from but related to the other four episodes. The setting is indistinct. In contrast to the eating theme of B and B’, episode C is about fasting. This is not a conflict. There is no legal issue. The two characters are Jesus and those who question him (not authorities). They ask Jesus a two-part question of inquiry: “Why do the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fast while your disciples are not fasting?” Jesus gives a two-part answer. The first answer is an image explaining why Jesus’ disciples do not fast in contrast to John the Baptist: The bridegroom (Jesus) is with his disciples, whereas the bridegroom of the disciples of John (John) has been arrested. He adds that his disciples will fast when the bridegroom will be taken from them (an allusion to his own arrest and death). The second answer is comprised of two images that explain why Jesus’ disciples do not fast in contrast to the Pharisees: “No one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth onto an old garment. Otherwise, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and the rip gets worse. And no one puts fresh wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, it will burst the wineskin, and the wine will be destroyed along with the wineskins.” Jesus ends with an appeal to “Put new wine in new wineskins.”

This central episode is the key to the whole composition. Jesus is special like a bridegroom. The time is special like a wedding. The bridegroom “taken away” signals the seriousness of the accusations against Jesus and anticipates Jesus’ eventual arrest and execution. The allegories of patch and wine illustrate how—in all five episodes—Jesus is being judged by “old” categories inadequate to evaluate the “new” thing that Jesus represents in the inauguration of the kingdom of God. To understand Jesus and the kingdom of God, people must put new wine (the actions of Jesus and his disciples on behalf of the kingdom of God) into new wineskins (new ways of thinking in line with the overall point of view expressed in the story).

*The Overall Pattern of the Ring Composition.* This last point reflects the overall theme of the episodes: Jesus is someone with authority. The reader knows from the story of the baptism that Jesus is a special figure who has been given authority by God. Jesus has authority over physical impairments, authority to forgive sins, authority over impurity, authority over the Sabbath, authority to interpret the law. Jesus taught with authority, unlike the scribes and Pharisees, whose authority was to accuse, and without results. The idea that people judge Jesus and his actions for the kingdom of God by old and inadequate categories will lead to the wine and the wineskins being “destroyed.” The use of the word “destroyed” at the end of

episode C provides a verbal thread to the last line in the series, when the Pharisees and Herodians plan how to “destroy” Jesus.

The circular progression is accompanied by a linear progression as the conflicts escalate. The opposition intensifies: scribes accuse Jesus silently (A); the scribes of the Pharisees accuse Jesus indirectly to his disciples (B); there are two instances foreshadowing the mortal outcome of the conflicts (C), namely, the bridegroom will be “taken away,” and the wine will be “destroyed”; Pharisees address Jesus directly about the actions of his disciples (B’); and finally the Pharisees accuse Jesus silently, as in the first episode, but now with the intent to bring charges against him (A’). In the last climactic episode, the hearts of the Pharisees have become hardened against Jesus. And, at the end of the episode, the Pharisees escalate their efforts. Throughout these episodes, Jesus’ responses also intensify in emotion until, in the final episode, “he looks at them with anger deploring the hardening of their hearts.”

These episodes clustered in a ring composition serve to interpret each other and the series as a whole. We cannot adequately understand the healing of the man with the withered hand without seeing it in the context of the whole ring composition. This ring composition is integrated into the larger narrative by being framed with notices of Jesus’ increasingly successful mission in Galilee. Just preceding the first episode, the narrator reports that a healed leper began to “spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer enter into a town openly, but stayed outside, in deserted places; yet people came to him from everywhere” (1:45). This popularity motif resumes right after the last episode, where people are coming to Jesus “in great numbers from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon” (3:7–8).

*The Interconnections of Mark 3:1–6 with the Gospel of Mark as a Whole.* The place of this episode in the pattern of stories in a ring composition by no means exhausts the connections between this episode and the rest of Mark’s story.

For example, the threat posed by the Pharisees and Herodians at the end of this episode leads Jesus immediately to “withdraw” to open spaces and new territory. News of this and other healings contributing to his popularity also constrains him to withdraw to open spaces. He goes by the sea, then across the sea, and then into the surrounding Gentile territory. Furthermore, due to opposition he has encountered in houses and synagogues, he seldom appears again in such locations.

In addition, the hardening of the opposition anticipates the escalation of the overall conflict in the Gospel. Subsequent to our episode, scribes and Pharisees come down from Jerusalem to defame him as one who exorcises demons “by authority of the ruler of demons” (3:22). Herod Antipas is responsible for the execution of John the Baptist (6:14–29). On the journey to Jerusalem, Pharisees seek



to trap Jesus with a question about divorce, the same issue that got John executed (10:2–12). In Jerusalem, scribes, Pharisees, and Herodians join forces with elders and chief priests to trick Jesus into making statements that would lead to indictment (11:27–12:27). As before, Jesus cleverly evades these efforts. He is indicted only when he voluntarily gives up a statement that leads the high priest and the Sanhedrin council to charge him with blasphemy (14:53–64).

In a related way, after this episode, Jesus' responses to authorities tend toward being indictments of them. He now goes to places where he can manifest the benefits of the kingdom among those who will respond—until he begins his journey to Jerusalem to face the opposition head on. Meanwhile, authorities are hardened in their determination to “destroy” him, a verbal thread picked up again near the end of the story to depict the determination of the authorities in Jerusalem who are seeking “how they might destroy him” (11:18).

The principle of interpreting the Law to “do good” and “to save life” gives the readers/hearers basis for understanding Jesus' actions throughout the remainder of the story. In Jerusalem, we see the full articulation of this principle when Jesus affirms that the greatest commandments of the Judean Law, the commandments to be used to interpret all other commandments, are “love God” and “love the neighbor as oneself” (12:28–34).

In addition to its place in the ring composition, the story of the man with the withered hand reflects other Markan techniques of storytelling that relate this passage to many other passages in Mark: features typical of the Markan type scene of healing; an episode (of conflict) sandwiched between the beginning and ending of another episode (of healing); the use of verbal threads as echoes (“hearts”) and forecasts (“destroy”); patterns of repetition (“Stretch out the hand” and “He stretched it out”); contrast between Jesus and authorities (“do good” or “do harm”); patterned uses of questions (two rhetorical questions addressed by Jesus to the authorities); two-step repetitions of a phrase with greater detail (“looked at them with anger, deploring the hardening of their hearts” and “against Jesus, how they might destroy him”); and irony (authorities reveal their hypocrisy).<sup>5</sup> Both content and strategies of storytelling contribute to the overall rhetorical impact of Mark's Gospel.

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5. For a description of all the Markan rhetorical techniques of storytelling, see Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 47–61.

## CONCLUSION

From narrative analysis, we come to appreciate Mark's complex patterns of storytelling. We discover that sophisticated storytelling techniques are pervasive in Mark. The interrelations of these features are quite extraordinary. Scholars have referred to Mark as an "interwoven tapestry." Exploring narrative features and storytelling patterns in an individual episode and in its relation to the Gospel as a whole is what narrative criticism is about—as means to interpret a Gospel, its values and beliefs, and its capacity to have such a powerful impact on its audiences.

## FOR FURTHER READING

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## ORAL COMMUNICATION, ORAL PERFORMANCE, AND NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION

*Richard A. Horsley*

### THE TYPOGRAPHICAL CAPTIVITY OF BIBLICAL STUDIES

Modern western print culture gave birth to biblical studies—and now threatens to hold it captive.<sup>1</sup> Like classicists, New Testament scholars who write mass-produced books and articles for individual silent readers have simply assumed that biblical “books” were widely distributed, readily available, and easily read at least by the time of Jesus and Paul. They assume, for example, that “authors” “wrote” the Gospels, which were fairly quickly “in circulation” to be “read” by early Christians.

Parallel but often separate lines of research in recent decades have shown that literacy was extremely limited in antiquity and that oral communication dominated, even among the literate elite. There was no “Great Divide” between an oral and a literate culture. Written texts in ancient Judea and the Roman Empire were embedded in the wider oral communication. In their interface, written texts reflected oral communication and writing influenced oral communication. Many texts that were inscribed on scrolls continued to be cultivated orally. By repeated recitation they had become “inscribed” on the tablets of people’s hearts as well as on scrolls.

Ironically our only access to oral communication is through extant written texts. Hence it is important not to impose modern typographical assumptions, and concepts in which our scholarship is embedded, onto the oral communication that might be discernible in or underneath the written texts that are the only

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1. On print culture, see especially Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Culture Transformations in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

remains visible of the biosphere of communication from which they grew.<sup>2</sup> It is important, therefore, to recognize that historically there have been different oral communications and literacies, and to investigate the specific social practices of reading and writing and oral communications. Practices of writing and reading are culturally embedded and ideological. Thus, while estimated percentages of “literacy” may be telling indicators for particular cultural situations, it is more important to discern the different uses of writing and their relationship with various forms of oral communications.<sup>3</sup>

Some significant implications for New Testament interpretation are already clear from the various lines of recent research.<sup>4</sup> Insofar as the medium of communication in antiquity was predominantly oral, and even written texts were recited orally to communities of people, it will be necessary for NT interpretation to shift and expand its focus from written texts in themselves, to (oral) *communication as interactive* and the *context(s)* in which it happened. Moreover, just as writing was embedded in wider oral communication, so particular texts, orally performed and/or written, were embedded in wider cultural *tradition(s)* and collective social *memory*, which thus become all the more important for our interpretation. Furthermore, insofar as oral and/or written texts (like the “oral traditions” behind them) were used in repeated recitation and application in communities and their contexts, interpretation would be appropriately focused on their *cultivation* and not their mere transmission.

## ORAL COMMUNICATION, LITERACY, AND THE USES OF WRITING IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Literacy was limited to a tiny percentage (10%) of the population in the Roman Empire. More important than the rate of literacy, however, were the uses and functions of writing. Writing was used mainly by the political and cultural elite,

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2. See especially the call for the field to recognize and critically rethink its own birth and basis in print culture by the pioneer in the study of orality, Werner Kelber, in “Jesus and Tradition: Words in Time, Words in Space,” *Semeia* 65 (1994): 139–67, and in many articles since.

3. Brian V. Street, *Literacy in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 2–3; John Miles Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 66–69.

4. See the reviews of research by Holly E. Hearon, “The Implications of Orality for Studies of the Biblical Text,” in *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory, and Mark* (ed. Richard A. Horsley, Jonathan A. Draper, and John Miles Foley; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 3–20; and Kelly R. Iverson, “Orality and the Gospels: A Survey of Recent Research,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 8 (2009): 71–106.

often as an instrument of power. While they knew that it was used by the elite, the vast majority of the people had no use for writing.<sup>5</sup>

The largely localized ancient economy did not require widespread literacy. A tiny minority of urban artisans used brief written forms. By the first century B.C.E. Roman aristocratic families had written contracts drawn up for large-scale loans and other major transactions. Administration and control of the empire required considerable use of writing, such as the imperial correspondence carried out by slaves in the "family of Caesar." The calculations of how much tribute could be taken from a given territory and its population were kept in writing (the "census" or "enrollment" of Luke 2:1). The Romans built massive monuments inscribed with names, slogans, and lengthy accounts of the great acts of the emperor in bringing Salvation and Security to the cities of the Empire. The operations of the Roman military also required extensive, if less public, writing. Writing in various forms was thus used mainly to maintain or expand military, economic and/or social power.

Writing also came to play a role in elite "literary" culture. Like every other aspect of life in the ancient world, however, this culture also was largely oral. Poetry of various forms was performed at festivals and in great households. Plays were performed in theaters. Orators displayed their rhetorical prowess at city festivals and before emperors. Sometimes orators used writing in the preparation of their orations. At least some literary culture was requisite for the urban and provincial elite of the Roman Empire, although they depended on suitably trained slaves to handle correspondence and read aloud to them. Yet most of their life, including "literary" entertainment and the ceremonial conduct of "political" affairs, proceeded by means of oral communication.

Among the ordinary people in the Roman Empire, urban artisans and rural peasants, transactions of all kinds took place in oral communication, usually face to face. Even "legal" agreements such as loans were conducted orally, perhaps confirmed by witnesses, the transfer of symbolic objects, and/or personal oaths. Such interaction was governed by age-old custom and ritual. Personal witnesses and testimony were far more trustworthy than written documents that could be altered by those who might use them for their own advantage. Indeed the people were often suspicious of writing as an instrument of their landlords or rulers.

It is curious that scholars of early Christianity who are aware of this limited literacy in the Roman Empire continue to trust older generalizations about general literacy among Judeans and diaspora Jews. "According to Josephus, in first century Judaism it was ... a religious commandment that ... children be taught to

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5. The standard work is William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), on which the following sketch depends.

read. . . . [R]abbinic sources suggest . . . that by the first century C.E. . . . even small communities had elementary schools.”<sup>6</sup> The key passages from Josephus, however, indicate not that children were taught to read but that the teaching and learning of the laws were done through public oral recitation (at Sabbath assemblies). This suggests both that Jews, like others in the Roman Empire, were generally not literate and that communication even of the most important matters was oral. Through recitation and hearing the laws would become “engraved on [the people’s] souls . . . and guarded in their memory” (*Ant.* 4.210; 16.43; *c. Apion.* 2.175, 178, 204; cf. Philo, *ad Gaium* 115, 210). Earlier studies failed to consider key aspects of the historical context, particularly the social location and power-relations of written texts, in the wider context of the dominant oral communications. The rabbinic texts cited for the ubiquity of schools refer rather to rabbinic circles themselves, a tiny segment of the population. And rabbinic sources cited as evidence of the people *reading* (e.g., *m. Ber.* 4.3; *m. Bik.* 3.7; *m. Sukk.* 3.10) refer rather to *recitation* of certain psalms and prayers from memory.

More extensive studies of the evidence of literacy and the particular uses of writing have now shown that the rate of literacy in Roman Palestine was much smaller than in the Roman Empire generally, as low as three percent.<sup>7</sup> The ability to read and write (Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek) was limited basically to scribal circles in Judea, the administrations of Rome’s client rulers, and nascent rabbinic circles. The Dead Sea Scrolls provide an unprecedented “horde” of written texts that were kept in scribal-priestly circles, copies of which were also presumably laid up in the Temple. Rabbinic circles evidently continued to teach and learn reading and writing. But it is sobering to realize that they may not have committed the tractates of the Mishnah and Tosepta to writing for several generations and the further elaboration of rabbinic debates and rulings in the Talmuds for many more generations after that. The rabbis, many of whom became wealthy, also used writing for economic transactions and social-religious-economic matters such as marriage contracts, after the second century C.E. The Babatha letters found in the Judean wilderness (in Greek) evidently attest the materialist concerns of the local Judean aristocracy.

As elsewhere in the Roman Empire, ordinary Judeans and Galileans communicated orally, with no need for writing. Villagers’ transactions concerning land, loans, and marriage were evidently conducted by oral agreement and/or ritual

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6. Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 7.

7. The extensive research in Catherine Heszer, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (TSAJ; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), confirms and much more fully documents what several of us sketched earlier.

action of oaths and witnesses, judging from rabbinic references. People placed their trust in the personal presence of living witnesses. Since writing was often used as an instrument of power over them, as in records of loans drawn up by wealthy creditors, artisans and peasants were sometimes hostile to written documents. One of the first actions in the popular insurrection in 66 C.E. was “to destroy the money-lenders’ bonds and prevent the recovery of debts” (Josephus, *J.W.* 2.426–27).

### KINDS AND FUNCTIONS OF WRITING IN THE SECOND TEMPLE ORAL COMMUNICATIONS CONTEXT

In modern print culture it is assumed that writing is for reading. Accordingly in biblical studies it is usually assumed that “biblical” texts were read and interpreted. In the culture of Roman Palestine, however, as in most cultures where writing was unusual, it may have appeared strange and mysterious, especially to the non-literate. It is important to discern the different kinds of writing and their function, lest we project the assumption that writing is for reading.<sup>8</sup> (Note that the Hebrew term *sepher*, “writing,” was used for all kinds of writing.)

Certain simple short “writings” were not intended to be read or consulted later. Pertinent to Jesus’ dispute with the Pharisees about divorce (Mark 10:2–9) was the provision in Deuteronomy (24:1–4) that a husband could place a simple “writing” of divorce into his wife’s hand and send her out of the household. Performative speech, such as a curse, carried the power of effecting what was pronounced. A husband’s simple written, hence permanent, renunciation was even more powerful, a decisively effective action.

A more substantial, extensive kind of writing served to authorize or “constitute” ruling institutions and/or claims to power and control of land and people. The “books” of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and possibly the “book” of Deuteronomy, earlier versions of the “books” of the Pentateuch, and many of the “writings” included in them (genealogies, lists of lineages and their claims to land and office, annals of kings, etc.) appear to have been constitutional writings produced to authorize the temple-state and its ruling priesthood. Like many writings placed in temples in Egypt and Mesopotamia, these writings were laid up in the Jerusalem Temple, further enhancing their authority, and were not (meant to

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8. Important distinctions, which some have not taken into account, by Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996); on second-temple texts, Richard A. Horsley, *Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judea* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), chs 5–6, on which the following depends.

be) consulted or read, although learned scribes may have known their contents orally-memorially.

"Numinous" writing is very important in authoritative second-temple Judean "books," many of which were later included in the Hebrew Bible. In a society dominated by oral communication, virtually any writing had a certain mysterious authority. The ultimate in numinous writing was that of God, especially his finger engraving his commandments on stone in the theophany at Sinai (Exod 24:12; 31:18; 32:16; Deut 4:13; 5:22; 9:10). The placement of the stone tablets in the ark of the covenant then made it electric with divine power. "The words" of God were *communicated* by Moses' oral recitation "in the ears of" the people. But the numinous aura of the divine writing gave them awesome authority and power.

Prominent in the cities of the Roman Empire was "monumental" writing, which was highly important in the legitimation of imperial and urban institutions and power relations. Monumental writing thus also carried constitutional functions. In the Greek city-states laws were inscribed on stones to display their force and permanence to the public. But knowledge of particular laws was obtained not by reading the inscription on the stones, but by consulting "rememberers." Some "monumental" writings with "constitutional" functions were inscribed on large scrolls or codices rather than on stone arches or "public" buildings. The Domesday Book of medieval England was not a record book to be consulted or read, but an awesome symbolic document of the majestic and unalterable Norman Conquest by William the Conqueror. Its earliest copies were sacred documents, with elaborate multicolored embellishments.<sup>9</sup>

"The writing of the torah/covenant/laws of Moses" was a corresponding "monumental" writing in second-temple Judea that was evidently not primarily for reading or consultation. A whole series of representations in Judean texts that were later included in the Hebrew Bible offer a sense of how "the writing of the torah" was understood, at least in scribal circles. In addition to the original numinous writing of the covenant "words" on stone and Moses' subsequent writing of the (presumably more extensive) words in a numinous writing placed in the ark of the covenant (Deut 31:24–26; cf. 28:58–61), Joshua "wrote the teaching of Moses on the stones [of the altar he had built]," making the numinous constitutional writing even more monumental (Joshua 8:30–35; cf. 24:25–27). Communication of the words to the people was oral, in Moses' and Joshua's recitation. The monumental writing of the covenantal teaching rather externalized

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9. M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066–1307* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 18.



and eternalized the covenant between Yahweh and Israel, guaranteeing its continuing force. Even its oral recitation to the people was not (primarily) to help them learn the particular laws but to ritualize their commitment to God and his words in a sacred ceremony.

The most telling representations of the torah of Moses as a monumental (and numinous and constitutional) writing were the ceremonial public presentations (followed by recitation) of the “writing of the covenant/teaching” by King Josiah and the learned scribe Ezra. In the latter case (Neh 8:4–8), Ezra, flanked by other high ranking figures on a raised wooden platform, “opened the writing (large scroll?) in the sight of all the people.” The people then acclaimed “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands,” and “bowed their heads and worshipped Yahweh with their faces to the ground.” This “writing of the teaching of Moses” was clearly a sacred object of great power. The people were bowing before a numinous monumental writing—whose constitutional function was to legitimate the Jerusalem temple-state now in the control of the previously deported Jerusalem aristocracy recently sent back from Babylon by the Persians. Even Ezra’s recitation was full of mystery, since it was presumably in Hebrew, unintelligible to the people who probably spoke Aramaic; it had to be “interpreted” (translated).

#### THE PLURIFORMITY OF AUTHORITATIVE TEXTS IN LATE SECOND-TEMPLE JUDEAN SCRIBAL CIRCLES

The representations of “the writing of the covenant/teaching” as monumental constitutional writing also indicate that the *communication* of the covenant/teaching (torah) was oral, by recitation. The performer, moreover, was the highly literate scribe, Ezra. As recent research into ancient scribal practices is now indicating, the very professional scribes who were trained in reading and writing also learned and cultivated texts orally, by repeated recitation. Ironically perhaps, one of our entries to appreciation of texts in oral performance may be through scribal practice that turns out to have been embedded in oral tradition. First, however, it may help us wriggle out from under the weight of print-cultural assumptions about the cultivation of ancient texts by attending to other recent research, that of text-critics on the multiple manuscripts of authoritative texts found in the caves at Qumran.

The written texts of scriptural “books” (in Hebrew) found at Qumran, manuscripts more than a thousand years earlier than those available before, were not standardized and stable. On the basis of over thirty years’ examination of these manuscripts, Eugene Ulrich, explains how the new evidence they provide challenges older assumptions about these books in two fundamental and

interrelated respects.<sup>10</sup> First, evidence from the Qumran manuscripts shows that multiple versions of these texts existed. Second, the multiple textual traditions were all “unstable” and still developing. As they handed on the tradition, creative scribes were enriching it, adding to it, and adapting it. The same process that scholars have concluded was involved in the composition of these (composite) texts evidently continued throughout the second-temple period. One important implication, as Ulrich suggests, is that if we are trying to achieve a historical perspective on the origins and textual development of these texts, “the first step is not to talk about a Bible,” at least until well after the late second-temple period.

Evidence of other texts, not later included in the Hebrew Bible, points to the fluid character of texts and the cultivation of texts.<sup>11</sup> If the numbers of copies of texts found at Qumran is any index of their relative authority, then *Jubilees* (at 15 copies) rivaled Exodus (17) and Leviticus (14). Moreover, alternative texts of torah, the *Temple Scroll* and the so-called *Reworked Pentateuch* (5 each) may have been nearly as important as Numbers (8). And those last two texts point to what is striking on the old assumption that the books of the Torah were already stable as Scripture that was studied and interpreted. The new exodus and covenant renewal community at Qumran evidently did not look directly to the books of the Pentateuch for the rules and ordinances that guided its life, but produced its own covenantal laws, as evident in the *Community Rule* and the *Damascus Rule*. The creative scribes at Qumran produced new, alternative texts of torah rather than “study” and “interpret” the already (relatively) authoritative texts of torah, of which they also made diverse copies. The recently generated scholarly concepts of “rewritten Bible” and “reworked Pentateuch” are anachronistic misnomers insofar as there was no Bible yet. And the *Temple Scroll* and *Reworked Pentateuch*, like *Jubilees*, include so much material that was not included (in some version) in the books of the Pentateuch and different version of some parallel materials, that we are virtually forced to imagine a wider Israelite/Judean *cultural repertoire* (including torah, prophetic materials, historical narratives, and different kinds of wisdom) in oral tradition that creative scribes drew upon in continuing composition of texts, some of which are extant in written form.

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10. Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), esp. 11, 14, 40–41, 91–92, 102.

11. More fully explored in Horsley, *Scribes, Visionaries*, ch. 6.

## SCRIBAL ORAL–WRITTEN CULTIVATION OF TEXTS

Recent research into scribal practices in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Judah/Judea, and later rabbinic circles is finding that the learned scribe Ezra was not alone in his oral recitation of a complex text. Professional scribes in the service of kings and temples learned and cultivated texts orally, by repeated recitation.<sup>12</sup> To imagine that the “scribal” (“scribality”) is a different medium entirely from the “oral” (“orality”) may be yet another projection of our print-cultural assumptions, just as the acquisition of knowledge through the reading and writing of written texts in schools is a modern practice.

The “education” of ancient learned scribes was like a family-based apprenticeship, a “training” or “discipline.” In Judea, as in other ancient Near Eastern cultures, the purpose of scribal training was to form a particular type of character suited for service of the temple-state. The skills of reading and writing were fundamental, yet ancillary to the inculcation of culture that would build qualities of personal discipline and obedience to higher authority. In his instructional speeches, the learned scribe Ben Sira admonished his protégés to fear the Lord, lead lives beyond reproach, and defer to their superiors.

Scribal training, while including writing and reading, proceeded mainly in an oral–aural mode. Ben Sira declares that he has “written” understanding “in this writing” (50:27). Yet in his “house of instruction” he teaches not by asking his students to “open a book,” but by “opening his mouth” (51:23–25). He presents his own teaching as oral, and his students’ reception as aural. “For wisdom becomes known through speech” (4:24). “If you love to listen you will gain knowledge” (6:23). “From the discourse of the sages” the fledgling students would “learn discipline and how to serve princes” (8:8–9). It was only fitting that the goal of scribal training was learning to be “a skillful speaker,” insofar as “the assemblies of the rulers,” like the society at large, proceeded by oral communication (5:10–11; 5:13–6:1; 11:7–9; 15:5; 21:15–17; 23:7–12; 27:11–15; etc.).

The formation of character, furthermore, was inseparable from and proceeded through the learning of texts and the wider cultural repertoire of which professional scribes were the guardians and cultivators, in service of monarchies and temples-states. Elementary to the curriculum of scribal training were the principal forms of wisdom (“sayings of the famous, ... parables, ... proverbs,”

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12. The following depends on Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Horsley, *Scribes, Visionaries*, chs 5–6; David M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Martin S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism 200 B.C.E. – 400 C.E.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

39:2–3). But the curriculum also included the other segments of the Israelite/Judean cultural repertoire. The scribe who devoted himself also “held in mind the teaching (torah) of the Most High,” and was engaged “with prophecies” (39:1). Like the learning of different kinds of wisdom, the learning of torah and prophecies were also oral-memorial; nothing in Ben Sira’s phrases suggests that written texts were involved.

According to recent research, scribal training and practice in Judea and the ancient Near East parallel Ben Sira’s observations and practices. Scribes learned a wide range of texts primarily by recitation and repetition. Their instruction in writing and responsibilities for copying and preserving written texts would have influenced and perhaps aided their learning. And scribes’ writing and handling of manuscripts may have effected a certain stabilization of texts. It may be significant that scribes understood the internalization of texts in a chirographic metaphor: “written on the tablet of the heart.” That metaphor, however, points primarily to the essential role and importance of memory in the cultivation of texts. And memory happened and lived by recitation. As is well known, the rabbis taught their students through recitation. They held that once students had heard a teaching or a traditional rabbinic debate about an issue recited three or four times, they should remember it. In medieval European cultivation of important cultural texts, memorial internalization and recitation were not differentiated.<sup>13</sup> In ancient and medieval elite cultural circles, manuscripts were produced and maintained, but were “almost accidental” or “reference points” to the oral-memorial-aural cycle of repeated recitation by which texts continued their life. Resorting to an analogy from music or drama, plainsong may have been written in the predecessors of our musical scores, and manuscripts of medieval mystery plays were written. But the plainsong and the plays had continuing life only in their continuing performance.

As indicated in some of the texts it produced, the scribal Qumran community, where written scrolls were kept and (evidently) texts inscribed on new scrolls, embodied the “oral-performative tradition” by which key cultural texts were appropriated and perpetuated, as Jaffee has explained.<sup>14</sup> This is exemplified in a well-known passage from the Qumran Community Rule that has usually been translated by modern scholars as a projection of their own practice of “reading,” “studying” and “interpreting” written texts. A more appropriate translation of the passage might be:

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13. Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 156.

14. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*.

Where the ten are, there shall never lack a man among them who searches the teaching [*dwrs btwrh*] day and night, concerning the right conduct of a man with his companion. And the many shall watch in community for a third of every night of the year, to recite the writing [*lqrw' bspr*] and to search the justice-ruling [*ldwrs mspt*] and to offer communal blessings [*lbrk byhd*]. (1QS 6.6–8; my adaptation of the Vermes translation)

All three of the activities mentioned, recitation, “searching,” and uttering blessings were clearly oral. The “writing” is usually assumed to have been a “book” of “the Torah.” But even if a scroll of torah were opened in front of the reciter(s), the recitation would have been from memory. The text was inscribed on the memory of the scribes and priests of the community. The function of the recitation of torah at Qumran, like the learning by recitation of texts by scribes-in-training, was not external study and interpretation but the internalization of spiritual-moral discipline, in this case collective as well as individual. The result was also the oral-memorial knowledge of many texts and the wider cultural repertoire in which those texts were embedded.

### POPULAR ORAL CULTIVATION OF ISRAELITE ORAL TRADITION

If even the literate scribes cultivated texts and the broader cultural tradition orally, then how much more the ordinary people, who were not literate.<sup>15</sup> It is difficult to imagine that the latter had any direct contact with authoritative written Judean texts. And there is no evidence that the people had indirect contact with such texts via “the scribes and Pharisees.”

Not only could the vast majority of people in Roman Palestine not read and write, but scrolls were expensive and cumbersome. The picture in Luke 4 of Jesus opening a scroll in a synagogue and reading was a projection perhaps based on what might have happened at a gathering of a well-off Jewish congregation in a Hellenistic city. In Judea scrolls were kept in the Jerusalem Temple and scribal circles valued and copied them. Considering that the texts were also “written on the tablets of their hearts,” it seems questionable whether even scribes regularly consulted or read from the cumbersome scrolls (which had primarily iconic value). Josephus comments more than once that the Pharisees were recognized (mainly in Jerusalem) as experts on the laws. But he also explains that they focused on

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15. Fuller discussion in Richard A. Horsley with Jonathan A. Draper, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me: Prophets, Performance and Tradition in Q* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1999), esp. chs 5–6.

promulgating laws that were derived from “the tradition of the elders” and not written in the laws of Moses (*Ant.* 13.288, 296–97). There is no evidence that they were defending, much less reciting or teaching, the contents of scriptural texts in the villages of Galilee or Judea (Mark is the sole source that suggests they were active in Galilee). Scribal teachers and Pharisees were active mainly in Jerusalem, teaching their protégés. The people who lived under the rule of the Jerusalem temple-state surely knew of the existence of authoritative written scrolls of “the Law and the Prophets.” But it is difficult to imagine they had any direct contact with the (still developing) authoritative written texts, or even how they might have acquired indirect knowledge of their contents.

Their lack of contact with authoritative written texts, however, did not mean that Galilean, Samaritan, and Judean villagers were ignorant of Israelite tradition(s). We can no longer use written Judean scriptural texts as evidence for what “the Jews” or “Judaism” generally knew and practiced. But we do have sources that provide evidence, however indirect, that Galileans and Judeans in late second-temple times knew and acted upon Israelite traditions. Josephus’ accounts of popular movements in the generations before, during, and after Jesus’ mission indicate that they took one or another of two distinctively Israelite forms.<sup>16</sup> In the decades immediately after Jesus’ mission, the prophet Theudas led a large group out to the Jordan river where he promised to divide the waters for a path into the wilderness, and a prophet (from Egypt) led thousands of followers up to the Mount of Olives opposite Jerusalem where the walls would fall down so they could take the city. These and other popular prophetic movements were clearly informed by memories of Moses leading the exodus and/or of Joshua leading the people against kings in fortified cities such as Jericho. In the popular messianic movements, several in 4 B.C.E. and another during the great revolt in 66–70, again large numbers of villagers acclaimed their leader as “king,” attacked Herodian fortresses and took back the goods taken there and held off the Roman military for months or even years. The form taken by all of these movements is informed by memories of how the Israelites acclaimed (“messiahed”) the young David as their king to lead them in their struggle against the Philistines (2 Sam 2:1–4; 5:1–4). The formative traditions of Israel were not only cultivated among the villagers but were so vivid that they provided the patterns for the sizeable movements led by popular prophets and messiahs.

More briefly, Josephus’ accounts of several actions by “the Galileans” in attacking Antipas’ palace in Tiberias or Herodians indicate that they were acting

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16. See further Richard A. Horsley with John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Resistance Movements at the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), chs 3–4.

in defense of Mosaic covenantal commandments.<sup>17</sup> The Gospel of Mark, clearly a popular and not a scribal text, not only presents Jesus as a new Moses and new Elijah, but as defending the covenantal “commandments of God” against the Pharisees’ “traditions of the elders” and what “Moses” allowed (Mk 7:1–13; 10:2–9; cf. Deut 24:1–4). These sources provide telling indications that Israelite traditions of the exodus, the land, the Mosaic covenant, the young David and the struggle against the Philistines, and Elijah-Elisha were alive, even formative among the villagers.

Studies of many other agrarian societies find that the people have their own version of their cultural tradition that parallels but differs in emphases and implication from the official or dominant version of the cultural tradition, which may appear (partly) in written texts. Anthropologists have referred to these parallel yet different versions of culture as “the little tradition” and “the great tradition.”<sup>18</sup> Because the official tradition is usually cultivated by cultural specialists, such as scribes, it is usually more unified and standardized (but not necessarily in stabilized written form). Popular tradition, which is cultivated in oral tradition locally in village communities, has regional variations. These studies of other societies that find “little traditions” running along “underneath” the politically-religiously dominant cultural tradition may give us confidence that Israelite popular tradition was cultivated orally in village communities, even though we do not have the direct sources to reconstruct its substance and “behavior” in detail.

The cultural context in which Jesus worked—and in which the Gospel tradition developed from Jesus’ interaction with people—was thus Israelite popular tradition that continued to be cultivated orally in village communities. The authoritative “books” later included in the Hebrew Bible and other Judean “writings” produced in scribal circles do not provide direct access to this culture. Israelite popular tradition was not a mere transmission of several texts, but a culture in which the people were embedded. It was the cultural medium in which the people communicated and interacted, like the biosphere in which they lived.<sup>19</sup>

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17. References and analysis in Richard A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1995), 152–55.

18. Especially helpful is James C. Scott, “Protest and Profanation: Agrarian Revolt and the Little Tradition,” *Theory and Society* 4 (1977): 1–38, 211–46. For application to Jesus and the Gospels, see the essays in Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance* (SemeiaSt 48; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).

19. Recognition of the dominance of oral communication in Roman Palestine has led to renewed exploration of the oral transmission of Jesus’ teachings and traditions about Jesus, most notably by James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Moving directly to the oral transmission of Jesus tradition may be premature, however, once we recognize that the Gospels or the Q speeches behind Matthew and Luke are embedded in and permeated

## IMPLICATIONS OF RECENT NEW TESTAMENT TEXT CRITICISM

As we struggle to grasp the implications of oral communication in antiquity, the lack of literacy among the vast majority of people, and the relative unavailability and illegibility of written texts, we are perpetually in the ironic situation of relying for our evidence on the surviving manuscripts. Significantly, recent research by text critics that challenges long-standing assumptions is also providing important evidence for the continuing oral cultivation of texts included in the New Testament.

Not until the fourth century do manuscripts show evidence of some standardization of the text of the Gospels. This standardization, moreover, was related to the establishment of Christianity in the Roman Empire. The newly converted Emperor Constantine sent instructions to the learned bishop Eusebius that he should “order fifty copies of the divine scriptures . . . for the instruction of the church, to be written on well-prepared parchment by copyists most skillful in the art of accurate and beautiful writing” (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 4.36).<sup>20</sup> Contrary to the earlier scholarly assumption of (and effort to “establish”) a normative early (or “original”) written text of the Gospels, early manuscript and fragmentary papyrological evidence indicates considerable variation. As leading text-critic David Parker says, “the further back we go, the greater seems to be the degree of variation.”<sup>21</sup> If anything, the variation in the written textual witnesses is greater on the most frequently cited statements of Jesus, such as on marriage and divorce. As Parker lays out, the variation in the versions in manuscripts of Mark 10, Matthew 5 and 19, and Luke 16 is as much or more than that between the respective Gospel versions. This suggests that the considerable differences across early manuscripts is not due simply to the way copyists copied already written copies. Rather it seems to have much to do with the importance of the teaching of Jesus to people’s lives, particularly on key matters of concern. As Eldon Epp explains, early manuscripts show marks of the social contextualizations of the Gospel texts. On this basis he also argues that textual *authority* was pluriform, in contrast to the previ-

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by oral communication. (See the works mentioned below on Mark and Q.) In this connection, much more critical analysis remains to be done on how social memory is operative in the Gospel tradition. See the preliminary explorations in many of the essays in Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher, eds., *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* (SemeiaSt 52; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005); and Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus in Context: Power, People, and Performance* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), chs 3–7.

20. Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 79, n. 132.

21. David C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 188.



ous print-cultural assumptions of text critics who took textual “variants” in early manuscripts as “tampering with the text” or “misquoting Jesus.”<sup>22</sup>

One possible explanation would be that producers of Gospel manuscripts, like earlier Judean scribes, were themselves performers of the texts they transcribed. In the wider Greco-Roman world, however, the copyist/scribe was a person different from the composer/performer of a text and not necessarily someone with education for literary composition. Important evidence suggests more of an *ad hoc* production of written texts as an occasional occurrence in the course of the continuing performance of revered texts in Christian communities. Prior to the fourth century there are strikingly few references to copyists engaged in making written copies of Gospels and other Christian texts.<sup>23</sup> A plea from a community in upper Egypt to “make and send me copies of books” suggests four interrelated aspects of the active cultivation of nascent scriptural texts. First, the existence of written copies of texts was known to (leaders of) communities, but they were not readily available. It was desirable (at least to the leaders) to possess written copies of these books. Someone in or hired by (a leader of) another community could make copies. There was probably some interaction between the text already orally-memorially known in the copying and sending community and the making of a new copy—especially if, as was likely, copying was done at dictation by someone who knew and could recite the text. Recent text-critical research is thus indicating that the production of written texts of New Testament books that were so “fluid” and “free” happened in the course of the continuing oral cultivation (that is, learning and recitation) of those books in the diverse early Christian communities. Those texts were repeatedly “reactivated” in oral performance.

## LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE

The implications of recent text-critical research that the considerable variation in early manuscripts of New Testament books is related to their continuing recitation is only further confirmation of other evidence that early Christian texts were orally cultivated even if written copies were available. According to the print-

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22. Eldon Epp, “The Multivalence of the Term ‘Original Text’ in New Testament Text Criticism,” *HTR* 92 (1999): 257–63; “The Oxyrhynchus New Testament Papyri: ‘Not without honor except in their own hometown?’” *JBL* 123 (2004): 10; in contrast to Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); and *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005).

23. Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmission of Early Christian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 38–39.

cultural assumptions of biblical studies, the teaching of Jesus and other material in the "Synoptic Tradition" was "transmitted" and developed in oral tradition for several decades. Then the "writing" of the Gospels provided a more stable written form of those teachings and stories, some of which were variously "edited" or "redacted" by later Gospel "writers." As Paul Achtemeier laid out clearly twenty years ago, however, the texts that were (also) written were spoken to hearers, the words "sounded."<sup>24</sup> In our professional investment in written texts, we seized upon evidence that Christian communities possessed at least some written copies of at least some of their revered texts already in the second century. But we were "deaf" to other "voices."

The few early Christian references to oral communication and writing indicate that the communities of Christ and their intellectual leadership did not just prefer oral communication, but were suspicious of or reticent about writing. The later bishop Eusebius, who supplied fancy standardized copies of books in response to the Emperor, remembered that Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in the early second century, "did not suppose that things from books (*ek tōn biblīōn*) would benefit [him] so much as things *from a living and abiding voice* (*zōsēs phōnēs kai menousēs*)" (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.4) The sophisticated theologian Clement of Alexandria apologized for committing the teaching of the church to writing, which he knew was weak and lifeless in comparison with oral discourse.

As it turns out, early Christian communities continued to cultivate orally not only the teaching of Jesus but the Gospel texts as well for several centuries after they were composed. Recent research into performance in Hellenistic and Roman culture is showing that this was not at all unusual, since texts of all kinds, some of them also written, were orally performed. It is clear in this context that the "readers" of the Gospels in the assemblies of Christ did not need to learn to read from a codex. A person could learn the text from hearing others recite it. According to Justin Martyr, at Sunday assemblies "the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets" were recited for as long as time permitted. A few generations later, Hippolytus reported that scriptures were recited by a succession of lectors at the beginning of services until all were gathered. The practice of reciting continued through the time of Augustine. He comments that many people learned to recite large portions of the Gospels themselves from hearing them recited in services.

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24. Paul J. Achtemeier, "Omnes verbum somnat: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity," *JBL* 109 (1990): 3–27. The following discussion relies on the plentiful references and analysis of Whitney Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel: First Century Performances of Mark* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2003), with particular citations from pages 26 and 47.

## COMPOSITION

In the oral communication environment of the ancient Mediterranean world, composition was not done in writing. Texts with a more traditional content, moreover, were often the result of a longer process of (repeated re-)composition over a period of time.

Even the literate elite in the Roman Empire did not compose their letters or histories of other texts in writing. Pliny offers a fascinating account of his own practice (*Letters* 9:34; 2.10; 3:18; 7:17).<sup>25</sup> Awaking before daylight, he composed in his head while lying in bed. Arising after some hours, he called in a capable secretary to take dictation as he spoke his text. To disseminate his composition he then performed his text to a group of friends or in public. His “public-ation” of his composition was thus assisted or “backed up” by a written text, but the composition was not done in writing.

Composition of letters was similarly done by oral dictation and the text was re-oralized, re-performed before the addressee(s). This is evident in nearly every account of letters in the Hebrew Bible, where a king dictated to a scribe at one end of the communication and a scribe/official “read” it out aloud to the intended recipient(s). This is evidently how the apostle Paul (and others) proceeded in long-distance communication with the assemblies of Christ. As indicated by his comment at the end of Galatians as he “signed” the letter—“see what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand”—he was dictating his complex extended arguments (Gal 6:11; cf. Rom 16:22; 1 Cor 16:21). It has been speculated, with sound basis in the epistolary practice of antiquity, that one of his associates (e.g., Timothy) or a member of the assembly he is addressing (e.g., Stephanas, Fortunatus, Achaicus, 1 Cor 16:20) was the bearer of the letter: they heard him speak the text, then carried the written text, and after arriving at the destination “read” aloud (performed) the text to the assembled community.

Many texts in antiquity were “traditional,” in the sense that they were repeatedly recited or performed. The best known examples are surely the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. We may continue to think of “Homer” as their composer. But at the very least classics scholars are aware that “Homer” is a cipher, that these poetic epics not only were never composed in writing, but their texts developed over centuries of repeated performance. Among texts that later became “biblical,” the book of Isaiah is an anthology of prophetic oracles, some of which may have been developed orally from what was delivered orally by the prophet Isaiah in eighth century

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25. Discussion of Pliny and others in composition in the ancient media context in Jocelyn Penny Small, *Wax Tablets of the Mind: Cognitive Studies of Memory and Literacy in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

Judah. A major section of the “book” (Isaiah 40–55) is a sustained prophetic poetic drama pertaining to anticipated events early in Persian imperial rule. If we trust what text critics are saying, however, the text of that prophetic poem continued to develop for centuries before we can catch sight of its development in scrolls of Isaiah from Qumran. In what sense, then, could we think of the text of “Second Isaiah” as having been composed in writing around 540 B.C.E.?

Once we become aware of the various lines of parallel research into oral communication in antiquity and the contingencies of the writing of texts, it is difficult to imagine that the Gospel of Mark, for example, could have been composed in writing. It is clearly a story about a figure and movement among the ordinary people of Galilee in opposition to the political-religious and (literate) cultural elite addressed to other ordinary people. But virtually no ordinary people could write. So did “Mark” compose and dictate the text to a scribe? Even if we insist on the highly unlikely (anachronistic) scenario that a literate “author” composed the Gospel in writing, the text would have been recited orally in communities of ordinary people. And even text critics are now suggesting, in effect, that what we have access to are different versions of the Gospel that were integrally related to its repeated performance over many generations.

The Gospel of Mark is the New Testament text that has been most carefully and creatively explored as an oral-aural narrative. Werner Kelber pioneered the appreciation of the healing and exorcism episodes and the parables in Mark in terms based on studies of the behavior of oral narrative, pushing decisively past the previous projection of print-cultural assumptions onto “oral tradition” by form criticism.<sup>26</sup> In a whole series of highly suggestive articles over the last two decades, Joanna Dewey explored the oral patterns and echoes and the oral-aural “event” detectable in the narrative.<sup>27</sup> David Rhoads and several others have for years performed Mark’s story in English to various audiences. In an imaginative study thoroughly informed by research into ancient performance practices

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26. Werner Kelber, *The Oral and Written Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983)—the groundbreaking work that opened investigation and discussion of orality and New Testament interpretation.

27. Joanna Dewey, “Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark,” *Interpretation* 53 (1989): 332–44; “Mark as Interwoven Tapestry: Forecasts and Echoes for a Listening Audience,” *CBQ* 52 (1991): 221–36; etc. (a collection of Dewey’s article is planned for publication in the Biblical Performance Criticism Series, ed. David Rhoads, from Cascade Books, Eugene, Ore.). Another ground-breaking article was Pieter J. J. Botha, “Mark’s Story as Oral Traditional Literature: Rethinking the Transmission of Some Traditions about Jesus,” *HvTSt* 47 (1991): 304–31. See also Richard A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark’s Gospel* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001). (Collections of Botha’s and Horsley’s articles are also planned in the Biblical Performance Criticism Series.)

of Greek texts in Hellenistic-Roman culture, Whitney Shiner has suggestively explored how Mark could have been performed in its historical context.<sup>28</sup> More recently Anne Wire has skillfully crafted a persuasive, step by step explanation of why and how Mark was composed in performance.<sup>29</sup>

### COMMUNICATION IN ORAL PERFORMANCE

As written texts, the books of the New Testament have served many functions for different people in various circumstances: an anthology of readings for worship and preaching, compendia of prooftexts for theologies, collections of verses for Bible study and personal devotion, colonial texts of Christian missions during Western imperial expansion, ideological texts in the subordination of some people to others or challenges to that subordination, and “culture texts” of “Western civilization.” Increased recent attention to the dominance of oral communication in antiquity leads to the consideration of NT texts as *communication* in the course and context of their composition and cultivation. In biblical studies developed on the basis of print culture, we have usually objectified text-fragments (verses, sayings, brief stories, pericopes, etc.) as artifacts the meaning of which (in themselves) we strive to discern. In the context of composition, performance, and further cultivation, however, those fragments were integral components of whole texts. And those texts were the negotiated messages in processes of communication between composer/performers and communities of hearers in particular social contexts.

While there has been little investigation into communications theory in New Testament studies, during the last generation or two other fields have seriously investigated how communication happens. The insights of socio-linguistics may be particularly relevant to New Testament texts in historical context, since they were orally performed, as indicated in the researches just summarized.<sup>30</sup> Within

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28. Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*.

29. Antonette Clark Wire, *The Case for Mark Composed in Performance* (Biblical Performance Criticism Series 3; Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2011). See also Whitney Shiner, “Memory Technology and the Composition of Mark,” in *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory, and Mark* (ed. Richard A. Horsley, Jonathan A. Draper, John Miles Foley; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 147–65; Richard A. Horsley, “Oral Performance and Mark,” and Joanna Dewey, “The Gospel of Mark and Oral Hermeneutic,” both in *Jesus, the Voice, and the Text* (ed. Tom Thatcher; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2008), 45–70, 71–88.

30. See M. A. K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (Baltimore: University Park Press, 1978).

the field of New Testament studies, recent rhetorical criticism has helped to reestablish sensitivity to the larger text in the communication process, particularly in Paul's letters, in which his arguments on key issues give us only one side of the conversation or argument. To appreciate oral communication, however, requires more attention to the social and cultural context(s) than rhetorical criticism has usually devoted. Moreover, it will likely be more difficult for us to discern the views and sensitivities of the hearers through rhetorical criticism (or its equivalent) of the Gospels than it has been for Paul's letters.

The texts in the New Testament, however, are not just any kind of communication, such as conversations or the (mere) transmission of information. They are special forms of communication: the foundational story of the hero-prophet-messiah and his expanding movement performed in communities of committed participants; and arguments on key issues of concern by an envoy of the exalted hero-messiah performed in a community in whose formation he had played a key role. These special forms of communication may be significant not so much for the meaning of their statements as for the *work* they do, the effect they have when performed in a community (such as narrating the foundational story, healing the individual and collective body, reviving the *esprit de corps*, and/or memorializing an event).

To interpret New Testament texts, therefore, it will be necessary to understand special communications as interactive and contextual, a far more complex undertaking than considering the meaning of written texts as artifacts, as we have been trained to do. Considering the circumstances of the early Jesus movements, our situation may be analogous in many ways to having only a few transcripts of the sermons delivered to the often nightly church services in small-towns in the South in the early 1960s as some demonstrators were welcomed out of jail and other teams prepared to attempt sit-ins the next day. Adequate appreciation and interpretation would require not just a sense of the rhetorical tone and rhythm of the respective speech, but a sense of the hearers' life circumstances and their historical situation and cultural tradition in which they hear and respond to the speeches.

Our training in biblical studies, like that in fields of modern and ancient literatures, has not prepared us to appreciate, understand, and interpret texts-in-performance. Again, however, we may be able to learn from and adapt the pioneering interpretive practices and theory being developed by leading scholars in other fields. Particularly helpful may be the work of John Miles Foley, perhaps the leading theorist of oral poetry and performance, who has interacted fruitfully with biblical scholars for over twenty years. In continuing theoretical reflection on oral poetry from a wide range of cultures, Foley has drawn on performance theory and ethnopoetics and called special attention to the importance of the

referencing of cultural tradition in oral performance.<sup>31</sup> The following discussion is an adaptation of Foley's suggestive synthetic theoretical reflection. Of greatest import for understanding texts in oral performance is giving careful attention to three key interrelated facets of a text-in-performance. In order to hear and interpret NT texts, it is necessary to discern the contours of the *text*, to determine the historical *context* of the community of the responsive/interactive hearers, and to know as much as possible the cultural *tradition* out of which the voiced texts resonate with the hearers.

### TEXT

Biblical studies based in print culture has usually focused on text-fragments "cut out" of longer texts. To interpret texts-in-performance it is first necessary to discern the contours of whole texts. The texts-in-performance as communication, moreover, were interactive with groups of hearers in their respective contexts. To take a particular "paragraph" out of the longer argument in 1 Corinthians 1–4, for example, will almost certainly miss how in one "paragraph" (step in the argument) Paul is "setting up" (some of) the hearers for his disagreement or disapproval in a subsequent "paragraph." Sensitivity to the oral performance of the argument can lead to hearing the "tone of voice" that might be sarcastic in one step and authoritarian in another.

Recent reading of the Gospels as sustained stories has helped move beyond their habitual fragmentation into verses or weekly lessons. Mark's story, for example, develops in a sequence of rapid-fire episodes, the earlier setting up the later. Reading the whole story results in the recognition of the multiple conflicts that are interwoven in the sequence of episodes. *Hearing* the whole story makes those conflicts seem all the more dramatic, particularly that between Jesus and his followers and the Jerusalem rulers and their scribal representatives. The

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31. The works most helpful for oral communication and New Testament interpretation are probably John Miles Foley, *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); *The Singer of Tales in Performance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); *How to Read an Oral Poem*; and, more condensed, "Plenitude and Diversity: Interactions between Orality and Writing," in *The Interface of Orality and Writing* (ed. Annette Weissenrieder and Robert B. Coote; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 103–18. See also the theoretical reflections specifically for NT interpretation by David Rhoads, "Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies, parts I and II," *BTB* 36 (2006): 1–16, 164–84. (A volume on performance criticism by Rhoads and Joanna Dewey is planned for the Biblical Performance Criticism Series.)

importance of hearing the whole story of Mark and other Gospels is reinforced by the implications of the recent text criticism. Given the diversity of wording in ancient manuscripts, it is not possible to “establish” a standard written text for particular teachings of Jesus, as on marriage and divorce, as noted above. Studies of oral performances of epics and other oral narratives much longer than the Gospels, however, find that while the particular lines and “stanzas” of oral performances vary, the overall story persists from performance to performance. The implication—ironically for the previously standard study of the Gospels focused on determining and interpreting words, phrases, and verses as precisely as possible—is that the overall story of Mark or Matthew was probably more stable than the wording of particular episodes and sayings.

#### CONTEXT

In order to understand a special form of oral communication it is necessary to hear it in the appropriate (historical) collective context: wedding, funeral, political rally. The context determines the expectation and the appropriate hearing of the text. Traditional oral performances were always already in the appropriate context. Ancient Greek dramas were performed in a theater in Athens or other city-states. Standing in the ruins of ancient Greek theaters and knowing something of the history and culture of Athens helps our informed historical imagination in appreciating the enacted drama for which we have only the script.

The earliest contexts in which Paul’s letters or the Gospels were performed, however, are more difficult to reconstruct in our informed historical imagination. Generally these would presumably have been gatherings of communities of the new and expanding movements of Jesus-loyalists or Christ-believers. At least we have become aware that the contexts addressed by different texts were different in many significant ways—and that essentialist scholarly constructs such as “Christian” simply obscure particular historical contexts about which we are gaining ever more precise historical information. Tradition had it that because “Mark” was Peter’s interpreter, the Gospel of Mark was addressed to a community in Rome. The text, however, would seem to have been more appropriately heard in communities in Syrian villages where circumstances were more similar to those of the Galilean villages in which Jesus is portrayed as healing and preaching. Each of the cities and their populations in which “assemblies” emerged in response to the work of Paul and his coworkers was distinctive. The contexts, such as the circumstances of the people and the issues addressed in each letter were different, as can often be discerned through Paul’s arguments.



## TRADITION

In a performance the text resonates with the audience as they hear it in the group context. This is clearly the case in traditional texts in performance, such as Greek plays, weddings, funerals, or political rallies. In performance, meaning happens in a way very different from a private reading of a modern literary text. A modern novelist individually manipulates inherited or idiosyncratic materials in a new direction or from a particular perspective, thus conferring meaning on her fresh new literary creation that is read silently by an individual reader. Performed traditional texts resonate with the hearers by referencing the cultural tradition and evoking meaning that is inherent. The evocation is often metonymic, as a part evokes a whole cultural pattern or complex memory.

Certain special texts in performance do not simply evoke meaning but do work on or among the group of hearers in the context. Some sermons, speeches on special national or other political events, or some performances of Mozart's Requiem or Bach's St. Matthew Passion evoke renewed religious-ethical commitment, renewal of group identity, or inspire and give expression to collective mourning and religious devotion. This happens through especially "effective" referencing of traditional memories, patterns, and expressive forms. To illustrate how the text resonates by referencing, in which a part represents or evokes a whole, let me reference what happens to many in the United States in mid-January each year. When those of us who were involved in the civil rights movement in the 1960s hear even a short excerpt from one of Martin Luther King's speeches on the radio ("I have a dream..."), it resonates deeply in our memory, evoking a whole period of our lives as well as recommitment to certain concerns.

In New Testament interpretation we are already aware of this referencing of the cultural tradition at least at a surface level. Biblical studies rooted in print culture has looked for this in the form of NT texts' quotations of "Old Testament" texts. This widened a bit and shifted into "mixed media" as "echoes" of and allusions to particular lines or phrases in Scripture. Discussion of "intertextuality" recognized this extensive interrelationship of texts. The interrelationship, however, was far deeper and more important than that between texts, as performed texts referenced cultural tradition that was more like a cultural biosphere in which texts, performers, and hearers were embedded. Recent interpreters of the Gospels of Mark and Matthew have recognized that they are addressed to communities that still have a strong sense of Israelite cultural identity and heritage. Exploration of these texts as/in oral performance can sense all the more how they repeatedly reference Israelite tradition, evoking whole patterns of meaning and social relationship, such as the renewal of the Israelite people and the Mosaic covenant and prophetic pronouncements against rulers. More than evok-

ing meaning, however, the performed Gospel of Mark may have also affected the community of hearers by referencing tradition, in a renewal of community identity and solidarity and collective commitment to the direct rule of God for which Jesus had been martyred.

The arguments in Paul's letters also repeatedly reference Israelite tradition. But Paul is addressing communities comprised largely of people(s) who were not familiar with this cultural tradition except insofar as Paul and his coworkers had taught it during their sojourns. Insofar as they were rooted in other cultures and/or had been listening to rival apostles, the performance of Paul's letters may have involved mis-communication, as the referencing of Israelite tradition failed to resonate with the hearers.

The goal of interpretation to be sought by exploring these three aspects of performance would be to discern, appreciate, and understand not the meaning of the text in itself, but the work done among the community of hearers by the text in performance.

#### INTERPRETATION OF THE SPEECH IN LUKE 7:18–35 // MATTHEW 11:2–19 AS ORALLY PERFORMED

As pioneering NT scholars have been explaining for twenty years or so, typical features of oral performance and "oral-derived" texts include poetic form, parallel lines, repetition of sounds, and additive and repetitive style. These were noted particularly in the Gospel of Mark and in the closely parallel speech material in Matthew and Luke, what has long been designated as "Q." In order to have a manageable text in which to illustrate the questions that emerge when we explore the implications of the predominantly oral communication in antiquity for NT interpretation, we focus on a speech of Jesus that is almost "verbatim" in Matthew and Luke.<sup>32</sup>

Recognition of the predominance of oral communication in antiquity raises serious questions about the print-cultural basis on which the Synoptic Problem was discussed and solutions proposed. There is little or no basis for assuming that written texts of Mark or Matthew or Luke or Q were sufficiently "circulated" shortly after their "writing" so that the "author" of one could have been "copying" from the written text of another. On the other hand, on the basis of comparative studies of lengthy oral narratives, it is striking that Matthew and Luke are telling

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32. The following builds on the extensive analysis and interpretation of the speeches of Q in oral performance in Horsley with Draper, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me*.

the same basic overall story as Mark and that they greatly expand and complicate the story with what are virtually the same speeches of Jesus in much the same sequence. As we learn more about oral-written texts embedded in oral communication and cultivated in oral performance, it will be fascinating to see how discussion of the relations between the Gospels will shift its basis and focus. With regard to the speeches of Jesus closely parallel in Matthew and Luke (with only a few similar short speeches, such as a mission-discourse and Beelzebul debate in Mark) what we are learning about the almost exclusively oral communication among ordinary people makes it difficult to imagine a written "Synoptic Sayings Source."

If, on the other hand, we listen to how the text of the Jesus speeches sounds, it is striking what we hear (or even see when it is printed out as poetry). Within and across "sayings" or "verses" are frequent repetition of sounds, verb forms, words, whole phrases and ideas/points. Not only do "sayings" take the form of parallel lines, but parallel lines/statements/thoughts occur in a sequence of sayings, and words and multiple sounds are repeated in a sequence of "sayings." This is poetry. As poetry in Greek, moreover, it is unusual. The parallel lines consisting usually of three or four basic words, with repetition of sounds, seem like Hebrew or Aramaic poetry and they include phrases that are not idiomatic in Greek but appear to be translations of Aramaic idioms (and presumably the early cultivation of Jesus' speech was in Aramaic). The "sayings," moreover, are not separate, but come in sequences that focus on an issue and move to a point or conclusion. The teaching of Jesus dubbed "Q" is thus not a collection of sayings but a series of short "discourses" or "speeches" on particular issues or concerns of the community(ies) addressed (such as mission, prayer, subsistence, exorcisms, or the Pharisees). To illustrate these and other points in exploring the implications of the predominantly oral communication in the ancient context, we focus on the speech parallel in Matthew 11:2–19 and Luke 7:18–35, concentrating on three of the basic aspects of oral performance.

#### TEXT

It bears repeating that the teaching of Jesus closely parallel in Matthew and Luke is not a mere collection of sayings but a series of short speeches on various issues. Among the clearest is the speech that addresses anxiety about subsistence, concluding with the reassurance "seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added" (Luke 12:22–31; included in Matthew's long covenant renewal speech at 6:25–34). Another clear example is the speech addressing persecution, including the sanctioning admonition about bold public confession (Luke 12:2–9; Matt 10:26–33; cf. the similar speech in Mark 8:34–38). The speech parallel in

Luke 7:18–28, 31–35 and Matt 11:2–11, 16–19 develops in three more distinct steps: in response to John’s question about “the coming one” Jesus points to how the longings of Israel are being fulfilled in his mission; he then points to John as the greatest of the prophets to exclaim how great life in the kingdom of God will be; and he concludes with the reassurance that despite their being attacked, their work will be vindicated. These speeches evidently belonged in a coherent sequence of speeches, hence should be interpreted in relation to each other.

Ironically, given our print-oriented minds, a printed transliteration may help our aural imagination hear the poetic form, the sequence of lines, the repetition of sounds and words, and the “rhetoric” of the speech. Readers should “re-oralize” the text by reading (and thus hearing) it *aloud*. The printed version of the speech on the facing page is, however experimentally, laid out for oral performance in a way intended to help discern the repetition of sounds and forms. In the few instances where the words are not verbatim in Matthew and Luke, this version usually follows (the modern text of) “Matthew.”

As most of us have experienced personally, even our modern print-oriented minds retain poetry and songs (especially with the tunes) far more easily than prose. As studies of oral tradition and the performance of (oral-derived) texts have found, a speech such as this, with parallel lines and profuse repetition of sounds, words, verbal forms, and rhetorical questions, is both readily remembered and repeated/recited by a performer and easily heard by a communal audience. The repeated sounds and thoughts duplicated or piled up in parallel lines make for effective communication.

## CONTEXT

Presumably this speech along with other speeches in the sequence would have been performed in communities of a Jesus movement and, once included in Matthew, in the assemblies to which the Gospel of Matthew was addressed. Because this and other *speeches* paralleled in Matthew and Luke sound like they may represent a Greek version of Aramaic speech, they may well have been developed and cultivated in Aramaic speaking village communities in Galilee (see the villages named in Q/Luke 10:13–15). The Greek version (behind Matthew and Luke) would have resonated most readily with other communities of villagers. Greek-speaking or bilingual village communities in Syria would have been the closest in proximity. The circumstances of people in villages and small towns in Syria who formed communities of the rapidly expanding Jesus movements would have been similar to those of the Galilean villagers among whom Jesus had worked. Most of the ordinary people, who comprised around 90% of a traditional agrarian society, lived at the subsistence level. And the villagers of Syria, like those of virtually

THE TEXT OF THE SPEECH PARALLEL IN LUKE 7:18–35 AND MATTHEW 11:2–19  
(FOR READING ALOUD, WITH VISUAL DISPLAY OF LINES AND REPETITION OF  
SOUNDS, WORDS, VERBAL FORMS)

*Iōannēs*            *pempsas*            *dia tōn mathētōn autou*    *eipen autō*  
*su ei*            *ho erchomenos*            *ē heteron*            *pros dokōmen?*  
*kai apokritheis*    *eipen autois*  
*poreuthentes*    *apangeilate Iōannē*    *ha akouete*            *kai blepete*  
*tuphloi*            *anablepousin*            *kai chōloi*            *peripatousin*  
*leproi*            *katharizontai*            *kai kōphoi*            *akouousin*  
*nekroi*            *egeirontai*            *[kai]ptōchoi*            *euangelizontai*  
*kai makarios estin*    *hos ean mē skandalisthē*    *en emoi.*

*Erxato*            *legein*            *tois ochlois*            *peri Iōannou*  
*ti exēlthate*            *eis tēn epēmon*            *theasasthai?*  
*kalamon*            *hypo anemou*            *saleuomenon?*  
*alla ti*            *exēlthate*            *idein?*  
*anthrōpon*            *en malakois*            *ēmphiesmenon?*  
*idou*            *ta malaka*            *en tois oikois*            *tōn basileiōn eisin.*  
*alla ti*            *exēlthate*            *idein?*            *prophētēn?*  
*nai,*            *legō hymin,*            *kai perissoteron*            *prophētou*  
*houtos estin*            *peri hou*            *gegraptai*  
*idou apostellō*    *ton angelon mou*            *pro prosōpou sou*  
*hos kataskeuasei*    *tēn hodon sou*            *emprosthen sou.*  
*legē hymin,*  
*meizōn*            *en gennētois gunaikōn*            *Iōannou*  
*ho mikroteros*    *en tē Basileia tou theou*    *meizōn*            *autou estin.*

*tini*            *homoiosō*            *tēs geneas tautēs*  
*homoia estin*            *paidiois*            *kathēmenois*            *en tais agorais*  
*[ha prosphōnounta*    *tois heterois*            *legousin]*  
*ēulēsamen hymin*    *kai ouk ōrchēsasthe*  
*ethrēnēsamen*            *kai ouk ekopsasthe*  
*ēlthen*            *gar Iōannēs*            *mēte esthiōn*            *mēte pinōn*  
*kai legousin*            *daimonion*            *echei.*  
*ēlthen*            *ho huios tou anthrōpou*            *esthiōn*            *kai pinōn*  
*kai legete*            *idou*  
*anthrōpos*            *phagos*            *kai oinopotēs*  
*telōnōn*            *philos*            *kai hamartōlōn.*  
*kai edikaiōthe*            *he sophia*            *apo tōn ergōn autēs!*

any area in the eastern Roman Empire had lived under imperial rulers and their local clients (Tyre, Sidon, Damascus, the Decapolis, etc.) for centuries and had experienced some of the same violence of periodic conquest, such as the recent Roman expeditions led by the warlords Pompey, Crassus, and Cassius. A message of deliverance from poverty and illnesses into a new life of wholeness and justice would have resonated with them as well as with Galilean villagers.

#### TRADITION

While not as continuously as the Gospel of Mark, this and other speeches parallel in Matthew and Luke reference Israelite tradition repeatedly and prominently. The speech as a whole and in its three principal steps presents both John and Jesus as prophets of fulfilment in the long line of Israelite prophets. The first and second steps of the speech make explicit reference to particularly prominent points of Israelite tradition that would have resonated readily with those rooted in or even just familiar with the culture.

On the assumption that the “books” of “the Law and the Prophets” were widely available and familiar to the “writer” of Q, it has been thought that the response to John’s question in Luke 7:22 // Matt 11:5 is a “quotation” from the book of Isaiah. The problem was always which particular text was being “quoted”: Isa 35:5–6 or 42:6–7 or 61:1 (or a combination phrases from them)? But how long must a phrase be to be credible as a quotation, as opposed to an allusion or an echo or a phrase in memory? Even before the recent recognition of how prominent oral cultivation of texts and cultural tradition was, we might have asked what to make of these parallel lists in Isaiah of what will happen in the future to people in certain conditions.

Now that we are aware of the oral-written scribal cultivation of texts such as those included in the Isaiah anthology and the oral scribal cultivation of the wider cultural repertoire, which regularly included material from the popular tradition, at least one possibility suggests itself. Isaiah 35:5–6; 42:6–7; and 61:1 are all combinations of phrases that express the longings of the people living in conditions of imperial conquest and ongoing imperial rule. Two of the three also have allusions to (memories of) the exodus liberation. These different passages in the “book” of Isaiah included some of these phrases of longing for deliverance from the common Israelite cultural repertoire. It seems quite possible, considering the continuing subjection of Judeans, Samaritans, and Galileans to one empire after another, that these phrases would have continued to be cultivated in the Israelite popular tradition. The speech here is not “quoting” from the written text of Isaiah, but referencing the people’s longings in what had become standard phrases. Moreover, a few “parts” signal the “whole” of the people’s longings for

liberation and justice, one prominent image of which, deeply rooted in the collective memory, was the exodus, as also projected onto the role of a future prophet, as in the Isaiah passages. But what scholars focused on written texts saw as quotation can be more easily explained now as the oral cultivation of Israelite tradition referenced at several points in development of the text of Isaiah and then again many generations later in this Jesus-speech.

The next step in the speech identifies John with what appears to be an explicit quotation, introduced by a quotation formula: "it is written." But what text-fragment is being quoted? Is it Mal 3:1a or Exod 23:20a, and from the Septuagint or in a Greek translation of a proto-Masoretic Text? As text critics are now explaining, we do not have the stable textual "data" on the basis of which we can "control" the evidence in our analysis of written texts. "It is written," however, can now be understood not as a cue of a quotation of a written text, but as an appeal to the authority of what stands "written"—in the "written" texts of great tradition laid up in the Temple. God's declaration that he would "send a messenger to prepare the way," as attested in Exodus, was evidently an important statement in the foundational Israelite narrative of the exodus and coming into the land. Malachi provides a clear illustration of how it was used (co-opted?) in a "writing" in support of the temple-state. Although they were unlikely to have known in which "writing" it was "written," ordinary people such as Jesus and his followers would have known that such a prominent divine promise stood "written," hence all the more authoritative.

It may be significant that this allusion to a future prophet-messenger to prepare the way for deliverance, which alludes to the exodus narrative, is the only reference to what "is written" in the speeches of "Q."<sup>33</sup> The many other references (allusions, echoes, etc.) to particular Israelite figures, events, themes, covenantal teachings, etc. evidently arose from (orally cultivated) Israelite popular tradition. And the citation of "the messenger to prepare the way . . ." also derived from Israelite popular tradition, in which the people knew some of the contents of what was "written," but did not have direct contact with or access to written scrolls.

These two explicit references to prominent points in Israelite tradition are what articulate the main point or message of the speech as it resonates with the hearers. Jesus' preaching and manifestation of the kingdom of God are the fulfilment of the longings of Israel for a new exodus-like deliverance and a common life of personal and communal justice and wholeness. John, the greatest in the long line of Israelite prophets, is/was the messenger who would prepare the way

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33. That is except for the temptation dialogue, usually judged a late and poorly fitting addition to Q, but another text in which the lines that are cued as "written" cannot be "controlled," that is identified as specific quotations.

of God's deliverance, hence life in the kingdom of God will be even more remarkable. In Israelite tradition, of course, the prophets had opposed and been opposed and attacked by the rulers. In this regard too, the speech presents John and Jesus as opposed to and attacked by the rulers. The final line of the speech, however, offers reassurance that these prophets in whose work the fulfilment of the people's longings for justice and wholeness is happening will be vindicated.

We are only beginning to discern/detect the ways in which increasing recognition of the dominance of oral communication in antiquity, along with the limits and uses of writing, will pose challenges to the standard assumptions and approaches of New Testament interpretation. Given the inertia and conservative bearing of the field, developed on the basis of print culture and dedicated to the interpretation of the printed sacred Scripture (i.e., written text), it seems likely that the implications of oral communication as the medium in which New Testament texts originated will be resisted. Greatest leverage will likely come from text criticism, which is now explaining that early manuscript evidence indicates not standardized early texts, but pluriformity of authoritative texts that were likely related to continuing oral recitation. Further exploration of texts-in-performance as oral communication, however, would lead into and reinforce further research and understanding in areas that have become important to NT interpreters for other reasons. There would be such "overlap" especially with the efforts to attain more precise knowledge of particular social contexts of texts and fuller understanding of the Israelite popular tradition in which Jesus movements were rooted.<sup>34</sup>

It may be significant that recognition of the dominance of oral communication in antiquity is emerging as the new electronic communications media are challenging and replacing print culture. The new electronic media are now showing both their possibilities and their problems for social and political life. In this time of media exploration and innovation, it is possible that rediscovery of how in oral performance texts were alive in, and had profound effects on, communities of hearers will lead to creative modes of re-performing those texts in today's world with its rich mix of communications media.

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34. Exploratory efforts to link these investigations can be seen in Horsley with Draper, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me*; Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*; *Jesus in Context*; and Wire, *The Case for Mark*.



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## THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS AS SOCIAL HISTORY

James M. Robinson

There were of course many Gospels in the early church, not just the four that made it into the New Testament. But the others were suppressed by emerging orthodoxy. Only recently have Coptic translations begun to be dug up from the dry sands of Egypt. Perhaps best known among these, because of its relevance for the feminist movement, has been *The Gospel of Mary* that had been lying dormant in Berlin for a century, until finally published half a century later, then published in English translation in 1977, in the volume I organized, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*. In that same volume there were also four Nag Hammadi tracts named Gospels. The best known is *The Gospel of Thomas*, since it consists of 114 sayings ascribed to Jesus. But the Nag Hammadi Codices also contain *The Gospel of Truth*, *The Gospel of Philip*, and *The Egyptian Gospel*. All these were only secondarily named “Gospels,” to compete with the four canonical Gospels that are in the New Testament (which also were only secondarily named “Gospels”). Yet their contents are not the stories and sayings of Jesus, which is what one usually looks for in Gospels, and so they are not really the kind of documents one would call Gospels. Of course the most recent Gnostic Gospel to surface is *The Gospel of Judas*.<sup>1</sup> These Gnostic Gospels tell us much about the social history of second century Gnosticism, and correspondingly less about the historical Jesus. This of course sets them apart from the canonical Gospels, at least from the first-century Synoptic Gospels on which our knowledge of the historical Jesus is primarily based—or does it?

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1. See my book, *The Secrets of Judas: The Story of the Misunderstood Disciple and His Lost Gospel* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), in which I seek to debunk the sensationalism surrounding its publication. The much enlarged and improved paperback second edition, 2007, has appeared in German translation: *Das Judasgeheimnis: Ein Blick hinter die Kulissen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

My purpose here is to address the social history of the Synoptic Gospels, and how they relate to the gospel preached by Jesus himself.<sup>2</sup> Almost all we know about the gospel Jesus preached is of course tucked inside the Synoptic Gospels, but yet Jesus' pitch was quite different from that of the church that composed them half a century after his crucifixion. The quest of the historical Jesus has to work through those Gospels, back behind them, to reconstruct Jesus' own gospel.

The Synoptic Gospels inside the New Testament were of course not written by the evangelists whose names were only later attached to them. The names of the actual evangelists are unknown to us. The anonymous evangelists edited them, shaped them, to fit their own evangelistic purposes, and tailored them for their specific audiences. Over the past century or more, scholars have done a good job of identifying what oral and written sources the evangelists had available, when the Gospels were written, and the like. I wish to move a step further, by reconstructing, to the extent possible, the social history in terms of which the evangelists worked. The Gospels came into existence in the different competing branches of the church in which they were created. As a result, each of the evangelists has a distinct social as well as theological profile. When all is said and done, we actually know a lot more about the anonymous evangelists than we do about persons named Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

### JEWISH AND GENTILE CONFESSIONS OF THE FIRST CENTURY

Jesus' own Galilean ministry was largely confined to Jews, and all his disciples were Jews. Those whom Luke describes as having the Pentecost experience in Jerusalem were Jews from all over the ancient world, who had gathered at Jerusalem to celebrate a Jewish festival. Christianity began not as a separate religion in its own right, but rather as a strand within the Jewish religion. Yet Judaism was (and is) a very impressive ethical monotheistic religion that appealed not only to Jews but also to Gentiles. The Hebrew scriptures provided humanity's primordial history going back even before Homer! Gentiles admired the high ethical standards of the Jewish community, and appreciated the form of worship they practiced throughout the Roman Empire. But few of them were willing actually to convert to Judaism, that is to say, to become Jews, "proselytes," by undergoing circumcision and accepting strict conformity to the Jewish life style. Such

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2. See James M. Robinson, *The Gospel of Jesus: In Search of the Original Good News* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005, paperback 2006). It also has appeared in German translation: *Jesus und die Suche nach dem ursprünglichen Evangelium* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

Gentiles who attended the synagogue without becoming Jews are referred to as “God-fearers.”

In the Jewish synagogues where Paul preached, these God-fearers were those who were most sympathetic to his message. For he offered them precisely what they wanted from Judaism: The high ethical ideal without animal sacrifice or outdated restrictions on their social relations. And baptism was preferable to circumcision! Hence the Gentile Christian Church blossomed, far surpassing in numbers what was left of Jesus’ disciples in Galilee, the withering Jewish Christian Church.

The leader of the Gentile Christian Church was Paul of Tarsus, from the southern coast of modern Turkey, hence a Jew raised way out there in the Gentile world (Acts 11:25).

Paul and Barnabas took a Gentile convert to Christianity, Titus, with them to Jerusalem, to convince the “pillars” of the Jewish Christian Church there that this Gentile, though uncircumcised, should be recognized as a fully accredited Christian (Gal 2:3). The Jerusalem Church conceded the point (Acts 15:19–21), and reached a working arrangement with Paul and Barnabas: The original disciples would continue their mission limited to Jews, but gave the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas to continue converting uncircumcised Gentiles (Gal 2:7–9). Paul in turn agreed to make a collection in Gentile Churches for the poor of the Jerusalem Church (Gal 2:10; Acts 11:29–30).

This seemingly fine ecumenical solution ratified by the Jerusalem Council proved difficult to implement in the mixed congregation of Antioch. For Paul and Barnabas had in practice given up their Jewish custom of eating only among Jews, which would have retained their ceremonial purity. Of course they ate together with all members of their mixed congregation—the Eucharist cannot be segregated! Even Peter, who had come there from Jerusalem, went along with this tolerant Christian practice. But Jesus’ brother James, who by then had taken over the leadership of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13), sent delegates to Antioch to insist that Jewish Christians should eat only at a table with Jews, to retain their ceremonial purity, even if the congregation including Gentiles (Gal 2:12). So Peter himself withdrew to a Jews-only table, and even Barnabas went along with this segregation (Gal 2:11–13). But Paul stood his ground, denouncing this as elevating reliance on Jewish purity into a condition for salvation (Gal 2:14–21). Apparently he did not convince these leaders, to judge by his silence as to the outcome. Indeed, from then on he did his missionary work without Barnabas, and without the support of the church of Antioch or of Jewish Christianity.

From Paul’s time on, this alienation between the Jewish and Gentile branches of Christianity seems to have gotten worse. The ecumenicity of the Jerusalem Council gave way to the dominance of the more numerous and prosperous Gentile Christian Church, which “returned the favor” of having been rejected in

Antioch by the Jewish Christian Church, by rejecting in turn the small Jewish Christian Church as heretical: By the fourth century, Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis on Cyprus, wrote against the Jewish Christians, calling them the heretical sects of "Ebionites" and "Nazarenes." The first term means "the poor," the second means "from Nazareth." Both were originally names for Jesus and his disciples! All these Jewish Christians were doing was continuing their Jewish life style, as had Jesus, while being Christians as well. Surely, we would not call them heretics today (though Luther did call the Epistle of James an epistle of straw)!

### JEWISH AND GENTILE GOSPELS

In the generation after Paul, each side collected their treasured recollections of Jesus into Gospels, the Jewish Christians into their Sayings Gospel Q, and the Gentile Christians into their Narrative Gospel Mark. We only know about the Sayings Gospel Q because, as a last expression of ecumenicity, both confessions decided to merge their respective Gospels, Q and Mark, into a single Gospel, of course each from their own perspective. Matthew did it from the perspective of the Jewish Christian Church, Luke from the perspective of the Gentile Christian Church.

As a result, it is possible to reconstruct rather accurately the Jewish Christian Sayings Gospel Q, even though no manuscripts have survived. For it soon ceased to be copied by the Gentile Christian Church. After all, both Matthew and Luke were enlarged improved Narrative Gospels that included the Sayings Gospel Q, and so it is they rather than Q that continued to be read aloud in Gentile Church services and hence to be copied down into the Second Century. Mark too was included in Matthew and Luke, and hence could also have been replaced by them for readings in the Gentile Church of the Second Century. But since it was the Gospel of the Gentile Church, it continued to have authority, and hence to be included in the emerging Gentile New Testament. The main reason that the Sayings Gospel Q did not become a book within the New Testament is that the New Testament is the book of the Gentile Christian Church, not the book of the Jewish Christian Church.

### THE GENTILE CHURCH'S GOSPEL OF MARK

#### MARK'S IGNORANT APOSTLES

Mark presents the inner circle of Jesus' disciples as being very ignorant about Jesus, as to who he was and what he was trying to do. One can really wonder why

they followed him at all—or one has to wonder why Mark portrayed them as so ignorant!<sup>3</sup> So we should see how he did portray them, and try to figure out why:

After telling the rather obvious Parable of the Sower, Jesus asked the disciples with amazement:

Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? (Mark 4:13)

A whole chapter of parables follows, which Jesus has to explain rather pedantically to the stupid disciples:

With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples. (Mark 4:33–34)

Yet even after all this coaching, the disciples still seem to be in the dark:

He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (Mark 4:40–41)

Then when the disciples are in a boat crossing the Sea of Galilee and see Jesus walking on the water toward the boat during a storm, their ignorance recurs:

They all saw him and were all terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for then did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. (Mark 6:50–52)

Later, at the conclusion of another parable, Jesus again asks:

“Then do you also fail to understand?” (Mark 7:18)

Looking back on both feedings of the multitude, Mark has Jesus ask the overarching question:

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3. William Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901); English edition: *The Messianic Secret* (Cambridge: T&T Clark, 1971), identified this striking Markan trait as one of the three strands documenting Mark's doctrine of the messianic secret he superimposed on the tradition. The present study seeks to go one step behind this strand in the doctrine of the messianic secret to identify the social-historical tradition it exploited.

“Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?” They said to him, “Twelve.” “And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?” And they said to him, “Seven.” Then he said to them, “Do you not yet understand?” (Mark 8:17–21)

On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter makes an ignorant suggestion:

“Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. (Mark 9:5–6)

Later, when Jesus points out how hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God,

... the disciples were perplexed at these words. (Mark 10:24)

After all of this ignorance, it is not surprising that Jesus knows just how unreliable the inner circle is:

Jesus said to them, “You will all become deserters; for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’” (Mark 14:27–28)

In the Garden of Gethsemane, the inner circle is out of it completely:

He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is given over into the hands of sinners. Get up, let’s be going. See, the one giving me over is at hand.” (Mark 14:37–41)

With this, the anti-hero Judas walks across the stage. But, as our survey of Mark’s presentation of the inner circle indicates, none of them are really much better in Mark’s presentation than Judas! Modern Christians have thought that such a scoundrel as Judas could not possibly have been chosen by Jesus as one of the twelve apostles, and thus admitted into the innermost circle. But, from Mark’s



point of view, he would have fit right in! Indeed, how many of this inner circle of the twelve apostles does Mark portray as being with him at the end, at the foot of the cross? None! For Jesus knew quite well that none would die with him, but that they would do a quick retreat to Galilee, as the women were told at the tomb:

“But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” (Mark 16:7)

#### PETER AS SATAN

At least Peter should be presented favorably in Mark, since after all it is he who is the Rock on which the church is built! But not in Mark—that is Matthew’s Jewish-Christian effort to clean up Peter’s act (Matt 16:18). But in Mark, Peter’s “confession” at Caesarea Philippi, “You are the Messiah” (Mark 8:29), takes a different turn, for the worse:

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priest, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.” (Mark 8:31–33)

Peter, not the Rock, but Satan? What is going on in Mark? “Get behind me, Satan!” might fit Judas, but as a title to Peter?

#### PETER’S TRIPLE DENIAL

On the Mount of Olives, Mark has Jesus predict that Peter would abandon him:

Peter said to him, “Even though all become deserters, I will not.” Jesus said to him, “Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.” But he said vehemently, “Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.” (Mark 14:29–31)

So at least Peter stuck by him to the bitter end. But not according to Mark! Instead: “They *all* forsook him, and fled” (Mark 14:50).

When Jesus was being interrogated by the High Priest, Peter followed him “at a distance” (Mark 14:54). Then Peter fails completely:

While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and

said, "You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth." But he denied it, saying, "I do not know or understand what you are talking about." And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed. And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." But again he denied it. Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." But he began to curse, and he swore an oath. "I do not know this man you are talking about." At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept. (Mark 14:66-72)

Judging by the way Mark presents Peter, it would not have been surprising if Peter, like Judas, had gone out and killed himself. Instead, Peter lived to see a better day. They built the greatest Church in the world over the site where tradition says Peter was buried. Mark would not have contributed a penny to the massive fund-raising effort involved! But, fortunately, that took place long after Mark's time.

#### THE UNBELIEVING FAMILY

Jesus' family hardly comes off much better in Mark than do the apostles. There is no infancy narrative in Mark, so the whole Christmas story is missing. Instead, the holy family is ashamed of Jesus, convinced that he is crazy, so they try to get him out of the public eye. For right after listing the Twelve apostles, Mark continues:

Then he went home; and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for they were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." ... Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." (Mark 3:19-21, 31-35)

The "holy family"? Hardly in Mark! Instead, those who do the will of God have replaced them as his true family!

#### JESUS' HOMETOWN NAZARETH

The same Markan put-down applied to Jesus' hometown, Nazareth:

They took offense at him. Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief. (Mark 6:1–6)

What happened to the local pride in the hometown boy who makes good?

#### JUDAS ISCARIOT

Mark's Judas Iscariot fits all too well into Mark's portrayal not only of the Twelve apostles, especially Peter, but also of the holy family and his hometown:

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to give him over to them. When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to give him over. . . . Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Now the one turning him in had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. (Mark 14:10–11, 43–46)

For Mark, this is conduct worthy of the Peter who denied him three times!

#### MARK'S PAULINE GENTILE CHURCH

Why did Mark write a Gospel in support of Jesus, but against the twelve apostles, especially Peter, against his hometown, even against his own family, not to speak of Judas Iscariot? Given the prominent roles of Jesus' brother James and the apostles Peter and John, all conceded to be "pillars" by Paul (Gal 2:9), one can hardly accept Mark's put-downs as historically accurate. In this bad-mouthing context, one is almost ready to question the damning portrayal of Judas Iscariot, even before the second-century *Gospel of Judas* exploits Gnosticism to do it for us! What is going on here already in Mark?

Mark was the first Evangelist of the thriving Gentile Christian Church, as it became increasingly alienated from the Jewish Christian Church built on Jesus' original disciples. Put into that context, it is less surprising that Mark so decidedly puts down the twelve apostles, Peter, Jesus' hometown, and the holy family.

One can only recall the strained relations with these most prominent Jewish-Christian “pillars” reflected already by Paul:

But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus.

Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas [Peter] and stayed with him fifteen days; but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord’s brother...

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up in response to a revelation. Then I laid before them (though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders) the gospel that I proclaimed among the Gentiles, in order to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain. But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. But because of false believers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us—we did not submit to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you. And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those leaders contributed nothing to me. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter making him an apostle to the circumcised also worked through me in sending me to the Gentiles), and when James and Cephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do.

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned, for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?” (Gal 1:15–19; 2:1–14)

Should one expect the Gospel of the Gentile Church to be more favorable than was Paul toward Peter (Gal 2:8; “Cephas” in Gal 1:18; 2:9, 11), whom Paul “opposed to his face, because he stood self-condemned” (Gal 2:11), or toward the “circumcision faction” (Gal 2:12), which he called “this hypocrisy” (Gal 2:13), those who were “not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel” (Gal 2:14), not to speak of those he called “false believers” (Gal 2:4), who had opposed him in Jerusalem? After all, Paul had warned explicitly against any other gospel than his own:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed! (Gal 1:6–9)

This is the text from which we get that damning word “Anathema”! Mark had been given the contradictory task of recording for the Gentile Church the Jewish Church’s traditions about Jesus, but in such a way as not to vindicate those who bore those traditions, since they had ultimately turned against Paul. They must be put down, while Jesus is put up!

One would indeed expect a Gentile Christian Gospel to be anything but enthusiastic about those whom Paul put down so decidedly! The portrayal in Paul’s letter to the Galatians of the twelve apostles (“Cephas and John”), specifically Peter (“Cephas”) and the holy family (“James”), fits perfectly the negative portrayal of the twelve apostles, Peter, and the holy family in the Gentile Gospel Mark. One should not expect it to be otherwise! It is really rather surprising how much factual accuracy has been conceded to Mark in this regard not only by the church hierarchy and the unlearned laity, but even by the critical biblical scholarship of the nineteenth century prior to Wrede.

But then the question has to be raised, as to whether Mark’s damning portrayals do full justice to these maligned persons, or whether they are the victims of Paul’s, and Mark’s, Gentile Christian prejudices. Mark can indeed list the holy family by name, except for Joseph and the sisters:

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? (Mark 6:3)

But is Mark really portraying accurately the lead figures in the story who are supposed to play the “supporting” role? They probably weren’t as bad as Mark portrays them—after all, the other Gospels are more favorable—though perhaps

not as good as we assume, in elevating them to sainthood, as apostles and the holy family. In any case, we cannot simply take Mark's portrayal at face value.

#### THE PAULINE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

If the Gospel of Mark thus plays down, all too decidedly, the pillars of the Jewish Christian Church, it does play up the Pauline emphasis on the cross. For Paul had insisted (1 Cor 1:23; 2:2): "we proclaim Christ crucified. . . . I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The impact on Mark of this Pauline narrowing of the gospel to Christ dying for our sins (1 Cor 15:3) is quite visible. Indeed, critical scholarship for the last century has characterized Mark as "a passion narrative with a long introduction." What this characterization has in mind is the way in which Mark seems to be oriented to the cross, long before narrating the actual crucifixion story itself. Already very early on, the plot to kill Jesus is brought into the story:

The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him. (Mark 3:6)

Then, the second half of Mark is dominated by Jesus again and again predicting his crucifixion in all too much detail (at least for Peter, as we have seen). Thus the first half of Mark records the traditions received from the Jewish Church, while emphasizing that they are only a coded version of the Christian gospel. Then the second half of Mark makes the gospel explicit in terms of the Gentile church's message of the cross:

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. (Mark 8:31–32)

Here Mark makes use of a standard distinction in the hermeneutics of the time between hidden (parabolically: Mark 4:2, 11, 33–34) and open (Mark 8:32). It recurs in the Gospel of John (John 16:25, 29), in the *Pesharim* of Qumran, at the opening of the *Didache*, and in Gnosticism, such as *The Secret Book of James*:

At first I spoke to you in parables, and you did not understand; now I speak to you openly, and you (still) do not perceive. (NHC I.2, p. 7)

To return to Mark, shortly after the first prediction of the passion there is a second prediction of the passion:

He was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be given over into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." (Mark 9:30–31)

Then, a third time, Jesus describes in even more detail what is going to happen:

He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again." (Mark 10:32–34)

For all practical purposes, this is a rather detailed summary of Mark's passion and resurrection narratives (Mark 15–16). Of course, it is generally recognized that such a detailed prediction was not made by the historical Jesus himself, but rather was formulated by Mark and put on Jesus' tongue.

Even the Pauline gospel that "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor 15:3) crops up once in Mark on Jesus' tongue to summarize his mission:

"For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

From Mark's Pauline point of view, it was clearly the will of God that Jesus die for our sins "in accordance with the scriptures," as Paul put it (1 Cor 15:3). Hence the Markan Jesus could quite understandably mention at the Last Supper (Mark 14:21): "The Son of Man goes as it is written of him."

#### USING MARK FOR THE QUEST OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

From all this it is clear that the Gospel of Mark, on which the quest of the historical Jesus was primarily built in the nineteenth century, turned out in the twentieth century to be a rather unreliable source for a biography of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> Between the two World Wars, the quest of the historical Jesus was for all practical purposes abandoned. Put baldly: Mark's focus turned out to be on Paul's gospel, not on Jesus' gospel. Mark does not actually present Paul's doctrine of justification by faith (who other than Paul actually does?), but nevertheless Mark is under the influence of the post-Pauline Gentile Church's theology more than one had previously

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4. This thesis was laid out in the *Habilitationsschrift* of my teacher, Karl Ludwig Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu* (Berlin: Trowitzsch, 1919).

assumed. The social history of the Gospel of Mark is the post-Pauline Gentile Church's replacement of the Jewish Church as the central stream of Christianity.

### THE JEWISH CHURCH'S SAYINGS GOSPEL Q

It is at this juncture that the reconstruction of the Jewish Church's own Sayings Gospel Q came to the rescue.<sup>5</sup> If Mark's explanation of Jewish customs makes clear that it is written for the Gentile Church (Mark 7:3–4), Q's orientation to the Jewish Church is obvious, e.g. from its pejorative use of the term "Gentiles" (Q 6:34; 12:30).

The Jewish Church of the first generation spoke primarily Aramaic, of which no written texts have survived. After all, most of the original disciples were illiterate! But, fortunately, somewhere along the way they did translate Jesus' sayings into Greek, no doubt for use in their mission among Greek-speaking Jews. They then brought together Jesus' sayings in this Greek translation as their own Gospel of Jesus, even though Paul had anathematized anyone who produced a gospel other than his own (Gal 1:8–9), a barb directed specifically against the Jewish Church leaders in Jerusalem.

*The Critical Edition of Q* is a reconstruction of Q produced by a group of scholars working together for almost two decades at the end of the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> Q is not a book that exists today in its own right in the New Testament or

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5. Adolf von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1900); English edition: *What is Christianity* (London, Edinburgh, Oxford: Putnam, 1901). Then von Harnack, *Sprüche und Reden Jesu: Die zweite Quelle des Matthäus und Lukas; Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Neue Testament 2* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1907); English edition: *The Sayings of Jesus: The Second Source of St. Matthew and St. Luke* (London: Williams & Norgate, and New York: Putnam, 1908).

6. *The Critical Edition of Q: Synopsis including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German, and French Translations of Q and Thomas*, eds. James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg (Minneapolis: Fortress, and Leuven: Peeters, 2000). For the English translation only, one may consult the small booklet entitled *The Sayings of Jesus: The Sayings Gospel Q in English*, Facets series (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2001), reprinted as "The Text of the Sayings Gospel Q" in ch. 2 of *The Gospel of Jesus: In Search of the Original Good News* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005, paperback 2006), 27–54, and in my collected essays, *Jesus According to the Earliest Witness* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 235–55. For an intermediate-sized edition, one may consult *The Sayings Gospel Q in Greek and English with Parallels from the Gospels of Mark and Thomas*, eds. James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg (CBET 30; Leuven, Paris, Sterling Va.: Peeters, 2001 [2002], and Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2002). The German equivalent is *Die Spruchquelle Q, Studienausgabe, Griechisch und Deutsch*, eds. Paul Hoffmann and Christoph Heil (Leuven: Peeters, and Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002). Since Q itself does not have chapter and verse



in an extant scroll or codex. Instead, it lurks just below the surface of the New Testament, and has to be reconstructed: Both Matthew and Luke had copies of the Sayings Gospel Q, and used it, together with the Gospel of Mark, in composing their Gospels, as a kind of “ecumenical” gesture, Matthew from the point of view of the Jewish Church, Luke from the point of view of the Gentile Church. This can be inferred from the fact that Matthew and Luke share a number of sayings of Jesus that we know they could not have gotten from Mark, since they are not in Mark. They must have gotten them from another written Greek source, since the striking similarity both of the Greek wording and of the sequence are best explained that way. Scholars a century ago nicknamed this other source “Q,” the first letter of the German word meaning “source,” *Quelle*. Today we refer to it as the Sayings Gospel Q, to distinguish it from the four Narrative Gospels with which we are familiar from the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. *The Gospel of Thomas* from Nag Hammadi is another instance of a Sayings Gospel.

Since the Sayings Gospel Q was composed for use in the actual continuation or resumption of Jesus’ own message by his disciples after his death, it does not look back on Jesus’ public ministry as a past golden age to be described but not continued (which is particularly Luke’s focus), but presents a collection of sayings still to be proclaimed (which is more Matthew’s focus: “... teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you,” Matt 28:20). What is important for Q is not *who* said *what* to *whom*, so as to establish the apostolicity of one’s own group, but rather: these sayings are decisive for *you*, your fate hangs on hearkening to them! It is perhaps for this reason that it does not mention by name those who carry on the message. None of the twelve apostles are mentioned, not even Peter. But Jesus’ sayings are there for you to hear read, believe, and even put into practice. That is what they are there for.

Not all the sayings in Q actually go back to the historical Jesus, since the collection of sayings pronounced in Jesus’ name grew until it finally reached the form Matthew and Luke knew around 70 c.e. (to judge by Q 13:34-35, which seems to presuppose the destruction of the temple). Yet there has been a rather broad scholarly consensus as to which sayings are the oldest layer that one might hence best ascribed to Jesus, a consensus that is all the more convincing since

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numbers, we make use of Luke’s chapter and verse numbers when quoting Q. This is because Luke follows Q’s sequence more faithfully than does Matthew. Since there is no birth narrative in Q, the text of Q begins at Luke 3 with John the Baptist. So the first chapter of Q is called Q 3. Q material is scattered through Matthew and Luke, but ends just before the Passion Narrative in Luke 22. So the last chapter of Q is called Q 22.

various scholars have reached it from a variety of methodological approaches.<sup>7</sup> Jesus' unique view of a God who loves the unjust as well as the just (Q 6:27, 35), and thereby calls on humans to do the same (Q 6:32, 34), and therefore to forgive endlessly (Q 17:3–4), is considered by the Q text itself to be a unique revelation (Q 10:22).

Yet Jesus' view of God was gradually superseded by a more vengeful view of God, engendering an attitude of woes against the Pharisees (Q 11:42, 39, 41, 43–44), against the exegetes of the law (Q 11:46, 52, 47–48), and against “this generation” of Judaism for rejecting Jesus' message (Q 11:49–51), which is held responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem (Q 13:34–35). This seems to be a reversion to the way the Hebrew scriptures had explained the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians—due not to God being unfaithful, but to the Israelites being unfaithful, which a just God had to punish with vengeance. This God of vengeance ultimately replaced the ever-loving God of Jesus, in the apocalypticism in which Q ended and the Gospel of Matthew revealed.<sup>8</sup>

The irony of all this is that as the Q movement became more literate and familiar with the Hebrew scriptures, the more it reverted to that vengeful God. Paul had already reached that point: “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord” (Rom 12:19; Deut 32:35).<sup>9</sup> The progressive failure of the Q movement's Jewish mission (in contrast to the blossoming Pauline Gentile mission) is in effect the determinative social history that explains the final form that Q reached by the time Matthew and Luke made use of it. Yet Matthew's successful attempt to enlarge the inaugural sermon of Q 6:20–49 with other Q material, into the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7), became the way Q survived while it was lost. It became the basis for the efforts to implement Jesus' teaching about God and human conduct undertaken, each in their own way, by Francis of Assisi, Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King.

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7. For details see my essay, “The Q Trajectory: Between John and Matthew via Jesus,” in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester*, ed. Birger A. Pearson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 173–94, especially the section “Helmut Koester's Early Sapiential Layer in Q,” 184–89. It is reprinted in my *The Sayings Gospel Q: Collected Essays*, eds. Christoph Heil and Joseph Verheyden (BETL 189; Leuven: University Press and Peeters, 2005), 285–307 (296–302), and again in my *Jesus According to the Earliest Witness*, 179–201 (190–96).

8. David C. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew* (SNTSMS 88; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), “Vengeance and consolation,” 227–35.

9. See Robinson, *Gospel of Jesus*, ch. 10: “The Gospel of Jesus and the Gospel of Paul,” 209–218: 212–16.

### THE JEWISH/GENTILE CHURCH'S ECUMENICAL GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

The Gospel of Matthew seems to have been written when the remaining vestiges of the Jewish Church of Q merged into the much larger Gentile Church of Mark. The merging of the Gospels of the two communions seems to have been a kind of last ecumenical gesture attesting to the hoped-for harmonizing of the two confessions.

Matthew was basically a Jewish Gospel, as the limiting of the mission prior to Easter to Jews (Matt 10: 5–6, 23) and the appropriation of Q's perjorative use of the term "Gentiles" (Q 6:34 par. Matt 5:47) by Matthew (Matt 6:7; 18:17) tend to indicate. Hence Matthew would have every reason to present a more favorable view of the Jewish disciples of Jesus than do Paul and Mark. After all, it was Matthew who softened Mark's title for Peter as Satan (Matt 16:23) by letting Jesus name him more prominently as the Rock:

"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this Rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matt 16:18–19)

Matthew had every reason to clear Peter's name since Peter is, of course after Jesus, the hero of his Gospel. If Mark might have been the first to cast a stone at Peter, Matthew would have been the first to lay a cornerstone at the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome.

Matthew begins with Jesus' Jewish genealogy going back to the founders of Judaism, David and Abraham (Matt 1:2–17), but not to Adam, as does Luke (Luke 3:23–38). And Matthew introduces Jesus as the one who "will save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21), which would seem to bypass the Pauline Gentile mission. Matthew's birth narrative (Matt 1:18–25) elevates Mary and Joseph to prominence, as do the stories of the wise men (Matt 2:1–12), Herod's efforts to kill the child (Matt 2:13, 16–17), and the holy family's resultant trips to Egypt and then to Nazareth (Matt 2:13–23). By omitting Mark 3:19b–21, where Jesus' family came to get him out of sight because they thought he was "beside himself," Matthew rescues the holy family from their unbelief during Jesus' Galilean ministry. When they stand outside the door seeking to speak to him, their intent could be quite innocent (Matt 12:46–50). In many such subtle ways Matthew, though using Mark, softens its Gentile bias as best he can.

Q had in its own way appealed to the disciples of John to become disciples of Jesus (Q 7:18–35), with the message: "Go report to John what you hear and see: The blind regain their sight and the lame walk around, the skin-diseased are

cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised, and the poor are evangelized" (Q 7:22). But to judge by the ensuing silence of the Q text, apparently this had little success. Matthew tried again, by producing a much more impressive sermon evangelizing the poor (Matt 5–7), followed by a complicated effort to document each of the healings listed in Q as having actually taken place prior to Jesus' saying to the Baptists (Matt 8–9).<sup>10</sup> After the failure of this last-ditch effort to bring into the Jesus movement the most congenial Jewish movement, the Baptists, the Q people would seem to have merged into the Gentile church, of which the Gospel of Matthew would be the primary documentation. This is then key to the social history of Matthew. Yet some of the Q people may have merged into "normative" Judaism, of whom there is no trace, and others may have persisted in their Jewish life style, to end up as the "heresies" of Ebionites and Nazarenes, of whom there is hardly a trace prior to Epiphanius.

### THE GENTILE/JEWISH CHURCH'S ECUMENICAL GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke presented the public ministry of Jesus as a sort of idealized time, a period not only quite different from the time before Jesus' public ministry, but also quite different from Luke's own time long after Jesus' public ministry.<sup>11</sup>

We are quite familiar with Luke's way of idealizing the beginnings of the church after Easter in the Book of Acts as a wonderful time, but a time that did not continue down into Luke's present. Luke presented Jesus' public ministry in a similar way, as an idealized time in the past that does not really apply to the present. Luke reports that after failing in the temptation, the devil left Jesus "until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13). The devil found that opportune time just before the passion narrative, when Satan reappeared just in time to enter Judas (Luke 22:3) and to tempt Peter (Luke 22:31). The period of the devil's absence, corresponding to the public ministry of Jesus, is for Luke a paradise-like unrepeatable idyllic period of time, much like the idealized beginning of the Christian Church.

This idealized time, free of the devil, corresponds very closely to the limits of Q in Luke. Q began at Luke 3:2, with John the Baptist, and went through Luke 22:30, just before the Passion Narrative. Indeed, the idyllic period of time ends in

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10. See Robinson, *Gospel of Jesus*, ch. 5, "Jesus Was Converted by John," 111–39, "The Christianizing of John," 123–37.

11. This is the thesis of Hans Conzelmann's *Die Mitte der Zeit* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1954); English edition: *The Theology of St. Luke* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960). He did not note the important fact that the period of Satan's absence in the Gospel of Luke coincides with the period when Luke is copying Q.

the very next verse after Q ends. For immediately after quoting the conclusion of Q (Luke 22:30), Luke presents Satan re-emerging to tempt Peter to betray Jesus (Luke 22:31). Then Luke revokes quite explicitly the Mission Instructions of Q that had been quoted in Luke 10:1–16. For those Mission Instructions had stated:

“Carry no purse, nor knapsack, nor sandals, nor stick, and greet no one on the road.” (Q 10:4)

But now Luke revokes these Mission Instructions, to get ready for the Passion Narrative:

And he said to them, “When I sent you out with no purse or bag or sandals, did you lack anything?” They said, “Nothing.” He said to them, “But now, let him who has a purse take it, and likewise a bag. And let him who has no sword sell his mantle and buy one. For I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me, ‘And he was reckoned with transgressors’; for what is written about me has its fulfillment.” And they said, “Look, Lord, here are two swords.” And he said to them, “It is enough.” (Luke 22:35–38)

In this way Luke prepares for Mark’s immediately following report of the arrest:

But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. (Mark 14:47, used in Luke 22:50–51)

So, by rearming the disciples, Luke has closed down the epoch of Q, wonderful though it may have seemed, and re-entered the “real world” of push and shove. With Q safely behind him, Luke can proceed to follow Mark through the Passion Narrative, and move on into the Gentile Church’s mission practices, which Luke exemplified in the Book of Acts, in his portrayal of Paul moving about throughout the whole Hellenistic world for all practical purposes as a successful businessman. It is this world of the Gentile mission founded by Paul and idealized in the Book of Acts that is the social history behind the Gospel of Luke.

### FOR FURTHER READING

- Robinson, James M. *The Gospel of Jesus: In Search of the Original Good News*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005.
- . *Jesus According to the Earliest Witness*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007.
- . “The Q Trajectory: Between John and Matthew via Jesus.” Pages 173–94 in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester*. Edited by Birger A. Pearson. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.

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# THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM: JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS

Mark Goodacre

## CURIOSITY AND COLORED PENCILS

For many New Testament scholars, studying the Synoptic Problem is a bit like studying algebra at school—it is a necessary evil. If you don't have some kind of grasp on the issue, you can't proceed to all the really rewarding, high-stakes issues that come afterwards, redaction-criticism, exegesis of the text, Historical Jesus research. It is a topic one first meets in courses offering introductions to the New Testament, when the major solution to the problem is explained in order to provide a framework for future study. To spend any longer on the problem is commonly regarded as a waste of time. It is too complex, too boring and best left to specialists who apparently retain a fascination with the topic long after they were supposed to have left it behind.

Although many New Testament scholars remain unexcited about the Synoptic Problem, their students do find it engaging once they are given the opportunity to explore it as a problem. While it is the norm among New Testament Introductions simply to present the Two-Source Theory, the dominant solution, as a *fait accompli* and then to refract the data through the lens of that solution,<sup>1</sup> there is actually a better way to approach it. The Synoptic Problem becomes exciting to students when they are introduced to it as a puzzle, as a problem in search of a solution. Engaging students in the humanities is, at its best, about teaching them how to engage critically with the materials rather than about simple description of consensus views. It is about appealing to their curiosity. And when it comes to the Synoptic Problem, curiosity can be combined with colored pencils.<sup>2</sup>

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1. See John Poirier, "The Synoptic Problem and the Field of New Testament Introduction," *JSNT* 32, 2 (2009): 179–90.

2. My introduction to the Synoptic Problem uses the metaphor of finding a way through a maze; Mark Goodacre, *The Synoptic Problem: A Way Through the Maze* (London: T&T Clark,

The Synoptic Problem is the study of the similarities and differences between the first three “Synoptic” Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, with a view to discovering their literary relationship. They are called “Synoptic” because they can be viewed together in synopsis in a way that facilitates close comparison like this:<sup>3</sup>

Matthew 3:13–17	Mark 1:9–11	Luke 3:21–22
<p>Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptised by him. But John prevented him, saying, ‘I need to be baptised by you, and yet you come to me?’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.’ Then he allowed him.</p> <p>And when Jesus had been baptised, he arose immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to him and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him; and behold a voice from the heavens saying, ‘This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.’</p>	<p>And it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee</p> <p>and was baptised in the Jordan by John. And immediately, having arisen from the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the spirit as a dove descending into him. And a voice came from the heavens, ‘You are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.’</p>	<p>And it came to pass that while all the people were being baptised, Jesus also having been baptised was praying, and</p> <p>the heaven was opened and the holy spirit descended in bodily form as a dove upon him, and there came a voice from heaven, ‘You are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.’</p>

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2001). The discussion of coloring the Synopsis is on pp. 33–35.

3. There are two main options for English language Gospel Synopses: K. Aland (ed.), *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1985) and Burton H. Throckmorton, Jr., *Gospel Parallels: A Comparison of the Synoptic Gospels* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1993).



Viewing the parallels together like this instantly allows the reader to see the degree of similarity between these three accounts. And one of the best ways of seeing the similarities and differences even more closely is to print out pages of Synopsis like this and to do some coloring. As it happens, fortune has favored the easy coloring of the Synopsis because there are three Synoptic Gospels and three primary colors. A simple coloring scheme quickly becomes intuitive. Matthew is blue, Mark is red and Luke is yellow. Words found only in Matthew can be colored blue; words found only in Mark can be colored red; words found only in Luke can be colored yellow. Agreements between Matthew and Mark are colored purple (blue + red); agreements between Mark and Luke are colored orange (red + yellow); agreements between Matthew and Luke are colored green (blue + yellow) and agreements between all three are colored brown (blue + red + yellow).

The mix of colors in a pericope like Jesus' baptism will show an attractive rainbow of variation in agreement and disagreement and several elements will quickly become clear. The most immediately striking will be a large wash of blue in Matthew's Gospel, where Matthew alone has the paragraph in which John the Baptist argues with Jesus about his coming for baptism. A closer look will then reveal a range of agreements, between Matthew and Mark (arising from the water), between Mark and Luke ("And it came to pass..." and "you are") and between Matthew and Luke ("opened" and "upon"). But the most common kind of agreements here are triple agreements, between all three Synoptics, including the all important conclusion of the story, "my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

Synopses like this can be constructed and colored for passage after passage in the Synoptic Gospels. Sometimes the range of similarity and difference will be like that seen in the Baptism account above. At other times, there will be more differences. Sometimes, the wording is remarkably similar, as here in the immediately preceding pericope, John the Baptist's preaching:

Matthew 3:7-10	Luke 3:7-9
<p>Offspring of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Bear fruit therefore worthy of repentance and do not <i>presume</i> to say in yourselves, "We have Abraham as father;" for I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Already the axe is laid at the root of the trees; for every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire.</p>	<p>Offspring of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Bear fruit therefore worthy of repentance and do not <i>begin</i> to say in yourselves, "We have Abraham as father;" for I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Already the axe is laid at the root of the trees; for every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire</p>

The similarity between the two versions of the speech is remarkable. If one colors the passage using the scheme suggested above, it is a solid wash of green, representing verbatim agreement between Matthew and Luke (in a passage that does not feature in Mark), with only one word different, the Greek words for “presume” and “begin” respectively.

Agreement like this suggests direct copying. The fact that there are other passages with similarly high levels of agreement suggests that the Synoptic Problem is a literary problem, and that the Synoptic Gospels are related to one another in some kind of literary way, a conclusion further reinforced by the fact that the Synoptics sometimes agree with one another in extraordinary Greek constructions like this one:

<b>Matthew 9:6</b>	<b>Mark 2:10–11</b>	<b>Luke 5:24</b>
“But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on the earth to forgive sins,” then he says to the paralytic, “Arise, take up your bed and go to your house.”	“But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on the earth to forgive sins,” he says to the paralytic, “I say to you, Arise, take up your pallet and go to your house.”	“But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on the earth to forgive sins,” he said to the paralytic, “I say to you, Arise and take up your bed and return to your house.”

In all three texts, the sentence “In order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . .” is unfinished, and the narrator breaks in before Jesus resumes the speech. If there were any further doubt about the literary nature of the problem, the striking agreements in order between the three Synoptics would put them to rest. In passage after passage, the three Synoptics are often found to be in agreement in order.

If three students showed this kind of agreement in a college paper, their teacher would refer them to the student disciplinary body without hesitation. It would be clear that at least two of the three had been engaged in some kind of copying. The only question would be which of the three had been engaged in copying. Were any of them copying from one or more of the others? Or might they have been copying from another source, a textbook or an online essay?

In the case of the plagiarizing students, the instructor could interview one or more of them to work out which ones were the offenders. Unfortunately for the contemporary scholar, there is no chance of this kind of firsthand cross-examination of the evangelists, and the early church witnesses are little help. They do not share the contemporary scholar’s interest in source criticism, and they are either

too late or too terse to shed much light.<sup>4</sup> The challenge of the Synoptic Problem is therefore to work out, from analysis of the internal evidence, what the literary interrelationship might be. There are several important clues, and these can be explored by taking a closer look at some of the specific examples we have already begun to encounter, the material about John the Baptist in Matthew 3:1–17, Mark 1:1–11 and Luke 3:1–22. This material could hardly be more useful as a way of exploring the Synoptic Problem. It occurs right at the beginning of the Gospel story proper, preceded only by the Birth Narratives in Matthew 1–2 and Luke 1–2 and it features all the different kinds of Synoptic material, with triple agreements, double agreements, singly attested material and combinations of all different kinds. The variety of the colors in this material encourages the student's curiosity. What does the evidence illustrate?

#### MARK 1:9–11 (BAPTISM) AND THE PRIORITY OF MARK

In the Synopsis above of the Baptism pericope (Mark 1:9–11 and parallels), there are several triple agreements, several agreements between Mark and Matthew and several agreements between Mark and Luke. (There are also several Matthew-Luke agreements, to which we will return in due course). Pericopes like this are common among the Synoptic Gospels and for most New Testament scholars they illustrate the phenomenon known as the Priority of Mark, whereby Matthew and Luke both knew and used Mark's Gospel. It can be diagrammed like this:

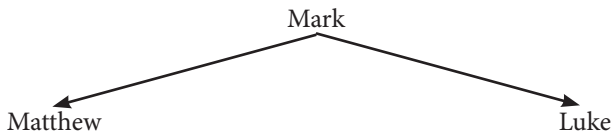


Fig.1: The priority of Mark.

The theory is that Matthew and Luke make best sense on the assumption that they were both copying from Mark but at the same time making modifications to the Marcan material. Most scholars currently think that this is more plausible than the major alternative explanation, that Mark was combining elements in Matthew and Luke, so that the arrows in the above diagram are reversed.<sup>5</sup>

4. See my *Synoptic Problem*, 76–81.

5. See further my *Synoptic Problem*, ch. 3 and *The Case Against Q: Studies in Marcan Priority*

Certain features of the baptism accounts make good sense on the assumption that Matthew and Luke were editing Mark and that Mark was, therefore, the first Gospel to have been written. There are several features in Mark's account that could have caused concern amongst early Christians. Mark introduces John's baptism as "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4) and a moment later, Jesus himself gets baptized by John. One might reasonably infer from this that Jesus, too, came confessing his sins (Mark 1:5) and that he was in some way inferior to John, in spite of the attempts to establish Jesus' superior status (Mark 1:7). Whatever Mark's intention, it looks like both Matthew and Luke rewrote the account in order to deal with the potentially dangerous inferences that certain readers might make.

Matthew avoids the specific description of John's baptism as a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4) and instead speaks about John the Baptist preaching repentance using the same words that Jesus himself will use in Matt 4:17, "Repent! For the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near!" (Matt 3:2). Now John is closely aligned with Jesus' own message of repentance. But this is subtle and insufficient, and something more is needed. The student who has colored the Synopsis of the passage above will have noticed a large wash of blue—unique Matthean material featuring a conversation between the Baptist and Jesus in which John balks over baptizing Jesus, and Jesus piously asserts the need for them to fulfill all righteousness (Matt 3:14–15). Any doubts about the appropriateness of the action are quickly put to rest at Jesus' own insistence.

Luke, too, appears to have made changes to Mark. They are at first sight more difficult to spot but on closer inspection are no less radical than Matthew's changes. Typically, Jesus' experience of the Spirit's descent is enhanced by the Lucan notice that Jesus was "praying" (Luke 3:21, cf. 5:16, 6:12, 9:18, 9:28–29, 11:1, 22:44), but the really striking difference is that Luke's terse narration of the baptism (3:21–22) takes place after he has narrated the arrest and imprisonment of John (Luke 3:18–20), an event saved for later by the other Synoptics (Matt 14:3–12 // Mark 6:17–29). Now it is not even clear quite how Jesus' baptism happens except that it occurs "in a baptism of all the people and Jesus also was baptized" (Luke 3:21).

The alternative explanation, that Mark created his starker, more primitive, more theologically risky account on the basis of editing Matthew's and Luke's accounts seems less plausible than that Matthew and Luke were engaging in a clever damage-limitation exercise. It provides a good example of how study of

the Synoptic Problem can provide insight into the development of early Christian thinking about Jesus. Although the “criterion of embarrassment” is usually associated with Historical Jesus research, it actually applies at a more fundamental and less controversial level in studies of inter-Synoptic relationships. Here, the later evangelists appear to have been embarrassed by what they found in their source material. They value Mark, they like the story of Jesus’ epiphany and the divine voice affirming him as God’s Son and there is a traditional narrative constraint to begin the story with the Baptist,<sup>6</sup> but they do not want to risk an inference that Jesus came to John for a baptism “of repentance” and they want to underline Jesus’ superiority to him. One might almost say that they are engaged in a kind of orthodox redaction of Mark.

### JOHN’S PREACHING (MATT 3:7–10 // LUKE 3:7–9) AND THE Q HYPOTHESIS

While the theory of Marcan Priority provides strong grounds for understanding the construction of the John the Baptist material in the Synoptic Gospels, it can only take us so far. Passages like Matt 3:7–10 // Luke 3:7–9 (John’s preaching, above) show verbatim agreement between Matthew and Luke alone in what is known as “double tradition” material. Depending on how one counts them, there are between two-hundred and two-hundred and fifty verses like this in Matthew and Luke. The most common explanation for the existence of this material is that Matthew and Luke were independent of one another and that they were both dependent on a lost document which scholars label Q, originally so named, it is said, because it is the first letter of the German “Quelle,” meaning “source,” but retained because it is quirky and memorable. The diagram for the Priority of Mark can then be amended in the following way to represent the Two-Source Theory:

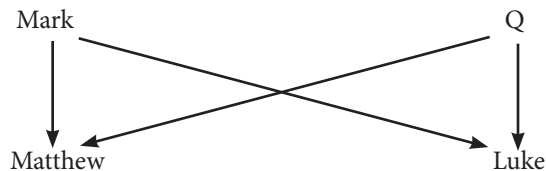


Fig. 2: The two-source theory.

6. Luke in particular feels that this is the right place to begin the story—cf. Acts 1:5, 1:22, “beginning with the baptism of John,” 10:37, 11:16, 13:24–25, 19:4. John’s Gospel too, in spite of its cosmic opening, begins with multiple references to John the Baptist.

Matthew and Luke draw independently on both Mark and Q, their two sources. A lot of the Q material is made up of sayings, usually Jesus' sayings, but in the example here (Matt 3:7–10 // Luke 3:7–9), John's. The degree of agreement is so high that it makes a purely oral hypothesis an impossibility. This is the kind of agreement that requires direct copying, and so Q, like Mark, would appear to have been a document.<sup>7</sup>

Since no textual witnesses of Q have survived, it can only be reconstructed by the careful analysis of Matthew's and Luke's double tradition material. In cases like this, where there is almost one hundred per cent agreement between the two, the reconstruction is straightforward. In other cases, where Matthew's and Luke's wording varies, the interpreter has to make a judgment about which of the evangelists is more likely to have changed the wording of his source. Sometimes this is a difficult business because good reasons can be given for either one of the evangelists to have made the change in question. Nevertheless, a working critical text of Q is now available, the product of years of careful, collaborative work by a group of scholars known as "the International Q Project."<sup>8</sup> The text is, of course, only an approximation of what the hypothetical document looked like, but it has value in reminding us that there must have been other source materials which will be forever lost. Indeed Luke, in his preface (1:1–4), appears to allude to the existence of "many" narratives of the events that "have been fulfilled among us."

The apparent contours of Q are fascinating in that it is difficult to see any sign of a Passion Narrative. And since so much of Q is made up of sayings material, some have speculated that it might be an example of a "sayings gospel" like the *Gospel of Thomas*, which is made up of loosely connected sayings of Jesus with no narrative structure and no Passion. If Q is indeed like *Thomas* and if both can be dated to the first century, then it would appear that there was a trajectory in early Christianity that was less interested in Jesus' death and instead placed special emphasis on the salvific importance of the proper interpretation of Jesus' words.<sup>9</sup>

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7. See further John S. Kloppenborg, *Q, the Earliest Gospel: An Introduction to the Original Stories and Sayings of Jesus* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008).

8. James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann and John S. Kloppenborg, *The Critical Edition of Q: Synopsis including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German, and French translations of Q and Thomas* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000) and James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann and John S. Kloppenborg, *The Sayings Gospel Q in Greek and English: with Parallels from the Gospels of Mark and Thomas* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002).

9. For this perspective, note in particular the seminal work James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971). Helmut Koester writes that "The *Gospel of Thomas* and Q challenge the assumption that the early church was unanimous in making Jesus' death and resurrection the fulcrum of Christian faith. Both documents presuppose that Jesus' significance lay in his words, and in his words alone," *Ancient*

However, passages like those under discussion place a question mark against this perspective. While the *Gospel of Thomas* is reasonably characterized as a sayings gospel, Q, by contrast, appears to show a marked interest in Jesus' career, with clear signs of a narrative sequence and a major investment in the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist. Like Mark's Gospel, Q begins with John the Baptist, who preaches about repentance (Matt 3:8 // Luke 3:8, "bear fruit worthy of repentance"), baptizes with water and speaks of a "coming one" (Matt 3:11 // Luke 3:16), Jesus, who is himself baptized (Matt 3:16 // Luke 3:21). Many of these early signals are apparently picked up later in Q. When John the Baptist makes another appearance, he is in prison, apparently having been arrested (Matt. 11:2–6 // Luke 7:18–23), though he can communicate with "his disciples" who now follow up on the question of Jesus' identity as "the coming one," an identity which is, incidentally, confirmed not through Jesus' words but through his deeds in fulfillment of Scripture (Matt 11:4–5 // Luke 7:22). All this is quite unlike anything that one finds in the *Gospel of Thomas* and so it may be that the generic differences between the two texts turn out to be greater than the generic similarities.

### MARK 1:7–8 AND MARK-Q OVERLAPS

Indeed, Q becomes increasingly curious the more that one looks at it. The oddity of its lack of a Passion Narrative becomes striking when one notices the degree of overlap Q has with elements in Mark's Gospel, a feature that is prominent in the texts under consideration here. It is not just that Q begins its account by presupposing a narrative about John the Baptist and Jesus, but it is also that the wording itself overlaps:

Matthew 3:11–12	Mark 1:7–8	Luke 3:15–17
	7 And he was preaching, and saying,	15 Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he might be the Christ, 16 John answered and said to them all,

11 "I, on the one hand, am baptizing you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove his sandals; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit <i>and fire</i> . 12 <i>His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor; and he will gather his wheat into the barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.</i> "	"After me one is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. 8 I baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."	"I, on the one hand, am baptizing you with water; but one is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of his sandals; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit <i>and fire</i> . 17. <i>His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor; and to gather the wheat into His barn; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.</i> "
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The words here in italics in Matthew and Luke represent major agreement between the two against Mark. If they are using Mark and Q independently of one another, as the Two-Source Theory suggests, it is difficult to reconstruct the wording of Q here. It would be absurd to imagine that Q simply had "and fire ..." and that Matthew and Luke each stitched the sayings together in the same way. It must have been the case, then, that Q featured the same account told in the same or similar words.

This phenomenon of "Mark-Q overlap" is one of the most intriguing elements in the Synoptic Problem and it suggests to some scholars that there may be something wrong with the Two-Source Theory. The Two-Source Theory works on the basis that Matthew and Luke are independent of one another, so that neither knows how the other one is treating the Marcan source material that they share. Indeed one of the reasons commonly given for their independence of one another is that they never agree together in major ways against Mark, or, stated another way, that Luke never shows knowledge of Matthew's modifications of Mark. However, examples like this, where Matthew and Luke share a practically identical redaction of Mark 1, appear to contradict those kinds of assertions.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, a large stretch of text, from Matt 3:1 to 4:11, in parallel to sections in Luke 3:1 to 4:13, features a range of agreements between Matthew and Luke against Mark of the kind that are supposed not to occur on the Two-Source Theory.

10. For examples of this argument and for a discussion of it, see my *Case Against Q*, 49–54.



Passages like this draw attention to the possibility that Matthew has added to Mark's wording and that Luke has copied the Matthean redactional reframing of this material. This model, known as the Farrer Theory,<sup>11</sup> suggests that an additional arrow can be drawn from Matthew to Luke. Marcan Priority is retained, but Luke also knows Matthew. Thus although Luke makes Mark's Gospel his major source, he also uses Matthew and adds supplemental material from there:

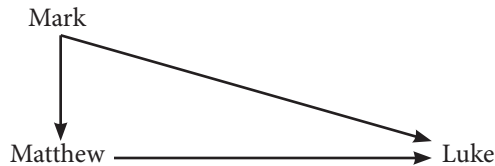


Fig. 3: The Farrer Theory

Students often find this model initially more appealing than the Two-Source theory because it is able to explain the agreements between the Synoptics without appeal to a hypothetical document. It retains the strengths of Marcan Priority but does not require the postulation of an otherwise unattested text. That kind of sceptical perspective can be helpful, but the matter is not going to be settled by reflecting on generalities. Given that many, many texts from antiquity have been lost, the hypothetical nature of Q can never, in and of itself, be held against its plausibility as a means of explaining how Matthew and Luke came to be. It is only the detailed study of the Synopsis that can provide the answers about whether the model stands up to scrutiny or whether an alternative like the Farrer Theory has greater explanatory strength.

### VERBATIM AGREEMENT IN MATTHEW 3 AND LUKE 3

One way forward is to ask whether the language shared by Matthew and Luke alone makes better sense as material they both took over from a hypothetical text or whether it makes better sense as having been copied by Luke from Matthew. There is a potential indicator here that is rarely discussed in the literature, the fact that the agreement between Matthew and Luke in the double tradition is so close.

11. Named after Austin Farrer, "On Dispensing with Q," in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot* (ed. D. E. Nineham; Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), 55–88. The theory owes most to Michael Goulder. See especially *Luke: A New Paradigm* (JSNTSup 20; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989).

To see the point, we need to look again at the agreement between Matt 3:7–10 and Luke 3:7–9 (above) and between Matt 3:12 and Luke 3:17 (above). The student who colors the synopsis has an easy job in these verses—there is almost one hundred per cent verbatim agreement between Matthew and Luke, so on the coloring scheme suggested above, almost all of it is green. Now the degree of identity between the two here makes much better sense if Luke is copying Matthew than if both are independently copying Q.

In order to illustrate what is at stake, it is worth returning to the analogy of plagiarizing students. If an instructor receives two papers that are almost identical, one possibility is that both students have copied from a third source, perhaps the text book or some online essay. The other possibility is that one student has copied the other's work. The closer the papers are to one another, the more likely it becomes that one copied from the other than that both copied from a third, unknown source.

In the case of Matthew and Luke, there is a way of checking to see whether this very close verbatim agreement is what we ought to expect. On the Two-Source Theory, Matthew and Luke are independently working with both Mark and Q, but they differ in how close they are to one another in the two different types of material. They are more conservative with Q (double tradition) than they are with Mark (triple tradition). Passages with very high verbatim agreement are often found in the double tradition (e.g. Matt 6:24 // Luke 16:13, Matt 12:43–45 // Luke 11:24–26) but Matthew and Luke do not agree together as closely in their versions of triple tradition passages.<sup>12</sup> It will not do to point out that the evangelists are generally more conservative in sayings material than they are in narrative material because the same phenomenon can be seen there too—Matthew and Luke tend to be closer together in Q sayings material than they are in Marcan sayings material.

On the Farrer theory, the degree of closeness between Matthew and Luke in double tradition is just what one might have expected. They are not mutually copying a third source, as they are in triple tradition, but Luke is copying directly from Matthew. Thus the near verbatim agreements between Matthew and Luke in passages like Matt 3:7–10 // Luke 3:7–9 and Matt 3:12 // Luke 3:17 make good sense as cases where Luke shows his direct knowledge of Matthew, where there is one arrow rather than two.

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12. One of the clearest representations of the relevant data is Charles E. Carlston and Dennis Norlin, "Once More—Statistics and Q," *HTR* 64 (1971): 59–78 (71), though they use the data to point to the written nature of Q.

## MATTHEW 3, LUKE 3, AND MATTHEAN LANGUAGE

The question about the degree of identity between Matthew and Luke in passages like this does not of course settle the question about which way the arrow should point. Advocates of the Farrer theory make a case for Luke's familiarity with Matthew and one of the reasons that this direction of dependence appears more plausible than the opposite<sup>13</sup> is that the language, imagery and rhythm of much of the double tradition material makes better sense as originating in Matthew's redaction. So here in Matt 3:7 // Luke 3:7, the construction "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?" bears the hallmarks of Matthew's style. He will use this offensive vocative + rhetorical question twice again in remarkably similar forms, Matt 12:34, "Brood of vipers! How can you speak good things when you are evil?" and Matt 23:33, "Snakes, brood of vipers! How can you flee from the judgment of gehenna?"<sup>14</sup> It is not only the rhythm but also the imagery (snakes' offspring) and language (wrath, judgment, gehenna) that sounds Matthean and may indicate in which direction the borrowing is going.

Similarly, in Matt 3:10 // Luke 3:9, "Therefore every tree not producing good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" appears again only in Matthew, in virtually identical format, in 7:19, and it is not just the language but also the imagery that is Matthean. Matthew's is the Gospel that exploits harvest imagery to tell the story of judgment and hell-fire. The Matthean apocalyptic scenario, here appearing for the first time in the Gospel, will be repeated at regular intervals, with a demand for good fruits (good works) from the faithful, a separation between good and evil at the Eschaton, and the burning of those whose deeds are evil (see especially Matt 13:24–30, 36–43, 47–50; 25:31–46).

This way of modeling Synoptic relationships has certain advantages. The Farrer Theory is able to provide a plausible account of this complex of agreements without appeal to a hypothetical text and without having to suppose that both Matthew and Luke behaved in practically identical ways independently of one another. This is, of course, only one brief series of Synoptic parallels and the same kind of analysis and reflection needs to take place in relation to all the data in order to see which models are preferable overall. The fact that scholars still disagree about the Synoptic Problem shows that the data can be read in different ways, and that scholars continue to assess the competing models differently.

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13. Among other reasons, it is also noteworthy that Luke sometimes apparently becomes fatigued when copying from Matthew—see my "Fatigue in the Synoptics," *NTS* 44 (1998): 45–58.

14. See also Matt 23:17 and 23:19 and Michael Goulder, *Midrash and Lektion in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974), 242–44.

Nevertheless, there is a real pay-off for studying the Synoptic Problem, however the individual scholar or student attempts to resolve it, and there is good reason to begin studying it at an early point in exploring Christian origins. Spending time with a Synopsis of the Gospels is ideal for unlearning naïve presuppositions about how the Gospels were written. That there was a lot of copying going on might make us skeptical about seeing the three Synoptic Gospels as three separate witnesses to the same events. That there are many differences between the Synoptic Gospels gives us reason to reflect on the historical and theological motivations for the differences. In the case of the John the Baptist narrative, the degree of copying suggests some caution in reconstructing his mission and his relationship with Jesus. The Synoptic differences similarly give us pause, especially as Matthew's John sounds so similar to Matthew's Jesus.

### ELIJAH, JOHN THE BAPTIST, AND JESUS

However, the payoff for engaging in serious study of the Synoptic Problem is not solely about inviting the student into a kind of healthy skepticism. Drawing lines between the Synoptic Gospels enables the historian to reflect on the interaction between differing Christian portraits of Jesus. If Mark is indeed the first Gospel, it can provide insight into how Christology developed and it can offer our earliest major source for studying the historical Jesus. And watching the way that Matthew and Luke interact with Mark is itself instructive in understanding the development of Christian thought. Indeed there is one suggestive example in the parallels that have been under discussion here. There is an element in both Mark and Matthew that is absent in Luke and it demonstrates the importance also of reading intertextually, in light of the Hebrew Scriptures, as well as intra-Synoptically:

Matthew 3:4	Mark 1:6
Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.	John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey.

This language describing John the Baptist's clothing and diet is clearly reminiscent of 2 Kgs 1:8 and it suggests an identification between John and the prophet Elijah. That this is the evangelists' intention is confirmed by other links made later in the narrative, most clearly in Matt 17:9–13 // Mark 9:9–13, where Jesus tells his disciples, on the way down from the mountain where he was transfigured, that "Elijah has come" and, as Matthew then underlines, "the disciples understood that he was

speaking to them of John the Baptist.” The point being made is Christological—it is about Jesus more than it is about John. If John is Elijah, then Jesus is indeed the “coming one,” the Christ, who for Mark and Matthew fulfils the prophecy of Mal 4:5–6. And since John met a violent death, this is a sign that Jesus too will die violently (“So too the Son of Man will suffer at their hands,” Matt 17:12).

The study of the Synoptic Problem helps out in cases like this by drawing attention to similarities as well as differences between the accounts, providing the necessary data for redaction-criticism, which involves the study of the evangelist’s own redactional (editing) agendas. If Matthew is using Mark here, he is wholeheartedly endorsing Mark’s fascinating take on the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus. Where Mark is content simply to allude to the identification, leaving the reader to puzzle out the mystery, Matthew prefers to underline the identification, making it explicit that John is Elijah and drawing the all important conclusion that this confirms Jesus’ identity as the Messiah who will suffer. Mark tells a subtle story in line with his reading of the Hebrew Bible, and Matthew understands, endorses and re-tells Mark’s story in light of his reading of the Hebrew Bible.

Luke, on the other hand, is less enthusiastic about the identification between John the Baptist and Elijah. He has John coming in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17) but he draws back from making the two men identical. His omission of the material about John’s clothing in Mark 1:6 // Matt 3:4 coheres with his omission of the discussion of John’s identity in Matt 17:9–13 // Mark 9:9–13. It is a striking difference and it may be due to Luke’s wish to link Jesus more strongly with Elijah (e.g. Luke 7:11–17, Raising of the Widow of Nain’s Son) and to downplay the importance of John the Baptist, a tendency that John’s Gospel takes further, where “They asked him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ And he said, ‘I am not.’” (John 1:21).<sup>15</sup>

The Synoptic Problem is a staple of historical introductions to the New Testament but it need not be studied in a grudging way, nor should it be confined to the introductory courses and textbooks. Exploring how the Synoptic Gospels relate to one another is not just the beginning point for exploring many key issues in Christian origins; it is an essential component of the ongoing academic study of the New Testament, integral to key questions. In other words, it is a high-stakes game for which curiosity and colored pencils pay off.

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15. See further on this material Mark Goodacre, “Mark, Elijah, the Baptist and Matthew: The Success of the First Intertextual Reading of Mark,” in *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels*, vol. 2. *Matthew* (ed. Tom Hatina; LNTS 310; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 73–84.

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## ANCIENT RHETORICAL AND EPISTOLARY THEORY: SECOND CORINTHIANS AS DELIBERATIVE DISCOURSE

*Thomas D. Stegman, S.J.*

Rhetorical criticism or, as it is sometimes called, rhetorical analysis has become a major interpretive tool in New Testament scholarship over the last thirty years. This analysis involves the use of rhetorical theory and practice to shed light on biblical texts. Such analysis, when applied to the study of Paul's letters, should also take into account ancient epistolary theory, which raises the methodological issue of the relationship between epistolography—the art of *writing* letters—and rhetoric—the art of persuasive *speech*.

The purpose of this essay is 1) to describe what is involved in the rhetorical analysis of Paul's letters, and 2) to provide examples of how it is brought to bear on the interpretation of 2 Corinthians. To this end, Part 1 offers a brief look at the scholarly catalysts of present-day rhetorical analysis; sets forth the relevant aspects of classical rhetoric for this analysis; treats the relationship between rhetoric and letter writing in the ancient world; and discusses questions about Paul's rhetorical abilities and the characteristic qualities of the letters he authored. Part 2 takes up the issue of rhetorical analysis practiced at the macro-level of 2 Corinthians; sets forth several rhetorical features in this letter at the micro-level; and proposes a schema that highlights the consistently deliberative nature of the writing as a whole.

### PART 1: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

#### 1.1 SCHOLARLY PRECEDENTS

The recognition of rhetorical features in Paul's writings is hardly a modern phenomenon. Commentators such as Origen, Chrysostom, Aquinas, Luther, Heinrici, and Bultmann noticed and commented on Paul's use of rhetorical figures and

style. A key moment occurred in the late 1960s when Old Testament scholar James Muilenburg, in an address to the Society of Biblical Literature, advocated a new direction of scholarly research that he dubbed “rhetorical criticism.” Muilenburg proposed, in effect, a type of literary criticism that paid particular attention to structural patterns and stylistic devices in the Hebrew texts.<sup>1</sup> Another catalyst for the emergence of rhetorical criticism of biblical texts was the English translation of a philosophical work, co-authored by Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, that analyzed various modes of argumentation. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca proposed a “new rhetoric” that emphasized techniques of argumentation focusing on values and audience reception.<sup>2</sup>

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, two seminal works were instrumental in spurring on the rhetorical analysis of Paul’s letters. The first was Hans Dieter Betz’s commentary on the letter to the Galatians in which he argued that this writing belongs to the genre of “apologetic letter.” He proposed for the letter’s structure the formal outline of a forensic speech as set forth by classical rhetorical treatises, an outline framed by an epistolary prescript and postscript.<sup>3</sup> The significance of Betz’s work was his employment of rhetorical genre and arrangement as well as of technical rhetorical terms and features in his interpretation of a Pauline letter. The second seminal work was by George A. Kennedy, a scholar of classical rhetoric and literature. Kennedy argued that the writings of the New Testament were produced in a culture imbued with rhetoric and were, for the most part, *heard* and not read (at least initially). Therefore it is necessary to analyze their linear quality and the cumulative effect of hearing/reading them from beginning to end. Kennedy proposed a method of interpretation that is thoroughly rhetorical—including the reconstruction of the “rhetorical situation” (i.e., the context and circumstances that gave rise to the act of writing), as well as the determination of rhetorical units, the arrangement of materials, and stylistic features.<sup>4</sup>

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1. James Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 1–18.

2. Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (trans. J. Wilkinson and P. Weaver; Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1969).

3. Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).

4. George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).



## 1.2 RELEVANT ASPECTS OF CLASSICAL RHETORIC

In order to appreciate what is involved in rhetorical criticism, it is necessary to set forth briefly some of the basics of ancient rhetoric as expounded in the classical rhetorical treatises.<sup>5</sup> Such basics include rhetorical genres, the aspects of rhetorical practice, the standard taxonomy of rhetorical discourse, means of rhetorical persuasion, and the elements that constitute a “complete argument.”

Rhetoric, the art of persuasion, consists of three genres—forensic/judicial, deliberative, and epideictic (sometimes called demonstrative). Forensic discourse took place in the law court and dealt with past matters. It took the form of accusation/prosecution or defense/*apologia*. The locus of deliberative discourse was the political assembly, whose concern was determining future course of action. Deliberative rhetoric could be either persuasive or dissuasive. Epideictic discourse was appropriate in a variety of venues, such as the market place, public ceremonies, and funerals. Its purpose was to praise or blame. Although the genres of rhetoric were discussed separately, in practice a discourse typically included elements from two or all three of them.

The rhetorical treatises addressed five features of rhetorical practice. The first was *inventio* (invention), which denotes the initial process of determining what was to be argued, the best strategy for doing so, and the search for relevant supporting materials. The second was *dispositio* (arrangement), the ordering of materials garnered in the process of *inventio* into a cogent outline. The third was *elocutio* (style), the choice of various stylistic features—grammatical, syntactical, and lexical—to perform the discourse effectively. The fourth was *memoria* (memory), the process of committing the discourse to memory so that it could be delivered naturally. Finally, the fifth was *pronunciatio* (delivery), the actual verbal performance which involved proper use of tone, pauses, and gestures. The rhetorical analysis of Paul’s letters has tended to focus almost exclusively on the second and third features, arrangement and style. Given that his letters, in all likelihood, were delivered and read aloud by chosen co-workers, attention to the oral patterning of his letters should also be an important component of rhetorical analysis.

There emerged a standard structure for rhetorical discourse—originally for forensic rhetoric, but easily applied to deliberative. The simplest taxonomy consisted of four parts: the *exordium* or introduction, which usually functioned to seek the goodwill of the audience; the *narratio*, the laying out of facts and issues to be judged or debated; the *argumentatio*, in which the merit of the case being

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5. The three treatises most frequently employed by New Testament scholars are Aristotle’s *Rhetorica* (late-fourth century B.C.E.), the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (first century B.C.E.), and Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* (first century C.E.). Texts and translations are available in the LCL.

argued was set forth; and the *peroratio* or conclusion, which often involved summation and an emotional appeal to the audience. The *argumentatio* could be further subdivided into the *propositio*, the central point to be argued; the *probatio*, the arguments in favor of the central point; and the *refutatio*, the rebuttal of actual or anticipated objections. The taxonomy also allowed for a *digressio*, an excursus or diversion. While this rhetorical structure provided a proper and accepted form, it also allowed for flexibility and adaptation.

Another fundamental aspect of classical rhetoric was the use of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* as means of persuasion. *Ethos* involves the speaker's self-presentation and character, including whatever enhanced his or her credibility and likeableness. The *exordium* was the standard, though not exclusive, place to establish one's character. *Pathos* refers to the means by which one appealed to and influenced the audience's emotions. While intellectual argument was crucial, rhetoricians appreciated the role the affect plays in the process of persuasion. The *peroratio* was the usual place for an appeal to emotion. *Logos* entails the use of rational means of argumentation, especially as found in the *probatio*.

One manner of rational argumentation in particular is worth mentioning, what was called "the most complete and perfect argument."<sup>6</sup> It involved the elaboration of a basic proposition or thesis. After positing the thesis, a brief reason or rationale was offered, usually beginning with the word "for" (*gar* in Greek). Following the thesis + rationale, four types of argument were employed to support the thesis/proposition: 1) a negative contrast or a statement from the contrary (in effect, the inversion of the rationale); 2) an analogy, frequently taken from nature or the social order; 3) the use of an example, often a famous figure from history who embodied the principle set forth in the thesis; and 4) a citation from an authority, usually from the canons of literature or philosophy. It is important to appreciate that these four supporting moves were regarded as "proofs" rather than as mere ornamentation.

These basics of ancient rhetoric constitute much of the rhetorical theory and practice scholars employ in their rhetorical analyses of Paul's writings. The reader may have noticed I have been using the term "discourse" more than "speech." To be sure, the rhetorical treatises were geared toward the production of persuasive speeches. Paul's discourse, however, has come to us in *written* form—to be precise, in the form of letters. Therefore it is necessary to discuss the relationship between rhetoric and letter writing in Paul's world.

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6. *Rhet. Her.* 2.18.28. The author of this treatise offers an example of such an argument in 4.43.57. See also Hermogenes's progymnastic exercise on the elaboration of a *chreia* in *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (trans. G. A. Kennedy; WGRW 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 76–77.

## 1.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RHETORIC AND LETTER WRITING

The influence of Betz's and Kennedy's works is hard to underestimate. The last thirty years have borne witness to an impressive number of monographs, collections of essays, and journal articles that apply rhetorical theory and practice to New Testament writings—to texts as a whole as well as to various passages.<sup>7</sup> For the most part, the rhetorical analysis of Paul's letters rests on the (often implicit) presupposition that they are "rhetorical speeches within an epistolary framework and with some epistolary features. After all, a letter was a surrogate for oral speech, and a good letter would seek to present as many of the best and most persuasive features of speech as possible."<sup>8</sup> But is this presupposition warranted, at least without some nuance? Hans-Josef Klauck has cautioned against a too easily presupposed "interchangeability of a speech and a letter."<sup>9</sup> Indeed, R. Dean Anderson, Jr. has commented, "Biblical scholars interested in applying ancient rhetorical theory to the letters of the New Testament have paid surprisingly little attention to the relation between epistolography and rhetoric."<sup>10</sup>

The issue of the relationship between rhetoric and letter writing in the ancient world is not an easy one to pin down. On the one hand, there are a number of data that suggest caution against claiming too close a relationship. Rhetorical theorists said very little about letter writing (at least before and around the time of Paul). One exception was a treatise on style traditionally attributed to Demetrius of Phalerum. In a digression on letter writing, the author insisted on the difference between letter writing and dialogue and, more to the point, argued that a letter's style should be "plain" rather than marked by "oratorical display." Letters should be concise and sober, unlike longer treatises that contain lofty expression.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Quintilian differentiated between the style appropriate for a letter and that for an oration.<sup>12</sup>

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7. See, e.g., Duane F. Watson, *The Rhetoric of the New Testament: A Bibliographic Survey* (Tools for Biblical Study 8; Blandford Forum, U.K.: Deo, 2006). Pages 121–72 list rhetorical works on the Pauline epistles. More recent studies can be found in *NTA*.

8. Ben Witherington III, *New Testament Rhetoric: An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade, 2009), 123.

9. Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2006), 224.

10. R. Dean Anderson, Jr., *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul* (rev. ed.; CBET 18; Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 117–18.

11. Demetrius, *Eloc.*, 223–25, 228. The text and translation of *De elocutione* is available in the LCL. The treatise is typically dated either first century B.C.E. or first century C.E.

12. Quintilian, *Inst.*, 9.4.19–22.

Just as the rhetoricians said little about letter writing, epistolary theorists said little about rhetoric. The key document, for our purposes, is a first century B.C.E. handbook on epistolary types (also falsely attributed to Demetrius of Phalerum).<sup>13</sup> The author lists twenty-one types of letters. For each type, he offers a brief description and an illustrative example (although in many cases the latter simply gives the gist of the style and content). While it is true that several of the letter types evoke the rhetorical genres—such as “blaming,” “praising,” “advisory,” “admonishing,” “accusing,” and “apologetic”—the author makes no direct linkage to rhetorical theory or practice. Nor does he set forth the content of the sample letters according to the taxonomy of rhetorical discourse. It is therefore no surprise that Stanley K. Stowers, in his study on Greco-Roman letters, could observe that “the letter-writing tradition was essentially independent of rhetoric. Furthermore, many of the letter types correspond to kinds of exhortation (paraenesis), and exhortation was only tangentially related to rhetorical theory.”<sup>14</sup> The last point is important, for even a casual reader of Paul’s letters is aware of his penchant for exhortation.

On the other hand, there are several substantive reasons for maintaining that there *did* exist an intrinsic relationship between rhetoric and letter writing.<sup>15</sup> In the first place, practice did not always follow upon theory. The malleable nature of the letter genre easily led to conflation with other genres. The rhetorical epistles of the orator Demosthenes (fourth century B.C.E.) are a prime example of speeches—containing both apologetic material and advice—conveyed in letter form (although lacking many epistolary formulae).<sup>16</sup> Second, letter writing had its origins, not in informal personal correspondence, but in royal, official correspondence (e.g., diplomatic and military injunctions). These early letters were written in a slightly elevated and more formal style, one that evoked rhetorical qualities befitting their royal provenance. Third, there is evidence from the second century B.C.E. onward of school exercises (*progymnasmata*) that dove-

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13. Pseudo-Demetrius, *Typoi Epistolikoi*. The text and translation can be found in Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists* (SBLRBS 19; Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 30–41. An epistolary handbook attributed to Libanius, *Epistolimaioi Charaktêres*, is dated ca. fifth century C.E. While it certainly reflects earlier theory and practice, its relatively late date precludes it from this brief discussion.

14. Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (LEC 5; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 52.

15. My discussion in this paragraph is indebted to Jeffrey T. Reed, “The Epistle,” in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 B.C.–A.D. 400* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 186–90.

16. Demosthenes, *Ep.* 1–4. *Epistle* 2 is used as a template for interpreting 2 Corinthians, as we will see in Part 2.

tailed rhetoric and letter writing. For instance, students were encouraged to write letters in the persona of famous persons. Such “letters” were to make full use of rhetorical style and conventions.

What is to be made, then, of the relationship between rhetoric and epistolography, especially as it relates to the rhetorical analysis of Paul’s letters? Before we can answer this question, it is necessary to take up a few more questions: What do Paul’s letters reveal about his rhetorical abilities and level of rhetorical education? What are the key general characteristics of his letters? And—here is ultimately the crucial question—what are the methodological implications of the answers to these questions?

#### 1.4 PAUL: RHETORIC AND LETTERS

That Paul’s letters are filled with rhetorical elements is indisputable. What is disputed is how much rhetorical expertise he had and how consciously he employed rhetorical theory. It is pointed out by some scholars who view Paul as being trained in rhetoric that the city of Tarsus—his hometown, according to Acts 9:11; 21:39; 22:3—was renowned for its schools of rhetoric and philosophy. Others, focusing on Paul’s statement about receiving his training under Gamaliel in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3), contend that such an education would still have had Greek influence, including training in rhetoric. Ben Witherington III expresses well the maximalist position: “... by the time Paul was being educated, rhetoric had become the primary discipline of Roman higher education. There is thus an a priori likelihood that Saul will have dedicated a considerable portion of his educational years to learning rhetoric.”<sup>17</sup> A maximalist position regarding Paul’s rhetorical training is not demanded by all scholars who engage in rhetorical criticism, however. Kennedy, for instance, does not require Paul to have achieved a high level of formal education. It was enough that “there were many handbooks of rhetoric in common circulation which he could have seen.”<sup>18</sup>

But what does Paul himself say? And what do his letters reveal? When discussing his upbringing and education (Gal 1:13–14; Phil 3:5–6), Paul refers only to their strictly Jewish aspects. Moreover, he acknowledges that he is an *idiōtēs* when it comes to speaking (2 Cor 11:6)—in other words, he is unskilled in speaking, in contrast to a professionally trained orator. Paul’s opponents viewed his speech as “contemptible” and, more to the point, his letters as *bareiai* and *ischyrai* (2 Cor 10:10). Although some exegetes interpret the latter terms in a positive

17. Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric*, 121.

18. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 10.

sense (e.g., “rhetorically powerful”), the context of the passage demands a negative characterization. That is, his letters are said to be “severe and violent” (which explains the comment in the preceding verse about their evoking fear).

The early reception of Paul’s letters, even by his admirers, reveals little appreciation of his rhetorical skills. The author of 2 Peter famously commented, “There are some things in [Paul’s letters] hard to understand” (3:16). Furthermore, as Anderson has pointed out, the Church Fathers—many of whom had a classical education and all of whom revered Paul—regarded his word choice, syntax, and paratactic style as unsophisticated. They recognized obscurities in his letters which, given the emphasis rhetorical theorists placed on the virtue of clarity (*saphēneia*), caution against exaggerating his rhetorical knowledge and skills.<sup>19</sup>

The upshot of the foregoing is that rhetorical analysis of Paul’s letters should not be done as if he wrote rhetorical treatises dressed in the trappings of epistolary form. Rather, first and foremost, he wrote letters—to be sure, letters to be read aloud. Although Adolf Deissmann’s distinction between “letters” (defined as private and nonliterary) and “epistles” (defined as public and literary) is no longer tenable, his insistence that Paul’s writings are real letters, dealing with nitty-gritty issues and circumstances, is spot on.<sup>20</sup> As actual letters, they follow epistolary conventions, such as the tri-partite structure of opening-body-closing and the ways these parts were to be realized (e.g., the letter opening lists the sender and the addressee, conveys a greeting, and includes a prayer and/or thanksgiving for the addressee). Paul’s letters fit somewhere in the middle of the epistolary spectrum between simple letters (e.g., the various papyrus letters Deissmann studied) and formal epistolary essays and treatises. John L. White has set forth the following characteristics of Paul’s letters:<sup>21</sup>

- they are longer than ordinary Greek letters (due, in large part, to their instructional purpose);
- they are marked by a more complex combination of genres (e.g., virtue and vice lists; duty lists; doxologies; benedictions);
- most are addressed to communities and thus resemble philosophical letters addressed to a community of students;

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19. Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory*, 279–80.

20. Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Greco-Roman World* (trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan; 4th ed.; 1927; repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995), 148–49.

21. John L. White, “Ancient Greek Letters,” in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament* (ed. David E. Aune; SBLBS 21; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 96. I have applied to Paul’s letters the characteristics that White sees in Christian letters in general.

- their didactic interests are reminiscent of philosophical letters of instruction;
- their intimate, emotional tone is comparable to familial letters between equals.

The emphasis on Paul's writing letters, and not rhetorical treatises, means that exegetes should not look to find precise formal rhetorical correspondences in them—or worse, to force such correspondences on them. Rather, those who engage in rhetorical criticism should focus on what Stanley E. Porter calls the “functional correspondences” between rhetoric and letter writing.<sup>22</sup> Analysis of Paul's writings must respect their primary identity as letters. Nevertheless, such analysis should be attentive to things like the persuasive function of various epistolary formulas, the argumentative features in the letter body, the use of *ethos* and *pathos*—in short, to the rhetorical elements embedded in his letters, for rhetoric was, as Kennedy argues, an essential component of Paul's cultural context. The crucial point is that rhetorical criticism should employ rhetorical theory—especially the basic features outlined above in Section 1.2—as, in effect, a *heuristic device* alongside other tools of exegetical analysis.

The characteristics of Paul's letters as outlined by White suggest at least three more implications for rhetorical criticism. First, the addressee is typically a community—specifically, an *ekklēsia*.<sup>23</sup> Although *ekklēsia* is usually (and appropriately) rendered “church,” it can also be translated “assembly.” Recall that the gathered assembly was the locus of deliberative rhetoric. It thus seems reasonable to expect to find significant elements of persuasion (and dissuasion) in Paul's letters. Second, White's comparison of Paul's letters with philosophical letters addressed to a community of students is important to note. Such letters stressed character-building and held up exemplary models (often the philosopher/writer himself) for imitation, as well as models and forms of behavior to avoid. Paul's letters manifest these features, although he focuses more on communal character-building and attributes its possibility to the gift of God's Spirit.<sup>24</sup> Third, White's assessment of the complex nature of Paul's letters cautions against overly simplistic characterizations of their function and type. It will be important to keep these implications in mind as we take up Paul's use of rhetoric in 2 Corinthians.

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22. Stanley E. Porter, “Paul of Tarsus and His Letters,” in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric*, 568.

23. Even the letter directed to Philemon includes “the church in your house” in the list of addressees.

24. See Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 36–43.

## PART 2: RHETORICAL CRITICISM AND 2 CORINTHIANS

## 2.1 MACRO-LEVEL RHETORIC

We turn to the application of rhetorical criticism to 2 Corinthians, a notoriously difficult text. As John D. Harvey notes, “The canonical version of 2 Corinthians is, from the perspective of rhetorical and epistolary analysis, one of Paul’s most challenging writings.”<sup>25</sup> An important critical issue is the question of the letter’s integrity. Is it a single letter or a combination of two or more letters (or parts of letters)? The reason for positing more than one letter is that the canonical text has several literary “seams,” places where the coherence of Paul’s presentation is not fully clear. The lack of clarity can derive from an unexpected change of topic (e.g., between 2:13 and 2:14), an apparent duplication of subject matter (e.g., chapters 8 and 9), and a perceived sudden change in Paul’s mood and tone (e.g., between 9:15 and 10:1). While there is no scholarly consensus on the question of literary integrity, a growing number of commentators now argue for the letter’s unity. Many, in fact, have done so on the basis of rhetorical criticism at the macro-level, through which they have discerned an *overall* coherent structure that reflects the standard taxonomy of a rhetorical discourse as set forth in the manuals. We will look at two examples.

The first is the work of Frances Young and David F. Ford, whose series of essays on 2 Corinthians, published in 1987, were instrumental in persuading many scholars to consider the letter’s unity as a viable interpretive option.<sup>26</sup> Young and Ford argue that 2 Corinthians is an apologetic speech in epistolary form and that its closest literary analogue is Demosthenes’s *Epistle 2*.<sup>27</sup> In this letter, written from exile in 323 B.C.E., Demosthenes pleads with the Athenian council and populace to reconsider his case and restore him to the city. Young and Ford contend that there are several points of similarity between Demosthenes and Paul: both seek to restore a broken relationship with a community by appealing to past services rendered, by defending and explaining their actions, and by responding to charges against them. More relevant for our purposes is Young and Ford’s claim that Paul follows the basic taxonomy of a forensic speech

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25. John D. Harvey, *Listening to the Text: Oral Patterning in Paul’s Letters* (ETS Studies; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1998), 194.

26. Frances Young and David F. Ford, *Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987). In what follows, I refer to their treatment on pp. 36–40.

27. For a good translation of Demosthenes, *Ep. 2*, see Jonathan A. Goldstein, *The Letters of Demosthenes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 195–203. In the debate about the authenticity of these letters, Goldstein argues for their being authentic.



like the one exhibited in *Epistle 2*. They propose the following four-fold structure: 1) the *exordium* in which Paul seeks to win the goodwill and sympathy of his audience (presumably, 2 Cor 1:1–14); 2) the *narratio* in which he gives an account of recent events (cf. 1:15–2:13); 3) the *pistis* in which he offers various “proofs” and refutations (presumably, 2:14–9:15); and 4) the *peroratio* in which he makes emotional appeals and recapitulates the arguments made in the letter body (chs. 10–13).<sup>28</sup> The latter point is crucial for Young and Ford because it can account for the roughest “seam,” the shift in emotional tone and style in the last four chapters.

While Young and Ford are successful in demonstrating the presence of several common topics and themes throughout 2 Corinthians (e.g., the way Paul’s opponents are foreshadowed throughout chs. 1–9), their comparison of this writing to Demosthenes’s *Epistle 2* is problematic. They overdraw the analogies between Paul’s and Demosthenes’s situations. More significant is that their proposed rhetorical taxonomy does not do justice to the complexity of the rhetorical situation and the content of 2 Corinthians. For instance, Young and Ford leave no place for Paul’s exhortations to the Corinthians to contribute to the collection for the church in Jerusalem (chs. 8–9); moreover, their description of chapters 10–13 as “recapitulating” the preceding arguments mischaracterizes the content of these chapters.

The second example is Ben Witherington III’s rhetorical analysis of 2 Corinthians.<sup>29</sup> Like Young and Ford, he regards the letter as a whole as forensic rhetoric. However, he proposes a more detailed taxonomy:

- 1:1–2 Epistolary prescript
- 1:3–7 Epistolary thanksgiving and *exordium*
- 1:8–2:16 *Narratio*
- 2:17 *Propositio*
- 3:1–13:4 *Probatio* and *refutatio* (including deliberative digressions)
- 13:5–10 *Peroratio*
- 13:11–13 Epistolary postscript

Although Witherington interprets the letter as forensic rhetoric, his analysis does allow room for deliberative elements, including what Paul says about the collection. Nevertheless, he views chapters 8–9 as “Paul’s indirect defense of *his own* practices, both past and present, in regard to the collection.”<sup>30</sup> But such an assessment belies the content of these chapters, where Paul offers several reasons and

28. Young and Ford only explicitly delineate chapter(s) and verses for the *peroratio*.

29. Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 325–476.

30. *Ibid.*, 336 (italics in the original).

motivations for the Corinthians to be generous (as we will see in the next section). Notice too that Witherington includes both an epistolary prescript and an *exordium* (as well as both a *peroratio* and an epistolary postscript). He thereby seems to suggest that Paul merely inserts a speech in epistolary trappings. Like Young and Ford, Witherington allows rhetoric to trump epistolary conventions.

The real distinctive feature in Witherington's analysis, however, is his isolating Paul's statement in 2:17—"For we are not like the many who peddle the word of God; but as out of sincerity, indeed as from God and in God's presence, we speak in Christ"<sup>31</sup>—as the *propositio* or thesis that the rest of the letter defends. For Witherington, determining the *propositio* is crucial for the correct interpretation of the letter. In effect, Paul is a defendant answering the charge that he is not an authentic apostle. Moreover, according to Witherington, 2:17 contains an allusion to Paul's opponents whom he classifies as Sophists. This analysis, however, overloads the verse with meaning it does not contain; even more, it overly restricts the scope of Paul's concerns as manifested in different parts of the letter (e.g., 1:13–14; 2:5–11; 6:11–13; 7:2–4; 8:1–9:15; 13:5). It also fails to recognize that 2:17 (which begins with *gar*, "for") functions as an explanation of what immediately precedes in 2:14–16. 2:17 is not a self-standing statement.

My purpose in setting forth these two examples—and others could be offered—is to suggest that applying rhetorical conventions at the macro-level can be problematic, at least in the interpretation of 2 Corinthians. Instead of functioning as heuristic devices, Demosthenes's *Epistle 2*—which scholars rightly characterize as a highly stylized epistle of forensic rhetoric—and the full taxonomy of a forensic discourse are employed in ways that distort the reading of 2 Corinthians. The supposed parallel and the structural format are superimposed on the text. Thus the valuable aspect of rhetorically sensitive readings of the entirety of 2 Corinthians—namely, careful attention to the cumulative effect of Paul's presentation—is attenuated. In Section 2.3 below, I will suggest a schema for reading the entire text that brings to the fore its recurring *deliberative* thrust. Before doing so, though, let us look at micro-level rhetorical analysis in connection with 2 Corinthians. Analysis at this level—that is, discerning the use of rhetorical devices and conventions *within* the letter—is a more fruitful application of rhetorical analysis.

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31. The biblical translations are my own.

## 2.2 MICRO-LEVEL RHETORIC

A complete analysis of Paul's use of rhetorical devices and conventions in 2 Corinthians is beyond the scope of this essay. In what follows, I offer several examples, working through the text in serial order.

Paul adapts the prayer wish/thanksgiving, one of the conventions used in a letter opening, to offer a blessing to God in 1:3–7. In this blessing he raises a number of themes he will develop in the course of the letter: God's mercy manifested in the gift of encouragement (*paraklēsis*); Paul's being encouraged by God in the midst of affliction; and Paul's commitment to work for the encouragement of the Corinthians. Paul's strategy here, at least in part, is to establish *ethos*: he is under God's special care and works for the Corinthians' benefit. A subtle rhetorical feature is Paul's use of parallelism (sometimes called inversion) in 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all encouragement." The word order: God—Father—Father—God is in an A-B-B'-A' pattern, a typical oral patterning. The effect is to highlight God as merciful Father and the giver of encouragement.<sup>32</sup>

Paul employs parallelism at a macro-level in 2:14–4:6. Here the pattern is A-B-A': A = 2:14–17; B = 3:1–18; A' = 4:1–6. The two bracketing passages parallel one another by sharing the following features: an allusion to Paul's call to be an apostle; an intimation of the presence in Corinth of other missionaries who oppose him; an indication that Paul's ministry entails humble service and suffering; and an acknowledgment that not all accept his proclamation of the gospel. Sandwiched between the bracketing passages is a treatment of Paul as a minister of the new covenant. In the middle of this treatment is an extended *synkrisis* or comparison of the new covenant ministry with the ministry given to Moses on Mt. Sinai in which Paul uses the mode of argumentation known as *a minore ad maius* ("from the lesser to the greater"; 3:7–11).

An example of a stylistic rhetorical feature is Paul's extended use of *anaphora*—the repetition of a word at the beginning of successive phrases—in 6:4–10. Here he lists a number of ways by which he commends himself as a servant of God. The list includes nineteen phrases that begin with the preposition *en* ("in"), three phrases that begin with *dia* ("through"), and seven clauses that begin with *hōs* ("as"). This passage functions to illustrate the sufferings and hardships entailed in ministry (e.g., "beatings" and "hard labor"), the qualities of character needed (e.g., "patience" and "sincere love"), the spiritual gifts bestowed (e.g.,

32. Harvey, *Listening to the Text*, 196–97. For more on Paul's use of parallelisms, see Jean-Noël Aletti, "Rhetoric in the Letters of Paul," in *The Blackwell Companion to Paul* (ed. Stephen Westerholm; Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 232–35.

“power of God”), and the vicissitudes of ministry (e.g., “as poor, yet making many rich”). This is a passage in which Paul evokes both *ethos*—his ministry gives paradoxical evidence of God’s power at work through him—and *pathos*—his manifold sufferings are endured for the sake of the Corinthians.

An instance of *logos* or rational argumentation is 9:6–10, where Paul approaches the climax of his appeal to the Corinthians to contribute generously to the collection for the church in Jerusalem. Implied in his presentation here is that liberality will be rewarded, a notion that functions as a *propositio* or thesis.<sup>33</sup> Paul follows this with an analogy from nature (bountiful sowing results in bountiful reaping). He then reminds the Corinthians that giving must be done freely, and reinforces this teaching with a proverbial maxim (“God loves a cheerful giver”; cf. LXX Prov 22:8). Next Paul makes a theological pronouncement that God is able to provide the wherewithal needed to give generously. He goes on to support this pronouncement with an argument from (scriptural) authority (LXX Ps 111:9, which speaks of God’s giving to the poor and of God’s righteousness enduring forever). Finally, Paul pronounces that the God who is able to provide will in fact supply the Corinthians so that they can produce a harvest of righteousness. While this is not a “complete and perfect argument” per se, Paul employs a number of features of this mode of argumentation.

Paul’s so-called “Fool’s Boast” in 11:16–12:10 is replete with the rhetorical trope of irony. For instance, in 11:19–21 he sarcastically calls the Corinthians “wise” for their gullibility in tolerating the arrogant behavior of the rival missionaries; moreover, he confesses his “shame” for being “too weak” to subject the community to such humiliating treatment. Paul brackets the boast by asking whether his humble manner—exemplified by his not taking direct remuneration from them for his ministry—was a “sin” (11:7) and by seeking their forgiveness for the “wrong” of not being a burden to them (12:13). He also makes ironic use of a well-known Roman military honor, the *corona muralis* (“wall crown”), in 11:32–33. The first soldier who scaled the wall of an enemy city during a siege was given a golden crown for his valor. Paul, however, boasts of an incident in Damascus where, pursued by authorities for proclaiming the gospel, he had to be lowered from the city wall like a baby in a basket.

A final example of Paul’s use of rhetoric at the micro-level is 12:14–15, where he announces to the community that he will soon be visiting Corinth. He reminds them that he is their spiritual father and sets forth the commonplace that parents ought to store up treasure for their children, not vice-versa. Then, employing the

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33. See Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (GBS; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 59. Mack, however, wrongly imposes the schema of *exordium-narratio-probatio-exhortatio-peroratio* on the whole of ch. 9.

figure of *paronomasia*, the use of similar sounding words, Paul makes explicit his love for the Corinthians, telling them he will “gladly spend” (*dapanēso*) and “be spent” (*ekdapanēthēsomai*) for them. He follows this with a poignant rhetorical question—“If I love you the more, am I to be loved the less?”—which functions as a particularly effective *pathos* argument.

### 2.3 THE DELIBERATIVE THRUST OF 2 CORINTHIANS

While rhetorical criticism works best at discerning Paul’s persuasive techniques at the micro-level of analysis (especially when one recalls the oral-aural experience of letters read aloud), it can also help shed light on texts as a whole. I have cautioned above against imposing too rigid a rhetorical structure onto 2 Corinthians. Nevertheless, the sensitivity of rhetorical analysis to the cumulative effect of an argument/presentation is an important feature that can be employed beneficially in the interpretive process—especially when one respects the primary identity of Paul’s writings as actual letters that address real (and often messy) circumstances.

Employing the letter types as set forth by epistolary theorists, scholars have discerned a complex mixture in 2 Corinthians. For instance, Klauck observes that “Pseudo-Demetrius’s ‘ironic’ letter fits 2 Corinthians very well. The ‘apologetic’ letter is also relevant, as are the ‘blaming’ type and the ‘accusing’ type.”<sup>34</sup> Klauck obviously focuses on forensic aspects. Second Corinthians also contains the commendatory type (cf. 8:16–24). In addition, Stowers rightly mentions the advisory type and points to Paul’s use of exhortation.<sup>35</sup> What should be made of such complexity? While some commentators contend that it argues for the presence of multiple letters embedded in the canonical text of 2 Corinthians, I suggest that this writing be regarded as a “mixed type,” one that draws on features from the types just mentioned.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, recall that one of the characteristics of Paul’s letters outlined by White is their complex nature.

In the case of 2 Corinthians, the complexity of the letter reflects the complexity of the rhetorical situation, the context and circumstances that were the occasion for Paul’s writing. Establishing the rhetorical situation is, according to Kennedy, an essential step in rhetorical criticism.<sup>37</sup> What is the rhetorical

34. Klauck, *Ancient Letters*, 311. I have removed from the quotation the numbers of the letter types as enumerated by Pseudo-Demetrius.

35. Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 109.

36. In *Epistolimaioi Charaktēres* (fifth century C.E.), Pseudo-Libanius refers to the “mixed style” of letter.

37. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 34. To be sure, there is an inevitable circularity involved in using the text to reconstruct the rhetorical situation and then using the rhetorical

situation here? Relations between Paul and the Corinthian community had deteriorated since his founding visit. Paul recently paid an emergency visit to Corinth, likely in reaction to information about the aberrant behavior of some in the community. But this visit ended badly, with one of the Corinthians insolently challenging Paul's authority; moreover, apparently none of the Corinthians came to the latter's defense. Paul left and shortly afterwards wrote a (no longer extant) letter to the community, one written "in anguish of heart and with many tears" (2 Cor 2:4). He sent Titus to deliver it as well as to gauge the Corinthians' response to it. Their response—at least the majority's—was to ostracize the offending member, to repent of their own complicit silence, and to declare their desire to see Paul again. Titus also informed Paul that one consequence of the breakdown in relations was that the community had stopped collecting funds for the collection he was taking up for the church in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Cor 16:1–4). Another complicating factor was the arrival in Corinth of other missionaries (when they arrived is not clear) who raised questions about Paul, the gospel he proclaimed, and his manner of being an apostle. These missionaries contrasted their pedigree, credentials, and oratorical abilities with those of Paul, and gladly received remuneration and honor from the Corinthians for their work among them—something Paul refused to do. They were also a likely source of suspicions raised about Paul's propriety in regard to the collection.

It is in this context and these circumstances that Paul wrote 2 Corinthians. I propose the following three major steps of his presentation, the steps he discerned in the *inventio* as the most proper way to respond. First, following the greetings and blessing (1:3–11), Paul offers the closest thing to a *propositio* that exists in the letter: he testifies that he has conducted himself in holiness; he wants the Corinthians to fully understand him; and he desires that he and they will be proud of one another "on the day of the Lord" (1:12–14). While forensic interpretations focus on the first two points, the third is also crucially important. In effect, Paul wants the Corinthians to live in such a way that they will be (eschatologically) vindicated, along with him, by God. He then sets forth a *narratio*, a rehearsal of recent events (1:15–2:13). This rehearsal functions to clear the air of misunderstandings that had arisen between Paul and the community and—here is the important point—culminates in his exhortation to receive back in love the ostracized member; in fact, Paul himself has already forgiven him (2:7–10). He thus foreshadows and puts into practice a key topic he will later develop, the ministry of reconciliation.

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situation as a basis for interpreting the text. The results of analysis must be tested and confirmed by as many means as possible.

The second major step in Paul's presentation is 2:14–9:15. Second Corinthians 2:14–7:4 is an extended discourse on the true nature of apostleship. Paul explains that he is a minister of the new covenant (2:14–4:6) and that this entails conducting himself, after the manner of Christ, in self-giving love and service, which leads to fullness of life (4:7–5:10). A key aspect of the new covenant ministry is the message and work of reconciliation, which marks life in the new creation brought about by Christ (5:11–21). Without a doubt, these units contain apologetic elements. But they ultimately function to remind the Corinthians that Paul's humble service is itself a proclamation of the true gospel (4:5). To misunderstand or, worse, to reject Paul is to reject the gospel. He thus desires that the community be reconciled with him (6:1–7:4). At this point, Paul resumes the *narratio*—in which he reveals to them his joy at Titus's report of their repentance—in order to encourage them to realize that reconciliation is a real possibility; indeed, it has already begun (7:5–16). Paul has thus laid the necessary groundwork to encourage the Corinthians to restart their participation in the collection (8:1–9:15). Paul holds up to the community the example of Christ (8:9), whose self-giving love they are to imitate by giving generously to the collection. More than a work of mercy, the collection was for Paul a symbolic manifestation of the ministry of reconciliation.<sup>38</sup>

The third major step is 10:1–13:13. Having dealt with matters between himself and the community, Paul now turns to the issue of the intruding missionaries, to whom he has alluded several times already (e.g., 2:17; 4:2; 5:12). If 2:14–7:4 functions to set forth what authentic apostleship looks like, 10:1–12:13 serves to show its contrast, as Paul highlights problematic aspects of the missionaries' behavior. Paul then defends both his practice of not taking direct remuneration and his handling of the collection (12:14–18). Finally, he announces that he is coming to Corinth a third time and warns those who are persisting in sin that he will not spare them (12:19–13:4). Again, there are apologetic elements here. But Paul's major concern is that the Corinthians understand that by their comportment—marked by arrogance and self-serving—the missionaries are preaching what is tantamount to another gospel (11:4). Their ways are not to be admired or imitated. In contrast, Paul conforms himself to the way of Christ (12:9–10; 13:3–4), the way by which God's power is manifested in what appears as weakness. Implicit throughout is Paul's call to follow the gospel as he proclaims it by word and deed. This call is made explicit in the climax of the letter body (13:5–10), where he challenges the Corinthians to test themselves, to see whether they are conducting themselves as people who have Christ in them. The brief epistolary

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38. Paul's use of the word *diakonia* in connection with the work of reconciliation (5:18) and the collection (8:4; 9:1, 12–13) strongly suggests this linkage.

closing then reiterates the theme of reconciliation (13:11–13; cf. “agree with one another”; “live in peace”; the exhortation to the kiss of peace).

## 2.4 CONCLUSION

Rhetorical analysis of 2 Corinthians can discern both the variety of persuasive techniques Paul employs at the micro-level and the cumulative effect of his presentation. Such analysis, however, should also be sensitive to epistolary conventions and practice. In the case of 2 Corinthians, some interesting parallels can be drawn with the tradition of philosophers who employed letters to set forth exhortations to a specific way of life.<sup>39</sup> Paul’s references to Christ as the supreme example of self-giving love, his holding up himself as a model of Christian life, and his use of the negative foil of the rival missionaries resemble the philosophers’ strategy. Too narrow a focus on the forensic elements in 2 Corinthians misses this strategy. Kennedy points out that, in the end, the predominant rhetorical genre of any work is determined by ascertaining “the intent of the author and the effect upon the audience in the original social situation.”<sup>40</sup> The three major movements in 2 Corinthians all culminate in Paul’s attempt to persuade the community to particular courses of action, the very aim of deliberative rhetoric. If what I propose is correct, his statement in a previous letter to Corinth—“for me it is a very small thing that I be judged by you or by any human court” (1 Cor 4:3)—still holds true. Paul is not a defendant in the courtroom; rather, he is an apostle who exhorts.

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39. See Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 36–40. Stowers dates this tradition as far back as Aristotle’s *Protrepticus*.

40. George A. Kennedy, “The Genres of Rhetoric,” in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric*, 46.



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# RHETORICAL CRITICISM IN HEBREWS SCHOLARSHIP: AVENUES AND APORIAS\*

Gabriella Gelardini

## A BRIEF HISTORY

### INTRODUCTION: FROM CLASSICAL RHETORIC TO RHETORICAL CRITICISM IN BIBLICAL AND HEBREWS SCHOLARSHIP

Eloquence (*eloquentia*) was an essential value in antiquity; whoever wanted to be known as an effective *vir princeps* had to be endowed with this quality. Accordingly, whoever earned respect showed themselves to be an abundantly gifted speaker, and whoever lacked that skill became an object of ridicule, even if he were the emperor himself (cf. Tacitus, *Ann.* 13.3.2–3; Cassius Dio, *Hist.* 68.7.4).<sup>1</sup> This premium on eloquence originated in the orality of ancient societies. However, according to tradition, once tyranny had been abrogated and lengthy private disputes could be fought out in court again, the interest in public speaking rose and led to the curricular establishment of rhetoric in the fifth century B.C.E.<sup>2</sup> Rhetorical theory in Greece was imparted within the context of ancient *paideia*, which apart from intellectual teaching always included ethical formation. Within the framework of the *enkyklios paideia*, a literary form of education, with its disciplines of grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric, quickly gained ascendancy over the mathematical–artistic forms, which included arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. Under the designation *artes liberales*, Rome followed the educational model of its predecessor, not only in regard to its traditional core topics but also

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1. Loretana de Libero, “Princeps,” *DNP* 10:328–31.

2. Gert Ueding and Bernd Steinbrink, *Grundriß der Rhetorik: Geschichte, Technik, Methode* (4th rev. ed.; Stuttgart: Metzler, 2005), 13.

in line with the prioritization of literary disciplines. Among these, rhetoric was established as the supreme discipline, so that the emperor Vespasian (9–79 C.E.) for the first time chose to establish official chairs for Greek and Latin rhetoricians financed by public funds (71 C.E.). The latter chair he offered to the renowned Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (ca. 35–96 C.E.), whose *Institutio oratoria* represents an authoritative summary of rhetorical theory in antiquity.<sup>3</sup>

Greco-Roman education, with its two groups of disciplines, known now as *trivium* and *quadrivium*, influenced medieval Europe's educational system to the core. Rhetoric was now taught at academies in all the larger cities in the Christianized Empire. Therefore the rhetorician—alongside high military officials—continued to play a predominant role in administration as well as at the imperial court of the fourth and fifth centuries C.E. Given this circumstance, patristic writers, that is, Christian writers of the first seven centuries, could not avoid being schooled in the rhetoric developed by Greco-Roman theorists. And still another necessity led them to submit Christian literature to the processes of rhetoric: imperial apologetics and the overriding mission of the imperial nobility, who as a class, including the emperor Julian (331–363 C.E.), deprecated the New Testament, for instance, due to its “barbarisms and solecisms.” This attitude in turn played into the hands of earlier Romanization, the process to which Judaism had been subjected under Hellenism centuries before. Similar to what Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 B.C.E.–50 C.E.) had undertaken with allegory, leading church writers availed themselves of Greco-Roman forms in order to convey Christian belief to the well-educated in sophisticated literary garb. It was therefore critically important that a number of literate pagan philosophers and rhetoricians, beginning in the 2nd century C.E., turned to Christianity and put their expertise into the service of the new religion. Among their number were the philosopher Justin Martyr (ca. 100–165 C.E.) and Tertullian (ca. 160–220 C.E.) in the West, Clement of Alexandria (ca. 140–220 C.E.) and Origen (ca. 185–253 C.E.) in the East, and the former rhetorician Augustine (354–430 C.E.), without doubt the most influential of them all.<sup>4</sup> The fact that others underwent a rhetorical education, even

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3. Johannes Christes, “Bildung,” *DNP* 2:663–73; idem., “Artes liberales,” *DNP* 2:62–63; Mark Joyal, Iain McDougall, and J.C. Yardley, *Greek and Roman Education: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2009), 203–30.

4. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* was thus dubbed the “first Christian rhetoric,” as he used Cicero's *De Inventione* and *Orator* in order to describe the rhetorician's tasks, and to deploy rhetoric for ecclesiastical proclamation on the one hand, and to stylistically interpret the Pauline Epistles from the perspective of Greco-Roman rhetoric on the other.

from pagan teachers, is known from the examples of Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350–428 C.E.) and John Chrysostom (ca. 349–407 C.E.).<sup>5</sup>

Thereafter, however, scores of ancient writings on rhetoric fell into oblivion, including Quintilian's aforementioned *Institutio oratoria*. Only the humanists, notably Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469–1536 C.E.), rediscovered these writings in whole or in part, and made them once again accessible to scholarship. Under their influence, rhetoric regained its high position in the canon of disciplines, and universities established chairs for rhetoric and offered them to humanists. By the time the Protestant Reformation began, the ascension of rhetoric was well underway, with major impacts also on theology. Certain reformers—first and foremost Philipp Melancthon (1497–1560 C.E.), and to varying degrees also Martin Luther (1483–1546 C.E.), Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575 C.E.), and John Calvin (1509–1564 C.E.)—placed rhetoric at the service of scriptural interpretation, and likewise placed the Bible at the service of rhetoric. Moreover, they expanded rhetorical tradition into the practice of Christian homiletics. Therefore, when they handled biblical texts, the *sola scriptura*-principle came into effect, particularly with the Pauline Epistles, so that rhetoric gowned in the vestments of rhetorical exegesis became “baptized.”<sup>6</sup>

Under the auspices of the Linguistic Turn, rhetoric has regained its significance in modernity. Under the name “New Rhetoric,” a field of research has arisen, whose protagonists have aimed at the revivification and extrapolation of the rhetorical tradition under modern scientific auspices, that is, at having the discipline come abreast of progress in natural science. Thus, the exploration of the rhetorical tradition as such was in view only to a lesser extent. What counted was its adaptation and actualization in what these new rhetoricians perceived as democratic “fundamental science.” The field's exponents, who on the one hand have applied philosophical-theoretical methods, and on the other have used experimental ones, have viewed language as a means of symbolic action for which rhetoric provides an analytical *instrumentarium* to capture communication acts in all their psychical, social, and linguistic idiosyncrasies. In the 1960s, the original quest lost its significance, not the least because the greatly diverging approaches—ethnological, feminist, or postmodern—had not led to a movement towards reformulating and transforming rhetorical tradition. However, the enterprise did succeed in freeing rhetoric from its fixation on antiquity and in affiliating it with other disciplines, such as philosophy, literature, and empirical social science.<sup>7</sup>

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5. Wolfgang Speyer, “Patristik,” *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* 6:717–27; Joyal, McDougall, and Yardley, *Greek and Roman Education*, 230–67.

6. Immo Meenken, “Reformation,” *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* 7:1078–96.

7. Olaf Kramer, “New Rhetoric,” *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* 6:259–88.

Rhetoric—apart from its longstanding tradition—owes its broad recognition in current biblical scholarship to the aforementioned Linguistic Turn and New Rhetoric. And by adding methodologies from the latter to existing ones, it developed rhetorical criticism into a new exegetical device. Duane F. Watson localizes the beginning of rhetorical criticism in biblical scholarship in the 1960s, when James Muilenberg and his students tested this approach on the Hebrew Bible. Muilenberg's presidential address to the *Society of Biblical Literature* in 1968 is considered by Watson as a "major turning point for the reintroduction of the method to biblical studies."<sup>8</sup> In the 1970s, this method received essential support through Hans Dieter Betz's research on Galatians.<sup>9</sup> With a view toward the New Testament in its entirety, the classical philologist George A. Kennedy reflected upon rhetorical criticism in the 1980s.<sup>10</sup> The approach gained further acceptance through the establishment of a *Rhetorical Criticism Section* within the *Society of Biblical Literature*, and the publication of a relevant bibliography by Watson and Alan J. Hauser in that context.<sup>11</sup> Thereafter, beginning with 1993 and continuing through 2002, Stanley E. Porter along with others published the proceedings of their international conferences on rhetorical criticism, which provided an overview of published research, in the field of theoretical discussion and of rhetorical interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, although chiefly of the New Testament.<sup>12</sup> After a longer incubation period, current rhetorical analyses of the New Testament have consisted of a variety of methodologies, falling into three broad categories. (1) One branch utilizes only Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions, including its dependent subcategories of epistolography and homiletics. (2) Another branch wedds Greco-Roman rhetoric with the modern, more linguistically or socially oriented methods developed within one vein of the New Rhetoric. These approaches attend to the text, and beyond that are interested in the flow and development of its inherent argument. They include the text's implied author and readers, and

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8. His address was published as James Muilenberg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969): 1–18.

9. Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); *Der Galaterbrief: Ein Kommentar zum Brief des Apostels Paulus an die Gemeinden in Galatien* (trans. Sibylle Ann; Munich: Kaiser, 1988).

10. George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1984).

11. Duane F. Watson and Alan J. Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible: A Comprehensive Bibliography with Notes on History and Method* (BINS 4; Leiden: Brill, 1994).

12. In the Supplement Series of the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*; for a critical appraisal of rhetorical criticism in view of the Pauline Epistles, see Carl Joachim Classen's article "Kann die rhetorische Theorie helfen, das Neue Testament, vor allem die Briefe des Paulus, besser zu verstehen?" *ZNW* 100 (2009): 145–72.

therefore focus on textual pragmatics. (3) A final branch applies postmodern and more philosophically and critically oriented methods deriving from another vein of the New Rhetoric. These approaches seek to interpret biblical texts in ethical ways, by attending not so much to ancient authors and their audiences, but rather to the text in relation to its present-day interpreters and recipients, analyzing how the text can be used or abused for persuasion in today's contexts.<sup>13</sup>

The broad recognition of rhetorical criticism is reflected also in scholarship on the Letter to the Hebrews. If one considers not only the amplitude of its methodological repertoire (classical as well as new rhetoric),<sup>14</sup> but also keeps its threefold origin in view (according to Watson, classical rhetoric itself, with both a heritage independent of and dependent on Greco-Roman rhetoric, and a Jewish heritage),<sup>15</sup> one can safely argue that no other method in Hebrews scholarship has enjoyed and still enjoys greater popularity than rhetorical criticism. In what follows, I wish to consider rhetorical criticism in regard to the form of Hebrews (literary or oral, or both) along with its related arrangement (*dispositio*). In the historical section, I shall proceed after this introduction with the oldest determination of the text's form, namely, Hebrews as epistle, a genre distinct from yet influenced by Greco-Roman rhetoric. I shall continue with the subsequent determination of the text's form, namely, Hebrews as homily, a subcategory of Greco-Roman rhetoric influenced by its Jewish heritage. I shall end with the most recent determination of the text's form, Hebrews as Greco-Roman oration. In the second part, I shall consider—after a brief introduction—the previous three forms in parallel order, as well as in an exemplary-theoretical manner. Both parts conclude in a summary; the second part also features a prospectus.

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13. Watson and Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible*, 99–206; Christina Hoegen-Rohls, “‘Rhetorical Criticism’: Zur Bedeutung rhetorischer Analyse für das Verstehen neutestamentlicher Texte,” *Praktische Theologie* 42 (2007): 93–99; David S. Cunningham, “Rhetoric,” in *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation* (ed. A. K. M. Adam; St. Louis: Chalice, 2000), 220–26.

14. Roman Pindel, “Was haben Jerusalem, Athen und Brüssel gemeinsam?: Über die drei Arten der rhetorischen Analyse hinsichtlich des Hebräerbriefes,” *Analecta Cracoviensia* 36 (2004): 261–80. In his article, Pindel laments the absence of a rhetorical analysis of Hebrews that follows the principles of new rhetoric, particularly as developed by two of its theorists Chaïm Perelman or Kenneth Burke. Obviously, he is not familiar with analyses that applied discourse analysis or text linguistics, such as George H. Guthrie's discussion of Perelman (*The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* [NovTSup 73; Leiden: Brill, 1994], 30).

15. Watson and Hauser, *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible*, 99–206.

## HEBREWS AN EPISTLE?

Irrespective of an assumed Pauline or anonymous authorship, over millennia Hebrews has been considered an epistle. Further specifications of the text on the basis of ancient epistolographic typologies occurred only at a few points, for instance when Hebrews was seen as a literary set-piece or *Kunstbrief*. Considerations regarding its structure (*dispositio*) affected only the text's beginning and end. Both Chrysostom in antiquity and Calvin during the Reformation thought of Hebrews as an epistle, and both, as mentioned earlier, were trained in rhetoric.<sup>16</sup> The same holds true for most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; neither Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687–1752), the pietistic poster exegete par excellence, nor the renowned English theologian Brooke Foss Westcott (1825–1901), ever questioned the epistolary form of Hebrews.<sup>17</sup>

The tide began to turn in the twentieth century, when the number of exegetes seeing Hebrews as an epistle quickly declined. A lone advocate in the 1980s was for instance Donald Guthrie, and in the 1990s Paul Ellingworth, who already had resorted to a tone of justification.<sup>18</sup> His case for the defense rested on the supposition that the first sheet of the papyrus roll bearing the official authentication had been lost at an early stage in transmission. Ellingworth conceded that his hypothesis was not supported by external evidence. Other arguments in favor of an epistolographic classification were the reference that early on Hebrews had been allotted to the Pauline Epistles in the process of transmission (for instance in the Chester Beatty-Papyrus P<sup>46</sup>), or that the alternation between passages of exposition and exhortation were typical of letters, and finally that the content insinuated a collective addressee, a concrete community.

In more recent Hebrews scholarship, an epistolary classification for Hebrews has been generally rejected. Exegetes base their assertion on the repeated observation that Hebrews, although it includes an epistolary postscript, still lacks the

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16. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ed. Philip Schaff; vol. 14 NPNF: First Series; New York: Cosimo, 2007), 363 *et passim*; John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews* (trans. and ed. John Owen; Calvin Translation Society, 1953; repr., Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2007), xxvi, 131, or 359 *et passim*.

17. Johann Albrecht Bengel, *Gnomon: Auslegung des Neuen Testaments in fortlaufenden Anmerkungen* (trans. C.F. Werner; 3 vols. 1876; repr., Stuttgart: Steinkopf, 1960), 3:600–712; Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (1892; repr., Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2001).

18. Donald Guthrie, *The Letter to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; 1983; repr., Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2001); Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1993), 59–62.



epistolary prescript found in other New Testament and Greco-Roman letters. Their rationale follows the line that Hebrews is more oration than epistle, and so needs no epistolary prescript. They further contend that Heb 1:1–4 is therefore the text's authentic oral introduction, and that the epistolary postscript is secondary. The beginning and end of this postscript were and still are disputed. Some had assigned it to the entire 13th chapter; in earlier exegesis this had led to questioning the text's integrity. Nowadays, the postscript is generally seen in Heb 13:(18)22–25, along with a presumption of the text's integrity.<sup>19</sup>

#### HEBREWS A HOMILY?

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Hebrews has been defined most often as a homily.<sup>20</sup> Yet the question of genre (*genus*) has played only a minor role in the twentieth century. The better part of one school of Francophone and Catholic Hebrews scholars, well acquainted with intellectual history, including the Linguistic Turn, structuralism, and possibly even the concerns of the New Rhetoric, had taken up the cause of the literary(-rhetorical) analysis of the text in Hebrews, particularly in regard to its linguistic (*elocutio*), stylistic (*ornatus*), and chiefly structural means (*dispositio*). All these means they located within Semitic and Hellenistic Judaism. Building on the observations of his predecessors, in 1963 Albert Vanhoye combined the announcements of themes (F. Thien), catchwords (Léon Vaganay), *Leitworte* (Albert Descamps), and alternations between genres (Rafael Gyllenberg) to present what by his time was certainly the most astute structural reading of Hebrews.<sup>21</sup> By complementing the list of literary-stylistic

19. Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 13–14; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* (WBC 47A; Dallas: Word Books, 1991), lxix–lxxxiv; Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 80–82; Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KEK 13; 7th ed. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 21–36; Alan C. Mitchell, *Hebrews* (SP 13; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007), 13–14; C. Spicq, *L'épître aux Hébreux* (SB; Paris: Gabalda, 1977), 9–12; Hans-Friedrich Weiß, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KEK 13; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 35–41.

20. For an elaborated research history, see Gabriella Gelardini, “*Verhärtet eure Herzen nicht*”: *Der Hebräer, eine Synagogenhomilie zu Tischa be-Aw* (BINS 83; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 11–77; *eadem*, “From ‘Linguistic Turn’ and Hebrews Scholarship to *Anadiplosis Iterata*: The Enigma of a Structure,” *HTR* 102, 1 (2009): 51–73.

21. F. Thien, “Analyse de l'épître aux Hébreux,” *Revue biblique internationale* 11 (1902): 74–86; Léon Vaganay, “Le plan de l'épître aux Hébreux,” in *Mémorial Lagrange: Cinquantenaire de l'école biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem (15 novembre 1890 – 15 novembre 1940)* (4 vols.; Paris: Gabalda, 1940), 269–77; Albert Descamps, “La structure de l'épître aux Hébreux,”

means for inclusions and symmetries, Vanhoye outlined a five-partite structure (Heb 1:1–2:18; 3:1–5:10; 5:11–10:39; 11:1–12:13; 12:14–13:21), which he argued would form the basis of a synagogal homily about the priesthood of Christ.<sup>22</sup>

The majority of the German-speaking protestant school of Hebrews scholars followed Vanhoye's homiletic classification in the context of the ancient synagogue, respecting it as a milestone, but deemed his structure as too "formalistic." In turn they placed the text's "content" at the center, particularly the parenetic sections, and contented themselves with saying that the text's arrangement revealed—as Erich Gräßer put it—"unbeschadet aller möglichen differenzierten Dispositionen, ein dreistufiges Grundschema" ("without prejudice to other possible arrangements, a three-fold basic plan"; Heb 1:1–6:20; 7:1–10:18; 10:19–13:25; alternatively Wolfgang Nauck: Heb 1:1–4:13; 4:14–10:31; 10:32–13:25).<sup>23</sup>

The homiletic classification of the French and later German school was adopted by a school of American Hebrews exegetes. Yet at first their concern was not so much the text's form or content, as the tradition-historical background related to the rhetorical aspects of Hebrews. Thus, some of them had recourse to Hartwig Thyen's position, that the ancient homily indicated a Greco-Roman context, and others argued for a pointedly Hellenistic-Jewish *Sitz im Leben*.<sup>24</sup> By way of an intertextual analysis, Lawrence Wills, for instance, found that there was a threefold pattern that could be deduced not from Greco-Roman but only from Hellenistic-Jewish literature, and thus had to be a genuine homiletic pattern which he described as follows: (1) exempla (scriptural quotations, authoritative examples from past or present, or reasoned expositions of theological points); (2) conclusion (based on the exempla and indicating their significance for those addressed); and (3) exhortation (usually expressed with an imperative or hortatory subjunctive). He further observed that this pattern could determine an

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*Revue diocésaine de Tournai* 9 (1954): 251–58, 333–38; Rafael Gyllenberg, "Die Komposition des Hebräerbriefs," *SEÅ* 22–23 (1957/1958): 137–47.

22. Albert Vanhoye, *La structure littéraire de l'épître aux Hébreux; Structure and message of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (*SubBi* 12; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989), esp. 237, 269.

23. Erich Gräßer, *An die Hebräer: Hebr 1–6* (EKK 17/1; Zurich: Benziger, and Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1990), 28–30; Wolfgang Nauck, "Zum Aufbau des Hebräerbriefes," in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche: Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias* (ed. Walther Eltester; BZNW 26; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1960), 199–206; Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 21–36; Weiß, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, 35–51.

24. Hartwig Thyen believed Hebrews to be influenced by the Cynic-Stoic diatribe (*Der Stil der jüdisch-hellenistischen Homilie* [FRLANT 65, n.F. 47; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1955]). And C. Clifton Black II suggested that the sermon needed to be analyzed in greater detail within "a classical frame of reference" ("The Rhetorical Form of the Hellenistic Jewish and Early Christian Sermon: A Response to Lawrence Wills," *HTR* 81, 1 [1988]: 1–18).

entire text or recur in cyclical arrangements.<sup>25</sup> With his study, Wills along with others called attention to a specific idiosyncrasy of the homiletic text type, which neatly fitted older observations of two features, first the alternation between genres (exposition–exhortation) and then with Hebrews self-designation as “word of exhortation” (Heb 13:22; cf. also Acts 13:15), namely, Hebrews’ use of and reference to Scripture. Harold W. Attridge, a subsequent advocate of Hebrews’ homiletic classification who views the homily as a subgenre of epideictic oration,<sup>26</sup> has repeatedly demonstrated on the basis of Heb 3:1–4:16 how the use of Scripture in homiletic passages works in accordance with his description.<sup>27</sup>

The theme of Hebrews’ use of Scripture has meanwhile developed into a sub-field of Hebrews’ research, not least because it is one of those New Testament texts that draws on Scripture the most.<sup>28</sup> Some exegetes assume that Hebrews’ use of Scripture is not only important but is also constitutive for the homily’s arrangement. Against the background of recent insights, particularly those gained in the context of Qumran scholarship—notably that portions of rabbinic literature ought to be antedated and thus be seen as having relevance for New Testament

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25. Lawrence Wills, “The Form of the Sermon in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity,” *HTR* 77, 3–4 (1984): 277–99. Along with Wills, William Richard Stegner has also stressed the Jewish provenance of the early Christian homily, albeit he reckons that no patterns of younger Jewish homilies could be transferred to New Testament texts (“The Ancient Jewish Synagogue Homily,” in *Graeco-Roman Literature and the New Testament* [ed. David E. Aune; SBLRBS 21; Atlanta: Scholars Press 1988], 51–69).

26. Attridge, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 13–21, esp. 14; idem, “Paraenesis in a Homily (*logos paraklēseōs*): The Possible Location of, and Socialization in, the ‘Epistle to the Hebrews,’” *Semeia* 50 (1990): 211–26; repr., in idem. *Essays on John and Hebrews* (WUNT 264; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 294–307.

27. For instance, in Attridge, “Paraenesis,” 215: “The section begins with a preface (3:1–6) which, in good epideictic fashion, involves a *synkrisis* or comparison of Christ and Moses. That comparison serves to introduce the theme of fidelity. A citation from Psalm 95 (Heb 3:7–11) provides a scriptural foundation for a summons to a faithful response to God’s word. Expository comments, focused on specific verses of the Psalm, explain the significance of the events of the Exodus generation and their relevance to the present situation of the addressees (3:12–4:10). All this exposition leads to the exhortation (4:11) to ‘strive to enter the rest’ mentioned in the Psalm. The section concludes with a bit of festive prose (4:12–13) celebrating the penetrating power of God’s word, a power which has just been felt in the way in which the ancient text, with its call to hear God’s word ‘today,’ was made to address the ‘today’ of the addressees. The pericope continues with a bit of transitional exhortation (4:14–16).”

28. For a representative up-to-date bibliography on Scripture use in Hebrews, see Gabriella Gelardini, “Hebrews, Homiletics, and Liturgical Scripture Interpretation,” in *Reading the Epistle to the Hebrews: A Resource for Students* (ed. Eric F. Mason and Kevin McCrudden; SBLRBS 66; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 121–43, esp. 121–23).

research<sup>29</sup>—I have attempted to understand Hebrews as a synagogue homily for *Tisha be-Av* that interprets and adapts the reading pair Exod 31:18–32:35 and Jer 31:31–34 for a particular group of addressees.<sup>30</sup> This proposal also rests on more recent synagogue research, which argues that in the 1st century C.E. early forms of reading cycles already existed, even early forms of homiletic genres, which Günter Stemberger for instance has related to later homiletical midrashim (*petichta, yelamdenu*; that the synagogue homily's main function was to "explain" the readings is also insinuated in the relevant sources, such as Acts 13:14–52, Luke 4:14–30, Philo, *Contempl.* 75, and *Prob.* 82.).<sup>31</sup>

Beginning in the 1980s, another group of American exegetes resumed the detailed analysis of Hebrews' (narrative) structure (*dispositio*), notably Linda Lloyd Neeley, George H. Guthrie, Cynthia L. Westfall, and Kenneth L. Schenck.<sup>32</sup> But related to their structural analysis, these scholars also sought "to clarify the book's message," that is, to uncover the author's pragmatic intent (*officia oratoris*: either *docere* or *probare*; *delectare* or *conciliare*, and finally *movere* or *concitare*) and the linguistic means used to that end (*elocutio*).<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, the methodologies deployed by these exegetes were discourse analysis, text linguistics, and narratology, tools derived from the New Rhetoric. Because they did not seek the text's center but the text's central message, it is perhaps no accident that, with the exception of Schenck, they all came to locate it in Heb 12:18–24. The text's form played an inferior role in these approaches, and where it was considered, Hebrews was still classified as a homily.

29. Gudrun Holtz, "Rabbinische Literatur und Neues Testament: Alte Schwierigkeiten und neue Möglichkeiten," ZNW 100, 2 (2009): 173–98.

30. More detailed and up-to-date: Gabriella Gelardini, "Verhärtert eure Herzen nicht"; shorter and older: "Hebrews, an Ancient Synagogue Homily for *Tisha be-Av*: Its Function, Its Basis, Its Theological Interpretation," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods—New Insights* (ed. Gabriella Gelardini; BINS 75. Leiden: Brill, 2005), 107–27.

31. Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (2d rev. ed.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), esp. 135–73; Günter Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch* (Beck-Studium; rev. ed.; Munich: Beck, 1992), esp. 241–44.

32. Linda Lloyd Neeley, "A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews," *Occasional Papers in Translation and Textlinguistics* 3–4 (1987): 1–146; Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*; Cynthia L. Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship Between Form and Meaning* (LNTS 297; London: T&T Clark, 2005); Kenneth L. Schenck, *Understanding the Book of Hebrews: The Story Behind the Sermon* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

33. Ueding and Steinbrink, *Grundriß der Rhetorik*.

## HEBREWS AN ORATION?

Inspection of the structure for the text's "message" definitely heightened awareness of Hebrews as an oration. Hebrews as an oration in the context of Greco-Roman rhetoric was already in view during the Humanist era, whose protagonists—as mentioned earlier—had a sharpened awareness of rhetoric. Nevertheless, the classification of Hebrews as an oration began sporadically, for instance by Nils Hemmingsen in the sixteenth century,<sup>34</sup> or Hermann von Soden in the nineteenth century,<sup>35</sup> and Th. Haering at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>36</sup> Greco-Roman rhetoric as a topic in Hebrews scholarship began to grow in popularity at about the same time as it did in biblical studies generally.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the number of contributions applying this method began to increase in the 1970s, although combinations of Greco-Roman rhetoric with other methodologies characterized the early proposals, for instance, with linguistics in the work of Keijo Nissilä and Walter G. Übelacker, with literary criticism in the work of Knut Backhaus, or *inter alia* with social science in the work of David A. deSilva.<sup>38</sup> In contrast, most recent proposals show the application of Greco-Roman Rhetoric alone, as in the work of Craig R. Koester or Ben Witherington.<sup>39</sup>

The aspect of genre (*genus*) in the context of Greco-Roman rhetoric is pivotal. But the classification of Hebrews in orations of either a judicial (accusation or defense), deliberative (exhortation or dissuasion), or epideictic (praise or

34. Kenneth Hagen, *Hebrews: Commenting from Erasmus to Bèze 1516–1598* (BGBE 23; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981), 80–81.

35. Hermann von Soden, *Hebräerbrief, Briefe des Petrus, Jakobus, Judas* (Rev. and enl. ed.; Freiburg: Mohr Siebeck, 1899), 1–114; idem, *Urchristliche Literaturgeschichte: Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments* (Berlin: Duncker, 1905), 127–38.

36. Th. Haering, "Gedankengang und Grundgedanken des Hebräerbriefs: Julius Kaftan zum 70. Geburtstag," *ZNW* 18 (1917/1918): 145–64.

37. For a research history up to 1997, see Duane F. Watson, "Rhetorical Criticism of Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles since 1978," *CurBS* 5 (1997): 175–207.

38. Keijo Nissilä, *Das Hohepriestermotiv im Hebräerbrief: Eine exegetische Untersuchung* (Suomen Eksegeettisen Seuran julkaisu 33; Helsinki: Oy Liiton Kirjapaino, 1979); Walter G. Übelacker, *Der Hebräerbrief als Appell: I. Untersuchungen zu exordium, narratio und postscriptum (Hebr 1–2 und 13,22–25)* (ConBNT 21; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1989); Knut Backhaus, *Der Hebräerbrief: Übersetzt und erklärt* (RNT; Regensburg: Pustet, 2009), 38–50; prefigured already in his *Habilitationsschrift: Der Neue Bund und das Werden der Kirche: Die Diatheke-Deutung des Hebräerbriefs im Rahmen der frühchristlichen Theologiegeschichte* (NTAbh n. F. 29; Münster: Aschendorff, 1996), 42–64; David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 35–75.

39. Koester, *Hebrews*, 79–96; Ben Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric: An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament* (Eugene: Cascade, 2009), 195–213.

blame) character has been a controversial topic. Whereas Hebrews was classified as a judicial oration in early work, subsequent generations have classified it as epideictic or deliberative, and the most recent contributions, for instance Koester and also Luke Timothy Johnson, as deliberative with epideictic elements.<sup>40</sup> Quite often, and appropriately so, Hebrews was classified as a Greco-Roman oration without, however, being seen as standing in contradiction to its categorization as homily, for instance in the work of deSilva. Backhaus goes even further, seeing Hebrews as a homily of the deliberative type that has been sent to distant addressees at a later or second stage.

Just as the topic of genre has been and still is controversial, so is that of arrangement. One group of scholars, including William L. Lane, Watson, Paolo Garuti, and deSilva, have not considered Greco-Roman rhetoric as useful for determining the parts of Hebrews as an oration.<sup>41</sup> Others have combined Greco-Roman rhetoric with ulterior methodologies, for instance James W. Thompson who invokes Nauck's tripartite thematic structure.<sup>42</sup> And still others have followed the rhetorical handbooks,<sup>43</sup> although allowing for the fact that ancient rhetoricians demonstrated freedom in adapting typical patterns to specific situations.

When an arbitrary set of proposed outlines structured according to Greco-Roman rhetoric is subjected to comparison, notable discrepancies surface, not only in regard to the respective parts but also in regard to their demarcations. For instance, the undisputed *exordium* (introduction preparing listeners to give proper attention) in Haering's outline ranges from Heb 1:1–4:16, in Koester's from Heb 1:1–2:4, and in Übelacker's along with Backhaus's and Thompson's only from Heb 1:1–4. The *narratio* (facts pertaining to the topic), which is omitted in Koester's outline, ranges in Haering's from Heb 5:1–6:20, in Backhaus's along with Thompson's from Heb 1:5–4:13, and in Übelacker's only from Heb 1:5–2:16. The *propositio* (defining issue to be addressed), which is omitted in Haering's

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40. Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 8–15.

41. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, lxxix–lxxx; Watson, "Rhetorical Criticism of Hebrews," 187; Paolo Garuti, *Alle origini dell'omiletica cristiana: La lettera agli Ebrei: Note di analisi retorica* (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Analecta 38; repr., Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2002).

42. James W. Thompson, *Hebrews* (Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 10–20.

43. The rhetorical arrangement (*dispositio*) often consisted of four sections in the following order: (1) *exordium* (introduction), (2) *narratio* (the statement of the facts of the case), (3) *argumentatio* (proof), and (4) *peroratio* (conclusion).

and Thompson's outlines, ranges in Backhaus's outline from Heb 4:14–16, in Übelacker's from Heb 2:17–18, and in Koester's only from Heb 2:5–9. The undisputed *argumentatio* (arguments supporting the speaker's position), ranges in Koester's proposal from Heb 2:10–12:27, in Übelacker's from Heb 3:1–12:29, in Thompson's from Heb 4:14–10:31, in Backhaus's from Heb 5:1–10:18, and in Haering's only from Heb 7:1–10:18. And finally, the undisputed *peroratio* (bringing the speech to a close), ranges in Haering's outline from Heb 10:19–13:21, in Thompson's from Heb 10:32–13:25, in Backhaus's from Heb 10:19–12:25, in Koester's from Heb 12:28–13:21, and in Übelacker's only from Heb 13:1–21. Some scholars add an epistolary postscript, which in Backhaus's outline ranges from Heb 13:1–25, and in Übelacker's and Koester's only from Heb 13:22–25.

#### SUMMARY

The historical account of rhetoric has highlighted the fact that rhetoric was omnipresent in antiquity, and hence that the interpretation of Hebrews with help of rhetorical categories is indisputably plausible. On the basis of rhetoric's threefold origin, epistolography has come to be seen as depending on rhetoric and homiletics as a subcategory of classical taxonomy. Thus, it is appropriate to treat these categorizations in the context of rhetoric.

Rhetorical criticism as an approach, apart from applying classical means and methodologies developed in the context of the New Rhetoric, once again gained importance beginning with the 1960s, first in biblical studies generally and subsequently in Hebrews scholarship as well. Since then, that book has decreasingly been classified as an epistle and increasingly as a homily, mainly due to its use of Scripture. Recent scholarship, while highlighting the development of the book's message, has treated the homily as a subcategory of oration, and has attempted to understand its genre on the basis of the Aristotelian triad, as well as its arrangement according to classical categories. Notwithstanding the auspicious avenues followed, no consensus has been reached, either in regard to genre or arrangement. Rhetorical criticism has fallen victim to its own success.

#### EXEMPLARY AND THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

The aporia in regard to Hebrews' form, genre, and arrangement calls for an exemplary analysis of Hebrews and a theoretical analysis of epistolography, homiletics, and oration. The guiding question shall be what can be said theoretically, and what historically, in regard to Hebrews.



## HEBREWS AND EPISTOLOGRAPHY

That Hebrews has been conceived of as an epistle, an assumption which has gone basically unchallenged from antiquity to the twentieth century, surely is important. Calvin, for instance, regarded the "Epistle" (*epistula*)<sup>44</sup> to the Hebrews, which he did not ascribe to Paul and believed was addressed to Jewish Christians, of equal theological importance as the Pauline Epistles. The purpose of Hebrews for Calvin was to show the nature of Christ's office, and hence that the ceremonies of the Law had been brought to an end by his advent. Therein he deemed the epistle as particularly qualified for undercutting Roman Catholic theology and practice. And as an indication of his appreciation of the work, in 1549 he published a freestanding Latin work on Hebrews, after preaching on it beforehand. Calvin followed the method already used in the 1540 commentary on Romans, that is, expressing his interpretation in terms of rhetoric, an approach he had borrowed from Melancthon, Bucer, and Bullinger. Calvin began by stating the *status causae* (p. 12.18). He further set down the *caput* (p. 12.21), the chief point, and finally he singled out the *cardo* (p. 12.21), that on which everything turns. Although the rhetorical method did not intrude on the rest of his *argumentum*, those two sentences are sufficient to alert his readers to this underlying method throughout the commentary. The *argumentum* reveals that Calvin saw the epistle arranged in four parts, although not stated according to Greco-Roman rules. (1) An *exordium* in Heb 1:1–3:6 (p. 15.8), followed by exhortations in Heb 3:7–4:13 (p. 52.8) take up the Supremacy of Christ and his Gospel. (2) A subsequent section in Heb 4:14–5:10 (p. 69.27–28) is followed by a digression in Heb 5:11–6:20 (p. 84.4) on the Priesthood of Christ. (3) Another section in Heb 7:1–10:35 (p. 105.11–12) is again entitled The Priesthood of Christ. And finally (4), a concluding section in Heb 10:36–11:40 (p. 180.27–28), followed by an epilogue in Heb 12:1–13:25 (p. 214.19–20), is on the Patience of Faith.<sup>45</sup> Calvin also used his knowledge of rhetoric as an interpretive tool on smaller portions of the text. The rhetorical devices he discerned were of two general types: first tropes, or figures of speech, such as metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, simile, hypallage, and paraphrase; the second were forms of argument, such as an implied comparison, or argument from opposites, proof from the nature of something, argument from the less to the greater, reasoning from connections between things, anticipation of objections, comparison of greater and lesser things, differentiation of genus and species, argument

44. Jean Calvin, *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Hebraeos* (vol. XIX of *Opera Omnia: Series II*; ed. T. H. L. Parker; Geneva: Droz, 1996), 11.1 *et passim*.

45. Calvin, *Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, XV–XVII.



from sign to thing signified, syllogisms, and reasoning from a principle to a particular case.<sup>46</sup>

Calvin was of course correct in holding that epistles in theory could be, and in practice were, rhetorically influenced, albeit in the “functional” manner Jeffrey T. Reed and others espouses,<sup>47</sup> particularly in regard to invention (*inventio*) and style (*elocutio*).<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, epistolary theorists said nothing about arranging letters according to the standard of rhetorical conventions. What they did say, instead, conforms to the standard pattern of letter writing. There were three standard conventions found in the majority of letters: opening, body, and closing. The obligatory elements of the opening included the superscription (i.e., from whom the letter is sent) and the adscription (i.e., to whom the letter is sent). Apart from these formulas, other elements used in the opening were discretionary. Reed goes on to note that in certain instances a superscription and/or adscription could be omitted, for instance with certain letter types (questions to oracles and invitation letters), where the obligatory formulas could be replaced by oral ones, and in letters which were either a first draft or copy. The bulk of the body, however, varied according to the epistolary skills and needs of the particular author. And the common epistolary closing of letters was not strictly obligatory, since it was frequently absent, especially from official and business letters. Certainly, the three standard epistolary components (opening, body, closing) are somewhat similar to the four principal parts of rhetorical arrangement (*exordium*, *narratio*, *argumentatio*, *peroratio*). But again, this slight similarity was only functional, not formal. Thus, just as the *exordium* did, the epistolary opening could serve to generate a positive relationship of trust and compliance between the speaker and the listeners. And literary epistles, a rather rare phenomenon, could be distinctively rhetorical, and frequently omitted epistolary elements.<sup>49</sup> According to Reed, epistolography and rhetoric were two distinct fields, so rhetorical handbooks did not broach the issue of letter writing, and epistolographic handbooks likewise reflected rhetoric only marginally. The epistolary genre served a different purpose and required more flexibility, because it was occasioned by particular situations where one or more individuals, spatially separated, wished to communicate. Yet that did not mean that the time-delayed conversation had to be less dialogical or

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46. Gary N. Hansen, “Calvin as Commentator on Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles,” in *Calvin and the Bible* (ed. Donald K. McKim; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 257–81, esp. 273–74 with references to the rhetorical devices.

47. Jeffrey T. Reed, “The Epistle,” in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 B.C.–A.D. 400* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Boston: Brill, 2001), 171–93.

48. *Ibid.*, 176–78, 182–86, 191.

49. *Ibid.*, 179–82, 186–90.

oral. In fact the opposite is true, for the letter had to be composed in a manner suggesting that the author was present. A personal or public letter could therefore be named *logos*, and spoke vicariously for either an individual or a collective. It is not surprising therefore that the various epistolary types, which the handbooks distinguish in as many as forty-one forms, parallel the three subgenres of rhetoric. Such functional parallels did not necessarily indicate, however, that an author patterned his or her letter after the rhetorical handbooks. Rather, the similarities might have been simply due to culturally shared means of argumentation. This functional overlap between the rhetorical species and epistolary types is demonstrated in the epistolary theorists. With respect to the possibility of a “deliberative letter,” for instance, perhaps the “advisory” or “paramedic letter” comes nearest.<sup>50</sup>

In conclusion, one may argue that, when applied to Hebrews, neither the self-designation *logos* nor the oral or rhetorical character—and not even the missing prescript—necessarily speak *against* the possibility of an epistolary form. And also, in reverse, the difficulties in unambiguously classifying Hebrews’ form or genre and settling on an undisputed arrangement might speak *for* categorizing Hebrews as an epistle.

#### HEBREWS AND HOMILETICS

Insofar as Hebrews in its form is a “word of exhortation,” as the author states in Heb 13:22, and therefore a homily, Hebrews scholarship has apparently reached a consensus. But what does the term “homily” denote? Evidently the author’s use of Scripture. But in which manner does he make use of it? Is he interpreting the sacred text, or expounding on a theological topic by means of Scripture? And according to which hermeneutical principle(s) does he embed Scripture into this argument? Moreover, which set of rules regarding his arrangement is he following? And finally, are there different types of homilies?

As far as form or genre, Folker Siegert does not classify Hebrews as a homily but as a “sermon.” He has done so in the context of two articles in which he attempts to contextualize ancient religious speeches with respect to the taxonomy of Greco-Roman rhetoric.<sup>51</sup> Siegert argues that there is no specific term for

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50. Ibid., 171–76.

51. Folker Siegert, “The Sermon as an Invention of Hellenistic Judaism,” in *Preaching in Judaism and Christianity: Encounters and Developments from Biblical Times to Modernity* (ed. Alexander Deeg, Walter Homolka, and Heinz-Günther Schöttler; SJ 41; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 25–44. This article is a revised version of the book chapter entitled “Homily and Panegyric Sermon,” in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 B.C. – A.D. 400* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 421–43.

“sermon” in the classical languages. However, the Greek *homilia* and the Latin *sermo*, both originally meaning “conversation,” indeed may be used to refer to a religious speech, as Augustine attested in the fourth century C.E. Thus, we are dealing with a phenomenon, he contends, which made its way gradually into ancient culture from its fringes. Teachers of rhetoric, as they were normally pagans, did not take note of it, and so it did not appear in their terminology. Siegert specifies that for modern purposes, “sermon” (*derashah*) may be defined as “public explanation of a sacred doctrine or a sacred text,” with its *Sitz im Leben* being a liturgical setting.<sup>52</sup> The sermon, then, so his thesis runs, was a Hellenistic Jewish innovation, adapted from Greek hermeneutics and rhetoric, and its practice displays a remarkable fact in the history of religions, that of all religious cults known in antiquity, only Jewish worship demanded a speaker’s rhetorical activity, as it took place outside the Temple in the synagogues—as did the Christian worship which imitated it. Ancient religious celebrations normally kept worship separate from teaching. Religious cult, including worship in the Jerusalem Temple, consisted of processions, performing symbolic acts, singing, praying, burning incense, slaughtering animals for sacrifice (in paganism also observing prodigies), and so on. There was no occasion for teaching. Siegert positions the “sermon” in the scheme of ancient rhetorical terminology as follows:<sup>53</sup>

	Speeches on religious matters	Speeches explaining a sacred doctrine/text in a liturgical setting (sermon)
Professional level (mass communication, literature)	(A) religious panegyric	(C) panegyric sermon
Colloquial level (private or classroom communication)	(B) religious diatribe	(D) homily
Used by	Most ancient religions	Judaism and Christianity only

The vertical dimension allows Siegert to single out a trait that distinguishes Judaism and Christianity from their Hellenistic background: (C) is a specialization of (A), he argues, and (D) a specialization of (B). Both rely on the intellectual bias of the Jewish-Christian tradition. As to the horizontal dimension, Siegert follows a properly rhetorical point of view, as he differentiates matters on stylistic levels.

52. Siegert, “Sermon as an Invention,” 25–26, 29.

53. Ibid., 25–26, 28.

The plain style is excluded from the upper level (A, C), just as the grand style is not called for in the lower (B, D). The domain of rhetoric proper is the upper level. Here the activities of well-trained persons, both orators and their pupils, are to be placed. It is a recent innovation, Siegert critically observes, that “rhetorical” analyses are also done on texts of the lower level.<sup>54</sup> In Siegert’s understanding, the categories (C) and (D) coercively presume orality, and “sermon” can only be labeled if it actually served as part of a religious ceremony, with the function of explaining some of the doctrines or sacred texts underlying that liturgical setting. Sermons could also be transferred into writing, either in advance (in order to be memorized and delivered), at the time of delivery (taken down in shorthand), or afterwards (from memory). Yet in view of the New Testament, Siegert emphasizes that only a few texts comply with the criterion of “orality.” Luke 4:16–21, for instance, may be classified only as a “summary” of Jesus’ preaching in the synagogue of Capernaum, and Rom 1:18–4:25; 5–8; 9–11 may have originated from oral diatribes but must have been transformed into a fairly homogeneous epistolary unit. Siegert deems Hebrews to be one of only few exceptions: the rhetorically-styled text of this “artistic sermon,” he contends, with its balanced constructions and its frequent rhythms, meets the requirements of orality, and so the term *logos parakēseōs* (13:22; cf. Acts 13:15) may be regarded as the oldest attested term for a synagogue sermon, Siegert concludes. Yet what exactly this “artistic sermon” explains—sacred doctrine or sacred text—he does not specify. Neither does he offer insight into possible rules of arrangement. However, he ascertains that its author must have been a trained rhetorician, even a professional orator of Jewish ethnicity.<sup>55</sup> Literary predecessors of such eloquent “panegyric sermons” Siegert finds in Hellenistic Judaism, as his thesis states, particularly in the two Jewish sermons attributed to Pseudo-Philo, *On Jonah* and *On Samson*. In his judgment, the author follows neither an allegorical nor a rabbinic hermeneutic, but rather applies the approach of psychological observations. Regrettably, Siegert again does not expound on specifics regarding the sermon’s arrangement, neither in his translation nor in his commentary.<sup>56</sup>

In a response to Siegert, Stemberger retains the point that Philo and Pseudo-Philo may be considered as valuable sources for early Jewish homilies. He questions, however, whether it is helpful, or even based on the premise of orality, to exclude nearly the entire New Testament as a homiletical source. Moreover,

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54. Ibid., 28–29.

55. Ibid., 27–28, 34.

56. Folker Siegert, *Drei hellenistisch-jüdische Predigten: “Über Jona,” “Über Simson” und “Über die Gottesbezeichnung ‘wohlthätig verzehrendes Feuer’”*; Übersetzung und Kommentar (WUNT 20 and 61; 2 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1980–1992).

he asks rhetorically, is orality in the Hellenistic context the only permissible standard? Stemberger can hardly imagine that there was no kind of public oratory in an Aramaic or Hebrew language environment. In the *bet ha-midrash*, for instance, one may find homiletical forms beyond the synagogue, and therefore in a context of learning. For that reason, he argues that in fact liturgy and teaching cannot be distinguished so easily, even in Philo's work.<sup>57</sup> Stemberger concludes that, while Siegert's hypothesis that the Christian homily evolved from its Hellenistic-Jewish predecessor offers insight, it cannot be proven historically. The same holds true for comparisons with later literary parallels, such as the "rabbinic homily." Research quickly revealed that midrashic texts were not transliterations of rabbinic sermons, as they underwent a thorough literary reworking before being inserted into a larger midrashic unit. Recent research has further shown that the basis of midrashim probably lay less in synagogue homilies, as lectures in the circle of disciples given in the house of instruction, so that *derashah* should not be translated as "preaching" but rather as "expounding and interpreting." This does not exclude the possibility, Stemberger holds, that sermons explaining the biblical reading were common and routine in late-antique synagogues, as is frequently claimed to have been the case in pre-70 C.E. synagogues. But preachers for the early rabbinic period must be sought beyond the rabbinic circle. To what extent such sermons and lectures influenced the production of rabbinic texts cannot be determined. Consequently, the boundaries between exegetical and homiletical midrashim have grown more blurred than they once were. Stemberger considers the work of Doris Lenhard as being an important contribution toward this insecure status quo.<sup>58</sup> Lenhard offers a large-scale form-analytical description of what had been deemed homiletical midrashim, based on Arnold Goldberg's formal description of distinct units of midrashic literature.<sup>59</sup> Her approach reveals that she perceives these texts as being pure literature, whose existence might be related to an entirely different domain, possibly for providing an adequate thesaurus of homilies according to the sequence of Scripture or the festival days. Her analysis of all the 411 homiletic units in *Leviticus Rabbah*, both versions of the *Tanḥuma*, and both *Pesiqtot*, reveals that the smaller functional forms, *yelamdenu* (a halakhic and optional section, called after its introduction *yelamdenu rabbenu*, "let our master teach us"), *petiḥah*, *semikhah* (an optional

57. Günter Stemberger, "Response [to Folker Siegert]," in Deeg et al., *Preaching in Judaism and Christianity*, 45–48.

58. Doris Lenhard, *Die rabbinische Homilie: Ein formanalytischer Index* (Frankfurt a.M.: Gesellschaft zur Förderung Judaistischer Studien, 1998).

59. Arnold Goldberg, *Rabbinische Texte als Gegenstand der Auslegung: Gesammelte Schriften II* (ed. Margarete Schlüter and Peter Schäfer; TSAJ 73; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

section which links the following central part to the biblical verse preceding it, *inyan* (the central part of the homily) and *ḥatimah*, include many deviations from the expected standard. Stemberger deduces from these findings that there exists no standard literary form of the rabbinic homily, and that the ideal type or prototype never occurs in the preserved texts. Stemberger does not claim, however, that there was no regular preaching in the synagogues of the (early) rabbinic period, but rather insists that from the texts as preserved, one cannot derive knowledge as to what the practice of the sermon was, who the preachers were, or what the “normal” sermon looked like. What we have, he concludes, are certain formal aspects—namely *petiḥah* (introduction) and *ḥatimah* (conclusion)—that demonstrate how a sermon could have been constructed. And along with it, what the central contents of such homiletic formal units were.<sup>60</sup>

#### HEBREWS AND RHETORIC

Craig R. Koester is one of those exegetes who advocate for classifying Hebrews as an oration of the deliberative-epideictic type (apart from being a sermon).<sup>61</sup> The author therefore uses rhetorical means in view of style (*elocutio*) and embellishment (*ornatus*).<sup>62</sup> But in regard to structural aporia in Hebrews, Koester is convinced that an arrangement according to Greco-Roman rhetorical categories provides a clear sense of how the text’s argument flows.<sup>63</sup> On this hypothetical basis, and in consideration of various “formal characteristics”—such as the use of inclusions and the interplay of argument (appealing primarily to logic) and digression (appealing primarily to emotion)—Koester deduces the following carefully reasoned outline: (1) An *exordium* from Heb 1:1–2:4 (with 2:1–4 being a digression), as he does not consider the exalted Son of God as part of the main argument, but as preparatory for the audience. About the *narratio* Koester believes—as it was not essential—that the author omitted it. (2) Instead, he sees the author move directly to the thesis, the *propositio*, in Heb 2:5–9, where he affirms that in Jesus’s death and exaltation listeners can see how God’s designs for human beings are accomplished through the suffering and exaltation of Christ. (3) The *argumentatio*, the body of the speech, Koester determines as falling in Heb 2:10–12:27. According to his interpretation, it includes three main series

60. Günter Stemberger, “The Derashah in Rabbinic Times,” in Deeg, *Preaching in Judaism and Christianity*, 7–21.

61. Craig R. Koester, “Hebrews, Rhetoric, and the Future of Humanity,” *CBQ* 64 (2002): 103–23.

62. For a representative list, see Koester, *Hebrews*, 92–96.

63. *Ibid.*, 104.

of arguments, each followed by a transitional digression including warnings and encouragements: (a) Heb 2:10–6:20: Jesus received glory through faithful suffering—a way that others are called to follow (2:10–5:10), digression (5:11–6:20); (b) Heb 7:1–10:39: Jesus’s suffering is the sacrifice that enables others to approach God (7:1–10:25), digression (10:26–39); and (c) Heb 11:1–12:27: the People of God persevere by faith through suffering to glory (11:1–12:24), digression (12:25–27). (4) By means of the *peroratio* in Heb 12:28–13:21, the author according to Koester makes an appeal for service that is pleasing to God. (5) And finally, Koester’s outline ends with an epistolary postscript in Heb 13:22–25.<sup>64</sup> The reader will note that he has not classified Heb 3:1–6 and Heb 12:1–3 as pertaining to the digressions, although they fit the criteria which he sets forth in regard to such passages.<sup>65</sup>

Luke Timothy Johnson, while acknowledging that Koester’s analysis is well-thought-out, argues that it can be challenged in ways that other readings can.<sup>66</sup> Two examples must suffice for the purpose of this contribution: firstly, Koester and others are correct in assuming that mixed types of oral genres existed. George A. Kennedy plausibly demonstrated that while the Aristotelian triad was handed down, a generic classification was criticized on various occasions, for instance by Quintilian (*Inst.* 3:4).<sup>67</sup> Genres were undermined, for example where speakers used the form of one genre for the purpose of another,<sup>68</sup> or where genres were used in a social context—in a school setting, for instance—different than the form required. Furthermore, the emergence of new oral types, such as midrash and homily, softened the firm contours of the classical rhetorical trichotomy. These developments lead Kennedy to define the “epideictic” genre as much broader than customarily assumed, namely, as including any discourse, oral or written, that does not aim at a specific action or decision but seeks to enhance knowledge, understanding, or belief, often through praise or blame, whether of persons, things, or values. Thus, he views most religious preaching based on scripture interpretation and application—such as midrash and homily—as epideictic. Finally, one other reason contributed to the increasing diversity of form,

64. *Ibid.*, 105–6.

65. *Ibid.*, 117–19.

66. Johnson, *Hebrews*, 14.

67. George A. Kennedy, “The Genres of Rhetoric,” in Porter, ed., *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric*, 43–50.

68. Isocrates’s *Panegyricus*, for instance, was neither delivered at a festival as an epideictic speech as the title suggests, nor was it delivered at an assembly despite its deliberative content. Instead, it was published as a pamphlet like most of his other speeches. Or Gorgias’s *Encomium of Helen* never really praises Helen, but rather seeks to remove the blame commonly heaped upon her, rendering the defensive speech more judicial than epideictic.

the rise of literariness. As the practice of ancient letter writing demonstrates, the combination of features of judicial, deliberative, or epideictic rhetoric grew more common. An aspect of this had already been observed by Aristotle with respect to the oration (*On Rhetoric* 1.9.36–37).<sup>69</sup> But apart from being an oration, Koester classifies Hebrews as “one of the earliest extant Christian sermons.”<sup>70</sup> In Siegert’s definition, a sermon “explains a sacred text or doctrine in a liturgical setting.” It seems that the author’s use of Scripture plays a subordinate role in Koester’s approach, as he neglects to demonstrate how the “explanation and application” of Scripture works, for instance in regard to one of Hebrews’ central quotes from Ps 95:7–11, which determines the section Heb 3:7–4:11 (and for some through 6:20).<sup>71</sup>

Secondly, Koester is also correct in that the arrangement according to rhetorical categories could vary, as Wilhelm Wuellner has illustratively demonstrated.<sup>72</sup> Ancient technographers offered two reasons for the “wretched state” in handbooks regarding arrangement: (1) Practical oratory, as well as the prolific growth of various literary and subliterate genres (e.g., letters, homilies, novels, etc.), which had produced a great variety of unique, situation-specific forms (along with their indigenous arrangement pattern). Wherefore (2) the parts of a speech came to be treated under *inventio*, instead of *dispositio*, in order to emphasize that the arrangement could or had to vary according to circumstances. As shown, Koester delimits his *propositio*, which sets the theme for the entire discourse, in Heb 2:5–9. Related to his *propositio*, a closer look at the titles of Koester’s outline reveal that he ascribes a decisive role to Christ’s as well as to the audience’s “suffering.” Johnson, along with Witherington,<sup>73</sup> has comprehensibly challenged this thematic emphasis, particularly in view of the text’s central cultic section. The author’s concern in the text’s center seems not to be suffering, but rather cultic purity, which becomes necessary where there is sin, a word stem that recurs more frequently by far than suffering.<sup>74</sup> Übelacker and Backhaus have therefore delimited their *propositio* in two similar sections that properly represent this observation (Übelacker: Heb 2:17–18; Backhaus: Heb 4:14–16).<sup>75</sup> Never-

69. Kennedy, “Genres of Rhetoric,” 44–45, 47.

70. Koester, “Hebrews, Rhetoric,” 103.

71. Ibid., 113–14.

72. Wilhelm Wuellner, “Arrangement,” in Porter, *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric*, 51–87, esp. 77.

73. Witherington, *New Testament Rhetoric*, 200.

74. Heb 1:3; 2:17; 3:13, 17; 4:15; 5:1, 3; 7:26–27; 8:12; 9:26, 28 [2x]; 10:2–4, 6, 8, 11–12, 17–18, 26 [2x]; 11:25; 12:1, 3–4; 13:11.

75. Übelacker, *Der Hebräerbrief als Appell*, 195; Backhaus, *Der Hebräerbrief*, 43.



theless, the theme of suffering may be placed in the context of cultic impurity, particularly where it prevents access to God. If that is what Koester means, then suffering may be perceived not as a perpetual but rather as a temporary condition that is overcome with Yom Kippur and its subsequent covenant renewal. Should this positive notion, however, not have been better represented in his outline's titles?<sup>76</sup>

#### SUMMARY AND PROSPECTS

At best, the expositions in this second part have demonstrated that Hebrews may be classified as epistle, homily, and oration, or as a mixed type of these forms. Thus Hebrews, with respect to all three forms, resists a definitive generic classification and rhetorical arrangement. This is due to various reasons. On the one hand, forms or genres such as midrash or homily represent "indigenous developments" of existing genres, and because these advances took place at the fringes of society, ancient theorists of rhetoric took no note of it. Details about the aesthetics of production for such texts therefore have remained in the dark. On the other hand, Hebrews—commonly promoted as "the best example of an early Christian homily we possess"—stands alone of its kind, with no literary analogies available.<sup>77</sup> Consequently, our historical starting point is tenuous. What remains are reconstructions, deduced on the one hand from related ancient handbooks, and on the other from comparable but accidentally preserved texts, both earlier and later, and thus only conditionally representative. Such reconstructions are necessarily of a hypothetical nature. Rhetorical criticism hence is not useful for "prescriptive" observations about texts, that is, it would be erroneous and lead into aporia to assume that reconstructed descriptions of rhetorical aspects were "historical." Under these precarious premises, rhetorical criticism is useful mostly for "descriptive" observations of texts—an inference that is rarely reflected upon in Hebrews scholarship. The implicit application of rhetorical criticism has accomplished much for the better perception of a text's meaning, but these returns need to be evaluated within the historical context appropriate to its interpreting subjects.

Irrespective of the gains in our knowledge, it must remain the case that questions about the genre and arrangement of Hebrews will presumably remain unresolved. Heuristic investigations will and ought to continue. But in view of the complex starting point which they must assume, such work requires a responsible

76. Koester, "Hebrews, Rhetoric," 115–16.

77. Harold W. Attridge, "New Covenant Christology in an Early Christian Homily," in *Essays on John and Hebrews*, 281–93, esp. 281.

mediation between the historical and the hypothetical. Hence, long live the better argument, which is also the more eloquent one—of which the jubilarian, a *primus inter pares*, has brought forth many!

## FOR FURTHER READING

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## APOCALYPTIC AND NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION

David E. Aune

The term “apocalyptic,” and its synonym “apocalypticism,” are modern terms for a spectrum of early Jewish and early Christian eschatology characterized by the expectation that God, or his accredited representative, will soon intervene decisively in human affairs, inaugurating a series of final events presaged by a time of great tribulation and culminating in the salvation of the righteous and the destruction of the wicked, through the resurrection and final judgment, bringing an end to history and the transformation of the cosmos. All apocalyptic is a form of eschatology, but not all eschatology can be called apocalyptic. For this reason, apocalyptic is often designated “apocalyptic eschatology,” in contrast to “prophetic eschatology,” that is, the type of eschatology found in the prophetic books of the Old Testament, which is concerned not with the end of time or history but with the salvific activity of God in the future in ways analogous to past divine interventions (e.g., Hosea’s new entry into the promised land; Jeremiah’s new covenant; Isaiah’s David *redivivus*; Deutero-Isaiah’s new Exodus).<sup>1</sup>

It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that biblical scholars began to come to the increasing realization that Jesus of Nazareth and Paul of Tarsus, together with most of those who belonged to the first generation of Jesus’ followers and many segments of contemporary early Judaism, understood God, the world and their place in that world from the perspective informed by apocalyptic eschatology. This “rediscovery of apocalyptic,” the apt English title of a monograph by the Old Testament scholar Klaus Koch,<sup>2</sup> had profound hermeneutical implications for biblical interpretation, since many New Testament scholars had

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1. Norman Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 161.

2. Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic: A Polemical Work on a Neglected Area of Biblical Studies and Its Damaging Effects on Theology and Philosophy* (trans. Margaret Kohl; SBT, Second Series, 22; Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1970). The original German title of

finally found an appropriate tool to enable them to understand the historically-conditioned implications of texts that had previously been misconstrued because they were read under the presuppositions of modern values and norms. The rediscovery of apocalyptic actually represents a further refinement of the historical critical method, introducing a greater willingness on the part of the interpreter of ancient texts to become conscious of the modern presuppositions that tend to govern the way in which ancient texts are understood. While an etic or outsider approach to ancient texts is to a certain extent unavoidable since we are captive of our own time and culture, nevertheless it is possible to become aware of our modern norms and values, opening up the possibility for a more self-consciously controlled emic approach to ancient texts.

In this essay, in honor of my esteemed friend and colleague Harry Attridge, I will focus on two primary issues. The first main part of this essay will center on the rise of the eschatological approach to the New Testament from the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century and on the construction of a profile of apocalyptic within Judaism of the third century B.C.E. through the early-second century C.E. as an indispensable ideological context within which early Christian texts must be understood using the historical-critical method. The second part will focus on an apocalyptic interpretation of the Lord's Prayer (henceforth LP), a centrally important liturgical text in ancient, medieval and modern Christianity.

## PART I: CONSTRUCTING A PROFILE OF APOCALYPTIC

The beliefs and conceptions characteristic of apocalyptic are found in, but not limited to, a particular ancient type of Jewish and Christian literature generically identified as "apocalypses." From the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, early Jewish and early Christian apocalypses and texts with a strong component of apocalyptic eschatology were regarded by many, if not most, biblical scholars as a bizarre deviation from the path that had led to ethical monotheism, the crowning religious development of late Israelite thought. The term "apocalypse" itself, as a modern generic label, derives from the Greek noun *apokalypsis* ("revelation, disclosure, unveiling") which occurs in the incipit of the New Testament book of Revelation: "The revelation [*apokalypsis*] of Jesus Christ which God gave to him to show his servants what must soon come to pass" (Rev 1:1). Based on Rev 1:1, the Greek term *apokalypsis* (in transliterated English form as "apocalypse") has been used since the mid-nineteenth century to designate Jewish and

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this monograph is *Ratlos vor der Apokalyptik*, or "Helpless before Apocalyptic," conveying more negative connotations than the English title.

Christian works that were similar in form and content to the Revelation of John. The late Greek adjective *apokalyptikos*, transliterated into ecclesiastical Latin as *apocalypcticus*, was in turn transliterated into French as the adjective “apocalyp-tique,” into German as the noun “Apokalyptik,” and into English as the noun “apocalyptic,” synonymous with the noun “apocalypticism” for the eschatological ideology characteristic of apocalyptic literature. The first modern scholar to use the term *apokalypsis* in Rev 1:1 in a generic sense for Jewish and Christian texts that were similar in form and content to the Revelation of John was Friedrich Lücke (1791–1855).<sup>3</sup>

The term “apocalyptic” is now understood to refer to the constellation of eschatological beliefs and concepts found in some strands of early Judaism and in most early forms of Christianity that flourished from the third century B.C.E. through the second century C.E., particularly in various texts identified as apocalypses, many of which were first published in critical editions during the nineteenth century. The earliest surviving apocalypses are *1 Enoch* 1–36, the Book of the Watchers (ca. 250 B.C.E.) and the Old Testament book of Daniel (ca. 166 B.C.E.). The later apocalypses include two Christian works, the Revelation of John (ca. 95 C.E.) and the composite *Shepherd of Hermas*, compiled in the area of Rome by the mid-second century. The later Jewish apocalypses include the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (70–150 C.E.), *4 Ezra* (ca. 90–100 C.E.), *2 Enoch* (late-first century C.E.), and *2 Baruch* (ca. 100–125 C.E.), *3 Baruch* (after 130 C.E.). Somewhere in between the earliest and latest apocalypses are the other apocalypses collected in *1 Enoch* (the “Similitudes of Enoch,” 37–71, the “Book of Heavenly Luminaries,” 72–82, the “Animal Apocalypse,” 83–90 and the “Epistle of Enoch,” 92–105). After ca. 150 C.E., Judaism tended to reject apocalyptic in the wake of the second Jewish revolt in Judea under Bar Kosiba (132–35 C.E.). In early Christianity, apocalyptic-like visionary literature began to focus on visionary trips to the underworld where the dead who had lived immoral lives were punished and served as warnings against moral laxity for the living (e.g., the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Apocalypse of Paul*).<sup>4</sup>

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3. Friedrich Lücke, *Versuch einer vollständigen Einleitung in die Offenbarung Johannis und in die gesammte apokalyptische Literatur* (Bonn: Eduard Weber, 1832). Lücke published a second edition with the expanded title *Versuch einer vollständigen Einleitung in die Offenbarung Johannis und in die gesammte apokalyptische Literatur oder, Allgemeine Untersuchungen über die apokalyptische Litteratur überhaupt und die Apokalypse des Johannes insbesondere* (2. Aufl.; Bonn: Eduard Weber, 1852). For an evaluation of Lücke’s contribution, see J. M. Schmidt, *Die jüdische Apokalyptik: Die Geschichte ihrer Erforschung von den Anfängen bis zu den Textfunden von Qumran* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1963), 98–119.

4. Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).

The first introductory studies of apocalypses and apocalypticism were produced by Friedrich Lücke (1832), Eduard Reuss (1843) and Adolf Hilgenfeld (1857), with little agreement on what constituted apocalyptic eschatology or which features characterized the genre apocalypse (problems that have dogged the study of apocalyptic eschatology ever since). In 1903, both Wilhelm Bousset (1865–1920) and Paul Volz (1871–1941) published books that became classics on early Jewish apocalypses and apocalyptic traditions. Bousset, a New Testament scholar, published two related works in 1903: a pamphlet containing a lecture entitled *Die jüdische Apokalypitik: ihre religionsgeschichtliche Herkunft und ihre Bedeutung für das neue Testament*, and the much larger and more comprehensive handbook, *Die Religion des Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* (1903), in which he used both Jewish apocalyptic literature as well as rabbinic literature to produce a synthetic portrait of the religion of early Judaism (a third edition, edited by Hugo Gressmann appeared in 1926 with the title *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter*). Bousset's reliance on apocalyptic literature as a supplement to rabbinic literature was somewhat controversial. George Foote Moore, the liberal Presbyterian scholar of Judaism at Harvard, maintained that while early Jewish apocalypses were important for understanding early Christianity, they were irrelevant for his reconstruction of "normal Judaism," since these apocalypses had never been accepted in Judaism but were transmitted only by Christians.<sup>5</sup> Volz, an Old Testament scholar, synthesized Jewish eschatology emphasizing Jewish apocalyptic literature in his 1903 book *Jüdische Eschatologie von Daniel bis Akiba* (the second edition of 1934 entitled *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter nach den Quellen der rabbinischen, apokalyptischen und apokryphen Literatur*.) Despite all of this intensive research on Jewish apocalyptic, the problem of defining apocalyptic has continued to be a debated issue.<sup>6</sup> Some scholars have used the term "eschatology" in a broader sense to include what others mean by "apocalyptic" (e.g., Paul Volz, Albert Schweitzer), while others either reject it as a hopelessly confusing label (T. F. Glasson)<sup>7</sup> or as a phenomenon that consisted primarily of divine disclosures

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5. George Foote Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim* (3 vols; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927), 1.127 (in the context of 126–32).

6. Richard E. Sturm, "Defining the Word 'Apocalyptic': A Problem in Biblical Criticism," in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (ed. Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards; JSNTSup 24; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 17–48.

7. T. F. Glasson, "What is Apocalyptic?" *NTS* 27 (1980): 98–105.

and should be confined to early Jewish and early Christian apocalypses that purport to offer disclosures of divine mysteries (Christopher Rowland).<sup>8</sup>

Following the lead of Lücke's work in the early-nineteenth century, a few scholars regarded apocalypticism more positively as a legitimate development out of classical prophecy. Others, including the influential Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), argued for a sharp break between classical prophecy and apocalypticism, arguing that the authors of apocalypses were slavish imitators who mechanically borrowed material from both classical prophecy and Iranian religion. Using a popular evolutionary model tinged with romanticism, Wellhausen reconstructed the development of Israelite religious thought which for him reached the pinnacle of human religious consciousness with the development of ethical monotheism. That stunning achievement was followed by the deterioration exemplified by the hardened legalism that emerged in the Judaism in the postexilic period. Thus the rise of apocalyptic literature was one clear indication of the decline of Judaism into a legalistic religion. This negative attitude toward apocalyptic was widely shared by biblical scholars until after the mid-twentieth century. Thus for many Protestant scholars of the nineteenth century, the apocalyptic eschatology that we now know plays an important role in the Synoptic Gospels and the Pauline letters, was either ignored or interpreted away.

For much of the nineteenth century, liberal Protestant theology had assumed that religious experience was the center of the Christian religion and Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God was understood to refer to this experience, of which he was the primary exponent and teacher. Liberal theologians had understood the Kingdom of God as the rule of God in the hearts of believers, the highest religious good, an ethical relationship of love for God and man (*sic*). Theologian Albrecht Ritschl (1822–1889), the father-in-law of New Testament scholar Johannes Weiss, understood the Kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus to refer to the moral transformation of the individual believer and of society. In 1892, Johannes Weiss (1863–1914) published a monograph on *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, in which he argued for a purely eschatological understanding of Kingdom of God, rather than an ethical ideal.<sup>9</sup>

The Kingdom of God as Jesus thought of it is never something objective, inward or spiritual, but is always the objective messianic Kingdom, which is

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8. Christopher Rowland, *Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 9–72.

9. Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (trans. R. H. Hiers and D. L. Holland; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 133.

usually pictured as a territory in which one has a share, or a treasure which comes down from heaven.

Weiss had understood Jesus' conception of the Kingdom of God in the light of the apocalyptic eschatology of early Judaism, insisting that this was the only appropriate historical context in which this concept could be adequately understood. In the world of apocalyptic eschatology there is a sharp dualism of two worlds, the world above and the world below and an equally sharp dualism between the rule of Satan (which is present) and the rule of God (which is future). Weiss' apocalyptic interpretation of Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God tended to emphasis the historical and cultural distance between the first century and the modern period.

In 1906, fourteen years after Weiss' monograph appeared, Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) published *Vom Reimarus zu Wrede: eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*,<sup>10</sup> translated into English as *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* in 1910. In 2001 an English translation of the ninth German edition of 1984 appeared.<sup>11</sup> In this work Schweitzer critically reviewed the lives of Jesus produced by scholars beginning with H. S. Reimarus (1694–1798) and concluding with William Wrede (1859–1906), clearly demonstrating that the portraits of Jesus produced were largely the product of the theological presuppositions of the authors.<sup>12</sup> Schweitzer criticized Weiss for applying eschatology only to aspects of Jesus' teachings, while he himself argued that every aspect of what Jesus said and did was entirely dominated by eschatology, an approach Schweitzer labeled "konsequente Eschatologie" ("thoroughgoing eschatology").<sup>13</sup> The framework within which Schweitzer interpreted the life and teaching of Jesus was that of the apocalyptic eschatology that permeated early Jewish apocalyptic literature.

In addition to arguing for the thoroughgoing eschatological interpretation of Jesus, Schweitzer was also the prime mover behind the view that Jewish apocalyptic eschatology was the matrix within which Christian apocalyptic eschatology, including that of Paul, developed.<sup>14</sup> One obvious feature of apocalyptic eschatol-

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10. Albert Schweitzer, *Vom Reimarus zu Wrede: eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1906).

11. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1st complete ed.; ed. John Bowden; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001).

12. A review of lives of Jesus that appeared between 1907 and 1912 was added by Schweitzer to the second and following editions of his work; see Schweitzer, *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 437–77.

13. *Ibid.*, 315–54.

14. Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (New York: Seabury, 1968 [English translation originally published in 1931]), 11; M. C. de Boer, "Paul and Jewish Apocalyptic



ogy in Paul is his use of scenarios narrating the coming or *parousia* of Christ (1 Cor 15:23–26, 51–52; 1 Thess 4:13–18; cf. 2 Thess 2:1–12) as well as his relatively frequent reference to apocalyptic dualism in his use of the phrase “this age” (Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 1:20; 3:18; 2 Cor 4:4) and once in the phrase “the present evil age” (Gal 1:4). One distinctive modification that Paul made in Jewish apocalyptic eschatology is the view that the end had already occurred when God raised Jesus from the dead.<sup>15</sup>

Schweitzer’s apocalyptic approach to Paul found greater response among New Testament scholars than his apocalyptic interpretation of the ministry of Jesus, which was widely rejected by German and English scholarship, though it was adopted by Rudolf Bultmann, the most prominent New Testament scholar in the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup> The recognition of the importance of apocalyptic for the development of Christian thought was articulated by Ernst Käsemann in two essays, “The Beginnings of Christian Theology” and “On the Topic of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic.”<sup>17</sup> In the first essay, Käsemann makes his famous claim that “Apocalyptic was the mother of Christian theology—since we cannot really class the teachings of Jesus as theology,”<sup>18</sup> arguing that apocalyptic eschatology lay behind the earliest developments of Christian thought from Easter through the early-second century C.E., including Pauline thought. Despite this largely positive assessment, Käsemann maintained that apocalyptic presuppositions are absent from the teaching of Jesus, if the pre-Easter Jesus traditions (non-apocalyptic) are properly separated from post-Easter additions and changes (apocalyptic). Many of those who were attracted to Käsemann’s new quest for the historical Jesus soundly rejected the notion that Jesus lived the myth of apocalyptic eschatology.

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Eschatology,” in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (ed. Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards; JSNTSup 24; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 169–90; idem, “Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” in *The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity* (vol. 1 of *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*; ed. J. J. Collins; New York: Continuum, 1998), 345–83.

15. Schweitzer, *Mysticism of Paul*, 99; de Boer, “Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” 354–57.

16. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Theology of the New Testament* (trans. Kendrick Grobel; 2 vols; New York: Scribner’s, 1951–55), 1.4.

17. Ernst Käsemann, “The Beginnings of Christian Theology” and “On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic,” *New Testament Questions of Today* (trans. W. J. Montague; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 82–107, 108–37; translated from Ernst Käsemann, “Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie” and “Zum Thema der urchristlichen Apokalypstik,” *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (2nd ed.; 2 vols; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 82–104, 105–31.

18. Käsemann, “Beginnings of Christian Theology,” 102; “Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie,” 100; he repeats the statement in “On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic,” 137; “Zum Thema der urchristlichen Apokalypstik,” 130–31.

Beginning with the 1970s, as part of the renaissance of apocalyptic, it became increasingly evident that apocalyptic was a complex religious and cultural phenomenon that consisted of several separable aspects. Paul D. Hanson provided a three-part definition of apocalypticism:<sup>19</sup> (1) *Apocalypse* as a literary genre was used by apocalyptic writers to communicate revelatory visions to their anticipated audiences. The task of describing the genre of apocalypses in terms of their form, content and function became an urgent desideratum in the 1970s when the value of identifying the genre of biblical texts generally became evident. John J. Collins, chair of the Apocalypse Group of the Society of Biblical Literature Genres Projects, edited a volume presenting some of the work of members of that Group including an introductory article by Collins himself entitled "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," in which he provided a succinct definition of the apocalypse genre, the summary of a more extensive master paradigm:<sup>20</sup>

"Apocalypse" is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.

Many of the literary features of apocalypses have no counterpart in apocalyptic eschatology, including pseudepigraphic authorship, the narration and interpretation of revelatory visions, universal history that is divided into segments (e.g., four, seven, twelve) reflecting a predetermined divine plan, the presence of an *angelus interpres* ("interpreting angel") and so on. (2) *Apocalyptic eschatology* is a religious perspective or ideology, that developed out of several antecedent influences including Old Testament prophecy, wisdom traditions and various other sources from the eastern and western part of the ancient world that individuals and groups can embrace to different degrees in various times and which in part provides the distinctive type of world view or symbolic universe reflected in apocalyptic literature. (3) *Apocalypticism* or millenarianism is a religious and social movement in which an apocalyptic community (such as the Qumran community) is formed around a symbolic universe informed by apocalyptic eschatology, typically understanding itself as a minority protest movement developed against what they consider the objectionable norms and values of the dominant society.

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19. Paul D. Hanson, "Apocalypticism," *IDBSup*, 28–31.

20. John J. Collins (ed.), "Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre" *Semeia* 14 (1979): 9 (1–20).

To these I would add the following: (4) *Apocalyptic imagery* is a general term for the continued use of constituent themes and motifs found in apocalypses and in apocalyptic eschatology, but used in a variety of ways and contexts in both early Jewish and early Christian literature, often with a modification or diminution of their original significance.

The distinctive features of apocalyptic eschatology consist of ideological features as well as the constituent features of apocalyptic scenarios, that is, recitals of apocalyptic events that are expected to occur in the future. The following features of apocalyptic eschatology constitute a synthesis of many apocalyptic sources, which exhibit great variety and little mutual consistency:<sup>21</sup> (1) A defining characteristic of apocalyptic eschatology is the belief in a dualism of two ages with both temporal and spatial aspects. This dualism is *temporal* in that involves a radical discontinuity between this present age and the age to come and the imminent replacement of this age by the age to come (expressed in the polarity of “this age/world” [‘*wlm hzzh*’] and “the coming age/world” [‘*wlm hbb*’]), and it is *spatial* in that while the locus of this present age is the earth, the locus of the age to come is heaven. (2) One expression of this dualism is that the world is the scene of conflict between two antithetical forces, God and Satan, the spirit of truth and the spirit of error, with human beings aligned with one side or the other, so that human conflicts take on a cosmic significance. (3) During the present evil age the people of God constitute an oppressed minority who fervently await vindication for the evils they have suffered through the intervention of God or a redeemer figure sent by God. (4) Prior to the imminent intervention of God to bring the present evil age to an end and to introduce the age to come, there will be a final period of intense suffering and tribulation, unlike anything that has every occurred previously. This period of distress, variously labeled the Messianic woes or the great tribulation, will severely test the people of God. This eschatological period may witness the rise of an Antichrist or a godless tyrant who regards himself as divine and opposes the people of God, or an assembly of world forces opposed to the people of God who march against the people of God in Jerusalem, such as Gog and Magog, but are decisively defeated by divine intervention. (5) The period of eschatological tribulation will be brought to an end by the climactic intervention of God on “the Day of the Lord” with the appearance of a redeemer figure, a messenger of God such as a Messiah with royal or priestly functions or an eschatological prophet. (6) Between the present evil age and the dawn of the age to come, the day of judgment will be held, with God or his enthroned representative presiding over the final resurrection (either of the

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21. Volz, *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde*, 135–419.

righteous only or of both the righteous and the wicked), concluding with the full realization of eschatological salvation for the righteous, including the restoration of all the exiled tribes of Israel to the Land and the punishment and destruction of the wicked. (7) The world will either be restored or destroyed and renewed along with the cosmos, with the restoration of Edenic conditions on earth where the righteous, freed from all the limitations brought about by the primal acts of rebellion against God and transformed by the resurrection, will worship him in blessedness forever.

## PART II: READING THE MATTHAEAN LORD'S PRAYER IN THE CONTEXT OF APOCALYPTIC ESCHATOLOGY

The LP exists in three early versions, Matt 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4; *Did.* 8:2. The first two are found in very different literary contexts in the Synoptic Gospels, while the third, very similar to the Matthaean version, and probably directly or indirectly dependent on it, is found in an early Christian handbook on ethics and liturgy from very early in the second century. These three versions probably represent variations of the LP that existed in oral tradition before they were fixed in written form, if “fixed” is an appropriate term for the fluid textual tradition of the written versions, which continued to be subject to changes in oral tradition. The LP almost certainly originated with Jesus,<sup>22</sup> one indication of which is its thoroughly Jewish character.<sup>23</sup> Jewish parallels to the first three petitions are particularly striking in the opening lines of the Aramaic mourners’ *Qaddiṣ* (an eschatological prayer), still recited in modern synagogues:<sup>24</sup>

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22. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 2: *Mentor, Message and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 294; E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993), 195; Norman Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 191–201; idem, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 47. There are, of course, dissenting opinions, including the Jesus Seminar; see the brief report in Marcus Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1994), 167 (fragments of the prayer go back to Jesus but not the entire prayer in either of its three forms), and John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 293–95.

23. Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times and Teaching* (trans. Herbert Danby; Boston: Beacon, 1964 [originally published in 1925]), 387–88.

24. J. J. Petuchowski and M. Brocke, *The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy* (New York: Seabury, 1978), 37.

Exalted and hallowed be His great Name  
 In the world which He created  
 according to his will.  
 May He establish His kingdom  
 In your lifetime and in your days,  
 And in the lifetime of the whole household of Israel,  
 Speedily and at a near time.  
 And say, Amen.

The LP was originally formulated in Aramaic (less probably, Hebrew), and was translated into Greek on a single occasion (suggested by the presence in all three versions of the rare Greek word *epiousion*).<sup>25</sup> Whether or not the longer version of the LP in Matthew and the shorter version in Luke were derived from the Q document or from Special M and Special L, is a debated issue.<sup>26</sup> Certain features of the versions of the LP in Matthew and Luke appear to reflect their respective styles, such as “our Father in heaven” in Matthew) and “each day” in Luke.<sup>27</sup> Attempts to determine which of the three versions is most original or to reconstruct a single original version based on a critical comparison of the three written versions has proven to be a difficult task, though many regard the shorter Lukan version as more original.<sup>28</sup>

For those influenced by the rediscovery of apocalyptic and who hold that Jesus himself lived in the myth of early Jewish apocalyptic eschatology,<sup>29</sup> the LP has frequently been understood as having had an originally eschatological or apocalyptic meaning, an approach often described as “eschatological interpretation.”<sup>30</sup>

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25. The fact that the Greek word *epiousion* (conventionally translated “daily”) occurs only in the three earliest versions of the LP (Matt 6:11; Luke 11:3; *Did.* 8:2), and nowhere else in all of Greek literature, points toward a single translation of the LP from Aramaic into Greek.

26. A summary of scholarly opinion on both sides of this issue is found in Shawn Carruth and Albrecht Garsky, *Q 11:2b-4*, ed. Stanley D. Anderson, in *Documenta Q: Reconstructions of Q through Two Centuries of Gospel Research: Excerpted, Sorted and Evaluated* (eds. James. M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg; Leuven: Peeters, 1996), 19–33.

27. Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 103, 217.

28. In the view of F. W. Beare, “Such variations as these [between Matt 6:9–13 and Luke 11:2–4] tell strongly against any theory that the words of Jesus were committed to memory and that there was any great concern to preserve them exactly” (*The Gospel according to Matthew* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981], 171).

29. There are many scholars who maintain (unconvincingly) that Jesus rejected the mythical thought of apocalyptic eschatology, e.g., James Breech, *The Silence of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 62–63.

30. Raymond E. Brown, “The Pater Noster as an Eschatological Prayer,” in *New Testament Essays* (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1968), 275–320; Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (New York: Scribner’s, 1971) 193–203.

One indication of the pervasive significance of apocalyptic eschatology for the Matthaean LP is said to be the presence of six aorist imperatives in each of the six (or seven) petitions.<sup>31</sup> The argument is that the aorist tense, with its punctiliar, once-and-for-all aspect provides support for the eschatological interpretation. However, this use of the aorist does not necessarily support an eschatological interpretation, since the aorist is frequently used in ancient Greek prayer,<sup>32</sup> where it conveys a greater sense of urgency.<sup>33</sup> Scholars who deny that Jesus himself was an apocalypticist, but who often maintain that apocalyptic became a central ideology of the early church, either understand the LP to be inauthentic (i.e., primarily the product of the early church) or give it primarily an ethical meaning (or both).<sup>34</sup> Since none of these three versions of the LP were composed entirely by the author-editors of the three texts in which they have been embedded,<sup>35</sup> they also preserve traditional material deriving from earlier oral and liturgical contexts.

Due to space limitations, the following line-by-line interpretation of the LP will focus on Matt 6:9–13, (using lemmata from the NRSV translation) and will discuss only those features that relate to an eschatological interpretation of the text.

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME.

The invocation “our Father in heaven” captures both the nearness as well as the transcendence of God<sup>36</sup> (Luke 11:2 has simply “Father”). Joachim Jeremias,

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31. This is maintained by Brown, “Pater Noster,” 289, 294, 302, 308, 314 and Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (WBC 33A; Dallas: Word, 1993), 148, 150, 151.

32. Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek* (Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici; Rome: Loyola Press, 1963), §255; W. F. Bakker, *The Greek Imperative: An Investigation into the Aspectual Differences between the Present and Aorist Imperatives in Greek Prayer from Homer up to the Present Day* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1966).

33. Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 380–82.

34. Crossan (*Historical Jesus*, 293–95) argues both that the LP as a whole is inauthentic (i.e., it is summary of themes and emphases from the authentic teachings of Jesus) and that there is nothing apocalyptic about it.

35. The view that the LP was formulated during the post-Easter period is argued by Michael D. Goulder, “The Composition of the Lord’s Prayer,” *JTS* 14 (1963): 32–45, idem, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974), 296–301, and Sjef Van Tilborg, “A Form-Criticism of the Lord’s Prayer,” *NovT* 14 (1972): 94–105.

36. Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (THKNT 1; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1968), 199.

expanding on the work of several earlier scholars,<sup>37</sup> argued that the term “Father” (Greek *patēr*) in the invocation of the LP, was a translation of *ʾabbā*,<sup>38</sup> an Aramaic term of endearment for “father,” reflecting a unique relationship to God, originating in the way that a child in the first century C.E. referred to his or her father (*ʾab*) as *ʾabbā* or “daddy.”<sup>38</sup> On the basis of Mark 14:36 (“He [Jesus] said, ‘Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want’”) and the survival of the Aramaic prayer formula “Abba, Father” in Rom 8:15 and Gal 4:6, Jeremias argued that *ʾabbā* was the characteristic designation Jesus used when addressing God in prayer, a feature found in all five strata of the Gospel tradition (Mark, Q, Special M, Special L, John) and which Jeremias regards as an instance of the *ipsissima vox Jesu* (“the very voice of Jesus”).<sup>39</sup> While most New Testament scholars have accepted his basic assumption that the Aramaic *ʾabbā* lies behind the Greek *patēr*,<sup>40</sup> some remain skeptical.<sup>41</sup> Others have proposed qualifications for Jeremias’ proposal. One such qualification maintains that the use of *ʾabbā* did not necessarily connote a *unique* sense of divine sonship, though the use of the term by Jesus did not reflect common practice and many Jews would have found it awkward if not impious to address God with such a term.<sup>42</sup> While the implication that those addressing God as “our Father” regarded themselves as sons of God is certainly valid, to regard that sonship as an eschatological reality and thus part of the eschatological interpretation of the LP seems forced.<sup>43</sup>

The first petition, “hallowed be your name,” alludes to Ezek 36:16–36, where the Lord tells Ezekiel how the scattered tribes of Israel had profaned his name by their wicked ways when they were in the Land. By bringing them back from exile (an event associated with the establishment of God’s eschatological kingdom), says the Lord:

I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nations . . . and the nations shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when through you I display my holiness before their eyes. I will take you from the

37. Gerhard Kittel, “*abba*,” *TDNT*, 1.5–6.

38. Joachim Jeremias, “Abba,” in *The Prayers of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 11–65.

39. Jeremias, “Abba,” 54–65, esp. 57.

40. E.g., Grundmann, *Matthäus*, 199; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 147–48.

41. Mary Rose D’Angelo, “Abba and ‘Father’: Imperial Theology and the Jesus Traditions,” *JBL* 111 (1992): 611–30; Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 374–75, 388.

42. W. D. Davies and Dale Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew* (ICC; 3 vols; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–97), 1.601–2.

43. Brown, “Pater Noster,” 286–87.

nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. (Ezek 36:23–24)

The restoration of the exiled tribes of Israel to the Land is one central event in the scenarios of apocalyptic eschatology.<sup>44</sup> The sanctification of God's name and establishing his kingdom are linked in an eschatological context in the *Qaddiṣ* (cited above): "Exalted and hallowed be His great Name . . . May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and in your days."<sup>45</sup>

#### YOUR KINGDOM COME.

This reference to "your Kingdom," that is, the kingdom of God, is the first clear eschatological reference in the LP. The kingdom of God was the focus of the teaching of Jesus and in this petition it is clearly a future (not a present) reality.<sup>46</sup> The fact that the prayer begins with the invocation "our Father" and that "kingdom" is used with a verb meaning "come," are indications of distinctive emphases in the teaching of Jesus, since the combination of "kingdom (of God)" and a verb meaning "come" occurs nowhere in the Old Testament or post-biblical Jewish literature.<sup>47</sup> In the Synoptic Gospels, however, kingdom of God as the subject of verbs meaning "come" occurs several times.<sup>48</sup> Further, "your kingdom come" appears to be an abstract way of referring to the coming of God to restore and save his people.<sup>49</sup>

44. E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 61–119 ("Part One: The Restoration of Israel").

45. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.295–98; Brant Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile* (WUNT 204; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 140–43.

46. Weiss, *Kingdom of God*, 73.

47. M. Burrows, "Thy Kingdom Come," *JBL* 74 (1955): 1–8.

48. The verb *erchesthai* ("to come") is used with Kingdom of God several times (Mark 9:1; 11:10 [attributed to the crowd]; Luke 17:20 [twice, the first time attributed to the Pharisees]; 22:18; cf. 19:11), as are two other verbs in adjacent semantic fields, *phthanein* ("to arrive, reach") in Matt 12:28 (par. Luke 11:20) and *engizein* ("come near, approach") in Mark 1:15 (par. Matt 4:17); Matt 10:7; Luke 10:11; cf. Luke 21:31 ("The Kingdom of God is near [*engus*]"). All three verbs belong to the semantic domain of Linear Movement; see Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon* (2 vols; New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), §§15.7, 15.81, 15.75, 15.84. For a list of the verbs used with Kingdom of God, see Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (trans. John Bowden; New York: Scribner's, 1971), 32–34.

49. Davies and Allison, *Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew*, 1.604–5; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.299.



YOUR WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

The first part of the third petition, “your will be done” is in synonymous parallelism with the second petition, “your kingdom come,” in that the will of God will be fully and completely realized only when the kingdom of God is fully and completely present in the world. The second part of this petition, “on earth as it is in heaven,” reflects both the temporal and spatial dualism of apocalyptic eschatology, since the prevailing conditions “on earth” are spatially contrasted with those “in heaven,” but this contrast will only be abolished in the (near) future, when the Kingdom of God arrives in its fullness.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY [EPIOUSION] BREAD.

The central interpretive problem in this petition is the meaning of the adjective *epiousion*, which occurs in the three earliest versions of the LP, but nowhere else in Greek literature.<sup>50</sup> While some scholars have construed *epiousion* to mean “necessary” (*epi + ousia*), that is, “necessary bread,” referring to daily nourishment (the view of Origen, Chrysostom and Jerome), it is linguistically improbable, because of the normal elision of the iota to avoid hiatus when *epi* is combined with forms of *einai*.<sup>51</sup> The most likely possibility is that *epiousios* is an adjectival formation derived from *epeimi* (infinitive *epienai*) meaning “next,” “coming,” that is, “the following [day],” “the next [day],” as in the participial form *hē epiousa* [*hēmera*].<sup>52</sup> This view was argued by Albert Schweitzer, who cites the phrase which introduces Acts 7:26: *tēi te epiousēi hēmerai*, “on the next day.”<sup>53</sup> This translation is also supported by the Gospel of the Nazaraeans, referred to by Jerome:<sup>54</sup>

50. See the review of possible options in Werner Foerster, “*epiousios*,” *TDNT*, 2. 591–99 and the more up-to-date review in BDAG, 376–77.

51. Heinz Schürmann, *Praying with Christ: The “Our Father” for Today* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1964), 55–56; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew* (trans. Robert R. Barr; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 67–68.

52. Foerster, “*epiousios*,” 595; Davies and Allison, *Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew*, 1.607–10; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7* (trans. Wilhelm Linss; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 1.380–83.

53. Schweitzer, *Mysticism of Paul*, 239–40.

54. Wilhelm Schneemelcher (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha* (trans. and ed. R. McL. Wilson; 2 vols; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991–92), 1.160. From Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew* 6.11 and *Tract. on Ps. cxxxv*; the Latin text reads: “In Evangelio quod appellatur ‘secundum Hebraeos’ pro ‘supersubstantiali pane’ reperi Mahar, quod dicitur crastinum—ut sit sensus ‘Panem nostrum crastinum’, id est, futurum, ‘da nobis hodie.’”

In the so-called Gospel of the Hebrews [i.e., Nazaraeans] instead of “essential for existence” I found “*mahar*,” which means “of tomorrow,” so that the sense is: Our bread of tomorrow—that is, of the future—give us this day.

Assuming then that the fourth petition should be translated “Give us today the bread of tomorrow,” what does “the bread of tomorrow” or “the bread of the future” mean? The Hebrew phrase “to eat bread” is used in a generic sense of eating a meal,<sup>55</sup> and the phrase “to break bread with” means “to eat with,” since in Jewish practice blessing and breaking a loaf of bread was how all meals began.<sup>56</sup> In line with his eschatological interpretation of the ministry of Jesus, Schweitzer construed the fourth petition in terms of the faithful entreating God to allow them to partake immediately of the future bread of the eschatological messianic banquet.<sup>57</sup> A close parallel to this notion is found in Luke 14:15, where “bread” represents the eschatological banquet: “Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God.” The apocalyptic conception of the messianic banquet, or eschatological banquet (the presence of the messiah is not *de rigueur*) to which Schweitzer refers, is a modern designation for a cluster of eschatological motifs that are metaphors for the presence on earth of the kingdom of God. These occur both in early Jewish and early Christian literature, and include a variety of submotifs involving eschatological feasting as a way of expressing the joy and fulfillment of the righteous who have attained eschatological salvation.<sup>58</sup> The conception of an eschatological banquet has its origins in the Hebrew Bible (Isa 25:6–8), and was developed in intertestamental literature into a central expectation of apocalyptic eschatology (e.g., *1 En.* 62:13–14):<sup>59</sup>

55. See Gen 37:25; 2 Sam 9:7, 10; 12:20; 2 Kgs 4:8.

56. See Matt 14:19; 15:36; Mark 6:41; 8:19; Luke 9:16; 24:30.

57. Schweitzer, *Mysticism of Paul*, 239–41; idem, *The Kingdom of God and Primitive Christianity* (ed. U. Neuenschwander; trans. L. A. Garrard; New York: Seabury, 1968), 124, 146. For Schweitzer (*Mysticism of Paul*, 239–40), this interpretation is supported in part by the fact that if the conventional translation “daily bread” is taken to refer to daily sustenance it would contradict the Matthean context in which Jesus instructs his followers not to be concerned with food or clothing, like Gentiles, for God will supply all the needs of those who put the Kingdom of God first (Matt 6:25–34); God knows what the faithful need before they ask (Matt 6:8).

58. On the messianic banquet (in chronological order), see Volz, *Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde*, 388–89, “Die Speise der Seligen”; Dennis E. Smith, “The Messianic Banquet Reconsidered,” in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* (ed. Birger Pearson; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1991), 64–73; idem, “Messianic Banquet,” *ABD*, 4.788–791; J. Priest, “A Note on the Messianic Banquet,” in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 222–38.

59. E. Isaac (trans.), “1 Enoch,” *OTP*, 1.44.

The righteous and elect ones shall be saved on that day; and from thenceforth they shall never see the faces of the sinners and the oppressors. The Lord of Spirits will abide over them; they shall eat and rest and rise with that Son of Man forever and ever.

One submotif of the messianic banquet motif is the early Jewish expectation of eschatological manna, variously referred to as the “bread from heaven”<sup>60</sup> or “the bread of angels,”<sup>61</sup> or “spiritual food” (= food from heaven),<sup>62</sup> with which God miraculously fed the Israelites during their wilderness wandering (Exod 16:1–36). Strands of early Judaism expected a corresponding eschatological miracle of manna (2 Bar. 29:8):<sup>63</sup>

And it will happen at that time that the treasury of manna will come down again from on high, and they will eat of it in those years because these are they who will have arrived as the consummation of time.

The context of this reference to eschatological manna (2 Bar. 29:1–8) describes two other submotifs of the messianic banquet motif: the miraculous abundance of the produce that the earth will produce during the eschaton and how the two great primal monsters Behemoth and Leviathan will serve as eschatological food for the righteous.

Moving from the historical to the mythical level, the daily communal meals of the Qumran Community (Josephus, *J. W.* 2.129–31 and 1QS vi.2–8 describe the protocol for actual communal meals at Qumran),<sup>64</sup> were consciously regarded by the participants as liturgical anticipations of the messianic banquet, with places of honor reserved for the messiah of Israel (1Q28a ii.11–22 describes the protocol prescribed for the mythicization of the communal meal when the Messiah of Israel is present).<sup>65</sup>

60. Exod 16:4; Neh 9:15; Pss 78:24; 105:40; Wis 16:20; John 6:25–59.

61. Ps 78:25; Wis 16:20; 5 Ezra 1:19; *b. Yoma* 75b.

62. 1 Cor 10:3; see Bruce J. Malina, *The Palestinian Manna Tradition* (AGSU 7; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 94–96.

63. A. F. J. Klijn (trans.), “2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch,” *OTP*, 1.631.

64. See H. W. Kuhn, “The Lord’s Supper and the Communal Meal at Qumran,” in *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (ed. Krister Stendahl; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 67–70, where the author compares the two accounts.

65. Frank Moore Cross, Jr., *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies* (rev. ed.; Garden City: Doubleday, 1961), 85–91; Dennis E. Smith, “Meals,” in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam; 2 vols; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1.530–32.

The mythical conception of the messianic banquet is also referred by Jesus in Q [Luke] 13:28–29):<sup>66</sup>

And many will come from Sunrise and Sunset and recline with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God, but you will be thrown out into the outer darkness, and there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

In this mythical messianic banquet, those Jews who have rejected the message of Jesus are contrasted with the Gentiles who will have access to the eschatological banquet. This mythical conception of the eschatological banquet is analogous to Jesus' own inclusive practice of table fellowship, in which he ate and drank with "tax collectors and sinners," ignoring purity laws promulgated by the Jewish religious leaders and parties. Jesus' practice of table fellowship is mentioned in Matt 11:19: "the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'" Here "a glutton and a drunkard" refers to Jesus' practice of holding table fellowship and "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" refers to those with whom he was accustomed to share his table.<sup>67</sup> The fourth petition, "give us today the bread of tomorrow," then, very likely reflects Jesus' understanding of table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners (i.e., breaking bread with them) as an anticipation of the eschatological banquet, that is, that those who ate and drank with Jesus would be included in the kingdom of God.<sup>68</sup> The Last Supper (as the culmination of meals that Jesus ate with his followers) was perhaps understood by Jesus (and certainly by the earliest church) to function in a proleptic way, according to Mark 14:25 (cf. Luke 22:18): "Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."<sup>69</sup>

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66. A simplified translation of the reconstructed Q text behind Matt 8:11–12 and Luke 13:28–29 (i.e., with the sigla removed) in James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann and John S. Kloppenborg (eds.), *The Critical Edition of Q* (Minneapolis: Fortress; Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 414–16.

67. Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 105–6.

68. On the significance of Jesus' practice of table fellowship, see Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 200; Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 102–8; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 174–211; Dennis E. Smith, "Table Fellowship and the Historical Jesus," in *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World: Essays Honoring Dieter Georgi* (ed. Lukas Bormann, Kelly del Tredici and Angela Standhartinger; NovTSup 74; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 135–62.

69. The authenticity of this saying is argued by Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.302–9.

AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS.

The forgiveness maxim in the fifth petition (where “debts” has a wider meaning than just “sins”) has a close parallel in Wis 28:2: “Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.”<sup>70</sup> There is therefore nothing particularly eschatological about this petition, though it has been argued that he should be so interpreted given the aorist tenses and the eschatological orientation of the rest of the LP,<sup>71</sup> yet the fact that Jesus proclaimed God’s forgiveness in the present (Mark 2:5; Luke 7:48) militates against that view.

AND DO NOT BRING US TO THE TIME OF TRIAL [PEIRASMON], BUT RESCUE US FROM THE EVIL ONE.

The Greek noun *peirasmos* has two basic meanings, reflected in two glosses: (1) “testing,” that is, “to try to learn the nature or character of someone or something by submitting such to thorough and extensive testing ... ‘examination, testing,’”<sup>72</sup> and (2) “temptation,” that is, “to endeavor or attempt to cause someone to sin ... ‘temptation.’”<sup>73</sup> The traditional ethical interpretation of the sixth petition understands *peirasmos* in the second sense, reflected in several English Bible translations (KJV, RSV, NASB, NIV), while the eschatological interpretation prefers the first meaning, reflected in many of the more recent English Bible translations (NAB, NEB, NRSV, REB). Schweitzer understood *peirasmos* to refer to the testing that the faithful must undergo during the messianic woes, that is, the eschatological time of tribulation, so that in the sixth petition the faithful entreat God to spare them from undergoing the severe testing of the eschatological tribulation.<sup>74</sup>

The eschatological tribulation, which functions as a time of testing, is a general designation for a time of unprecedented social and political turmoil, accompanied by exceptional natural disasters, that was expected to occur immediately preceding God’s climactic intervention in history to save his people, to

70. There are many similar parallels including Mark 11:25 and Matt 6:14–15, where *paraptōmata*, “transgressions,” occurs as a synonym for *opheilēmata*, “debts” in v. 12.

71. Davies and Allison, *Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew*, 1.612.

72. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, §27.46 (semantic domain of Learn).

73. Ibid., §88.308 (semantic domain of Moral and Ethical Qualities and Related Behavior). This translation is supported by Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 405–11 and Luz, *Matthew*, 1.384–85.

74. Schweitzer, *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 331; idem, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus’ Messiahship and Passion* (trans. Walter Lowrie; New York: Macmillan, 1950), 143; idem, *Kingdom of God and Primitive Christianity*, 118–19, 124.

destroy the forces of evil and to establish the kingdom of God.<sup>75</sup> This time is referred to as “the woes of the Messiah” in rabbinic literature (*b. Sanh. 98b*).<sup>76</sup> There is little consistency in either the labeling or conceptualization of this mythical expectation in apocalyptic scenarios, either in the ancient sources or in modern scholarly discussion,<sup>77</sup> largely because the eschatological tribulation is a multivalent mythical conception capable of being understood and used in a great variety of ways. The best discussion of the eschatological tribulation and many of its constituent motifs is that of Brant Pitre<sup>78</sup> who focuses on the eschatological tribulation in relation to the end of the Jewish exile. Judaism had experienced some horrific wars, including the brutal repression of Jewish religious practices by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (168–64 B.C.E.) and the first Jewish revolt (66–73 C.E.), ruthlessly repressed by Rome involving the destruction of the temple and the slaughter of thousands of Jews. Some apocalyptically-oriented Jews believed that the beginning of the eschatological tribulation had begun during the initial phases of both conflicts and features of both events were woven into the evolving mythic imagery of the eschatological tribulation.

While it has been argued that the missing definite article before *peirasmos* is problematic for interpreting it apocalyptically,<sup>79</sup> the variety of nouns used for the eschatological tribulation in the New Testament are inconsistently arthrous or anarthrous (two examples follow), particularly in prepositional phrases, and it is also probable that individual instances of *peirasmos* were regarded as part of the *peirasmos*.<sup>80</sup> While *peirasmos* is articular in Rev 3:10 (which reads like a divine response to the sixth petition): “I will preserve you from the time of affliction [*tou peiras mou*] which will come upon the whole earth,” the definite article is missing from *peirasmos* in Mark 14:38 (Matt 26:41; Luke 22:40): “Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial [*peirasmon*] . . .,” which

75. Dan 12:1; *T. Moses* 8:1; *Jub.* 23:11–21; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 27:1–15; cf. Volz, *Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde*, 147–63. The same expectation characterized early Christian apocalyptic eschatology (Matt 24:21; Mark 13:7–22; Rev 7:14: “the great tribulation”).

76. Str-B, 1.950; the Greek term “woe” (*ōdin*) is associated with the pain of childbirth and is used in the New Testament for the eschatological tribulation (Mark 13:8 = Matt 24:7; 1 Thess 5:3).

77. This terminological and conceptual confusion is emphasized by Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation*, 4–8.

78. Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation*, 4–23, 41–130.

79. Anton Vögtle, “Der ‘eschatologische’ Bezug der Wir-Bitten des Vaterunser,” in *Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. E. E. Ellis and E. Grässer; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 344–62, esp. 355.

80. Davies and Allison, *Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew*, 1.613–14; Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah* (2 vols; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1.160.

also clearly refers to the final eschatological trial that has already begun.<sup>81</sup> Again, while Rev 7:14 refers to “the great tribulation” (*hē thlipsis hē megalē*) with definite articles, Matt 24:21 refers to the same eschatological event, “the great tribulation” (*thlipsis megalē*) with an anarthrous phrase.

Since the verb in the final clause in the sixth petition is an aorist imperative, the line is often understood as a seventh petition: “but rescue [*rusai*] us from the evil one [*tou ponērou*].” Apart from the issue of whether or not this clause was added by Matthew (it is absent from Luke), the central interpretive problem is whether to read the genitive singular *tou ponērou* neuter substantive meaning “evil,” (as in Luke 6:45; Rom 12:9; *Did.* 5:2),<sup>82</sup> which fits as a parallel to *peirasmos* when understood as “temptation,” or a masculine substantive meaning “the evil one,” that is, Satan (as in Matt 13:19, 38; John 17:15; 1 John 2:13, 14; 3:12; 5:18–19; Eph 6:16; *Barn.* 2:10; *Mart. Polyc.* 17:1), which fits *peirasmos* understood as “eschatological trial,” brought on by the power and influence of Satan.<sup>83</sup> Even though *ho poneros* is not a Jewish designation for Satan, its widespread use in the New Testament in this sense suggests that it is an appropriate construal of *tou ponērou*, though that may suggest that the entire clause originated with the early church.

### FOR FURTHER READING

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81. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.365, n. 50; Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1.157–62; D. E. Nineham, *Saint Mark* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 392; Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (2nd ed.; London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), 555; Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus* (14th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), 317; Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation*, 150–51, 488–91.

82. The view of Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 411–12 and Luz, *Matthew*, 1.385.

83. Brown, “Pater Noster,” 317–19; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 151–52.

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## GOD AND PLANNING: FOOTPRINTS OF PROVIDENCE IN ACTS AND IN THE ACTS OF PAUL

*Richard I. Pervo*

“Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it” is generally regarded as one of George Santayana’s more penetrating aphorisms. Presuming the statement does not mean that if Jane Doe fails to learn from the history of Sweden in July 1892, she shall have to repeat the entirety of human history, and setting aside such problems as the profound desirability of repeating this or that snatch of the past, the phrase views history as utilitarian.<sup>1</sup> History displays what happens to those who place their hands upon red hot stoves or cry “wolf” when no predator lurks in the vicinity. Most historians would (one hopes) cringe at the crudity of this model, but it does not suffer from a lack of supporters. Baskets crammed with pertinent examples could be gleaned without effort from contemporary politics.

The fundamental and decisive conviction is that history has detectable meaning. If one may transfer the application of E. M. Forster’s famous dictum: “‘The king died and then the queen died’ is a *story*. ‘The king died and then the queen died of grief’ is a *plot*,”<sup>2</sup> one may characterize the first sentence as suitable for a *chronicle*, while the second characterizes *history*, a fundamental task of which is the identification of causes rather than the mere production of lists of effects. Historians characteristically argue from effect to cause. Debate about the importance of various effects can be vigorous, but arguments about causation are often tempestuous. For example, statistics show a decline in adult crime in the United

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1. It is a great honor to offer this small contribution in tribute to Harold Attridge, friend and colleague for forty years, a scholar’s scholar, wise editor, and accomplished administrator. I can still remember Harry reeling off some of the references found below when I dropped by his library carrel one afternoon in 1974. *Multos ad annos!*

2. E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt & Brace, 1954 [reprint of 1927]), 86 (emphasis added).

States from 1991 onward. One interpretation attributes much of this decrease to the legalization of abortions. Fewer unwanted babies result in fewer eventual criminals. One may be assured that opponents of legal abortion, if compelled to accept the evidence, will find different explanations for the decrease.

More than a few historians have, from time to time, been inclined to attribute the failings of this or that group or nation to its moral or other shortcomings while deeming the successes of others to the practice of virtue. Needless to say, history appears in its finest didactic dress when virtue meets consistent reward and vice constant punishment. This moral order can be seen as evidence for the existence of an active divine power, which, in the light of reflection, may be called providence.

The notion of a beneficent guiding providence may be said to have begun with Herodotus, the “father of history,”<sup>3</sup> and it flourished in the work of Greek historians under philosophic, particular Stoic, influence (see below), but this view did not hold uncontested sway. Many historians did not warmly embrace a doctrine of providence. Lady Luck was not absent; the Greeks made a lady of her, so to speak. Statues of *Tychē* (fortune, *Fortuna* in Latin) served as the patron and mascot of many cities. Her attributes included a cornucopia symbolizing the bounty she could dispense and a rudder to show her guidance of affairs. Fortune can take the form of misfortune. Fatalism has some comfort: this is how things had to be. Such comfort may or may not be religious. Whereas our forebears were inclined to seek consolation by attributing evident misfortune to the will of God, many today will say no more than that “stuff happens.”

Astrology enjoyed a wide and rather unembarrassed following in the Greco-Roman world. The leading appeal of astrology was its utility for predicting the future. Divination and/or prophecy of various types served as principal buttresses for belief in providence. Some ancient historians attributed outcomes to fate without setting forth theories on the matter. One example of this stance is the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (*Jewish War*). Others looked for the hand of providence. An example of this stance is the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (*Antiquities*).

From the rationalist perspective, a historical playing field in which one or more gods intervenes to punch the ball into one goal or to deflect it from another is ludicrous. At the same time the practical lessons and moral illustrations of his-

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3. On the theological underpinnings of Herodotus, see Charles W. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 78–79. Thucydides, generally acknowledged as the greatest of Greek historians, did not invoke fate, chance, or providence. Tacitus, widely regarded as the best Roman historian, was quite dubious. See, e.g., *Ann.* 4.20.

tory lose much of their force if events are the result of mere caprice. Polybius, widely acknowledged as one of the greatest Greek historians, was a committed rationalist, but he nonetheless begins his great work with this claim:

Now my history possesses a certain distinctive quality which is related to the extraordinary spirit of the times in which we live, and it is this. Just as Fortune (*tychē*) has steered almost all the affairs of the world in one direction and forced them to converge upon one and the same goal, so it is the task of the historian to present to his readers under one synoptical view the process by which she has accomplished this general design. It was this phenomenon above all which originally attracted my attention and encouraged me to undertake my task. (Polybius, *Histories* 1.4)<sup>4</sup>

To the ordinary reader this “Fortune” looks very much like providence by another name. The role of the historian who would emulate Polybius is not to argue for such a providence but to discover it. Polybius is not, however, consistent. He can use *tychē* in several senses, ranging from what chanced to occur to the inexplicable and beyond. In 36.17 the distinguished historian had another go at the matter. This reveals his ideals but does not fully illuminate his practice. In his concise and accessible review of the matter F. W. Walbank concludes that the term can embrace both chance and fate, “What happened to happen and what had to happen.”<sup>5</sup> Ancient historians may have wished to distance themselves from superstition and to avoid theology, but the drive for meaning places obstacles in the paths of both determinism and happenstance, philosophies of history that view it as proof of a beautifully designed carpet or as demonstration of the futility of pursuing purpose behind the mere nest of events.<sup>6</sup>

If historians can be tempted to look for providence and discover what they sought, can the presence of a beneficent necessity serve to propel a work onto the shelves reserved for historiography? Baldly stated, that is the object of this essay. Its particular focus is the book of Acts. The *Antiquities* of Josephus and, in particular, the *Acts of Paul* will provide texts for comparison. These far from crystalline waters are further muddled by two factors with which scholars of the previous generation did not have to contend. One is a contribution of postmod-

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4. Citations to Polybius, *Histories* are from Ian Scott-Kilvert (trans.), *Polybius: The Rise of the Roman Empire* (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1979).

5. F. W. Walbank, “The Problem of Fortune,” in his introduction to Scott-Kilvert, *Polybius*, 27–30. *Tychē* can, for example, undertake no less a providential task than the punishment of wrongdoers (e.g., Polybius, *Histories* 15.20).

6. On providence as an “organizing principle of Greek history,” see John T. Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts* (SNTSMS 76; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 16 n. 4.

ern thinkers, who emphasize that the proclivity of historians to discover causes and purposes marks much, if not most, historiography as governed by a providence created by the historian. To the extent that this observation is valid, the gap between historians and novelists is diminished. Polybius came perilously close to providing evidence for the postmodern position (1.4, cited above).

In the 1970s one could safely posit that (Luke and) Acts were quite independent of Josephus and that the author of the *Acts of Paul* did not know the canonical book. The consensus of contemporary scholarship is that the author of the *Acts of Paul* utilized Acts.<sup>7</sup> Literary dependence does not establish generic identity. This does mean that, if *Acts of Paul* envisions the early Christian mission unfolding in accordance with a divine plan, it cannot be proposed that the author had never come across that idea elsewhere. The sound of the second shoe dropping represents increasing applause for the notion that the author of Luke and Acts made use of some of the writings of Flavius Josephus.<sup>8</sup> Reasons for this change of opinion include methodological shifts, notably more sophisticated approaches to intertextuality and to the application of redaction criticism (the study of an author's editorial methods and techniques). Because Luke has a number of positions and proclivities in common with Josephus, one must either posit an unknown Jewish historian who shared many of Josephus's particular views or deem it likely that Luke had some familiarity with Josephus.<sup>9</sup> The latter is more probable.

These three: Josephus, Acts, and the *Acts of Paul* cannot be treated as three independent witnesses to one phenomenon or another. Acts *may* be independent of Josephus, but dependence cannot be presumed. How much does the possibility that Josephus served Luke as a source rather than as a parallel, change methods and conclusions? Not absolutely. One may still argue for generic similarities, for example. Josephus remains one of the best points for comparison with Acts. If Luke used Josephus, much can be learned from how he did so. Few doubt that the author of Acts was completely unfamiliar with Greco-Roman historians; it is quite probable that Luke knew some of the Hellenistic Jewish historians whose work

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7. Space does not permit an enumeration of the arguments for this relationship, which will be set forth in considerable detail in my forthcoming commentary on the APl in the Yale Anchor Bible Series.

8. See Richard Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Polebridge, 2006), 149–99, for a detailed argument that Luke is dependent upon Josephus.

9. The argument has more force if one presumes that Acts made use of written sources, but even those who view the work as very early and the result of eyewitness activity, cannot account for all of the data. Acts 5:34–39 presents a famous case. For arguments that dependence upon Josephus is the most probable and economical possibility, see Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 152–60.

survives only in fragments, such as Artapanus and Aristobulus.<sup>10</sup> Luke's familiarity with biblical historiography of various types is indisputable. Josephus would have been an important resource, but not the only one.

The Stoa, with its holistic and deterministic orientation, provided the most obvious intellectual foundation for a doctrine of providence. "The Stoics' god is, first, an immanent, providential, rational, active principle imbuing all matter ... sometimes identified with nature or fate."<sup>11</sup> Stoic views exhibited development in response to criticism. By the second century (later than Josephus) Middle Platonists had appropriated (and modified) the Stoic doctrine.<sup>12</sup> The rise of the Roman Empire and its universal claims fostered a congenial environment for proposing a providence that guided history toward its goal.<sup>13</sup> Two historians who made use of this tool are Diodorus Siculus and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. The former is important because he sought to produce a universal history. The latter provided the major model for Josephus's *Antiquities*.

Diodorus attributes to providence the misfortunes of the unrighteous as well as proper outcomes for the virtuous.<sup>14</sup> Although terminology suitable for the miraculous may appear, most of the events are "natural," such as punitive earthquakes (15.48) or rain in the desert (17.49). Other epiphanies are conventionally wondrous (the Dioscuri, 4.43; Athena, 11.14). Putative epiphanies like these indicate on whose side god (and the historian) stand. Diodorus is not shy about the historian's place in this scheme:

10. For the latter see Richard Pervo, *Acts. A Commentary* (ed. H. W. Attridge; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 438–39. For Artapanus, consult the index, 475.

11. A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (2 vols; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1.331, commenting on twenty-one texts cited, 323–31 (Sec. 54. For the original languages see vol. 2.321–32.)

12. See Apuleius (below) and the tractate *On Fate* included among the works of Plutarch, *Mor.* 568B–574, trans., with a good brief introduction: *Plutarch's Moralia* 7 (trans. Phillip H. De Lacy and Benedict Einarson; Loeb; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), 303–59.

13. Note the surveys by Harold W. Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus* (HDR 7; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976), 71–107; 145–65, as well as idem, "Josephus and His Works," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (ed. Michael Stone; CRINT 2.11; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 185–232, and Squires, *Plan of God*, 15–52. See also W. Capelle, "Zur antiken Theodicee," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 20 (1907): 173–95; W. Theiler, "Tacitus und die antike Schickalslehre," *Phyllobolia für Peter von der Mühl* (Basel: Schwabe, 1946), 35–90, J. Behm, "πρὸς τὸν Θεόν," *TDNT* 4:1009–17. William C. Greene, *Moirai: Fate, Good, and Evil in Greek Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963 [reprint of 1944]), 331–98, usefully surveys the subject.

14. For details see Attridge, *Interpretation of Biblical History*, 160–61, and Squires, *Plan of God*, 12–16; 38–46, *et passim*.

[*The proper sort of*] historians have therein shown themselves to be, as it were, ministers of Divine Providence. For just as Providence, having brought the orderly arrangement of the visible stars and the natures of mortals together into one common relationship, continually directs their courses through all eternity, apportioning to each that which falls to it by the direction of fate, so likewise the historians in recording the common affairs of the inhabited world as though they were those of a single state, have made of their treatises a single reckoning of past events ... (Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History* 1.1.3)<sup>15</sup>

Postmodernists will applaud Diodorus's candor. Despite this promise of seeing the hand of god in the demise of every sparrow, Diodorus does not make frequent references to providence. Dionysius of Halicarnassus also attends to providence as a provider of useful examples by thwarting the wicked and rescuing the righteous.<sup>16</sup> Although Josephus exhibits no apparent knowledge or use of Diodorus, Dionysius was an important influence. Emilio Gabba summarizes Dionysius' theology of history thusly:<sup>17</sup> reverence (*eusebeia*) for the divine produces benevolence (*eunoia*), a natural consequence of which were the cardinal virtues of moderation (*sōphrosynē*) and upright behavior (*dikaiosynē*). The net result is civic harmony (*homonoia*). Sturdy bravery in war will naturally follow.<sup>18</sup> The relation between piety and divine benevolence are also central to Josephus, whose philosophy in the *Antiquities* is summarized by Harold Attridge:

The fundamental theological theme of the *Antiquities*, that history is a record of divine providence at work rewarding the good and punishing the wicked, indicates the roots of Josephus in the biblical historiography of the Deuteronomist and the Chronicler, but it is worked out in a distinctive way. To express this divine governance of affairs Josephus relies primarily on the Greek term *pronoia*, which, for the most part, replaces the more deterministic language of fate and destiny used prominently in the *War*.<sup>19</sup>

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15. References to Diodorus Siculus are from Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History* (trans. C. H. Oldfather; Loeb vol. 1; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933). The passage reeks of Stoicism.

16. On Dionysius see Attridge, *Interpretation of Biblical History*, 161–64, and Squires, *Plan of God*, 16–18; 122–29, *et passim*.

17. E. Gabba, *Dionysius and the History of Archaic Rome* (Sather Lectures 56; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 200.

18. This is, in effect, a summary of Greek civic social ethics.

19. Attridge, "Josephus and His Works," 218.

Attridge stresses that this language also replaces the traditional theology of election and covenant. Although more intelligible to a Greco-Roman audience, the theory of providence is not simply a matter of translation. Whereas the concepts of election and covenant can be construed as particularistic, a doctrine of providence is readily applicable to a universalistic orientation. This Hellenistic Jewish context encouraged early Christians to view the religion of Israel as universal in scope. When leaders like Moses are characterized as benefactors they are ripe for inclusion among other benefactors of the human race.<sup>20</sup> Artapanus was one, and not the only one, who seized upon the opportunity to make Moses one of history's great benefactors.

Josephus, like others, attributes to divine providence remarkable events (including those commonly designated as miracles, such as the Akedah [sacrifice of Isaac] and the crossing of the Red Sea) that exhibit vice punished and virtue rewarded. The existence of providence is established by two categories, wonders and predictions. These may overlap, since portents may indicate what is to come. Divination of varied types, including astrology, was considered proof of providence. Stoics thus tended to defend divination.<sup>21</sup> From the perspective of argumentation, historians appealed to remarkable events, prophecy in particular, to reinforce their arguments. Clare K. Rothschild has profiled historiographical rhetoric in ample detail, illuminating its value for supporting historical convictions, opinions, and prejudices.<sup>22</sup> Josephus's portrayal of Daniel well illustrates how prophecy serves providence:

All these things (*the persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes, Rome's conquest of the Judean revolt*), as God revealed them to him, he left behind in his writings, so that those who read them and observe how they have come to pass must wonder at Daniel's having been so honoured by God, and learn from these facts how mistaken are the Epicureans, who exclude Providence from human life and refuse to believe that God governs its affairs or that the universe is directed by a blessed and immortal Being to the end that the world runs by its own movement ... (Josephus, *Ant.* 10.277–78)<sup>23</sup>

This polemical jab intends to shame deniers of providence, among whom the Epicureans hold theoretical pride of place. Although the author of Acts, who does

20. Cf. Attridge, *Interpretation of Biblical History*, 79–81.

21. See, e.g., Cicero, *Nat.d.* 2:7–12.

22. Clare K. Rothschild, *Luke-Acts and the Rhetoric of History* (WUNT 2/175; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), esp. 142–212.

23. References to *Ant.* are from Josephus, *Antiquities* (trans. Ralph Marcus; Loeb; *Josephus* VII; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1937), 311–13.

not hesitate to advance arguments from wonders and prophecies, is often compared with Josephus, he makes no statement comparable to this. Epicureans are mentioned, along with Stoics, at 17:18 (Athens), where they jointly apprehend Paul. The subsequent speech (17:22–31) argues for the existence of god from nature. This is a feature often associated with providence. The Epicureans of the dramatic audience press no specific objections.<sup>24</sup> Study of Josephus can help one understand the intellectual background of Acts, but it also shows Luke's relative lack of interest in certain issues.

Josephus does not represent the gold standard of Greco-Roman historiography with regard to this subject. Attridge says, "The closest parallels to the language of Josephus with its specific connotations occur in more popular religious contexts and in the historical literature which reflects the popular, non-philosophical belief and usage."<sup>25</sup> His primary example is 3 Maccabees, a fictional account of the deliverance of Egyptian Jewry from annihilation.<sup>26</sup>

Greek historians often made use of the theme of providence.<sup>27</sup> Josephus is distinctive, in his *Antiquities*, for making it a central element of his argument and using it as a structure for a number of important episodes.<sup>28</sup> This Jewish historian is both atypical in his evaluation of the place of providence in historiography and inclined toward the lowbrow. If Luke's writings are comparable to those of Josephus, he is not thereby vaulted into the ranks of Polybius, or even of Dionysius of Halicarnassus.

John T. Squires, who devoted his Yale dissertation to the argument that Luke's use of providence and related themes supports the classification of his work as

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24. Acts 17:32 reports a mixed reaction to Paul's statements about resurrection. One might suppose that the Stoics were among the more polite, but the narrator does not say so. On the passage see R. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 423–42. For the debate about providence between Stoics and Epicureans see the references in Squires, *Plan of God*, 39 n. 11. In Acts 23:8 the narrator notes that Sadducees deny resurrection, but that observation explains why Paul can start a brawl between two sects.

25. Attridge, *Interpretation of Biblical History*, 159. Martin P. Nilsson regards the use of *pronoia* in miracle stories and the accounts of punishment of those who defy god or the gods as intellectual degradation (*Geschichte der griechischen Religion*. Vol. 2 [2nd ed.; München: Beck, 1961], 705).

26. Attridge, *Interpretation of Biblical History*, 152–53, 159. Attridge also discusses *Jubilees*, 2 Maccabees, and the *Book of Biblical Antiquities* known as "Pseudo Philo."

27. Rothschild (*Rhetoric of History*, 149) says: "The divine guidance of history was a principle ancient historians would neither argue for, nor argue without. It was taken for granted because it was imperative to persuasive claims to truth." Some historians did, as shown here, argue for divine guidance. Others were dubious. (See above.) The statement applies to *many* ancient historians.

28. *Ibid.*, 164.



historiography, admits that Christians did not engage providence in philosophical terms until the era of the apologists (mid-second century). He concedes that Luke reveals little familiarity with the intellectual conversation.<sup>29</sup> Lukan emphasis lies upon the term *boulē* of God, in the sense of “will.”<sup>30</sup> Although not frequently employed to denote providence, the term is not unparalleled. For Luke language about the plan of God emerges particularly in reference to two events that challenge the conventional plot of salvation history: the crucifixion of Jesus and the gentile mission. The messiah was not expected to be crucified, nor, upon his arrival, to be rejected by a majority of God’s people yet embraced by gentiles.<sup>31</sup>

Squires states, “Luke exhibits an awareness of the philosophic dimension of this providential theme.” His evidence is the critique of idolatry by Stephen and Paul (Acts 7:48; 17:24), but this polemic is not fully pertinent.<sup>32</sup> The major pillar of Luke’s argumentation about the passion and subsequent mission is his appeal to necessity. (See below.) This may not have been how you would have arranged matters, nor would it have been my plan, but this is how God chose to do it. Providence and necessity are not necessarily, if you will pardon the adverb, identical. To buttress his arguments about providence Squires takes up three types of wondrous events: portents, epiphanies and fate.<sup>33</sup>

Portents are signs, including “acts of god,” interpretations of natural phenomena, and divination of various types. An example is Acts 1:24–26, where lots are cast to select an apostle (thereafter the Holy Spirit takes charge of such matters.) Close to a conventional type of portent in Acts are the earthquakes reported in 4:31 and 16:26. The former demonstrates that God has heard the prayers of the community. The latter is part of the apparatus of a prison-release miracle. In the story both function as epiphanies.<sup>34</sup> Squires views the miracles attendant to the prayer in 4:24–31 as evidence of providence.<sup>35</sup> This is, no doubt, implicit, but the predetermined plan of God is the condemnation and execution of Jesus (4:27–28). The best example of the association of a miracle with providence is Acts 14:8–18, which links the particular benefaction of a healing to God’s general

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29. Squires, *Plan of God*, 14, 20, 52–53.

30. See Gottlob Schrenck, “βούλομαι,” *TDNT* 1.633–37. Important occurrences are Acts 2:33; 4:28; 13:36; 20:27.

31. Acts 13:36 is an interesting exception: David died in accordance with God’s plan. Since David replaced the deposed Saul and engaged in misbehavior, the subtle, and quite possibly intended, message is that God writes straight with crooked lines, i.e., that such apparent deviations as the crucifixion and gentile mission are less anomalous than one might think.

32. Squires, *Plan of God*, 77.

33. *Ibid.*, 78–102 (portents); 102–20 (epiphanies); 155–85 (fate) respectively.

34. See Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 120–24 and 397–415.

35. Squires, *Plan of God*, 98–99.

benefactions to the human race.<sup>36</sup> Luke assumes, rather than argues for, divine providence.

Squires includes dreams among the epiphanies. Through the apparatus of dream epiphanies, angelophanies and visions Luke makes it clear that God is in charge. Perusal of Acts 8:26 through 13:3 indicates that these manifestations cluster most thickly at the inauguration of the gentile mission. The narrator does not, as narrators of histories will sometimes do, stand aside and say, "The linked visions of Peter and Cornelius or of Paul and Ananias show, dear reader, that the course of the world in general and the mission of Jesus' followers in particular is directed by the providence of a loving god." Any dolts who could not grasp that from the story will not get the point if crammed down their throats. Formally, Luke is an author who shows rather than tells. Historians may both show and tell, but their vocation is based upon telling, that is, upon pointing out the meaning of events.

Prophecy constitutes Squires' last category. Oracles of various types were an important feature of ancient historiography. Josephus rather strongly emphasized the link between prediction and prophecy, as indicated above.<sup>37</sup> Rothschild examines prediction in historiography from the viewpoint of the historians' goals rather than of theology. Reports of fulfilled predictions strengthen the author's viewpoint: this account is accurate because every important incident was forecast.<sup>38</sup> The author of Luke and Acts reveals no need to explain the function of prophecy. The implied reader understands the value of fulfilled predictions and their implicit support for the view that things happen because God wills outcomes.<sup>39</sup> This leads to the final topic: necessity, fate, and free will.

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36. See Mikeal Parsons and Richard I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 92–93.

37. Biblical prophecy is properly defined as the application of God's word to particular situations. In the Hellenistic era prediction gained importance, as can be seen in the New Testament.

38. Squires provides a more detailed survey of Greco-Roman practice (*Plan of God*, 122–37). Rothschild's examination of prediction in Luke and Acts is quite detailed (Clare K. Rothschild, *Luke-Acts and the Rhetoric of History* [WUNT 2/175; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004], 158–82). Squires' leading concern is to equip Luke as a Greco-Roman historian; he does not comment on the veracity of the accounts. The object of Rothschild's study is to demonstrate that the rhetorical strategies and techniques of most Hellenistic and Roman historians demonstrate that truth was not their leading concern.

39. In order to understand Luke's view of the Hebrew Bible one must realize that, to put it rather crudely, Luke argues from fulfillment to prophecy. In effect, since the Messiah suffered, the prophets predicted it.

Squires engages the questions of fate and divine necessity as the climax of his study.<sup>40</sup> After a review of the problem in various Greco-Roman historians and some reflections upon the philosophical context, he turns, as usual, to Josephus and then to Luke-Acts. The impersonal *dei* and equivalent (it is necessary, must be, has to be) is prominent in the Lukan writings (41 of 102 NT occurrences), as are a number of verbs beginning with *pro-*, “in advance” (such as “choose in advance”). The subject raises a number of questions, including the function of necessity in salvation history, apocalyptic, and historiography. Walter Grundmann identified the tension between the Hellenistic propensity to view the divine as an impersonal fate, that is, *tychē*, and the Hebrew concept of a single, personal God. In apocalyptic thought determinism was, as in classical Marxism, a source of encouragement: however small, oppressed, and insignificant your movement now appears, it will win. Rothschild underlines and exposes this rhetorical function of argument from necessity within the broad scope of historiography.

Squires concludes that Luke’s use of necessity places him in the company of Hellenistic historians. “Like them, he appears to be well aware of the broad issues involved in relating necessity to human free-will, but also quite content to avoid the technical terms and concepts of the philosophical discussion.”<sup>41</sup> The second cause is certainly correct, and it weakens the second. How does one seem to be aware of such issues without discussing them? Finally, Luke does not, like many historians, discuss fate or necessity as a concept or condition; he states what must have happened and what must happen. Humans can resist or reject the plan of God; they cannot thwart it. That fact does not qualify as learned, or even unlearned, reflection upon the conflict between providence and free will.<sup>42</sup> Squires’ thesis that Luke was aware of the underlying intellectual issues and ques-

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40. Squires, *Plan of God*, 155–85. Representative scholarly contributions include: Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (London: SPCK, 1958 [Original, 1927]), 303–6, Siegfried Schultz, “Gottes Vorsehung bei Lukas,” *ZNW* 54 (1963): 104–16, *TDNT* 1:629–37, Walter Grundmann, “δεῖ,” *TDNT* 2:21–25, K. L. Schmidt, “ὁρίζω,” *TDNT* 5: 452–56, Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St Luke* (trans. G. Buswell; New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 151–54, Charles H. Cosgrove, “The Divine ΔΕΙ in Luke-Acts: Investigations into the Lukan Understanding of God’s Providence,” *NovT* 26 (1984): 168–90, and Rothschild, *Rhetoric of History*, 185–212. See also François Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Thirty-Three Years of Research 1950–1983* (trans Ken McKinney; Allison Park, Pa.: Pickwick 1987), 1–77.

41. Squires, *Plan of God*, 178.

42. Rothschild, *Rhetoric of History*, 193 n. 35, proposes, in opposition to Haenchen’s contention that Luke has not worked out the problem of reconciling divine necessity and human freedom, that Luke may represent “a creative and sophisticated compromise to this insoluble dilemma.” Luke could be creative and sophisticated, but the evidence for such activity in the theological realm is wanting.

tions but chose not to make them explicit is not, on the basis of the evidence, sustained. The closest Luke comes to something approximating a “philosophy of history” is in his language of necessity, which has been appropriated from a number of sources and leaves the author open to the charge that “must” is a card he plays to stifle objections to the doctrine that the messiah suffered and that gentiles replaced Jews as heirs to the promise.<sup>43</sup> Evocations of providence are associated with nature rather than history. Luke’s views of divine providence may have been influenced by Josephus, but this would be a difficult case to formulate. One explanation for the existence of evil is the Devil/Satan. Archdemons and the like are not characteristic elements of Greco-Roman historiography, but this creature is an important element of Lukan cosmology.<sup>44</sup>

John Squires begins with the assumption that Luke and Acts are specimens of ancient historiography and argues that the author’s philosophy of history reinforces this view.<sup>45</sup> If one begins without this assumption, Luke’s exposition of providence will not suffice to answer the question. Luke and Acts have benefited from comparison with a number of genres and texts. A few examples of such comparison follow.

### FASHIONING GOD’S PLAN

The unfortunate Miss Prism offered this summary of her long misplaced novel: “The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means.”<sup>46</sup> Her judgment, absent the last five words, would have warmed the Deuteronomist’s and the Chronicler’s hearts—not to mention all who enjoy reinforcement of the moral order. Miss Prism (and, some may suspect, her creator) associate the tidy correlation of behavior and fate with fiction. Her point is at least valid to this extent: fiction makes the construction of a moral universe a much more manageable task than is the case with history. Such a result even Miss Prism can achieve.

Novelists before (and since) this good lady have found themselves equal to the task of attributing rewards for the good and punishments for the wicked to the workings of a just providence. Among these were some ancient novelists. One

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43. That charge is not fair, but refuting it would require labor both substantial and subtle.

44. See Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).

45. Squires ignores the questions raised by Richard Pervo, *Profit with Delight: the Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) and implicitly rejects the proposals of V. Robbins and L. C. A. Alexander (Squires, *Plan of God*, 20 n.16).

46. Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Act 2; New York: Bantam, 1961) 32.

of the most sophisticated was Apuleius of Madaura, who was a Middle Platonic philosopher. The plot of his complex novel *Metamorphoses* (also known as *The Golden Ass*) pits the providence of the goddess Isis against the machinations of cruel fortune.<sup>47</sup> Transformed through his own impious curiosity and lust into a donkey, Lucius has to undergo more than a few of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune until, repentant, he is rescued by Isis's timely intervention. This is, by and large, a personal providence, although Isis is willing, in conjunction with her bid to be viewed as the supreme deity, to exercise care for the entire society.

Following the Isaic ceremony at Rome marking the opening of navigation, the scribe (*grammateus*) of Isis offered written prayers "for the prosperity of the great Emperor, the Senate, the knights, and the entire Roman people, for the sailors and ships under the rule of our world-wide empire" (Apuleius *Metam.* 11.17).<sup>48</sup> This prayer for the whole state of Rome indicates that the experience of Lucius is but a small example of what Isis has to offer.<sup>49</sup>

Fortune, on the other hand, can be characterized as "blind, savage, and unfair" (*En orba et saeva et iniqua Fortuna*, 5.9; cf. 8.24). Her role is summarized by a priest of Isis in a common image: "You have endured many different toils and been driven by Fortune's great tempests and mighty stormwinds; but finally, Lucius, you have reached the harbor of Peace and the altar of Mercy" (11.15).<sup>50</sup> The source of that mercy and peace was the providence of beneficent Isis:

Surrounded by the silent mysteries of dark night, I realized that the supreme goddess now exercised the fullness of her power; that human affairs were wholly governed by her providence; that not only flocks and wild beasts

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47. This statement is valid whether one thinks that the novel has a "serious" theme (as I do) or views this structure as no more than a plot device. For a reading that treats the novel as serious in its ultimate purpose see Carl C. Schlam, *The Metamorphoses of Apuleius: On Making an Ass of Oneself* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). Another view is set forth by John J. Winkler, *Auctor & Actor. A Narratological Reading of Apuleius' The Golden Ass* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984). Winkler's analysis is brilliant. A fundamental reservation is that essentially every ancient work of moderate or greater length prepared under the technological constraints dictated by poor light and cumbersome scrolls, let alone many other and more recent books, will deconstruct under such a rigorous analysis. For a general survey of Apuleius that takes all his surviving writings into account see S. J. Harrison, *Apuleius: A Latin Sophist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

48. References to *Metam.* are from *Apuleius: Metamorphoses* II (trans. J. Arthur Hanson; Loeb; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

49. Apuleius *Metam.* 11.1–2 extols her universal status.

50. *Multis et uariis exanclatis laboribus magnisque Fortunae tempestatibus et maximis actus procellis ad portum Quietis et aram Misericordiae tandem, Luci, uenisti.*

but even lifeless things were quickened by the divine favour of her light and might. (Apuleius *Metam.* 11.1)

Climactically, with cogent evidence of arguments from miracles wrought by providence, the priest proclaims:

“Let the unbelievers see; let them see and recognize their errant ways. Behold! Lucius, set free from his tribulations of old and rejoicing in the providence of great Isis, triumphs over his Fortune.” (... *Isidis magnae providentia*<sup>51</sup> *gaudens Lucius de sua Fortuna triumphat*; Apuleius *Metam.* 11.15)

Blind fortune has given way to a Fortune that can see (11.15). Isis is superior to fate.<sup>52</sup> Fortune punishes the ignorant and foolish, while providence comes to the rescue of the faithful. Enjoying the favor of providence entails, as Josephus and Luke would agree, acknowledging the proper god.<sup>53</sup> Hostile fate plays a role that has some features in common with the Devil of Luke and Acts. The universe includes both good and dark forces. Without the protecting providence of (a) beneficent god mortals will be in danger of shipwreck.

The other example is a “standard” Greek romantic novel, *Callirhoe*. This is an historical novel, set in the late fifth century B.C.E.<sup>54</sup> The boy and girl meet, lose one another, and eventually find one another. None of these outcomes is simply, easily, or comfortably achieved. The heroine, a stronger and, to most, more appealing character than her mate, Chaireas, knows the source of her difficulties: “Envious Fortune, you hound me by land and sea and have not yet had your fill of my misfortunes?” (*Callirhoe* 1.14.7)<sup>55</sup> She then proceeds to itemize those misfortunes.

At 2.8.3, after *Callirhoe*, refuses to accept an offer of honorable marriage that would make her unfaithful to her husband, the narrator comments: “Yet she was overcome by the stratagems of fortune, against whom alone human reason is

51. The ms. reads *prudencia*. The correction is quite probable.

52. This claim is made explicit in Isis’s hymn of self-praise (“aretalogy”) from Cyme, 55–56: “I master destiny; destiny listens to me.” Cf. also the aretalogy from Andros. Is there a source reference for these hymns? Do the numbers refer to pages, lines or verses? For a study of the language of destiny, fate, and providence in the *Metamorphoses*, see Schlam, *Making an Ass*, 58–66, 142–45.

53. Squires identifies the *Metamorphoses* as “an example of the predominance of Fortune in the hellenistic age,” *Plan of God*, 155 n.5. He neglects to note the place of providence.

54. For a survey see B. P. Reardon, “Chariton,” in *The Novel in the Ancient World* (ed. Gareth Schmeling; rev. ed.; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 309–35.

55. References to *Callirhoe* are from Chariton, *Callirhoe* (trans. George P. Goold; Loeb; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

powerless. She is a deity who likes to win and is capable of anything. So now she contrived a situation that was unexpected, not to say incredible.” Life on fortune’s bad side is unpleasant (if exciting reading).

Our hero has not given Eros that respect that produces good will. For that he will have to pay. “Since Chaereas had now made full amends to Love (*Erōs*) by his wanderings from West to East amid countless tribulations, Aphrodite took pity on him, and, as she had originally bought together this handsome pair, so now, having harassed them over land and sea, she resolved to unite them again” (*Callirhoe* 8.1.3).

The thesis is clear: although fortune can wreak its havoc, it functions only at the sufferance of Aphrodite, almost at her behest. When the great goddess is prepared to take the wheel of fortune,<sup>56</sup> *tychē* must stand aside. The hero, not unlike Lucius—and the apostle Paul in Acts—will reach his safe haven only after much wandering and suffering.<sup>57</sup> Chariton’s Fortune, like that of Apuleius, takes a role like that of Satan in some Christian theological constructions. The devil may or may not make you do it, but that odious creature is allowed to dispense evil that functions as punishment that may, even if contrary to his wishes, bring repentance. The duel of gods in these two novels is not a match between equals. When the powerful goddess decides to enter the game, the more inferior is finished.

Although it is not surprising that “the good guys” always win in light fiction, the tendency of some, at least, historians to discover a kindred plot in history should give one pause. Scholars do not need to speculate about what a novel that gave Paul three days growth of beard and a black hat might have contained. Remnants of that novel exist.<sup>58</sup> A more favorable portrait is available in the clean-shaven *Acts of Paul* (here APl).

## AN INVIDIOUS COMPARISON: THE ACTS OF PAUL

The APl was written ca. 175 in Asia Minor, using diverse sources, including Paul’s letters, Acts, and varied oral or written stories. APl is nonetheless a work of fiction; much of it was created by the author.<sup>59</sup> Because of its generally uncontested

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56. The author, Chariton, was a resident of Aphrodisias, a city enjoying the patronage of Aphrodite.

57. The ultimate prototype is Odysseus. Heracles was also a famous world-wide sufferer.

58. The material is embedded in the Pseudo-Clementines. See Richard Pervo, *The Making of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 177–84.

59. For a brief introduction to the APl, see *ibid.*, 156–64. The following citations are the author’s drafts. All emphases are added. Chapter and section enumeration follows the current edition, which can be found at *ibid.*, 159.

fictional character and the similarity to and overlap of its contents with Acts, API is a useful basis of comparison with Acts. The book includes an ample portfolio of portents, such as resurrections (e.g., 2; 13.1), healings (e.g., 5.1), punitive miracles (e.g., 5.4), wonders in the form of opportune storms (3.22; 6.5; 9.25), and an earthquake (6.5). Epiphanies of divine figures and revelations are frequent (e.g., 1, 3.2; 3.4; 5.3; 9.2; 9.27) as are revelations of God's intentions.<sup>60</sup> The elements Squires identified in various historians, Luke and Acts are thus also present in API. Resurrections and the like have a probative effect, demonstrating who is the real god. In one instance divine providence is invoked with reference to a miracle: A door miracle is characterized in Paul's prayer "The d[oor]s opened] [...] to praise your providence (or "plan," *oikonomia*) [...] so that Artemilla might be initiated with the seal of the lord ... " (9.20). Neither Luke nor Acts makes this specific identification of miracle and providence.

API is also comparable to Acts in that it refers to the plan of God. In chapter 9 the apostle, speaking in the house of Prisca and Aquila at Ephesus, tells the story of his conversion (as in Acts 22 and 26). Traveling from Damascus with two women, the party encounters a fierce lion. Paul prays:

"You who dwell in the heights and take notice of the downtrodden, You who give respite to the downtrodden, You who stopped the jaws of the lions set against Daniel, You who have sent me our lord Jesus Christ, grant us also a means for escaping from the beast and accomplish the established divine plan!" (9.8)

"Divine Plan" here has particular reference to Paul's mission. Toward the end of that same chapter, after Paul has escaped condemnation to the beasts and left Ephesus, an angel appears in the bedroom of Artemilla and Eubula, mistress and slave, both converts, to comfort them: "Don't be upset or ill, but be secure in the name of Christ Jesus and in his might. For Paul, the slave of Christ, the prisoner, has left. He has gone to Macedonia to accomplish the *lord's plans* entrusted to him." (9.27) The passage is based upon Acts 19:21, where *dei* ("must") appears. API makes explicit what is strongly implicit in Acts: the plan of God has particular reference to the Pauline mission, specifically in his martyrdom. Like Jesus, Paul "must" be executed (Luke 9:22).

So also at Corinth, from which Paul will sail for Rome, after he prophesies his impending martyrdom, the faithful are grief-stricken, whereupon

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60. The apologetic speech in API 9.13 appeals to the goodness of creation, like the orations in Acts 14 and 17.



Cleobius, speaking through the Spirit said to them, “Sisters and brothers, Paul must fulfill the *entire plan of God* and go up to the place of death [ . . . ] with impressive instruction, knowledge, and dissemination of the message, until, having stirred up jealousy, he leaves this world.” (12.2)

“Entire plan of God” comes from Acts 20:27, also a farewell address. Here it specifically refers to Paul’s death, as it referred to the death of Jesus in Acts (e.g., 2:23). Following a nocturnal vigil, the apostle closes with these words: “I have no wish to hinder what has been ordained and imposed upon me. This is why I was appointed.” The verbs evoke the description of Paul’s office and mission in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11).

The final reference is Apl 13.1. In command of the ship conveying Paul to Rome is a believer, Artemon, whom Peter had baptized. After attending to the duties of leaving port, “Artemon, by divine grace, joined Paul to glorify the lord Jesus Christ, who had fashioned in advance his *plan* for Paul.” The concept of a divine plan is no less central to Apl than to Acts. The term is even more frequent in these fragmentary Acts than in the canonical book.<sup>61</sup> Only in the Apl does the word meaning “providence” appear in the context of a miracle story.

The preferred term in Apl is not *boulē*, as in Luke and Acts, but *oikonomia* (administration, dispensation, plan of salvation). This indicates that the author has not woodenly copied the canonical book, for *oikonomia* was a common term for God’s plan of salvation in the second century. The author of Apl used contemporary language for a vital and living concept.<sup>62</sup> The case for claiming that the author of this apocryphon was indebted to historiographical theory and practice in regard to the operations of divine providence is essentially as strong as the case made for the canonical book.

## CONCLUSION

Comparison of (the Gospel of Luke and) Acts to Greco-Roman historians on the subject of divine providence, historical necessity, and the function of miracles in historiographical theory does not provide compelling evidence for enrolling Luke among the historians. Other arguments for viewing Acts as historiography exist,

61. It appears that about two-thirds of the text is now extant. A higher proportion of speech material, where one is likely to find such expressions as “the plan of God,” has been lost.

62. This word is also taken over in the Coptic version. *Oikonomia* is Pauline in background (1 Cor 9:17; Col 1:25; Eph 3:2; 3:9.) Eph 1:10 applies it to the plan of salvation. Note also Luke 16:2–3; Ign. *Eph.* 18.2; 20.1; Justin *Dial.* 107.3; and Clement *Strom.* 1.11. Literature: Otto Michel, “*οἰκονομία*,” *TDNT* 5:152–53. Horst Kuhli, *EDNT* 2:498–500.

as do difficulties.<sup>63</sup> Luke focuses on two components of the cluster of themes linked to providence. One links miracles to natural theology and is well-expressed in Acts 14:8–18: a healing should summon humans to acknowledge the miraculous composition of the universe: seasons, sunrise, and celebrations among the miracles of daily life. This is well-expressed, but quite without theoretical underpinning. That foundation John Squires seeks to reveal. He well-illustrates the background of Acts but does not show the author as a philosopher of history at first hand.

That lack is clear in the second strand, which speaks of a divine plan and focuses upon necessity. This determinism is not linked, in Stoic fashion, to nature, or even to salvation history in general, but emerges in the face of two “scandals,” the hideous death of Jesus the Messiah and the rejection of that Messiah by most Jews along with his acceptance by gentiles. One would commit an injustice by saying that, for Luke, providence is a literary device, but it is fair to say that, important as the Plan of God is, it does not constitute a well-integrated component of a theological system.

Clare Rothschild is less concerned with enhancing the identification of Luke-Acts as historiography than with exposing appeals to providence as part of the apparatus of persuasion, as rhetorical tools. Squires, readers may suspect, hopes to secure Luke’s place in a company of saints; Rothschild is content to identify him as one of the boys. “The rhetoric of history” is rhetoric, more or less equally applicable to speeches and treatises, tractates and sermons. In proof whereof is the nearly embarrassing similarity of the role of providence in histories to that in novels. This particularly invidious specimen of comparison does not leave novelists looking worse than historians.

The most logical basis for comparison with Luke is Josephus. On the place of providence in the big scheme, Josephus is not a typical early Roman historian. Harold Attridge concluded that the Jewish historian delves into the realm of popular narrative and thought in constructing his picture of providence. If Luke can be compared to Josephus, he is not thereby equated with historians in general. I had hoped to find reasons for proposing that Luke took over his views of providence from Josephus. That hope went unfulfilled, because Luke does not have enough system to make comparison particularly fruitfully. Moreover, Luke has a personified chief evil power: the Devil. Pre-Christian historians did not make use of such a figure. The contest between Jesus or the apostles and Satan or demons

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63. All agree that Acts is a history of some sort. Discussion becomes interesting when deciding what qualifiers should be applied. Opinion ranges from something like the *Alexander Romance* to a history comparable with Thucydides. For impediments to efforts to identify Acts with a particular type of Greco-Roman historiography see Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 17–18.

is similar to the struggle between fate and a providential god in the two novels surveyed. The closest comparison, however, is with the *Acts of Paul*, which also links the theme of a divine plan with the Pauline mission.

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## THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT: THE CASE OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT

*John J. Collins*

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 and subsequent years in the caves near Qumran, south of Jericho, brought to light for the first time a corpus of writings from Judea, in their original languages, from New Testament times.<sup>1</sup> Before that, Judean writings from this time period were preserved mostly in translation (1 Enoch, Psalms of Solomon, 4 Ezra, etc.), with the exception of the works of Josephus, which were composed in Rome, and not in the author's native language. The Scrolls, then, promised an unprecedented level of access to the religious and cultural environment in which Jesus lived. It was only natural that scholars would comb the newly discovered texts for parallels to the New Testament. In fact, scholarship on the Scrolls for the first decade or so after the discovery was preoccupied with their relevance to the New Testament.

That scholarship has vacillated between two poles. On the one hand, some scholars have posited very close continuity between the early Christians and the sectarian Judaism of the Scrolls. In extreme cases, a few scholars have even claimed that the Scrolls provide "nothing less than a picture of the movement from which Christianity sprang in Palestine," or rather "a picture of what Christianity actually *was* in Palestine."<sup>2</sup> At the other extreme, the views of many New Testament scholars were not substantially affected by the new discoveries at all. While the sweeping holistic comparisons between the early church and the so-

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1. While Harry Attridge is not primarily known as a Scrolls specialist, it should be noted that he has contributed to the edition of the Cave 4 fragments by editing 4Q369, the Prayer of Enosh, with John Strugnell, in *Qumran Cave 4. VIII. Parabiblical Texts. Part 1* (ed. Harold Attridge *et al.*; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 353–62.

2. So Robert Eisenman in Robert H. Eisenman and Michael O. Wise, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered: The First Complete Translation and Interpretation of 50 Key Documents Withheld for Over 35 Years* (Rockport, Mass.: Element, 1992), 10.

called “Qumran Community” have certainly been exaggerated, however, the Scrolls can shed light on the New Testament in many matters of detail.<sup>3</sup>

### THE ESSENES AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

From the beginning, the relation between the Scrolls and Christianity was viewed through the lens of the Essenes. Almost immediately after the discovery of Scrolls, the religious association to which they refer was identified as the Essene sect. The identification was suggested independently by Millar Burrows of Yale, who was director of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, and by the Israeli scholar Eliezer Sukenik.<sup>4</sup> It was prompted by the location of the find, in the area west of the Dead Sea where Pliny had located the Essenes, by the similarity of the admissions procedures in the Community Rule to those of the Essenes as described by Josephus, and by other correspondences, such as the sharing of possessions. The Essenes had always been something of an enigma in ancient Judaism. They are known only from Greek and Latin sources, and their way of life is in striking contrast to that of rabbinic Judaism in some respects, such as the practice of celibacy.<sup>5</sup> For centuries, they and the Therapeutae, who were thought to be an Egyptian offshoot, were believed to be Christian ascetics, the first monks. This belief is found in Eusebius, and persisted down to the Reformation, and beyond in some circles.<sup>6</sup> At the time of the Enlightenment, Essenism was seen as an environment in which a pacifistic, non-materialist, spirituality might be nurtured. It exhibited an ideal of brotherhood and distrust of riches and the temple. A deist, Robert Taylor (1784–1844) declared that “in every rational sense that can be attached to the word, they [the Essenes] were the authors and real found-

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3. See the careful methodological study of Jörg Frey, “Critical Issues in the Investigation of the Scrolls and the New Testament,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 517–45.

4. Weston W. Fields, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Full History* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 58, 81, 87. According to Fields, the identification was first suggested by one Ibrahim Sowmy, whose brother was an assistant to the Syrian Metropolitan Mar Samuel.

5. For the sources on the Essenes, see Geza Vermes and Martin D. Goodman, *The Essenes according to the Classical Sources* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), and the discussion by Joan E. Taylor, “The Classical Sources on the Essenes and the Scrolls,” in Lim and Collins, *Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 173–99.

6. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.16. See Siegfried Wagner, *Die Essener in der Wissenschaftliche Diskussion vom Ausgang des 18. bis zum Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts. Eine Wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Studie* (BZAW 79; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1960), 3.

ers of Christianity.”<sup>7</sup> Such views, of course, also encountered opposition. Taylor was imprisoned for heresy. But they were echoed at the end of the nineteenth century by no less a figure than Ernest Renan, who declared that “Christianity was an Essenism that survived” (“un essénisme qui a su durer”).<sup>8</sup> Renan doubted that there was direct contact between the early Christians and the Essenes, but he thought the similarities were profound, noting the common meal, community of goods, and so on. Essenism represented an attempt to draw the moral consequences of Judaism and the preaching of the prophets. Essenism could not last, because of its extreme form of life, but it anticipated the Christian ideal of the meek who will inherit the earth.

Not all scholars shared this view of the Essenes. Another strand of scholarship saw the sect as “nur der Pharisäismus im Superlativ,” in the words of Emil Schuerer.<sup>9</sup> The place of the Essenes in Judaism was complicated by the discovery in the nineteenth century of 1 Enoch and other apocalyptic writings. Inevitably, some scholars assigned this literature to the Essenes, on the grounds that they were the main representatives of a kind of Judaism different from that of the rabbis.<sup>10</sup> The likelihood that the Essenes were the carriers of apocalyptic traditions was affirmed by scholars of various persuasions, including Renan and Schuerer.

It should be noted that the links between the Essenes and early Christianity, and the identification of the community described in the Scrolls as Essene, were in place before the site of Qumran was excavated. Roland de Vaux and his collaborators have often been accused of imposing a monastic paradigm on the site. Be that as it may, neither the Essene identification of the sect, nor the perceived analogies between the Essenes and early Christianity, originated with the archaeologist.

### A FORETASTE OF CHRISTIANITY?

Renan’s dictum was taken up in the earliest synthetic presentation of the Scrolls then available by André Dupont-Sommer: “Already eminent historians have

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7. Robert Taylor, *The Diegesis, Being a Discovery of the Origin, Evidences, and Early History of Christianity* (Boston: Kneeland, 1834), 38.

8. Ernest Renan, review of P. E. Lucius, *Der Essenismus in seinem Verhältnis zum Judenthum* (Strasbourg, 1881) in *Journal des Savants* (February, 1892), 91.

9. Emil Schuerer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi* (3rd ed.; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1898), 2.577. The affinity with Pharisaism had been argued by scholars of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement, such as Solomon Rapoport and Zecharias Frankel.

10. So especially Adolf Hilgenfeld, *Die jüdische Apokalyptik in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Jena: Mauke, 1857), 243.

recognized in Essenism a 'foretaste of Christianity,'" he wrote. "Everything in the Jewish New Covenant heralds and prepares the way for the Christian New Covenant. The Galilean Master, as He is presented to us in the writings of the New Testament, appears in many respects as an astonishing reincarnation of the Teacher of Righteousness."<sup>11</sup> The Teacher, like Jesus, was the Messiah. He had been condemned and put to death, but he would return as the supreme judge. In the meantime, he too left a "church," supervised by an overseer or "bishop," whose essential rite was the sacred meal. Few scholars saw the similarities between Jesus and the Teacher as being as extensive as did Dupont-Sommer. His claim that the Teacher was condemned and put to death, or that he was expected to come again, was promptly and widely rejected. Dupont-Sommer himself toned down his views in his later publications. He continued to argue, however, for a fundamental similarity between Jesus and the Teacher, mediated by the association of both with the figure of the Suffering Servant in Second Isaiah: "Defining the mission of Jesus as prophet and saviour, the primitive Christian Church explicitly applied these Songs of the Servant of the Lord to him; about a century earlier, the Teacher of Righteousness applied them to himself."<sup>12</sup>

Dupont-Sommer's claims were endorsed and popularized in a much less critical manner by the literary critic Edmund Wilson, even though he was aware that the position of the French scholar was overstated. "If," he wrote, "we look now at Jesus in the perspective supplied by the scrolls, we can trace a new continuity and, at last, get some sense of the drama that culminated in Christianity . . . The monastery [of Qumran] . . . is, perhaps, more than Bethlehem or Nazareth, the cradle of Christianity."<sup>13</sup> Wilson suggested that the scholars working on the Scrolls were "somewhat inhibited in dealing with such questions by their various religious commitments."<sup>14</sup> The fire of this controversy was fanned by a radio broadcast in England by John Allegro, a member of the editorial team, who contended that "Dupont-Sommer was more right than he knew."<sup>15</sup> Allegro spun a scenario in which the Teacher was crucified and expected to rise again, which was promptly

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11. André Dupont-Sommer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Preliminary Survey* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952), 99–100, translated from his *Aperçus préliminaires sur les manuscrits de la mer morte* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1950).

12. André Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene writings from Qumran* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961), 361.

13. Edmund Wilson, *The Dead Sea Scrolls, 1947–1969* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 98. Wilson's original book appeared as *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).

14. *Ibid.*, 99.

15. Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991), 46.



repudiated by Roland de Vaux on behalf of the rest of the editorial team. Thus was born the conspiracy theory, according to which the editorial team, led by a French Catholic priest (de Vaux) withheld or suppressed material that might be damaging to Christianity. This theory never gained wide currency, but it was aired periodically until the full corpus of the Scrolls was finally published in the 1990s.

The claims of Dupont-Sommer, popularized by Wilson and sensationalized by Allegro, provoked the first major debate about the significance of the Scrolls for early Christianity. As in the earlier debates about the Essenes, conflicting ideological agendas were at work. For Allegro and Wilson, similarity between the Teacher and Jesus, or between the Scrolls and Christianity, undercut the latter's claim to uniqueness and to divine revelation. For others, continuity with Judaism grounded Christianity in the tradition of biblical revelation. This was true for the Albright School in North America, and later for Martin Hengel and his pupils in Germany. For these scholars, the Scrolls served to counter the view of Christianity as a Hellenistic cult, associated with German scholarship of the Bultmannian school.

Several scholars entered the lists to counter the exaggerated view of the affinities between the Scrolls and the early Church. In 1955, Millar Burrows wrote: "Direct influence of the Qumran sect on the early church may turn out to be less probable than parallel developments in the same general direction."<sup>16</sup> He was more impressed by the "basic contrasts" between Jesus and the Scrolls, especially with regard to ritual purity, than by the similarities.<sup>17</sup> For Krister Stendahl, "the issue between the Essenes and the early Christians was not one of 'originality,' but a searching question about who were the legitimate heirs to the prophetic promises and who could produce the most striking arguments for fulfillment."<sup>18</sup> Frank Cross also saw the significance of the Scrolls in the light they shed on the context of the New Testament rather than in specific points of influence. For Cross, "the Essenes prove to be the bearers, and in no small part the producers, of the apocalyptic tradition of Judaism."<sup>19</sup> "In some sense," he wrote, "the primitive Church is the continuation of this communal and apocalyptic tradition."<sup>20</sup> Both were "apocalyptic communities." The various analogies between the Scrolls and

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16. Millar Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Viking, 1955), 328.

17. Millar Burrows, *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Viking, 1958), 39–132.

18. Krister Stendahl, *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (New York: Harper, 1958), reprinted with a new introduction by James H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 6.

19. Frank M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran* (3rd ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 144. Originally published by Doubleday in 1958.

20. *Ibid.*, 145.

the New Testament must be seen in the context of their common eschatological consciousness. Within this context, Cross could affirm the affinities of the Gospel of John with the Scrolls, in the symbolism of light and darkness, and the hope for eternal life: "the point is that John preserves authentic historical material which first took form in an Aramaic or Hebrew milieu where Essene currents still ran strong."<sup>21</sup> He also found continuity in messianic expectations, but he denied that the Teacher was either eschatological prophet or messiah, or that he was expected to return from the dead. He was similarly skeptical of attempts to make John the Baptist into an Essene. He was somewhat less guarded on some other issues, and spoke of "the central 'sacraments' of the Essene community,"<sup>22</sup> baptism and the communal meal, construing the latter as a messianic banquet. It is apparent that here Cross was using Christian analogies for heuristic purposes, to understand the new material of the Scrolls. This was an understandable move in the early years of Scrolls scholarship, but is increasingly viewed with caution in later years.

#### DEBATE RENEWED IN THE 1990S

Much of the debate about the Essenes and early Christianity was carried out on the basis of the seven scrolls that constituted the original find. The huge trove of texts from Cave 4 did not become fully available until the 1990s. By then, the general perception of the Scrolls had shifted. In the wake of the publication of the Temple Scroll, and especially of the presentation of 4QMMT at a conference in 1984, it became apparent that halachic concerns, of the kind associated with rabbinic Judaism, were a much more important component of the Scrolls than had previously been realized.<sup>23</sup> The separation of the sect from the rest of Judaism was not occasioned by its messianic beliefs or apocalyptic expectations, but by disagreements about the minutiae of purity laws. Accordingly, it was not so obvious that the Scrolls reflected an "apocalyptic community" analogous to Christianity, or indeed that analogies with Christianity were important for understanding the Scrolls at all.

Nonetheless, when the fragmentary material from Cave 4 became generally available in the 1990s, many of the old issues from the 1950s were revived. Some writing on the subject, such as the book by the English journalists Baigent and Leigh, was blatantly sensational. Some, such as Robert Eisenman's claim that

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21. *Ibid.*, 156.

22. *Ibid.*, 168.

23. See e.g. Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1994).

the Scrolls were the authentic writings of early Christianity, was merely idiosyncratic.<sup>24</sup> But there were also serious scholarly attempts, in the tradition of Dupont-Sommer, to argue that the Teacher and his movement anticipated Jesus and his followers in important ways.<sup>25</sup>

The context of the latter-day debate about the Scrolls and the New Testament, however, is significantly different from that of its earlier counterpart. It is complicated by the great wealth of Scrolls material now available, much of which is not clearly sectarian in provenance. While it still seems plausible that the Scrolls were a sectarian collection, from which certain kinds of material (Hasmonean, Pharisaic) were excluded, they can no longer be viewed as tightly coherent, or assumed to reflect a distinctively sectarian viewpoint in every case. Even within the clearly sectarian material, there is now a greater awareness of the differences between the Damascus Document, which provides for married life, and the Community Rule, which does not. In both cases, it is clear that the sectarian communities had their *raison d'être* in the precise observance of the Torah.<sup>26</sup> If the movement represented by the sectarian rule books was Essene, then Christianity was not an Essenism in any meaningful sense. Suggestions that Jesus may have spent time at Qumran have long been dismissed as unfounded. Such suggestions are still occasionally made with regard to John the Baptist, but are equally baseless.<sup>27</sup> The kind of holistic comparison of the "Qumran community" and early Christianity that characterized the scholarship of the 1950s can no longer be sustained.

This does not, however, preclude the possibility that particular beliefs or customs in early Christianity can be illuminated if we view them in the context provided by the Scrolls. In fact, there have been many fine studies that have used

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24. See above, n. 2. See also Robert Eisenman, *Maccabees, Zadokites, Christians and Qumran: A New Hypothesis of Qumran Origins* (Leiden: Brill, 1983); idem, *James The Brother of Jesus: The Key to Unlocking the Secrets of Early Christianity and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Viking, 1997). Even more fantastic is Barbara Thiering, *Jesus and the Riddle of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Unlocking the Secrets of His Life Story* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992), who identifies the Teacher as John the Baptist and the Wicked Priest and "Man of the Lie" as Jesus.

25. Notably Michael O. Wise, *The First Messiah: Investigating the Savior before Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper, 1999). Note also the controversial study of Israel Knohl, *The Messiah before Jesus: The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000). See my discussion, "A Messiah before Jesus?" in *Christian Beginnings and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. John J. Collins and Craig A. Evans; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 15–35 and "An Essene Messiah? Comments on Israel Knohl, *The Messiah before Jesus*," in *ibid.*, 37–44.

26. See my book, *Beyond the Qumran Community: The Sectarian Movement of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 12–87, and my article, "Sectarian Communities in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in Lim and Collins, *Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 151–72.

27. See the concise discussion by Frey, "Critical Issues," 517–45, esp. 528–30.

the Scrolls responsibly in just this way, notably the essays of Joseph Fitzmyer on a range of topics,<sup>28</sup> or of George Brooke on shared exegetical traditions in the Scrolls and the New Testament.<sup>29</sup> The specific issue which I wish to discuss in the remainder of this essay concerns one of these shared exegetical traditions, regarding the “suffering servant” in Isa 53, which has figured prominently in arguments that Scrolls anticipated early Christianity in significant ways.

### THE “SUFFERING SERVANT”

Since the classic commentary of Bernhard Duhm in 1892,<sup>30</sup> it has been customary to identify four passages in Second Isaiah as “Servant Songs”: Isa 42:1–4; 49:1–7; 50:4–9 and 52:13 to 53:12. The most famous of these passages is Isa 52:13–53:12, which describes a figure who is despised and afflicted but who is vindicated by God and makes many righteous by his suffering. These passages were not singled out in antiquity, and their distinctiveness has also been questioned in modern times.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, readers in antiquity might well have recognized the profile of an individual in the prophecies of the second half of the book of Isaiah. Joseph Blenkinsopp describes the profile as follows: “a prophetic individual acting as God’s agent on behalf of the people of Israel, an individual inspired and spirit-possessed (Isa 42:1; 50:4), the object of a special divine election (41:8–9, etc.) from the first moment of life (44:2; 50:4) and one whose mission led to opposition, abuse, violent death, and ultimate vindication (49:4–5; 50:5–9; 52:13–53:12) by the God whom he served.”<sup>32</sup> As Blenkinsopp recognizes, this profile was not

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28. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Chapman, 1971); idem, *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979); idem, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

29. George J. Brooke, “Shared Exegetical Traditions between the Scrolls and the New Testament,” in Lim and Collins, *Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 565–91. See also George J. Brooke, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005); Florentino García Martínez, ed., *Echoes from the Caves: Qumran and the New Testament* (STDJ 85; Leiden: Brill, 2009), and Craig A. Evans, “Jesus, John and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Assessing Typologies of Restoration,” in Collins and Evans, *Christian Beginnings*, 45–62.

30. Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892).

31. Richard J. Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading: An Interpretation of Second Isaiah* (New York: Paulist, 1984).

32. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Opening the Sealed Book: Interpretations of the Book of Isaiah in Late Antiquity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 252.

necessarily confined to the classic "Servant Songs." Other passages too seem to speak of a distinct individual. Isa 61:1–3 is a significant passage in this regard.

### THE SERVANT IN THE HODAYOT

We have already noted the claim of Dupont-Sommer that the Teacher of Righteousness had applied these songs to himself a century before the early Christians applied them to Jesus. He based this claim on the Hodayot, or Thanksgiving Hymns, which he took to be compositions of the Teacher. (No distinction between Hymns of the Teacher and Hymns of the Community had yet been drawn). Citing such passages as 1QH<sup>a</sup> 5:24; 6:25, 15:6–7, he wrote: "The expression 'thy servant' recurs in these passages with such insistence that one cannot fail to compare them with the celebrated poems known as the 'Songs of the Servant of the Lord' in the book of Isaiah."<sup>33</sup> This view received a surprisingly strong endorsement from William H. Brownlee, who regarded much of Dupont-Sommer's speculation as impossible but concluded: "Yet Professor Dupont-Sommer often has an uncanny knack for being ultimately right (or nearly so), even when his views are initially based on the wrong texts!"<sup>34</sup> He concluded: "Just as the Servant of the Lord of Second Isaiah is the most important single background element for the understanding and interpretation of the New Testament, so it is likely to prove for the Qumran Scrolls."<sup>35</sup>

Later scholarship became more skeptical. Jean Carmignac acknowledged allusions to only three "servant" passages in the Hodayot: Isa 49:4, 50:4 and 53:3.<sup>36</sup> After the work of Gert Jeremias in the early 1960s, it became customary to distinguish between Teacher Hymns and Hymns of the Community.<sup>37</sup> Many of the occurrences of "servant" on which Dupont-Sommer relied were now relegated to the Hymns of the Community. Jeremias admitted only three cases in

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33. Dupont-Sommer, *Essene Writings from Qumran*, 361. Dupont-Sommer cites these passages according to the older numbering of Sukenik's edition of the Hodayot.

34. William H. Brownlee, "The Servant of the Lord in the Qumran Scrolls," *BASOR* 132 (1953), 9.

35. William H. Brownlee, "The Servant of the Lord in the Qumran Scrolls II," *BASOR* 135 (1954), 33.

36. Jean Carmignac, "Les Citations de l'Ancien Testament, et spécialement des Poèmes du Serviteur," *RevQ* 3(1960) 357–94, esp. 383–94. Not every use of the word "servant" could count as an allusion to Isaiah.

37. Gert Jeremias, *Der Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit* (SUNT 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963) 171–73.

the Hymns of the Teacher where the speaker designated himself as “servant.”<sup>38</sup> Martin Hengel felt that the idea that the servant was a model in the Hodayot had been so clearly refuted by Carmignac and Jeremias that it was unnecessary to discuss it further.<sup>39</sup>

The case for the servant paradigm in the Hodayot has been revived, however, by Michael Wise, in his book, *The First Messiah*. Wise accepts that a corpus of Teacher Hymns can be distinguished within the Hodayot. In this he follows the analysis of Michael Douglas, who refined the work of Jeremias,<sup>40</sup> but also finds support in the material evidence of the Hodayot scrolls from Qumran Cave 4, where these hymns seem to have constituted a distinct collection.<sup>41</sup> Whether this block of material should be attributed to the Teacher, or can be used for biographical purposes is still disputed. The argument for attribution to the Teacher rests on the forceful personality and claims made in these hymns. Jeremias argued that

It is completely inconceivable that in [a single movement] within a short span of time there could have been two men, each of whom came before the group with revolutionary claims to bring about redemption through his teaching, and that both men were accepted by the community.<sup>42</sup>

Nonetheless, there has been a tendency in recent scholarship to avoid biographical claims and focus instead on the persona represented by the ‘I’ of these hymns. So Carol Newsom, who is critical of “a romantic model of authorship,” acknowledges that “in a number of the compositions the persona of the speaker is that of

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38. Ibid., 305.

39. Martin Hengel, “The Effective History of Isaiah 53 in the Pre-Christian Period,” in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources* (ed. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 118.

40. Michael C. Douglas, “Power and Praise in the Hodayot: A Literary Critical Study of 1QH 9:1–18:14,” Ph.D. Diss, Chicago (1998); “The Teacher Hymn Hypothesis Revisited: New Data for an Old Crux,” *DSD* 6 (1999), 239–66.

41. In the words of Eileen Schuller: “At least eight psalms of this [i.e. Teacher-hymn] type (some commentators would add a few more) are grouped together in cols. 10–17, that is, in the middle of the reconstructed 1QH<sup>a</sup> scroll, and it is these same psalms that are found in 4QH<sup>c</sup> and 4QH<sup>f</sup>”; Eileen Schuller, “Hodayot (1QH and Related Texts),” *DEJ*: 747–49. Conversely, “all the material in 4QH<sup>a</sup> that overlaps with material in 1QH<sup>a</sup> is from the ‘Hymns of the Community’ type.” See further Schuller, “427–432. 4QHodayot<sup>a-e</sup> and 4QpapHodayot<sup>f</sup>: Introduction,” in *Qumran Cave 4. XX. Poetical and Liturgical Texts, Part 2* (ed. Esther Chazon et al.; DJD 29; Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 75.

42. Jeremias, *Der Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit*, 176, trans. Michael O. Wise, “The Origins and History of the Teacher’s Movement,” in Lim and Collins, *Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 103.

a persecuted leader of the community, whether the Righteous Teacher or some other figure.”<sup>43</sup> It may never be possible to prove that the leader in question is the Teacher (although we do not know of any other viable candidate). The question is whether the Suffering Servant served as an ideal in the Scrolls, whether that ideal was thought to be realized in the Teacher or not. For convenience, we will follow Wise in referring to the author of these hymns as the Teacher, while mindful that the historical identification is in dispute.

Wise builds his case, not on the use of the term “servant,” which occurs in the Teacher Hymns, but not very frequently,<sup>44</sup> but on allusions to the servant poems. He claims that toward the end of the Teacher Hymns, the Teacher “came to speak of himself as the Servant of the Lord in concentrated fashion. He made allusion after allusion to the passages of Isaiah that modern scholars designate Servant Songs and others to portions that might easily be so construed.”<sup>45</sup> 1QH<sup>a</sup> 16 speaks of a shoot nourished by the streams; Isaiah speaks of the servant as a sapling and a root. The one who causes the shoot to grow is “without esteem” (*blw’ nḥšb*; נחשב) like the servant in Isa 53:3. The shoot in the hymn seems to be the community rather than the Teacher, but the Teacher is associated with the Servant by the lack of esteem. Again, 1QH<sup>a</sup> 16.26–27 reads: “I sojourn with sickness and my heart is stricken with afflictions. I am like a man forsaken.” Compare Isa 53:3–4: “He was despised and forsaken by men, a man of suffering and acquainted with sickness . . . We accounted him afflicted.” Another clear allusion to Isa 53:3 is found in 1QH<sup>a</sup> 12.8, where the author complains that “they do not esteem me,” using the same verb, *ḥšb* חשב, that is used with reference to the servant in the Isaianic passage: “despised, and we did not esteem him.” The same allusion is found in 1QH<sup>a</sup> 12.23. The claim of the hymnist in 12.27, “through me you have enlightened the face of the many,” may also be taken as an allusion to Isa 53:11, which says that the servant will make many righteous. There are also clear allusions to other Isaianic passages that modern scholars identify as Servant Songs. 1QH<sup>a</sup> 15.6–7, “I thank you, O Lord, for you have upheld me by your might and have poured out your holy spirit within me,” echoes Isa 42:1: “Here is my Servant whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights. I have put my spirit upon him.” The gift of the spirit also recalls Isa 61:1, “the spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me . . .” While Isa 61 is not regarded as a servant passage by modern scholars, it could reasonably have been taken to speak

43. Carol A. Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space: Constructing Identity and Community at Qumran* (STDJ 53; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 197.

44. 1QH<sup>a</sup> 13.15, 28; 15.16; 17.11.

45. Wise, *The First Messiah*, 290.

of the same figure. In 1QH<sup>a</sup> 16.35–36, the hymnist says that God has made the tongue in his mouth strong “to sustain the weary with a word,” echoing Isa 50:4b.

In all, Wise makes a persuasive case that the speaker in the Teacher Hymns applied to himself language used for the servant in the Book of Isaiah.<sup>46</sup> Like the servant, the Teacher claims to be endowed with the spirit and to have “a disciple’s tongue” (1QH<sup>a</sup> 15.10; cf. Isa 50:4), but is rejected and not esteemed, and afflicted with sickness. Nonetheless, his career benefits “the many.” In some cases, the words of Isaiah are used. It is reasonable to conclude that the hymnist used the prophet’s depiction of the servant to describe his own situation. He may even have regarded himself as the one of whom Isaiah spoke, although that conclusion is not necessarily required by the correspondences.

### THE SELF-EXALTATION HYMN

It is of the essence of the servant poems that God exalts the servant in the end. This claim is muted in the Hodayot, presumably because the speaker has not yet been exalted, although his confidence is strong. Another text from Qumran speaks more clearly of exaltation, of a figure who is also reminiscent of the servant. This is the so-called “self-exaltation hymn,” which is found in four fragmentary texts, one of which was part of the Hodayot Scroll from Cave 1 and another of which was part of the 4QHodayot fragments.<sup>47</sup> The speaker in this text makes several extraordinary claims: “No one can compare to my glory; no one is exalted except me . . . I am reckoned with the gods, and my dwelling is in the holy council.” It refers to “a mighty throne in the council of the gods,” and says: “I have taken my seat . . . in heaven.” It even asks “who is like me among the gods?” Yet some other passages contain echoes of the Servant Songs: “who has been counted contemptible like me” uses language used of the Servant in Isa 53: “despised, and we did not esteem him” (the Hebrew verbs *hšb* חשב and *bwz* בזו are used in both cases). There are also possible allusions to taking away evil. While the text is fragmentary and difficult, it seems that a figure who was subjected to contempt is now enthroned in heaven, above the “gods” or angels. Scholars are divided as to whether the figure in question is the Teacher, an eschatological figure, or even an angel.<sup>48</sup> For our present purposes, it may suffice to say that here again the servant

46. So also Blenkinsopp, *Opening the Sealed Book*, 284–85.

47. The fullest edition is that of Michael O. Wise, “מי כמוני באלים: A Study of 4Q491c. 4Q471b. 4Q427 7 and 1QH<sup>a</sup> 25:35–26:10,” *DSD* 7 (2000): 173–219.

48. See my discussion in *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 149–64, and Philip Alexander, *The Mystical Texts*



seems to serve as the paradigm for an ideal figure, who might then serve as a model for the sectarian reader. The hypothesis that this hymn was attributed to the Teacher after his death is attractive, but unverifiable.

### 4Q541

Another, even more obscure, example of a figure who undergoes adversity but is finally exalted is found in the fragmentary Aramaic text 4Q540–541. This refers to a figure who encounters opposition and falsehood, but who will shine like the sun and will atone for all the children of his generation.<sup>49</sup> The original editor, Jean Starcky, suggested that it evoked “a suffering Messiah in the perspective opened up by the Servant Songs,”<sup>50</sup> while also suggesting that it referred to an eschatological High Priest. In this he was followed by the eventual editor, Émile Puech, and also by Martin Hengel.<sup>51</sup> In this case, however, there are no clear terminological echoes of the Servant Songs. When this figure is said to atone for the children of his generation, he presumably does so as a priest, by offering the appropriate sacrifices, not by his own suffering.<sup>52</sup>

### SERVANT AND MESSIAH?

The Servant of Isaiah’s poems are invoked a number of times in pre-Christian Judaism as a paradigm of humiliation and exaltation.<sup>53</sup> Examples can be found in Dan 11–12 and Wis 2–5. He was not usually understood as a messiah. It has occasionally been suggested that the Servant was viewed as a messiah in the Scrolls. Besides the reference to anointing in Isa 61, there is a noteworthy reading in the great Isaiah Scroll from Qumran (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>).<sup>54</sup> Where the Masoretic text reads “so his appearance was destroyed (*mšht* מִשְׁחַת) beyond that of a man,” the

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(London: T&T Clark, 2006), 85–91.

49. Émile Puech, “540. 4QApocryphe de Lévi<sup>a</sup> ? ar,” and “541. 4QApocryphe de Lévi<sup>b</sup> ? ar,” in *Qumrân Grotte 4. XXII. Textes Araméens. Première Partie. 4Q529–549* (ed. Émile Puech; DJD 31; Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 217–56.

50. Jean Starcky, “Les quatre étapes du messianisme à Qumrân,” *RB* 70 (1963): 481–505, here 492.

51. Hengel, “Effective History of Isaiah 53,” esp. 106–18.

52. See my discussion in *The Scepter and the Star*, 141–45.

53. See Hengel, “Effective History of Isaiah 53,” 75–146.

54. D. Barthélemy, “Le grand rouleau d’Isaïe trouvé près de la Mer Morte,” *RB* 57(1950): 530–49, esp. 546–49.

Qumran text reads “so I have anointed (*mšḥty* מִשְׁחָתִי) his appearance ...” The reading, which dates to the third century B.C.E., may have originated as a scribal mistake, but it lent itself inevitably to a messianic reading, especially if it was read in conjunction with Isa 61. The Teacher Hymns follow the readings of this scroll at several points, but not always, and do not actually cite this passage. Neither the Hodayot nor the Self-Exaltation Hymn make a specific messianic claim. Neither do they claim that the figure who was “not esteemed” and suffered contempt like the Servant suffered vicariously for others.<sup>55</sup>

How does this use of the Servant Poems in the Scrolls compare with what we find in the New Testament?

### THE SERVANT AND JESUS

For Dupont-Sommer and Brownlee, writing in the 1950s, it was self-evident that the Suffering Servant provided the primary model for understanding the death of Jesus in the New Testament. The view that Jesus himself understood his death in terms of the Servant prophecies was expressed in classic form by Joachim Jeremias, even though he recognized that “the number of passages in which Jesus refers Is. 53 to Himself is not great.”<sup>56</sup> This view was criticized sharply by C. K. Barrett<sup>57</sup> and Morna Hooker.<sup>58</sup> Hooker noted that most of the clear quotations of Isa 53 in the New Testament, such as the passage read by the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:32–33, stop short of reference to the meaning of Jesus’s death. Only in 1 Pet 2:22–25 is a quotation from Isa 53 associated with the atoning value of Jesus’ death. There is also a clear allusion in Heb 9:28, as Harry Attridge has also recognized.<sup>59</sup> In her later work, Hooker recognized an allusion to the servant in Rom

55. Pace Knohl, *The Messiah Before Jesus*, 24.

56. J. Jeremias, “παῖς θεοῦ,” *TDNT* 5 (1967): 654–717 (here 716).

57. C. K. Barrett, “The Background of Mark 10:45,” in *New Testament Essays: Studies in Memory of Thomas Walter Manson* (ed. A. J. B. Higgins; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), 1–18.

58. Morna Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant. The Influence of the Servant Concept of Deutero-Isaiah in the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1959). See also her later defence of her position, “Did the Use of Isaiah 53 to Interpret His Mission Begin with Jesus?” in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant* (ed. William H. Bellinger and William R. Farmer; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1998), 88–103. See also the comments of Sam K. Williams, *Jesus’ Death as Saving Event: The Background and Origin of a Concept* (HDR 2; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975), 224–29.

59. Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 266.

4:25, “who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.”

The influence of the Servant paradigm, even on the thinking of Jesus, received strong affirmation from a group of scholars at the university of Tübingen in the 1990s.<sup>60</sup> For Peter Stuhlmacher, the understanding of Jesus’ death in terms of the Suffering Servant

was not first and foremost the fruit of post-Easter faith; its roots lie rather in Jesus’ own understanding of his mission and death. He himself adopted the general messianic interpretation of Isaiah 53 current in early Judaism, but he understood his sufferings quite independently of the prevailing tradition in the light of the word of God given to him from Isaiah 43:33–4 and 53:11–12. After the completion of Jesus’ mission in the cross and resurrection, the song of the Suffering Servant was applied in early Christianity consistently for the first time to a historical individual whose fate made the whole text transparent.<sup>61</sup>

For his claim that a general messianic interpretation of Isa 53 was current in early Judaism, Stuhlmacher relied on Émile Puech’s interpretation of 4Q541, but in fact that text is not clearly an interpretation of the Servant at all.

Claims as to what the historical Jesus may have thought are at least as controversial as claims about what the Teacher may have written. In this case, we must be content to recognize the claims that were attributed to Jesus. Hooker’s insistence on explicit citations is probably too restrictive. We must also recognize clear allusions. So, when Mark 9:31 says that the Son of Man will be *handed over* into the hands of human beings . . . (using the Greek verb *paradidōmi*, also used in Rom 4:25), we must recognize an allusion to the LXX of Isa 53:12, which says that the Servant will be handed over to death and was reckoned among the lawless. The verb *paradidōmi* is used ten times in Mark 14–15. As Adela Yarbro Collins has argued: “This frequent usage makes it into a kind of refrain and surely signifies its theological significance and its allusion to Isaiah 53.”<sup>62</sup> Again, Mark 10:45, “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many,” has important similarities to Isa 53:10b–12 LXX. In this case, however,

60. Janowski and Stuhlmacher, *The Suffering Servant*.

61. Peter Stuhlmacher, “Isaiah 53 in the Gospels and Acts,” in Janowski and Stuhlmacher, *The Suffering Servant*, 149.

62. Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 441. She notes that the destiny of “being handed over” does not belong exclusively to Jesus, but also to John the Baptist and to the disciples. Stuhlmacher also finds an allusion to the *paradidōmi* of Isa 53:12 in Luke 22:19, which adds “which is given for you” to the saying over the bread at the Last Supper.

the term “ransom” (*lytron*) is introduced, which brings to mind the Priestly writings in the Pentateuch, or Greek ideas of sacrifice, but not Isaiah.<sup>63</sup> In Mark 14:24, the description of Jesus’ death as a “pouring out of his blood for many” seems to combine terminology of sacrifice with an allusion to Isa 53.<sup>64</sup>

As Hooker noted, allusions to Isa 53 are used in connection with Jesus in various ways. In Matt 8:17 (“he took our infirmities and bore our diseases”), Jesus is said to fulfill Isa 53:4 by casting out spirits and healing the sick. At Mark 15:28, a citation of Isa 53:12 LXX (“and he was considered to be among the lawless”) is added to explain why Jesus was crucified between two thieves. In other cases, Isaiah is cited as prediction of Jesus’ death (Acts 8:32–33) or Jesus is said to be “handed over,” using the verb *paradidōmi* that is used in Isa 53:12. When atoning significance is attached to the death of Jesus, this is usually brought out by additional sacrificial language beyond that of Isa 53.

### A COMMON SCRIPTURE

If we compare this usage with that of the Hodayot, we find differences as well as similarities. The similarity is basic: Isa 53, and the other Servant passages, provide language that could be applied to the suffering of a righteous man. The particular aspects of Isaiah’s prophecies that are highlighted, however, vary with the context. In the Hodayot, the main motif that is picked up is that the speaker suffers lack of esteem, but that God nonetheless upholds him. He is never said to be handed over to anyone, nor is he said to be put to death. The Self-Exaltation hymn speaks of a Servant-like figure who is exalted, but nowhere in the Scrolls do we find a claim that he atoned for others by his suffering. Even if 4Q541 is taken to allude to the Servant, which is not at all clear, his atonement for the sins of his generation is presumably performed by ritual means, not by personal suffering. There is an obvious reason for this different appropriation of the servant figure. Jesus had been subjected to a shameful death, and this required explanation. Whatever trials he had to endure, the Teacher, or the figure envisioned in the Hodayot, suffered no such fate. Consequently, his death had no special significance.

What emerges from this comparison is that the main feature that the Scrolls share with the New Testament is a common reliance on a corpus of authoritative scriptures, which could be used to contextualize and explain new experience. In many cases, there were also common exegetical traditions, as George Brooke and

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63. Adela Yarbro Collins, “The Signification of Mark 10:45 among Gentile Christians,” *HTR* 90 (1997): 371–82.

64. Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 657.

others have shown. In some cases, prophetic texts were believed to be fulfilled in different ways, as Stendhal observed, but prophetic texts could also be used allusively in ways that were not concerned with fulfillment. In the case of the Suffering Servant, however, we can only speak of the use of a common text, which was interpreted differently because of the different circumstances in which it was used.

Despite the long-standing attempts to make the Essenes into proto-Christians, the two movements were very different, and they applied their scriptures to different ends. Nonetheless, the different ways in which common traditions were used can still enrich our understanding of both phenomena.

### FOR FURTHER READING

- Collins, John J. *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.
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GNOSTICISM AND THE NEW TESTAMENT:  
*THE APOCRYPHON OF JAMES* (NHC I,2)  
FROM NAG HAMMADI\*

Elaine Pagels

The present essay,<sup>1</sup> focusing primarily on the *Apocryphon of James* (NHC I,2), suggests that its opening scene offers an intertextual critique of Acts 1—one that challenges the view that the disciples' direct access to the risen Jesus ended after forty days, and invites the recipient to seek ongoing revelation. As we shall see, a similar pattern occurs in the opening tractates<sup>2</sup> of at least three other Nag Hammadi codices.<sup>3</sup> After the opening scene simultaneously *recalls* and *revises* what

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\* I am delighted to participate in this celebration of our extraordinary colleague and friend Harry Attridge, whose scholarship and generosity of spirit have made invaluable contributions to our field.

1. Note for scholars: a fuller account of the research sketched here is given in Lance Jenott and Elaine Pagels, "Antony's Letters and Nag Hammadi Codex I: Sources of Religious Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt," *J ECS* 18 (2010): 557–89. I am grateful to Lance Jenott for his collaboration on our previous article and his help in preparing this present essay and to Nicole Kirk for her helpful and important comments in revising this article.

2. Although *Ap. Jas.* is now listed as the *second* tractate in Codex I, Michael Williams has persuasively shown that the scribe who copied this tractate as well as the *Gospel of Truth* (I,3) and the *Tripartite Tractate* (I,5) apparently intended *Ap. Jas.* (I,2) to be the opening tractate, but then added the *Prayer of the Apostle Paul*, now labeled (I,1) on the flyleaf; see *Rethinking 'Gnosticism': An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); idem., "Interpreting the Nag Hammadi Library As 'Collection(s)' in the History of 'Gnosticism(s),'", in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi et le problème de leur classification* (ed. Louis Painchaud and Anne Pasquier; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1995), 1–49; for a summary, see the conclusion of this article.

3. For discussion see Jenott and Pagels, "Anthony's Letters," 584–87; also *The Coptic Gnostic Library: A Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (ed. James M. Robinson; Leiden: Brill, 2000), for Codices II, III, and IV, and perhaps also codex VII, which opens with a somewhat similar scene in *Zostrianos*.

Luke sets forth in Acts 1, *Ap. Jas.* offers “dialogue” and discourse in which the risen Jesus first urges his chosen disciples to seek revelation, and then shows them *how* to do so. The techniques he teaches include cultivating the necessary attitudes, encouraging exegetical inquiry into Jesus’ sayings and parables, and demonstrating practices of focused prayer intended to raise heart, mind, and spirit into heavenly regions. Questions the author implicitly addresses throughout the tractate include the following: *what are the media of revelation*, and *how is revelation received*?

The topic originally suggested for this contribution, “Gnosticism and the New Testament,” reminds us first of all how much our approach to the Nag Hammadi texts has changed since their earliest publication. From this text’s discovery in 1945 to its inclusion over fifty years later in *The Coptic Gnostic Library* (Brill, 2000), many scholars have sought to delineate its relationship to other second century Christian sources primarily by defining the extent to which their content is—or is not—“Gnostic.” In his introduction to *Ap. Jas.* published in volume one of *The Coptic Gnostic Library*, for example, Francis Williams declares its teaching “less obviously Gnostic than many Nag Hammadi tractates.”<sup>4</sup> To this day, many scholars have sought to identify this text by asking to which school of “Gnosticism” it belongs, most questioning to what extent its terminology and theology are identifiably “Valentinian.”<sup>5</sup> Since both questions have yet to yield useful results, much less conclusive ones, I agree with those who find that this text shows no significant deviation, either in doctrine or terminology, from a range of other texts classified as Christian apocrypha.<sup>6</sup>

New Testament scholars seeking to reconstruct the history of gospel traditions have initiated a third approach. Noting that the text is saturated with

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4. Francis E. Williams, “The Apocryphon of James: Introduction,” in *The Coptic Gnostic Library*, 1.21; note, too, his conclusion, after discussing terminology: “Many of these traits are also found in orthodox Christian writings, but the occurrence of so many, in a work of this particular type, suggests that the *Apocryphon of James* is, indeed, Gnostic,” 22.

5. Michael Malinine et al., eds., *Epistula Jacobi Apocrypha: Codex Jung F. Ir-F.VIIIv* (Zürich-Stuttgart: Rascher, 1969), 1–16; see Hans-Martin Schenke, “Der Jakobusbrief aus dem Codex Jung,” *OLZ* 66 (1971): 117–30, and the different view of W. C. van Unnik, “The Origins of the Recently Discovered ‘Apocryphon Jacobi,’” *VC* 10 (1956): 149–56.

6. For example, see the incisive article by Boudewijn Dehandschutter, “L’Epistula Jacobi apocrypha de Nag Hammadi (CGL I,2) comme apocryphe néotestamentaire,” in *ANRW* II 25.6:4530, note 2; also 4532–36, and *passim*; also J. van der Vliet, “Spirit and Prophecy in the Epistula Jacobi Apocrypha (NHC I,2),” *VC* 44 (1990): 25–53; and David Brakke, “Parables and Plain Speech in the Fourth Gospel,” *J ECS* 7 (1999): 187–218, who writes, for example, that “it is to this last category, unclassified Christian apocrypha, that the work known as the *Apocryphon of James* belongs,” 203.



allusions to sayings familiar from the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John, as well as other written texts, some have inferred that its author not only knows, but draws upon, a wide variety of written sources, including the Synoptic Gospels, the Fourth Gospel, and other texts as well; one catalogue includes over twelve possible source texts.<sup>7</sup> Others, including Helmut Koester and Ron Cameron, argue instead that this author has incorporated and adapted sayings from independent traditions.<sup>8</sup>

Whatever view one takes of the author's use of sources, the text's central theme is clear: how Jesus' sayings are transmitted, received, and interpreted. Although, as David Brakke points out,<sup>9</sup> the author approaches revelation in terms of an "open canon," he<sup>10</sup> begins by picturing "the twelve disciples" sitting together as they began to write down Jesus' teachings. Abruptly, however, as noted above, the scene changes, to echo—and challenge—the narrative given in Acts 1: the risen Jesus suddenly appears among his disciples long after his resurrection—"five hundred and fifty days" later (2,19–20). Unlike many other accounts describing the disciples gathering in anticipation of the risen Jesus' appearance (e.g., Matt 28:16; *Ep. Pet. Phil.* 133,8–134,10), *Ap. Jas.*' opening scene shows that "the twelve disciples" have no expectation of seeing him. On the contrary, the author initially pictures them acting as if they had accepted the view Luke sets forth in Acts 1: that since the risen Jesus is no longer available to speak with them directly, they have all conscientiously turned to the task of writing down everything they could remember that he had said, whether openly or privately, so that future generations might hear his teaching as well. James was also busy writing, he says, when to the disciples' astonishment, "behold the Savior appeared, (although) he had departed from (us) as (we) gazed after him" (2,16–19).

Thus the author pictures "the twelve disciples" as having accepted the premise that many of his Christian contemporaries could have learned from Acts 1: that since more than a year had passed since Jesus' death and resurrection he

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7. See, for example, Pheme Perkins, "Johannine Traditions of *Ap. Jas* (NHC I,2)," *JBL* 101 (1982): 403–14; Robert W. Funk, ed., *New Gospel Parallels*, vol. 2: *John and the Other Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 218–30.

8. Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia: SCM Press/Trinity Press, 1990), esp. 187–200; Ron Cameron, *Sayings Traditions in the Apocryphon of James* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004); also note Harold Attridge's judicious discussion of this issue in regard to the Gospel of Truth, in "The Gospel of Truth as an Exoteric Text," in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity* (ed. Charles Hedrick and Robert Hodgson: Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1986), 242–43.

9. Brakke, "Parables and Plain Speech," 216.

10. Although we do not know the author's gender, I regard the masculine pronoun as the most appropriate for an author who has chosen to attribute the work to "James."

had by then definitively departed, ascending through the clouds as his disciples watched, “gazing up toward heaven” (Acts 1:10). Luke then has two angels explain that Jesus has “been taken up from you, into heaven” to return only at that eschatological time when he “will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). Luke later has Peter say that Jesus “must remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration” (Acts 3:21). Although Acts does relate that some of the apostles received visions of Christ after his ascension (9:1–6; 10:9–16), many Christians in later generations interpreted such teaching to mean that believers born after the “age of the apostles” might find access to him primarily by means of oral and written “apostolic tradition.”

The opening scene in *Ap. Jas.*, then, pictures the disciples responding to Jesus’ unexpected appearance with an incredulous statement—virtually an objection—that echoes Acts 1: “And after *five hundred and fifty days after he had risen from the dead*, we said to him, ‘You have departed, and were far from us’” (2,19–22). But Jesus increases their astonishment—and so that of the hearers—by answering, “No, but I shall go to the place whence I came.” Then he extends to them an open invitation: “If you wish to come with me, come!” Still hesitant, they remain where they are, and then return to writing their books (2,19–40).

Leaving the others behind, Jesus calls Peter and James to speak with him privately, and exhorts them to be filled with the spirit (2,30–4,22). Pheme Perkins, noting that the text apparently echoes Johannine passages—perhaps especially those that suggest that revelation not only continues after Jesus’ resurrection, but increases in clarity—concludes that for this author “the real issue is oral as opposed to written authority.”<sup>11</sup> Yet the views of revelation offered in *Ap. Jas.* are considerably more complex. From its opening lines, the author clearly shows how much he values written revelation. In the first place, speaking as James, he opens the text claiming to be writing this very *apocryphon*, already having written at least one other “secret book which the Savior had revealed to me” (1,30–31). After “James” relates that he was asked to send this second “secret book” “which was revealed to me and Peter by the Lord” (1,10–13), a book he claims to have “written in Hebrew,” he now hastens to comply, sending this *apocryphon* as well, which he characterizes as salvific, saying that the recipients may be saved “through faith in this discourse” (*hrêi h<sup>en</sup> tpistis <sup>e</sup>mpilogos* 1,26–28). The following scene also takes written sources as its starting point, as it pictures “the twelve disciples . . . sitting together and recalling what the Savior had said to each one of them, whether in secret or openly, and putting it in books” (2,7–15). Thus “James” acknowledges

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11. Perkins, “Johannine Traditions,” 405.

that written as well oral “apostolic tradition” includes not only what Jesus taught “openly” but also what he taught “in secret.”<sup>12</sup>

Does this mention of *written* “apostolic tradition” that includes both Jesus’ public and secret teaching indicate that the author has in mind two distinct sets of books, some “open,” and others “secret”? His description of this very *apocryphon* and the one he says preceded it suggest that that he does, and this certainly is possible. *The Revelation of Ezra* (also called *Fourth Ezra*), for example, attests that such views were current in Asia Minor about fifty years before this text was written, at least among some Jewish groups, for its author describes how the spirit inspired him to restore in writing first the twenty two books of the Scriptures, open to everyone, and then seventy more secret books, to be shown only to “the wise.”<sup>13</sup> When “James” directs the recipient of this *apocryphon* to “be careful not to reveal this text to many,” not even to all of “the twelve disciples” (1,21–25), he, like “Ezra,” ingeniously implies that what the reader now has in hand belongs among a latter category of “secret books.” Yet many of our extant sources include both public and secret teaching. Mark’s Gospel, of course, alludes to both (Mark 4:10–12), although it offers little of what Jesus taught in private. The Gospel of John also claims to offer in the “farewell discourses” what Jesus taught his disciples in private. Furthermore, in his incisive discussion of “parables and plain speech” in the Johannine Gospel and *Ap. Jas.*, David Brakke points out that *Ap. Jas.* also includes both kinds of teaching, and, indeed, “presents all of Jesus’ discourse as a combination of these two.”<sup>14</sup>

While showing regard for written sources, however, this author simultaneously insists that unmediated access to revelation is still—even now—available to those “whom the Lord has made his sons” (16,29–30), here represented by Peter and James. Some scholars have argued that the author plays James against Peter, seeing the latter as representing the “orthodox church”; but such views often assume a static view of Peter’s role in so-called gnostic sources that the evidence

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12. Later, when the Savior takes Peter and James apart from the other disciples for private instruction, the author says that “the Lord” nevertheless tells the others to continue writing, apparently regarding such written “apostolic tradition” as an essential starting point. Perhaps most telling is that when the risen Jesus engages in private dialogue with Peter and James, he reproaches them for not yet having understood his parables (7,5ff), often recalled in oral form, no doubt, but which were likely to have been known to many as well from written sources at the time he was writing.

13. Michael E. Stone, ed., *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); for discussion, see Stone’s commentary, 410–42, and Elaine Pagels, *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, and Politics in the Book of Revelation* (New York: Viking, forthcoming), ch. 3.

14. Brakke, “Parables and Plain Speech,” 206.

does not support.<sup>15</sup> Now the Savior reveals that, contrary to the disciples' expectations, it was not only during his earthly lifetime that he descended to reveal divine truth; even now he descends to those open to receive him:

I have come down to dwell with you, so that you, in turn, might dwell with me. And finding your houses without ceiling, I have come to dwell in the houses that could receive me at the time of my descent. (9,1–9)

This opening scene, then, picturing Jesus' sudden, unexpected appearance, invites its hearers to identify with the chosen disciples, and, like them, to seek ongoing revelation—not only in oral and written accounts of what Jesus did and said in the past, but also by seeking access to the risen Lord (and to the Paraclete 11,11) in the present.

How, then, is one to seek ongoing revelation? The author devotes much of the rest of the tractate to this obvious question, as the risen Jesus begins exhortation and teaching. According to *Ap. Jas.*, seeking revelation has less to do with visions (as I had suggested in a much earlier article)<sup>16</sup> than with engaging in specific disciplines that nurture spiritual growth. First of all, the recipient must come to realize what the opening scene is meant to demonstrate—that such revelations are still available. Next, as Jesus tells James and Peter, they must take to heart Jesus' exhortation to “become full of the Spirit” (2,30–36; 4,19–20), and realize how “empty” they are. That is, while receiving the spirit, they must simultaneously become aware of how much they have yet to learn—a point underscored by the way that *Ap. Jas.* continually juxtaposes teachings that sound contradictory (and throughout are paradoxically stated), so that even these chosen disciples, as Brakke points out, oscillate between understanding and confusion.<sup>17</sup> Then, as van der Vliet shows, the Lord demands that his disciples “believe in my cross” (6,2–5), requiring them to prepare to endure suffering and understand prophecy.<sup>18</sup> Above all, they must come to understand what Jesus has taught, becoming “serious (*refkʿepê*) about the word” (8,10–11) by engaging in exegetical inquiry.

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15. See, for example, Donald Rouleau, *L'Épître Apocryphe de Jacques* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1987), 17. Rouleau reads the contrast *Ap. Jas.* draws between Peter and James as evidence of “un text manifestement polémique,” followed by Madeleine Scopello in her introduction to the text published in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (New York: Harper, 2007), 9–22. For a more accurate view, see van der Vliet, “Spirit and Prophecy,” 45, n. 19, and Dehandschutter, “L'Epistula Jacobi,” 4543; see also n. 19 on the same page.

16. Elaine Pagels, “Visions, Appearances, and Apostolic Authority,” in *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (ed., Barbara Aland et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 415–30.

17. Brakke, “Parables and Plain Speech,” 206.

18. van der Vliet, “Spirit and Prophecy,” 25–53.

In the case of *Ap. Jas.*, this means inquiring into the meaning of Jesus' parables and sayings. With some impatience, Jesus reproaches Peter and James for having failed to

listen to the teaching, and to understand "The Shepherds," and "The Seed," and "The Building," and "The Lamps of the Virgins," and "The Wage of the Workmen," and "the Didrachmae," and "The Woman." (8,5–10)

As other scholars have noted, the risen Jesus here promises that when they come to understand what such parables mean, they will see that the kingdom of God is not just an event coming at the end time, but a reality into which one may enter here and now. But whoever wants to understand these parables must proceed through faith and love toward *gnosis* (8,26–27). Throughout this text, Jesus repeatedly insists that such exegetical inquiry requires serious effort ("work," *hōb*) to proceed beyond simply hearing Jesus' sayings, and come to understand their spiritual meaning.<sup>19</sup> The three agricultural parables given here, incisively discussed by Peter Nagel,<sup>20</sup> invoke the familiar image of the word (*logos*) as seed, and show that becoming "serious" about the word requires, first, having faith in it when it is sown; loving it when one sees its increase, and then "working" it as a farmer tends his harvest, so that it may provide spiritual food.<sup>21</sup> The first parable, unique to this text, compares the kingdom of heaven to a palm plant, whose fruit puts forth many leaves that offer new growth to many (7,24–35).<sup>22</sup> The second parable reiterates that exegetical study offers the potential for spiritual growth, since

the word is like a grain of wheat; when someone had sown it, he had faith in it; and when it had sprouted, he loved it because he had seen many grains in place of one.... So you yourselves can receive the kingdom of heaven; unless you receive it through knowledge (*gnosis*) you will not be able to find it. (8,14–27)

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19. Brakke for example, compares this with Origen's view of exegetical "work" in "Parables and Plain Speech," 208–14.

20. See the careful and incisive discussion by Peter Nagel of these parables and the various translations by Hans-Martin Schenke and Dankwart Kirchner, "Beiträge zur Gleichnisauslegung in der Epistula Jacobi Apocrypha," in *For the Children, Perfect Instruction: Studies in Honor of Hans-Martin Schenke on the Occasion of the Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften's Thirtieth Year* (ed. H.-G. Bethge et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 157–73.

21. Compare *The Gospel of Philip* (NHC II,3), 79,20–30 in *The Coptic Gnostic Library*, vol. 2:200.

22. See Nagel's discussion of translation and interpretation of this parable in "Beiträge," 158–59.

Jesus declares that he tells Peter and James the third parable

so that you may know yourselves. For the kingdom of heaven is like an ear of grain after it had sprouted in a field. And when it had ripened, it scattered its fruit and filled the field with grain for another year. You, too, hasten to reap an ear of life for yourselves, so that you may be filled with the kingdom! (12,20–31)

As “the Lord’s” instruction proceeds, he declares that one needs an advocate (*paraclêtos*, 11,11), apparently alluding, as Perkins points out, to Johannine sayings which promise that the spirit will lead the disciples into truth (John 16:13).<sup>23</sup>

Since *Ap. Jas.* cites only Jesus’ sayings, and not, for example, the Hebrew Scriptures, as the sources that require—and reward—such exegetical study, this author seems to agree with Valentinus’ disciple Ptolemy that “the sayings of the Lord” offer the “only sure criterion of truth.”<sup>24</sup> By invoking such parables to speak of spiritual understanding, *Ap. Jas.* insists that one only comes to true understanding by actively striving to interpret Jesus’ teachings—most likely, as Brakke suggests, in the context of a Christian study circle.<sup>25</sup>

Finally Jesus does ascend into heaven, after exhorting Peter and James to practice focused forms of prayer in order to progressively send heart, mind, and spirit upward into the heavens, where they are to hear, perhaps even participate in, liturgical “hymns, angelic benedictions, and angelic rejoicing” (15,15–23), apparently alluding to practices related to Jewish ascent traditions. Van der Vliet suggests that James and Peter’s attempts to ascend failed to attain their purpose, since they were unable to follow Jesus into the highest heaven.<sup>26</sup> Yet *Ap. Jas.* has “the Lord” acknowledge that his two chosen disciples have opened their hearts (14,26–29), as he had urged them to do; furthermore, both endured suffering and martyrdom. Finally, after Jesus had exhorted them to listen to angelic hymns sung in heaven (14, 27–29), they succeed in this as well (15,14–23).

What their failure to attain the highest level shows is that more remains to be revealed than even *they* have yet received. Rather than showing that they have failed, this indicates that they have, indeed, understood what Jesus here reveals to them. For this final message, like the opening one, speaks to the theme of ongoing revelation—how given, and how received—a message that James and Peter

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23. See Perkins, “Johannine Traditions,” esp. 410–14.

24. Ptolemy, *Flor.* 3.7.

25. Brakke, “Parables and Plain Speech,” 208–17.

26. van der Vliet, “Spirit and Prophecy,” speaks of “the failed ascension by James and Peter,”

are now to deliver to “the other disciples,” who hear it with dismay, apparently feeling their own role diminished.

For James says that when the other disciples “called us and asked us, ‘What did you hear from the master? And what has he said to you? Where did he go?’” (15,30–34), Peter and James answer that he has ascended, after having “promised life to us all, and revealed to us children who are to come after us, after telling us to love them, since we would be saved for their sakes.” James says that the other disciples were “displeased”—first, apparently, to hear that Peter and James have received revelation beyond what they had previously heard in common with the others, and then even more “displeased about those to be born” (16,4–5).

What distresses “the twelve disciples,” then, is that both aspects of this message tend to devalue their own role, and that of the “apostolic tradition” which their writings offer. After all, the author of Luke-Acts, along with many other believers, reserves for “the twelve” a far greater role: not only as the original eyewitnesses, but as the primary and virtually the *only*, reliable transmitters of Jesus’ teaching. The author of *Ap. Jas.* apparently depicts them as having believed their own legend. For in this closing scene, as in the opening one, the author seems to treat “the twelve disciples” as a stand-in for Christians who revere those twelve as the indispensable eyewitnesses that Luke portrays.

The message that angers “the twelve,” then, suggests that what Jesus taught in the past, whether openly or in secret, along with the written “apostolic tradition” attributed to “the twelve disciples,” is not, as many would later insist, the *last word* in authoritative revelation. On the contrary, “James” here comes to see such teachings, and the writings that convey them, as only the *first* word, the *starting point*—indispensable, certainly, but less complete (or “full”) than what he and Peter now hear from the risen Jesus. Then James and Peter learn even more: that even what they have received is, in turn, still less than what is to be revealed to “those not yet born.” In his learned and incisive article on spirit and prophecy, van der Vliet sees this as evidence of the author’s deprecation of sense perception, as, adopting Platonic assumptions, he encourages progress beyond faith in what eyewitnesses have “seen” toward *gnosis*.<sup>27</sup> This certainly reflects an aspect of the text, and David Brakke extends such observations into a persuasive analysis of the Alexandrian school’s perspectives on epistemology and learning.<sup>28</sup> Placing these views into the context of our theme of revelation, however, offers an additional perspective on the author’s message.

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27. Ibid., 32–34.

28. Brakke, “Parables and Plain Speech,” 203.

For as *Ap. Jas.* concludes, Jesus announces his ascension, and “having said these words, he departed” (15,6). Does this mean that those born in the future may *not* have the kind of access to the risen Lord that Peter and James here receive? The text does not give an unambiguous answer to this question. Earlier, in a characteristically paradoxical passage, the author has Jesus echo the Johannine Jesus’ praise for “those who have not seen, and yet believed” (John 20:29), while pronouncing woe upon

those who have seen the Son of Man . . . and blessed will they be who have not seen the man, and not associated with him, and have not spoken with him, and those who have not heard anything from him; yours is life! (3,17–25)

Yet whether or not “those who are yet to be born” will have direct access to the risen Jesus, James not only offers them what he has received, but assures them that they will be able to receive even more than anything he and Peter—or anyone else, it seems—has received so far.

Thus James, by contrast with “the twelve,” expresses what *Ap. Jas.* characterizes as appropriate humility in regard to what has been revealed to him. First he prays “that I may obtain a portion among the beloved who will be made manifest,” and later says he trusts that he will be saved, “since they will be enlightened through me, by my faith, and through another faith that is better than mine (16,14–16).” James demonstrates, then, that he has, indeed, “gotten the point”: that both now and in the future, access to revelation is available—and increasingly so—as one nurtures faith not only through apostolic tradition written down in the past, but also by practicing the disciplines here prescribed, in order to progress toward greater spiritual understanding.

While it is beyond the scope of this present article to place *Ap. Jas.* in its fourth-century context—the Coptic codex known as Nag Hammadi Codex I—I mention briefly in conclusion, what I and others have noted elsewhere: how views of revelation similar to those in *Ap. Jas.* resonate throughout the entire codex. As Michael Williams has shown, the scribe who copied *Ap. Jas.*, now labeled second in the codex (I,2), as well as the *Gospel of Truth* (I,3) and the *Tripartite Tractate* (I,5) originally had intended, apparently, to place it as the opening tractate. After copying *Ap. Jas.*, however, the scribe then added the *Prayer of the Apostle Paul*, now labeled I,1, on the flyleaf. This prayer, echoing Paul’s words, asks for illumination, authority, healing and revelation, “through Jesus Christ . . . the Son of Man, the Spirit, the Paraclete of truth:”

You are my mind; bring me forth! You are my treasury; open for me! You are my fulfillment; take me to you! . . . Grant what no angel’s eye has seen,



and no ruler's ear has heard, and what has not entered into the human heart (1,6–29).

Whoever opened the heavy leather cover of this book, then, would likely begin with this prayer, and conclude with the praise that the scribe who copied it added at the end: "Christ is holy!" Michael Kaler points out that this prayer serves as an appropriate introduction for what follows.<sup>29</sup> For Codex I offers a progressive devotional curriculum meant to guide the reader—not, however, as Kaler suggests, "into the heterodox (primarily Valentinian) doctrines,"<sup>30</sup> which he claims this codex contains, but into what its authors take to be illuminated understanding of Jesus' teachings.

Immediately following this *Prayer* the reader would find the text originally planned as the start of the codex—the opening scene of *Ap. Jas.* that offers an "invitation to seek revelation." Evidence from Codex II, Codex III, and Codex IV from Nag Hammadi (and perhaps Codex VIII) confirms that this was not only a deliberate decision, but a popular—perhaps even conventional—choice.<sup>31</sup> For the scribes who copied and arranged each of these other three codices placed at the beginning of each of them the *Apocryphon of John*, which opens with a similar "invitation to revelation." For the *Apocryphon of John*, like *Ap. Jas.*, opens onto a scene set after Jesus' death, as the chosen disciple—in this case, John—grieves Jesus' death, and, like "the twelve disciples" in *Ap. Jas.*, has no expectation of seeing Jesus again. On the contrary, John is so filled with fear and doubt that he nearly sinks into despair. Yet here, as in *Ap. Jas.*, Jesus appears unexpectedly, confounding his chosen disciple with the shocking and joyful news that "I am the one who is with you always!" And here, too, Jesus declares that "I have come to teach you . . . the things that are not revealed, and those that are revealed (2,1–12)." As John comes to the joyful realization that the risen Lord is still accessible to him, he begins to ask questions (2,25ff) and to hear the divine presence answer. Here too, as in *Ap. Jas.*, the risen Jesus encourages his disciple to engage in exegetical inquiry. In the *Apocryphon of John*, however, such inquiry focuses not on Jesus' teachings, but primarily on the opening passages of *Genesis*. Thus the opening of the widely read and influential *Apocryphon of John*, like that of *Ap. Jas.*, first invites the "disciple" to seek revelation, and then demonstrates how to do so. Here,

29. Michael Kaler, "The Prayer of the Apostle Paul in the Context of Nag Hammadi Codex I," *J ECS* 16 (2008): 319–39; see esp. 324–25; see also Louis Painchaud and Michael Kaler, "From the Prayer of the Apostle Paul to the Three Steles of Seth: Codices I, XI, and VII from Nag Hammadi viewed as a collection," *VC* 61 (2007): 445–69.

30. Kaler, "Prayer of the Apostle Paul," 334.

31. For a fuller discussion, see Jenott and Pagels, "Antony's Letters," 564.

too, “the Lord” encourages questions about hidden realities, as the chosen disciples inquire about the meaning of the creation accounts, which he now comes to understand more fully in light of what “the Lord” continues to reveal to him.

What follows *Ap. Jas.* in Codex I is the *Gospel of Truth*, a text which, as Harry Attridge has shown, is “rich in allusion to early Christian literature, especially to those portions of it that eventually came to be canonized as the New Testament.” And although this text makes “no explicit citation of any New Testament text as scripture, nor even as an authoritative source,”<sup>32</sup> its author, gifted with a vivid sense of poetic imagery, alludes to many such sources as starting points from which to develop theological reflection. The *Treatise on the Resurrection* follows next, a text which similarly treats Paul’s writings neither as a mine of “proof texts” nor as the last word in understanding, but as an essential starting point for the theological discussion to which he invites his students.

As I have discussed more fully elsewhere, Codex I concludes with the *Tripartite Tractate*, which offers a magisterial account of the entire course of salvation history, from the primordial beginning of “all things” in the Father to their final *apocatastasis*. Further research is needed to investigate in detail what a brief sketch like this can only suggest: how the entire codex elaborates the “invitation to revelation” that *Ap. Jas.* offers, and demonstrates techniques for growth in spiritual understanding that this text initiates. *Ap. Jas.* may prove instructive as we continue to investigate other texts and codices found at Nag Hammadi and other sites. For its author alludes continually to sources later known from the New Testament, while simultaneously challenging what would become a basic premise of “orthodoxy”: that what “the twelve” received and transmitted as eyewitnesses not only is the indispensable foundation, but is also the normative and complete revelation for all of salvation history. Yet as we have seen, such texts as the *Apocryphon of John* make similar claims to those in *Ap. Jas.*—that believers who continue to seek to understand “the word” and remain receptive to the divine presence, may find ongoing revelation that surpasses not only what “twelve disciples” received, but also beyond what such *apocrypha* themselves can offer.

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## JEWISH APOCRYPHA AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

*James VanderKam*

There are several places in the New Testament where a character in a narrative or the author of a text cites the words of a non-Jewish writer. In most of them, the person in question is open about the fact and makes no attempt to mask what he is doing. The examples are:

*Acts 17:28*: As part of his argument on the Areopagus about God's nearness and the need for humans to seek him, Paul includes two quotations from Greek writers—a sensible procedure in the context where he is addressing Athenians. The first of the citations, or at least it appears to be one though it is unmarked, reads: "In him we live and move and have our being." Some commentators attribute the words to Epimenides, a writer who flourished in the sixth century. Only fragments from him have survived, and the quoted words do not appear in them. Joseph Fitzmyer finds it "highly unlikely" that they come from Epimenides and concludes: "If Luke had any model for the tricolon he uses, it has not survived."<sup>1</sup> The next citation receives an introduction characterizing it as such: "as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'" It is agreed that these words come from the fourth-/third-century poet Aratus, specifically from his *Phaenomena* line 5 where they are in fact preserved. "In quoting this verse, the Lucan Paul makes a new point in part III of his address: God is not only near to human beings, but they are related to him as kin. Paul understands the Stoic idea in a biblical sense."<sup>2</sup> It is intriguing to see the author of Acts citing such a bold

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1. Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1988), 610. See also the analysis in F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 384–85.

2. Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 611. He notes that the plural "some of your own poets" is a fairly typical way of introducing a citation from one author. That Paul cites Aratus stands regardless whether

sentiment from a Greek poet, as the Paul of the story searches for common debating ground with his audience in Athens.

*1 Corinthians 15:33*: In his chapter on the resurrection of Jesus and those who believe in him, Paul maintains that he would not have endured fighting with “the wild beasts at Ephesus” if he were fortified with human hopes alone. He writes (vv. 32–33): “If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’ Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals.’” The quotation in verse 32 (“Let us eat . . .”) is from Isa 22:13, but the one in verse 33, though it too lacks a citation formula of any sort to introduce it, has been traced to the Athenian writer Menander (fourth–third centuries B.C.E.) in his play *Thais*, frg. 218 (the full work itself has not survived). Here too Paul uses the words of a reputable Greek author in communicating with Greeks.

*Titus 1:12*: While instructing Titus, who was located on the island of Crete, the writer warns his younger associate about those who teach what they should not, and do so for financial gain. He continues: “It was one of them, their very own prophet, who said, ‘Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons.’” Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 1.14.59.1–2) said that the quoted words came from a work by Epimenides the Cretan (see above on Acts 17:28).<sup>3</sup>

There is no need to enter into the exegetical questions that arise from these three passages. The salient point is that perhaps three different New Testament authors demonstrate their familiarity with the literature of the wider world, by using material from it in composing their works meant for fellow believers. They were aware they were using words from non-Jewish authors, words coming from texts that had no religiously authoritative status for them. The introduction to the citation in Titus 1:12 even calls the poet “their very own prophet.”

If these New Testament writers were willing to quote from texts that originated from another religious sphere, it would be unsurprising if they appealed to more closely related literature—Jewish works—that they might find helpful

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he took the line from the poet himself or drew it from the Jewish philosopher Aristobulus who quotes the first nine lines of *Phaenomena* in frg. 4.6.

3. He does so when listing the seven early wise poets, the seventh of whom was, according to some, Epimenides: “Epimenides the Cretan, whom Paul knew as a Greek prophet, whom he mentions in the Epistle to Titus, when he speaks thus . . . [he quotes the verse]. You see how even to the prophets of the Greeks he attributes something of the truth, and is not ashamed, when discoursing for the edification of some and the shaming of others, to make use of Greek poems” (*ANF* 2:313–14; Clement next quotes 1 Cor 15:33). See Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 384–85, who also notes that appeal has been made to the same Epimenides in connection with the reference to the altar to an unknown god in 17:23 (380–81).

in supporting their messages to their fellow believers in Jesus the Christ. Jewish authors wrote a large number of literary compositions during the Second Temple period; miraculously, a sizable amount of their literary output has survived to the present and is available for study. Though authorship of many New Testament works is disputed, presumably most of these texts also belong to the Jewish literary output of the time.

Jewish authors used one another's compositions in formulating their own arguments and presentations. They developed a technical vocabulary for citations from earlier works, but they also betray the influence of other writings in places where they do not explicitly acknowledge the borrowing. At times New Testament authors cite from earlier works using the familiar citation formulas of the time, and the works they most commonly adduce are ones now in the Hebrew Bible. There are other cases in which commentators suspect borrowing from Jewish sources (whether from ones now in the Hebrew Bible or others), though there is neither a quotation from another text nor acknowledgment of the influence. Cases falling into this second type will be a major concern of the present essay.

For the purposes of this paper the term *Jewish Apocrypha* is understood to mean Jewish texts from the land of Israel (Hellenistic ones are covered elsewhere) other than the Dead Sea Scrolls (also covered elsewhere). Commentators on these apocryphal books frequently claim they exerted some influence on New Testament writers, but the difficulty arises in demonstrating that this was the case, as in no instance but one is the borrowing acknowledged.

### NEW TESTAMENT USE OF JEWISH APOCRYPHA

Scholars of the New Testament, or at least the small subset of them that study the book of Jude, have had little choice but to deal with the New Testament use of apocryphal literature because Jude does so explicitly—a point that was noted and that became controversial already in the patristic period. There is nothing surprising in the fact that a New Testament author drew upon an apocryphal Jewish work in the days before canonical boundaries had become fixed. In fact, it would be shocking if they showed no indebtedness to the vast body of early Jewish reflections on the scriptures shared by these authors and theological issues that had arisen from them.

The passage in Jude will be considered first followed by a much more dubious candidate of use. Once that has been done, a few inferences regarding method in detecting such usage will be presented. Those methodological points will then be exemplified through two cases where influence of specific Jewish apocryphal texts has been suspected.

## JUDE 14–15

Jude 14–15 is the only place in the New Testament where an author not only borrows from a Jewish apocryphal work but also identifies his source. There is no question about the borrowing, but that does not mean the passage is free of problems; in addition, the implications of it are worth exploring in this context. In the letter of Jude, the writer is speaking about opponents whom he earlier called dreamers, blemishes on the audience's love feasts, and waterless clouds—among other names: “It was also about these that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, ‘See, the Lord is coming with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all, and to convict everyone of all the deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.’” Jude attributes the prophecy to Enoch whom he calls (literally) “the seventh from Adam.” As commentators frequently note, the expression, although it contains what may be a simple inference from Gen 5, is attested word-for-word in *1 En.* 60:8—a text available today only in the Ge'ez version of *1 Enoch* (*sābe' em-'ādām*). Did Jude take the identification of Enoch from the Similitudes of Enoch? The question is not trivial because it is doubtful he had to identify Enoch further for anyone who knew Genesis (there was no other Enoch with whom he was likely to be confused). In this case, though the possibility should not be dismissed, one would have to say that for just a few words (three in Greek) the case for borrowing is too slim, as there is nothing about the information that could not have come from other sources such as Genesis.

Ancient students of Jude already identified the citation as coming from a *book* of Enoch. So, for example, Tertullian, who held that the “Scripture” of Enoch came from the prediluvian patriarch and was inspired by God's Spirit, notes: “To these considerations is added the fact that Enoch possesses a testimony in the Apostle Jude.” (*Cult. Fem.* 1.3; *ANF* 4.16). Jude introduced the words from Enoch with the verb “prophesied”—a term of considerable significance. Jude did not draw it from the text of Enoch where he is never said to prophesy but may have supplied it himself. Nevertheless, it appears from a comment by Jerome that some early Christians rejected the Epistle of Jude precisely because it employs material such as these words from Enoch (*Vir. ill.* 4).

The text that Jude cites is *1 En.* 1:9 which has survived in a number of textual witnesses. Setting them side by side yields interesting results.<sup>4</sup>

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4. The translations are my own attempts to be literal and to bring out the agreements between the witnesses to the text. For studies of the versions, see James VanderKam, “The Theophany of Enoch I 3b–7, 9,” *VT* 23 (1973): 147–50; Carroll Osburn, “The Christological Use of 1 Enoch 1:9



<b>Jude</b>	<b>Greek <i>1 Enoch</i> 1:9</b>	<b>Ethiopic <i>1 Enoch</i> 1:9</b>
Now the Lord came with his holy myriads to exercise judgment against all	Because he is coming with his myriads and his holy ones to exercise judgment against all	And now he came with myriads of holy ones to exercise judgment against them
and to convict every person regarding all their acts of impiety	and to destroy all the impious and to convict all flesh regarding all their acts of impiety	and to destroy the impious and to convict all flesh regarding all that they did
that they did impiously and regarding all the hard things	that they did impiously and the hard words	and did impiously
that the impious sinners spoke against him.	that the impious sinners spoke against him.	the sinners  against him.

Jude indeed cited *1 En.* 1:9 but did not include all of it, and he made some modifications in it to serve his own ends.<sup>5</sup>

Jude's quotation from Enoch's prophecy has provoked much discussion about the status the author of the New Testament Epistle ascribed to the Enochic composition from which he took the sentences. Some scholars have argued the cautious position that his use of *1 En.* 1:9 "does not demand approval of the work as a whole, but extends only to those portions that he utilizes for his purpose. The

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in Jude 14–15," *NTS* 23 (1977): 334–41; Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC 50; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983), 93–98; and George Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 142–43, 148–49. A few letters and words of the passage have survived on 4Q204 frg. 1 i:15–17

5. Textual notes:

*Now* (traditionally: behold): Jude and the Ethiopic agree against the Greek (because/when).

*The Lord*: Jude uniquely reads this subject; it is very likely he means the Lord Jesus Christ here.

*Came*: a past tense form of the verb appears in Jude and the Ethiopic; the Greek present tense form is probably an accurate interpretation of the "prophetic" perfect.

*With his holy myriads*: Jude and Ethiopic may agree, while the Greek has two expressions: his myriads and his holy ones.

*And to destroy (all) the impious*: Jude lacks the expression.

*Every person*: the versions of *1 Enoch* have all flesh, with the noun preserved in 4Q204.

*And regarding all the hard things*: Jude is closer to the Aramaic and Greek, while the Ethiopic lacks these words.

*That the impious sinners spoke against him*: Jude and the Greek again agree while the Ethiopic is shorter.

situation is not materially different from Paul's references to pagan poets."<sup>6</sup> At the least, we should not assume that Jude had before him the entire 108-chapter book that we call *1 Enoch* and that he regarded all of it as prophecy uttered by the seventh patriarch. Which Enochic literature the writer knew may emerge from looking elsewhere in Jude.

Commentators agree that Jude used a book of Enoch in other passages. R. H. Charles, in his editions of Jewish pseudepigraphic texts, regularly included sections regarding their influence on the New Testament. There seems little doubt today that he found too many parallels, not all of which implied literary contact with the book in question. Nevertheless, his detective work remains helpful and impressive. For the influence of *1 Enoch* on Jude,<sup>7</sup> he lists not only verses 14–15 but also verses 4, 6, 13, and “the seventh from Adam” in verse 14, as follows:

Jude 4: “... and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ,” his parallel is *1 En.* 48:10: “For they have denied the Lord of Spirits and his Anointed One.” Charles also pointed to *1 En.* 38:2 (“those who have denied the Lord of Spirits”) and 41:2 (“who deny the name of the Lord of Spirits”). There is reason for being skeptical about the latter two proposed parallels: denial of the Lord is met more often in the Hebrew Bible, and only 48:10 combines each of the elements in Jude 4—denying the Lord and his anointed. If the expression in Jude reflects *1 En.* 48:10, then Jude knew the latest part of our *1 Enoch*.<sup>8</sup>

Verse 6: “... the angels who did not keep their own position, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains in deepest darkness for the judgment of the great Day.” Charles adduced only the first and last clauses: for the first clause, he cites *1 En.* 12:4: “the watchers of heaven—who forsook the highest heaven, the sanctuary of the(ir) eternal station.” For the latter clause he could specify several passages in *1 En.* 10 where the imprisonment of the angels comes under consideration (vv. 4–6, 11, 12). There is no denying that Jude knew a

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6. Everett F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 404; Bauckham (*Jude, 2 Peter*, 96) thinks that by labeling Enoch's words *prophecy* Jude indicates he considered them inspired but that it does not have to entail that he deemed the book “canonical scripture.”

7. R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1912), xcv–xcvi. He lists these in a section he entitles “... passages of the New Testament which either in phraseology or idea directly depend on or are illustrative of passages in 1 Enoch” (xcv). The last phrase considerably hedges the claims made for influence! Bauckham (*Jude, 2 Peter*, 7) finds use of a book of Enoch in vv. 6, 12–16.

8. Bauckham (*Jude, 2 Peter*, 39–40) quite rightly questions this suggestion, observing there is little indication in Jude of the Parables of Enoch (though he does note “the seventh from Adam” in 60:8).

form of the angel story that is most familiar from *1 En.* 6–11,<sup>9</sup> but it may be that another work that tells the angel story—the book of Jubilees—is closer to the idea in Jude. In Jubilees the fact that the angels left their *positions* is stressed (see *Jub.* 5:6; 7:21 for close parallels to Jude). The presence of multiple possible sources for a motif or theme raises a question of method: if it is more widely attested in antecedent literature, how can one determine which is the most likely source?

Verse 13: “wandering stars”: Charles claims parallels in 18:15; 21:2, 3, 6, none of which refers to wandering stars; the subjects in the Enoch passages are stars that transgressed. Bauckham more plausibly suggests *1 En.* 80:6 as the source.<sup>10</sup>

There do appear to be a few other allusions in Jude to material familiar from the Enochic Book of the Watchers (*1 En.* 1–36), and similar verses in 2 Peter give the same impression. Bauckham claims that Jude “certainly knew chaps 1–36 (vv 6, 12–13, 14–16, cf. v 8), probably chap 80 (vv 12–13), perhaps chaps 83–90 (v 13),” but we lack strong evidence he referred to the other parts of *1 Enoch* (the Parables, 37–71, and the Letter of Enoch, 91–107).<sup>11</sup>

#### A SUGGESTED CASE

There are no other examples as clear as Jude’s use of Enoch, but one expert, Rendel Harris, proposed almost a century ago that there was another New Testament citation of a Jewish apocryphal work: the Book of Judith was known and used by Paul.<sup>12</sup> Commenting on Harnack’s famous hypothesis that Aquila and Priscilla, especially the latter, wrote Hebrews, he wondered why “the author or authoress of a document [he is speaking about Heb 11] which has so many military reminiscences and glorifies so many warrior saints, could have omitted the name of Judith.”<sup>13</sup> He noted that he had shown on another occasion<sup>14</sup> that the text did in fact refer to Judith in 11:34 (she is among those who “won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight”). He based his inference on Clement of Rome’s reference to Judith as an illustration of “womanly weakness turned to manly strength” in such a way that he must have been using Heb 11. The passage in Clement reads:

9. Bauckham (*Jude*, 2 *Peter*, 51) writes that Jude in v. 6 is “directly dependent on *1 Enoch* 6–19.”

10. *Ibid.*, 89–90.

11. *Ibid.*, 7.

12. Rendel Harris, “A Quotation from Judith in the Pauline Epistles,” *ET* 27 (1916): 13–15.

13. *Ibid.*, 13.

14. In his *Angus Lectures* published as James Rendel Harris, *Side-Lights on New Testament Research* (London: Kingsgate, 1908).

(3) Many women, being strengthened by the grace of God, have performed many manly deeds. (4) The blessed Judith, when the city was under siege, asked the elders to permit her to go to the enemy's camp. (5) So she exposed herself to peril and went out for love of her country and of her besieged people, and the Lord delivered Holophernes into the hand of a woman.<sup>15</sup>

If Clement was commenting on Heb 11:34 in (3), then Judith (later he adds Esther) is an example.<sup>16</sup> This instance emboldened Harris to ask whether Judith had left its imprint elsewhere in the New Testament.

He wrote: "I propose to show that the book was known to St. Paul, and that it has been carefully studied by him, and has, in consequence, influenced a remarkable passage in the First Epistle to the Corinthians."<sup>17</sup> That passage is 1 Cor 2:10–16 where he found a "quotation" (judging from the article title) of Jdt 8:14–15. The nearest similarity he found between Jdt 8:14 and 1 Cor 2:10–11, 16 whose Greek texts he placed side by side. The English translations of the two read:

#### **Judith 8:14**

You cannot plumb the depths of the human heart or understand the workings of the human mind; how do you expect to search out God, who made all these things, and find out his mind or comprehend his thought?

#### **1 Corinthians 2:10–11, 16**

for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. . . . "For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?"

Harris highlighted the shared themes of the depths of a personality (whether human or divine), the exploration of God, and the knowledge of the mind of the Lord. The language of depths and searching is common to the two texts, but while there is a certain level of similarity between them—some shared ideas and vocabulary—it is difficult to see how one could call the Pauline passage a quotation or even a likely allusion. Moreover, the terms and ideas are not unique. Carey Moore, commenting on "the depths of a person's heart" in Jdt 8:14, has written about the hypothesis: "This phrase, along with other 'similarities' between this verse and 1 Cor 2:10, persuaded Rendel Harris (but evidently no one else)

15. Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 90–91.

16. See Harold Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 349. He thinks it is uncertain whether Clement is here dependent on Hebrews (see n. 45).

17. Harris, "A Quotation from Judith," 14.

that the Apostle Paul had read the book of Judith and that 1 Cor 2:10, at least, had been influenced by it . . . But see Job 11:7 and Jer 17:9.”<sup>18</sup> That the ideas are more widely attested reduces the likelihood of borrowing from a specific work—or at least our ability to identify from which it came.

#### SOME METHODOLOGICAL INFERENCES

In light of the discussion above, what criteria would yield the strongest case that in a passage lacking explicit acknowledgment direct borrowing from a source has occurred? Some are obvious, others less so. This is an area of research that has been heavily canvassed in recent decades in studies of allusion, echo, and the like. It has been done primarily to determine where New Testament authors are indebted to texts in the Old Testament. For our purposes, here are a few suggestions.

1. Possibility: First, of course, one would have to establish that such borrowing was possible. To do so, one would have show:

(a) That the source book existed at the time it was supposedly used. That seems simple enough but deciding is often a challenge either because of the scarce evidence regarding when a text was composed or the state in which the text survives. When, for example, when were the Parables of Enoch composed—a text that has been brought into connection with the picture of the Son of Man, especially in the Gospel of Matthew?

(b) Another question in this category is the availability of a work: is there evidence it circulated and thus may have been available in various places? Was it accessible in the place where the New Testament writer lived and wrote his composition? The dearth of evidence regarding the availability of works clearly limits what can be said about the matter: we usually do not have information about how widely a work circulated or about where New Testament authors did their writing (or both).

(c) What was the language of the book supposedly employed by a New Testament writer? In the cases of Parables of Enoch and a number of other works, the composition has not survived in its original language, and even the identity of that first language is debated. The language issue is important in this category for another reason. It would be a rare case in which, if we knew the identity of the author of a New Testament book, we also knew the linguistic competence of

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18. Carey A. Moore, *Judith: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 40; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 182.

that author—whether he read Aramaic or Hebrew or whether his knowledge was limited to the Greek language.<sup>19</sup>

2. Likelihood: The second step, after one has established the possibility that a New Testament author used a particular composition, is to look for evidence making that use more or less likely. In lieu of overt acknowledgement that a New Testament author used a Jewish work, helpful information would be:

(a) Does the New Testament writer use content from the source that is distinctive to that source?

(b) Does the New Testament writer not only use content distinctive to the source but also do so using the same or similar vocabulary?

(c) Does the New Testament writer use the source in more than one place?

## TWO TEST CASES

With all the limits imposed by the nature of the data at our disposal, it is not easy to demonstrate that a New Testament writer used a specific Jewish work. Nevertheless, there have been many suggestions. In the next section I will examine two rather different proposals regarding New Testament use of Jewish Apocrypha and test them by the criteria just presented. In the final analysis one has to treat each case on its own merits as the nature of the evidence for each takes on a form of its own.

### JUDE 9

Returning to Jude, it is evident that the writer exploited more Jewish literature than a book or books of Enoch. When speaking of those who advocate teachings and actions to which he is opposed, he says: “Yet in the same way these dreamers also defile the flesh, reject authority, and slander the glorious ones. But when the archangel Michael contended with the devil and disputed about the body of Moses, he did not dare to bring a condemnation of slander against him, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’ But these people slander whatever they do not understand.” (8–10a) Jude here refers to an incident—a disagreement between Michael and the devil about Moses’ body—that cannot be found in the Hebrew Bible or Greek scriptures. Moreover, he quotes a few words from the angel Michael.<sup>20</sup>

19. Bauckham (*Jude, 2 Peter*, e.g., 7, 96) argues that Jude used the Aramaic version of Enoch.

20. Michael’s retort to the devil echoes another angelic reply to an evil figure—the one the angel of the Lord made to the Satan in Zech 3:2: “The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who

There is an ample Moses literature surviving from Second Temple times. One thinks, for instance, of *Jubilees*, the *Assumption/Testament of Moses*,<sup>21</sup> and several texts from Qumran (1Q22, 4Q368, 377); moreover, he is a prominent character in others. In none of these texts, however, is there a story about a confrontation between these two supernatural beings over the disposal of Moses' corpse. Such silence might lead to the conclusion that the source of Jude's allusion is unknown, but modern commentators are agreed that his source was the lost ending of the *Assumption/Testament of Moses*.

The *Assumption/Testament of Moses* has just barely survived in manuscript form. Only a part of a Latin translation of it appears on a single palimpsest, on which it, with *Jubilees*, is the bottom or overwritten text. In the one copy the work lacks a title but contains an extended stretch of text that is transparently defective in places. The first three lines are missing (the first words are "which is twenty five hundred years after the creation of the world" [*T. Mos.* 1:2; *OTP* 1, trans. J. Priest]). At the end of the text Moses is still speaking his final words to Joshua as he has been doing throughout the book: "For God, who has foreseen all things in the world, will go forth, and his covenant which was established, and by the oath which" (12:13). The text breaks off at this point in mid-sentence.

The ending is clearly missing from the only copy, but why should one think that the lost conclusion contained the episode to which Jude refers and from which he quotes a few words? Once again early Christian writers play a pivotal role in grounding the case.

Origen (*Princ.* 3.2.1) reports that Jude was referring to a work entitled *Adscensio Mosis*, that is, Ascent of Moses.<sup>22</sup> He is there surveying scriptural references to the opposing power(s) and says: "And in the first place, in the book of Genesis, the serpent is described as having seduced Eve; regarding whom, in the work entitled *The Ascension of Moses* (a little treatise, of which the Apostle Jude makes mention in his Epistle), the archangel Michael, when disputing with the devil regarding the body of Moses, says that the serpent, being inspired by the devil, was the cause of Adam and Eve's transgression" (*ANF* 4.328).

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has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you." For a rabbinic story about a discussion between Michael and Sammael regarding the soul of Moses, see Str-B 3:786–87.

21. As we will see, the name given to the text that goes under both titles in modern scholarship is a complex problem.

22. Clement of Alexandria likely says that in v. 9, which he quotes, "he [Jude] confirms the *Assumption of Moses*" (in his *Hypotyposes on Jude*) as translated by P. Jones, *The Epistle of Jude as Expounded by the Fathers—Clement of Alexandria, Didymus of Alexandria, The Scholia of Cramer's Catena, Pseudo-Oecumenius, and Bede* (TSR 89; Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 2001), 62.

Gelasius Cyzicenus (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.17.17) writes: “When the prophet Moses was about to leave (this life), as it is written in the book the Assumption of Moses, he summoned Joshua the son of Nun and in conversation with him said: God foresaw me before the foundation of the world that I should be the mediator of the his covenant” (my translation). The last sentence is a citation of 1:14 in the Latin text of the *Assumption/Testament of Moses*: “But he did design and devise me, who (was) prepared from the beginning of the world, to be the mediator of his covenant.” In the same work (2.21.7), he adds that in the Assumption of Moses the archangel Michael and the devil were in conversation. So Gelasius quotes a verse from the text and identifies it as the Assumption of Moses and says the same work contained an encounter between Michael and the devil.<sup>23</sup>

A problem that emerges in this case is the fact that books could circulate under different titles and that ancient lists of books mention two Moses works: *Assumption of Moses* and *Testament of Moses*. The surviving truncated Latin translation looks more like a testament and lacks any mention of Moses’ assumption. Did Jude use an *Assumption of Moses* that was a different text than our Latin work and with which it shared at least one verse (1:14 in the Latin text)?<sup>24</sup>

Johannes Tromp has argued cogently that the Moses work surviving in the Latin translation once contained an account of Moses’ death. He also draws attention to Joshua’s comment in 11:7: “Or who as a man will dare to move your body from place to place?” He may here be implying that angels or God buried Moses, since no human had the stature to do so. In discussing the lost ending of the book, he adduces the evidence especially from Gelasius, including the following (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.21.7): “In the book of the Assumption of Moses, the archangel Michael, in a discussion with the devil, says: ‘For by his Holy Spirit, all of us have been created’, and further he says: ‘God’s spirit went forth from his face, and the world came into being.’” That Gelasius is able to cite these passages shows that he did not derive his knowledge of the *Assumption of Moses* from Jude; he knows more of the text than Jude and presumably consulted it for himself.<sup>25</sup> At least one of his extra citations from it is placed directly in the context of a discussion between Michael and the devil—likely the episode exploited by Jude who supplies the added detail that their discussion concerned Moses’ body.<sup>26</sup>

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23. For the passages from Gelasius, see Johannes Tromp, *The Assumption of Moses: A Critical Edition with Commentary* (SVTP 10; Leiden: Brill, 1993), 271–72.

24. For example, Origen knew that Jude used the Ascension of Moses, but some of the materials he attributes to it may come from the Apocalypse of Adam and Eve which also went by the name Apocalypse of Moses (Tromp, *The Assumption of Moses*, 274–75).

25. Tromp, *The Assumption of Moses*, 270–85 (his full discussion of the lost ending issue).

26. Bauckham (*Jude, 2 Peter*, 65–76) has a detailed discussion of the works that are likely



If we apply the criteria for identifying a borrowing or allusion, then we can say about this case that:

Possible: Jude could have had access to the *Assumption of Moses* which was written earlier in the first century and may have been translated into Greek by whatever time Jude was composed (unless he knew the Semitic original). The work was used and referenced by various authors so it may have circulated.

Likely: If we accept the identification of our Latin text with the work referred to in antiquity as the *Assumption of Moses*, then it is likely that Jude used it. He takes from it distinctive contents—an episode not known from another source (at least not in this form)—and even quotes a few words from it, though we can check the accuracy of the quotation only indirectly because the ending of our text is lost.<sup>27</sup>

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candidates to furnish information about the lost end of the book. He divides them into two categories: ones with data about the lost ending of the *Testament of Moses* (six sources, all rather late, like the *Slavonic Life of Moses*), and ones about the *Assumption of Moses* (including the Gelasius citations). Though he does not mention it, none of the sources in his first category refers to a work entitled *Testament of Moses*, while all of the earlier ones in his second category refer to the *Assumption of Moses* (other than Origen who calls it the *Ascension of Moses*). He argues that an original *Testament of Moses* was later revised, with the revised version known as the *Assumption of Moses*. However, it is a fact that the only sources referring to Jude 9 are in his second category, but he thinks some of them, such as Gelasius's testimonies, point to an anti-Gnostic version of the encounter between Michael and the devil—something hard for him to imagine in the first century. That this is an anti-Gnostic version can be debated. I think Tromp is correct that the relevant sources are the three citations from Gelasius and Jude 9 and that the work in question is the one preserved in part in the Latin manuscript (recall, it lacks a title, even if some modern scholars think it looks more like a testament). Ancient book lists do refer to a *Testament of Moses* and an *Assumption of Moses*, but how they were related is not known. Charles thought the two were combined in the first century C.E. into the work we know in part from the Latin manuscript (*The Assumption of Moses* [London: Black, 1897], xlv–l, 105–10).

27. Among the other passages from the *Assumption of Moses* that have been suspected of lying behind a New Testament verse is 3:11 (see, for example, E.-M. Laperrousaz, "Le Testament de Moïse [généralement appelé 'Assomption de Moïse']". Traduction avec introduction et notes," *Sem* 19 [1970]: 66–73) which sounds much like Acts 7:36.

**3:11**

who suffered many things in Egypt  
and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness  
for forty years.

**7:36**

having performed wonders and signs in Egypt,  
at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness  
for forty years.

The two have close verbal similarities, although the first words are not the same (performing wonders vs. suffering many things) and the other information is a simple listing, in order, of the major places where the last forty years of his life transpired. As a result, the passage is not a strong candidate for use of the *Assumption of Moses*; it is only a possibility.

## THE LAW REVEALED BY ANGELS

There are three (or four) places in the New Testament in which writers assert that the Law was revealed, not by God, but by or through angels.

*Acts 7:38, 53:* In verse 38, Stephen says of Moses that he was “in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors; and he received living oracles to give to us.” The angel mentioned may be the one described in *Exod 14:19; 23:20–33*. Then, at a later point in his summary, he adds: “You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it” (*Acts 7:53*). The notion of angelic ordination seems to have a positive significance here.

*Galatians 3:19:* “Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring would come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained through angels by a mediator.”<sup>28</sup> The association with angels is more negative in the context.

*Hebrews 2:2:* “For if the message declared through angels was valid, and every transgression or disobedience received a just penalty.” For the writer, the message given through angels is not on the level of the one delivered through the Son.

The idea that angels were present at Sinai during the momentous events described in *Exodus 19–Numbers 10* is scriptural.<sup>29</sup> *Deuteronomy 33:2* associates angels (“myriads of holy ones,” “a host of his own”) with the Lord at Sinai (among other places):

The Lord came from Sinai,  
and dawned from Seir upon us;  
he shone forth from Mount Paran.  
With him were myriads of holy ones;  
at his right a host of his own.

The Targums to the passage make the connection with the lawgiving at Sinai explicit: *Tg. Onq. Deut 33:2* (end) reads: “and with him were myriads of holy ones; from the midst of the fire He gave the Law, written by His right hand.”<sup>30</sup> The trig-

28. For rabbinic references to the presence of angels when the law was given, see *Str-B 3:554–56*.

29. See James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 670–71.

30. Translation of Bernard Grossfeld in *The Targum of Onqelos to Deuteronomy: Translated, with Apparatus, and Notes* (ArBib 9; Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1988). There all but the word “and” is in italics, indicating a change from the MT. Targums Neophyti and Pseudo-Jonathan to the passage not only mention the giving of the Law at the beginning of the verse (to

ger for finding the lawgiving in the passage (besides the name Sinai) was the word *šdt* (translated “a host” by the NRSV) which was subdivided into “š = fire” and “dt = law.”

Psalm 68:17 also put angels with God at Sinai:

With mighty chariotry, twice ten thousand,  
thousands upon thousands,  
the LORD came from Sinai into the holy place.

A related and more extended version of the idea of angelic presence at Sinai and of giving the Law is found in the book of *Jubilees*, a second-century B.C.E. retelling of the stories in Genesis and the first half of Exodus. There an angel of the presence reveals the contents of the book to Moses as he is atop Mt. Sinai receiving the law (*Jub.* 1:27–29; 2:1). The situation is a rewriting of the one described in Exod 24:12–18. *Jubilees* pictures just one angel revealing the Torah to Moses (see particularly 6:22), but there are indications in the book that more than one angel was involved. The writer at times attributes to angels actions that Genesis–Exodus assign to God, such as the making of the covenant with Abram in Gen 15 (compare Gen 15:18 with *Jub.* 14:20). He does the same with the giving of the Law: “On Mt. Sinai I [the angel of the presence] told you about the Sabbaths of the land and the years of jubilees in the sabbaths of the years, but its year *we* have not told you until the time when you enter the land which you will possess” (italics added; see also 6:19 where the angel claims to have renewed the Noachic covenant at Sinai).<sup>31</sup>

Could any of the three writers (Luke, Paul, the author to the Hebrews) have had access to *Jubilees* and is it likely he used it? The possibility is there because *Jubilees*, a second-century B.C.E. work, long antedates the New Testament books. It too was translated into Greek, though the time of the translation is unknown, and it appears to have circulated because it was used by various writers at later times. Is it likely the New Testament writers used it? The idea of angelic revelation or mediation of the Law at Sinai is first attested in *Jubilees* and then not for some time in extant literature. There are no verbal overlaps of any significance, but the

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Israel at Sinai) but also to the nations associated with the other mountains named here besides Sinai; they add another reference to it at the end of the verse. In the LXX, the last part of Deut 33:2 says that angels were with God.

31. Translation of James VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (2 vols.; CSCO 510–11, Scriptores Aethiopici 87–88; Leuven: Peeters, 1989), vol. 2. For the date of the book, see VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 17–21, and for the roles of the angels in it, 126–27. Robert Henry Charles (*The Book of Jubilees or the Little Genesis* [London: Black, 1902], lxxxiv) listed Acts 7:53 as one of several places in the New Testament influenced by *Jubilees*.

idea is present in the New Testament texts and in *Jubilees*. In the case of Luke, one could also make a reasonable case that he used material from *Jubilees* elsewhere in his history; there are important agreements in the story of Pentecost in Acts 2 and in *Jubilees*' association of the holiday with the making of the covenant at Sinai.<sup>32</sup>

While the author of Jude probably knew a work called the *Assumption of Moses*, and the writers who say the Law came through angels may been familiar with *Jubilees*, a caveat has to be expressed about such a conclusion. James Kugel has written:

Ancient Jews and Christians not only shared a common body of Scripture; they were also heir to a common body of interpretations that had accompanied that Scripture for centuries, interpretations that go back, in some cases, at least to the period of the return from Babylonian exile in the late sixth century B.C.E. Consequently, early Christian writers almost never approached a biblical text fresh; that is, they did not simply set about reading and interpreting on their own. Instead they perceived Scripture through the lens of early interpretation ... Indeed, sometimes it appears that the writers themselves did not clearly distinguish what the biblical text itself said from what interpreters had long been saying it said.<sup>33</sup>

The nature of our evidence is such that we must be very modest in our conclusions. So, for example, if *Jubilees* provides the earliest attestation for the idea that angels revealed the Law to Moses, it hardly entails that a New Testament writer who mentions this view read *Jubilees*. It may have been a more common association with the text—it may have been “in the air,” as it were, through repetition in schools and synagogues—despite the fact that other written references to it are no longer available.

### FOR FURTHER READING

Charlesworth, James H. and Craig Evans, eds. *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation*. JSPSup 14. SSEJC 2; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993.  
Collins, John J. and Daniel C. Harlow, eds. *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

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32. E.g., James VanderKam, “The Festival of Weeks and the Story of Pentecost in Acts 2,” in *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. Craig A. Evans; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004), 185–205.

33. James Kugel, “Stephen’s Speech (Acts 7) in Its Exegetical Context,” in Evans, *From Prophecy to Testament*, 206. Kugel does not deal with Acts 7:53 in the essay.

- deSilva, David A. *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002.
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## TRADITIONS ABOUT MARY IN THE APOCRYPHAL NEW TESTAMENT

*J. Keith Elliott*

An approach to be adopted when using New Testament apocryphal texts as interpreters and developers of materials known more familiarly in the New Testament proper is inevitably the comparing of texts. And for that we need to recognize the fundamental differences between textual- and literary-criticism. The former accepts that at a particular point an author completed his writing and launched it upon the world.<sup>1</sup> That publishing of a text—the autograph, original writing—later gave rise to copies, and text-critics thereafter, no longer having access to the original usually long since lost, are concerned with collecting as many examples of those surviving copies as possible, comparing them and from them reconstructing what seems to be the closest to that presumed original, the *Ausgangstext* from which the surviving copies may ultimately be traced. (Today's text-critics may perhaps have another aim, that of plotting the significance of all the deliberate changes wherever these chance to surface. In this way one may be able to detect changes due to theological, social and even linguistic developments. Many critically significant variants lie buried in the apparatus of an edited text.) Literary criticism reflects an earlier stage in a composition's history—the sources used and adapted by the author. In the New Testament for instance one may decide that Luke used Mark and in so doing adapted Markan language, composition, meaning and theology. A text-critic would not try to reconstruct Mark using the form of Mark found in Luke. Mark in Luke has been changed to conform to Lukan style, theology and language.

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1. In another context one may well profitably argue that, in the case of the Acts of the Apostles (and to a lesser extent even the Epistle to the Romans), it was reissued by its original author in a second, revised edition. The Western form of Acts and the arguably later Alexandrian text may both have been published by Luke at different times in order to serve a changed and different need or audience.

When we move from the canonical New Testament to the apocryphal Christian writings one may establish a text, the *Protevangelium of James* for instance, using the manuscripts that have chanced to survive and create a critical edition, printing as the running text the earliest or the most reliable one can edit and displaying all deviant readings in footnotes. A comparison with the later *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, which uses the *Protevangelium of James* extensively is an exercise not of textual- but literary-criticism when one assesses the way in which the later author used and altered his predecessor's writing. Pseudo-Matthew adopted and adapted the *Protevangelium of James* as a source rather as Luke used Mark.

When we next move on and focus specifically on the accounts of the end of Mary's life, the situation is more complex. Whereas in the stories of Mary's early years we have a sequence of related texts that clearly and successively made use of earlier writings, in the Dormition / Assumption stories the accounts seem separate and independent. Parallels that exist there can be more plausibly accounted for as developments from shared oral traditions than due to literary interdependence. When I published my *Apocryphal New Testament*,<sup>2</sup> I was not confident to be able to plot the history of the many surviving texts about Mary's "death." More work on those accounts (summarized below in part 2) may reveal some trajectories especially in the differing traditions associated with the Greek and Coptic forms. We need to handle those texts somewhat differently from those in part 1, the accounts of Mary's early career.

## PART 1

From those with but a passing acquaintance with that amorphous collection of early Christian writings generally labeled the apocryphal New Testament, the opinion is sometimes to be heard that the principal motive behind their original composition was to embellish the canonical writings by filling in gaps and expanding passages deemed incomplete. That certainly would not be an opinion of our honoree, whose most recent foray into the apocryphal writings is his commentary on the Acts of Thomas.<sup>3</sup> While the plugging of perceived gaps (such as those regarding Jesus' forbears, his birth and his childhood) plays its part in the writing there are other motives, primarily theological, that have determined their contents.

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2. J. Keith Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993).

3. Harold W. Attridge, *The Acts of Thomas* (Early Christian Apocrypha 3; Salem Ore.: Polebridge, 2010).



My own most recent involvement with this corpus was the compiling of a synopsis of the stories of Jesus' birth and infancy.<sup>4</sup> As part of that enterprise, I collected the many tales of the birth of Mary, her parents, her upbringing and betrothal. I had initially assumed, wrongly as it soon became clear to me, that one would be tracing a steady and onward growth through the centuries and an increasingly flamboyant elaboration of the myths about Mary as I compared stories beginning with the second century *Protevangelium of James* through the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* of the sixth century up to the time of the composition of the *Gospel of the Birth of Mary* in the ninth century, while looking *en route* at the Arabic *Infancy Gospel*, and the Armenian *Infancy Gospel*, both possibly dependent on Syriac originals from the fifth–sixth centuries. There are also important Irish traditions that go back to the ninth century. But a straight graph is not achievable. The dates of these writings and their use of sources obviously needed to be determined insofar as one was able, but it is clear that these writings, however much they plagiarized their sources, were nonetheless separate and separated books whose authors had their own theological, social and literary agendas. What these may have been is the purpose of this essay in honor of Harold Attridge.

Initially it was perhaps the natural curiosity of those reading the texts that became the canonical Gospels that led to the need to amplify the story of Mary. Anyone attempting to tell her life basing it only on the New Testament comes across many tantalizing gaps. Outside the nativity stories the New Testament includes Mary in the story of the Miracle at Cana (John 2:1–11); then she appears in the Fourth Gospel at the foot of the Cross (John 19:25–27). She re-appears after Easter among the followers of Jesus assembled in Jerusalem (Acts 1:14). And that is about all we read of her life in the canonical texts.

Biographical queries arose: Where was Mary born? Who were her parents? How was she reared? What about her death? Other queries are theological: Why was that woman chosen to be the mother of Jesus? What was special and unique about her? What example can she set? In the *Questions of Bartholomew* among the questions is one asked of the risen Mary, namely how one conceives the inconceivable. Mary tells of her experience. It was in order to answer questions such as these that, by the second century, Christian imagination and piety produced many (apocryphal) tales about Mary. Her role became increasingly enhanced but, as we shall see, there were later checks and balances that served to somewhat diminish the most elaborate of stories and attributes about her.

Likewise, artists responsible for illustrative series, such as cycles of Mary's life (for example in Chartres Cathedral), had to look beyond scripture to com-

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4. J. Keith Elliott, *A Synopsis of the Apocryphal Infancy and Nativity Narratives* (NTTS 34; Leiden: Brill, 2006).

plete their narrative.<sup>5</sup> Giotto's famous sequence of scenes from Mary's life in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua (the Arena Chapel) needed to use apocryphal stories to tell of her early life and background. There are thirty-eight panels of frescoes in the chapel, one half is concerned with Mary's or her parents' life, and most come from traditions outside the New Testament. There are two Mary cycles in Saint Mark's, Venice, the first a mosaic cycle in the South and North transepts of the church. These start with the refusal of Joachim's sacrifice, lead on to the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple and then to her suitors, marriage, and ultimately to Jesus in the Temple at the age of twelve.<sup>6</sup> The second cycle is in sculpture on the ciborium columns at the high altar and includes the contretemps between Anna and her serving girl and also Joachim's offering in the desert.<sup>7</sup>

The earliest text we deal with is the so-called *Protevangelium of James*. A third to fourth century manuscript, Bodmer MS. V, contains this text and entitles it "The Birth of Mary; the Revelation of James." Normally, however, because it tells of events prior to Jesus' birth and concerns Mary's parents, Anna and Joachim, her birth and upbringing, it became known as the Proto-Gospel or *Protevangelium of James* because the purported author (according to its final paragraph) is James of Jerusalem. Its stories reflect the developing tradition that was ultimately expressed in Christian teaching regarding the perpetual virginity of Mary. In addition it gave support and impetus to feasts such as the Immaculate Conception of Mary and the Presentation in the Temple.

The text, which was probably originally composed in the second century, was particularly popular in the East. Over 150 manuscripts of it in Greek have survived. These are dated from several centuries, thereby indicating its long-standing popularity. It was translated into several early versions (Coptic, Syriac, Georgian, Armenian,<sup>8</sup> Ethiopian and Slavonic), showing that it was also popular in a wide geographical area. Latin versions also exist, albeit not in great numbers.<sup>9</sup> In the West the

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5. David R. Cartlidge and J. Keith Elliott, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha* (London: Routledge, 2001) esp. ch. 2 "Mary"; Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge dans l'empire byzantin et en occident* (2 vols; Brussels: Académie royale de Belgique, 1992).

6. The details of each portrayal appear in Cartlidge and Elliott, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha*, 33–34.

7. The details also appear in *ibid.*, 35

8. Recently three early versions of the *Protevangelium* in Armenian have been published as Appendix I of Abraham Terian, *The Armenian Gospel of the Infancy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

9. The most complete MS in Latin is Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève 2787, recently edited by Rita Beyers in Martin McNamara *et al.* (eds.), *Apocrypha Hiberniae I: Evangelia Infantiae* (CCSA 14; Turnhout: Brepols, 2001).

later *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (see below) was the main vehicle in Latin for propagating stories that had originated in the *Protevangelium*.<sup>10</sup>

The work is sometimes seen as apologetic in tone. One motive seems to have been the defence of aspects of Christianity, such as the lowly origins of its leading characters, which had been ridiculed by Celsus. To combat charges of Christianity's humble origins, the *Protevangelium* is at pains to show us that Jesus' parents were not poor: Joseph is a building contractor; Mary spins, but not for payment. Another motive may be to defend Jesus' conception against charges of sexual irregularity: the pregnant Mary's virginity is vindicated before Joseph (14.2) and the priests (16). Similarly, the Davidic descent of Mary is stressed (10.3), a significant detail once Joseph is described only as the putative father of Jesus. Jesus' siblings, well-known from the canonical Gospels, are now explained as Joseph's children from an earlier marriage. (Later, Jerome, objecting to such an apologia, preferred to say the siblings were in fact cousins.)

One unique and strange story in *Prot. Jas.* 2 concerns an altercation between Anna and her maid, Judith (or Euthine) when the latter offers Anna a headband bearing a royal cipher. Judith is reproached for her offer. The scene appears in some iconic representations such as in the Lupicin Diptych of the sixth century in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris and in a fifth-century ivory in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg.

The *Protevangelium* is probably best described as an encomium, that is an extended homily to Mary, praising her, describing her origins and character and extolling her virtues and accomplishments. Throughout the *Protevangelium* the destiny of Mary is known from beginning: for example, at *Prot. Jas.* 4.1 when Anna is told that her as yet unborn child will become world famous (cf. 6.7, 6.9, 7.7, 12.2, 6). At Mary's first birthday the parents make a feast at which the priests and people ask God to "bless the child and give her a name eternally renowned among all generations." Prior to the story of Mary's visit to Elizabeth in the *Protevangelium*, Mary is blessed by the high priest (not by Elizabeth as is the case in Luke 1:42) with these words: "Mary, the Lord God has magnified your name, and you shall be blessed among all generations of the earth" (and cf. Luke 1:48).

A recent study of Mary states that in these stories,

From the day that she is born, Mary functions less as an active subject and more as an object of exchange and offering. Her birth is guaranteed in an-

10. The Greek text has been edited in various collections (e.g., by Tischendorf). The oldest manuscript, found in Bodmer V, edited by Testuz in 1958, forms the basis for Émile de Strycker's French translation and commentary in his *La forme la plus ancienne du Protévangile de Jacques* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1961).

gelic announcements (4.1, 4); she is vowed to the Lord by her parents (4.2, 7); protected by them in their home (6.3, 7.4–5); placed under the protection of the Temple priests (7.7–8.2); removed from the Temple and placed under the guardianship of Joseph (8.3–12); and subjected to a series of accusations and tests (13.6–7, 15.10, 16.5, 20.1–2). She is often cherished by those who bear responsibility for her, yet she also poses a burden. Finally, she is a passive character whose bodily integrity is of paramount concern.<sup>11</sup>

As indicated above, the *Protevangelium* was popularized, especially in the West, by *Pseudo-Matthew*. Over 130 manuscripts containing that text have been listed. This Latin text, originating in the sixth to seventh century, is close to a Latin version of the *Protevangelium* (for chs. 1–17) and to the Arabic Infancy Gospel (in chs. 18–24). Our oldest extant manuscript is eleventh century.<sup>12</sup> *Pseudo-Matthew* popularised legends about Mary's early life in Latin-speaking Christendom in the Middle Ages. What encouraged its wide circulation and acceptance were prefatory letters from bishops Cromasius and Heliodorus to Jerome and his reply to them. Those spurious letters, which are found attached to other apocryphal texts too, were added here to provide this Gospel with appropriate credentials.

The motive for the compiling of this Gospel seems to have been to further the veneration of Mary, not least by the inclusion of stories about the Holy Family's sojourn in Egypt. Such stories did indeed "fill a gap" in the canonical account that merely reports a flight into Egypt. These developing traditions recounted an increasing number of yarns about the family's exile there as well as its journeys to and fro. These later and dependent sequences have a feel of *The Hundred and One Nights* about them.

As far as differences between *Pseudo-Matthew* and the *Protevangelium* are concerned, Anna's father, Achar, is mentioned only in *Pseudo-Matthew*; Abiathar is high priest during the time of Mary's espousal to Joseph—in the *Protevangelium* it is Zacharias. Other changes to the story are the protracted absence of Joachim and the reduction of Anna's lament (probably in order to enhance the figure of Joachim); there is no visit by Mary to Elizabeth. In *Pseudo-Matthew* the birth occurs in a cave, as in the *Protevangelium*, but mother and son soon move to a manger, thereby assimilating the text to the canonical account. *Pseudo-Matthew* adds the ox and the ass to the scene there, and the fulfilling of prophecy when

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11. Mary F. Foskett, *A Virgin Conceived: Mary and Classical Representations of Virginity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 160.

12. The chapters that Tischendorf included in his edition (25–42) and called *Pars Altera* are attached in some medieval manuscripts to *Pseudo-Matthew* but do in fact belong to the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, with which they need to be considered both from a literary and textual point of view.

these animals worship Jesus. For the Annunciation the event is now divided into two scenes: one at the well, the second indoors.

The Annunciation, the location of which is unspecified in Luke, is said in *Prot. Jas.* 11.1 and *Ps.-Mt.* 9 to have been out of doors at a fountain. The message is repeated on the following day in *Pseudo-Matthew* when Mary this time is indoors, spinning. Later iconographical representations of the scene in Western art typically prefer the studious Mary, busy with her books, following *Ps.-Mt.* 6 where Mary in the temple is familiar with the Davidic Psalms. Eastern traditions prefer to portray her spinning. Mary's reaction to the apparition is far more phlegmatic in *De Nativitate Mariae* (to which we now turn), because it is said there that her life in the Temple meant she was well accustomed to such visions. The angel's explanation of Mary's impending pregnancy in *De Nativitate Mariae* again emphasises Mary's sinlessness.

By the time we get to the text known as *De Nativitate Mariae* or the *Gospel of the Birth of Mary* several centuries have elapsed and we detect not only similarities with the earliest stories but also significant changes. Over 130 manuscripts of this apocryphon have been catalogued. The text appears in two main types, one the more original, the other a grammatically or stylistically revised form. This "Gospel" probably arose in the ninth century; in chapters 1–8 it is a free adaptation of *Pseudo-Matthew*, but in chapters 9–10 it follows the canonical Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The motive for its composition seems to have been to enhance devotion to Mary but it lacks some apocryphal accretions found in *Pseudo-Matthew* that were doubtless deemed inappropriate or offensive. Much attention is paid to angelic apparitions. The problematic tradition about Joseph's former marriage is eliminated.

The influence of this apocryphon was spread by its having been used in the thirteenth century by Jacob of Voragine for his chapter 131, "The Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary," in *The Golden Legend*.<sup>13</sup> Jacob of Voragine in this chapter is close to the *Gospel of the Birth of Mary*, although he reminds us that Jerome in the Prologue to his *History of the Birth of the Virgin* had from his early reading read the story we know "in some book"—presumably the *Protevangelium*. Once the Feast of the Nativity of Mary was established, readings from *De Nativitate Mariae* were used liturgically. The Dominicans seemed to have held the book in

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13. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints* (trans. William Granger Ryan; 2 vols; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). Jan Gijssels, *Libri de Nativitate Mariae* (CCSA 9; Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 32 n. 5, shows Jacob worked from a résumé by Jean de Mailly based on the *De Nativitate Mariae*. See also p. 17 for references to devotion to Mary from the eighth century onwards. See in addition B. Fleith, *Studien zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der lateinischen Legenda Aurea* (*Subsidia Hagiographica* 72; Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1991), 17–24.

high regard and versions of the text were used by the order from the thirteenth century onwards.

The use of scriptural citations in *De Nativitate Mariae* betrays a more faithful acceptance of the biblical narrative than is the case in many an earlier apocryphal writing. The author of *De Nativitate* has deliberately avoided the more picaresque elements (i.e. the more characteristically *apocryphal*) in his retelling of the story about Anna and Joachim and of Mary's upbringing. The story is more restrained and is more of a hagiographical than an apocryphal story. Thus, by this date many details seen in the *Protevangelium of James* and *Pseudo-Matthew* have been toned down. Our graph may have kept climbing ever upwards; there is now a more moderate tone, although the main message is still to exalt Mary's purity and position.

The lament of Anna (*Prot. Jas.* 3) and Anna's conversation with her maid are, not surprisingly, avoided. Yet, unexpectedly perhaps, less is said about Mary's daily routine in the Temple (such as is found in *Ps.-Mt.* 6–7)—“unexpectedly” because the *De Nativitate* is concerned to show Mary, the ward of the Temple, as a exemplary religious in a convent: her arrival at the Temple at the age of three betrays a precocious spirituality; her being succored by an angel (a detail carried over from the *Protevangelium*) implies her asceticism; at the Annunciation she is unafraid of the vision because she is accustomed to the “faces of angels and to celestial light.” (*Gos. Bir. Mary* 9.2)

My *Apocryphal New Testament* suggests a fifth to sixth century date for its composition. However, the recent exhaustive textual analysis of this work by Rita Beyers now published in *Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum* 10<sup>14</sup> and in a condensed form in *Ecrits apocryphes chrétiens* I<sup>15</sup> favors a later date, because of the apparent Carolingian influence she detects there. The Carolingians' interest in the patristic exegesis of earlier centuries especially of Matthew is said to have rekindled this interest in scripture. For example, the linking of Mary's ascent of the fifteen steps to the Altar of Burnt Offerings in the Temple is said to parallel the fifteen Gradual Psalms (Pss 120–134)<sup>16</sup>; *Gos. Bir. Mary* 3.7 makes an appeal to scripture absent from the earlier accounts; 4.8 is seen as due to Carolingian exegesis. The naming of Mary at 3.8 and the divine promise that she will be “made eminent by name and work” is compatible with such teaching. Hence it is not

14. Rita Beyers, ed., *Libellus de Nativitate Sanctae Mariae* (CCSA 10; Turnhout: Brepols, 1997).

15. François Bovon and Pierre Geoltrain, eds, *Ecrits apocryphes chrétiens* I (*Bibliothèque de la Pléiade* 442; Paris: Gallimard 1977).

16. These Psalms were prominent in monastic communities.

surprising that docetic or magical elements in the *Protevangelium*, such as the catalepsy of nature, were dropped.

The more restrained and theological tone here shows that, whenever this apocryphon was composed, the age of the unbridled, magical, superstitious features of many apocryphal writings of earlier centuries had passed.

The condensing of *Pseudo-Matthew* and by extension the *Protevangelium* in *De Nativitate Mariae* had the effect of concentrating the narrative on Mary. The ongoing emphasis on her virginity both reflected and itself fuelled belief about her perpetual virginity; virginity itself was proclaimed as the most sublime form of chastity (see further below).

Among differences from earlier accounts are: the planned betrothal of Mary to the High Priest Abiathar's son in *Ps.-Mt.* 7 becomes a planned betrothal to Abiathar himself; there is a greater emphasis on angelic appearances—to Joachim, Anna, Joseph and Mary; Anna's Magnificat is not reproduced; in *De Nativitate Mariae* Mary's and Joseph's marriage is a real, albeit an unconsummated, marriage; there is no flight to Egypt in *De Nativitate*, perhaps because Celsus centuries earlier had claimed that Jesus had learned magic arts there. We may therefore conclude that the stories of the sojourn in Egypt had now outplayed their role.

Arundel 404 is but one Latin manuscript that belongs to what is now being referred to as the "J" Compilation, so called after Montague Rhodes James who had discovered and published it. Another Latin manuscript is the Hereford MS, also originally published in part by James<sup>17</sup>. The Arundel manuscript (British Library Arundel 404) is fourteenth century; the Hereford Cathedral manuscript O.3.9 is thirteenth century. Like the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, the Arundel manuscript and its allies provide another means whereby the stories of the *Protevangelium* were popularised in the Latin West.<sup>18</sup>

This literature had many successors and followers. Other texts include the Arabic *Infancy Gospel* and the Armenian *Infancy Gospel*, both from the East and the Irish *Leabhar Breac* from the West as well as the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* and the *History of Joseph the Carpenter*. From the Arabic in particular we find repeated prayers and entreaties to Mary that she save or cure a supplicant.

17. A full version of this text now appears in Martin McNamara *et al.*, *Apocrypha Hiberniae* I, 2: *Evangelia Infantiae* (CCSA 14; Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 621–880.

18. Jean-Daniel Kaestli and Martin McNamara's recent researches show how the Irish traditions about the nativity and the original form of the "J" compilation seem to have had an existence prior to their "contamination" by *Pseudo-Matthew*. If so, the text in the Arundel, Hereford and allied manuscripts has a good and early pedigree.



So far we have concentrated on describing the apocryphal texts and some of their distinctive contents. Now we extrapolate some of their ongoing and enduring teachings.

First, the promotion of or reflection of monasticism is noteworthy. At the time Anna conceives Mary, she and Joachim vow that, if they are granted to be parents, their offspring would be dedicated, like a religious, to the service of the Lord. The monastic origin of some of the Mary materials may be seen in *Pseudo-Matthew*, even at the beginning of the narrative (*Ps.-Mt.* 1), where Joachim is introduced as a pious man whose almsgiving is exemplary: he even supports pilgrims as many a monastic house did. Later, Mary too practises almsgiving.

Mary's monastic upbringing begins even prior to her third birthday when she is presented in the Temple where she is to remain until she is twelve. From her earliest days while she is in her parental home she is nurtured constantly in the "sanctuary of her bedroom," as her feet must not be contaminated through contact with the earth. The *Protevangelium* stresses the undefiled nature of that domestic sanctuary where Mary is attended by "the pure daughters of the Hebrews" (*Prot. Jas.* 6). In the Temple, later, Mary is attended by fellow virgins and she undertakes monastic rituals. Only *Ps.-Mt.* 6-7 gives the daily routine of the virgin during her nine years cloistered in the Temple. Are we to see here the influence of the Benedictine Rule? Day and night her life is characterized by righteousness and prayer: "From the morning to the third hour she remained in prayer; from the third to the ninth she was occupied with her weaving; and from the ninth she again applied herself to prayer. She did not retire from praying until there appeared to her an angel of the Lord, from whose hand she used to receive food" (*Ps.-Mt.* 6). *Pseudo-Matthew* 6.1 refers to perpetual adoration (*laus perennis*) by Mary. Her communicating with angels and her being nurtured by a dove occur here, as they do in other Marian Gospels. The *De Nativitate Mariae* also mentions Mary's divine visions in the Temple. Throughout her life she had been at home in the company of the "undefiled daughters of the Hebrews" and later as a ward of the Temple; when Mary leaves the Temple to be the ward of Joseph other virgins (religious) accompany her. Her life is therefore described as having been in a monastic community until she sets off to Bethlehem to give birth of Jesus.

The theme of virginity has already been alluded to above. This may now be expanded. We note that as soon as Anna conceives, her child is destined to be the mother of the Son of Most High. The pregnancy is divinely ordained. The repeated angelic proclamations to Joachim and to Anna make that clear. Mary's own destiny is spelled out: she is to be reared in the Temple and later without the stain of sexual contact shall, as a virgin, bear a son. *Protevangelium* 9.7 uses



the title "Virgin of the Lord" for the first time, and that is how she is constantly referred to thereafter in this literature.

Mary's reaction to the proposal by the High Priest, Abiathar, that she marry his son is to defend her status as a true religious, saying that her own virginity is in itself worship: "God is first of all worshipped in chastity . . . I from my infancy in the Temple of God have learned that virginity can be sufficiently dear to God. And so, because I can offer what is dear to God, I have resolved in my heart that I should not know a man at all" (*Ps.-Mt.* 7). She then accepts her destiny and assents to the incarnation (while preserving her virginity) in order to reverse Eve's trespass.<sup>19</sup>

The theme of virginity continues with Joseph being appointed merely as Mary's guardian. *Pseudo-Matthew* emphasises that Joseph is only the ward not a husband. In this Gospel he is said to have grandchildren older than Mary. Doubtless, that is intended to show not only Joseph's great age, but the improbability that he would have any desire for Mary as a woman. Once he takes her to his home she is again in a monastic setting and her virginity is preserved. Her companions are other virgins and she is to remain a virgin. Mary's vow in *De Nativitate Mariae* reminds us that she is "dedicated to the Lord." In *De Nativitate Mariae* wedding preparations are made but Mary goes off with seven virgins to her parental home. Those two later texts are thus still faithful to a tradition seen as early as the *Protevangelium* that the marriage is not consummated. Immediately after the marriage—and a genuine wedding seems not to be understood in the *Protevangelium*—Joseph goes off surveying his buildings, immediately upon taking Mary as his ward, until he returns months later to find Mary pregnant. Her time at home is spent chastely preparing the wool work for the Temple. In *Pseudo-Matthew* 8 her fellow virgins recognize her special qualities and they call her Queen of the Virgins—apparently the earliest recorded instance of the use of that title for Mary. Oddly for such a portentous claim, the attribution is delivered in irritation by her companions, although the words are interpreted for their benefit by an angel.

Mary's perpetual virginity is emphasized after the pregnancy: the strange story of the administration of the "water of truth" in the *Protevangelium* serves to highlight her ongoing virginity, while physically her womb is great. Similarly, in *De Nativitate Mariae* 8.5, although Joseph's and Mary's is a real marriage, Augustine stated that it was not consummated.<sup>20</sup> Throughout the Marian Gospels Mary is only ever called "the virgin," not ever "daughter," "wife," or "mother" (with only one exception at *Prot. Jas.* 21.11).

19. Eve meets Joseph and then visits the Virgin in the cave in the Armenian *Infancy Gospel* 9.

20. See H. Barré, "L'apport marial de l'Orient à l'Occident de saint Ambroise à saint Augustin," *Etudes mariales* 19 (1962): 27–89.

The midwife in *Ps.-Mt.* 13.3 makes a significant declaration about Mary's perpetual virginity by stating, having observed that the birth of Jesus occurred without the spilling of blood: *Virgo peperit et postquam peperit virgo esse perdurat* ("A virgin has conceived, a virgin has brought forth and as a virgin she remains" cf. the Lateran formulation of 649).<sup>21</sup> The physical examination by the disbelieving midwife confirms she is *virgo intacta even post partum*. (That scene was popular in iconic depictions until the Middle Ages; the midwives are also depicted bathing the neonate.)

Another aspect of Mary's birth gave rise to the doctrine known as the Immaculate Conception. This may be seen most vividly in the *Protevangelium*. The angel tells Anna she *will* conceive but at 4.4 when an angel speaks to the absent Joachim he tells him his wife *is* pregnant, implying a miraculous conception. At 4.9, too, the perfect tense (indicating a present reality) is found, although some manuscripts, conscious of the difficulty, both here and at 4.4 have substituted a future tense. Defenders of the future tense, improbably, take Joachim's "resting" at home after his return for a euphemism intended to say that that is when the conception occurred. The perfect is probably to be preferred in both verses and may be used to support the teaching that Anna's conception of Mary was indeed without *macula*. That Anna has conceived without sexual intercourse is implied when Joachim sees in the priest's frontlet that he has not sinned (*Prot. Jas.* 5.1), the only "sin" possible being concupiscence.<sup>22</sup>

This contrasts with *Ps.-Mt.* 3 where Anna is told she has conceived of Joachim's seed, but, as the story progresses, that detail seems to have been forgotten. (Joachim is absent for five months and takes thirty days to reach home.) In any case, we note here a further development in the miraculous element of the narrative, and, as so often, all the principle characters' roles are increasingly exalted.

Fanciful, superstitious and exaggerated are legitimate judgments on this body of apocryphal gospels, but gnostic they are not. As far as the birth of Jesus is concerned, the emphasis is clearly on the reality of the incarnation. What needs to be emphasized here is that throughout the traditions Mary is visibly pregnant. Elizabeth, Joseph and the priests all observe her swollen womb. The *Protevangelium* has this at six months; *Pseudo-Matthew* at nine months; *De Nativitate Mariae*, still calling her a fiancée, refers to four months. *The History of Joseph the Carpenter* has three months.

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21. Cf. Augustine's *virgo concepit, virgo peperit, virgo permansit* (*Serm.* 51.11). Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 7.6) says that when Mary gave birth she was found to still be a virgin.

22. *Gos. Bir. Mary* 9.5 refers to the birth of the Jesus as unique because as Son of God he is "conceived without sinning" (cf. 9.10 thus applying an immaculate conception to *him* and not to the birth of his mother).

However apparently docetic some descriptions of the actual birth of Jesus seem to be, for example, in Arundel 404 and *Protevangelium* 19.16, which speak of the light in the cave withdrawing until the baby “appears,” these may be no more than a dramatization of terms like the light of the world becoming visible—the Word has indeed become flesh. The bloodlessness at the parturition in *Pseudo-Matthew* and the painlessness of the childbirth in *Leabhar Breac* are balanced by the main message, which is that Mary’s pregnancy is real enough. The reality of the birth is also evident in Mary’s lactating. Her breasts are “gushing” according to *Leabhar Breac*, and she suckles Jesus in *Arabic Infancy Gospel* 3 and even in Arundel 404 (which is often pointed to as having encouraged a docetic understanding of the birth).

One more theme found in this literature is Mary as a facilitator in healing, an intercessor. That tradition has obviously lived on beyond these writings.

Soon after the birth in the *Arabic Infancy Gospel* (ch. 3), Mary encourages a sick woman to touch the baby and be healed. Mary as intercessor is a prominent motif through the Holy Family’s sojourn in Egypt. The *Arabic Gospel* as well as the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* in Latin and also the *Leabhar Breac* have numerous stories in which the “Lady Mary” is an intercessor. Even prior to that time she has supernatural gifts in her own right. In *Ps.-Mt.* 6 we learn that Mary herself as a child in the Temple is also a healer and not merely a mediatrix (“If anyone who was unwell touched her, that same hour he went away cured”). After the end of her life she heals on her own account too: in the Dormition account of Pseudo-Melito Mary heals the Jew whose hands were evulsed when he attacked her bier.

Stories about Mary influenced the church’s liturgy, just as they themselves were influenced by early Christian practices. After the Council of Ephesus in 431 when Mary’s status as *theotokos* was proclaimed, the Eastern churches began to celebrate Marian festivals. The feast of her birth, based on the *Protevangelium*, seems to have originated in Constantinople in the sixth century, the Presentation of Mary in the Temple, perhaps in the century following, the Conception of Anne from the ninth, as well as the Feast of Anna and Joachim a century later. The West imported some of these from the East, thanks in part to Augustine’s influence. Those include the Purification and Assumption, as well as the Annunciation and Nativity. As far as the Presentation is concerned this became a popular subject for iconic representations. Cartlidge and I note that by being accepted into the Temple the Virgin reverses the rejection of her father’s offering by the priests; the priesthood is on the right path.<sup>23</sup> Now Joachim’s offering is accepted; the history of salvation is on course.

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23. Cartlidge and Elliott, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha*.

## PART 2

Just as believers and writers in the post-New Testament period began to reflect on why it was that Mary, of all people, was chosen to be the one to bring Jesus into the world, so too they reflected on her death. Her birth and upbringing had to be special, her virginal life increasingly emphasized. Her death also needed to emphasize her unique status. The assumption, or dormition, or falling asleep, or transitus or obsequies appeared in written forms somewhat later than stories of her family and upbringing; Epiphanius of Salamis towards the end of the fourth century claims he can find no record of how the Virgin's life ended. Only from the fifth century do the stories of Mary's departure from the earth emerge. The day to commemorate Mary's death, August 15, seems to have originated from the end of the fifth century, according to Mary Clayton.<sup>24</sup> Before that date writers merely mention her end only in the context that she remained a virgin until her death. Stephen Shoemaker, however, argues that some of the traditions in these earliest accounts may go back to the third century.<sup>25</sup> The later, that is, fifth century, traditions did not emerge throughout Christendom *ex nihilo*! Whatever their possible early history, it is clear that nothing substantial emerges in writing on this theme until the end of the fifth century. Before then the death itself was not of relevance—only her perpetual virginity. But by the sixth century the Gelasian decree denounces an apocryphal book named the *Transitus sanctae Mariae*, by which Pseudo-Melito, *Assumption of the Virgin*, may be meant.

There is a large number of accounts of her death and assumption into heaven (or paradise) composed in various languages including Greek, Latin, Coptic, Ethiopic, Georgian, Armenian, Arabic and Syriac. There is also an Irish tradition with close links to the Syriac. The history of those traditions is largely uncharted, although Simon Mimouni has argued for an organic growth of the differing extant traditions.<sup>26</sup> That view has however recently been criticized by, among others, Stephen Shoemaker.

My *Apocryphal New Testament* includes translations or summaries of twelve such stories of the assumption from Greek, Latin, Coptic and Syriac, because we are not yet in a position to provide a synoptic presentation of the material, let alone produce a critical edition of the assumption. The ones I include are: Coptic:

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24. Mary Clayton, *The Apocryphal Gospels of Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. 118.

25. Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions about the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

26. Simon C. Mimouni, *Dormition et assumption de Marie: Histoire des traditions anciennes* (ThH 98; Paris: Beauchesne, 1995).

The Sahidic Coptic *Homily on the Dormition* attributed to Evodius of Rome; *The Twentieth Discourse* of Cyril of Jerusalem; The Discourse of Theodosius of Alexandria; A fragment from *The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles*. In Greek: *The Discourse of John the Divine*. In Latin: *The Narrative of Pseudo-Melito; The Narrative of Joseph of Arimathaea*. In Syriac: Various fragments including the *History of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, edited by E. A. Wallis Budge.<sup>27</sup>

Shoemaker prints English translations of six of the earliest dormition narratives hitherto untranslated in the Appendixes to his monograph: The Ethiopic *Liber Requiei*; Transitus R by John the Theologian and Evangelist; A fifth-century Syriac Palimpsest; The Ethiopic Six Books; The Sahidic Coptic *Homily on the Dormition* attributed to Evodius; Jacob of Serug, *Homily on the Dormition*.<sup>28</sup> The recently published collections in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens* have a French translation by Simon Mimouni of the Dormition by Pseudo-John the Theologian in vol. 1 and Transitus Greek R in volume 2 (also by Mimouni).<sup>29</sup>

Although it seems to be impossible to edit a single assumption narrative that takes into account all variant forms in the different languages, one can detect certain roughly defined differences between two main areas. In the Coptic tradition Mary's corporeal ascent is a feature: there is a long interval between her death and assumption. That tradition knows nothing of the summoning of all the apostles—only Peter and John are present. Mary is warned of her death by Jesus. In the tradition represented by the Latin, Greek and Syriac, Mary's death is announced by an angel (who in the Latin brings a palm branch), the apostles are summoned from all parts of the world and Mary's assumption occurs soon after her death. In the Latin narrative attributed to Joseph of Arimathaea Mary dies and Jesus takes her soul to heaven. Her corpse is placed in her tomb but is then immediately transported to heaven by angels to be reunited with her soul. During that translation into heaven Mary throws her girdle to Thomas. The Greek narratives may have been used liturgically on the commemoration of Mary's death, and as a consequence, are somewhat shorter. The Latin narratives are smoother, suggestive of a later date. The Syriac tradition is perhaps the earliest.

But in all the accounts it seems that Mary actually dies, even though that detail is glossed over—as indeed it is in the difficult Papal dogmatic decree of 1950 *Munificentissimus Deus* with reference to the assumption. Inevitably, since that decree was issued, much discussion of the history of the assumption has been

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27. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*.

28. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*.

29. EAC Vol. 1 (ed. François Bovon and Pierre Geoltrain; *Bibliothèque de la Pléiade* 442; Paris: Gallimard 1977); Vol. 2 (ed. Pierre Geoltrain and Jean-Daniel Kaestli; *Bibliothèque de la Pléiade* 516; Paris: Gallimard, 2005).

conducted along either Roman Catholic lines or anti-Catholic, especially where that declaration states “[Mary] was not subject to the law of remaining in the corruption of the grave and she did not have to wait until the end of time for the redemption of her body” (AAS 42 [1950], 754).

Michel Van Esbroeck over many years has contributed a number of articles to learned journals in which he has analyzed many of the oriental versions of the assumption.<sup>30</sup> He is concerned to explain how such narratives arose especially in Greek, Georgian and Armenian. The key to understanding the development of the tradition is, according to Van Esbroeck, the relationship with the imperial policies of the Byzantine emperors and their attitudes to Chalcedon, Pulcheria’s influence on Theodosius II being one of the better known examples of how Mary as *theotokos* was vigorously promoted. However, one needs to remember that the various apocryphal assumption tales are remarkably neutral regarding Chalcedon.

How far we should link the origins of written stories about the assumption and the flowering of pre-Byzantine Marian devotion in the Holy Land is an open question and beyond the scope of the present essay. Ought we to connect the development of Marian veneration in the fifth century at the church of the Kathisma between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, then at the church of Mary’s Tomb in the Jehoshaphat Valley, and then by 543 at the Nea Basilica near Jerusalem, to the proliferation of these texts that had fuelled the devotion? Or may the reverse be true, namely the spread of the written narratives arose from these and other centers of popular devotion? We merely note the diverse collection of narratives that possibly originated in Syro-Palestine and Egypt but which had spread throughout Christendom by the tenth century, and we urge the continuing study of these materials.

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30. Some of his essays have been gathered together in Michel Van Esbroeck, *Aux origines de la Dormition de la Vierge* (Variorum Collected Studies Series 472; Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995). Other influential books on the Dormition stories are: Martin Jugie, *La mort et l’assomption de la Sainte Vierge: Etude historico-doctrinale* (Vatican City: Bibliotheca apostolica vaticana, 1944) and Antoine Wenger, *L’assomption de la très Sainte Vierge dans la tradition byzantine du VI<sup>e</sup> au Xe siècle* (Paris: Institut français d’études byzantines, 1955).

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## ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT: “EXEMPLAR” AS EXAMPLE

*David T. Runia*

### USING ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY TO UNDERSTAND THE NEW TESTAMENT

It has often been observed how significant it was that the New Testament, just like the Septuagint before it, was written in Greek. In consequence its language and its contents resonated to a greater or a lesser extent with the many and various aspects of Greco-Roman culture. Among these was the tradition and current practice of ancient philosophy, particularly as it was carried out in the Greek language.

There are only two direct references to ancient philosophy in the New Testament and neither are very promising. The author of the Letter to the Colossians warns his readers: “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy (*philosophia*) and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe and not according to Christ” (Col 2:8 NRSV). This text has often been thought somewhat unfortunate by Christians who wish to pursue philosophy, though it is ameliorated if we follow David Hay’s suggestion and interpret “philosophy and empty deceit” as equivalent to “an empty and deceitful philosophy.”<sup>1</sup> The second direct reference occurs when, according to the book of Acts, Paul visits Athens. He enters into debate with “some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers (*philosophoi*),” who make derogatory remarks in relation to the good news about Jesus and the resurrection and drag him off to the Areopagus for a discussion (Acts 17:18).

These two texts are sufficient, however, to show that the worlds of ancient philosophy and of the New Testament were not wholly disconnected. Over the

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1. David M. Hay, *Colossians* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 86.

centuries philosophers and the pursuit of philosophy had built up a well-recognized niche in Greek society. Undeniably most of its practitioners belonged to the social elite. There could be exceptions such as Epictetus, who was born a slave, but it is significant that his owner was the Emperor Nero's secretary. Generally speaking one would only attend a philosophical school or become a philosopher if there was some form of contact with upper-class circles. It is quite unlikely that any of the New Testament writers had a formal training in philosophy. This might be disputed in the case of Paul, who grew up in Tarsus, a town with a reputation for philosophy.<sup>2</sup> However, if the author of Acts is to be believed, the key to his education was his training in Jerusalem "at the feet of Gamaliel" (Acts 22:3). The New Testament writers certainly did not regard the Christian life as a "philosophy" in the way that the Hellenistic Jewish author Philo, whose family did move in upper-class circles, regarded Judaism. Nevertheless it is important to acknowledge that the philosophers and the earliest Christians did not live in wholly separate worlds. Not only would the Christians have recognized a philosopher when they saw one (he would have been bearded and worn distinctive clothing), but they would have also had some inkling of what being a philosopher involved. At most there would have been only two or three "degrees of separation" between them. For this reason investigation of the "links" or, perhaps better, the "overlap" between the worlds of ancient philosophy and of the New Testament is always going to be a worthwhile exercise.

Turning now to our modern times, we should note that the relationship between the two disciplines is closer than the parallel situation in the ancient world. At the very least, New Testament scholars generally have some acquaintance with the main developments of ancient philosophy. Helmut Koester's two volume *Introduction to the New Testament*, which presumably distilled what he thought his Harvard students should know, has two short chapters on Greek philosophy, the one dealing with "the Philosophical Schools and Philosophic Religion," the other with "the Spirit of the Hellenistic Age."<sup>3</sup> In fact many New Testament scholars have a wide-ranging knowledge of ancient philosophy, even if it is uncommon to find a scholar who publishes monographs in both fields.<sup>4</sup>

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2. The geographer Strabo writes at about the time of Paul's birth (14.5.13): "The people there have developed such an enthusiasm for philosophy and all the rest of liberal education that they have surpassed Athens and Alexandria and any other place where schools and lectures of philosophy are found."

3. Helmut Koester, *History, Culture and Religion of the Hellenistic Age* (vol. 1 of *Introduction to the New Testament*; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1982), 140–62; see also sections on "the Stoics of the Imperial Period" and "the Philosophical Marketplace" at 353–62.

4. A splendid example is Troels Engberg-Pedersen.

Such knowledge was perhaps even more the case in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century German scholarship, during the first fertile period of studies on the relationship between the New Testament and ancient philosophy.<sup>5</sup> One thinks, for example, of the scholar Adolf Bonhoeffer (1859–1919), who first wrote monographs on Epictetus and the Stoa and the ethics of Epictetus, but later followed with a well-known study on Epictetus and the New Testament, which is still occasionally cited today.<sup>6</sup> In recent years there has been somewhat of a boom in studies on the interface between ancient philosophy and New Testament, set in motion by Abraham Malherbe and continued by scholars such as Troels Engberg-Pedersen, John Fitzgerald, Johan Thom and others. Special mention should be made of the Hellenistic Moral Philosophy and Early Christianity seminar of the Society of Biblical Literature, which over a period of more than two decades has pursued with great vigor and enthusiasm topics and texts that can shed light on the interaction between moral philosophy and early Christianity, including the New Testament.<sup>7</sup>

Ancient philosophers and the New Testament writers thus lived in largely but not wholly separate domains of the same society, with some links and overlapping areas between them. Given the detailed knowledge that scholars have built up over the years of ancient texts and artefacts, it is not going to be difficult to uncover many parallels. Two large-scale research enterprises have been devoted to this exercise, the “Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti” and the “New Wettstein projects.” Both have developed lengthy lists of parallels, taking ancient Greco-Roman and Jewish texts and the New Testament as their starting point.<sup>8</sup> But ever since Samuel Sandmel’s admonitory lecture on “parallelomania” there has been concern about the soundness and value of compiling parallels in biblical studies.<sup>9</sup> It is to be agreed with Malherbe that the mere listing and explanation of parallels is of limited value, unless there is a sharp eye for the point of comparison of the material (the *tertium comparationis*), which generally involves

5. For a succinct account of scholarship on ancient philosophy and New Testament scholarship, see Abraham J. Malherbe, “Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament,” *ANRW* 26.1:267–333. Though focused on ethics, this is perhaps the best short introduction to the subject.

6. Adolf Bonhöffer, *Epictet und die Stoa: Untersuchungen zur stoischen Philosophie* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1890); idem, *Die Ethik des Stoikers Epictet* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1894); idem, *Epiktet und das Neue Testament* (Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 10; Giessen, 1911).

7. The first seminar was held at the SBL meeting in New Orleans in 1990 and it continues to this day.

8. On these projects see Malherbe, “Hellenistic Moralists,” 272–76. The former, based in Utrecht and Claremont, has come to a standstill. The latter, based in Halle, is forging ahead under the leadership of Udo Schnelle, with a number of volumes appearing in recent years.

9. Samuel Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” *JBL* 81 (1962): 1–13.

making a detailed study of the context in which the parallels are situated. Since the direction of the search for parallels is generally from the New Testament to Greco-Roman authors, such research will benefit from not just focusing on single parallels but also investigating the degree of differentiation that these authors reveal in their own domain. There is diversity not only in the New Testament, but also in the Greco-Roman writers that it is compared with.<sup>10</sup> Malherbe points out that it is often too easy to emphasize the differences between the two sides of the comparison and this does not lead to the constructive results that research seeks to attain.<sup>11</sup>

Against this background it will be of value to look more specifically at how scholars have made use of the material that ancient philosophy provides to help them in their task of elucidating the New Testament. I suggest a typology of four different approaches.

The first approach may be called *sociological*, but it can also be extended to *literary* aspects. It has proved highly fruitful for scholars to localize the early Christians in the social context of their society, as Wayne Meeks has done in his classic study, *The First Urban Christians*.<sup>12</sup> Although, as we have seen, the New Testament writers and ancient philosophers lived in largely separate worlds, it has long been recognized that the missionary activity of men such as Paul and Barnabas bears significant resemblance to wandering philosophers (and also sophists<sup>13</sup>) who were active in the “philosophical marketplace” (Helmut Koester’s term). The philosophers whose writings are most helpful in this context are the Stoic moralists such as Musonius Rufus, Dio Chrysostom and Epictetus, but the satirist Lucian also sheds light on this world from quite a different angle.<sup>14</sup> In addition we should note common *literary methods* that these writers and the authors of the New Testament letters share. The most important are the diatribe, a popular philosophical treatment of an ethical topic with the aim to change the way of life of the reader, the exhortation (*paraenesis*), which similarly gives examples

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10. Malherbe, “Hellenistic Moralists,” 276–78.

11. Ibid., 299–301; David E. Aune, “Passions in the Pauline Epistles: The Current State of Research,” in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought* (ed. John T. Fitzgerald; London: Routledge, 2008), 221–37, esp. 222–23.

12. Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

13. Sophists also claim to be educators, but lay more emphasis on rhetoric than philosophers. The term often has negative overtones. See Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

14. See the collection of texts in Abraham J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (LEC; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987).

of actions that the reader should follow, and the practical argument (*enthymeme*), which attempts to persuade the reader that the action should be taken.<sup>15</sup>

The second approach focuses on the *terminology* and *conceptuality* found in the New Testament. Numerous terms used by its authors resonate with meanings that have a background in Greek philosophy. The major lexica of New Testament studies diligently record this background.<sup>16</sup> In particular Kittel's great theological Dictionary devotes a special section for the philosophical background of every key term. So, to take an example at random, the discussion of the term for freedom, *eleutheria*, begins with a section on (A) "the political concept of freedom in the Greek world," followed by one on (B) "the philosophical concept of freedom in Hellenism (Stoicism)," before treating (C) "the concept of freedom in the NT."<sup>17</sup> This background is further examined as a matter of course in commentaries and monographs. It is important to recognize that here, perhaps more than elsewhere, both terminology and conceptuality are mediated through the Hellenistic-Jewish background of the New Testament.<sup>18</sup> Many, if not the majority, of the terms already occur in the Septuagint, whose translators may have been influenced by some knowledge of Greek philosophical terminology,<sup>19</sup> and their usage is further developed by the learned Jew, Philo of Alexandria. Philo, though a loyal member of the Jewish community, belonged to a higher social sphere than the New Testament writers and plainly had an excellent education in Greek philosophy. Nevertheless his use of philosophical terms and concepts in his biblical exegesis has proved a fertile source of comparative material for New Testament interpreters.<sup>20</sup>

15. On the diatribe see Stanley K. Stowers, "Diatribes," in *ABD* 2.190–93; on *paraenesis* (esp. in letters) Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists," 278–93; on argumentation, David Hellholm, "Enthymemic Argumentation in Paul: the Case of Romans 6," in *Paul in his Hellenistic Context* (ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 119–79.

16. See for example William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3rd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

17. Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (10 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76), 487–502. The Dictionary has been sharply criticized for not distinguishing between the lexical and the doctrinal use of concepts: James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 206–62.

18. Research in this area was greatly stimulated by the seminal study of Charles H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1954).

19. As argued in the case of key texts such as Gen 1:26–27 by Martin Rösel, *Übersetzung als Vervollständigung der Auslegung: Studien zur Genesis-Septuaginta* (BZAW 223; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994).

20. For a survey of scholarship on Philo and the New Testament see my *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (CRINT III 3; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993), 63–86.

In a third approach, which follows on from the second, scholars attempt to *contextualize* themes in the New Testament that can be related to a broad scope of ancient philosophical doctrines, in the areas of ethics, cosmology, anthropology, political philosophy and, less commonly, epistemology and metaphysics. The schools of thought (*haireseis*) that prove most useful for this approach are undoubtedly the Stoa (particularly in its later developments) and Platonism in the guise of what scholars now call Middle Platonism, but other schools such as the Peripatos, the Epicureans, the Sceptics and (largely for sociological purposes) the Cynics also furnish material. An obvious example is the interpretation of the distinctions Paul makes between *sōma*, *psychē*, and *pneuma* and between the *psychikoi* and the *pneumatikoi* in 1 Corinthians, which simply cry out for examination against the background of Greek philosophical anthropology (primarily Stoicism and Platonism, though here too Philo's usage has to be taken into account as well). Not surprisingly a good deal of research on this theme, exploiting the philosophical background, has been carried out in recent decades.<sup>21</sup> Taking a different approach, George van Kooten in his study entitled *Paul's Anthropology in Context* focuses on Paul's use of notion of the human being as "image of God" (from Gen 1:26) and sees an important Platonist background, which he investigates with great thoroughness.<sup>22</sup> Another question that has roused considerable discussion recently is Jesus' emotions as portrayed in the Gospels. In a careful study Harold Attridge asks whether the presentation in the Fourth Gospel owes anything to Stoic views on the passions.<sup>23</sup> He concludes that the portrait of the serene Jesus bears some resemblance to the ideal Stoic sage, but is not so sure that in the depiction of Jesus' emotions there is any kind of link

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21. John A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1952); Robert Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings* (AGJU 10; Leiden: Brill, 1971); Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1276–81 (on the *sōma pneumatikon*).

22. George H. van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context. The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity* (WUNT 232; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). In an earlier article Van Kooten argued that the Johannine concept of the true light should be viewed against the background of Platonic philosophy: "The 'True Light which Enlightens Everyone' (John 1:9): John, Genesis, the Platonic Notion of the 'True, Noetic Light,' and the Allegory of the Cave in Plato's *Republic*," in *The Creation of Heaven and Earth: Re-interpretations of Genesis 1 in the Context of Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, Christianity, and Modern Physics* (ed. George H. van Kooten; Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions 8; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 149–94.

23. Harold W. Attridge, "An 'Emotional' Jesus and Stoic Tradition," in *Stoicism in Early Christianity* (ed. Thomas Rasmussen, Troels Engberg-Pedersen and Ismo Dunderberg; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 77–90.

to Stoic notions of the healing of the passions (if it exists, it is only formal). In all these studies the Greek philosophical doctrines are seen to belong to the *context* or *background* of the text and can shed light on them (often by way of contrast). But it is not argued that the writers are interacting with philosophical discussions with which they are acquainted. At most they may have some knowledge of philosophical doctrines, which has contributed in some way to the development of their views and arguments. Correspondingly, knowledge of ancient philosophical material is also not going to supply the modern interpreter with the key that will unlock the meaning of the text in question.

The fourth approach that I wish to highlight goes a final step further. In this approach it is argued (or assumed) that the background of ancient philosophy is *essential for understanding and interpreting* the text. If this is the case it can hardly be otherwise than that the New Testament author was conscious of that background and may well be interacting with it as he presents his argument or sets out his exposition. Let me give some examples that relate closely to themes that I discussed in relation to the third approach. Very recently Troels Engberg-Pedersen has published a study that is bound to raise controversy.<sup>24</sup> He argues that Paul's understanding of *sōma*, *psychē* and *pneuma* can only be understood in the broader context of his cosmology and that this is basically materialistic, following a Stoic rather than a Platonist line of thinking. *Pneuma* is not immaterial, but is a bodily entity that has the physical constitution of the stars and other heavenly bodies. Even in the apocalyptic ideas developed in 1 Cor 15 "Paul drew on a number of basic ideas in Stoic cosmology."<sup>25</sup> Similarly Emma Wasserman has argued that the Pauline monologue in Rom 7 needs to be understood in the light of a Platonist psychology in which the mind describes its defeat at the hand of passions and desires that are represented as sin.<sup>26</sup> On the question of the Fourth Gospel's presentation of the emotional Jesus, Gitte Buch-Hansen argues that this should not be taken to reflect an anti-Stoic stance, but can in fact be understood from a Stoic perspective (as indeed Origen did), even if we may never know exactly what John had in mind when he presented Jesus' emotions as he did.<sup>27</sup> Buch-Hansen thus tentatively goes a step further than Attridge did in the study

24. Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

25. Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self*, 38.

26. Emma Wasserman, *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Sin, Death, and the Law in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology* (WUNT 2/256; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). Wasserman sees Philo's writings as an essential part of the background needed to interpret the text.

27. Gitte Buch-Hansen, "The Emotional Jesus: Anti-Stoicism in the Fourth Gospel?," in Rasimus, *et al. Stoicism in Early Christianity*, 93–114.

on the same subject cited earlier. The Stoic theory of the passions, and particularly the notion of “right sensibilities” (*eupatheiai*), which is further developed by Philo for exegetical purposes, form a possible background for understanding what the evangelist wanted to achieve in his depiction of the emotional Jesus.

Surveying the typology that I have presented, I conclude that there are clear cross-links. The third approach presupposes the results of the second. The fourth approach extends that of the third. In both cases the possible mediating role of Hellenistic Judaism must be taken into account. The most intriguing questions are raised by the intersection of the first and fourth approach. If the results of historical and sociological analysis are that ancient philosophers and early Christians lived in largely distinct, if perhaps not wholly separated worlds, what does this mean for scholarly approaches that argue that New Testament authors are working directly with ideas derived from or influenced by Greek philosophy? Could it be that the supposed connections exist primarily in the heads of modern scholars, who have the texts before them on their desks or their computers and cannot resist imposing them on the ancient texts? But we must also bear in mind that the texts we still have are a very incomplete and perhaps skewed selection and that our knowledge of historical and sociological realities is very imperfect. It would be less rash, in my view, to venture on the fourth approach in my typology, in those cases where it might look promising, than to rule it out of hand.

### “EXEMPLAR” AS EXAMPLE

I now propose to take an example from the Letter to the Hebrews, a text dear to the heart of our honorand, on which he has written a magisterial commentary.<sup>28</sup> It focuses on Heb 8:5 and in particular the phrase *hypodeigma kai skia*. It is a limited example, but I have chosen it because it illustrates well the issues that arise when Greek philosophy is a point of reference for the understanding of New Testament texts. Even though the example is limited, it will not be possible to examine every aspect of it in full detail. But it will emerge that all four of the approaches outlined above can be related to this text to a greater or lesser degree.

In his commentary, Harold Attridge translates the long sentence of Heb 8:4–5, referring to Christ as the High Priest, as follows:<sup>29</sup>

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28. Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989).

29. *Ibid.*, 216.



(4) Now if he were on earth, he would not even be a priest, since there are those who legally offer gifts, (5) who serve a shadowy copy (*hypodeigmati kai skiai*) of the heavenly things, just as Moses, when he was about to make the tent, received an oracle. For it says, “See that you make everything according to the pattern (*ton typon*) shown you on the mountain.”

This version is quite close to the rsv (1952), which translated the first clause of 8:5 as “They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary.” There are two differences: Attridge takes the two nouns *hypodeigma kai skia* as a *hendiadys* and so makes a single phrase of them, and he also translates the neuter plural *tōn epouraniōn* more literally. But when we turn to the NRSV (1989) we get quite a different reading: “They offer worship in a sanctuary that is a sketch and shadow of the heavenly one.” What is going on here?

It has long been thought—and Attridge’s translation agrees with this view—that the phrase *hypodeigma kai skia* is an indication of the author’s appropriation of Platonic ideas in his presentation of an earthly and a heavenly temple. The interpretation is reinforced by a further passage at 9:23–24, where the rsv reads:

(23) Thus it was necessary for the copies (*ta hypodeigmata*) of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. (24) For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy (*antitypa*) of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

The NRSV, consistent with its rendering of 8:5, changes “copies” to “sketches,” but retains for “a copy” the similar “a mere copy.”

The term “shadow” certainly could have philosophical overtones. Attridge affirms without hesitation that its use “as an image for components of the phenomenal or material world is Platonic,” and cites the central Platonic text of allegory of the cave, in which the term is used some seven times in *Resp.* 515–517. The translators do not have to commit to any interpretation and are content to render the term literally. They can all do the same at 10:1, where the author states that “the law has a shadow (*skia*) of the good things to come, and not the very image (*eikōn*) of the realities.” The term “image” could once again be Platonic, but “shadow” is given a temporal aspect, that is, a “foreshadowing,” which we would not expect in Platonic usage.

But what of the other term? In his commentary Attridge argues for the translation of *hypodeigma* as “copy.”<sup>30</sup> He acknowledges that the term is more common in Hellenistic Greek for the meaning “example” or for that which is copied.

30. Ibid., 219.

“Example” is the meaning it has at Heb 4:11 and elsewhere in the New Testament, for example, at John 13:15. But those scholars who argue that it has this meaning here, or that of “prefiguration” or “outline,” are premature, in Attridge’s view, because this shift in meaning does not occur until the culmination of the exposition at 10:1–10. Attridge also adduces the evidence found in Philo of Alexandria. Although Philo does not use exactly the same terminology of *skia* or *hypodeigma* in his temple allegories, the contrast between ideal model and sensible copy is common. Moreover Philo makes frequent use of the same text quoted by the author of the Letter in 8:5, namely Exod 25:40. Most interestingly, when Philo cites this verse in *Leg.* 3.102, he replaces the term *typon* in the LXX with *paradeigma*, which he imports from Exod 25:9, where it is used twice. It is difficult not to think that the LXX translators were aware of the strongly Platonic background of this term when they used it. *Paradeigma* is the classic term that Plato uses in both the *Parmenides* and the *Timaeus* to denote the ideal intelligible object that serves as a model for the sense-perceptible image that resembles it.<sup>31</sup> The term is taken over repeatedly by Middle Platonist commentators when they summarize Plato’s doctrines.<sup>32</sup> For Philo the term’s presence in scripture is a strong encouragement to interpret the Pentateuchal texts that speak of a pattern for the tabernacle in a Platonist and dualist way.<sup>33</sup> In addition he makes much of the name of the craftsman of the tabernacle, Bezalel (Exod 31:2), which is taken to mean “in the shadow (*skiai*) of God” and so also to hint at a Platonic contrast between ideal model or design and sense-perceptible copy.<sup>34</sup> We should note this scheme is not confined to Philo among Hellenistic-Jewish writers. In Wis 9:7 we read that God commanded Solomon to build a temple on his holy mountain, “a copy (*mimēma*) of the sacred tabernacle which you prepared from the very first.” The term *mimēma* is unmistakably Platonic,<sup>35</sup> and the implied preexistence of the model strongly reminds us of Philo’s adaptation of the Platonist theory of ideas in his interpretation of the Genesis creation account.<sup>36</sup>

Where, then, does the very different rendering in the NRSV, published in the same year as Attridge’s Commentary, come from? One must suspect that

31. Plato *Parm.* 132d2, *Tim.* 28a7, 28c5, 29b4, 37c8 etc.; note also *Resp.* 592b2.

32. See the list of texts in my *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (2nd ed.; *Philosophia Antiqua* 44; Leiden: Brill, 1986), 161.

33. See Attridge, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 219 n.44.

34. In addition to *Leg.* 3.102, see *Plant.* 26, *Somn.* 1.206.

35. As pointed out by David Winston in his commentary on the passage, *The Wisdom of Solomon* (AB 43; New York: Doubleday, 1979), 203–5.

36. *Opif.* 16–36; note also that Wisdom refers to the preexistent Sophia (based on Prov 8:30) in the following verse, Wis 9:9.

this occurred under the influence of the monograph on Hebrews published by Lincoln Hurst, though an earlier article by C. K. Barrett may have also contributed.<sup>37</sup> Hurst, after citing the rendering by the RSV, trenchantly affirms that “there is no instance in known Greek literature where *hypodeigma* can be demonstrated to mean ‘copy.’”<sup>38</sup> He argues that in all known occurrences it is “a ‘sample,’ ‘suggestion,’ ‘symbol,’ ‘outline,’ ‘token’ or ‘example,’ usually ‘something suggested as a basis for imitation or instruction.’”<sup>39</sup> The simpler word *deigma* can mean a “prefiguration” of a cosmic or eschatological secret. The erroneous translation of *hypodeigma*, Hurst claims, “has perhaps played a greater role in the Platonizing of Hebrews than any other factor.”<sup>40</sup> He goes on to argue that the author may well have had the final section of Ezekiel in mind, of which he was reminded by his quotation of Exod 25:40. In that passage the word *hypodeigma* is used in an architectural context and has the meaning of “outline” (Ezek 42:15, “and he measured the plan (*hypodeigma*) of the house” [NETS]). When it is recognized that the use of the term is architectural and not philosophical, then it is likely that *skia* is used in the same sense as later in 10:1, that is, with a “forward nuance,” which is quite different from what is found in Plato.<sup>41</sup>

In my view Hurst is correct that *hypodeigma* cannot bear the meaning “copy,” but that does not mean we have to accept all his other conclusions. The translation may have been inspired by the parallels in Wisdom and in Philo, where the term *mimēma* is used.<sup>42</sup> Hurst contests it because he wants to downplay any suggestion of a vertical “Platonizing” relationship between the earthly form of the tabernacle and a preexistent ideal form of the tabernacle in heaven or in God’s mind. For him the thrust of the argument in Hebrews is horizontal and eschatological, emphasizing that the earthly tabernacle or temple prefigures the future heavenly temple presided over by Christ. In the language of Hebrews, he argues,

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37. Lincoln D. Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (SNTSMS 65; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Of course the publication of this monograph postdates the appearance of the translation. But the Oxford D.Phil. on which it was based was completed in 1982 and Hurst’s main thesis had already been put forward in “Eschatology and ‘Platonism’ in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *SBLSP* 23 (1984): 41–74. The study by Barrett is “The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology* (ed. David Daube and W. D. Davies; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 363–93 (but he does not suggest a translation other than “copy” for *hypodeigma*).

38. Hurst, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 13.

39. *Ibid.*, 13 (his italics).

40. *Ibid.*, 14.

41. *Ibid.*, 16–17.

42. In addition to Wis 9:8 cited above, see texts in Philo such as *Leg.* 3.102, *Ebr.* 133, *Somn.* 1.206.

“there is nothing distinctly ‘Platonic,’ ‘philosophical’ or ‘noumenal’; much of it is drawn from the OT.”<sup>43</sup>

Before we evaluate Hurst’s claim, it is worth noting that in two early little-known doxographical texts *hypodeigma* is somewhat surprisingly used more or less as a synonym for *paradeigma*. Both texts reflect the ontology of Plato’s cosmology dialogue, the *Timaeus*, in which the Demiurge creates the cosmos by looking to a preexistent model (28a–30c). In a doxographical summary of Plato’s doctrine in Diogenes Laertius, we read that “he constructed it [the cosmos] as single and not infinite (in number), because the *hypodeigma* after which he fashioned it was also single” (3.71). The other text in the doxographer Aëtius is less conventional. It argues for the atheistic viewpoint that there is no such thing as a god and makes fun of “loud-mouthed Plato” who says that God moulded the cosmos by looking to himself as *hypodeigma*.<sup>44</sup> In both these texts the term is probably best translated with “model.” It might be taken to give support to Hurst’s viewpoint that it cannot be rendered “copy” but points more towards that which is the basis for imitation or copying.

Returning now to the text of Hebrews, we may now pose a difficult question. Does the author cite Exod 25:40 in Heb 8:5 with its use of the phrase “according to the pattern (*ton typon*) shown you on the mountain” because he wants to *avoid* the Platonic term *paradeigma* that is so prominently used in Exod 25:9? Or is the word *typos* used in a basically Platonist sense, anticipating *antitypa* in 9:23? Here, as Hurst admits,<sup>45</sup> the latter word can be rendered “copy” without doing violence to the Greek. Of the two options, the latter seems to me more persuasive. The author may have wished not to use the text with *paradeigma*, not because he wanted to avoid Platonic language, but because it might be confusing when contrasted with *hypodeigma*. However this might be, it is difficult in my view, when 8:5 and 9:23 are taken together, not to read them in terms of a contrast between a model or a pattern and an example based on that model.

There is a further difficulty with the interpretation of the phrase *hypodeigma kai skia* if taken to mean “outline and shadow” or even “shadowy outline.” In the case of “outline,” as we saw, it is meant to indicate “the basis for imitation,” that is, *towards* which one looks for realization of the final product. But this will hardly work for “shadow,” since a shadow is derived *from* something else that causes the

43. Hurst, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 42.

44. Derived from the *Timaeus* by combining 28a–29a with 29e; see further on this text my “Atheists in Aëtius: Text, Translation and Comments on *De placitis* 1.7.1–10,” *Mnemosyne* 49 (1996): 560.

45. Hurst, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 18.

shadow to occur. So the hendiadys would have an internal contradiction and will not work at all easily.

A solution comes in sight, I believe, if the term *hypodeigma* is rendered as “exemplar,” that is, a special example. This translation coheres well with Philo’s use of the term. He only uses it four times in his extant works. In each case he uses it to denote an example of a biblical theme or symbol.<sup>46</sup> Intriguingly, “exemplar” in English can mean both a model for something else, or a special example based on a model elsewhere.<sup>47</sup> I submit that the term *hypodeigma* in Greek has the same double meaning.<sup>48</sup> It can be used for a model (cf. the examples in Diogenes Laertius and Aëtius above), but also as a special example. In the text in Hebrews, where it is linked with *skia*, it can hardly mean “model.” It makes good sense for it to mean “exemplar” or “specimen,” that is, an earthly representation of the heavenly “type” or “pattern” revealed to Moses. Such “exemplars” needed to be purified through the cultic acts of Judaism, but now what occurs in the case of their heavenly counterparts (*ta epourania*, 9:23) requires a superior cultic act, which is performed by Christ.

It will take further analysis, which cannot be undertaken within the scope of the present essay, to determine how precisely the author uses the contrast between the heavenly and the earthly tabernacle in the context of his presentation of Christ as the “high priest of the good things that have come” (Heb 9:11). But what is quite clear is that his argument in chapters 8–9 cannot be read without taking into account the background of ancient philosophy, and in particular Platonic ontological dualism. To be sure, the author uses that dualism for his own ends, which prove to be eschatological than ontological, as becomes clear in chapter 10. But, even if we should not translate *hypodeigma* with “copy,” to deny any influence of Platonic dualism in 8:1–5 and 9:23–24 flies in the face of the evidence, both when ancient philosophical texts are adduced and when the mediating role of Hellenistic Judaism, as seen in the guise of an author such as Philo, is taken into account.

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46. *Post.* 122 (fat from sacrifice as a *hypodeigma* of wise souls’ vigour), *Conf.* 64 (*hypodeigma* of the worse kind of rising), *Her.* 256 (*hypodeigmata* of exegetical figures such as Judah and Jacob), *Somn.* 2.3 (a *hypodeigma* of a special kind of dream).

47. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), gives the following four meanings for “exemplar”: 1. a person or thing that serves as a model for imitation, an example; 2. the model, pattern or original after which something is made; an archetype whether real or ideal; 3. an instance, example; a parallel instance, a parallel; 4. a typical instance; a type, a specimen.

48. The same occurs with the Greek term—also often used by Plato—*eikōn*, which usually means image, but can also mean “example used as a model”; cf. Runia, *Philo and the Timaeus*, 161.

Returning to the typology that we outlined in the first part of this essay, we can justify the claim that in our brief example all the four kinds of approaches are illustrated to a greater or lesser degree. Naturally it is the second approach focusing on *terminology* and *conceptuality* that we have focused on the most. *Hypodeigma* and *skia* are both terms used in Greek philosophy (though the former is not particularly common) and this background must be taken into account when investigating how the author of the Letter made use of the phrase joining them together. But it also became evident that his use of the phrase had to be seen in a wider context—our third approach—and had to be related, for example, to use of the parallel terms *paradeigma*, *typos*, *antitypos*, etc. Here the background of the Septuagint came into view as an important factor, involving the question of its relation to Greek philosophy as well. And most importantly, the entire question of the Hellenistic-Jewish background of the author and the evidence of the foremost Hellenistic-Jewish author, Philo of Alexandria, had to be taken into account. However, in the case of our author, whose work has been described by Attridge as the “most elegant and sophisticated, and perhaps the most enigmatic, text of first-century Christianity,”<sup>49</sup> it will certainly be necessary to advance to our fourth approach and ask what the *role of various philosophical themes* is in his argument. Even though many scholars wish to downplay this role, it certainly needs to be taken into account. We may cite the support of C. K. Barrett, who argues strongly against a Platonizing interpretation of Hebrews, but nevertheless affirms that “the author . . . may well have read Plato and other philosophers, and must have known that his images and terminology were akin to theirs.”<sup>50</sup>

Finally we may ask whether our example can still benefit from the first approach, which looks at *sociological* and *literary* aspects of ancient philosophy. This is less obvious. Various rhetorical and literary features, and in particular the role of *paraenesis* and exhortation in the work, are shared with some philosophical texts, but it is certainly not exhorting the reader to anything resembling the philosophical or ethical life, no matter how broad we take those terms to be. At most we can say that the use of Greek philosophical ideas suggests a connection with Hellenistic Judaism as practised in Alexandria by Philo. Even if we heed the warning of Attridge and concede that “neither rhetoric, philosophy, nor the Greek scriptures were confined to Alexandria,” it is to be agreed with recent commentators that an Alexandrian provenance for both the Letter and its enigmatic author is still more likely than any other.<sup>51</sup>

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49. Attridge, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1.

50. Barrett, “Eschatology of the Epistle,” 393.

51. See, for example, the pronouncements of two recent commentaries that both give serious consideration to the candidature of Apollos of Alexandria as the Letter’s author (known from

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Acts 18:24–28): Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 21; Timothy L. Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 42–44.





## HELLENISTIC JUDAISM AND THE NEW TESTAMENT\*

Thomas H. Tobin, S.J.

All twenty-seven documents in the New Testament were composed in Greek. This simple observation is obvious but also points to the very complicated character of the development of a movement that began in Palestine with a Jew from Galilee, whose earliest followers were likewise Palestinian Jews, and within a period of about one hundred years had spread into the larger Greco-Roman world of the eastern Mediterranean, and whose members were now primarily non-Jews. Connected with this first observation is a second, also seemingly simple observation. The most commonly quoted texts in the New Testament are the Jewish scriptures. But these quotations are generally not directly from the original Hebrew or Aramaic of these scriptures but from earlier Jewish Greek translations, some of which were already two or three hundred years old.

Together these two observations point to the reality of the close kinship of the early Christian movement to Hellenistic Judaism.<sup>1</sup> Although somewhat disputed, in this essay I take Hellenistic Judaism to be the religion practiced by Greek-speaking Jews outside of Palestine in the larger Greco-Roman world. This kinship between the early Christian movement and Hellenistic Judaism did not, of course, mean that the relationship between the two was friendly. By and large it probably was not. But they were in analogous positions, situated as they were as Greek-speaking religious minorities in the larger Greco-Roman world. In addition, some of their basic religious beliefs and practices were very much alike and at the same time very different from those of their Greco-Roman fellow citizens. In this essay I want to discuss this kinship at three different levels, at the level of

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\* This essay is dedicated in gratitude to Harry Attridge on his 65th birthday. *Ad multos annos!*

1. For helpful descriptions of Hellenistic Judaism, see John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996) and John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

organization, at the level of beliefs, and at the level of ethical practice. In the case of the last of these, I want to offer a more detailed consideration of Galatians 5 as an example of both the appropriation and the transformation of Hellenistic Judaism by early Christians.

### SYNAGOGUES AND EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

Some Jewish communities in the Greco-Roman world were open to receiving Gentiles, either as sympathizers or as full converts, into their communities. This is attested to by Josephus (*C. Ap.* 2.209–10.261) and, with contempt, by some Greek and Latin writers (Horace, *Sat.* 1.4.139–43; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.1–2; Juvenal, *Sat.* 14.96–106). But there is very little evidence that converts were actively or aggressively sought out. The early Christian movement, however, was quite different. It did, very early in its development, begin to seek out converts, not only from among their fellow Jews but also from among Gentiles (e.g., Gal 1:15–17; 2.1–10; Matt 28:19–20; Luke 24:46–47; Acts 9:15; 10:1–48; Rev 7:9–12). The result of this was that this movement very quickly had an increasing number of members who were not Jewish. No doubt a few of them were Greek-speaking Jews (Prisca and Aquila and some of the names mentioned in Rom 16:3–16); but others were Gentiles who probably were first sympathizers to Judaism (Phoebe and also some of the names mentioned in Rom 16:3–16), and yet others were Gentile converts directly from various forms of Greco-Roman religions. As time went on the third group grew to make up more and more of the communities.

But all three groups together shared a similar reality with their more numerous Greek-speaking Jewish contemporaries. They were both very much of a minority within a much larger and highly developed civilization. In that sense both were faced with very similar issues which had to do with maintaining a distinct identity within that much larger and sometimes overwhelming world. In early Christianity this led to the formation of communities which were analogous to Jewish communities in the Greco-Roman world. These local assemblies (*ekklēsiai*) of believers served purposes similar to those of the assemblies (synagogues, *proseuchai*) of Greek-speaking Jews.<sup>2</sup> No doubt both these institutions bore similarities to the many voluntary associations in the Greco-Roman world. But in crucial ways, these assemblies of Jews and believers in Jesus bore

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2. See Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (2nd ed.; New Haven: Yale University, 2005); L. Michael White, *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture* (2 vols.; Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1990, 1997).

similarities to each other that they did not have with most of the voluntary associations of their fellow citizens. In these Jewish communities there was by and large a thickness of commitment and practice that would have been unusual for Greco-Roman voluntary associations. In addition, these Jewish communities were meant to maintain an identity for Jews who were members which would set them apart from and in crucial ways in opposition to the religious and cultural mores of the world around them. This involved the celebration of various Jewish festivals and feasts (e.g., Passover, Tabernacles, the Day of Atonement), weekly gatherings on the Sabbath, and the collection of the Temple taxes. The weekly gatherings probably also involved the regular reading of the Jewish scriptures in Greek. They also provided for the settling of disputes between members of the community. Although it is impossible to know in any given instance the level of success these Jewish institutions had in maintaining the Jewish identity of their members, it is clear that Jews living in the Greco-Roman world did maintain a distinct identity that most other similarly situated minorities did not.

Early Christian communities outside Palestine and in the larger Greco-Roman world, then, had an already existing model to draw on. Like their Jewish counterparts these early Christian communities held regular gatherings (1 Cor 11:17–34; Heb 10:25); there was a level of commitment like that found in their Jewish counterparts and beyond what was found in most voluntary associations. Early Christian communities also established ways in which to care for those among them who were in poverty (Mark 10:21; Matt 19:21, 26:11; Luke 14:12–24, 18:22–30; Gal 2:10; 2 Cor 8–9; Rom 15:26). Although the evidence is sparse, they probably also regularly read from the Jewish scriptures in Greek at these gatherings (see 1 Cor 15:3–4; 1 Tim 4:13–15; 2 Tim 3:16–17; Rev 1:3).

What distinguished these early Christian communities from their Jewish counterparts, of course, initially was their size. Compared to the several million Jews living in the Greco-Roman world in the first century C.E., the number of members of the early Christian communities was extremely small. As time went on and these early Christian communities grew, they became more and more Gentile in makeup. But they obviously still provided for their members the kind of identity formation and support also provided by their larger Jewish counterparts. These early Christian communities became more visible as time went on. This visibility periodically presented special difficulties, since unlike their Jewish counterparts, they were not officially recognized in the same way by the Roman government. This led to periodic local persecutions (e.g., Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44; Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 10.96, 97). Nevertheless, these early Christian communities found in the already existing Hellenistic Jewish communities important paradigms for their own communities and the functions they served.

### THE INFLUENCE OF HELLENISTIC JUDAISM ON EARLY CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

Early Christianity and Judaism obviously shared a fundamental belief in monotheism, a belief in only one God and a rejection of all other deities. This set both of them apart from the beliefs of most of their Greco-Roman neighbors. In the Greco-Roman world there was a growing belief that there was ultimately one God, but this generally did not lead to a rejection of belief in some form in the existence of other deities as it did in Judaism and early Christianity. In that rejection, early Christianity and Judaism, both in Palestine and in the larger Greco-Roman world were at one.

But Hellenistic Judaism and early Christianity shared in common something not shared by either with Palestinian Judaism. That commonality was their minority status within the much larger Greco-Roman world. Their relationship to that world was inevitably different than was the relationship of Jews in Palestine who were in the majority. Both sought to explain and justify their beliefs in categories that would make sense to that world, at least to its more educated members. In that process they were also, and probably more importantly, explaining and justifying their beliefs to themselves.

An example of this is the way in which early Christian writers appropriated the language of "conversion" found in a Hellenistic Jewish writer such as Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 B.C.E.–50 C.E.).<sup>3</sup> In 1 Thess 1:9 Paul describes how the Thessalonian believers had "turned (*epetrepsate*) to God from idols, to serve a living and true God." Similarly in Luke 24:47 Jesus tells his disciples that "repentance (*metanoian*) for the forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations." And in Acts 26:20 Paul tells King Agrippa that, obedient to his heavenly vision, he has declared "first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout the countryside of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn (*metanoein kai epistrephein*) to God and do deeds consistent with repentance." Philo used the same language to characterize the change from worshiping other gods to the worship of the one God and living a life in keeping with that belief. He describes how one should keep one's mind and speech far from other gods and turn (*epistrepson*) to the worship of "the Father and Maker of all" (*Spec.* 2.256). Elsewhere, he describes in more detail a fundamental change that takes place in a person both from worshiping created things to the worship of one God as well as

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3. For a fuller presentation, see Gregory E. Sterling, "Turning to God: Conversion in Greek-speaking Judaism and Early Christianity," in *Scriptures and Traditions: Essays on Early Judaism and Christianity in Honor of Carl R. Holladay* (ed. P. Gray and G. R. O'Day; NovTSup 129; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 69–95.

a change from a life of vice to one of virtue appropriate to the worship of that one God (*Virt.* 175–86). In this description Philo uses the words *metanoia/metanoiein* to describe this fundamental conversion of a Gentile to a Jewish way of life. The conversion of Gentiles was central to early Christianity in a way that it was not to Judaism. But the use of the language of conversion in Hellenistic Judaism shows one of the ways in which early Christians appropriated the language of Hellenistic Judaism and turned it to their own purposes.

A second, and more complicated example of the way in which early Christians not only appropriated the language and thought of Hellenistic Judaism but also transformed it is found in their developing views of Christ. This is especially apparent in the hymns about Christ found in John 1:1–18; Col 1:15–20; and Heb 1:3–4.<sup>4</sup> This is also especially important because these hymns were so significant for the development of what became the dominant paradigm of Christology in the following centuries. These hymns envision three successive Christological states: a state of preexistence with God (John 1:1–5, 10–12a; Col 1:15–17; Heb 1:3a–b), the earthly life of Jesus (John 1:14a–b; Col 1:18a, 20b; Heb 1:3c), and a resurrection/exaltation (John 1:14c–d, 16; Col 1:18b–20; 20a, c; Heb 1:3d–4).

These texts from John, Colossians, and Hebrews share two other things in common. First, all three connect the first state, the state of preexistence, not only with being in the realm of the divine but also with having a role in the creation or sustaining of everything else. In John 1:1–3, the *Logos* is not only divine, it is also that “through which” (*di’ hou*) everything else came into being. In Col 1:16–17 Christ not only “is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation,” but also “in him all things were created,” and “all things were created through him and for him.” Finally, in Heb 1:3 the Son not only is the radiance of God’s glory and the imprint of his fundamental reality, he also sustains all things by his powerful word. Just prior to the hymn, the author of Hebrews has referred to the Son as the one “through whom” (*di’ hou*) God created the universe (Heb 1:2). In these three texts then, the *Logos*, Christ, or the Son all play crucial cosmological roles in the creation or sustaining of the universe. Second, although all three hymns are clearly rooted in the Jewish wisdom tradition, specifically in texts such as Prov 8:22–31; Sir 24; and Wis 7:21–8:1, none of them can be explained simply on the basis of Jewish wisdom literature. All three texts move well beyond the Jewish wisdom tradition and are part of a broader tradition of Hellenistic Jewish speculation represented by a writer such as Philo of Alexandria.<sup>5</sup>

4. Although more complicated a similar case can be made for the hymn in Phil 2:6–11.

5. I have shown this in the case of John 1:1–18 in “The Prologue of John and Hellenistic Jewish Speculation,” *CBQ* 52 (1990): 252–69. For Col 1:15–20, see Gregory E. Sterling, “Prepositional Metaphysics in Jewish Wisdom: Speculation and Early Christological Hymns,” *Studia*

It is most helpful to begin with the *Logos* in Philo. This figure as it is found in Philo is complex both in terms of its functions and in terms of its origins. The *Logos* is closely connected in a number of passages with the figure of Wisdom in Jewish wisdom literature.<sup>6</sup> Both the *Logos* and Wisdom are given the same attributes, for example, image, beginning, vision of God (*Conf.* 146; *Leg.* 1.43). Because of the number of times this identification occurs, the Jewish wisdom tradition is clearly one of the roots of the concept of the *Logos* in Philo. Similarly the *Logos* in Philo often has some of the attributes of the *Logos* as it was understood in Stoicism. The *Logos* can be that which fills all things with its being (*Her.* 188). The *Logos* can also be described as putting on the world as a garment (*Fug.* 110). In these two passages in Philo, the *Logos*, as in Stoicism, is the principle of rationality that pervades the universe. For example, Diogenes Laertius describes the Stoic view this way:

They [the Stoics] hold that there are two principles in the universe, the active principle and the passive. The passive principle, then, is a substance without quality, that is, matter, whereas the active is the reason (*logos*) inherent in this substance, that is, God. (D. L. 7.134)

In this way the function given to the *Logos* in Stoicism is similar to that given to Wisdom in Jewish wisdom literature. This functional similarity between the two may well have been one of the initial reasons the *Logos* was introduced into Judaism. The *Logos* offered educated Jews a way of speaking of Wisdom that was comprehensible to educated members of the larger Greco-Roman world, to non-Jews and Jews alike.

The very complexity of the *Logos* in Philo also indicates that, once the figure had been introduced into Judaism, it became the carrier of a variety of different functions. The figure could be interpreted both as similar to the Stoic principle of rationality and as a further stage of development within Jewish wisdom speculation. All these functions appear in Philo's writings.

While originally connected with Stoicism, the *Logos* also came to be interpreted in a basically Middle Platonic framework which gave little indication of its Stoic origins. One characteristic of Middle Platonism was the development of an intermediate reality between the primal deity and the sensible world. This intermediate reality also became the home of the Platonic ideas and the means

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*Philonica Annual* 9 (1997): 219–38. For Heb 1:3–4, see Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 36–48.

6. *Leg.* 1.65; 2.86; *Somn.* 1.65–66; 2.242–45; *Fug.* 97, 109; *Post.* 122; *Deus* 134–35.

by which the sensible world was ordered.<sup>7</sup> In Philo the *Logos* comes to function within just such a Middle Platonic context. The *Logos* functions within this Middle Platonic cosmology in which the sensible world is made after the patterns of the ideal world. Terms that Plato used to characterize the world of ideas are now used to characterize the *Logos*: archetype (*Leg.* 3.96; *Opif.* 25; *Spec.* 1.171; 3.83), paradigm (*Leg.* 3.96; *Her.* 231; *Spec.* 3.83; *Det.* 87; *Opif.* 139), intelligible (*Opif.* 139). The *Logos* becomes the archetypal idea in which all of the other ideas were contained. The *Logos* unified the world of ideas under one rubric. What had been a realm, the world of ideas in Plato, now became a figure, the *Logos*, in both Middle Platonism and Philo.

The *Logos* in Philo also functioned in two other ways relevant to the early Christian hymns. First, the *Logos* is that through which (*di' hou*) the sensible world was made (*Spec.* 1.81). In another passage in Philo the *Logos* is referred to as the "instrument" (*organon*) by means of which God made the world and humanity (*Leg.* 3.96). God created the world by using the *Logos* as his instrument.<sup>8</sup> This role is obviously central in the hymn at the beginning of John (1:1, 10).

Second, the *Logos* is an intermediate figure between God and the rest of the created world. The term that is often used in Philo to describe this function is "image" (*eikōn*). In Plato there is no comparable intermediate *figure* between the demiurge and the sensible world, only the *ideas* which are paradigms for the objects in the sensible world. However, once one has introduced the *Logos* as the archetypal reality in which all the ideas are contained, one is forced to characterize its relationship both to the primal deity and to the sensible world. The term that Philo often uses is "image" (*eikōn*). In a number of passages, Philo uses this term especially to characterize the relationship of the *Logos* both to God himself and to the sensible world. For example, in *Leg.* 3.96 Philo writes that, just as God is the paradigm for the "image" (the *Logos*), so too this image is the paradigm for other beings, that is, for the sensible world. In this way, the use of the term "image" brings out the intermediate character of the *Logos*.<sup>9</sup> The notion of the Son as an "image" of the invisible God is central for Col 1:15–20.

The *Logos* as it was understood by Philo also attracted to itself concepts and language found not only in John 1:1–18 but also in Col 1:15–20 and Heb 1:3–4. For our purposes the most important passages are found in *De confusione*

7. For a fuller explanation, see John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 45–49.

8. For a recent analysis of prepositions in a metaphysical context, see Sterling, "Prepositional Metaphysics," 220–31.

9. See also *Opif.* 24–25; *Her.* 230–31; *Spec.* 1.80–81; 3.83, 207.

*linguarum*. For example, in *Conf.* 62–63 the *Logos* is identified with the “divine image” and the “first born” (*prōtogenon*) and “eldest son” (*presbytaton huion*) of the Father of the universe. And in *Conf.* 146 Philo expands this list even more:

But if there be any as yet unfit to be called a son of God, let him press to take his place under God’s First-born, the *Logos* (*ton prōtogenon autou logon*), who holds the highest rank among the angels, their ruler as it were. And many names are his, for he is called, “the Beginning,” and the Name of God and his *Logos*.<sup>10</sup>

Here again we find the language of the *Logos*, image, and sonship, all of which are taken up in John 1:1–18; Col 1:15–20, and Heb 1:3–4.

The use of *logos*, however, in the hymn in John 1:1–18, as well as the language of “image” and “son” in Col 1:15–20 and Heb 1:3–4, moves beyond Hellenistic Jewish speculation in that it identifies these figures with Jesus of Nazareth. Neither Jewish wisdom literature nor the kind of Hellenistic Jewish speculation represented by Philo would ever have identified these figures with a specific human being. These hymns are the clearest example in first-century Christian literature of both an incarnational and a preexistence christology. These hymns affirm both that the *Logos*, God’s “image” and “son,” has become flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and that Jesus of Nazareth existed before the incarnation, indeed before the creation of the world, as God’s divine *Logos*, image, and son. In this way early Christian writers both appropriated the heritage of Hellenistic Judaism and transformed it into something very different.

### THE INFLUENCE OF HELLENISTIC JUDAISM ON EARLY CHRISTIAN ETHICS

The influence of Hellenistic Judaism on early Christian ethics is both profound and complex. This influence involves both appropriation on the part of early Christians but also, and perhaps more importantly, transformation. Here I want to illustrate this complexity by paying particular attention to Paul’s ethics in Gal 5.

The various peoples who made up the Hellenistic and Roman empires all had their own distinctive religious practices. Jews living in these empires were no exception. What did distinguish Jews, however, was the extent and thickness of their laws and practices. Some were ethical laws while others were dietary and

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10. Unless otherwise indicated, the translations of Philo are from *Philo* (trans. F. H. Colson, E. H. Whitaker, and R. Marcus; LCL; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1922–62).



purity regulations. On the one hand, as we have seen, the thickness of these laws and regulations set Jews apart in such a way that many of their fellow citizens found odious (see above). On the other hand, it led Jewish communities living in the Greco-Roman world to want to live according to their “ancestral customs.” Jewish communities sought to have this desire to live according to their ancestral customs recognized by their Greek and Roman overlords, often in the face of opposition from local civic authorities (see Josephus, *Ant.* 14.185–267; 16.160–78).

At the same time though, Jews living in the Greco-Roman world were attracted to that world and sought to be part of it and of its cultural, if not its religious, benefits. Especially at the level of the more highly educated, this is reflected in a drive to take advantage of that larger world to as great an extent as possible. The question of course was to what extent was that possible within the bounds of Judaism as they understood it. Issues of this sort marked the literature of Greek-speaking Jews throughout the period of the successor empires to Alexander the Great, as well as of the Roman Empire.

Hellenistic Jewish writers dealt with these issues in different ways. But, one of the central ways was that Hellenistic Jewish writers often redescribed the purpose of the observance of the Law as a whole by using the categories of virtue and vice central to Greco-Roman ethical discourse. They claimed that observance of the Law led to the practice of virtue and the avoidance of vice better than any Greco-Roman ethical philosophy or legal system did. The language of virtue and vice became an alternate way of understanding and expressing the value of the observance of the Law.

An early example of this is found in the *Letter of Aristeas*, which is best placed in Alexandria sometime in the second century B.C.E. Eleazar, the Jewish high priest, begins his protreptic discourse<sup>11</sup> for the Law in the following way:

Our lawgiver, then, in the first place laid down the principles of piety [*eu-sebeias*] and justice [*dikaiosynēs*] and expounded them point by point, not alone by prohibitions but by commandments, and he made clear the dis-comfitures and visitations that would be inflicted by God upon the guilty. (131)<sup>12</sup>

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11. Eleazar's protreptic discourse is found in *Let. Aris.* 130–69. The purpose of a protreptic discourse is to persuade an audience to adopt a certain way of life and to contrast it with other ways of life.

12. The translations of the *Letter of Aristeas* are from Moses Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates* (*Letter of Aristeas*; 1951; repr., New York: Ktav, 1973).

Again at the end of his discourse Eleazar sums up the purpose of the observance of the Law in this way:

The points I have briefly run over have shown that throughout our life and in our actions we may practice justice towards all men, being mindful of the sovereignty of God. (168)

While Eleazar is clearly offering a defense of the observance of the Mosaic Law, he is doing so with language that draws upon Greek ethical concepts and categories. The Law is based on the virtues of piety and justice, and the observance of its commandments and prohibitions is meant to lead to a community of the wise and prudent. It is in this context that Eleazar places the observance of the dietary regulations:

Do not accept the exploded idea that it was out of regard for “mice” and the “weasel” and other such creatures that Moses ordained these laws with such scrupulous care; not so, these laws have all been solemnly drawn up for the sake of justice, to promote holy contemplation and perfecting of character. (144)

The dietary regulations of the Law, according to Eleazar, are not arbitrary, nor are they really concerned with the wellbeing of such creatures as mice and weasels. Rather abstinence from eating these creatures is meant to point to the realm of ethics.

The more elaborate and learned example of this, however, is found in the writings of the Alexandrian Jewish writer Philo of Alexandria. Philo, like the author of the *Letter of Aristeas*, habitually redescribed the purpose of the observance of the Law in terms of the practice of virtue and the overcoming of vice. This emerges from his analysis of the ten commandments in general in *De Decalogo* and from his more detailed analysis of each commandment in *De Specialibus Legibus* 1–4. For example, as Philo begins his general treatment of each of the commandments in *De Decalogo*, he points out that God is the transcendent source of all that exists and that piety (*eusebeia*) is the source of all the other virtues (*aretai*) (*Decal.* 52). Later in the treatise Philo describes the injunction to keep holy the Sabbath as “a most admirable injunction full of power to urge us to every virtue and piety most of all” (*Decal.* 100). The most helpful section is *Decal.* 142–53, his explanation of the tenth commandment against “desire” (*epithymia*): “You shall not desire” (*ouk epithymēseis*). Philo consistently explains the purpose of this commandment as directed against the worst of the “passions” (*pathē*) described in Greek philosophical ethics:

The last commandment forbids desiring, since he knew that desire was subversive and insidious. For all the passions of the soul which stir and shake it contrary to nature [*para physin*] and do not let it continue in sound health are hard to deal with, but desire is the hardest of all. And therefore while each of the others seems to be involuntary, an extraneous visitation, an assault from outside, desire alone originates with ourselves and is voluntary. (*Decal.* 142)

Philo then goes on to use this occasion to discourse in Middle Platonic and Stoic philosophical terms on the four passions, pleasure, grief, fear, and desire, of which the last is the deadliest (*Decal.* 142–53). Quite clearly Philo has recast the meaning of the tenth commandment in a Greek philosophical framework, in which desire is the worst of the four passions, all of which move the soul to act in ways contrary to nature.

A final example comes from the end of the first century C.E., from the Jewish historian Josephus. In his *Contra Apionem*, he wrote a refutation of what he regarded as Greek calumnies against the Jews and a defense of the Mosaic Law, what he called the Jewish “constitution” (*katastasis*). What interests us here is the way in which Josephus explains and defends this Jewish constitution in *C. Ap.* 2.145–286.<sup>13</sup> Josephus begins by characterizing it in the following way:

For I think it will become clear that we possess laws that are extremely well designed with a view to piety [*eusebeian*], fellowship [*koinōnian*] with one another, and universal benevolence [*philanthrōpian*], as well as justice [*dikaiosynēn*], endurance [*karterian*] in labors, and contempt [*periphronēsīn*] of death. (*C. Ap.* 2.146 [Barclay])

Although less elaborately than Philo, Josephus does take this initial characterization of the Law in terms of its fostering the practice of various virtues and develops and specifies how it does this. For example, according to Josephus, Moses combined moral education (*paideia*) through both practice (*askēsis*) and precept (*logos*), unlike the Greeks who emphasized one or the other. Moses emphasized both from infancy on (2.171–74). In addition, all Jews know their Law. From their earliest years, Jews have the Law continually read and taught to them in their synagogues. This is quite unlike the practices of other peoples who are ignorant of their own laws (2.175–78). Throughout the last part of *Contra Apionem*, Josephus consistently redescribes the purpose and function of observance of the Law as leading to the practice of virtues and the avoidance of vices. Toward the end of

13. For a thorough and insightful commentary on this section of *Contra Apionem*, see Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion* (Translation and commentary by John M. G. Barclay; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 242–330.

this defense, Josephus compares the Mosaic Law with the laws of other peoples. Unlike the Greeks, the Jews put into practice the ideals which the Greeks, in their critique of Plato, think impossible to achieve (2.220–24). In fact the Jews are more law-abiding than the Spartans and have for a much longer period of time adhered to laws even more severe than those of the Spartans (2.225–31).

These examples from the *Letter of Aristeas*, from Philo, and from Josephus all show the extent to which Hellenistic Jewish writers redescribed the Law, its purpose, and its observance in ways that were in harmony with Greek philosophy. At the same time, however, it is important to emphasize that these redescrptions are all alternative ways to explain the purpose of the Law and its observance. They are not alternatives to observance. All three writers assume and advocate that Jews should continue to observe the Law in all its particulars. As we shall see, this is a crucial point to keep in mind.

These examples should make clear how educated Hellenistic Jews sought to redescribe and defend the Mosaic Law and its observance in categories that would have been comprehensible to their educated Greek and Roman neighbors. This redescription also served (and probably primarily) to explain and defend the Law and its observance especially to educated Jews themselves. Observance of the Mosaic Law led to the practice of virtues and the avoidance of vices that they shared with their fellow citizens. As a matter of fact it did it better than did various other laws and practices. The Mosaic Law was superior to those of other legislators. This was true even of the seemingly peculiar and puzzling dietary and purity regulations of the Jewish Law. These too pointed indirectly or symbolically to the practice of virtue and the avoidance of vice. It is important to keep in mind that in all of this the goal was to redescribe the value of observing the Law and not to offer an alternative to its observance.<sup>14</sup>

This Hellenistic Jewish way of redescribing the value of observing the Law also helps us to understand a good deal about Paul's ethical viewpoints in Gal 5:1–6:10. This involves his appropriation and transformation of the terms "spirit" and "flesh," at least in part from Palestinian Judaism. But more importantly for our purposes it involves his appropriation of Hellenistic Jewish interpretations of the observance of the Law and his transformation of them in ways that were characteristically his own.

That Paul was aware of these Hellenistic Jewish interpretations of the function of observance of the Law emerges in 1 Cor 9. Here Paul argues that he has a right to be supported in his apostolic endeavors by the Christian communities he

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14. See especially Philo, *Migr.* 89–93 for a defense of the continued observance of the literal commandments of the law. Philo was very much aware of the importance of the observance of the law for the identity and cohesion of the Jewish community.

works with, even though he intentionally does not exercise it. One of the examples he gives to support this right is an interpretation of Deut 25:2:

Do I say this on human authority? Does not the Law also say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses, "you shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain" [Deut 25:2]. Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Or does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was indeed written for our sake, for whoever plows should plow in hope and whoever threshes should thresh in hope of a share in the crop. If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits? If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we still more? (1 Cor 9:8–12)

Paul's way of interpreting Deut 25:2 as referring to human conduct rather than to the treatment of an ox is the same kind of argument found in *Let. Aris.* 144 mentioned earlier. A similar mode of interpretation is found in Philo, *Somn.* 1.93–94. One strongly suspects that this kind of argument was a commonplace in Hellenistic Judaism. In any case, what 1 Cor 9:8–12 shows is that Paul is aware of Hellenistic Jewish attempts to interpret various non-ethical commandments of the Law in ethical terms. This also means that Paul was probably aware of the larger effort of Hellenistic Jewish writers to redescribe the purpose and function of the Law in the categories of virtues and vices.

Paul thus seems to be aware of this fairly widespread Hellenistic Jewish practice of redescribing the observance of the Law by means of the ethical categories of virtue and vice, even though his own ethical exhortation ultimately moves in a very different direction. This can be seen most clearly in Paul's exhortation to the Galatian believers in Gal 5:1–6:10. Earlier in the letter (Gal 3:1–4:31), Paul presented a series of arguments meant to dissuade the Galatian believers from being circumcised and observing the Mosaic Law. In the first of these arguments (Gal 3:1–5), he rhetorically asks the Galatian believers how they received the spirit. Was it through the observance of the Law, or was it through hearing in faith? Of course it was the latter. As part of his argument he again asks rhetorically, "Are you so foolish? Having begun with the spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?" (3:3). This same kind of argument is carried through the other five arguments in Gal 3:1–4:31. The Mosaic Law and its observance are consistently viewed negatively. There is almost an in-principle contrast between faith and the Mosaic Law.

This contrast between spirit and flesh in the first of his arguments contains two significant clues to Paul's use of the contrast later in Galatians. First, the contrast revolves around the issue of the observance of the Mosaic Law. Second, there is an asymmetrical character to the contrast. On the one hand, the spirit is a quasi-external divine reality which is experienced by believers. On the other hand, the flesh is a negative human reality that is consistently at odds with the

spirit. Paul will greatly expand on this contrast later, in Gal 5:1–6:10. There the question becomes, if believers are not to be circumcised or observe the Mosaic Law, how are they then to live lives pleasing to God? If Paul's arguments in Gal 3:1–4:29 against circumcision and observance of the Law are to have any cogency, then he must offer the Galatian believers an alternative way of living lives pleasing to God. This is what he sets out to do in Gal 5:1–6:10.<sup>15</sup>

Paul's introduction both sums up Gal 3:1–4:31 and sets the tone for the exhortation that follows: "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (5:1; see 5:7–12). The "yoke of slavery" he refers to in this context is clearly circumcision and observance of the Mosaic Law, and he contrasts it with the freedom believers have because of Christ. Paul then claims that the basic principle of Christian life is "faith working through love" empowered by the spirit (5:5–6). After a section in which he turns again to a polemic against those who advocate circumcision and observance of the Law (5:7–12), Paul returns to the theme of freedom. But this freedom is not meant to lead to immorality. Rather, love means that believers are to become slaves of one another (5:13).

Paul then contrasts living and being led by the spirit (5:16, 18) with satisfying the desire of the flesh (5:16–17). Here Paul returns to and expands on the contrast of spirit and flesh he initiated in 3:1–5. On this basis he tries to be more specific in 5:19–23 by urging the Galatian believers to avoid a series of vices (the "works of the flesh") and to practice a series of virtues (the "fruits of the spirit"). The "works of the flesh" are vices of fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, rivalry, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, and carousing. In contrast, the "fruits of the spirit" are the virtues of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control. Once again, all this is made possible through the power and guidance of the spirit (5:17–18, 22, 25). Finally, in 6:1–10 Paul offers some specific admonitions about community cohesion and concludes with admonitions to do what is noble (*to kalon*) and good (*to agathon*).

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15. There is a good deal of debate about the genre and structure of Galatians. But it does seem fairly clear that the purpose of 3:1–4:31 is to dissuade the Galatian believers from being circumcised and observing the Mosaic law, while the purpose of 5:1–6:10 is to persuade them to live virtuous lives guided by the Spirit. For different views about the genre and structure of Galatians see Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 14–25; Frank J. Matera, *Galatians* (SP; Collegeville: Liturgical, 1992), 12–19; J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 20–27.

There are several things that need to be said about this passage in Galatians. First of all, a good deal of the passage is taken up with lists of vices (5:19–21) and virtues (5:22–23). Such lists were common both in Greco-Roman and in Hellenistic Jewish literature. In general, while the various lists were never identical, the virtues and vices contained in them were often fairly conventional in character. This is especially true of the list of vices. With the exception of the virtue of love (*agapē*) in 5:22, this is also for the most part true of the list of virtues found in 5:22–23. In the list of virtues, however, Paul does emphasize virtues such as peace, patience, generosity, gentleness, and self-control, all of which he thinks are important for the formation and maintenance of community.

Second, Paul frames the list of vices and virtues in 5:19–23 with a contrast between the spirit and the flesh (5:16–18, 24–25). Similarly, he contrasts “walking by the spirit” (5:16), “living by the spirit” (5:25), or “following the spirit” (5:25) with satisfying the “desire of the flesh” (*epithymian sarkos*, 5:16) or the “passions and desires” (*tois pathēmasin kai tais epithymiais*, 5:24) of the flesh. With regard to the flesh, Paul seems to be grouping the vices under the rubrics of “passions” and “desires” of the flesh, both of which were familiar categories in Hellenistic Jewish and Greco-Roman ethics. What does Paul mean by “flesh” in this context? He means the various human desires and passions which result in the various vices that he has listed. Conversely, what does he mean by the “spirit” in this context? The language he uses (walking, living, following the spirit) indicates that he is thinking of a divine power beyond believers themselves, a divine power which can influence and guide their conduct, and which first led them to faith (see 3:1–5). It is again important to recognize, as in Gal 3:1–5, that there is an asymmetrical character to the contrast of spirit and flesh as it is used by Paul in Galatians. Flesh refers to a reality or aspect or element in the makeup of human beings which is sinful and opposed to God. On the other hand, spirit does not refer to some part or aspect of the human constitution but rather to an external divine reality that can influence or guide human beings and their conduct. Flesh and spirit in this context are not two parallel realities or powers. One (flesh) is an inherent part of human beings; the other (spirit) is a quasi-external divine influence.

This leads us to the third point. It is how Paul in Gal 5:1–6:10 has transformed Hellenistic Jewish interpretations of the Law and moved them in a very different direction. Paul does not appeal in either passage to the commandments of the Law or their observance as a way for believers in Jesus to live lives pleasing to God. In fact, the Mosaic Law and its observance is seen in Gal 5:1 as a “yoke of slavery” from which believers have been freed. Astonishingly in Galatians Paul contrasts the spirit not simply with the flesh, but also with the Mosaic Law. In Gal 3:1–5, Paul first appealed to the Galatian believers’ own experience. He asked them how they first received the spirit. Did they receive it from obser-

vance of the Law (*ex ergōn nomou*), or did they receive it through hearing in faith (*ex akoēs pisteōs*) (3:2)? The answer, of course, was through hearing in faith. Since the Galatians had only recently even considered being circumcised and observing the Mosaic Law, their initial reception of the spirit had to have been through hearing in faith. Again in Gal 3:13–14, at the end of his complex and even contorted scriptural argument in Gal 3:6–14, Paul concluded that “Christ redeemed us *from the curse of the Law* by becoming a curse for us . . . in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive *the promise of the spirit through faith*.” Finally, Paul claimed in Gal 5:18 that, if believers are led by the spirit, they are not under the Law (*ouk este hypo nomon*). What is common to all these passages is that the spirit is, in one way or another, starkly contrasted with the Law. The spirit stands over against not only the flesh but also over against the Mosaic Law. Astonishingly both the Mosaic Law and its observance are on the side of the flesh.

Rather Paul exhorts them to practice *directly* a series of virtues, without reference to the Law or its observance. He also crucially appeals to the presence and guidance of the spirit. It is the power of the spirit rather than the observance of the Law that will enable them to live virtuous lives pleasing to God. More generally, what Paul is doing in Gal 5:1–6:10 is to take the basic Hellenistic Jewish framework we have seen in the *Letter of Aristeas*, Philo, and Josephus that re-described the purpose of observing the Mosaic Law in terms of the practice of virtue and the avoidance of vice and reinterpreted it in two very significant ways. First, rather than an alternate way of understanding and expressing the value of observance of the Law, the practice of virtue and the avoidance of vice become, in Paul’s interpretation, an alternative to observing the Law. Believers are exhorted directly to practice virtue and avoid vice without the mediation of observance of the Law. Second, in this practice of virtue and avoidance of vice, believers are guided and empowered by the spirit. Paul’s ethical alternative to observance of the Law, then, is the spirit-guided practice of virtue and avoidance of vice. This is now what leads to virtuous lives pleasing to God. Granted all of this, nevertheless, Paul is clearly still part of a larger discussion in Hellenistic Judaism about the function and purpose of the Mosaic Law and its observance, even though he ultimately has turned that discussion in a very different direction. The world in which he is thinking is still the world of Hellenistic Judaism.

## CONCLUSION

This essay has sought to illustrate how early Christian writers both appropriated the intellectual heritage of Hellenistic Judaism, and then moved in a very different



direction. Let me conclude by pointing to two features of this appropriation.

The first is that both the appropriation and the transformation are carried out with remarkably little sense of distance. These early Christian writers make use of aspects of Hellenistic Jewish thought, appropriate them, and revise them as their own. It is the world of thought in which they live and which is still their own world. In this sense, they are not “borrowing” or “using” these elements of Jewish thought as if they were taking them from a foreign source. Rather they are thinking and reflecting in very complex ways on traditions and viewpoints they consider their own.

The second feature is that these early Christian writers are appropriating this tradition and transforming it in ways that would turn out to be unacceptable to the vast majority of other Jews, whether Palestinian, Hellenistic, or otherwise. This transformation involved their making claims about a particular human being, Jesus of Nazareth, that most other Jews would find blasphemous, as well as their desertion of the observance of the Mosaic Law as their basis for living. Of course, they did not see this transformation as a rejection of Judaism but rather as a further development and, indeed, a fulfillment of it.

As one studies the development of early Christianity and its relationship to Hellenistic Judaism, it is important to keep both of these features in mind, appropriation and transformation. In time, of course, early Christianity underwent a *metathesis eis allo genos*, into a religion separate from Judaism. In a different way, however, so did Judaism. While Christianity continued to be deeply influenced by Hellenistic Judaism, rabbinic Judaism came to reject it. Ironically, the heritage of Hellenistic Judaism was preserved, although transformed, by early Christianity while that same heritage was almost entirely lost in the development of rabbinic Judaism.

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## THE SPIRIT OF THE LETTER: SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION IN THE EARLY CHURCH

*Rowan A. Greer*

In our time scholars who study the exegesis found in the ecclesiastical writings of the first five or six centuries of this era owe a considerable debt to the historical-critical methods employed by biblical critics. To be sure, they are obliged to take seriously the religious and theological character of patristic exegesis. Yet there is some risk that they may fail to give full attention to the basic purposes of this literature. In what follows I wish, first, to offer some reflections upon modern approaches to the ancient exegesis, and then to examine the use by Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine of several key New Testament passages, a use prompted by the question of what happens to the soul after death and before the general resurrection.

### METHOD AND CONTEXT IN INTERPRETING EARLY EXEGESIS

Let me begin with a modest attempt to supply one possible way of understanding what “method and context” might mean. Method is a particularly slippery term. The Oxford English Dictionary gives a somewhat bewildering list of definitions. It at least implies that the word may refer to “an activity: procedure for attaining an object,” but may also refer to the result of that activity: “Systematic arrangement, order.” The first and wider sense of “method,” then, includes the object or aim of the activity; and it may be assumed that this includes the situations that prompt the activity and the presuppositions that inform it. I suggest that these factors represent the contextual aspect of method, on the grounds that they are important for understanding any written text, but need not include the particular rules and principles that characterize method in the second sense as “systematic arrangement.” The OED gives as an example of this definition, “A branch of Logic or Rhetoric, which teaches how to arrange thoughts and topics for investigation,

exposition, or literary composition.” In what follows I shall treat the larger activity of interpretation as the location of contexts by which to explain a text, and of the more particular rules and principles as methods in the narrower sense. I use the plural advisedly, since it is hard to see that we can speak of a single method. Even the so-called historical-critical method surely acts as a rubric for a number of different though interrelated methods.

With respect to presuppositions and aims it seems fair to say that the study of the early church well into the twentieth century was concerned to assess the written evidence in the context of the development of Christianity. Protestant presuppositions tended to speak of this as the Hellenization of Christianity, while Catholic presuppositions thought of the steady development of doctrine and discipline. To be sure, there were those whose interest was primarily in the New Testament, but whose work led them to study the writings of the century or so after the latest New Testament books. Nevertheless, it is hard to see that there was a focus upon the exegesis of scripture. Moreover, describing the history of doctrine implicitly or explicitly made the conciliar dogmas a basis for judging the pre-Nicene literature. Such an approach was, to our sensibility, anachronistic and drove in the direction of minimizing the differences and divisions that were part of the picture. It is certainly impossible to speak of the uniformity of the church even when it had the emperor as its patron. There may have been a unity that allowed for difference in the imperial church, but that unity did not include the monophysite churches of Egypt and Syria or the Nestorian church that took up its life in Persia. Moreover, by the end of the fourth century the West began to drift away from the East.

I should argue that the impact of the historical-critical method gradually altered approaches to the early church and even shifted attention to the interpretation of scripture. For example, Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou, both Jesuits, founded *Sources chrétiennes* during the Second World War and in 1942 published the first volume of the great many that continue to be produced. These volumes not only establish a critical text but also supply a French translation and an introduction using the conventions of the historical-critical method. Needless to say, even establishing a critical text often involves more than a careful comparison of existing manuscripts; it includes examining translations of the texts, assessing questions of authorship, and elucidating the possible dependence of one writer on another.<sup>1</sup> The volumes of *Sources chrétiennes*, as well as of other similar pub-

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1. For example, Book 4 of Athanasius's *Against the Arians* is almost certainly an Apollinarian forgery; much of Theodore of Mopsuestia's literary remains exists only in Syriac translation; there is no consensus regarding the relationship of the *De instituto* of Gregory of Nyssa to the Great Letter of Macarius.

lications, now provide a firmer basis for examining exegesis in the early church. Commentaries on scripture are few and far between, but there is a considerable homiletic literature focused on the Bible. In addition even polemical works, treatises, and letters are saturated with scripture, however much there is a tendency to find proof texts for the writer's argument without full attention to the immediate context of those texts.

The question, of course, remains how we are to describe the characteristic features of patristic exegesis. Most critics realized that it commonly distinguished the "letter" of scripture from its "spiritual" interpretation. As a result, a number of scholars in the second half of the last century saw a conflict between allegorical interpretation, exemplified by Origen (d. 254), and typology, exemplified by Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428). Because of its insistence upon the *historia* of scripture, typology was often thought to be preferable, since this emphasis appeared coherent with modern historical approaches.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, both Theodore and his teacher, Diodore of Tarsus, wrote books against the allegorists (now lost), with Origen primarily in mind. Hence, Antioch was opposed to Alexandria; and two quite different methods of interpretation found their identity. Increasingly, however, the approach depending on the contrast between allegorism and typology has been, if not discredited, at least seriously qualified.<sup>3</sup> One difficulty is that when Antioch and Alexandria come into full conflict during the Nestorian Controversy (428–451), it is impossible to discern the opposition of two exegetical methods. Moreover, preference for typology because of its emphasis upon the *historia* of scripture fails to understand the meaning of the Greek word, which certainly does not mean "history" in any modern sense. "Literal" also seems beside the point; for example, in his *Life of Moses* Gregory of Nyssa adds to the *historia* of Book 1 a good many elaborations of the scriptural account of Moses' life, while his distinction between *historia* and the *theōria* of Book 2 is scarcely watertight. The *historia* is in fact the narrative and obvious meaning of scripture. Finally, the Antiochenes were as concerned with the *theōria* or spiritual meaning as Origen was. The real difference between the two approaches depends upon differing understandings of the aim (*skopos*) of scripture. For Origen that aim primarily involves the ascent of the soul to the perfect contemplation of God. In

2. See, e.g., R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* (London: SCM, 1959).

3. See Frances Young, "Alexandrian and Antiochene Exegesis," in *The Ancient Period* (vol. 1 of *A History of Biblical Interpretation*; ed. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), ch. 12; see esp., 352: "The difference lay not so much in exegetical method as in hermeneutical principles."

contrast, Theodore takes the aim of scripture to be guiding Christians in the context of God's providential ordering of the two ages, a guidance designed to prepare them for their destiny in the age to come.

Beginning in 1957 with Robert Grant's study of Origen's exegesis there has been a new look at patristic interpretation, based upon an examination of the ways in which the early writers employed the conventions of ancient rhetoric. This context illuminates our texts in a way that places them in their proper historical setting. That is, it is reasonably certain that most of the church fathers received a rhetorical education. While it is not always possible to specify whether this included reading Aristotle or the long line of classical writers on rhetoric, it is clear that Ambrose and Augustine were familiar with Cicero's philosophical and rhetorical works. Augustine cites his *Orator* several times in *On Christian Teaching*. A rhetorical education, however, involved the use of manuals of rhetoric (*progymnasmata*); and the parallels between Christian texts and the classifications and rules found in the manuals are sufficiently clear and widespread to enable us to regard the *progymnasmata* as a context in which to examine exegetical texts from the early church. The classification of narratives is one example. To be true a narrative must be persuasive; consequently, improbabilities or impossibilities in it demonstrate it to be a myth (which did not happen) or a fiction (which might have happened but did not). The method applied to narratives is one of confirmation (*kataskeuē*) or of refutation (*anaskeuē*). Importance also attaches to the discernment of a narrative or logical "sequence" (*akolouthia*) in a text. Figures of thought and speech find complicated classifications. Obviously, much more could be said with respect to the conventions of ancient rhetoric.

It is doubtful that anyone would argue that the manuals of rhetoric supply the sole context by which to explain the exegesis of the early church. The influence of Hellenistic allegorical interpretation of Homer, of Philo's allegorical treatment of the Hebrew scriptures, and of gnostic exegesis demand consideration. For example, Origen's commentary on John is in constant dialogue with the Valentinian commentary of Heracleon, while Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses* owes a considerable debt to Philo. There are other contexts that have sometimes been explored, but where more work is certainly possible. The impact of rabbinic interpretations of the Hebrew scriptures probably deserves more attention. The liturgical setting of exegesis is of considerable importance, since it included the homily, often based upon the readings assigned by a lectionary. It is useful to remember that the early Christians were for the most part acquainted with scripture by the way it was read in the liturgy, where passages from the Old Testament and the Epistles were juxtaposed with the Gospel. As well, by the fourth century Christian architecture and iconography were part of the liturgical setting and were, to some extent, based upon scripture.

All these contexts help us to understand patristic exegesis, but it is also important to consider what these early interpreters say about what they were doing. To be sure, they do not often reflect upon their methods, but it is possible to examine Origen's account in Book 4 of *On First Principles*, and Augustine's in *On Christian Teaching*. There are, as well, occasional passages in other writers that touch upon methods of interpretation. Theodore of Mopsuestia's comments on Gal 4, where the word allegory actually appears, betray his opposition to allegory and his careful redefinition of what Paul means. There are several places where Gregory of Nyssa comments on the methods he employs. Much more needs to be said, but the point of my remarks is to underline the importance of taking seriously what the early writers say about their interpretations and to acknowledge the differences between their approach and the one common in our time. It is true that most of the early exegetes employ the conventions of ancient rhetoric, but in some respects those conventions undergo a sea change. For example, the method of refutation, proving that a narrative is not true, is for Origen and others an invitation to find a spiritual meaning above or buried beneath the "letter" of scripture. The problematic relationship of the obvious meaning or "letter" to the spiritual interpretation derived from it finds no single or easy resolution in the early church. It does, however, look as though even an allegorist like Gregory of Nyssa was concerned to bind the spiritual meaning to the "letter"; and Theodore faults the allegorists for "breaking up" the narrative to which Paul appeals in Gal 4, thereby failing to take seriously the narrative sequence (*akolouthia*). He also rejects their supposed denial that the events concerning Abraham's two sons really happened.

In some respects what seems to me a growing concern for the letter of scripture is congenial to our presuppositions. But there are a number of ways in which interpretation in the early church differed from what we are now accustomed to. The church fathers gave the text multiple meanings, and were quite aware of the limits of human understanding. Meanings tended to be valid rather than correct, and the church's rule of faith—and for Augustine the rule of love—drew the limits of validity. Two basic assumptions dominated exegesis in the early church. In principle, scripture is a coherent whole; any contradictions are merely apparent. The exegete's task is to search for the coherence thought to be hidden in the text, and "sequence" (*akolouthia*) is to be found by juxtaposing texts from various parts of scripture. The second assumption is that every word and every detail have great importance, and the exegete must supply a word for word interpretation. Most important of all, the aim (*skopos*) of scripture is religious and theological rather than historical. Unlike our common method, which treats the text of scripture primarily as historical evidence, the method of the church fathers treats the Bible as revelation designed to empower and guide Christians toward

their eternal destiny. Perhaps I am drawing the contrast between a religious and an historical aim for interpretation too sharply, and it would certainly be possible to qualify the opposition. Nevertheless, putting the point in this extreme fashion is a reminder that our world is not that of the early interpreters.

### WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH?

In this second part of the essay I wish to turn attention to a particular problem and to the New Testament texts consulted by Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine for what solutions seem possible to them. In the writings of both figures I have tried to examine their use of Rom 7:7–25 to explain the human predicament, of 1 Cor 15:21–22, 44–49 and Rom 5:12–21 as the larger framework comprising that predicament, and of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31), which partially enables them to draw conclusions about what happens between death and the general resurrection. My chief reason for this inquiry is related to the patristic assumption that it is the whole of scripture that must be consulted. If exegesis often involves posing questions to the biblical text, the answers include a concatenation of scriptural passages and tend to raise new questions. A second reason for my inquiry is that the question of human fate after death for these early interpreters involves the problem of how to envisage the relationship of the soul's immortality to the conviction that the resurrection of the body will take place not after the individual's death but at a particular point marking the transition from this age to that yet to come. As I hope to show, Gregory and Augustine give quite different answers to these questions despite their use of the same texts from the New Testament.

#### GREGORY OF NYSSA (D. CA. 395)

As I have argued, method in its broadest sense includes the presuppositions of the exegete. But it can also include the specific situations that represent the context for the writer. The exegesis found in polemical works needs to be assessed with the controversy involved in mind. Still more, it is possible to assume that the exegete's own experience and sensibilities help shape the questions to be asked. It is, of course, quite speculative to draw any portrait of an ancient writer's personality. In Gregory's case we cannot even be sure of the details of his ordinary life. Nevertheless, Basil the Great makes it reasonably clear that his brother Gregory was an inept ecclesiastical politician.<sup>4</sup> One of Gregory's letters (*Ep.* 1) describes a

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4. See Basil, *Ep.* 58–60, 214–15, 100; Gregory of Nyssa, *Ep.* 28, 33.



situation implying that he understands his own failings and this leads him to cite part of the passage from Rom 7 to describe his emotional state. On his way back to Nyssa from a festival at Sebaste, Gregory takes an arduous journey by night to mend fences with Helladius, the metropolitan bishop of Cappadocian Caesarea. Gregory and Helladius were two of the three bishops appointed by the council of Constantinople in 381 in order to guarantee orthodoxy in the civil diocese of Pontus; and it seems probable that Helladius saw Gregory's work as an interference with his rights as metropolitan.<sup>5</sup> When Gregory is finally allowed to wait upon Helladius, he is greeted by "a silence as profound as night." He finds himself so overwhelmed by his emotional reaction to Helladius's arrogance that he "was not in a condition to admonish myself to be unmoved." Immediately he remembers with admiration Paul's vivid description of the civil war within us between the law of sin and the law of the mind (cf. Rom 7:23). He discovers a conflict in his heart between his ideal and his ecclesiastical ambitions and social prejudices.

In a few of his other writings Gregory employs Rom 7 as a description of the struggle against the passions, which threaten to overwhelm the quest for virtue. The passions stem from our creation like the beasts and are somehow associated with the body, even though these emotions in our present condition are also associated with the soul. They are located on the borderland, as it were, between the soul and the body. Although the passions act as diseases of the soul, when they are governed and moderated by the mind, they can be transformed into virtues. In his eighth homily on Ecclesiastes (*GNO* 5:429-33) Gregory explains "the time for war" (Eccl 3:8b) by citing Rom 7:23, where "the law" of flesh is "at war with the law of the mind, making me captive to the law of sin." Gregory understands this to mean that in various ways the devil uses the passions to make war against us. His first attack is to send spies to seek out the weaknesses "by which the passions take their origin." The spies are followed by traitors who are members of "our own household" (Matt 10:36) and who provoke the thoughts of the heart into deeds such as "murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander" (Matt 15:19). Next, those who lie in ambush for us on the road of life pretend to be our friends, but arouse the passions by the false goods of pleasure and the theater. Gregory continues in this vein and then urges his hearers to take up what Paul calls "the whole armor of God" (Eph 6:11). In his fourth homily on the Lord's Prayer (*GNO* 7.2:47-48) Gregory underlines the need for God's help in winning the war. The "poison of disobedience" that lost us paradise also made us mortally ill, but the true physician provided a cure for the disease by

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5. It is possible that Gregory's interference in the election of a new bishop for Nicomedia was the issue. See Gregory, *Ep.* 17, and Pierre Maraval, *Lettres* (SC 363), 103, n. 3, and introduction, 38-41.

following the law of medicine and applying the opposite of our disobedience, “thy will be done.” The cure “needs God” to make our good desires effectual. We say, “because your will is temperance, but I am carnal and sold under sin (Rom 7:14), may this good will be accomplished in me by your power; and so it is also with justice, piety, and deliverance from the passions.”<sup>6</sup>

The allusion to paradise in the homily on the Lord’s Prayer points toward the larger framework in which Gregory places Rom 7 with its account of the civil war within the human heart. He can think of this as Christ’s reversal of the fall, the last Adam overcoming the sin and death introduced by the first Adam. But this is only part of his schema. In several places he treats the resurrection of Christ as the refashioning of humanity into its original form, to what he calls in *On the Making of Man* God’s first creation of humanity in his image.<sup>7</sup> There can be little doubt that his emphasis is not so much on the fall as on the resurrection. The reversal of the fall is no more than a prelude to the consummation of creation, and Gregory pays more attention to the Adam typology of 1 Cor 15 than to that of Rom 5. One of his works is a treatise on 1 Cor 15:20–28 and its reference to the subjection of Christ (*In illud tunc et ipse Filius*; GNO 3.2:3–28). He sets the problematic passage in the full context of the chapter in 1 Corinthians, though his specific purpose is refuting the heretical use of Christ’s subjection to demonstrate the Son’s inferiority to the Father. Subjection, he says, is a term scripture uses in a number of senses—of slaves to masters, of children to parents, of beasts to humans, of captives to their captors, of humans to God, and so on. Paul, however, is using the term in an unusual way. He is not speaking of the divine Son but of the man the Son appropriated in the incarnation. The man of Christ acts as a leaven in the lump of human nature; and when the leaven has completed its work, the one body of Christ will be subjected to God. As well, this will happen when all God’s enemies will be subject to him either by destruction or by reconciliation. Death will be destroyed, and evil will completely disappear; but all humanity will be reconciled to God.

Despite Gregory’s failure to pay full attention to the fall, as well as no more than a possible allusion to Romans 5:12, there is one telling exegetical move with respect to “the man of dust” (1 Cor 15:47). Instead of relating the expression to Gen 2:7 and the creation of Adam before the fall, Gregory argues that Adam is called “dusty” because he was dissolved into earth by death as a punishment for his sin. In this way he avoids allowing the comparison of 1 Corinthians to stand

6. See also *Hom. 1 in Cant.* (GNO 6:30), *Hom. 10 in Cant.* (GNO 6:298). Both passages allude to Rom 7:23, understanding the verse as a reference to the war against the passions.

7. See *Orat. Cat.* 8, 16 (GNO 3.4:29, 48); *Anima et res.*, PG 46.148A, 156C.

in obvious contradiction to that of the fallen Adam to Christ in Rom 5.<sup>8</sup> While in his treatise Gregory focuses upon the problem of Christ's subjection, his interpretation takes full account of the themes that he finds elsewhere in the chapter from 1 Corinthians; and he weaves those themes into his solution of the problem he must address. His emphasis is not so much upon Adam's sin as on its consequence in human mortality. To be sure, salvation involves overcoming sin as well as death; but in common with most of the Christian East Gregory thinks of Christ primarily as the victor over death. If his understanding of the incarnation and of the body of Christ enables him to refute the heretical exegesis of Christ's subjection, his final conclusion underlines the last verse of the passage in question—"so that God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28). This means that evil will disappear and that all will be saved. Gregory's universalism can include even the devil. His conclusion may be a pious hope rather than a dogmatic assertion, but it stands in sharp contrast to Augustine's view.

Gregory's speculations about what happens after death and before the general resurrection are far from consistent, but he finds in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31) important clues. In his homily against those who delay baptism he expresses his uncertainty whether the angels will receive the unbaptized after their death. Their souls may wander about in the air seeking a place of refreshment, "lamenting their folly and regretting what they had failed to do, like the rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen . . . who fed the wood of unquenchable fire" (GNO 10.2:364).<sup>9</sup> The Lukan parable locates the rich man in "Hades," separated by a "chasm" from Lazarus, whom the angels had carried to Abraham's bosom. In *On the Soul and the Resurrection* (PG 46.80B–88C) Gregory recounts his sister Macrina's consideration of the parable, arguing that it must be understood spiritually. Since after death only bodies are buried in tombs, the soul is no longer united to the body in any full sense. Therefore, the parable, despite its bodily references, is speaking of the spiritual *condition* of the soul and not of actual places. The rich man represents souls which chose this life of

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8. Gregory's interpretation may be directed against Apollinaris, who exploits the contrast in 1 Cor 15:47 between the dusty man from earth and the man from heaven to argue that Christ was not human as we are, since his humanity consisted only of the body (and sometimes the soul as life principle), excluding the mind or spirit. See, e.g., frag. 4 from the *Recapitulation*: Hans Lietzmann, *Apollinaris und seine Schule: Texte und Untersuchungen* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1904), 243. Gregory argues that by opposing the created Adam to Christ, Apollinaris violates 1 Cor 15:48, which implies that Christ's humanity is of the same nature as Adam's, since Christ was "in every way tested as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15). Thus, Paul does not oppose Christ's humanity to human nature as created, but only to it as fallen (*Antirrheticus*, GNO 3.1:145–46).

9. Cf. *De anima et res.*, PG 46.88B: "certain shadowy appearances of the dead are seen near their tombs." Cf. Plato, *Phaedr* 81bcd.

flesh and continue to yearn for it even after death. Lazarus, however, stands for souls that longed for eternal life and that after their journey in this life come to the quiet harbor of Abraham's bosom, where they find rest. These souls may not need "another death," which will be a fiery purgation of evil in the life to come (PG 46.88A, 152A). The implication is that souls like the rich man's may require such a purification *after* the resurrection. The idea accords with John 5:29 and its reference to a "resurrection of life" and one "of condemnation." Gregory can cite the text, but I cannot find a place where he connects it with a post-resurrection purification. But he does appear convinced that such a fiery purgation will take place for those who need it after the general resurrection, thereby ushering them into eternal life and guaranteeing universal salvation.<sup>10</sup> One thing, however, is clear; the two conditions of the soul are preliminary to the general resurrection. As well, the bosom of Abraham can be equated with paradise whenever Gregory thinks of it not as a final destiny but as a waiting room between death and the general resurrection.<sup>11</sup>

In *On the Soul and the Resurrection* the bodily references in the Lukan parable appear to contradict the conviction that the soul after death is in a condition without its body. Macrina's spiritual interpretation of the passage insists that the reunion of soul and body will take place only at the general resurrection, but she also points out that the references to tongue, eye, and finger do accord with her earlier discussion with Gregory about the soul's memory and recognition of the elements and form of its body (PG 46.77A–80A). In his homily *On the Holy Pascha* Gregory offers another interpretation of the parable. If there were no resurrection, the bodily details would prove the passage no more than a myth. Instead, "all these things depict the future state of the resurrection." They are "a prior announcement of what is to come" (GNO 9:265).

My discussion has necessarily been curtailed by noting only part of the evidence and has focused on the results of Gregory's methods rather than on the methods themselves. Nevertheless, the way he juxtaposes texts from various parts of scripture implies his conviction that the "sequence" (*akolouthia*) of scripture unifies the entire Bible, while his attention to detail accords with the word by word method of the rhetorical manuals. Yet the rhetorical methods take second place to the authority of scripture. At one point in *On the Soul and the Resurrection* Macrina rebukes Gregory for his outline of the way the dogma of the resurrection can be refuted by the so-called art of rhetoric, thereby circumventing the truth (PG 46.145B). Earlier in the dialogue she argued that unlike the pagan

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10. See *Orat. Cat.*, GNO 3.4:32, 33, 66, 91.

11. See, e.g., GNO 8:398, 9:489.

philosophers Christians depend upon scripture for doctrine and discipline and do not base their teaching on dialectic argumentation, which leads to falsehood as well as truth (PG 46.49C). Here we are not so very far from Augustine's attitude, but what Augustine makes of the same texts used by Gregory will reveal that the same methods and attitudes can yield quite different results.

#### AUGUSTINE (D. 430)

In his *Soliloquies*, written at Cassiciacum not long before his baptism in 387, Augustine concludes that he has not yet been healed because "the diseases and perturbations of the mind," though quiescent, can still be stirred up to produce the inner struggle with the passions (1.9.16). His earlier writings imply that this warfare can be won by free choice, even though custom and habit hinder human choosing which requires God's help to be effective.<sup>12</sup> Augustine's sense of his own moral incapacity sows the seeds of his twin mature doctrines of original sin and sovereign grace. Their development is a gradual one, but most critics agree that the watershed between the earlier and the later Augustine is to be found in the first writing of his episcopate in 396. That year he wrote answers to questions posed to him by Simplicianus, who a year later succeeded Ambrose as bishop of Milan. The first two questions are how to understand Rom 7:7–25 and 9:10–29. Augustine treats the first passage as Paul's use of "personification" to describe someone set under the law, which neither introduced sin nor did away with it. Instead, the law makes sin known (Rom 7:7) and by being wrongly used increases the desire which it was intended to forbid (Rom 7:11). The wrong use of the law is sin, and sin appears to be derived from the mortality humans inherit from Adam (*Div. quaest. Simpl.* 1.4, 10, 13). But the right use of the law remains possible by subjection to God "in pious humility so that by grace" the law can be fulfilled (*Div. quaest. Simpl.* 1.6). Romans 7:18b does not mean that we are deprived of free choice, since Paul says "to will is present with me." "Doing the good," however, is not in our power and is the result of Adam's penalty, "by which mortality itself became a second nature from which the grace of the creator sets us free, if we subject ourselves to him by faith" (*Div. quaest. Simpl.* 1.11). Despite our mortality we can still choose God's grace, which is "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us" (Rom 5:5, a text Augustine cites with great frequency).

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12. See, e.g., *Fort.* 21–22, written in 392 and citing Rom 7:23–25 and Gal 5:17; *Fid. symb.* 10.23, written in 393 and citing Rom 7:25b.

What Augustine says in answer to Simplician's second question (Rom 9:10–29) focuses upon the meaning of grace. In his *Retractions* (2.1.3) he says that his answer “struggled on behalf of the free choice of the human will, but the grace of God won the victory.” Indeed, Augustine's mature view begins to emerge in his argument. God's choice of Jacob and his rejection of Esau (Rom 9:10–16) lead him first to reflect upon election (*Div. quaest. Simpl.* 2.1–7). God's “purpose” (Rom 9:11b) precedes the birth of the twins, as does his call, his justification, and then his election of Jacob (Rom 9:11–12). God's merciful call even precedes faith, which is itself the gift of grace. The rejection of Esau poses the central problem (*Div. quaest. Simpl.* 2.8–15). Romans 9:18, unlike verse 14, speaks not only of mercy but also of hardening, specifically that of Pharaoh's heart; and Paul recognizes the danger of imputing injustice to God (Rom 9:14, 19). The solution of the puzzle derives from the metaphor of the potter who makes some vessels for honor and others for dishonor (Rom 9:21–23). Since all humans are a “mass” of sin because “in Adam all die” (1 Cor 15:22), all of them owe “a penalty to the highest divine justice.” Whether God exacts that penalty or remits it, is based upon his will and “a justice completely hidden and far removed from human perception,” as Paul's reference in Rom 11:33 to God's “unsearchable judgments” shows (*Div. quaest. Simpl.* 2.16). God uses the vessels made for destruction “as a means of salvation for the others on whom he has mercy” (*Div. quaest. Simpl.* 2.18; Rom 9:22–23). While Augustine employs 1 Cor 15:22a to show that humanity is a mass of sin, Rom 9, as he interprets it, will eventually force him to explain away the second part of the verse in 1 Corinthians, “so in Christ shall *all* be made alive.” Moreover, it will not be until the Pelagian controversy that he will tie Rom 5:12 (“in whom all sinned”) to his schema.

It is evident that Augustine's treatment of Rom 7, unlike Gregory's, underlines his emerging account of the larger framework that explains the origin of the war against the passions. Particularly in his anti-Pelagian writings he makes quite frequent use of Rom 7. Sometimes he is concerned with the question of the law, thereby paying strict attention to the obvious meaning of the passage.<sup>13</sup> But there are a number of places where he treats the text primarily as a description of the divided self and the war against the passions, an interpretation more coherent with Gregory's use of the passage. In his *Confessions*, written in 397 at least fifteen years before the first beginnings of the Pelagian controversy in north Africa, Augustine tells of discovering the “Platonic books” and his realizing that they do not include a number of specifically Christian claims. He turns especially to Paul in order to complete or correct the Platonists (*Conf.* 7.21). They fail to place what they say in the context of praising God's grace, together with the realization that

13. *Spir. et litt.* 8.14, 13.21; *Gest. Pelag.* 6.20–8.21; *C. du. ep. Pelag.* 1.8.14, 1.9.16–11.23.

we have nothing that we have not received (1 Cor 4:7). His pessimistic assessment of the human capacity for good prompts the question, “even if someone delights in the law of God according to the inner man, what will he do about the other law in his members, which wars against the law of his mind and leads him captive to the law of sin in his members?” (Rom 7:22–23). He continues by citing Rom 7:24, and the chapter concludes with the contrast between seeing “the fatherland of peace” from a mountain top and embarking on the perilous journey to that destination.<sup>14</sup>

By 415 Augustine recognizes that in Rom 7 Paul is not speaking of those under the law and before grace, and that the conflict he describes is one characteristic even of saintly Christians. Consequently, he rejects the Pelagian claim that humans because of their nature have the possibility of being sinless and that grace is to be identified with nature. In *Nature and Grace* (50.58–62.72) he makes full use of Rom 7 to refute these assertions; and he employs Gal 5:17, addressed as it is to baptized Christians, to argue that Rom 7 has the same reference (53.61). In *Perfection in Human Righteousness* (8.19), written also in 415, he argues that even the righteous who live by faith must pray for forgiveness when they recite the Lord’s Prayer. The proof lies in Phil 3:12–15, where Paul recognizes that he is not yet perfect (v. 12), yet speaks of “those of us who are perfect” (v. 15). Running perfectly in this life means living by faith, hope, and love. But the perfection of the age to come will involve the increase and fulfillment of love, whereby full vision will replace faith and the possession of its object will replace hope. Then it will be possible to obey perfectly the command to love God and the neighbor. Then the righteous will be absolutely sinless, “since there will be in their members no law warring against the law of their mind” (Rom 7:23).

The framework in which Augustine locates the struggle of Rom 7 is primarily found in the Adam typology of 1 Cor 15 and Rom 5. It is not surprising to find at least echoes of the larger schema in his earlier writings,<sup>15</sup> but it plays an increasing role in his anti-Pelagian works, where it undergoes a sea change because of his developed ideas of original sin and sovereign grace. The change also involves focusing attention upon Adam’s legacy of sin and death rather than upon Christ’s gift of the resurrection and eternal life. For this reason it is not as easy as one might expect to find passages where Augustine expounds the entire typology. The point can be illustrated by a discussion found in the first book of *Guilt and Remission of Sins*, written in 412 as a response to Marcellinus, the imperial commissioner charged with adjudicating the dispute between Catholics and Donatists

14. Cf. *Conf.* 8.5, where Gal 5:17 shows him the war within him between the flesh and the spirit. The chapter concludes with the citation of Rom 7:22–23.

15. E.g., *Mor.eccl.* 19.35.



in north Africa. The issue here, however, concerns the opinions of Caelestius, who fled from the sack of Rome in 410 to Carthage and in 411 had been denied ordination by the Carthaginian church. By citing 1 Cor 15:21–22 and Rom 5:12 Augustine refutes Caelestius's claim that Adam was created mortal (*Pecc. merit.* 1.8.8). Caelestius and his party are wrong to suppose that the death mentioned in these texts is only that of the soul. Moreover, Augustine's Latin translation of the last phrase of Rom 5:12 renders the Greek idiom literally, causing it to mean "*in whom*" rather than "*because all have sinned*." As a result all humans are born with original sin, which is passed down by propagation rather than by imitation (*Pecc. merit.* 1.9.9–10). Original sin must be distinguished from actual sin, as evidenced by the fact that infants who cannot have committed actual sin, must be forgiven by baptism (*Pecc. merit.* 1.16.21–22). The argument from infant baptism is central to Augustine's polemic against the Pelagians, and it depends upon defining the chief if not the sole purpose of baptism the forgiveness of sin. Finally, the statement of Rom 5:18 that "one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for *all*" does not mean that all those born of Adam are regenerated in Christ. What Paul wants to say is that just as no one "partakes of carnal generation except through Adam, so no one shares in spiritual regeneration except through Christ." In Rom 5:15 and 19 Paul uses the word "many," and so "all" may in fact be only a few (*Pecc. merit.* 1.15.19).

In the discussion I have just summarized Augustine correlates 1 Cor 15:21–22 with Rom 5:12 as two of the chief texts articulating the Adam typology. He increasingly turns to Romans, placing chapter 5 in relation to chapter 9 and to the predestinarian passage in Rom 8:28–30. "The first death," is a process initiated by the soul's separation from God and concluded by the separation of soul and body in what we normally call death. It is sin as separation from God that explains why humans are incapable of good, not because they cannot perform good deeds, but because even those good deeds are vitiated by being imperfectly motivated. The first death leads inexorably to "the second death," in which the soul is reunited to the body for eternal damnation and punishment. Only those predestined to be elected by grace are given "the first resurrection" in order to belong to the City of God and to share in the resurrection to life. At one point in *Guilt and Remission of Sins* Augustine explains his preference for Rom 5 (*Pecc. merit.* 3.11.19–20). He notes that Rom 5:12 correlates with 1 Cor 15:21–22; but 1 Corinthians speaks only of death, while Romans includes both death and sin, "sin in Adam, righteousness in Christ; death in Adam, life in Christ" (Rom 5:12, 16–19). Yet Paul's reference to sin as "the sting of death" in 1 Cor 15:56 does imply the larger view of Romans. The victory of the resurrection includes not only the body but also the "free justification" of the soul.



As I have suggested, once he turns to Romans Augustine fills out his mature doctrines of original sin and sovereign grace, placing both in a predestinarian structure he finds in Rom 8:28–30. The entire “mass of perdition” justly deserves final condemnation; all humans are born liable to eternal damnation. But Paul calls those delivered from this fate “vessels of mercy” (Rom 9:23) because they are those whom God “foreknew, foreordained, called, justified, and glorified” (*Nat. grat.* 5.5; Rom 8:29–30). In *Admonition and Grace* Augustine cites Romans 8:28–30 and notes that “purpose” in verse 28 is unqualified. That it means God’s purpose rather than any human purpose finds proof in Rom 9:11, “God’s purpose of election” (*Corrept.* 7.13–14). God’s sovereign grace includes not only the gift of faith but also that of perseverance. In these ways Augustine’s reading of Romans dominates his construal of the larger framework in which he places the human predicament. This obliges him to apply it to the life of the individual Christian, which is correlated with the stages of the church’s progress. The Christian lives before the law in sin; and while the law brings knowledge of sin, the law “came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied” (Rom 5:20). The third stage for those in whom the Spirit begins to work is that of faith or “under grace.” The final stage is perfect peace in the age to come, when the inner struggle of Rom 7 disappears (*Enchir.* 31.118). Augustine’s interpretation of Romans also requires him to explain away apparently universalist passages, just as he interprets “all in Christ” in the Adam typology, by restricting the reference to the elect. That God wills all “to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4) means either all kinds of humans or all those whom God wills to be saved (*Enchir.* 24.97, 27.103).

The last question to be examined is how Augustine explains the fate of the soul after death and before the general resurrection. In *Enchir.* 29.109 his brief answer is that this time “keeps souls in hidden storehouses according to what each one deserves—either in rest or in affliction—according to what they attained by lot while living in the flesh.” Presumably the souls in rest have been allotted God’s elective and selective grace. In any case Augustine here echoes the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The Lukan parable occupies a place in a correspondence between Evodius and Augustine in 414 (*Ep.* 158, 159). Evodius asks for Augustine’s comments on some surprising occurrences, dreams in which the dead appear to the living in bodily form. He draws the tentative conclusion that the dead have some kind of body, and he appeals to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, who are obviously portrayed in bodily form. And if the two are in distinct places, their souls must have bodies (*Ep.* 158.5). But he also recognizes that the resurrection of the body can mean that before it the souls of the dead are without bodies. Augustine’s answer (*Ep.* 159) affirms this view and explains

the apparent bodily forms as a product of the imagination of those who see such visions.<sup>16</sup>

Augustine, then, supposes that after death human souls find themselves in two different conditions, rest or torment. They are ordinarily not aware of the world they have left behind and are simply waiting for the judgment given at the time of the resurrection that will seal their fate and explain their two conditions. He does, however, make one hesitant qualification, based upon his reading of 1 Cor 3:11–15. In Book 21 of the *City of God* he argues at length against compassionate Christians who believe that all humans or at least all Catholic Christians will be saved. He thinks it obvious that the Platonists are wrong to suppose that all divine punishments are remedial and purgatorial (*Civ.* 21.13). Moreover, those who appeal to the passage in 1 Corinthians to argue that all Catholic Christians, who thereby have Christ as their foundation, will be “saved as though by fire” are equally deluded (*Civ.* 21.21). But he is unwilling to contradict the view that “the foundation” is having Christ in the heart, and that some of the elect have built “wood, hay, or straw” on that foundation. The fire “will test what sort of work each has done” (1 Cor 3:13), and this fire is not the same as “the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” into which the goats at Christ’s left hand will be plunged for eternal punishment (Matt 25:41, 46). This fiery testing will take place after death, but *before* the general resurrection.

## CONCLUSION

Both Gregory and Augustine treat the whole of scripture as the context in which they seek to articulate the “sequence” of the biblical narrative. Broadly speaking both employ the same methods and interpret the same texts in order to explain what happens after death. What we find, then, is two quite different articulations of the salvation history. Gregory’s emphasis is upon the end of the story and is fundamentally optimistic. Christ’s work completes God’s creative purpose, and the fall of Adam and its consequences for mortal life is an interruption of the pattern that, while tragic in the short run, is in the long run positive because it enables humans to learn by their mistakes. Augustine, on the other hand, is preoccupied with the fall, which he radically interprets as leaving humans with freedom to choose nothing but evil, and with no future but eternal damnation unless God’s sovereign and elective grace intervenes for some. For Gregory the age to come will see the abolition of evil, while for Augustine the city of the damned will be the

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16. He also appeals to his longer discussion in *Gen. litt.* 12. For other references to Luke 16 see also *Ep.* 164.3.6 and 166.9.7 and *Cur.* 2.4 and 13.17.

final end of evil just as the city of God will be the final end of good. Only God's sovereign ordering together of good and evil to make up a total good can avoid the dualistic implication of his view. Yet both patterns have their weaknesses. Gregory's is so optimistic that one is tempted to ignore the tragic aspect of human life, while Augustine's is so pessimistic that despair runs the risk of obliterating hope. Perhaps both patterns are necessary to provide a balance or a constructive tension.

### FOR FURTHER READING

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## MARCION AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

*Judith M. Lieu*

Marcion, who, it seems likely, was active in Rome towards the middle of the second century C.E., is chiefly remembered for the “heresy” of distinguishing between the God who is witnessed to by what Christians would later call the Old Testament, and the Father revealed by Jesus Christ. Although many of the details of his thought remain debated, it is certain that Marcion relied not on any distinctive writings or revelatory texts but on what later opponents identified as a version, or a perversion, of the Gospel according to Luke and of the Pauline letters. Thus, this chapter, set within a section entitled “Context and Method,” will ask in particular whether Marcion provides a context for understanding the New Testament, or whether the New Testament provides the context for understanding Marcion.

### PATRISTIC PERSPECTIVES

From the perspective of his opponents, who provide the main evidence for him and his followers, the second alternative was the case, namely, that the New Testament provides the context or presupposition for understanding Marcion. This is already true for the first to address Marcion in any detail, Irenaeus in his five-volume *Against Heresies* (ca. 180 C.E.).<sup>1</sup> Having summarized Marcion’s denigration of the Creator God, who was proclaimed by the law and prophets, and his presentation of Jesus as sent by a superior Father, Irenaeus continues:

In addition to this, he mutilates the Gospel according to Luke, doing away with everything that is written about the birth of the Lord, and removing

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1. The first explicit references to Marcion are made by Justin Martyr, who does not mention his use of a Gospel or of Paul.

much about the teaching of the words of the Lord in which the Lord is described as openly acknowledging the builder of this universe as his own father; so he persuaded his disciples that he himself was more to be trusted than those apostles who handed down the Gospel, handing down himself not the Gospel but a piece of Gospel. Similarly he cut away at the letters of Paul the apostle, removing whatever was explicitly said by the Apostle about that God who made the world, that he is Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and whatever the Apostle taught making use of the prophetic announcements of the coming of the Lord. (*Haer.* I.27)

For Irenaeus, therefore, Marcion took what lay before him, Gospel(s) and Pauline corpus, namely, an at least incipient “New Testament,” and he mutilated it.

Irenaeus was followed in this model by Tertullian, who found the challenge posed by Marcion’s teaching sufficiently serious to dedicate against it what was by far his longest work, the five-volume *Against Marcion* (ca. 207–212 C.E.). Tertullian, in probable contrast to Irenaeus, had access to copies of Marcion’s Gospel and Pauline corpus, or “Apostolikon” as he named it; therefore, he was able to study each in detail, seeking to do what Irenaeus had promised but had never fulfilled, namely, to refute Marcion from his own writings. Book IV introduces Marcion’s method and assumptions before working through the Gospel, Book V follows the Pauline letters, although in both Books Tertullian’s treatment becomes ever more selective as he proceeds, ostensibly to avoid repetition. As he cites and discusses Marcion’s texts Tertullian sometimes draws attention to what he claims are omissions or alterations but more frequently he highlights passages that, from his perspective, undermine Marcion’s basic premise that the gracious God proclaimed by Jesus was other than the bellicose, judgmental, and unreliable Creator God of the law and the prophets.

According to Tertullian Marcion did not only cut out material that contradicted his views but he also “falsified” what was there in order to suit his own theological ends. So, for example, Marcion did not only remove the birth narratives (Luke 1–2), but began his Gospel “that in the fifteenth year of the principate of Tiberius he descended into a city of Galilee, Capernaum”—apparently an elision of Luke 3:1 and 4:3. In addition, Marcion understood the verb “went down” here as referring to a descent from heaven, and he perhaps even emended or annotated the text to indicate this. Tertullian’s mocking response is typical of his approach: he comments that any such descent must have involved passing through the heaven created and owned by the Creator God, while that Jesus should go to Galilee was in any case foretold by Isaiah (Isa 9:1), demonstrating that he was indeed “the Creator’s Christ” (*Marc.* IV.7). The same pattern emerges as he reads Paul: for example, Tertullian accuses Marcion not only of omitting references to Abraham (Gal 3:6–9), but also of identifying “the God of

this age" (2 Cor 4:4) with the Creator, who deliberately hid the truth from people, an identification that he then repeated in other occurrences of the term "world," such as Gal 6:14, "for the world is not crucified to me but I to the world" (*Marc.* V.3.11, 4.15, 11.9–13). However, Tertullian is less consistent as to the route by which Marcion came to his, in the former's eyes perverted, scriptural exegesis and manipulation. The first two volumes of the *Against Marcion* make their attack from a philosophical vantage point, and Tertullian implies that his opponent was driven by the perennial philosophical dilemma of the origin of evil. Yet at other times the move seems to be from Scripture to the understanding of God, as when Tertullian ascribes to Marcion a foundational document, the "Antitheses," made up of "contrasting oppositions which attempt to establish the disagreement of the Gospel with the Law, in order that from the difference of tenets of each document they may argue a difference also of Gods" (*Marc.* I.19.4). For this reason some interpreters have understood Marcion as following a philosophical agenda, while for others, most notably for the classic study by Adolf von Harnack, he is more of a biblical theologian.<sup>2</sup>

From this point the picture of Marcion as the mutilator of the Gospel and of the Pauline Epistles is established, although no other author imitated Tertullian in his detailed analysis of Marcion's text. Our only other extensive source of information for that text is Epiphanius, who, in his "Medicine Chest against All Heresies" (*Panarion* [*Adversus haereses*] 374–378 c.E.) describes eighty groups, drawing on a range of earlier sources and on his own investigations. In his account of the Marcionites (*Pan.* 42) he includes a transcription of an earlier collection he had made of excerpts, seventy-eight from the Gospel and forty from the Pauline epistles; here he cites Marcion's text, identifies alterations, or signals key passages, and he adds to them his own counter-arguments (*Pan.* 42.11–12). Unfortunately, the value of Epiphanius's evidence for a detailed reconstruction of Marcion's Gospel and Apostolikon is vitiated by the corrupt state of the text transmitted; indeed, some of these problems may already have been present when he incorporated it into his account of the Marcionites.

In using the language of "mutilation" or "excision" Marcion's opponents take for granted the prior existence of an authentic Gospel and collection of Pauline letters. Irenaeus expresses this in general terms: "Marcion and his followers are

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2. Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom Fremden Gott. Eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der katholischen Kirche* (2nd ed.; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1924); this includes a hypothetical reconstruction of Marcion's text (pp. 39\*–221\*). Harnack remains influential despite criticisms of his method, and there are a number of subsequent accounts and attempts at reconstruction.

committed to cutting up the Scriptures, which in fact they do not acknowledge in their totality; instead, mutilating the Gospel according to Luke and the letters of Paul, they claim only those to be legitimate, which they themselves have abbreviated" (*Haer.* III.12.12). Tertullian goes a step further, making explicit what is not yet so in Irenaeus, that "out of those authors whom we have, Marcion *chose* Luke which he caused damage to"; in addition he concludes that Marcion has "rejected" the letters to Timothy and Titus—of which Irenaeus had said nothing—in order "even to falsify the number of letters" (*Marc.* IV.2.4, V.21). Tertullian also accuses Marcion of rejecting the Apocalypse (*Marc.* IV.5.2), while later Epiphanius adds Hebrews to the Pastorals as ignored by Marcion (*Pan.* 42.11.10–11). Both Tertullian and Epiphanius indicate that in Marcion's Apostolikon the order of the letters ran Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon (or Philemon followed by Philippians), but only Epiphanius draws attention to this as an "aberration"; similarly, Tertullian is hardly bothered that Marcion apparently treated "Ephesians" as "to the Laodiceans," while in Epiphanius's eyes Marcion deliberately added an eleventh letter "to the Laodiceans" (*Pan.* 42.9.4, 13.1–8). For each author, the New Testament that provides a context for Marcion's activity is the New Testament as they knew it.

At the same time, Marcion does provide a framework for making explicit the nature of that New Testament, and hence for defending it, at least in its core. Irenaeus' charge that Marcion has but a "piece of the Gospel" does not refer only to his "amputated" Luke, but presupposes Irenaeus' own conviction that *the* gospel is expressed through the fourfold Gospel. It is in the context of his polemic against Marcion that he articulates most fully his argument for the unified tradition shared by the "apostles and disciples of the Lord" and by their heirs, witnessed by the Acts of the Apostles, whose testimony is corroborated by that of Paul himself, and which thus also excludes any assertion that Paul alone knew the truth (*Haer.* III.12–14). In turn, Tertullian claims that Marcion believed that the Gospel had been "falsified," apparently drawing from Gal 1:7–9, and he points out that in so doing Marcion in effect acknowledged his own "corrected" Gospel to be later than that which Tertullian recognized; he even claims that by failing to "correct" the other Gospels Marcion implicitly admitted their integrity (*Marc.* IV.4.3, 5.5–6). Ecclesial consensus across time and space are so axiomatic for Tertullian that "even if Marcion had introduced a Gospel under the name of Paul, the document as a singleton, in the absence of the patronage of his predecessors, would not be adequate for faith" (*Marc.* IV.2.4). In fact, it would seem that Marcion's Gospel was anonymous, but that is not something of which Tertullian can make any sense: for him each Gospel is by its authorship directly or indirectly identified with one of Jesus' apostles. Once again, Marcion provided the context within which fundamental principles regarding the New Testament could be set out.



As these comments also demonstrate, the line between textual choice and interpretation was a fluid one. Tertullian would have preferred to punctuate 2 Cor 4:4, noted above, as “God blinded the minds of unbelievers of this age,” although if he had to accept “the God of this age” then he had other options, including a reference to the devil. It is uncertain in what form Marcion’s interpretation was presented and transmitted, whether in marginal comments or as a separate writing, but he does appear to have exploited the intertextual possibilities of his collection for interpretation, as also do his opponents; according to Tertullian Marcion found the Creator indicated in other references to “this world” both in Paul and in Luke (1 Cor 1:21; Eph 2:2; Luke 20:35), while Tertullian himself appeals instead to Eph 2:12 even while claiming to forbear from so doing (*Marc.* IV.38.5–8, V.11.12). For Marcion’s opponents such intertextual interpretive logic extends to the prophets, and they accuse Marcion of deliberately ignoring what is so self-evident.

### MARCION AND THE NEW TESTAMENT: RESPONSE AND COUNTER-RESPONSE

A more critical reading of the rhetorical function of such polemics, together with a greater sensitivity to the major gaps in our knowledge of much of what was happening in the early church during the second century, has led to new ways of expressing the question of the relationship between Marcion and the New Testament. It is but a small step from the recognition that polemics against Marcion afforded an opportunity to set out such fundamental principles to the question whether in fact it was they that provoked their formulation. To what extent did Marcion stimulate and even necessitate the idea of a fourfold Gospel witness, or the combination of different apostolic voices that would ensure that no single representation of the tradition would exclude all others? More specifically, was the inclusion of Acts or of 1 Peter and 1 John, writings associated with apostles who for Marcion missed the truth grasped by Paul, deliberately aimed at counterbalancing a heady Paulinism?

Questions such as these generate new ones: did Marcion, by choosing a Gospel and putting it alongside a collection of Paul’s letters as his authoritative texts, in practice introduce the future shape of the “New Testament,” namely, the combination of Gospel narrative of Jesus with stories and letters associated with the apostles after Jesus’ death and resurrection? Indeed, is the idea, and perhaps the label, of the “New Testament” initially his innovation, as an articulation of his rejection of the God “of whom the law and the prophets,” or the “Old Testament,” spoke? Taking this a step further, without Marcion would it have been inevitable

that the early Christian movement drew up a separate and parallel corpus to the authoritative Scriptures that they inherited, rather than, for example, supplementing these or radically editing them to demonstrate the conviction that they pointed to Christ? On the other hand, was it the need to mount a defense against Marcion and the consequences of his position that determined that Christians would retain those Scriptures, albeit at the cost of insisting that they could only be read as preparatory of Christ or as containing truths hidden in allegory, and hence also at the cost of denying the validity of any alternative, “Jewish,” way of reading them?

These suggestions have been deliberately left in the form of questions, for each indicates a direction for further exploration that could constitute an essay in its own right. Any answer will involve two different types of argument: the first is an assessment of the evidence before and after the time of Marcion. For example, there is room for debate as to when knowledge of Acts is first attested, with some finding few if any traces of it before Justin Martyr, who was in Rome during or shortly after the peak of Marcion’s activity. Similarly, while sensitivity to echoes of their language, reports by later writers, or the earliest papyrus fragments found in Egypt, may be appealed to for the circulation and even status of each of the canonical Gospels during the first half of the second century, such judgments are inevitably subjective, and cannot decisively demonstrate when those Gospels were brought together—a question that is also bound up with the origins of the Christian use not of the roll but of the codex, a format that could include all four.

From a different perspective, while *1 Clement* and Ignatius undoubtedly value Paul highly, before the time of Marcion and then that of Irenaeus it is more difficult to trace either a detailed knowledge of his letters, particularly as a collection, or a close engagement with his thought and its implications; can such silence demonstrate, as some would suggest, that Paul “went into decline” or that his ideas had most influence in circles later judged marginal? Or again, whereas the language of “covenant” (“Testament”), and of “old” and “new,” swiftly emerges to describe God’s dealings with Israel and then with those called through faith in Jesus Christ, its application specifically to written documents, or to collections of documents, is far from obvious and only begins to become established at the end of the second century and into the third. Each of these developments, which in different ways belong to the growth of “the New Testament,” can be plotted on a timeline, although without complete consensus as to detail. Marcion, too, can be plotted on that timeline, although even here there is room for debate between those who follow the largely consistent claims of his opponents that he was active in Rome in the 140s and 150s, and those who would push those dates back earlier and/or credit him with extensive promulgation of his ideas before he moved to Rome.

However, to turn these dates and events into a narrative of cause and effect demands a second style of argument, one for which inevitably there is no explicit evidence. Marcion's own reasons for his treatment of the Scriptures have not been preserved, while his opponents would be unlikely to credit him with inspiring such significant steps, even had they been conscious that this was the case. To judge what would have happened "if . . . (not) . . ." is, in such circumstances, even more hazardous. Given the many gaps in our knowledge of this crucial period, and the probable disappearance of many more writings than those that have survived, educated guesswork and imaginative reconstruction are a necessity, so long as it is recognized that they are such, and that we can rarely speak of more than possibilities and probabilities. Within such a framework a more likely alternative conclusion might be that among the diversity and multiple strands now recognized as characterizing second-century Christianity Marcion represents trends that were already in process, rather than that he served as a pivot in a simple linear cause and effect.

A variant view of the "New Testament" as a response to Marcion, at least embryonically, is that there may be elements of a polemic against him in some writings that are now part of the canon. Inevitably this demands an earlier dating of Marcion, as already noted above, or a later dating of those New Testament texts, or both. The most frequent candidate for such a position has been the Pastoral Epistles, which were not included in Marcion's *Apostolikon*—on this view not because he rejected them but because they had not yet been written. They warn against those who forbid marriage, and instruct that what God has created is good and is to be partaken of with gratitude (1 Tim 4:1–5); Marcion was notorious for his rejection of procreation and, according to Tertullian, for his demand of celibacy of full communicants; according to some reports he also allowed women positions of authority in the church, while his reading of the Scriptures as referring to the Creator might fall under the category of "myths" (1 Tim 1:4, 2:9–15). What better riposte to the "heretic" who promoted Paul could there be than "Paul" exhorting his disciple Timothy to "keep safe the deposit" and to avoid "the antitheses of the falsely-named knowledge (Gnosis)," particularly in the light of the attention given by Tertullian to Marcion's "Antitheses" (1 Tim 6:20)? A less direct polemic has been found in the Acts of the Apostles, which, as already noted, may not be attested until close to the time of Marcion; this could be seen as presenting an alternative account of the continuity that stretched from God's activity in Israel to the ministry of Jesus and then to the faithful preaching and witness of all the apostles, on whose support Paul was dependent—an account that both Irenaeus and Tertullian were quick to exploit in their own polemical apologetics. Without even internal allusions to offer support, is it possible to

move from the usefulness of a text (Acts) for a given purpose, namely, anti-Marcionite polemic, to its intentional construction for that same purpose?

The benefits of an approach that does make these links are that it breaks down the division, sometimes still found, between “the New Testament (period)” and that which follows, or between the New Testament and those who (ab)use it, and that it recognizes instead that both the individual writings of the New Testament and the processes by which that corpus was formed are part of a much more extensive on-going dynamic of ideas, texts, and people over an extended period of time. On the negative side, this approach shares in many of the dangers of mirror-reading, often overinterpreting the conventional or imprecise polemical language of the texts, and being uncritically overconfident about the reconstruction of individuals and of their views, in this case of Marcion. As with other “opponents,” such as those projected by the Johannine epistles or by Jude, the warnings of the Pastoral Epistles arguably tell us more about their own anxieties and concerns than about actual groups and ideologies “out there.”

### MARCION AS WITNESS TO NEW TESTAMENT ORIGINS

In many ways it might seem but a step further than these questions that locate Marcion within the process of the production of the New Testament, including of its writings, to return with critical skepticism to the Patristic claims about his use of the Gospel of Luke and of the Pauline letters. There can be little doubt that there is a close relationship between canonical Luke and Pauline letters on the one hand, and what his opponents encountered as the Gospel and Apostolikon of Marcion on the other. Yet was that relationship, down to its finest detail, simply that which his opponents claimed it to be, namely, that he started with the same text as did they and then cut some passages out and changed the wording of others, all with the express purpose of ensuring support for his own prior ideas?

Doubts about this have been raised from a number of angles. First, however, any discussion has to deal with the problem of whether it is possible to recover Marcion's version with sufficient confidence to draw conclusions from it. The different witnesses, chiefly Tertullian and Epiphanius, but also others who make passing comments on Marcion's interpretation, only occasionally reinforce each other, although when they do so, this is striking.<sup>3</sup> For example, there is widespread agreement that in Marcion's version the parable of the wineskins preceded

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3. Other witnesses include the anonymous fourth century *Dialogue of Adamantius* and Origen's Commentaries on the Pauline letters, largely transmitted through Jerome's Latin translation.

that of the patched garment (Luke 5:36–38), while Epiphanius explicitly states and Tertullian presupposes that Marcion read “you pass over the calling (vs. ‘judgement’) of God” at Luke 11:42. Further, Tertullian writes in Latin, and there has been considerable debate both as to whether he made his own translations from a Greek text of the New Testament or worked from existing Latin translations, or indeed a mix of both, and as to whether he read Marcion’s writings in Greek, once again making his own translation, or in Latin. A decision about both debates is not easily reached, and has to rely on detailed comparison of the vocabulary of Tertullian’s own biblical citations and of his quotations from Marcion, with each other, across his corpus including his own vocabulary in nonbiblical contexts, and with the Old Latin versions.<sup>4</sup>

The same sort of thorough comparison is required to assess Marcion’s text, in its detail rather than in its contents. Although the argument that Marcion “mutilated” the text implies that there was something stable and agreed to mutilate, this was not the case, as even his opponents would have known. Textual variation was a feature of the transmission of early Christian writings from the earliest traceable point; as more manuscripts have been discovered and transcribed, so has this impression been reinforced, to the extent where some scholars reject the working assumption of a single “original” version. Indeed, Tertullian himself is part of this variation, for often he is cited as evidence of “African” or “Western” readings in contrast to those of some of the Alexandrian and later Byzantine manuscripts. Close analysis of Marcion’s text as reconstructed from his opponents has shown that in many cases readings where he differs from them and/or which they identify as “changes” or “falsifications,” are more widely attested in the textual tradition. That Marcion himself had a significant impact on the text as transmitted is not impossible, and in some cases it is arguable, but this is unlikely to be the total explanation. Rather, Marcion used a form of the text familiar to him, and so counts as a witness to it; there is a growing consensus that the text he represents is related to the Western tradition with some affinities to that from which the old Syriac drew. Once again, this may not be a total explanation, and there are instances where it is highly possible that Marcion did make changes to his text, or that he chose readings that suited his intention. He may have been responsible for the contrast “first Adam . . . last Lord” in 1 Cor 15:45, a variant not otherwise attested (although a similar one in 1 Cor 15:47 is); the absence of “to you” after “should preach” in Gal 1:8 is also found in the original hand of Sinaiticus, but

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4. For the debate see Dieter Roth, “Did Tertullian Possess a Greek Copy or Latin Translation of Marcion’s Gospel?” *VC* 63 (2009): 429–67; Ulrich Schmid, *Marcion und sein Apostolos: Rekonstruktion und historische Einordnung der marcionitischen Paulusbriefausgabe* (ANTF 25; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 40–59.

would have supported his view that Paul's heated defense was not restricted to the Galatian context. Yet to label this as "mutilation" is to ignore that Marcion worked at a time when the editing of older texts was a commonplace, and when it was widely supposed that they had acquired errors, particularly where they appeared to make a revered teacher say something with which his later disciple felt unable to credit him.

There may be some overlap between the analysis of textual variations witnessed by Marcion and that of more substantial omissions. For example, it has been suggested that his apparent "omission" of Gal 3:15–25/26 could be explained by haplography, a scribe's eye—probably prior to Marcion—slipping from the genitive "of faith" in 3:14 to 3:25 or 26.<sup>5</sup> More frequently the contents of Marcion's Gospel and Apostolikon demand a separate approach. Tertullian claims that there were more "ditches" in Marcion's version of Romans than of any of the other letters, including much of Rom 9–11 (*Marc.* V.13.4, 14.6–9); it is difficult to assign this to any other cause than to Marcion's deliberate omission. Even so, that leaves open the question of how Marcion explained his undertaking: as already noted, Gal 1:7–9 may have given him grounds for suspecting that "the Gospel" had been falsified but a similar theory regarding the letters of his hero-cum-mentor, Paul, would require a more sophisticated narrative of Machiavellian intrigue, and there is little evidence that he held this.

Reason, however, to query whether Marcion's Gospel is simply the consequence of his removal or correction of passages that he suspected were such falsifications arises from their character and from the way that they parallel modern analysis of the Gospel sources or redaction.<sup>6</sup> A disproportionate percentage of material from canonical Luke that is absent from Marcion's Gospel represents what modern scholars would call "L" or "special Luke," that is, material that is not part of the "common tradition" shared with Mark or of the distinctive "Q" material shared with Matthew. This includes the killing of the Galileans, the parables of the Two Sons (Prodigal Son) and of the Fig Tree, the cutting off of the servant's ear at Jesus' arrest, and probably also the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus' visit to Martha and Mary, and the healing of the man with dropsy.<sup>7</sup> It is this feature that has led to the suggestion that the form of Luke associated with Marcion represents a more primitive form of "Luke" than that known by Irenaeus as part of the fourfold Gospel, which in due course was included within the New Testament canon.

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5. Schmid, *Marcion und sein Apostolos*, 248–49.

6. A key work here was John Knox, *Marcion and the New Testament: An Essay in the Early History of the Canon* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1942).

7. The last three are indicated by their absence from any of the witnesses.

A simple form of such a suggestion would be the reverse of the polemical accusation against Marcion: instead of Marcion's Gospel being an abbreviation of "canonical Luke," "canonical Luke" would be the result of an expansion of Marcion's Gospel, perhaps deliberately designed to counter it or its interpretive possibilities. Such an explanation has its roots in nineteenth century theories, associated with F. C. Baur, of a conflict between Pauline and Petrine parties in the early church; in these debates a key role was played by the question whether Luke either was "Pauline" or supplied evidence of an accommodation to the Petrine tradition: "Marcion's Luke" could be seen as a purer Pauline nucleus with subsequent editing and expansion marking the eventual compromise consensus of "the great church." A more nuanced form of such a view would be that Marcion did indeed make changes, but more minimally than his accusers suggest and to an earlier form of the Gospel, one which did not include much of the so-called Lukan redaction; in turn, "canonical Luke" is the result of further growth or redaction of this earlier Lukan nucleus. For example, rather than omitting the birth narratives Marcion may have been unaware of Luke 1–2, chapters which some scholars have suggested are secondary on stylistic grounds; however, it would still be possible that he had deliberately emended the opening of the Gospel to exclude any references to John the Baptist as in some sense preparing for Jesus, as well as to the temptations of Jesus since these would conflict with his Christology of a divinely-commissioned revealer.<sup>8</sup>

There have been attempts to correlate this process with that of the growth of the Synoptic tradition and with the interrelationship between the Synoptic Gospels. However, Marcion's Gospel, as far as it can be reconstructed, does not map neatly onto current models of "the Synoptic problem"; for example, it does omit so-called Q material and does include supposedly "special Luke" passages, and thus it does not conform to a hypothetical "Ur-Luke." Rather, it could be seen as evidence for two features of the Gospel tradition in the second century. The first of these is that not only was the textual tradition unstable or fluid but that so also was the written tradition; Marcion's Gospel warns against any assumption that the production of Luke out of its source components was a single achievement with common and immediate effect. Secondly, and part of the same overall picture, it should not be surprising that readers and interpreters felt able to adjust the text as they received it. As we have seen, textual emendation and correction was a characteristic of the age, and the relationship between the interpretation of a text and its reproduction could take many forms. Marcion may represent one extreme, in

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8. On this and the following paragraph see Judith M. Lieu, "Marcion and the Synoptic Problem," in *New Studies in the Synoptic Problem* (ed. P. Foster *et al.*; BETL 239; Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 731–51.

interpreting at least in part by selectivity in producing a copy of the text, but he was not a totally aberrant figure.

The origins of Marcion's Apostolikon cannot be explained on quite the same model. Here there is no strict equivalent to the various sources and earlier forms that precede canonical Luke. It is true that some of Paul's letters are arguably composite, formed out of parts of separate earlier letters, for example 2 Corinthians and Philippians. But the "seams" that are often held as evidence of these earlier elements do not overlap with supposed Marcionite omissions. The main exception might be the ending of Romans: it would seem that Marcion's version of Romans omitted chapters 15 and 16, thus adding to the evidence that scholars have found from elsewhere of an early fourteen-chapter edition of the letter.<sup>9</sup> However, a closer analogy might be the question of the formation of the Pauline corpus. We have already seen that rather than Marcion having omitted the Pastoral Epistles, these might be subsequent to his collection if not actually designed to challenge his interpretation "from within." More fundamentally, the distinctive sequence of letters need not be the result of Marcion's tampering with a stable prior collection. The origin and date of the Pauline corpus have been much debated, as too has been the rationale behind what becomes the normative order. While some have argued for a relatively early date, perhaps associated with the writing of Ephesians, here accepted as pseudonymous, others have pointed out that secure evidence of such a collection is again difficult to demonstrate prior to Marcion: Ignatius' claim that Paul mentions the Ephesians "in every epistle" hardly counts as such (Ign. *Eph.* 12). There may be some evidence of a collection with Galatians at its head independent of Marcion, although that position undoubtedly served the priority that he gave to Paul's conflicts with other "false" apostles.<sup>10</sup> At the very least, it seems probable that Marcion's Apostolikon, like his Gospel, has to be located within the complex processes leading to the canonical forms of Paul and Luke and not as a reaction to them.

Such a conclusion suggests that there will be no neat answers to the questions posed earlier as to the extent to which Marcion was a catalyst for the canonical moves towards the end of the second century and beyond, or merely a symptom

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9. See Harry Y. Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans: A Study in Textual and Literary Criticism* (SD 42; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977).

10. The argument here turns in part on the origins and date of the so-called Marcionite prologues to the Pauline letters found in a number of Latin manuscripts, and is too complex to examine in detail here. See Nils Dahl, "The Origin of the Earliest Prologues to the Pauline Letters," in *The Poetics of Faith: Essays Offered to Amos Niven Wilder* (ed. W. Beardslee; Semeia 12; Missoula: SBL, 1978), 233–77; J. Regul, *Die Antimarcionitischen Evangelienprologe* (AGLB 6; Freiburg: Herder, 1969), 88–94.



of what was already in train, a sideshow in a process that was driven by its own internal momentum. Such questions demand careful study of the evidence of the texts and their interpretation that we do have and due recognition of how much we do not have, a sensitivity to the cultural effect of other similar dynamics within the Jewish and Greco-Roman world, along with the critically imagined reconstruction of the diverse forms and shared threads of early Christianity. Marcion will undoubtedly remain important as signaling all these, and hence as representing a degree of indeterminacy in our confidence about the nature of the New Testament that neither he nor his opponents would have wished to acknowledge.

### EXPLORING MARCION'S NEW TESTAMENT

As we have seen, any assessment of Marcion's New Testament demands close attention to a wide range of textual sources. The polemical accounts that provide our best primary evidence have to be interrogated in the light both of their rhetorical intentions and of the attendant problems of reconstruction, including issues of translation and transmission. Readings that may with any degree of confidence be attributed to Marcion have to be located within the full spectrum of textual variants attested in the Greek manuscript tradition, the versions, and citations by contemporary and later writers. In turn, as exemplified by recent editions of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament, caution is needed in citing Marcion as a textual witness. No single example can illustrate all of the issues this raises or the wider interpretive questions discussed earlier; what follows is intended to demonstrate this.

It might be thought that the importance of the death and resurrection of Jesus for the early church, and indeed for the debate between Marcion and his opponents about the goal of Jesus' coming, would mean we would know most about this part of Marcion's Gospel. However, by the time Tertullian reaches these chapters he is becoming increasingly summary, spending less than 150 lines of a recent critical edition on Luke 23–24 compared with 570 lines on Luke 4–5;<sup>11</sup> this is only partly mitigated by the attention he gives in Book Three to demonstrating against Marcion that Jesus' crucifixion fulfilled prophecy (*Marc.* III.1–19, esp. 18.1, 19.6). By contrast, ten of Epiphanius's excerpts cover the last two chapters of the Gospel, but just two, with an additional comment on its opening, address chapters 4–5; even so, much remains uncertain.

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11. Claudio Moreschini and René Braun, eds., *Tertullien Contre Marcion IV* (SC 456; Paris: Cerf, 2001).

To begin with, the only explicit charge Tertullian makes is that Marcion deleted the division of Jesus' garments; in contrast, according to Epiphanius that was present, but Marcion did remove Jesus' promise to the thief (Luke 23:34b, 43; *Marc.* IV.42.4; *Pan.* 42.11.17, S71–72). The former is Markan, quoting Ps 22:19, the latter—ignored by Tertullian—exclusively Lukan; Marcion could have found both uncongenial, but their absence does not disrupt the narrative flow, and either could be redactional.<sup>12</sup> However, Epiphanius' initial reference is highly abbreviated: "And coming to a place named 'Place of the skull' they crucified him and divided his garments and the sun was darkened" (*Pan.* 42.11.17, S71: Luke 23:33a, 34b, 44).<sup>13</sup> Such summaries are characteristic, and may include everything in between (except v. 43), or very little: it is possible that his copy of Marcion's crucifixion narrative omitted not only Jesus' prayer for absolution (v. 34a, Luke only), whose textual status has long been independently debated,<sup>14</sup> but also the mockery of Jesus by the rulers (or in D [Codex Bezae] by the people) and soldiers, the superscription, and the entire distinctively Lukan account of the two thieves (vv. 35–43). Tertullian ignores these events, directly continuing "the elements were convulsed." Certainly, that Jesus was crucified as "King of the Jews" or as Jewish Messiah may not have suited Marcion; in Tertullian's account Pilate had asked him whether he was the Christ, not King of the Jews, while according to Epiphanius Marcion replaced the charge against Jesus of "saying he was Christ a King," with "and destroying the law and prophets" (Luke 23:2–3); Epiphanius had also claimed that Marcion omitted the detailed passion prediction at Luke 18:31–33, which includes the mockery and abuse.<sup>15</sup>

With these omissions the crucifixion would be marked primarily by the dramatic darkness: Tertullian pillories that, protesting that creation should rejoice at the death of the opponent of the Creator; for Marcion, however, the darkness might signal the defeat of the Creator's powers. Indeed, Tertullian's description of the splitting of the Temple veil as caused by the violent exit of the angel deserting "the daughter of Zion" may anticipate the tradition in the account of Marcion by Eznik of Kolb (ca. 450 C.E.), where the Creator darkens the sun and tears the veil of the Temple in anger at the trick played on him (*Marc.* IV.42.5; Eznik of Kolb, *De*

12. Verse 34 does not flow smoothly: for v. 34a see below; v.34b *could* be an addition dependent on Matthew or Mark. There are significant variants to the wording of vv. 42–43; in *Gos. Pet.* 4 one thief rebukes those who revile Jesus, but Jesus himself says nothing.

13. The form "the sun was darkened" follows AWΘ and parts of the western tradition.

14. It is omitted by P<sup>75</sup>, s<sup>a</sup>, B, D; see D. C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 162.

15. *Marc.* IV.42.1; *Pan.* 42.11.17, S52, 69; Tertullian makes no reference to the whole of Luke 18:23–34. Marcion's text at Luke 24:7 is less certain: both Tertullian and Epiphanius omit the words "to the hands of sinful people," with some Old Latin support.

*Deo* IV). Finally, both Tertullian and Epiphanius ignore the words of Jesus' loud cry (Luke 23:46)—although Tertullian does note the fulfilment of the prophets—but instead appeal to the verb “he expired” or “ex-spirited” (*exepneusen*) against Marcion's supposed docetism.<sup>16</sup>

The silences of the two witnesses more than their assertions may point to a truncated crucifixion account that would be congenial to Marcion's position. Even so, it need not follow that this was entirely the result of his intentional editorial activity. The Lukan Passion narrative is distinctive in part because of the extent of independent source traditions it incorporates and/or of editorial reworking compared with Matthew and Mark; it also displays a significant number of textual variations in the manuscript tradition effecting both wording and details of the narrative, perhaps indicating “that the text of these chapters was not fixed, and indeed continued to grow for centuries after its composition.”<sup>17</sup>

By contrast both Tertullian and Epiphanius are more explicit about the burial and resurrection narratives: they both attest the presence in Marcion's Gospel of the burial by Joseph, the visit of the women and the appearance of shining figures, the encounter of the two disciples with Jesus on the road to Emmaus, and the final appearance of Jesus to the disciples, although with little evidence of the details.<sup>18</sup> The silence of both regarding the visit of Peter to the tomb may suggest its absence, as also in D (Luke 24:12). However, according to Epiphanius, with support from the *Dialogue of Adamantius* and by implication from Tertullian, Jesus recalled Cleopas and his companion not to what the prophets said but to “what I said” (Luke 24:25);<sup>19</sup> this would effectively have Jesus already “blow his cover,” which, as Epiphanius points out, annuls the need of the breaking of the bread—retained in Marcion's Gospel—to prompt their recognition of him. In practice the first person harmonizes with that in 24:44, and with the words addressed to the women, “Remember what he spoke to you” (24:7), as Tertullian himself notes with approval.<sup>20</sup> These parallels may explain the origin of the reading, or they may support its authenticity; on the other hand, a deliberate change would remove any reference to prophecy, reinforce Jesus' self-revelation by his

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16. Jesus' words are cited by the *Dial. Adam.* 198.8–12 (5.12), but this part of the *Dialogue* is less secure evidence for the Marcionite Gospel.

17. Parker, *Living Text of the Gospels*, 172.

18. *Marc.* IV.43; *Pan.* 42.11.17, S72–78.

19. *Marc.* IV.43.4–5, “what was spoken to you”; *Pan.* 42.11.17, S77; *Dial. Adam.* 198.6 (5.12). Unlike Adamantius, Tertullian makes no reference to the following words, “must not the Christ suffer...?” (Luke 24:26), while Epiphanius's report is ambiguous; v. 27 and perhaps v. 26 may have been absent.

20. Tertullian's translation at both points “*quae*” reinforces the parallelism; Marcion's Gospel perhaps read “*hosa*” at 24:7 with D it, rather than “*hos*” (“how”).

word, as well as sustain a theme important for Marcion, namely, the disciples' persistent failure to understand Jesus' teaching.

A more striking conundrum is represented by Jesus' response to the fear of his disciples at his sudden appearance (Luke 24:37–40). Tertullian and Epiphanius agree that Jesus reassured them, "... see my hands and feet, [that it is I myself: *Tertullian only*] because a spirit does not have bones, as you see me have."<sup>21</sup> Both are perplexed by Marcion's failure to delete these words, which to them provide the most effective refutation of his supposed "docetism." Surprisingly, neither remarks on the absence, also attested by *Adamantius*, of the Lukan Jesus' invitation to them to "touch and see," or on the simple "bones" against "flesh and bones" of the Lukan manuscript tradition.<sup>22</sup> Although in the *On the Flesh of Christ* Tertullian claims ignorance as to how Marcion interpreted this response, here he proposes that Marcion twisted the syntax so as to imply a positive comparison between a "boneless" spirit and Jesus: "A spirit does not have bones, which is how you see me having," that is, "not having." Undoubtedly, differences between Marcion's and Tertullian's interpretation of key texts were sometimes based on different grammatical analyses, yet the latter's proposal here is remarkably tortuous—as he himself admits in a characteristic neologism (*tortuositas*). Whether he had such a Marcionite interpretation before him may be doubted, although how readers would know what to make of such an oblique statement remains unclear.

Tertullian's focus on grammar may have been misplaced. It is notable that he describes the disciples as initially believing that they were seeing "a phantasm"; presumably this, rather than "spirit," was the word read by Marcion at Luke 24:37 (*phantasma*), as it also is by Codex Bezae (which also omits v. 40).<sup>23</sup> This is also the term that Tertullian consistently uses to describe Marcion's Christ. This may suggest that Marcion found some significance in the difference between "phantasm" in verse 37 and "spirit" in verse 39, and perhaps also that he was more comfortable with such a being having "bones" than having "flesh"—whose absence, as noted, goes unremarked by his opponents.

Again, such niceties may not have been entirely due to Marcion's creative reading of the Lukan tradition. Although "flesh" is well-attested in Luke 24:39, textual variants of the formula suggest that scribes felt the need to clarify the rela-

21. *Marc.* IV.43.6 (where there are minor variants in the manuscript tradition); cf. *Carn. Chr.* 5.53–54; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 42.11.17, S78.

22. *Dial. Adam.* 198.18–21 (5.12) does read "flesh (pl.) and bones," while Epiphanius concludes his Refutation, "The Saviour was clearly teaching that even after the resurrection he had bones and flesh, as he himself witnessed, 'as you see me having.'"

23. In support is "*phantasia*" in *Adamantius*, although this is not attested in the Lukan manuscript tradition.

tionship between the two. There is also considerable evidence that this saying was transmitted in various forms. To support his own conviction that Jesus was “in flesh” (*en sarki* or *sarkikos*) after the resurrection Ignatius reports a tradition that Jesus “came to Peter and his companions and said to them, ‘Take, touch me and see, that I am not a bodiless demon (*daimonion asōmaton*)’” (Ign. *Smyrn.* 3.1–2). Since Ignatius continues that “after the resurrection he ate and drank with them” a relationship with Luke seems probable, although not necessarily a literary one (cf. Luke 24:41–43). Similar traditions are referred by Origen to “The teaching of Peter” and by Jerome to the Gospel of the Hebrews or another Jewish Gospel, but their origin and transmission are disputed.<sup>24</sup> In fact interpretations of the nature of Jesus’ fleshly experience both before and after the resurrection were very varied in the second century, and cannot be classified simply as “docetic” and “nondocetic.” Marcion’s own position was more complex than his opponents allowed and he may have found this narrative of the sudden appearance of an embodied (or “emboned”) Jesus, in whatever version he received it, a fruitful one.<sup>25</sup>

Thus Marcion’s reading of the Lukan Passion represents the dynamic interplay between interpretation, textual fluidity, and parallel transmission of both oral and written traditions characteristic of the second century; his opponents represent the developing attitudes to textual authority and fixity that would herald the emergence of the New Testament.

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24. For references see William Petersen, “What Text Can New Testament Textual Criticism Ultimately Reach?” in *New Testament Textual Criticism, Exegesis and Church History* (ed. B. Aland and J. Delobel; CBET 7; Kampen: Pharos, 1994), 136–52, 144–45.

25. It is likely that Marcion’s Gospel ended, as does Tertullian’s account, with Jesus’ “sending the disciples to the nations of the world” (Luke 24:47; *Marc.* IV.43.9), avoiding any reference to his departure and to the disciples’ return to Jerusalem.

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## THE NEW TESTAMENT AND ITS PALESTINIAN BACKGROUND: ESSAYING MARK'S GOSPEL

SEAN FREYNE

In this essay I would like to illustrate the problems and possibilities of reading New Testament writings within a particular milieu, namely, that of Roman Palestine, by focusing on the Gospel of Mark. Such a procedure raises several methodological problems to be discussed presently. Yet Mark's Gospel would appear to be a highly suitable text with which to explore the issues that such a project gives rise to. This is especially the case in view of the fact that an increasing number of scholars are locating the origins of the Gospel in Palestine–Syria rather than in the more traditional setting of Nero's Rome.<sup>1</sup> True, one could suggest other texts also as possible testing grounds for such an enterprise. Thus, for example, the Fourth Gospel, despite its highly developed theological perspective, shows an intimate acquaintance with some Palestinian sites, especially in Judea/Jerusalem. Furthermore, the Q document has been associated with Galilee by a number of recent scholars.<sup>2</sup> However, both would be problematic choices. The Fourth Gospel lacks the narrative realism of Mark because of the otherworldly perspective of the work. And in the case of Q one would have to decide on which putative stage of this putative work one was dealing with.

### PART 1: METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

The literary turn in New Testament studies has raised serious problems with regard to negotiating the different worlds which texts project. The more we

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1. Sean Freyne, "Matthew and Mark: The Jewish Contexts," in *Mark and Matthew: Understanding the Earliest Gospels in Their First Century Settings* (ed. Eva-Marie Becker and Anders Runesson; WUNT 271; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 179–203.

2. Jonathan Reed, "The Sayings Source Q in Galilee," in *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus: A Re-examination of the Evidence* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2000), 170–96; John S. Kloppenborg, "Reading Q in the Galilee," in *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 214–70.

become aware of the Evangelists as writers, the less we can assume that there is an immediate and direct referential aspect to their narratives. With the emergence of such concepts as “narrator,” “ideal reader,” “character depiction,” “plot situations” and “point of view,”—all borrowed from the New Criticism’s analysis of the modern novel—the more our attention is drawn to the internal world of the text. Indeed, some have gone so far as to claim that texts are mirrors, not windows, and that therefore it is a fallacy to suggest that we can rely on the author’s depictions as referring to a “real” world behind the text.<sup>3</sup> As Stephen Moore, referring to Norman Petersen’s study of Mark, reports, the nonrealistic spatial and psychological capabilities of the Markan narrator (i.e., omnipresence and omniscience) have serious generic implications with regard to the work, and “provide compelling evidence that the gospel is a bona fide literary composition.”<sup>4</sup> Moore concludes, “Critical measurement of Mark against an historical paradigm has shattered the precritical integrity it enjoyed. That integrity can be restored only if the critical paradigm of history is replaced with a postcritical paradigm of story.”<sup>5</sup> So much for Mark’s and Q’s nineteenth-century status as the earliest and most reliable sources for the historical Jesus in accordance with the von Ranke ideas of history writing!

Before ceding the ground too readily to such post-modern criticism, several issues need to be addressed. One could begin with a critical remark on Petersen’s stance as cited above by Moore. “The serious generic implications” that the discovery of certain spatio-temporal rhetorical strategies in Mark indicate to him, are simply asserted, without being properly investigated in relation to the first century rhetorical strategies contemporary with the Markan narrative. New Testament scholars such as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Vernon Robbins, while indeed paying careful attention to the internal rhetorical devices of various texts, also emphasize the socio-historical implications of their rhetoric in terms of the ancient audiences to which these texts were addressed.<sup>6</sup> Thus bridges can be built

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3. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “Galilee and Jerusalem: History and Literature in Markan Interpretation,” *CBQ* 44 (1982): 242–55, and more recently *Mark’s Jesus: Characterization as Narrative Christology* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2009).

4. Stephen Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 28, with reference to Norman R. Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 28–29.

5. Moore, *Literary Criticism*, 29.

6. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Followers of the Lamb: Visionary Rhetoric and Social-Political Situation,” in *Discipleship in the New Testament* (ed. Fernando F. Segovia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 144–65; “Rhetorical Situation and Historical Reconstruction in 1 Corinthians,” *NTS* 33 (1987): 386–403; Vernon Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984).



between the text and the worlds both behind and in front of the text, when due consideration is given to the efforts of the New Testament writers to influence their readerships in ways that challenged the prevailing values and ethos.

In a stimulating article, Markan scholar, John R. Donahue, has pointed out that these efforts to understand the rhetoric of ancient texts within their contemporary settings resonate rather well with some recent trends in modern literary criticism that go under the general rubric of "The New Historicism." While the practitioners of this approach are mostly interested in Renaissance studies, their objectives and approach are not dissimilar to the aims of Schüssler-Fiorenza and Robbins in regard to New Testament texts. According to Donahue, the New Historicism is "less a method than a perspective that integrates historical research (particularly into cultural and social practice), literary methods and philosophical perspectives, and it provides a challenge to NT studies to join historical and literary criticism again."<sup>7</sup>

In light of these suggestions one writer, chronologically not far removed from Mark, that could contribute in interesting ways to the discussion, is Josephus, whose *Life* and a section of his *Jewish War* deal with Galilean conditions of the immediate pre-revolt period. Indeed one might go further and suggest that despite their quite different objectives there is at least a "family resemblance" between Josephus's works and the Gospel insofar as they focus on the movements, activities and interactions of two main characters, Jesus of Nazareth and Flavius Josephus, within the same geographical landscape of Roman Galilee. Of course, there are major differences of perspective that cannot or should not be ignored. Mark's work is a presentation of the life of Jesus for Christian believers, probably in the wake of the upheaval generated by the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 C.E. and the attendant major change in the religious landscape of the eastern Mediterranean for Jesus' followers, Jewish and non-Jewish alike.<sup>8</sup> In the *Jewish War* Josephus is interested in presenting himself as an able and astute general who conducted the Galilean campaign with courage and foresight, whereas the *Life* is an autobiographical self-presentation by the Jewish priest, based on his brief sojourn as governor of Galilee prior to the revolt in 66 C.E. It serves as an appendix to his larger work, *Jewish Antiquities*, and is aimed at a Roman readership, serving as a celebration of Josephus's character (cf. *Ant.* 20.266–67; *Life* 430).

In the past New Testament scholars have been prone to "cherry-picking" Josephus's writings with a view to illustrating individual episodes or items in various Early Christian texts, but without seeking to understand the genre or the rhetoric

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7. John R. Donahue, "Windows and Mirrors: The Setting of Mark's Gospel," *CBQ* 57 (1995): 1–26 (8).

8. Freyne, "Matthew and Mark."

of the different works and how these shaped Josephus's reporting of events and situations. In recent times there has been an important shift in our understanding of Josephus's works, largely due to the efforts of Steve Mason and the team of scholars working under his editorship on *The Brill Josephus*.<sup>9</sup> There is now a growing awareness that the first step in bringing Josephus into dialogue with other texts is to appreciate the author's narrative artistry in each of his writings and evaluate this in the light of the overall intention of the work in question. Thus, for example, when in the *Life*, Josephus paints a picture of the Galilean country people as being loyal to him as a Jerusalem priest in contrast to the citizens of Sepphoris and Tiberias who, he claims, were extremely hostile, this portrayal must be understood in the first instance as part of his overall self-presentation as somebody whose leadership qualities match Roman ideals. Indeed the Galileans are said to celebrate his arrival among them as a benefactor (*euergētēs*) and saviour (*sōtēr*), epithets that properly applied to the Roman emperor in the Augustan age, but which expressed the values that ideally all Roman governors were expected to embody.

This "literary turn" in Josephan scholarship to some extent corresponds to that already discussed briefly with regard to the Gospels. It raises the question of how far Josephus's works can be deemed to be referential with regard to the actual world of first century Galilee. Indeed Mason in some of his early writing on this theme seems to suggest that we must be content with enjoying Josephus's literary artifice without attempting to use his writings to recreate the world behind his texts, an approach that has led to "ungovernable speculation," he claims.<sup>10</sup> This judgment is to some extent a reaction to the uncritical use of these writings in the past, and Mason himself is engaged on a history of the Jewish War based on Josephus's work. In my own case I have attempted to negotiate this apparent impasse by focusing on the hierarchy of perspectives that are characteristic of all texts, as emphasized by hermeneutical experts, such as Werner Jeanrond.<sup>11</sup> In order to uncover these layers within the texts, Jeanrond calls for a pluralist reading strategy.<sup>12</sup> Thus, for example, when Josephus describes aspects of Galilean society such as the village people flocking to his support as a Jerusalem priest (e.g., *Life* 80, 84, 99), or the sending of a delegation to the region by the Jerusalem authorities in order to have Josephus removed (*Life* 189–201), the information imparted is

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9. Stephen Mason, "Contradiction or Counterpoint? Josephus and Historical Method," *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 6 (2003): 145–88.

10. Steve Mason ed. *Life of Josephus. Translation and Commentary* (vol. 9 of *Flavius Josephus*; Leiden: Brill, 2001), xlix.

11. Werner G. Jeanrond, *Texts and Interpretation as Categories of Theological Thinking* (Dublin: Gill-McMillan, 1988), 97–100.

12. *Ibid.*, 116–18.

not exhausted by judging it solely in terms of how it might redound to Josephus's reputation. The instances just cited raise questions about urban-rural relations in Roman Galilee as well as the relationships between Jerusalem and Galilee in that period. Were they more fraught in the immediate pre-revolt period than was the case earlier in the first century? And what might we reliably take from Josephus on such questions?

It is interesting to observe that the correspondences already noted between Mark and Josephus's *Life* in terms of the main character's role in each work, are extended to other aspects of their respective narratives. Thus the Scribes who on two occasions are said by Mark to come from Jerusalem to discredit Jesus (Mark 3:22–23, 7:1–2) have a role quite similar to that of the Jerusalem delegation sent to unseat Josephus in the *Life* (189–201). Jerusalem's control of the periphery was important, it would seem, irrespective of whether it was a Jerusalem priest involved in the local politics on the eve of the Revolt, or a charismatic preacher/healer who was to prove a threat to the religious hegemony of Jerusalem and its elite. Ironically, Josephus was a member of this very elite in 66 C.E., and one might reasonably therefore question the veracity of his claims to popularity among the Galileans. On the other hand it could be argued that the stance that he took in terms of courting wider popular appeal once he arrived in Galilee angered others of his ilk who had hoped to contain the more militant elements in the society, thereby avoiding the wrath of Rome.

Faced with such conundrums arising from the literary sources archaeology can act as a third dialogue partner, once its limits and possibilities are taken into account. Today it is customary to speak of Syro-Palestinian archaeology, rather than the more traditional Biblical Archaeology that was deemed to have been too narrowly focused on the biblical record, especially the Hebrew Scriptures, often with an apologetic bias. Developments in archaeological methods associated with the so-called New Archaeology in America, have brought about changes in the field generally, being especially influenced by ecological and anthropological approaches to the study of cultures.<sup>13</sup> More recently, however, this interest in uncovering processes at work in ancient societies (processual archaeology) has been challenged as being too deterministic, calling instead for a return to a broader understanding of context that includes human as well as ecological factors in the shaping of individual cultures (post-processual archaeology).<sup>14</sup> These

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13. William G. Dever, "Biblical Archaeology," and Alexander H. Joffe, "New Archaeology," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Ancient Near East* (5 vols.; ed. Eric M. Meyers; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1.315–19 and 4.134–38.

14. Ian Stodder, *Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

methodological debates allied to the more scientific analysis of data means that the discipline speaks with a very different and independent voice, one that is not simply at the service of textual studies of the past. Thus archaeology, no less than literary criticism, is an interpretative science also that engages with the social sciences as well as with literary and historical criticism in attempting to uncover the social and cultural patterns of a region and assisting in mapping how these may have changed over time.

In engaging with texts and archaeology as independent but related voices from the past, I choose to use the term “intertextual” rather loosely to describe the kind of dialogue between literary, historical, and archaeological methods that I consider both appropriate and necessary in Gospel studies today. I am aware that the use of the term “textual” to apply to archaeological data is the most open to question. Nevertheless one is reminded of Renan’s famous remark that the landscape of Galilee was like a “fifth gospel, torn but still legible.”<sup>15</sup> My own justification is based not on a romantic view of the landscape as in Renan’s case, but rather on the fact that, as mentioned previously, post-processual archaeology is interested in developing its own description of the social, cultural and political structures of a region with the aid of the social sciences, especially historical sociology and cultural anthropology. Nevertheless, as Marianne Sawicki reminds us, one must continue to be aware of the difficult methodological issues that this approach raises and seek to be both critical and self-critical in regard to the models being employed and their application to ancient societies.<sup>16</sup>

Literary critic Hayden White casts an interesting and important light on this relationship between context and text. Commenting on the various points of view that have emerged in a collections of essays by both literary critics and New Historicists, he states the issue succinctly as follows: “[w]hat was originally represented as an interest in studying the relation between literary works and their socio-cultural contexts [New Historicism] is suddenly revealed as a radical re-conceptualization of literary works, their socio-cultural contexts, the relations between them, and therefore of ‘history’ itself—all are now to be considered as kinds of ‘texts.’”<sup>17</sup> White goes on to list the various “fallacies” that the practitioners of the New Historicism are perceived as committing. Thus, from the literary perspective New Critics would see the attempt to relate text to context as engaging in the “genetic” fallacy, whereby the autonomy of the author of a literary text

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15. Ernest Renan, *Vie de Jésus* (Paris, 1863; English edition, Buffalo: Prometheus, 1991), 23.

16. Mariane Sawicki, *Crossing Galilee: Architectures of Contact in the Occupied Land of Jesus* (Harrisburg, Pa: Trinity Press International, 2000), 73–75.

17. Hayden White, “New Historicism: A Comment,” in *The New Historicism* (ed. H. Aram Veesser; New York: Routledge, 1989), 293–302 (294).

is negated. Furthermore, it is open to the “referential” fallacy that identifies the world of the text with the world behind the text. Equally, more old-fashioned historians resist the prioritizing of culture over social and political structures (the “culturalist” fallacy) and also reject what might be called the “textualist” fallacy of reducing culture to the status of a mere text.

This list of “fallacies” represents in my opinion a set of challenges rather than charges. While deriving from different approaches in modern literary and historical theories each stresses one particular point of view and fails to acknowledge the plurality of perspectives that texts can potentially at least reflect and represent. As to the charge that speaking of history as a text is reductionist, White points out that irrespective of the precise meaning of history that one is operating with (whether it be “the past,” “the documentary record of this past,” or “the body of reliable information about the past established by professional historians”), one is always dependent on some version of a textualist theory of history, since the historical past is accessible to study “only by way of its prior textualizations,” citing Frederic Jameson.<sup>18</sup>

The use of the notion of “text” as an appropriate metaphor for historical reconstructions is not meant in any way to reduce the history of Galilee to either Mark’s or Josephus’s representations of the region. Rather, the metaphor functions to underline the interconnectedness of the various structures—social, economic, religious, cultural—that can be uncovered from our different sources of information, textual and material alike, allowing us to map the periodic changes that may have occurred, and give plausible reasons for those changes. Since it deals with life from below, the archaeological data in fact provide a very different lens on the world of Galilee than those of either the Christian Evangelist Mark or the aristocratic Jerusalemite priest, Josephus. This is not to suggest that by engaging in this intertextual exercise a complete picture of Galilee in the Roman period will emerge. Rather the Berlin New Testament scholar Cilliers Breytenbach proposes a more modest, but realistic, agenda for the exercise when he asks: “How can our understanding of the spatial aspect of the world that can be constructed from the text of Mark benefit from taking cognizance of the relevant images of Galilean localities that historians construct from the remains of Galilee that have survived the last two millennia?”<sup>19</sup> The attempt to answer this pertinent question engages the expertise of literary critic, historian and archaeologist in dialogue with each

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18. Ibid., 297.

19. Cilliers Breytenbach, “Mark and Galilee: Text World and Historical World,” in *Galilee through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures* (ed. Eric M. Meyers; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 75–85 (76).

other. In the rest of this essay I will attempt to show how such an intertextual dialogue can benefit the aims of all three practitioners.

It is therefore my working hypothesis that when texts of very different perspectives and intentions, such as Mark's Gospel and Josephus's *Life* and *Jewish War*, present us with similar patterns of social, religious and cultural life of a region, and when these patterns can be corroborated *independently* from the archaeology of that same region and period, then one is entitled to conclude that these patterns are more than mere literary creations.

## PART 2: RECONFIGURING ASPECTS OF GALILEAN LIFE: MARK'S CONTRIBUTION IN DIALOGUE

More than twenty years ago in my study *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels. Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (Gill and Macmillan: Dublin, 1988), I sought to explore the ways in which a literary and an historical approach to the Gospels could together contribute to our understanding of first century Galilee. However, in retrospect my efforts did not achieve the ends that I had in mind, since what transpired were two quite separate approaches that did not adequately interact with one another. I trust that by setting out my methodological stall more carefully in the first part of this essay I will not fall into the same trap. As Elizabeth Struthers Malbon recently articulated the dilemma, "It is important to recontextualize Christology by moving from history to theology to story, and indeed back and forth between history, theology and story," thereby avoiding "reducing story too easily to history or inflating story too easily to theology."<sup>20</sup> Here my concern is with story and history and less with theology, while recognizing that Mark's Gospel is primarily a theological work based on the history of one Jesus of Nazareth. I will begin this part of my essay by exploring the "family resemblance" between these two very different works in relation to the picture of Galilee that each paints, before bringing the archaeological evidence into the discussion.

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20. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "History, Theology, Story: Re-Contextualizing Christology and Mark's Messianic Secret," 20, Paper delivered to annual meeting of SNTS, Berlin 2010, forthcoming in *NTS* 2011.

## 2.1 GEOGRAPHY, POLITICS, AND PEOPLE

Even a superficial reading of Mark suggests that while Galilee is extremely important for his overall purposes, he is not overly concerned with giving the details of the region in the first century, as we know these from other sources. There is no mention of such important Herodian centres as Sepphoris or Tiberias, the former refurbished after 4 B.C.E., and the latter founded in 19 C.E. when Mark's main character, Jesus, was a young adult. Likewise, Herod Philip's upgrading of Bethsaida to Iulias, thereby honoring the emperor's sister, is ignored in favor of the Jewish name that indicates its primary role as a fishing village (Mark 6:45; 8:22). While Mark often mentions villages in his narrative, he rarely names any of them, other than Capernaum, Nazareth, and Bethsaida. One can only suspect that at the time of writing Mark had no interest in documenting the Herodian court or its presence in the region, indeed possibly deliberately excluding it from his narrative by way of implicit commentary on its alien character. The one episode that relates to the Herodian court, namely, Antipas's banquet (Mark 6:17–29), paints a colorful but damning picture of the opulent and licentious nature of the ethos, where both Jewish and Roman law could easily be flouted.

Despite this reticence, Mark's narrative shows a clear awareness of the location of Galilee within the larger regional setting. Indeed, of all the Evangelists, he scores best in terms of this awareness. Thus he speaks of "the borders of Tyre," conscious of the Hellenistic influences that that territory represented (7:24); he recognizes "the villages of Caesarea Philippi" (8:27), indicating a sense of the structure of the Greek *polis*; he is aware of the fact that the Decapolis region is across the lake and that one of its principal cities, Gadara, has its own *chōra* or territory (5:1, 17, 20). While some commentators have queried the accuracy of his geographic knowledge when he describes Jesus' journey "from Tyre *through* Sidon to the sea of Galilee, in the midst of the territory of the Decapolis" (7:31), the route is by no means as improbable as some have suggested, once the reference to Sidon is understood as the territory of Sidon rather than the city itself.<sup>21</sup> Finally, in describing the crowds that came to Jesus at 3:7–8, he chooses the pre-Herodian divisions of the Jewish territory, namely, Judea (with Jerusalem), Idumea, Perea and Galilee, the traditional Jewish divisions that Pompey had recognized in his partial dismantling of the Hasmonean state in 63 B.C.E. In short we might say that Mark is drawing on an older "map" of Galilee, one that predates Herodian changes. He is interested in presenting the ministry of Jesus as a minis-

21. F. Lang, "'Über Sidon mitten ins Gebiet der Dekapolis.' Geographie und Theologie in Markus 7,31," *ZDPV* 94 (1978): 145–59.

try to the village communities of the region, even when he is never anchored to a particular village, not even Capernaum (cf. Mark 1:45).

What of Josephus's knowledge of and interest in Galilee? As already mentioned he has two separate though related agendas in *Jewish War* and *Life*. The former is the earlier of the two works and closer to the events of the Jewish revolt. As far as his sojourn in Galilee is concerned it presents him with the opportunity to display his prowess as a brave and shrewd general, well versed in the art of war, thereby displaying his manly credentials. In particular his long account of the siege of Jotapata by Vespasian is intended to illustrate his knowledge of Roman warfare and his skilful stratagems in seeking to outwit the enemy (*J.W.* 3.145–408). He thus sought to counter the slanderous accounts of others that were circulating with regard to the Jewish people in the wake of the revolt (*J.W.* 1.1, 3, 6). The *Life* on the other hand is an encomiastic biography dealing with his conduct of affairs in Galilee before the outbreak of hostilities, a situation, which as he describes it, allowed him to display other aspects of his character that would be expected of any good Roman governor.<sup>22</sup>

Against this background, we are given two different depictions of Galilee, which complement one another, while serving the different perspectives of the author in different moments of his career. In *Jewish War* the account of the Galilean campaign is enclosed by two descriptions of the landscape. In *J.W.* 3.41–43 he describes the two Galilees (upper and lower) surrounded by Syria and Phoenicia, “two powerful nations,” whereas at *J.W.* 3.515–20 he concentrates on the valley region, especially the Plain of Gennosar. In contrast to Mark's seeming vagueness about borders, Josephus in the earlier passage knows and lists the adjoining territories on all four sides: Ptolemais, Carmel, and Gaba to the west, the territories of Samaria and Scythopolis as far as the Jordan to the south, on the east the city states of Hippos and Gadara and Gaulanitis, and on the north Tyre and its territory. In addition he gives the internal borders between upper and lower Galilee, showing himself to be well informed about the territory under his command for the coming conflict. This territory, though limited in size, was plentifully supplied by brave and industrious men, “who were at all times inured to war and resisted any hostile invasion” (*J.W.* 3.42). The description of the valley region is even more fulsome. The excellence of the *air* is noted and the *water* of the lake “is sweet and good to drink,” remaining as cold as snow even on a summer's night (*J.W.* 3.506–8, 519).<sup>23</sup> His description of the natural fertility of the

22. Steve Mason, “Essenes and Lurking Spartans in Josephus's *Judean War*: From Story to History,” in *Making History: Josephus and Historical Method* (ed. Zuleika Rodgers; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 219–61, esp. 222–38; idem. *Life of Josephus*, xiii–liv.

23. The emphasis on the quality of the air and water recalls the importance of these proper-



Plain of Gennosar, on the north-western side of the lake, liberally supplied with water from various springs, is positively Eden-like (*J.W.* 3.516–21).

In his account of Galilean geography in *Life* the emphasis is different and there are some minor discrepancies in regard to details already given in *Jewish War*. Nevertheless, the author does open windows from time to time on inner-Galilean situations and tensions, while constantly seeking to present himself as both pacific and prudent in dealing with the crises that arose. In contrast to Mark's account, the Herodian centres of Sepphoris and Tiberias feature prominently in the narrative, both of which are hostile to Josephus, so that his main base of operations was with the Galilean villagers, that is, the country people, who appear chorus-like in his support, whenever he is in trouble.<sup>24</sup> Here, too, as in the *Jewish War* Josephus shows himself to be well appraised of the numerous lesser settlements within his territory. At different times he was stationed in different named villages, Asochis close to Sepphoris, Japha-Yaphia close to Nazareth, and Tarichea (Magdala) close to Tiberias, presumably for strategic reasons to do with opposition to him from the major Herodian centres. Other villages are named also, especially in his list of places that he claims to have fortified (*J.W.* 2.573–76; *Life* 185–88) and in naming the borders of Galilee (*J.W.* 3.35–40). In addition, such places as Gischala, the home of one of his most bitter enemies, John, features prominently, and Capernaum is mentioned for its abundant supply of water (*J.W.* 3.519) and as the place to which Josephus was brought for healing after falling from his horse (*Life* 403). Of the 204 cities and villages that he claims dotted the landscape of Galilee (*Life* 235), Josephus actually names close to 50 in all, a stark contrast to Mark's passing interest in such details. It has even been suggested that Josephus may have been provided with an official list of such settlements when he was appointed to Galilee.<sup>25</sup>

This initial probe into our two works, Mark's Gospel and Josephus's *Life* (and relevant section of *Jewish War*) provides an interesting contrast between the two authors. Whereas in *Mark* there would appear to be a deliberate writing of Rome out of the story, Josephus in both works is keenly aware of his Roman audiences and this strongly colors both his rhetoric and his desire to demonstrate that, as

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ties for health care practices according to the well-known work in antiquity, Pseudo-Hippocrates' *Airs, Places, Waters*. Josephus was treated by healers in Capernaum when he was thrown from his horse (*Life* 405). These pieces of casual information provide an interesting background for understanding Jesus' ministry of healing in the region also, as presented in all three gospels.

24. Sean Freyne, "The Galileans according to Josephus' *Life*," *NTS* 26 (1980): 397–413.

25. See Mordechai Aviam and Peter Richardson, "Appendix A: Josephus' Galilee in Archaeological Perspective," in Mason, *Life of Josephus*, 177–209, for complete list and archaeological notes on each of the named sites.

the main character, he was always conscious of Rome's power and presence in the land, even when he found himself for a time aligned against them in Galilee. At the same time a recognizably similar pattern of Galilee and Galilean life can be detected behind both authors' depictions. In both one gets the sense that Galilee is a well-defined region whose borders and territorial neighbors are well known and recognized. The Sea of Galilee and the adjacent valley district feature prominently in both, providing lush vegetation because of the plentiful supply of water, ample fishing to support the salting and export of fish from Tarichea, Bethsaida and other centers, as well as acting as means of access and/or as boundary with the non-Jewish populations of the Gaulanitis. In both there is a decided emphasis on the importance of the village population, whether it be the crowds coming to follow Jesus or those who supported Josephus when he was under threat. The relationship of both the main characters with the Herodian foundations is intriguing. Whereas Mark's Jesus ignores these places altogether, giving rise to various views regarding the silence, Josephus's relationship with both is fraught, even hostile, but in each instance for different reasons. In the case of Sepphoris its pro-Roman stance from the outset meant that he was seen as a potential enemy, while the situation in Tiberias was more complex, given the different factions in the city and the suspicion of Josephus by the most militantly Jewish group, lead by Jesus, son of Sapphias.

Other aspects of the different narratives raise intriguing questions also. Mention has already been made of the delegations from Jerusalem and their make-up, the one to discredit the native charismatic healer/exorcist and the other to remove the ambitious and unreliable Jerusalem priest. What do these episodes say about Galilee/Jerusalem relations? The incident of the noblemen from Trachonitis who had fled to Galilee from King Agrippa's territory, and who were unacceptable to the *Ioudaioi* of Tarichea unless they underwent circumcision, is singular in that this is the only time that Josephus uses *Ioudaioi* rather than *Galilaios* in *Life*, raising the issue as to whether some of the residents of Galilee were more observant than others in regard to the Jewish law (*Life* 112, 149–51). Eventually, Josephus claims that he accompanied the noblemen secretly as far as the territory of Hippos, making the journey by boat across the lake, rather than having them put to death in his own territory. The whole episode is told from the perspective of Josephus's liberal and humane treatment of foreigners, thereby enhancing his character further with his readers. Yet because of its association with the lake as an escape route, the incident relates in interesting ways with Mark's account of Jesus' several crossings into non-Jewish territory, but also his use of the lake to escape the crowds (Mark 5:1–2, 6:32). It seems legitimate, therefore, to enquire about the relations of Galilean Jews with the Gadarenes, the Hippites, and the

residents of the other cities of the Decapolis, an issue on which archaeology can shed some light as we shall discuss presently.

## 2.2 SOME POINTERS FROM THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

The correspondences and contrasts between the literary sources with regard to life in the region are both interesting and frustrating. Perhaps the third dialogue partner to this intertextual discussion, archaeology, can contribute to resolving some of the issues raised but not adequately answered by the literary sources. Over the past thirty years no other region of ancient Palestine has been so intensively surveyed and excavated as has Galilee, with the result that a new and independent script is emerging even when there are differences of opinion among scholars working in the field regarding certain aspects of life 'from below' as this emerges from the material culture.

Different surveys of various sub-regions have contributed to a clearer picture of the demography of Galilee from the Persian to the Byzantine periods. While surface surveys can be problematic, in many instances the initial conclusions regarding sites have been confirmed by subsequent stratified digs. It is safe to say that on the basis of these investigations the picture painted by Josephus (*Life* 235) and presumed in Mark of a thickly populated region of nucleated villages has been confirmed. Thus, for example, in upper Galilee alone, the number of such settlements increased from 106 in the Hellenistic period (second to first centuries B.C.E.) to 170 for the Roman period. Since thirty-four Hellenistic sites did not survive into the Roman period, there was a net increase of 60 percent of new sites, ninety-eight in all.<sup>26</sup> A more recent survey of a section of eastern lower Galilee, (i.e., the valley region and the overhanging basaltic hills) shows a marked increase in settlements (from 15 to 40) from the Hellenistic (100 B.C.E) to the early Roman period (50 B.C.E.). This position remained constant until the mid-fourth century C.E., when a sharp drop in the number of settlements occurred, possibly due to the earthquake of 353 C.E.<sup>27</sup>

The clear indication coming from the material remains from these sites and surveys is that the initial increase in the number of settlements coincided with the Hasmonean expansion in the north from ca. 100 B.C.E., and that the inhabitants of the new settlements were Judeans who were engaged in re-possessing what they deemed to be the ancestral lands (cf. 1 Macc 15:33). When Josephus alludes to

26. Rafael Frankel *et al.*, *Settlement Dynamics and Regional Diversity in Ancient Upper Galilee* (IAA Reports 14; Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2001), 110–14.

27. Uzi Leibner, *Settlement and History in Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Galilee*, (TSAJ 127; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 311, 331–45.

*Ioudaioi* in Tarichea he undoubtedly has in mind the descendants of such people with strong Judean roots.<sup>28</sup> Indications from other sites that played an important role in the resistance to Rome in 66 C.E., such as Gamla in the Golan and Jotapata in lower Galilee, both of which have been excavated, show that there were people of similar persuasion in these centers also. Thus while Josephus for his own purposes chooses to speak constantly of “the Galileans” as his supporters, this cannot be taken to suggest that the village people of Galilee were any less loyal to their ancestral roots than were those labeled by him as “Judeans” in that one incident which he seeks to exploit rhetorically for his own self-promotion with a Roman audience. Indeed as more detailed and comparative analyses of the finds takes place, such as the pottery and coins seen as indicators of dietary and trading patterns of the inhabitants of these various sites, it emerges that life styles were becoming increasingly more “separatist” in the first century C.E. This contrasts with the more open attitude of the first generation of Judeans in dealing with the surrounding culture. Archaeologist, Andrea Berlin claims that this phenomenon should be attributed to the impact of direct Herodian presence in the region from the beginning of the first century C.E., a presence that was seen to be alien to traditional Jewish values.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, when in Mark’s account we encounter native Galilean Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem challenging Jesus’ stress on a moral rather than a strictly legal approach to Jewish customs (Mark 2:16, 18, 24; 3:1–6; 7:1–2; 8:11–13), these scenarios are both realistic and plausible. The increasing fragmentation of Judean society in the Roman period lead to the emergence of such renewal movements as the Pharisees and the Essenes, who sought to extend the rules pertaining to the priests in the temple to the ordinary villagers throughout the land. According to Josephus, the Pharisees were most popular with the townspeople (*Ant.* 18.12–15), and this would have applied in Galilee as elsewhere. On the other hand the absence of definite evidence for synagogue *buildings* from pre-70 C.E. Galilee, despite Mark’s statement that Jesus preached and performed exorcisms “in their synagogues” in all of Galilee (Mark 1:39), raises an interesting issue from

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28. For a detailed discussion of the material evidence as ethnic identity markers, cf. Mordechai Aviam, “Distribution Maps of Archaeological Data from the Galilee: An Attempt to establish Zones indicative of Ethnicity and Religious Affiliation,” in *Religion, Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Galilee* (ed. Jürgen Zangenberg, Harold W. Attridge and Dale B. Martin; WUNT 210; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 115–32.

29. Andrea Berlin, “Romanization and Anti-Romanization in Pre-Revolt Galilee,” in *The First Jewish Revolt: Archaeology, History and Ideology* (ed. Andrea M. Berlin and J. Andrew Overman; London: Routledge, 2002), 57–73; “Jewish Life before the Revolt: The Archaeological Evidence,” *JSJ* 36 (2005): 416–70; *Gamla I: The Pottery of the Second Temple Period* (IAA Reports 29; Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2006).

an archaeological perspective regarding the extent of Galilean knowledge of the fundamentals of their religious inheritance.<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that the Markan statement is a typical generalization to suggest Jesus' covering of the whole region, and in fact the only named synagogue, that of Capernaum (Mark 1:21), does have some evidence of an earlier, possibly first century, basalt building underneath the present white limestone one that is visible at the site today, which is from a later period.<sup>31</sup>

It has emerged from both our literary witnesses that the region of the lake seemed to play an important role in the life of Galileans within their respective narratives. Josephus eventually made his headquarters at Tarichea (*Life* 160) and we have already mentioned his fulsome account of the district around the lake and the quality of its water, "sweet to the taste and very drinkable." Insofar as Jesus can be said to have had a center of operations, Capernaum seems to have played such a role, and his first permanent followers came from nearby Bethsaida, technically belonging to Herod Philip's territory, but on the borders of Galilee. The reasons for this apparent centering of Galilean life around the lake as far as the two narratives are concerned differ somewhat. In the case of Jesus' movements and strategy according to Mark, it provides the opportunity for people to congregate in the open air and the possibility to cross over to the other side (Mark 1:16; 2:13; 4:1–2, 36; 5:1–2; 6:45, 53; 7:31; 8:10). A modern survey of the number of harbors and other installations around the lake claims that in all there were more than 20 such places where boats would be moored and people would congregate to collect the produce or begin the salting process.<sup>32</sup>

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30. Sean Freyne, "Jesus and the Galilean Am ha-Aretz: A Reconsideration of an Old Problem," in *Follow the Wise: Studies in Jewish History and Culture in Honor of Lee I. Levine* (ed. Zev Weiss et al.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 37–51, esp. 47–50.

31. Virgilio Corbo, *Cafarnao I: Gli Edifici della Citta* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1975), 113–70, esp. 161–63. For an English summary of the results of the excavations to the south east of the white synagogue, cf. Stanislaw Loffreda, *Recovering Capernaum* (2nd ed, Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1993), 43–49. It should also be noted that a 2009 report on the IAA website of new excavations at Magdala by Dina Avshalom-Gorni, announced the discovery of a structure with benched seats and a large engraved stone at the centre of the floor showing various reliefs, including a menorah. The building is confidently understood to be a synagogue from the Second Temple period. This exciting discovery is different from the rectangular structure at the site that in the past was identified as a synagogue, but which was more probably the town latrine. Cf. Jürgen Zangenberg, *Magdala am See Gennesaret. Überlegungen zur sogenannten minisynagoga und einige andere Beobachtungen zum kulturellen Profil des Ortes in neutestamentlicher Zeit*. (Kleine Arbeiten zum Alten und Neuen Testament 2; Waltrop: Hartmut Spenner, 2001).

32. Mendel Nun, *Sea of Galilee: Newly Discovered Harbours from New Testament Days* (Kibbutz Ein Gev: Kinnereth Sailing Club, 1989); *The Sea of Galilee and its Fishermen in the New Testament* (Kibbutz Ein Gev: Kinnereth Sailing Club, 1989).

For Josephus, having his headquarters close to Tiberias, was the primary motive, especially since both Tarichea and Tiberias “with their territories” technically belonged to Agrippa II, on the basis of a bequest from Nero, as early as 54 C.E. (*J.W.* 2.252–53; *Ant.* 20.159). By setting up his quarters in Tarichea and seeking to control Tiberias, he was, therefore, making a political statement that refused to accept existing Roman divisions of the land. Thus, while both main characters are aware of the lake as a natural resource, it functions differently for each. For Jesus it provides access to an alternative religious landscape, thus opening the way for contact with non-Jews also. Josephus on the other hand is caught in internal Judean politics that had to do with the exercise of power between Herodians and the remnant of the older Hasmonean nationalism, represented by the Judeans of Tarichea. Because of the boat traffic he was able to usher the noblemen to safety, but also to quell a riot against himself by staging a mock attack on Tiberias.

As far as Mark’s narrative is concerned, fishermen and boats feature prominently. The opening scene of the call of the two pairs of brothers gives us a rare snapshot of fishermen engaged in the various activities associated with their work, casting and mending nets for example (Mark 1:16–20). The fact that they come from Bethsaida is significant, since as mentioned previously, the name alludes to its association with fishing. The identification of the site is now generally regarded as that of et Tell, east of the Jordan, some two kilometers northeast of the present lakeshore, but which in all probability was on the lakefront in antiquity.<sup>33</sup> It also transpires that Mark regards this as a family business in which there are hired servants, suggesting a relatively affluent ethos. Similarly, Josephus in his account of the mock sea attack on Tiberias, requests the “heads of households” in Tarichea to launch their boats and set sail for Tiberias, thereby alarming the rebellious Tiberians that their city was about to be attacked from the sea (*Life* 163–64).<sup>34</sup> While the whole episode is intended to demonstrate Josephus’s cleverness in quelling riots without any loss of life, the association of boats with Tarichea is entirely natural, since the name of this place also is associated with fish (Semitic: *Migdal Nunya*, “fish tower”) and the Greek name *Tarachia* refers to the salting of fish, as noted

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33. John F. Schroder *et al.*, “Catastrophic Geomorphic Processes and Bethsaida Archaeology,” in *Bethsaida: A City on the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee* (ed. Rami Arav and Richard Freund; vols. I–IV; Kirkville, Miss.: Truman State University Press, 1995–2008), II.115–74. Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, “Bethsaida und et-Tell in frühromischer Zeit. Historische, archäologische und philologische Probleme einer als Wirkungsstätte Jesu angenommenen Ortslage,” Teil I, *ZNW* 101 (2010): 1–31; Teil II, *ZNW* 101 (2010): 174–203.

34. In the parallel account in *Jewish War* (2.635) Josephus says that the boats (230 in all) were already at sea.

by the first century C.E. writer Strabo (*Geogr.* 16.2.45). Intensive excavation of Bethsaida has produced some evidence of the village's association with fishing—lead weights, hooks, needles, basalt and limestone weights and anchors—some one hundred items in total. These have been found throughout the site and are not confined to one particular location, thus suggesting that the population as a whole was actively involved with the industry.<sup>35</sup>

Thus far the material evidence for Tarichea's engagement with the fish industry is not as significant, mainly because excavation at the site has until lately concentrated on the alleged synagogue and the streets surrounding it. Nevertheless the discovery of a mosaic at the entrance vestibule to a first century villa, depicting a fishing galley and other objects provides an interesting insight into the life of an upper-class Tarichean in this relatively prosperous town.<sup>36</sup> The prominence of the galley in the mosaic suggests that the owner of the villa has acquired his wealth from the fish industry. As well as the depiction of the galley the mosaic in question has a number of other objects that have been interpreted to reflect the aspiration of the villa's owner. They include objects associated with the bathhouse and the sports arena (i.e., recreational pursuits), knapsacks for carrying food and liquids, a beautifully crafted *kantharos* or large drinking cup, and most significant of all, the fishing boat with mast and sail as well as posts for four oarsmen and a helmsman. Clearly this mosaic represents an affluent life-style, more Greco-Roman than Jewish, and is indicative of the possibility for generating wealth that the fish industry in this place provided. Separate from the main mosaic but close by is a Greek inscription (*KAI SU*), which has been interpreted as part of an apotropaic formula to avert the "evil eye" from the household and protect its prosperous life-style.<sup>37</sup>

The discovery in 1986, of a first century C.E. boat close to Tarichea and its subsequent restoration open a further window on this world of fishing in the region. The "Galilean Boat" has been painstakingly restored and beautifully presented at a small museum attached to Nof Ginosar, a few kilometers north of the

35. Sandra Fortner, "The Fishing Implements and Maritime Activities of Bethsaida-Julias (et Tell)," in Arav and Freund, *Bethsaida*, II.269–82.

36. Virgilio Corbo, "Piazza e Villa urbana a Magdala," *Liber Annuus* 28 (1978): 232–40; Zangenberg, *Magdala am See Gennesaret*, 50–56; J. Richard Steffy and Shelley Wachsmann, "The Migdal Boat Mosaic," in *The Excavation of an Ancient Boat in the Sea of Galilee (Lake Kinneret)*, *Atiqot* (ed. Shelley Wachsmann; English Series 19; Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1990), 115–18.

37. Ronny Reich, "A Note on the Roman Mosaic at Magdala on the Sea of Galilee," *Liber Annuus* 41 (1991): 455–58.



site of Magdala.<sup>38</sup> Study of the construction of the boat and the various types of wood that have been used has assisted greatly in our understanding of the ancillary trades that were required in order to service the fishing industry, since the manner in which the timbers were prepared and mortised illustrate the ways in which first-century boatwrights worked. This particular sample would appear to have had a long life and had undergone repairs many times with different timbers being used. Of the forty-two timbers that have been examined, Lebanese cedar and oak constitute the majority, but there are samples of Aleppo pine, hawthorn, willow and red-bud—all locally grown except for the cedar.<sup>39</sup> According to Wachsmann this variety of timber types, some of which were unsuitable for seafaring, indicates either a shortage of wood or the fact that the boat's owner could not afford any better, even though the hull was originally crafted by someone familiar with Mediterranean seafaring. It is a large boat, 8.2 meters long and 2.3 meters wide at its maximum. At the stern, where it is best preserved the depth is 1.2 meters high. The boat would have required four oarsmen and a helmsman captain, similar to the boat depicted in the Magdala mosaic and mentioned also by Josephus in relation to the launching of the boats from Tarichea for the mock attack (*Life* 163; cf. Mark 1:20; John 21:2–3). Presumably this boat also had a mast and sail, but the mast step had been removed already in antiquity.

It has been suggested that the location of this boat may have been a repair yard as some timbers from other boats were also found in the mud that had covered the boat for centuries. Equally fascinating are some of the other items discovered in the immediate vicinity: household pottery including a lamp, an arrowhead, coins and anchors. The pottery finds are particularly interesting in that they match similar finds at Capernaum, and Magdala, representing some well established samples of Kefar Hanania ware, a ceramic production center in the center of Galilee. Israeli archaeologist David Adan Bayewitz has made a detailed study of this ware in terms of both form and distribution patterns.<sup>40</sup> The samples from the boat site represent Kefar Hanania types 3A and 4A of Adan Bayewitz's analysis, and they also match similar finds in stratified digs from nearby Capernaum and Magdala. Thus they can be confidently dated to a period between the mid-first century B.C.E. to the late-first century C.E., that is, the early Roman period. The fact that none of the later pottery types from Kefar Hanania was found at the site suggests that in the wake of the collapse of the Galilean cam-

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38. Shelley Wachsmann, "Galilee Boat," in Meyers, ed., *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, 2.377–79.

39. Ella Welker, "The Wood," in Wachsmann, *Excavation of an Ancient Boat*, 65–75.

40. David Adan-Bayewitz, *Common Pottery in Roman Galilee: A Study of Local Trade* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1993), esp. 88–150 for detailed description of the types.



paign, the yard may have closed, probably because of Vespasian's destruction of the Tarichean fleet, as reported by Josephus (*J.W.* 2.522–31).<sup>41</sup>

Even though Mark's Gospel seems to be aware of the Jewish War and its immediate aftermath in Jerusalem (Mark 13),<sup>42</sup> there is little overt indication in his narrative of the turmoil of Galilean society before the revolt and the disruption that Vespasian's campaign must have caused for the inhabitants of the lake region in particular. According to the Gospel account people could move freely back and forth across the lake and crowds could gather on its shores. How are we to explain this silence, if our working hypothesis is correct, namely, that Mark's is a Galilean Gospel written at the time of the destruction of the temple? It was noted earlier that Mark had virtually ignored the Roman/Herodian presence in Galilee. Is his message now one of affirming continuity with the past in the midst of a very uncertain present and future, by retelling the story of Jesus in such a way as to encourage his followers to continue his way of peace and reconciliation, rather than that of violence and bloodshed? The Jesus followers who at the close of the Gospel are exhorted to return to Galilee (Mark 16:7) are invited back to a region where life can go on, it is being suggested, and where traditional Jew/Gentile hatred can be overcome. And so the Markan community would appear to have taken the initiative of "crossing over," perhaps even before the revolt already, an initiative that would inevitably alienate itself further from its Jewish moorings. Such a bold move required some encouraging precedents, and archaeology can begin to fill in some of the lacunae by documenting the ways in which the borderland of the lake had been safely crossed back and forth for centuries as part of the everyday coping with life in the region.

Ceramic ware and coins are normally seen as reliable indicators of trading patterns, and it is this evidence that can perhaps contribute to a better understanding of how bridges were built and life could continue despite the heavy hand of Rome. Adan Bayewitz's study of the distribution patterns of the Kefar Hanania ware provides interesting evidence that while there was competing local ware in the Golan, none of this is found in Galilee, but the Kefar Hanania ware was marketed at many Jewish and some non-Jewish sites in upper Galilee (e.g., Tel Anafa, a Hellenistic/Roman site, and Meiron, a Jewish site) and in the Golan (Susita-Hippos, a pagan site, and Gamla, a stoutly Jewish one) among others.<sup>43</sup> What this suggests is that there was some movement of trade from Jewish Galilee to the north and east. In contrast, however, on the basis of the ceramic remains,

41. David Adan-Bayewitz, "The Pottery," in Wachsmann, *Excavation of an Ancient Boat*, 89–96.

42. Joel Markus, "The Jewish War and the *Sitz im Leben* of Mark," *JBL* 111 (1992): 441–62.

43. Adan-Bayewitz, "Common Pottery," 201–23.

this was not reciprocated from the opposite direction, not even from Jewish sites like Gamla with its ware similar to that of Kefar Hanania, which one might have expected to have competed well in the markets of Capernaum and Magdala.<sup>44</sup> It should of course be underlined that in speaking of ceramic evidence at a site, this may also include the contents of the larger jars, particularly wine and oil, but also salted fish, all of which Galilee produced in abundance and exported.

The presence of coins of non-Jewish provenance at various Galilean sites would represent a further indication of the prevailing trading patterns, even when due account has to be taken of the fact that coins are portable items and they often remained in circulation for decades after their first minting. A further complication is the fact that coins from a mint such as that of Tyre may be much more plentiful than those from other smaller mints in the region, and one can overestimate the significance of the number of coins from any one mint.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless the frequency of Tyrian coins at upper and lower Galilean sites is surely indicative of trading contacts that had a long history, as the prophet Ezekiel testifies (Ezek 27).<sup>46</sup> The fact that the Tyrian half-sheqel retained its value for over 100 years and was designated “the coin of the sanctuary” in rabbinic sources, further suggests that such trade could be tolerated in pious circles, when other considerations were operative.<sup>47</sup>

It should be recalled that in Mark's listing the different places from where Jesus followers come, Tyre and Sidon are mentioned together with people from various regions of the Jewish territory. Yet, surprisingly there is no mention of the Decapolis in this list, even though the region figures prominently in the subsequent narrative as a place of Jesus' activity (Mark 3:7–9).<sup>48</sup> Such a scenario assumes freer associations between the Phoenician territory and Galilee, implying that movement was in both directions, something Josephus corroborates in his description of the activities of John of Gischala (*Life* 72–76). On the northern and eastern borders, it was Jesus and his followers who travelled to the villages of Caesarea Philippi or east across the lake to the Decapolis territory (Mark 5:1–2;

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44. Ibid. 247–48.

45. Dan Barag, “Tyrian Currency in Galilee,” *Israel Numismatic Journal* 6/7 (1982/1983): 7–13, strikes a cautionary note in terms of overemphasizing the influence. Cf. however, Richard Hanson, *Tyrian Influence in Upper Galilee* (Cambridge, Mass.: ASOR, 1980).

46. Uriel Rappaport, “Phoenicia and Galilee: Economy, Territory and Political Relations,” *Studia Phoenicia* IX (1992): 262–68.

47. A. Ben-David, *Jerusalem und Tyros. Ein Beitrag zur Palästinensischen Münz- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte (126 a.C.–57 p.C.)* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969).

48. Mention of Perea in this list does not cover the Decapolis, since it belonged rather to the recognized Jewish territory east of the Jordan since the early Hellenistic period. The Decapolis region lay to the north and the east.

8:26), where the cured demoniac became one of the earliest missionaries for the Jesus movement (Mark 5:19).

The pattern of non-Jewish citizens from the Decapolis avoiding Galilee seems to be reflected also in the coin profiles of the sites along the lake front that have been excavated. Thus, for example, at Bethsaida/Julias which according to Josephus had a population mix of Jews and Syrians (*J.W.* 3.57) and where one might have expected to find the coins of neighboring cities of the Decapolis, in fact none have been found according to the published record.<sup>49</sup> This may be partially explained by the fact that Philip, the third of Herod the Great's sons, who inherited Gaulanitis after his father's death in 4 B.C.E., struck his own bronze coins, five exemplars of which have been found at et-Tell, all bearing Philip's own image, thereby ignoring Jewish law and projecting a *persona* that suited the culturally mixed ethos of his territory.<sup>50</sup> At Capernaum, the situation is similar. Only one city coin, from Tyre incidentally and dated to 36 or 37 C.E., is listed in the catalogue produced by the excavators, and none from any of the Decapolis cities.<sup>51</sup>

The situation at Magdala is only slightly more promising, even though again one might expect more signs of cross-regional activity to be reflected in the coin samples. However, little attention has been given to the publication of the finds from the earlier excavation, and we are dependent on a chance find in 1973 of a hoard of coins nearby, in addition to the coin finds at the site of the Galilean boat. The hoard find consists of 188 coins in all, dating from the time of Titus (74 C.E.) to the early-third century C.E. (reign of Elagabalus).<sup>52</sup> In all, 40 percent of the coins in the hoard spanning the century and a half were minted at Tyre, suggesting that the Phoenician city continued to dominate the numismatic profile of the whole region. No doubt the fact that the Tyrian half sheqel retained its consistency in terms of silver content over the period explains its popularity, even being designated the coin of the sanctuary in Jerusalem, despite bearing a pagan image of the god of the city Melqart/Herakles. In this instance, however, the Tyrian city coins are all from the second century C.E. The one coin in the hoard from the first century comes from Gadara and celebrates Titus, who had recently brought an end to the Jewish revolt. The coins recovered at the site of the Galilean boat are equally disappointing for our purposes, since of the fifty-seven coins recovered, only six are city coins, of the earlier period: two from Akko/Ptolemais (ca. 120

49. Ariel Kindler, "The Coin Finds at the Excavation of Bethsaida," in Arav and Freund, *Bethsaida*, 2.250–68.

50. Kuhn, "Bethsaida und et-Tell," 1.15–19.

51. Augusto Spijkerman, *Carfarnao, III. Le Moneta della Citta*, (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1975).

52. Yacov Meshorer, "A Hoard of Coins from Migdal," *Atiqot* XI (1976): 54–71.

B.C.E.); three from Tyre (first century B.C.E., first century C.E. and second century C.E.); Sidon (first century C.E.).<sup>53</sup> It must be remembered that these coins were not found in a stratified dig and therefore their use or time of deposit in the Magdala region is uncertain.

From this tentative effort to decipher the patterns of interaction between the east and west sides of the lake in the first century, it would seem that Mark's narrative of Jesus and his followers crossing over to the other side more than once is not itself improbable. However, the coin profile together with the addition of "Tyre and Sidon" to the list of Jewish regions from where people approached Jesus at Mark 3:8, would appear to suggest that it was in the direction of the coast rather than across the Jordan that the Jesus followers may have decided to move as the clouds of war threatened in 66 C.E., at least in Mark's view. The story of the Syro-Phoenician woman, for all its initial ethno-centrism on Jesus' part, does demonstrate that, with good will on both sides, cultural and religious boundaries can be surmounted. Josephus's narrative of the pre-revolt recriminations between Jews in the interior and the inhabitants of the various Greek cities is illuminating in respect of Jew/Gentile relations. Sidon is one of the few places where the Jewish population was spared (*J.W.* 2.477–80). Was this because of older commercial contacts between the Phoenicians and the Jewish population of Galilee? The Decapolis cities may have been less inviting at that moment in history (*J.W.* 2.457–60), even though the stories of Jesus' visiting the region were clearly important for the Evangelist at the time of writing.

At all events, telling the story of Jesus in the manner that he does, Mark was suggesting that a movement outwards to non-Jews as well as to Jews was not only in continuity with the memory of Jesus but was also the best way to overcome the social and cultural barriers that had existed in the north, at least since the Hasmoean expansion in the second century B.C.E. With the temple in ruins and the Romans in full control, now was not the time to remain isolated as dissident Jews. In this regard the Markan community's attitude was in stark contrast to that displayed by the Judeans of Tarichea towards the gentile noblemen as reported by Josephus (*Life* 112–13; 149–54).

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53. Haim Gitler, "The Coins," in Wachsmann, *Excavation of an Ancient Boat*, 101–6.

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## ROMANS 1:23 AND GRECO-ROMAN RELIGION

Everett Ferguson

### INTRODUCTORY SURVEY OF SCHOLARSHIP

The *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* had as its premise that the origins of Christianity can be understood only in terms of its antecedent history.<sup>1</sup> It saw the development of Christianity at its beginning as influenced primarily by Hellenistic Judaism, which in turn drew from Jewish, Persian, and Greco-Roman religious thought. Founders included the biblical scholars Hermann Gunkel and Wilhelm Bousset.<sup>2</sup> Important in directing attention to the mystery religions and Gnosticism for the understanding of Christian faith and practice was the classical philologist Richard Reitzenstein.<sup>3</sup> As popularized in an extreme form this approach seemed to minimize the distinctiveness of the New Testament and early Christianity. Christianity could be understood as derived from the religious and cultural currents at the time.<sup>4</sup>

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1. For the history of religions school see Gerd Lüdemann, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule in Göttingen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987).

2. Hermann Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religio-historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12* (trans. K. William Whitney, Jr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006; trans. of *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895]); Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* (trans. John E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon, 1970); trans. of *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913; 3rd ed. 1926]).

3. Richard Reitzenstein, *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1904); *Hellenistic Mystery-Religions: Their Basic Ideas and Significance* (trans. John E. Steely; PTMS; Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1978; trans. of *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen* [3rd ed.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1927]).

4. Francis Legge, *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity: Being Studies in Religious History from 330 B.C. to 330 A.D.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915; repr. New York: Peter Smith, 1950).

Important modifications and refutations of exaggerated claims of dependence followed. Arthur Darby Nock from his unrivalled knowledge of Greco-Roman religion pointed out the distinctive elements in Christianity.<sup>5</sup> In particular he identified the differences from the mystery religions.<sup>6</sup> Bruce Metzger showed the methodological errors made by advocates of Christianity's dependence on the mystery religions.<sup>7</sup>

Appreciation for the distinctive elements in early Christianity led to a period in which these distinctives were emphasized. Where the non-Christian elements were highlighted, the context of Second Temple Judaism was featured over the Greco-Roman context. An example of the latter perspective is viewing Christianity as one of the varied Judaisms in late antiquity.<sup>8</sup>

Nonetheless, the New Testament writers were residents of the Greco-Roman world, and scholarship recently has circled back to drawing comparisons of early Christianity with elements of its wider environment. Abraham J. Malherbe, for instance, in several studies has demonstrated the contacts of Paul with popular philosophy.<sup>9</sup> The tensions between Christian thought and the political ideology of the Roman Empire is the focus of several recent studies.<sup>10</sup> New Testament authors certainly had an awareness of the religion and culture of their time. These studies present the contacts in a more nuanced way than did some of the earlier enthusi-

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5. Arthur Darby Nock, "Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background," in *Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation* (ed. Alfred E. J. Rawlinson; London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1928), 51–156; repr. in *Arthur Darby Nock: Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (ed. Zeph Stewart; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 1.49–133; idem, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933).

6. Arthur Darby Nock, "Hellenistic Mysteries and Christian Sacraments," *Mnemosyne* 5 (1952): 177–213; repr. in Stewart, *Arthur Darby Nock*, 2.791–820.

7. Bruce Metzger, "Considerations of Methodology in the Study of the Mystery Religions and Early Christianity," *HTR* 48 (1955): 1–20; repr. in idem, *Historical and Literary Studies* (NTTS; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 1–24.

8. For the term, Jacob Neusner, *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) and Alan Segal, *The Other Judaisms of Late Antiquity* (BJS 127; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), and for the commonalities Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds, *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007); cf. the imagery by Leo Duprée Sandgren, *Vines Intertwined: A History of Jews and Christians from the Babylonian Exile to the Advent of Islam* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2010).

9. Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).

10. As those by Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001); *The Roman Empire and the New Testament: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006); *John and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2008).



asts for Christianity as simply another Greco-Roman religion. This is notably true of the work of Harold Attridge, who draws on an exceedingly wide knowledge of comparative materials in a balanced way.<sup>11</sup>

I want to take as a small item of illustration a possible contact with Greco-Roman religion in one verse from Paul.

### ROMANS 1:23

They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles. (Rom 1:23)

#### WHAT DO THE COMMENTARIES SAY?

Many commentaries pass over the four types of images without specific comment or make only general reference to the phenomenon of idolatry. Otto Kuss is representative of many in making no comment on the four classes.<sup>12</sup> Similarly William Sanday and Arthur Headlam in the old International Critical Commentary refer to Ps 106:20 and Jer 2:11 for the wording and cite only two parallel passages in Philo's polemic against idolatry.<sup>13</sup> The revision by C. E. B. Cranfield expands the discussion of the word "glory" and on animal images adds reference to Deut 4:15–18; Wis 11:15; 12:24; 13:10, 14; *Let. Aris.* 138 (see below).<sup>14</sup> Thomas Schreiner notes that Paul's list moves from the highest (worship of God) to the lowest (reptiles).<sup>15</sup>

Some commentators separate the reference to images of human beings and lump the animals together. Thus Peter Stuhlmacher says, "The ancient statues of idols and heroes, together with the religious symbols made of animals, offered abundant material from which one could gain a perspective on the Pauline statements."<sup>16</sup> Everett Harrison and Donald Hagner call attention to the deifica-

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11. On display in Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989) and his numerous articles and edited works.

12. Otto Kuss, *Der Römerbrief* (2nd ed.; RNT; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1963).

13. William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1898), 45.

14. C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 119–20.

15. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 87.

16. Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (trans. Scott J. Hafemann;

tion of the human form in Dan 3:1–7 and the cult of Caesar in New Testament times. The animals are drawn from Ps 106:20; in dealing with idolatry as the characteristic sin of paganism Paul alludes to Israel's idolatry at Horeb.<sup>17</sup> Jack Cottrell explains that the human form was common in pagan religion in representations of the gods of Olympus and of rulers. For the animals his examples are mostly from Egypt: birds, Horus (falcon) and Thoth (ibis); quadrupeds, bull (widely worshiped) and Egyptian deities like Anubis (jackal), Bastet (cat), Khnum (ram); and reptiles, crocodile (Sobek in Egypt) and serpents (widely worshiped, as in cult of Asclepius).<sup>18</sup>

Several commentators approach the list wholly within biblical usage. Most often cited for the verbal parallels is one event in the recitation of Israel's rebelliousness (narrated in Exod 32) from Ps 106 (LXX 105):19–20—"They made a calf at Horeb and worshiped a cast image. They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass."<sup>19</sup> Similar is Jer 2:11—"Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for something that does not profit."<sup>20</sup> John Toews is an example of those who cite Ps 106:19–20 and Jer 2:11.<sup>21</sup> Douglas Moo does too and in a footnote rejects the interpretation appealing to Gen 1 and 3, but he says that Paul is not describing the fall of Israel or the fall of humankind in Adam but the proclivity of all people to corrupt the knowledge of God.<sup>22</sup> Brendan Byrne in addition to citing these two texts makes reference to the "image" in Gen 1:26–28 and Deut 4:15–18.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed the closest parallel in the Old Testament to the list of images comes from the prohibitions in Deut 4:15–17:

Since you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire, take care and watch yourselves closely, so that you do not act corruptly by making an idol for yourselves, in the form of any figure—the likeness of male

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Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 36.

17. Everett F. Harrison and Donald A. Hagner, "Romans," in *Romans to Galatians* (vol. 11 of *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 48–49.

18. Jack Cottrell, *Romans* (College Press NIV Commentary; Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 2005), 85.

19. The Hebrew and most Greek manuscripts read "exchanged their glory." Alexandrinus reads "his [God's] glory."

20. The Greek has "My people changed his glory."

21. John E. Toews, *Romans* (Believers Church Commentary; Scottdale: Herald Press, 2004), 71.

22. Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 108–10.

23. Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (SP 6; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007), 67–68, 75.

or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth.

Unlike the different order in this passage, the three categories of animals in Rom 1:23 follows the order of their creation in Gen 1:20–25—birds, four-footed creatures, and things that creep on the ground, followed by the creation of male and female in verses 26–30.<sup>24</sup> Ulrich Wilckens says that the listing is oriented to Gen 1 with the reference to Exod 32 in Ps 106:20.<sup>25</sup> The sequence, however, is changed in Gen 1:30 to beasts, birds, and creeping things. It is notable, however, that Paul unlike Gen 1 and Deut 4 omits fish.

Some, nonetheless, make Gen 1 the key to understanding Rom 1:23. Niels Hydahl a half-century ago saw in it a reminiscence of Gen 1:20–27, noting that only missing in Paul's list is the fish of the sea.<sup>26</sup> Influential on more recent commentators is Morna Hooker, whose study of "likeness of the image" in Rom 1:23 saw the story of Adam in Genesis as its background. She found a triple contrast in the passage: God exchanged for idols, fellowship with God exchanged for an experience that is shadowy and remote; and human reflection of the glory of God exchanged for an image of corruption.<sup>27</sup> Among those who cite her article, F. F. Bruce quotes approvingly her statement that the words "glory," "image" and "resembling" suggest that "Paul's account of man's wickedness has been deliberately stated in terms of the Biblical narrative of Adam's fall."<sup>28</sup>

Jouette Bassler notes the Old Testament allusions in Rom 1:23, observing that allusion to the calf incident in Exod 32 and idolatry are obvious and that Paul does not introduce the Adam motif here. Although Paul employs an argument traditionally directed against Gentiles, the Old Testament allusions signal that it was appropriate to Jews also.<sup>29</sup> Frank Matera follows the line of including the Jews in Paul's polemic in Rom 1: "Paul implicitly draws a comparison between Israel's idolatry at Sinai and the idolatry of the Gentiles."<sup>30</sup> Stanley Stow-

24. Roy A. Harrisville, *Romans* (ACNT; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 37, notes that every word but mortal occurs in Gen 1:20–26 in the same order, but he also compares Deut 4:16–18.

25. Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (3d ed.; EKKNT; Zurich: Benziger, 1997), 1.108.

26. Niels Hydahl, "A Reminiscence of the Old Testament in Romans 1:23," *NTS* 2 (1955–1956): 285–88.

27. Morna D. Hooker, "Adam in Romans 1," *NTS* 6 (1959–1960): 297–306.

28. F. F. Bruce, *Romans* (2nd ed.; TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1985), 80, quoting Hooker, "Adam in Romans 1," 301.

29. Jouette Bassler, *Divine Impartiality: Paul and a Theological Axiom* (SBLDS 59; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982), 122, 195–97.

30. Frank J. Matera, *Romans* (Paideia; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 50.

ers contradicts the interpretation of Rom 1 as based on Genesis and declares that the argument to include the Jews in Paul's indictment in that chapter depends on the alleged allusion to Ps 106:19–20 with an inattention to audience, argument, and context.<sup>31</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer too rejects Hooker's view that there is an allusion to the Adam story in Genesis: "how else could Paul express such things?"<sup>32</sup> For the images he refers to gods in human form in the ancient Near East and for animals he refers to El at Ugarit as a bull and the Egyptian gods Anubis as a jackal, Horus as a hawk, and Atum as a serpent.

Otto Michel also saw an application in Paul's words to the Jews. Pagans do what Israel was expressly forbidden to do, but the guilt of pagans is a guilt that Israel also had been convicted of in its history (citing the passages in Psalms, Jeremiah, and Deuteronomy). The three parts of the animal world correspond to Gen 2:20; 7:8; Acts 10:12; 11:6. But Michel is a bridge to the interpretation in terms of Egyptian religion for he notes that one can think of the ibis, crocodile, and snake, which were honored in Egypt.<sup>33</sup>

James Dunn suggests that Paul had in mind the satire of Isa 44:9–20, and refers to the influence of the Wisdom of Solomon and the comparable polemic against idolatry in Hellenistic Jewish writers. The contrast of "corruptible/incorruptible" is parallel to Wis 2:23 and Philo, *Alleg. Interp.* 3.11.36.<sup>34</sup>

Many join Dunn in making reference to the polemic against pagan idolatry found in Jewish writers.<sup>35</sup> The Letter of Jeremiah expands on the satire of Isa 44:9–20; 46:1–13; Ps 115:3–8 in warning against gods fashioned from wood, silver, and gold. Paul was acquainted with the Wisdom of Solomon and may have had in mind such passages as 11:15 ("irrational serpents and worthless animals"); 12:24; 14:8; 15:18–19; and particularly 13:10–19 ("forms it [wood from a tree] in the likeness of a human being, or makes it like some worthless animal").

1 *Enoch* includes among sinners "those who worship stones, and those who carve images of gold and of silver and of wood and of clay, and those who worship evil spirits and demons, and all kinds of idols" and "become wicked on account of the folly of their hearts" (99:6–8). The *Testament of Naphtali* 3:3 offers a parallel

31. Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 91–93.

32. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 283–84.

33. Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (KEK; 13th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 66.

34. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC 38A; Dallas: Word, 1988), 61–62.

35. Joseph Schulam with Hilary Le Cornu, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Romans* (Baltimore, Md.: Lederer Foundation, 1998), 54–57, gives numerous references from biblical and Jewish texts for the words in Rom 1:23 but for the images quotes only from Wis 13.

to Rom 1:23—"The gentiles, because they wandered astray and forsook the Lord, have changed the order, and have devoted themselves to stones and sticks."

Those commentators who look outside the biblical text for Paul's reference usually cite the representation of gods in animal forms by the Egyptians. Paul Billerbeck made the fullest collection of references pointing to Egyptian religion as the object of Paul's statement in Rom 1:23.<sup>36</sup> Making the contrast between the Creator God and idols, *Sib. Or.* 3:6–45, probably with Egyptian religion especially in mind, says that God "fixed the shape of the form of human beings and made wild beasts and serpents and birds," but those who do not revere him "worship snakes and sacrifice to cats, speechless idols, and stone statues of people" (3:27–31). The author expressly identifies Egyptian practice in another passage, referring to a time when "mortal men pay attention to the immortal eternal God, ruler of all, and no longer honor mortal things, neither dogs nor vultures, which Egypt taught men to revere with vain mouths and foolish lips" (5:278–80). The *Letter of Aristeas* specifically identifies "Egyptians and those like them" among the "very foolish people, who have put their confidence in beasts and most of the serpents and monsters, worship them, and sacrifice to them both while alive and dead" (138). Artapanus, *Concerning the Jews*, noted that the gods of the Egyptians "were cats, dogs, and ibises."<sup>37</sup>

Philo—after listing those who revere the four elements, the heavenly bodies, the demigods, images made of wood and stone—takes up the gods of the Egyptians, "hardly decent even to mention them":

The Egyptians have promoted to divine honors irrational animals, not only the tame but also the most savage beasts . . . from the creatures of the land the lion, from those of the water their indigenous crocodile, from the creatures of the air the hawk and the Egyptian ibis. (*Contempl.* 1.8–9)<sup>38</sup>

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36. Herman L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (3rd ed.; Munich: Beck, 1961), 3.60–62. Without pressing the Egyptian connection Jacobus Wettstein, *Novum Testamentum Graecum* (Amsterdam: Dommeriana, 1752; repr. Graz: Akademische Druck, 1962), 2.23–24, cites Latin, Greek, and Jewish authors; the text is now more readily accessible in Georg Strecker and Udo Schnelle, eds., *Neuer Wettstein: Texte zum Neuen Testament aus Griechentum und Hellenismus* (2 vols; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996, 2001), 2.26–30.

37. Quoted by Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.27 (432b).

38. Cf. Philo, *Ebr.* 28.107–110 without specific reference to the Egyptians: "It did not content them to fashion images of sun or moon . . . but they even allowed irrational plants and animals to share the honor which belongs to things imperishable"; and *Mos.* 2.32.171 for the contrast of the falsely so-called gods made from corruptible and created matter with the incorruptible and uncreated God.

In a parallel passage Philo reproaches the Egyptians for a practice “peculiar to themselves”:

They have advanced to divine honors irrational animals—bulls, rams, goats—and invented for each some fabulous myth.... The Egyptians have gone to a further excess and chosen the fiercest and most savage of wild animals—lions, crocodiles, and among reptiles the venomous asp—dignifying them with temples, sacred precincts, sacrifices, festivals, and processions.... Many other animals also they have deified—dogs, cats, wolves, and the birds ibises and hawks, and also fishes. (*Decal.* 16.76–79)<sup>39</sup>

Josephus explained the animosity of Egyptians toward the Hebrews as due to the profound contrast between their two religions, a difference as great as between the nature of God and that of irrational animals: “For it is their national custom to regard animals as gods” (*C. Ap.* 1.25.224–25). He named some of these as “bull, goat, crocodiles, dog-faced baboons” (1.28.254). To Apion’s charge that Jews worshiped an ass in their temple, Josephus included in his reply that there is no reason for reproach from an Egyptian, since an ass is no worse than the other creatures that Egyptians ranked as gods, such as crocodiles and asps (2.7.81, 86).

Billerbeck included rabbinic passages, but these are general references to Egyptian idolatry with no details.<sup>40</sup>

Non-Jewish Greek and Latin authors also took note that the Egyptians represented their gods by animal figures.<sup>41</sup> Herodotus described the religious rites of the Egyptians for the god to whom a given animal was dedicated, explaining the treatment of creatures that were sacred—cats, hawks, ibises, crocodiles (not all Egyptians held them sacred), hippopotami, otters, scale-fish, eels, phoenix, and snakes (*Hist.* 2.65–76). Diodore of Sicily and Plutarch bracket the New Testament period. Diodore had a different explanation from Herodotus for the animal deities of the Egyptians: they say certain deities “visit all the inhabited world, revealing themselves to humans in the form of sacred animals, and at times even

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39. Cf. Philo, *Leg.* 25.162–63 for the Alexandrians giving the title God to ibises, snakes, and ferocious wild beasts.

40. *Exod. Rab.* 16.2–3 (79c) on Exod 12:21—a condemnation of idolatry and everything connected with it; Israel in Egypt served Egyptian gods but must now slay them; *Pesiq. Rab.* 49.10 (55a)—the Egyptians tried to get Israel to prostrate themselves before idols and burn incense before them; *Tanh.* 15b.

41. For a long list of references in classical literature attacking the worship of animals see Arthur S. Pease, *Cicero, De Natura Deorum* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955), 1.289–91 on *De Nat. Deor.* 1.43. For the mockery of Egyptian animal worship by early Christian apologists see the references in J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (London: Macmillan, 1889; repr. 5 vols; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989), part 2, vol. 2, 506–7.

appearing in the form of human beings or in other shapes" (1.12.9). Plutarch, apparently with Egyptian practice in mind, attributed to the lawgiver Numa the absence of images in early Roman religion: Like Pythagoras, "Numa forbade the Romans to revere an image of God whether in the form of a human being or an animal" (*Num.* 8.7). Among Latin authors Virgil has a line about "monstrous gods of every form and barking Anubis wield weapons against Neptune, Venus, and Minerva" (*Aen.* 8.698–700). Lucan granted, "Although we have admitted to Roman temples your [Egyptian] Isis and your dogs half divine, the rattles [sistra] which bid the worshiper wail, and the Osiris whom you prove to be mortal by mourning for him" (*Pharsalia* 8.831–34).

The recent commentary by Robert Jewett gives one of the fullest treatments of Rom 1:23.<sup>42</sup> He cites scholars who see the passage as an attack on the Egyptian gods.<sup>43</sup> Jewett expands the evidence beyond the literary sources by including coins with animal images on them<sup>44</sup> and military banners.<sup>45</sup> He further calls attention to an amulet from Egypt against an evil spirit's appearing or frightening the client "in any form" whether "of a reptile, of a bird, or cattle, or in the form of a person."<sup>46</sup> These are the same categories as appear in Rom 1:23 but in a different order, and the date (fifth century C.E.) makes it too late to be relevant. Nonetheless, Jewett concludes that Paul is thinking inclusively, not just about Egyptians or non-Jews.

As suggestive as the above cited parallels are, none matches exactly Rom 1:23. Hence, I would like to offer another proposal in order to give a specific content to the four items in Paul's list.

42. Robert Jewett, *Romans* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 160–62.

43. E. Klostermann, "Die adäquate Vergeltung in Rm 1.22–31," *ZNW* 32 (1933):1–6 (the plagues on animals in Exodus were a punishment for Egyptian animal worship with reference to Wis 11:15–16; 12:23–24); Joachim Jeremias, "Zu Rm. 1.22–32," *ZNW* 45 (1954): 119–21 (adds to Klostermann's references Acts 7:41–42 and *T. Naph.* 3.2–4 but has nothing on Egyptian religion); Heinrich Daxer, *Römer 1.18–2.10 im Verhältnis zu spätjüdischen Lehrauffassung* (Naumburg: Patz'sche, 1914), 17–24, which I have not seen.

44. With reference to John Kent, "The Monetary System," in *The Roman World* (ed. John Wachter; 2 vols; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 2.584–85.

45. Graham Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army of the First and Second Centuries A.D.* (2nd ed.; New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 134–41.

46. Jewett, *Romans*, 161–62 with reference to Roy Kotansky, et al., "A Greek-Aramaic Silver Amulet from Egypt in the Ashmolean Museum," *Mus* 105 (1992): 5–24.

### REPRESENTATIONS OF ZEUS/JUPITER

A huge number of representations of Zeus/Jupiter survive from the ancient world.<sup>47</sup> Overwhelmingly the representations from the Hellenistic and Roman periods show him according to the first item in Paul's list in Rom 1:23 as a human being, as with the other deities of the Greek pantheon. Zeus appears as a majestic male with full beard, bushy hair, and usually with a stern demeanor (although sometimes with milder features). Many museums preserve sculptures of Zeus, so a complete catalogue is out of the question, and I limit myself mainly to photographs I have in my own collection.

The colossal statue of ivory and gold over a core of wood at the temple of Zeus at Olympia sculpted by Phidias and his fellow artists in the mid-fifth century B.C.E. set the pattern for many representations. It no longer survives, but its appearance is known from literary descriptions (Pausanias, *Descr.* 5.11) and copies in various media. Zeus was seated on a throne, his himation came down from one shoulder and fell on the thighs and legs, and he held a statuette of Nike (Victory) in his right hand and a scepter surmounted by an eagle in his left.

Notable examples of the enthroned Zeus/Jupiter are a marble sculpture of the third century C.E. modeled on the cult statue in the Capitoline temple (Rome—a gold and ivory work) with the scepter a correct restoration (Vatican Inv. 671), a seated Zeus of the second century C.E. in the Getty Museum, and a bronze seated Zeus/Jupiter with scepter in the right hand and a thunderbolt in the left in the Hungarian National Museum, Budapest.<sup>48</sup>

The seated Zeus is sometimes blended with another deity. A relief of the seated Zeus Melichios with a goddess, Hermes, and Herakles recovered from the Illisos River, Athens, third century B.C.E., is now in the Athens National Archaeological Museum (#1778). Several examples combine the chthonian and Olympian traits of Sarapis and Zeus, as in British Museum sculpture 1531 where Cerberus and an eagle flank the deity, restored as holding a thunderbolt and scepter.

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47. A convenient place to begin is the collection of literary and pictorial evidence by Arthur Bernard Cook, *Zeus: A Study of Ancient Religion* (2 vols; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914; repr. New York: Biblio & Tannen, 1964–1965).

48. Also one from Hungary (first/second century) in the British Museum, pictured in Cook, *Zeus*, 2:pl. xxxiv; the British Museum also has a silver-gilt statuette from Mâcon with the thunderbolt in the right hand and the left hand positioned to hold a now missing scepter (Cook, *Zeus*, 2:pl. xxxii).



Earlier representations of Zeus showed him as a standing nude and hurling a thunderbolt, as in the bronze statuettes from Dodona,<sup>49</sup> but the type continued later. Sometimes in the later versions Zeus holds the thunderbolt at his side, as in the bronze statuette in the Uffizi, Florence, based on an Attic sculpture of the fifth century B.C.E.<sup>50</sup> and the marble statue in the Gregorian Profane Museum (Vatican # 15049).

Other notable examples of a standing Zeus are two statues in the Capitoline Museum (Rome), one from the fourth-century B.C.E. and another with the right arm missing after a fourth century B.C.E. original (Rm. 3, # 1a); a standing Zeus in the Vatican Museum; the Dresden Zeus (second century C.E.), a Roman copy of a fifth-century B.C.E. original by a disciple of Phidias in the Albertinum; and a standing Zeus from Perga of the second century C.E. in the Antalya Museum, Turkey.

Many heads of the marble sculptures of Zeus/Jupiter are now separated from his body. Particularly fine examples are the head of Zeus of Otricoli, a Roman version of a Greek image of the fourth century B.C.E. (Vatican Inv. 257), another Roman copy derived from a statue attributed to the circle of Phidias ca. 450 B.C.E. (Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, #259.17.4), a Zeus head from the Greco-Roman period (British Museum sculpture # 1515), a head of the second century B.C.E. from Troy (Istanbul Archaeological Museum), and a nice example from the Severan period in the Archaeological Museum, Thessalonica. A head of Zeus, ca. 350–340 B.C.E. from Mylasa in Caria (Turkey) is a softened version of Phidias's Zeus at Olympia (Boston Museum of Fine Arts 04.12). There is a head and arm of a large statue of Zeus from the second century B.C.E. in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens (# 3377).

After the thunderbolt and scepter, the most common attribute of Zeus is the eagle. In addition to what has already been noted, mention may be made of a standing Zeus with a scepter and an eagle at his feet in Berlin and a standing Jupiter with an eagle at his feet in the gallery of the Capitoline Museum (Rome). The common pose is Zeus seated with a scepter in the left hand and the eagle perched on the right, as in a coin from Crete of the fourth century B.C.E. in the British Museum.<sup>51</sup> A seated Zeus facing an eagle in flight almost as large as the

49. Greco-Roman Museum, Berlin (dated 470 B.C.E.); National Archaeological Museum, Athens (dated 450 B.C.E.). Cf. Cook, *Zeus*, 1:84–86; 2:739–45.

50. Cook, *Zeus*, 2:pl. xxxi.

51. R. S. Poole, *et al.*, *Crete and the Aegean Islands* (vol. 9 of *Catalogue of Greek Coins in the British Museum*; British Museum Trustees 1873–1927), 60, pl. 14, 12.

god appears on two kylixes, one in the Louvre and the other with their postures reversed in Taranto.<sup>52</sup>

Zeus also took the form of an eagle, an example of the birds that are second in Paul's list. Zeus himself appeared as an eagle in his abduction of Ganymede.<sup>53</sup> The eagle snatched up the handsome boy Ganymede and carried him to Olympus to be the cupbearer and sexual companion of Zeus.<sup>54</sup> A fine example in art of the eagle taking up Ganymede is a small (3½ inches high) bone carving of the third/fourth century from Samaria in the Israel Museum. There are statues of Ganymede and an eagle in the Bonn Museum and of Ganymede beside a large eagle in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples.<sup>55</sup>

Zeus also took the form of a swan in order to copulate with Leda, who became the mother of the Dioscuri, Helen, and others. There are various forms of the myth involving Leda, and different aspects appear in art.<sup>56</sup>

Another myth concerning the sexual exploits of Zeus involved his taking the form of a bull in the rape of Europa. This brings us to representations of Zeus as a four-footed animal. According to the myth Zeus saw Europa playing by the seashore and became filled with desire for her. He turned himself into or sent a beautiful bull and enticed her to climb on its back. The bull swam to Crete, where Zeus made love to her, and she bore him three sons.<sup>57</sup>

Depictions of Europa with the bull was popular in art.<sup>58</sup> A very fine painted kylix (but much damaged) found at the temple of Aphaia on Aigina, Greece, and now in Munich, dated ca. 470 B.C.E., carries the name Zeus for the bull.<sup>59</sup> The top of a vase of the mid-fourth century B.C.E. from Daphni shows Europa on a bull (Liebighaus, Frankfurt). Europa on a bull also occurs on a coin from Egypt of the first century B.C.E. (Mainz). A red-figured vase in St. Petersburg shows Europa on the bull with five figures gesturing for her to follow to Crete.<sup>60</sup> A red-figured

52. Cook, *Zeus*, 1:92–93, fig. 65 (Louvre) and 1:782, pl. xlii (Taranto).

53. Cook, *Zeus*, 1:408; 2:188.

54. The myth is found in Theognis 1345–48; Ovid, *Metam.* 10.155–61; Lucian, *Dial. d.* 10 (4): “Zeus and Ganymede.”

55. For other scenes in art, H. Sichtermann, *LIMC* (12 vols.; Zurich: Artemis, 1981–1999), 4.1:154–69.

56. Euripides, *Hel.* 17–20, 259; Apollodorus, *Library* 3.10.7. La Kahil *et al.*, in *LIMC* 6 (1992), 231–46.

57. Apollodorus, *Library* 3.1.1–4.

58. Cook, *Zeus*, 1:464–67, 526–38; more completely M. Robertson in *LIMC* 4.1 (1988), 76–92.

59. Cook, *Zeus*, 1:pl. xxxii, p. 526.

60. *Ibid.*, fig. 369, pp. 505–6.

amphora also in St. Petersburg shows Europa holding a basket and riding on a bull toward Zeus holding a scepter.<sup>61</sup>

Bulls were identified with several deities in the ancient world.<sup>62</sup> That fact made easy the blending of Zeus/Jupiter with the principal deity of other cults. Jupiter Dolichenus was an identification of the Baal of Doliche with Zeus/Jupiter.<sup>63</sup> The god is shown standing on the back of a bull and holding a double-headed axe and a thunderbolt, thus combining attributes of the two deities. Examples include a statue in the Capitoline Museum room VI (there is an eagle beneath the bull) and a plaque in the same location (#9756) with a thunderbolt in the god's right hand. Sometimes there is also an eagle or snakes present.<sup>64</sup> In addition to statuary the scene occurs on the triangular metal plates associated with the cult. A particularly fine example from Heddernheim now in Wiesbaden includes other deities besides the central figure of the god on the bull.<sup>65</sup> Other examples include a double-sided bronze votive relief (second–third centuries C.E.) and a one-sided bronze votive relief (third century C.E.), both in the Art Historical Museum in Vienna, which also has a bronze statuette of Zeus Dolichenus. A fragmentary triangular bronze plaque is in the Ashmolean, Oxford.

The Egyptian god Ammon was identified with Zeus, so Zeus Ammon shows the typical head of Zeus with a pair of ram's horns, the attribute of Ammon.<sup>66</sup> A statue of Zeus Ammon from the third century B.C.E. is in Archaeological Museum in Istanbul; a bust is in the Barrocco Museum, Rome (#199); and a head of the second century C.E. is in Bonn.

Depictions of Zeus Sabazios combine attributes of the ram and the sun.<sup>67</sup> A bronze relief of Zeus Sabazios in Copenhagen shows the bearded deity in Phrygian cap, holding a pine cone in his right hand, a scepter in the left, and accompanied by a bull, a bird, a snake, and busts of the moon and the sun.<sup>68</sup> A stele acquired in Istanbul and presented to the British Museum shows the bearded Zeus Sabazios holding a thunderbolt and spears in his hands and riding on a

61. Ibid., fig. 405, p. 531.

62. Ibid. I.633–65.

63. Ibid. I.604–33.

64. Ibid. I.611–12, fig. 480 and 481.

65. Ibid. I, pl. xxxiv. Other examples appear on pp. 616, 618, figs. 487–489 and a silver plate, p. 629, fig. 494. A silver plaque of the second-third century C.E. from Heddenheim in the British Museum does not include Zeus.

66. Ibid. I.348–53; 1:fig. 271 is a bust in Naples; other examples of the ram-horned human head on I, pl. xxvi.

67. Ibid. I.390–403.

68. Martin P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, vol. 2 (Munich: Beck, 1950), pl. 13.2 and p. 632; also in Cook, *Zeus*, 1:pl. xxvii.

horse toward a tree, in which are an eagle and a snake and in front of which are a krater and altar.<sup>69</sup> The thunderbolt and eagle are attributes of Zeus and the snake and krater of Sabazios. A similar bronze bust of Zeus Sabazios in the Vatican shows the bearded god with eagle, pine cone, snake, and other attributes.<sup>70</sup> There is a bronze bust of Zeus Sabazios of the second century C.E. in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Bronze magic hands have been identified with the cult of Sabazios, and they include reptiles, pine cones, and heads of the personified sun and moon.<sup>71</sup>

A silver *simpulum* from Cullera (near Valencia) with lettering of the third century C.E. now in Paris depicts four manifestations of Zeus.<sup>72</sup> On the handle Zeus holding a thunderbolt and a scepter stands beside an altar; where the handle attaches to the bowl is an eagle between two torches. Around the bowl are four scenes: Zeus as a swan with Leda, Zeus as a man with Semele, Zeus as Artemis with Kallisto and Eros, and Zeus as an eagle with Ganymede.

In view of the usual associations of Zeus with the sky (thunderbolt, eagle) it is surprising to find him also given an earthly depiction as a snake. Snakes were common religious symbols in both Greece and Rome as well as elsewhere.<sup>73</sup> A snake was particularly associated with Asclepius and so appears in the blending of Zeus Asclepius.<sup>74</sup>

Zeus Ktésios was the protector of the house and its goods, and was represented as a snake. This is shown by a marble stele of ca. third century B.C.E. in the Thebes Museum, bearing the inscription DIOS KTHSIOU (Zeus of the property) and depicting a coiled snake.<sup>75</sup> This function of Zeus as a household god may be compared with the *penates* (guardian spirits of the pantry) and *lares* (protective spirits of family and household) in Roman religion, the latter of which are associated with snakes in art, as in the *lararia* found in houses in Pompeii. Zeus was also identified with the Agathos Daimōn (the good spirit), the protector of the house-

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69. Ibid. 1:pl. xix; pp. 282–83.

70. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* 2:pl. 14.1 and p. 632.

71. Front and back of one depicted in Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* 2:pl. 13.3a and b.

72. Cook, *Zeus*, 2:pl. xv, p. 229, the Dutuit Collection in the Musée du Petit Palais des Champs-Élysées.

73. For Zeus Ammon and the snake, Cook, *Zeus*, 1:358–61. Philo of Byblos reported that Phoenicians and Egyptians regarded serpents and dragons as divine; Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 1.10 (41a).

74. Cook, *Zeus*, 2:1078–85.

75. Pictured in Cook, *Zeus*, 2:1061, fig. 914.

hold associated with the male ancestor of the family and the giver of fertility and wealth, who was represented as a snake.<sup>76</sup>

## CONCLUSION

There is no need to look to Egypt or elsewhere outside Greco-Roman religion for the objects in Paul's list in Rom 1:23. When Paul speaks of exchanging "the glory of the immortal God for images," could it be that he was thinking of the chief god of the Greek and Roman pantheon and his manifestations as a mortal human being, a bird (eagle, swan), a four-footed animal (bull), or a reptile (snake)—the four chief ways in which Zeus/Jupiter appeared in Greco-Roman literature and art?

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76. On the Agathos Daimōn and identification with Zeus, see Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, 202–7; Cook, *Zeus*, 2:1125–29.



## DID JESUS CONFESS HIS SINS AT BAPTISM? EVIDENCE FROM THE BOOK OF TOBIT

*Gary A. Anderson*

In this essay I would like to consider the problem of Jesus' participation in the baptism of John, an event that appears near the beginning of all three Synoptic Gospels. It is one of those rare moments in the history of Jesus research when all scholars are in agreement that the event itself is part of the historical record and cannot be an invention of the early Church. But one must be careful to observe my wording: though the event itself is regarded as historical, the particular depictions that our Gospel writers provide of that event have been subject to dramatically different interpretations. Before turning to those problems, let us refamiliarize ourselves with the story itself. I have chosen the version from Mark's Gospel, the earliest witness to the event.

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.... In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." (Mark 1:4–5, 9–11)

In his recent book on Jesus, Pope Benedict XVI reminds his readers of the way in which this event was remembered in the early church. To illustrate his point, Benedict XVI turns our attention to the way the baptism was presented in the iconographic tradition.<sup>1</sup> In this visual medium, the events of the baptism are

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1. Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfigura-*

juxtaposed with those of the crucifixion and resurrection. Descending into the Jordan was an anticipation of the death Jesus would suffer and his rising from the waters foreshadowed his resurrection. For example, in one ancient reliquary from Tuscany (ca. ninth century), one can see how closely the two events were intertwined by noting the way in which the baptism and resurrection are depicted on opposite sides of single cruciform object.<sup>2</sup>

But a personal favorite of mine is an icon with two registers from St. Catherine's Monastery (tenth century).<sup>3</sup> In the top register we see the descent of Jesus into the Jordan while in the bottom his descent into the bowels of Hades to retrieve the figures of Adam and Eve. Yet strikingly the movement is depicted along a single vertical axis; it is as though Jesus falls through the Jordan into Sheol. Clearly the imagery of Rom 6 has influenced the way in which the iconographers have depicted the historical event.

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. (Rom 6:3–5)

According to this text, the entry into the baptismal waters becomes salvific for the newly minted Christian because it is identified with the descent of Christ into Hades. Going down into the water is symbolic of the individual's death while rising out of the waters bespeaks a participation in the resurrection of Jesus.

The historical-critical reader, however, will have reason to worry. How can we know whether the iconographic tradition has accurately captured what actually took place at the baptism itself? The renowned Catholic biblical scholar, Joseph Fitzmyer, argues persuasively that Paul's understanding of baptism in Rom 6 is quite different from the way in which the Gospel writers themselves understood the event.<sup>4</sup> Paul has presented us with a post-Easter understanding of the

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tion (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 18–19.

2. See Anna D. Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986) fig. 26a and b (unpaginated).

3. Ibid., fig. 63.

4. Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 28; New York: Doubleday, 1981), esp. 239–41. In order to substantiate the church's manner of reading the Baptism, Benedict appeals to Joachim Jeremias' declaration that John 1:29 ("Behold, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world") represents an historical utterance of the Baptist himself (*Jesus of Nazareth*, 20–21). On these grounds, Benedict concludes, we can say that Jesus enters the Jordan knowing that his baptism has a redemptive



event that has, in turn, been further shaped by the liturgical practices of the early church. The historian, on the other hand, wants to know what the event of the baptism might have meant to Jesus of Nazareth himself (and to those individuals who had come out to the Jordan to participate in the ministry of John the Baptist) prior to the rise of the church. Recent historical work on this passage has focused considerable attention on the problem of Jesus' participation in the ritual itself. Benedict XVI in his recent book on Jesus has succinctly summarized the challenge the Gospel text provides the Christian reader when he writes:

The real novelty [in our text] is that he—Jesus—wants to be baptized, that he blends into the gray mass of sinners waiting on the banks of the Jordan. We have just heard that the confession of sins is a component of Baptism.... Is that something Jesus could do? "How could he confess sins? How could he separate himself from his previous life in order to start a new one?" This is a question that [the earliest] Christians could not avoid asking. The dispute between the Baptist and Jesus that Matthew recounts for us was also an expression of the early Christians' own question to Jesus: "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" (Mt 3.14). Matthew goes on to report for us that "Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he consented" (Mt. 3.15).<sup>5</sup>

### THE PROBLEM OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

No doubt Benedict XVI is quite sensitive to how Jesus' participation in John's baptism has been used in order to launch a frontal attack on one of the most treasured teachings of the church—the declaration that Jesus was sinless. Paul Hollenbach is

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purpose for the cosmos at large that will be configured through his Passion. But one should note a curious aporia in the way in which Benedict lays out his argument. Having made the point that Jesus' assent to Baptism was a way of expressing a "solidarity with men" he goes on to say that "the [true] significance of the event could not fully emerge until it was seen in light of the Cross and Resurrection. Descending into the water, the candidates for Baptism confess their sin and seek to be rid of their burden of guilt.... Looking at the event in light of the Cross and Resurrection, the Christian people realized what happened: Jesus loaded the burden of all mankind's guilt upon his shoulders; he bore it down into the depths of the Jordan. He inaugurated his public activity by stepping into the place of sinners" (*ibid.*, 17–18). On this view, one could remain agnostic as to what the participants thought about the historical event of the baptism—it was the events of Easter that cast a light backwards and illumined the true meaning of the occasion. In support of this position of reading the text "backwards" see Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa's review of Benedict's volume (<http://www.zenit.org/article-20129?l=english>).

5. *Ibid.*, 16–17.

an excellent representative of this school, and in his oft-cited article on the subject found in the prestigious series *Der Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, he declares that the rise of departments of religious studies in secular universities is allowing scholars to ask questions of the Jesus traditions that have been off-limits for centuries. He writes:

In this connection it is particularly important to focus on the traditional Christian belief in Jesus' sinlessness. This belief has colored most historical study of Jesus up to the present. Now it may be in some sense abstracted from history that Jesus never sinned, but historically speaking that issue cannot be determined one way or another. More important, the question whether or not Jesus was sinless in some sense abstracted from history is beside the point since it is clearly a theologically developed belief. *Historically the fact that Jesus came to John for baptism shows demonstrably that Jesus thought he was a sinner who needed repentance.* Indeed, if he had thought he was "without sin," that very thought clearly would have been a "sin of ignorance." For if he came to be baptized believing that he did not need it, but did it for some theologically appropriate reason, then he was in fact a deceiver, which was again reason enough indeed for him to need John's baptism of repentance even if Jesus himself was unaware of it. Hence, the only reasonable conclusion is that Jesus came to be baptized because he believed he was a sinner who needed the repentance John preached. Likewise, he must have believed the rest of John's message as it has been outlined above. Thus, from an historical point of view, the fact of Jesus' baptism and its meaning for Jesus are really not agonomizing theological issues at all. They are and have been problematic only for Christians from the earliest days (Mt 3:14–15) to the present.<sup>6</sup>

Hollenbach's logic appears to be unassailable: A. John the Baptist proclaims a baptism for the remission of sins; B. Jesus willingly submits to this baptism; ergo C. Jesus must have considered himself a sinner.

I think all of us would agree that it takes a commendable degree of honesty and scholarly integrity to apply rigorous historical methods to sacred texts that have historically made particular claims on the Christian believer. That is clearly Hollenbach's intention. But, I would also want to argue, it is clear that he has betrayed his own apologetical desire to discredit the teaching of the church by the way he understands the concept of sin.<sup>7</sup> On this point, John Meier, the cel-

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6. Paul Hollenbach, "The Conversion of Jesus: From Jesus the Baptizer to Jesus the Healer," *ANRW* 25.1:201–2.

7. It is, of course, important to note that it is not just religious believers who have a vested interest in "apologetic" readings; many scholars who have rejected Christianity find in historical-critical approaches the "empirical" grounds for their rejection of faith.

ebredated author of a multi-volume work on the historical Jesus, makes a very astute observation. He writes: "In theory, a historian might inquire as to whether Jesus *considered* himself a sinner just as a historian might inquire as to whether Jesus' adversaries considered him a sinner (according to the Gospels, some did)."<sup>8</sup> But by posing the issue this way, Meier goes on to say, "we are once again in danger of reverting to the psychologizing [tendencies] of the 'liberal lives' [of Jesus]."<sup>9</sup> And as everyone will concede, the first monumental works of the nineteenth century—most famously David Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch arbeitet*—found in the so-called historical Jesus nothing other than an image of themselves. Meier raises the most pertinent issue when he asks: "What data allow us to enter into the depths of the individual conscience of the historical Jesus to find out whether he thought himself a sinner?"<sup>10</sup>

The way Hollenbach has framed the question, Meier continues, is more in accord with twentieth century worries about *individual* as opposed to *collective* sin. This is really the rub of the question, so let's try to let this distinction settle into our consciousness. "Confession of sin in ancient Israel," Meier correctly observes, "did not mean an unraveling of a lengthy laundry-list of personal peccadilloes, with the result that worship of God was turned into a narcissistic reflection on self. . . . Confession of sin often meant recalling God's gracious deeds for an ungrateful Israel, a humble admission that one was a member of this sinful people, a recounting of the infidelities and apostasies of Israel from early on down to one's own day, and a final resolve to change and be different from one's ancestors. Even apart from the question of one's particular personal sins, one was part of this history of sin simply because one was part of this sinful people."<sup>11</sup> But one need not take Meier's word as authoritative; the texts themselves bear this out. Consider the prayer of Ezra, for example, paying particular attention to the use of the first person plural ("we"):

O my God, I am too ashamed and embarrassed to lift my face to you, my God, for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens. From the days of our ancestors to this day we have been deep in guilt, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been handed over to the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame, as is now the case. . . . And now, our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken your commandments,

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8. John P. Meier, *Mentor, Message, and Miracles*. Vol. 2 of *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 113.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*, 113–14.

which you commanded by your servants the prophets, saying, "The land that you are entering to possess is a land unclean with the pollutions of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations. They have filled it from end to end with their uncleanness." . . . Here we are before you in our guilt, though no one can face you because of this. (Ezra 9:6–7, 10–11, 15b)

And what Meier has said about early Judaism in general is even more true for grand restoration movements like that of John the Baptist, it was *collective* sin that was of primary importance. And any number of penitential texts from this period put the emphasis squarely on the nation's sin as opposed to the sins of individual persons.<sup>12</sup> An excellent example of this very point can be found in the book of Tobit. And to that book let me turn.

### TOBIT AS A RIGHTEOUS ISRAELITE

As George Nickelsburg has noted, this book has two foci: the plight of Tobit and the nation Israel.<sup>13</sup> It is impossible to read the book correctly without attending to how the one is related to the other. In this sense, Tobit shares some striking similarities to the figure of Jesus whose life was also about himself and the people of Israel.

Tobit is a righteous Israelite who suffers miserably for his exemplary behavior. The nation Israel, on the other hand is suffering the consequences of its apostasy by enduring the harsh consequences of the exile. Chief among those sins was the nation's violation of the prescription to worship the Lord solely in Jerusalem.

I, Tobit, walked in the ways of truth and righteousness all the days of my life. I performed many acts of charity for my kindred and my people who had gone with me in exile to Nineveh in the land of the Assyrians.

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12. See *ibid.*, 114–15, for a fuller listing of texts and excellent discussion.

13. In his short commentary on the book (George W. Nickelsburg, "Tobit," in *The HarperCollins Bible Commentary* [ed. James L. Mays; 2nd ed.; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000], 791), he writes: "Parallel to the story of Tobit is the uncompleted story of Israel. Tobit's situation is paradigmatic for the exiled nation. As God has chastised Tobit, so Israel, suffering in exile, is being chastised. But God's mercy on Tobit and his family guarantees that this mercy will bring the Israelites back to their land. Since this event, described only in predictions, awaits fulfillment, one level of the double story is incomplete."

When I was in my own country, in the land of Israel, while I was still a young man, the whole tribe of my ancestor Naphtali deserted the house of David and Jerusalem. This city had been chosen from among all the tribes of Israel, where all the tribes of Israel should offer sacrifice and where the temple, the dwelling of God, had been consecrated and established for all generations forever. All my kindred and our ancestral house of Naphtali sacrificed to the calf that King Jeroboam of Israel had erected in Dan and on all the mountains of Galilee. But I alone went often to Jerusalem for the festivals, as it is prescribed for all Israel by an everlasting decree. I would hurry off to Jerusalem with the first fruits of the crops and the firstlings of the flock, the tithes of the cattle, and the first shearings of the sheep. I would give these to the priests, the sons of Aaron, at the altar; likewise the tenth of the grain, wine, olive oil, pomegranates, figs, and the rest of the fruits to the sons of Levi who ministered at Jerusalem. Also for six years I would save up a second tenth in money and go and distribute it in Jerusalem. A third tenth I would give to the orphans and widows and to the converts who had attached themselves to Israel. I would bring it and give it to them in the third year, and we would eat it according to the ordinance decreed concerning it in the law of Moses and according to the instructions of Deborah, the mother of my father Tobiel, for my father had died and left me an orphan. When I became a man I married a woman, a member of our own family, and by her I became the father of a son whom I named Tobias (Tob 1:3–9).

Tobit, who came from the far northern province of Naphtali, made the trek to Jerusalem on a regular basis to fulfill the mandates of the Mosaic law. Yet in spite of this heroic obedience, he suffered the same fate as his disobedient fellow citizens and ended up being carted away to Assyria. There he kept up his courageous obedience to the Law in the face of similar apostasy among his fellow Israelites.

Later in the tale, after he goes out to retrieve a corpse for burial, he will have to put up with mockery for his religious dedication: "When the sun had set, I went and dug a grave and buried him. And my neighbors laughed and said, 'Is he still not afraid? He has already been hunted down to be put to death for doing this, and he ran away; yet here he is again burying the dead!'" (2:8). To make matters worse, his exemplary devotion to this commandment will lead to his becoming blind. Mocked by his fellow countrymen and subject to a humiliating test by his God, Tobit prays to be released from his misery and allowed to die.

But just prior to what he believes is his imminent death, he sends his single, unmarried son on what seems to be a perilous journey in search of funds he had left on deposit in Media. In the end, the perilous journey leads to a great reward. God superintends the trip through his angel Raphael, Tobias finds a wife of the right pedigree and of considerable means and brings home a remedy for Tobit's blindness. So great is the transformation that Tobit declares that he has been

raised from the dead. His life of almsgiving has brought him the reward that was his due.

Raphael exhorts Tobit and his son not to keep the news of his deliverance to himself but to trumpet it far and wide.

Then Raphael called the two of them privately and said to them, "Bless God and acknowledge him in the presence of all the living for the good things he has done for you. Bless and sing praise to his name. With fitting honor declare to all people the deeds of God. Do not be slow to acknowledge him. It is good to conceal the secret of a king, but to acknowledge and reveal the works of God, and with fitting honor to acknowledge him. Do good and evil will not overtake you." (Tob 12:6–7)

And just moments later, in his song of thanksgiving, Tobit thanks God for raising him from the dead:

Then Tobit said:

"Blessed be God who lives forever,  
because his kingdom lasts throughout all ages.

*For he afflicts, and he shows mercy;*

he leads down to Hades in the lowest regions of the earth,  
and he brings up from the great abyss,  
and there is nothing that can escape his hand."

(Tob. 13:1–2; emphasis added)

He then goes on to pray that God will do the same for Israel (exile, as is common in biblical thought, being thought of as a form of death):

*He will afflict you for your iniquities,  
but he will again show mercy on all of you.*

He will gather you from all the nations  
among whom you have been scattered.

If you turn to him with all your heart and with all your soul,  
to do what is true before him,

then he will turn to you  
and will no longer hide his face from you.

So now see what he has done for you;  
acknowledge him at the top of your voice.

Bless the Lord of righteousness,  
and exalt the King of the ages.

In the land of my exile I acknowledge him,  
and show his power and majesty to a nation of sinners:

‘Turn back, you sinners, and do what is right before him;  
perhaps he may look with favor upon you and show you mercy.’  
(Tob 13:5–6; emphasis added)

The structure then of Tobit’s life (vv. 1–2) and that of Israel (vv. 5–17) are strikingly parallel in form. From the description of verse 2, we could describe Tobit’s life as follows:

- A. A blind Tobit “descends” to Sheol
- B. In utter despair he prays to God that he take his life
- C. God attends to his prayer “raises” Tobit to new life.

And from verse 5, the life of Israel:

- A. Israel is in exile (/Sheol) due to apostasy
- B. Tobit exhorts Israel to repent...
- C. ... in the hope that she too will soon be restored.

In sum, the book of Tobit is both a personal and a national story. If there is a single message that it wishes to convey it would be this: the God who raised Tobit from the dead can do the same for Israel. Israel’s hope for restoration is not in vain.

### TOBIT’S CONFESSION OF SIN

So let us now return to the problem of Jesus’ confession of sins at his baptism. As Hollenbach put the matter, the simplest historical interpretation of this act is that Jesus has come to the waters of the Jordan in despair over his personal plight as a sinner and seeks to restore his relationship with God. Meier countered this suggestion by saying first, that Hollenbach presumes an access to the psychological state of Jesus that is beyond the ken of the exegete and second, that the types of prayers of confession that we find in the Second Temple period put an emphasis on communal sin not personal.

The book of Tobit is a good test case for this matter because it depicts its main character in a way very similar to the way the writers of the Gospels depict Jesus: the book has been organized with the concerns of the nation Israel at the fore. In order to probe this more deeply let us consider the prayer of contrition that Tobit voices after he reaches the deepest point of his despair. If one knew only what had transpired in the first two chapters of the work and had to guess

what type of prayer Tobit would utter at the beginning of chapter three, there would really be only one possibility—a lament. All the classic markers of that genre would seem to be in place: innocence in the face of great suffering and the constant reproaches of his neighbors. Psalm 26 would be the prayer I would have chosen, had I been the author of the book of Tobit!

Vindicate me, O LORD,  
     for I have walked in my integrity,  
     and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.  
 Prove me, O LORD, and try me;  
     test my heart and mind.  
 For your steadfast love is before my eyes,  
     and I walk in faithfulness to you.

I do not sit with the worthless,  
     nor do I consort with the hypocrites.  
 I hate the company of evildoers,  
     and will not sit with the wicked. . . .

But as for me, I walk in my integrity;  
     redeem me, and be gracious to me.  
 My foot stands on level ground;  
     in the great congregation I will bless the LORD. (Ps 26:1–5, 11–12)

I think this Psalm constitutes a fitting prayer for the occasion, for in it the Psalmist protests his innocence (“Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering”) and contrasts his behavior to that of his neighbors (“I do not sit with the worthless, nor do I consort with the hypocrites. I hate the company of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked”). Other laments like that of Ps 3 (vv. 2–3, 8) demand of God that he silence the enemies of the just (“Rise up, O LORD! Deliver me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked”); a plea that would also be fitting for Tobit.

Yet Tobit does not utter this sort of lamentation. The prayer of Tobit has more in common with the communal laments of the Second Temple period (see Ezra 9, cited above). The prayer begins with a declaration that the judgments of God are righteous and just (Tob 3:2), which may refer not only to his own plight but also refer to the exile that has followed upon the apostasy of Israel. Yet, as the opening chapter makes quite clear, Tobit was heroically innocent. He suffers solely because of the sins of others. Yet Tobit does not take this occasion to



trumpet his innocence. Quite the opposite, he underscores his solidarity with his people:

And now, O Lord, remember me  
 and look favorably upon me.  
 Do not punish me for my sins  
 and for my unwitting offenses  
 and those that my ancestors committed before you.  
 I have sinned against you,  
 and disobeyed your commandments.  
 So you gave us over to plunder, exile, and death,  
 to become the talk, the byword, and an object of reproach  
 among all the nations among whom you have dispersed us.  
 And now your many judgments are true  
 in exacting penalty from me for my sins.  
 For we have not kept your commandments  
 and have not walked in accordance with truth before you. (Tob 3:3–5)

This prayer is remarkable within its context and seems to fly in the face of everything one might expect from what has transpired over the first two chapters. But the choice to pair Tobit's confession ("And now your many judgments are true in exacting penalty from me for my sins") with that of the nation as a whole ("For we have not kept your commandments . . .") fits well with the overall purpose of the book to make Tobit's life a parable for the larger nation. Tobit's moral and spiritual luster is not limited to a display of his own personal righteousness in the face of great apostasy but blossoms into an extraordinary expression of solidarity for his people that prevents him from disarticulating his own fate from theirs.

### THE BAPTISM OF JESUS RECONSIDERED

In the person of the historical Jesus, I would like to suggest, we meet a similar person with a double-focused life. On the one hand, Jesus claims to be the Messiah, the very son of God who has come to do the bidding of his Father in Heaven. But at the same time he is a prophet anointed to preach about the coming Kingdom of God. And to facilitate that task he calls twelve disciples—not an accidental number by any means!—who constitute an Israel in miniature. So the story of Jesus, exactly like that of Tobit, centers on both a person and the nation he has come to redeem.

It is not only a distinct possibility that Jesus came to the Jordan to participate in a confession of *national* sin, but quite probable that this was the case. Benedict XVI's claim that Jesus' consent to baptism was intended to express "solidarity

with men who have incurred guilt but yearn for righteousness” is not some sort of apologetic veneer awkwardly pasted over the more sober and searing historical judgment proposed by Hollenbach, it is rather the most likely historical reading of the event. And viewed this way, we can also see why the early church found the historical act of submitting to the baptism of John a window into the theological depth of Jesus’ mission. By consenting to this baptism the innocent figure of Jesus was identifying with the people of Israel and recalling the message of the prophets about God’s promise of restoration. The burden of the Gospel itself was to preach of a coming kingdom that was probably at variance with what most of those gathered at the river would have thought. To enter into his kingdom, Jesus would have to suffer and die first. Armed with this insight, a revelation that the church (in the person of the disciples-turned-apostles) only came to understand after the miracle of Easter, it was a short distance to travel indeed to see the descent into the waters as a participation in the unique way Jesus had understood the onset of God’s eschatological kingdom. At the end of the day, the icons we examined earlier are not as far from the historical origins of the scene as we might have thought.

### FOR FURTHER READING

- Anderson, Gary A. “Tobit as Righteous Sufferer.” Pages 493–507 in *A Teacher for All Generations: Essays in Honor of James C. VanderKam*. Edited by E. Mason, JSJSup 153.2. Leiden: Brill, 2011.
- Bauckham, Richard. “Tobit as a Parable for the Exiles of Northern Israel.” Pages 140–64 in Bredin, *Studies in the Book of Tobit: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. Library of Second Temple Studies 55. London: T&T Clark, 2006.
- Collins, John J. “The Judaism of the Book of Tobit.” Pages 23–40 in *The Book of Tobit: Text, Tradition, Theology. Papers of the First International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, Pépa, Hungary, 20–21 May, 2004*. Edited by Geza Xeravits. JSJSup 98. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Ego, Beate. “The Book of Tobit and the Diaspora.” Pages 41–54 in *The Book of Tobit: Text, Tradition, Theology. Papers of the First International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, Pépa, Hungary, 20–21 May, 2004*. Edited by Geza Xeravits. JSJSup 98. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *Tobit*. Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003.
- Nickelsburg, George W. “Tobit.” Pages 791–803 in *The HarperCollins Bible Commentary*. Edited by James L. Mays. 2nd ed. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000.
- Rabenau, Merten. *Studien zum Buch Tobit*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994.
- Soll, Will. “Misfortune and Exile in Tobit: The Juncture of a Fairy Tale Source and Deuteronomical Theology.” *CBQ* 51 (1989): 209–31.
- Talmon, Shemaryahu. “‘Exile’ and ‘Restoration’ in the Conceptual World of Ancient Judaism.” Pages 107–46 in *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives*. Edited by James M. Scott. JSJSup 72. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

## JUDEAN ETHNIC IDENTITY AND THE PURPOSE OF HEBREWS\*

*Philip F. Esler*

My aim in this essay is to reassess the purpose of Hebrews in the light of the expanding understanding of the ethnic identity of those first-century C.E. people whom Greek texts of the period regularly call *Ioudaioi*. By its use of the anthropology of ethnicity, this essay will illustrate the social-scientific interpretation of the New Testament in relation to Hebrews.

### ETHNICITY AND THE SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC INTERPRETATION OF NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS

The social-scientific interpretation of biblical texts began in the early 1970s and its processes are well enough established as not to require detailed explanation or defense here.<sup>1</sup> Suffice it to say that it involves the explicit application of ideas and perspectives from the social sciences to situate Old and New Testament phenomena within frameworks of enquiry that allow us both to interrogate the data

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\* The long and illustrious career of Professor Harold W. Attridge has included a sustained and judicious analysis of Hebrews, with his major 1989 Hermeneia commentary merely being the most prominent of a number of publications on this text. In this Festschrift I seek to honor him by an essay on Hebrews. See Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), with earlier publications of his on Hebrews listed on p. 215. For a recent collection of essays on Hebrews, see *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods and New Insights*, with a Foreword by Harold W. Attridge (ed. Gabriella Gelardini; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005).

1. But for a good introduction, see John Elliott, *Social-Scientific Criticism of the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993). Also see Philip F. Esler, "Social-Scientific Models in Biblical Interpretation," in *Ancient Israel: The Old Testament in Its Social Context* (ed. Philip F. Esler; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 3–14.

and to organize the results of critical investigation (“to draw the lines between the dots”) in new and socially realistic ways, rather than relying on implied and unexamined assumptions on how societies work. Social-scientific interpretation continues to retain its importance.<sup>2</sup>

The area of the social sciences to be deployed in this essay is the anthropology of ethnicity that began to be mentioned by biblical scholars in the 1990s, achieving considerable prominence in 1996 with a collection of essays edited by Mark Brett.<sup>3</sup> Recent anthropological debate on ethnicity was stimulated by an essay by Fredrik Barth that appeared in 1969.<sup>4</sup> In short, Barth rejected the “primordial” approach that considered ethnic groups were constituted by the possession of a set of cultural features. He argued instead that their sense of themselves as a group interacting with other groups came first and that cultural *indicia* (which frequently changed over time) were deployed, as a boundary, to express that group identity. In this sense, ethnicity was a field of ascription and identification used by certain groups to organize their relationships with other groups.<sup>5</sup>

To move away from employing cultural features to distinguish ethnic groups did, however, leave hanging the question of what distinguished them from other groups. Barth offered some assistance on this point by noting that an ascription of someone to a social category was ethnic in character “when it classifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, *presumptively determined by his origin*

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2. For an unconvincing argument that it has served its purpose, see David G. Horrell, “Whither Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation? Reflections on Contested Methodologies and the Future,” in *After the First Urban Christians: The Social-Scientific Study of the Pauline Christianity Twenty-Five Years Later* (ed. Todd D. Still and David G. Horrell; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 6–30. Horrell thinks the day of the explicit application of social-scientific theory to the Bible (from which he himself has retreated) has passed, in spite of the continuing stream of publications on both Old and New Testaments doing just that. In his enthusiasm to devalue the importance of theory, Horrell even misreads a sociologist and an anthropologist against their stated interest in social-scientific theory (respectively, Grace Davie, *Religion in Great Britain: Believing Without Belonging* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1994] and David E. Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* [New York: Berg, 2001]).

3. Mark G. Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1996). My essay in the volume was on Gal 5:13–6:10.

4. Fredrik Barth, “Introduction,” in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (ed. Fredrik Barth; London: Allen & Unwin, 1969), 9–38. For the current lively debate on the subject of ethnicity, see John Stone and Rutledge Dennis, eds., *Race and Ethnicity: Comparative and Theoretical Approaches* (Blackwell Readers in Sociology; Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) and Ann Phoenix, “Ethnicities,” in *The Sage Handbook of Identities* (ed. Margaret Weatherell and Chandra Talpade Mohanty; Los Angeles: Sage, 2010), 297–320.

5. See my application of this approach to Romans: Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

and background.”<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, this is still very general and applies as much to a family as an ethnic group. What we need is a limited repertoire of features that must, to accord with Barth’s ascriptive and interactive approach, be diagnostic and not constitutive of ethnic identity. John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith provided just such a repertoire in 1996:

1. a common proper name to identify the group;
2. a myth of common ancestry;
3. a shared history or shared memories of a common past, including heroes, events and their commemoration;
4. a common culture, embracing such things as customs, language and religion;
5. a link with a homeland, either through actual occupation or by symbolic attachment to the ancestral land, as with diaspora peoples; and
6. a sense of communal solidarity.<sup>7</sup>

It is worth noting that in this set of diagnostic features “religion” forms only one aspect of one of six diagnostic features. An identity that is ethnic can include religion but is much wider than, and very different from, a religious identity.

One further aspect of the anthropology of ethnicity requires explanation for what follows: how groups develop counter-identities to a dominant ethnic identity. In *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland*, published in 2003, anthropologist Takeyuki Tsuda considers the position of families of Japanese origins, whose forebears had emigrated to Brazil, who have returned to Japan to live and work, speaking Portuguese but not Japanese.<sup>8</sup> One aspect upon which Tsuda focuses is the extent to which the Brazilian Japanese exaggerate their Brazilian cultural characteristics as a response to the refusal of Japanese people born and raised in Japan fully to accept them. Tsuda explains this by arguing that since ethnic identity is a form of self-consciousness that is displayed and enacted in practice, it can consolidate existing hegemonies or generate resistance to the dominant order.<sup>9</sup> He

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6. Fredrik Barth, “Introduction,” 13 (emphasis added).

7. John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith, eds, *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3–14 (6–7).

8. Takeyuki Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland: Japanese Brazilian Return Migration in Transnational Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003). I am grateful to my Old Testament colleague at St Mary’s University College Twickenham, Dr. Katherine Southwood, for drawing my attention to Tsuda’s work.

9. Tsuda, *Strangers*, 263, where he utilizes the research of Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 5–6.

draws on earlier work of Raymond Williams,<sup>10</sup> and argues that such dominance and resistance span the whole range of lived experience, including ethnicity. In some contexts “counter-identities” are generated as a form of resistance to dominant identities. In the case he examines one ethnic identity (Brazilian) is being asserted against another (indigenous Japanese). Here resistance refers to behavior that “demonstrates a refusal or unwillingness to assimilate to the culture of a dominant group.”<sup>11</sup> Tsuda notes that most resistance literature examines social groups that have been subjected to the hegemonic order through the imposition of dominant ideologies and belief systems, and that the resistance developed by such groups “generally operates within the context of the hegemonic system and involves the subversion, manipulation, and redefinition of dominant cultural categories and meanings.”<sup>12</sup>

## ETHNICITY AND THE PURPOSE OF HEBREWS

### ETHNICITY AND HEBREWS

How does all this relate to Hebrews? The short answer is, quite profoundly. In other research published over the last decade I have argued that first-century C.E. *Ioudaioi* are best understood as an ethnic group within the Barthian understanding of that concept, as augmented using the criteria identified by Hutchinson and Smith. The core of my approach appears in my 2003 monograph on Romans. There I argued, to summarize briefly: (a) that, following Wilfrid Cantwell Smith and Bruce J. Malina, “religion” as we understand it was unknown in the ancient Greco-Roman world;<sup>13</sup> (b) that the *Ioudaioi* are best understood as an ethnic group; (c) that the *Contra Apionem* of Josephus is a first-century text that presents this people as one ethnic group among others, all of whom are named with respect to the territory they come from (except for a couple of anomalies like the Hycsos); (d) that *Ioudaioi* in first-century texts are best translated “Judeans.”<sup>14</sup>

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10. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 108–18.

11. Tsuda, *Strangers*, 265.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Wilfrid Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991 [1962]); Bruce Malina, “Religion in the Imagined New Testament World: More Social Science Lenses,” *Scriptura* 51 (1994): 1–26 and “Mediterranean Sacrifice: Dimensions of Domestic and Political Religion,” *BTB* 26 (1996): 26–44.

14. See Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 7–8 for (a); 10–12 and 62–63 for (b); 59 and 63 for (c); and 63–74 for (d). Features very similar to these are important to the argument in Steve Ma-

I subsequently published an essay expanding on this dimension of the *Contra Apionem*.<sup>15</sup> In part, I am inviting the readers of this essay to imagine how the argument of Hebrews makes sense as addressed to an audience who understood their original Judean (ethnic) identity in ways similar to that set out in the *Contra Apionem*.

As soon as one recognizes that the *Ioudaioi* were an ethnic group with a name for which the only appropriate translation is “Judeans,” not the members of a religion “Judaism” whose adherents were “Jews”—whereas the early followers of Christ had a completely different identity that was certainly not ethnic, whatever else it was—we experience a seismic shift in how we understand all New Testament texts, not just Hebrews. Almost all New Testament interpreters work with an implied and largely unacknowledged model for understanding early “Christianity” which presupposes two entities of the same nature, namely, religions, one of them “Judaism” and one “Christianity,” whose believers are “Jews” and “Christians” respectively. This understanding appears unambiguously in the profoundly misleading metaphor of “the parting of the ways” (which wrongly envisages a sorrowful separation of two entities of the same type).

In my view this model represents a fundamental category error that inevitably distorts all interpretation that presupposes its truth. I have recently published an essay showing how applying an ethnic understanding of Judeans to John’s Gospel produces a very different understanding of that work.<sup>16</sup> In this essay I will apply the anthropology of ethnicity, as it applies to the position of first-century C.E. Judeans, to Hebrews and show how it produces fresh insights into its purpose. *My aim is to demonstrate that the purpose of Hebrews is to undermine the pull and the claims of Judean ethnic identity being felt by Judean Christ-followers at the expense of their new faith and to demonstrate the superiority of that faith as an identity and a mode of being.* Throughout this text the author compares and contrasts the two radically distinct identities, Judean and Christ-follower, to the detriment of the former. At its heart Hebrews embodies a contest between identities presented as fundamentally different in nature and value. I will seek to

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son, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,” *JSJ* 38 (2007): 457–512.

15. Philip F. Esler, “Judean Ethnic Identity in Josephus’ *Against Apion*,” in *A Wandering Galilean: Essays in Honour of Sean Freyne* (ed. Zuleika Rodgers, with Margaret Daly-Denton and Anne Fitzpatrick McKinley; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 73–91. (I completed and submitted the essay by 2005, before I had seen Mason’s article, *supra*.)

16. Philip F. Esler, “From *Ioudaioi* to Children of God: The Development of a Non-Ethnic Group Identity in the Gospel of John,” in *In Other Words: Essays on Social Science Methods and the New Testament in Honour of Jerome H. Neyrey* (ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn, Zeba A. Crook, and Eric Stewart; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007), 106–37.

make this case by exploring Hebrews under the six diagnostic indicia of ethnicity mentioned above and showing how the author in each case devalues Judean ethnic identity in relation to Christ-follower identity, which is valorized. While there is so much data on this issue in Hebrews that a much longer presentation would be possible, the space allowed me in this volume will enable the core of the argument to be set out.

Although he does not take up the idea, Tsuda's important discussion of how a subordinate identity may be engaged in the "subversion, manipulation, and redefinition" of the dominant cultural categories and meanings of a dominant ethnic identity leaves open the possibility that the former may be a *nonethnic* counter-identity. I will argue below that this is what we find in Hebrews, with a Christ-movement counter-identity being advocated in the face of a dominant ethnic identity that it pervasively subverts, manipulates and redefines. While Sherry Ortner has appropriately observed that resistance literature that focuses on the contrast between dominant and subordinate groups tends to overlook the internal politics and conflicts within subordinate groups,<sup>17</sup> the only evidence we have for Hebrews is what is found in the text, so the data relevant to such an inquiry is largely lacking. Nevertheless, we do have evidence for an initial difference of opinion at least between the author and his addressees; otherwise he would have had no need to compose this letter.

#### HEBREWS AS WRITTEN TO JUDEAN CHRIST-FOLLOWERS

In pursuing this argument, I am accepting a well-represented though admittedly contested position that the audience for whom Hebrews was written were Judeans who had become Christ-followers or, in commonly current (although inaccurate and misleading) language in the field, "Jews" who had become "Christians."<sup>18</sup> Barnabas Lindars has offered an excellent defense of this view of the audience of Hebrews that contains the following statement:

The traditional view is that Hebrews is written to a group of Jewish converts who are in danger of relapsing into Judaism. They have lost their original fervour and hanker after the temple worship with its splendid ceremonial

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17. Sherry B. Ortner, "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal," *CSSH* 37 (1995): 173–93.

18. See Attridge: "Since the earliest commentators, most critics who have opted for a primarily Jewish-Christian audience have tended to view Hebrews as an attempt to prevent a relapse into or a failure to move completely out of Judaism" (*Hebrews*, 10, with footnote 85 on page 11 containing a long list of such critics).



and miss the security of the traditions of their Jewish past. The aim of the letter is to persuade them to remain in the church with renewed confidence in the Christian confession of faith.<sup>19</sup>

Many commentators, including Harold Attridge,<sup>20</sup> disagree with this view and consider that the audience was not former “Jews.” While I consider the thrust of Lindars’ position is I correct, I note that he is making the following assumptions about the first-century situation (which are widely shared in New Testament criticism):

1. There is a religion “Judaism,” and “Jew” primarily means an adherent to that religion.
2. There is another, Christian religion (the “church,” “the Christian ...faith”).
3. One could move from “Judaism” to this other religion by the process of conversion.
4. Converts could relapse back into “Judaism.”

In my view (1), (3) and (4) are wrong, because they fail to appreciate that the identity of *Ioudaioi* was ethnic, not religious, while any view that there was a “Christian” “religion” in the first century, as in assumption (2), has different problems attached to it (namely, that “religion” as we understand it did not exist in the ancient world, while “religious” phenomena tended to be associated with either the political or domestic realms).<sup>21</sup> Rather than offering a separate discussion of the identity of the audience of Hebrews at this point, however, I will keep this question in view during the discussion, so that the position I favor will be established by the cumulative effect of the argument. But I will mention one point here. That the letter has borne subscription “To the Hebrews,” since the last quarter of the second century C.E., if not earlier, as shown by its appearance at the head of the text in P<sup>46</sup> and by the statement of Clement of Alexandria (ca. 180 C.E.) that it was written “for Hebrews,”<sup>22</sup> supports its original destination as *Judean* Christ-fearers. “Hebrew” was a word especially applied in the Old Testa-

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19. Barnabas Lindars SSF, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 4–15 (4). For this view Lindars himself drew on F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (New London Commentary; London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1965), xxiii–xxx.

20. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 10–11, 94–95.

21. See Smith, *Meaning and End*, and Malina, “Religion in the Imagined New Testament World”; “Mediterranean Sacrifice.”

22. Clement of Alexandria, in an extract from his *Hypotoses* cited by Eusebius in *Hist. Eccl.* 6.14.3, 4.

ment and in Josephus to this people before their return from exile, but was also used as an in-group designation by first-century C.E. Judeans, such as Paul (2 Cor 11:22 and Phil 3:5). If ancient readers of this text identified its addressees as ethnic Judeans, that is a fact worth serious attention.<sup>23</sup>

#### JUDEAN IDENTITY AND CHRIST-MOVEMENT COUNTER-IDENTITY

Prior to considering how the identity of the Christ-movement is treated in Hebrews in relation to the six broad *indicia* of ethnicity listed above, it is necessary, however, to reflect a little more on the nature of this contrast. It is likely that there were several million Judeans living around the Mediterranean in the first century C.E., with the majority probably to be found in the diaspora.<sup>24</sup> They were an ethnic group whom even the Romans respected as ancient, with a long history, distinctive customs, an impressive literature, a distinctive homeland in Judea, and (if Hebrews was written before 70 C.E.) a magnificent capital, Jerusalem, and Temple. Whenever Hebrews was composed, with Craig Koester reasonably noting that it was probably written between 60 and 90 C.E. but that fixing a more precise date is difficult,<sup>25</sup> Christ-followers could only have numbered in the thousands at most, they held to a novel faith and they had no long-standing customs, no distinctive architecture and no homeland.

This treatment will prove to be consistent with the comparatively little that we can learn from the situation of the addressees of Hebrews from the text of the letter, namely: (a) they are in danger of drifting away from what they have heard (2:1); (b) there is a risk they will not hold fast to their initial assurance unto the end (3:14) or to their confidence and pride in their hope (3:6); (c) they could succumb to faithlessness (*apistia*; 3:12), just like the wilderness generation who because of their *apistia* could not enter their rest (3:19); and (d) they have become dull of hearing and need to hear again the first principles of God's word (5:11–12). Although in the penultimate verse of the letter (13:24) the author records a greeting from "those who come from Italy," it is unclear whether this means he is with Italian Judeans in Italy itself or with them somewhere else in the Mediterranean world.<sup>26</sup>

23. Attridge discounts the importance of the subscription "To the Hebrews," *Hebrews*, 12.

24. John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander the Great to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 4.

25. Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 50. Also see Alan C. Mitchell, *Hebrews* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007), 7–11, who notes the argument mainly centers on whether Hebrews was written before or after 70 C.E.

26. See Koester, *Hebrews*, 581.

## THE TREATMENT OF JUDEAN ETHNIC DIMENSIONS IN HEBREWS

*A Common Proper Name to Identify the Group*

The pattern that emerges repeatedly in Hebrews is that common names or collective designators of ethnic Israel are mentioned, together with ways of referring to the Christ-movement that trump such expressions. The author acknowledges Judean in-group nomenclature while proffering a different set of expressions to name or refer to Christ-followers that denote a superior identity to Judean ethnicity.

First-century Judeans used several expressions to identify themselves. As John H. Elliott has shown, when they were speaking among themselves and of themselves they most frequently used the in-group expressions “sons of Israel,” “house of Israel,” or “Israelites.” Occasionally the word “Hebrew” (*Hebraios*) was used. But when other ethnic groups were referring to them or they were speaking of themselves when such groups were in view, they were “Judeans” (*Ioudaioi*).<sup>27</sup> This latter name derives from that of their homeland, Judea, and was used by them whether they were living there or in diaspora communities.<sup>28</sup> Striking confirmation of this pattern is found in Josephus’s *Contra Apionem*, where the word *Ioudaios* appears on numerous occasions but *Israelitēs* does not, and *Hebraios* only appears once (1.167). In Hebrews, on the other hand, the word *Ioudaios* does not occur (nor “Judea” for that matter), nor *Hebraios*, whereas “house of Israel” appears at 8:8 (followed by “house of Judah”) and at 8:10, in quotations from Jer 31:31 and 33 respectively. As noted above, this is in-group ethnic identification.

Yet the addressees represent a far better type of “house,” for they are “the house of God” (Heb 3:6; 10:21). The text expressly mentions the superiority of this house in Heb 3:1–6. It is true that Moses was faithful in God’s house, whatever this expression means (and it is certainly a group expression, perhaps akin to a household),<sup>29</sup> as a servant but Christ was faithful as a son “and we are his house if we hold fast in confidence and pride in our hope” (3:6). A house in which Moses was faithful, but in a manner inferior to Christ, is now identified with the Christ-followers addressed in the letter. Other types of household or family relationships are also used to denote the new identity, especially those of “son” and “brother.” I will return to this area in the section below, since such language provides a response to the Judean tradition of common ancestry from Abraham.

27. John H. Elliott, “Jesus the Israelite Was Neither a ‘Jew’ Nor a ‘Christian’: On Correcting Misleading Nomenclature,” *JSHJ* 5 (2007): 119–54.

28. See Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 67–68.

29. Koester, *Hebrews*, 252–53.

There are a variety of other ways of identifying (generally more by describing than naming) the (recently inaugurated) Christ-movement and those who are members of it. The key expression is *pistis*, faith or faithfulness, appearing thirty-two times in Hebrews, of which twenty-four instances are in Heb 11 (with the related adjective, *pistos*, occurring four times and the related verb, *pisteuō*, twice). Matthew Marohl has shown how important is the notion of faithfulness for the author in presenting the social identity that comes from belonging to the Christ-movement.<sup>30</sup> The nature of the movement is also referred to as a “confession” (*homologia*; 3:1; 4:14; 10:23). This probably refers to the “cognitive dimension” of the social identity that comes from such *pistis*.<sup>31</sup> The addressees are also “sharers (*metochoi*) in a heavenly call” (3:1), sharers (*metochoi*) in Christ (3:14), sharers (*metochoi*) in the Holy Spirit (6:14) and sharers (*metochoi*) in the discipline (*paideia*; 12:8).

Finally, it is worth noting that the text does not proffer any distinctive proper noun to designate members of the Christ-movement. But that is true of every New Testament text. In particular, the word *Christianos* only appears four times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26 and 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16) and never as a group self-designation. That did not happen until the second century C.E.

### *A Myth of Common Ancestry*

Fredrik Barth's view that ethnic identity was “presumptively determined” by one's “origin and background” corresponds closely the second indicator identified by Hutchinson and Smith: a myth of common ancestry. First-century C.E. Judeans, believing they were descended from Abraham, described themselves as “the seed of Abraham.” In this way they named themselves in relation to their (real or) imagined physical lineage. In the *Contra Apionem*, while Abraham is not explicitly mentioned, at one point (1.171) Josephus states that “the Chaldeans” are “the founders (*archēgoi*) of our people (*genos*),” where by Chaldeans he means Abraham and his family who left Ur in the land of the Chaldeans (Gen 11:31–32; 12:1–9) and settled in the land God had promised.<sup>32</sup> In the New Testament outside of Hebrews, “seed of Abraham” as a way of designating the Judean ethnic group occurs at John 8:33, 37, Rom 9:7, 11:1, 2 Cor 11:22, and Gal 3:29 (cf. Acts

30. Matthew J. Marohl, *Faithfulness and the Purpose of Hebrews: A Social Identity Approach* (Princeton Theological Monograph Series; Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2008).

31. The “cognitive dimension” of social identity (as it has been expounded by Henri Tajfel and others) is the sense of belonging to the group and the beliefs associated with such belonging; see Daniel Bar Tal, *Group Beliefs: A Conception for Analyzing Group Structures, Processes, and Behavior* (New York: Springer, 1990).

32. Esler, “Josephus's *Contra Apionem*,” 81.

3:25; 7:5, 6; Rom 4:13; and Gal 3:16 where “Abraham” is represented by a pronoun). At Gal 3:29 “seed of Abraham” is not an ethnic self-designation, and I will return to it in a moment.

Important for our purpose is the occurrence of *sperma Abraam* (“seed of Abraham”) in Heb 2:16. This expression clearly refers back to the people identified as the “sons” (*huiioi*) whom God brought to glory (2:10), Jesus’ “brothers” (*adelphoi*; 2:12) and the children (*paidia*) whom God has given Jesus and who share the same flesh and blood with him (2:13–14), while looking forward to the “brothers” (*adelphoi*) he was like in every respect, including having been tempted like them (2:17–18). Some commentators have argued that *sperma Abraam* here extends beyond “the natural descendants of Abraham” (that is, Judeans) to “the whole family of faith.”<sup>33</sup> This would suggest, however, that the author of Hebrews considered non-Judean Christ-followers to be of the “seed of Abraham,” and this view runs against the evidence. For it was, in fact, not inevitable that the early writers of the Christ-movement would claim Abrahamic descent for followers of Christ who were non-Judeans. Several positions were possible in relation to this central prop of Judean ethnic identity. In John 8:39–59 certain Judeans who believed Jesus (8:31) have their claim to descent from Abraham refuted. Paul certainly argues that all Christ-followers (including Greeks) are the seed of Abraham in Galatians, but there, in an extraordinary raid on the collective memory of Israel, he goes so far as to disenfranchise from Abrahamic descent Judeans who were not Christ-followers; this is why “seed of Abraham” in Gal 3:29 is nonethnic in character.<sup>34</sup> In Rom 4, on the other hand, Paul steps back from this, allowing Abrahamic descent to Judeans generally while also claiming it for Christ-followers (Judean or non-Judean).<sup>35</sup> The author of Hebrews adopts a different strategy. In the other two places in Hebrews where this particular “seed” appears (11:12, 18) it has only a literal meaning (as does the related expression, “loins” of Abraham; 7:5, 10) and this is also the case at 2:16. The author is only speaking of Christ-followers who are Judeans.

In Hebrews, therefore, we encounter the remarkable replacement of the ethnic expression “seed of Abraham” with designations evoking kinship that are more suitable to the identity of the new household and family that have come with Christ. Christ-followers are “sons” and brothers of Jesus, as carefully set out in Heb 2:8–18. Although the “sons” in question can only be “sons of God,” that

33. Bruce, *Hebrews*, 51. To similar effect, see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 94, citing Luke 1:55; Gal 3:8–9, 29; 4:28–31; Rom 4:1–25; and John 8:33.

34. Philip F. Esler, “Paul’s Contestation of Israel’s (Ethnic) Memory of Abraham in Galatians 3,” *BTB* 36 (2006): 23–34.

35. Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 184–85.

expression is not found in Hebrews,<sup>36</sup> where only Jesus is expressly called the son of God (4:14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29). We are so used to these expressions, and so unaccustomed to the pull of ethnicity in the meaning of Hebrews, that we largely miss their significance. This type of relationship both undermines and takes precedence over the myth or reality of physical descent from Abraham. While the author's addressees share Judean ethnicity, that is to say, share physical descent, that is not the descent that really matters now. For they are characterized by having God as father and Jesus as their brother. They are, in fact, "holy brothers" (Heb 3:1).

### *A Shared History*

Under this category we are concerned with a shared history or shared memories of a common past, including heroes, events and their commemoration. Such a history played a major role in the maintenance of Judean ethnic identity. Israelite scripture is replete with narratives detailing a long line of figures from the past who are prominent in the pre-history and history of the people: figures like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel and the prophets. In the *Contra Apionem* Josephus devotes great attention to Moses (2.151–89), especially in his role as law-giver.

Hebrews 11, which I have considered in an essay published in 2005, mentions all of the figures from the Israelite past just noted, but recasts most of them by modification of the collective memory of Israel so that they now become characters in the ancestry and history of the Christ-movement. The author does this by considering them under the banner of faith or faithfulness (*pistis*) in a way that contests Israelite tradition and reconstructs Israelite history. In short, these figures are retrospectively enlisted into the Christ-movement.<sup>37</sup> Hebrews 11 contains twenty-four of the thirty-two instances of *pistis* in this text. We will see below how radical this process could become, in the author's attempt to detach Abraham from the Judean connection to the land.

### *A Common Culture, Embracing Customs, Language, and Religion*

Although, as noted above, there are significant problems with using the word "religion" of any group or movement in the first century C.E., especially because our Western notions of religion as a stand-alone phenomena that can be separate

36. Although "children (*tekna*) of God" occurs in John 1:12 in this sense.

37. Philip F. Esler, "Collective Memory and Hebrews 11: Outlining a New Investigative Framework," in *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* (ed. Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher; SemeiaSt 52; Atlanta: SBL, 2005), 151–71.

from politics and the household is very anachronistic relative to that period, it is difficult to avoid the use of “religious” altogether, in the broad sense of pertaining to the relationships between human beings and God or gods.<sup>38</sup> Within the approach to ethnicity being employed in this essay, religious phenomena fall within a broader category of “culture.” This approach finds a strong ancient parallel in the *Contra Apionem*, since Josephus argues that the Judeans have a “culture,” as it were, the Mosaic heritage, which he refers to as their “constitution” (*katas-tasis; politeuma*) or institutions (*epitēdeumata*), and which is made up of *nomoi* (laws and customs) and *eusebeia*, the proper worship of God. While he is always at pains to show that the Judeans are an ethnic group like the others in their context, he also makes clear that for them divine worship has an unusually prominent role; this emerges when he says that Moses “did not make worship (*eusebeia*) a part of virtue (*arête*), but the virtues part of it” (2.170).<sup>39</sup> Josephus gives Moses considerable attention in this text (2.151–89) and even claims Plato followed his example (2.257).

It is very instructive to see how the author of Hebrews goes about separating Judean *eusebeia* from its ethnic context and character and re-casting it in terms suitable for the Christ-movement. The first two verses of Hebrews represent an extraordinary announcement to the effect that much of the previous teaching to the Judean people, namely, that by their prophets, has now been radically overshadowed by what has been heard from Jesus:

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers (*patrasin*) by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world (Heb 1:1–2 RSV).

Here we have three points of contrast: the Son vis-à-vis the prophets, a contemporary teaching vis-à-vis a past one, and a teaching made to “to us” rather than to “our fathers.” While these contrasts surprisingly subvert the widespread first century preference for the old rather than the new,<sup>40</sup> their fundamental purpose is to set the stage for the replacement of ethnic identity by a different identity presented as superior. The author is deliberately challenging the importance, indeed relevance, of the origin and background of the Judeans, especially the links to the people’s ancestors, their “fathers” (*pateres*), factors that Fredrik Barth regards as central to *ethnic* identity.

38. Esler, *Conflict and Identity*, 6–7.

39. Esler, “Josephus’s *Against Apion*,” 84.

40. Philip F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (SNTSMS 57; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 212–17.

After this the author goes to some lengths to assert that the Son, who reflects the glory of God and bears his nature, is superior to the angels (1:3–14). Probably this section is a response to the importance of angelology among first century C.E. Judeans.<sup>41</sup> This sets the stage for building on the dichotomies of verses 1–2 in a new contrast between on the one hand the “message” (*logos*) declared by angels, meaning the law of Moses (2:2),<sup>42</sup> transgression against which led to retribution (2:3), and on the other, that message concerning so great a salvation (*sōteria*) which was *first* declared by the Lord, attested by all who heard him and accompanied by signs and angels (2:3–4). Thus we see the law of Moses, the corner-stone of Judean ethnic culture, put firmly in its place.

This theme is developed in Heb 3, which is devoted to proving the superiority of Jesus over Moses. Once again we need to focus on what is at stake. As we have seen from the *Contra Apionem*, Moses was a pillar of Judean ethnic identity, the one who had given Judeans their characteristic laws, including the right way of worshipping God. Whereas Moses served *as a servant* in God’s house/household, not delivering a law to his people but merely testifying as to what would be spoken later (Heb 3:5), Christ was faithful in God’s household *as a son* (3:6).

Since the central feature of the *eusebeia* of the Judeans before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 C.E. was the cycle of sacrifices offered in the Temple by the high priests and priests, it is not surprising that the author feels drawn to depicting Jesus in these terms. How could he maintain a new identity for members of the movement, different from and superior to Judean ethnic identity, if Jesus did not do everything the priests did and much more so? It is worth noting, indeed, that Jesus is described as high priest ten times and as a priest eight times.<sup>43</sup> The theme is introduced at Heb 2:17, where Jesus is described as the faithful (*pistos*) high priest who will be able to make expiation for the sins of the people, a verse that also marks the beginning of the major faithfulness theme in the letter. Shortly after he is described as the high priest “of our confession” (*homologia*; 3:1), while in the next reference on this theme the author urges that since we have such a high priest “let us hold fast our confession (*homologia*)” (4:14). For he is a high priest “tempted like us yet without sin” (4:15).

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41. See Loren Stuckenbruck, “Angels’ and ‘God’: Exploring the Limits of Early Jewish Monotheism,” in *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism* (ed. Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy E. Sproston North; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 45–70.

42. The role of the angels in giving the law of Moses is not really an explicit Old Testament theme (although the Septuagintal version of Deut 33:2 does mention that angels were with Yahweh on Sinai); nevertheless, it was a belief that developed in the intertestamental period, as evidenced by its appearance in Acts 7:53 and Gal 3:19. See Bruce, *Hebrews*, 28.

43. For Jesus as high priest: Heb 2:17; 3:1; 4:14, 15; 5:5, 10; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11; and for Jesus as priest: Heb 5:6; 7:11, 14, 15, 17, 21; 8:4; 10:21.



There is further discussion of his priesthood during which we encounter the first two references to Christ being a priest forever and a high priest “after the order (*kata tēn taxin*) of Melchizedek” (5:6, 10). This phrase reappears at Heb 6:6, although must wait until Heb 7 to learn what it means. That meaning turns out to involve the remarkable removal of any trace of ethnic identity from Melchizedek so as to qualify him as a predecessor of Jesus as priest and high priest. The author reminds us that Melchizedek met Abraham and blessed him and received a tithe from him (cf. Gen 14:17–24). Having explained his name as “king of righteousness” and “king of peace” the author adds:

He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever (Heb 7:3 rsv).

The Judean ethnic group was built on a belief in physical descent from great figures in the past, like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That belief surfaces unambiguously in Matt 1:2–16. Yet here we find a man greater than Abraham who has no such descent. Indeed, the author repeats the assertion in Heb 7:6, noting that Melchizedek, “who had no named physical descent from them (*mē genealogoumenos ex autōn*),” meaning no ethnic link with the descendants of Abraham (v. 5), took the tithe from Abraham. This shows the superiority of Melchizedek, a man apparently still alive,<sup>44</sup> over Abraham (7:7–8).

And not just from Abraham! Relying on the ancient view that semen contained *homunculi* (miniature, fully-formed human beings), with the woman who gives birth being little more than a receptacle, the author claims that because Levi, the progenitor of Israel’s priests, was in the loins of Abraham, he also acknowledged the superiority of Melchizedek when Abraham did (7:9–10). This meant that a superior form of priesthood existed before the Levitical priesthood, which lay at the heart of Judean *eusebeia*.

In Heb 7:11–16 the author develops this line in relation to Jesus. If perfection had been obtained through the Levitical priesthood, why would a priest be needed after the order of Melchizedek and not Aaron?<sup>45</sup> And indeed, why someone like Jesus, who was from the tribe (*phulē*) of Judah to whom Moses allocated no priestly responsibility (vv. 11–14)? That *physical* descent, a common indicator of ethnic identity, was irrelevant to the priesthood of Jesus is explicitly confirmed

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44. The statement in the text, “of whom it is testified that he lives” (Heb 7:8), which is probably a reference to Melchizedek and not Christ, is apparently based on the fact that his death is not mentioned in Genesis.

45. On perfection, see David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection* (SNTSMS 47; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

shortly after, in the statement that he has become a priest “not according to the mandate of a physical commandment (*entolē sarkinē*),” but “according to the power of an indestructible life” (7:15). Shortly afterwards the author goes so far as to assert that “a former commandment,” presumably the one instituting the Aaronic priesthood (Exod 28:1–3), had been set aside because it was weak and useless (v. 18), for the law made nothing perfect (v. 19). Here we see a notable replacement of an institution fundamental to Judean ethnic identity with something very different, and certainly entirely nonethnic, in character.

### *The Link with the Homeland*

In the *Contra Apionem* of Josephus there is quite a lot of material on the Judean homeland. I have dealt with this in detail elsewhere,<sup>46</sup> so I will merely summarize some of the most prominent data here. Like other Greco-Roman authors Josephus thought the land in which a people was born and raised affected their character and identity. The issue of how the Judeans came to possess the land they now inhabit figures as one of three themes of the work mentioned at the outset (C. Ap. 1.1). There is explicit recognition that the Judeans took their name from the place (1.179). The word Josephus uses to express the notion of homeland, denoting the precise intersection between land and people, is *patris* (appearing nine times in the text). He employs it in relation to the homelands of Judeans, but also of other ethnic groups. At one point he says, “Let each man reflect on his own homeland (*patris*) and household (*oikos*) and he will not disagree with what I have said” (2.284). This plainly indicates his belief that everyone has an identity that derives, in part at least, from their ethnic homeland and family. At one point Josephus acknowledges the reality of diaspora when he notes that however far a Judean may be from his homeland (*patris*), he still fears the Law rather than any despot (2.277).

These views of Josephus typify how a member of an ethnic group typically feels about his or her homeland and can safely be attributed to other Judeans in the latter parts of the first century C.E. A notable feature of Hebrews is that the subject of the Judean homeland (*patris*) receives a specific and highly elaborated treatment in which the role of a homeland, so central to ethnic identity, is entirely subverted. This occurs in Heb 11:8–16.

I have argued elsewhere that in Heb 11 the author contests several aspects of the collective memory of Israel to reconstruct the Israelite past, to establish and maintain a distinctive memory for the Christ-movement.<sup>47</sup> In doing so I focused on the figures of Abel, Enoch and Noah. The approach the author takes to

46. Esler, “Josephus’ *Against Apion*,” 86–88.

47. Esler, “Collective Memory.”

Abraham also reflects the same broad processes, while at the same time unambiguously subordinating a central feature of Judean identity and proposing a much more valid option available for Christ-followers. The author begins by noting that, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out into a place (*topos*) which he was about to receive as an inheritance; and he went out not knowing where he was going" (11:8). The reference is to Gen 12:1–5, where God sends Abraham out of his country and family house to the land (*gē*) that he would show him. Abraham does so, moving from Ur to Canaan, so that his actions reveal his obedience (although neither his obedience nor his faith are explicitly mentioned in Gen 12:1–5).

While there is nothing especially surprising about Heb 11:8, the next verse contains explosive content, even if it is rarely noticed: "By faith he sojourned (*paroikein*) in the land of promise (*gē tēs epangelias*) as if it were a foreign land (*allotria*), living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise" (Heb 11:9). The shock of Heb 11:9 resides in the fact that if Abraham was to receive a land as an inheritance, how could he live there as if it were foreign (*allotria*) and not as its owner? And not live there but sojourn there: this is the only instance of *paroikein* in Hebrews (the only other example in the NT is Luke 24:18, where it means to reside for a period, not permanently). Later Judeans traced their claim to ownership of the land to the fact that God had given it to Abraham. Philo wrote that for Abraham coming to Canaan was like coming home.<sup>48</sup> Commentators generally do not appreciate what the author is up to here, typically by assuming that the reference to a foreign land refers to the period in Egypt (Gen 12:10–13:1) or to the period before Abraham purchased the field of Machpelah near Hebron as a family burial-ground (Gen 23).<sup>49</sup> But in Heb 11 Abraham never receives a land, nor does he even want one, for we are told that he looked forward to a city made by God (11:10), which must be the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22). So much for the role of Abraham in gaining possession of the land for his descendants, a central feature of the ethnic identity of Judeans in the first century C.E.! According to Hebrews the land was irrelevant, since it was the heavenly city, made by God, in which Abraham was interested (11:10). Thus the author knocks away a major prop of Judean ethnicity.

Yet the author does not just sever Abraham's connection with the land. After mentioning how the elderly Sarah conceived because of faith, so that Abraham was able to father innumerable descendants (11:11–12), he goes on to say (11:13), "In accordance with faith, all these (*houtoi pantes*) died, not having received what

48. Philo, *Abraham* 62; noted by Koester, *Hebrews*, 485.

49. Bruce, *Hebrews*, 296–97.

was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers (*xenoi*) and exiles (*parepidēmoi*) on the land (*epi tēs gēs*).<sup>50</sup> On the reading favored by most commentators, *houtoi pantes* refer to Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob. Supporting this view is the notion in verse 15 that they had an opportunity to return to their original land, Ur, if they had wanted to. Yet “all these” probably also include some of the unnamed descendants of Abraham mentioned in the verse immediately prior to this one who could have returned to Ur with the patriarchs as well. The author has a large group of Israelites in mind.

Having made clear that Abraham himself did not receive the land (11:9–10), the author has here further asserted that other Israelites who were descended from him also failed to receive the land God had promised them, that they never settled on the land (the common rendering “on the earth” is a serious mistranslation, since we are still talking here about that land [*gē*] noted as promised to Abraham in 11:9), never owned it, and never regarded it as theirs. Now imagine how Josephus or any other first-century Judean not affected by the Christ-movement would have reacted to such a claim: as a preposterously false denial of a central feature of their ethnic identity. Had not God himself referred to the land as “the land of your fathers” (Gen 31:3)? Reading what the commentators have to say on these two verses offers a salutary reminder of the power of an interpretative tradition to obscure what the text is saying and the usefulness of the social sciences in disclosing that meaning. I have yet to find a commentator who has noticed this point.

The extent to which the author is intent on eliminating the importance of an actual connection with the land of Judea from the minds of his audience is strengthened in the next three verses:

For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a homeland (*patris*). If they were remembering that (homeland) from which they had come out, they would have had an opportunity to return. But now they desire a better (homeland), that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. (Heb 11:14–16)

Most first-century Judeans believed that because of the promises God had made to Abraham they had come into their homeland, and that their claim to possession of the land ultimately stemmed from this promise and from Abraham’s

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50. *Parepidēmos* only appears here and 1 Pet 1:1; 2:11 in the New Testament, but probably means “exile.”

occupation of the land. Yet here is the author of Hebrews telling his addressees that Abraham and his descendants did not regard the land as their homeland at all, and he does so using *patris*, the same word by which Josephus describes the ethnic homeland of Judea. The real homeland for Christ-followers is the heavenly city that God has prepared for them. Therefore, the author fully recognizes the deep connection between Judean ethnic identity and the Judean homeland, and to break that connection he forges for his Judean Christ-follower addressees an argument that seeks to destroy the link between their identity and Judea and to substitute for it an attachment to a very different type of *patris*, the heavenly city. This contrast graphically reveals the distinction between these two types of identities.

### *A Sense of Communal Solidarity*

The evidence for the sense of communal solidarity that certainly exists in Hebrews lies in the data already considered: in the use of household, brotherhood and sonship language, in the centrality of faithfulness, in the idea of their confession, in the notion of their homeland being the heavenly city, and in the fact that they are a people who have perfection (*teleiōtēs*; 6:1) in view and look forward to a promised “rest” (*katapausis*; 3:11, 18; 4:1, 3, 5, 10, 11) and a heavenly city (12:22). The problem here is the richness of the data rather than its paucity and this is an area that would repay further research.

## CONCLUSION

The unknown author of Hebrews obligingly provides the reader of the work with a succinct description of its character and purpose: it is a *logos paraklēseōs*, a word of “exhortation” or “encouragement” (13:22). The author has elsewhere used this noun (or its verbal equivalent, *parakalein*) to describe how his audience should treat one another,<sup>51</sup> and here he uses it of his own efforts in writing to them.

While interesting, this is an emic, or insider, characterization. By investigating Hebrews from a point of view focusing on ethnicity we are pursuing an etic, or detached social-scientific point of view. The argument advanced here represents a worked example in social-scientific interpretation. It relies upon the anthropology of ethnicity both to interrogate the text in new ways and also to organize the answers it offers in response, to provide strong evidence for the extent to which

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51. The noun *paraklēsis* appears at Heb 6:18; 12:5; 13:22 and the verb *parakalein* at Heb 3:13; 10:25; 13:19, 22.

the author of Hebrews was responding to the original Judean ethnic identity of his addressees in all of its primary features. Craig Koester's suggestion, that "the ethnic background of those addressed by Hebrews is unclear" and that "ethnicity was not a primary bond" for those addressees,<sup>52</sup> represents the precise opposite of what this text is about. The author everywhere presupposes the powerful pull of Judean ethnic identity and sets out comprehensively to subvert, manipulate, and redefine its dominant cultural categories and meanings in terms suitable for the Christ-movement by developing a broad counter-identity—of a completely different type—containing a set of altogether more desirable alternatives. That is, indeed, the very purpose of this letter. Given that the author's addressees, wherever they were located, were so influenced by their underlying Judean identity that they were in danger of drifting away from what they had heard (2:1), of not holding fast to their initial assurance to the end (3:14) or, worst of all, of abandoning their Christ-movement identity altogether (which is what succumbing to "an evil heart of faithlessness to fall away from the living God" at 3:12 means), the exhortation and encouragement offered in the letter were sorely needed.

Finally, this essay should not be interpreted at a theological level as a supersessionist enterprise.<sup>53</sup> My aim has been a purely historical one, to interpret how this work would have been understood by its original, very particular audience. New Testament texts respond to the continuing existence of the Judean people and to its destiny in a variety of ways. One of those ways consists of what Paul says in Rom 11:25–32. More fundamentally, the whole notion of supersessionism in relation to first century C.E. phenomena needs to be rethought once we have moved from a Judaism/Christianity two religions model to one that accords with the actual situation: a huge ethnic group spread around the Mediterranean with ancient and impressive institutions and a new and comparatively tiny movement of Christ-followers with a completely different socio-religious identity struggling to maintain its precarious foothold in that world.

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52. Koester, *Hebrews*, 77.

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## GENDER AND THE BODY OF CHRIST: PROBLEMS IN 1 CORINTHIANS

*PHEME PERKINS*

### GENDER STUDIES IN NEW TESTAMENT CRITICISM

With the development of feminist approaches to the study of the New Testament and antiquity generally, studies of gender emerged that addressed the problems of women, whether historical or literary characters in Biblical narrative. Since the available evidence for women's views and experience in antiquity is filtered through lenses provided by male authors, such evidence bears the marks of cultural constructions of women as "Other." What it means to be female is depicted over against an idealized masculine paradigm that defines what it means to be fully human. As Thomas Laqueur observes, the female is a problematic element whether for women who are biologically "female" or males who find themselves classified as such, since "man is the measure of all things, and woman does not exist as an ontologically distinct category ... the standard of the human body and its representations is the male body."<sup>1</sup> Therefore one cannot read references to women in ancient literature as simple mirror images of their actual lives. Ross Kraemer presses this point: "far from corresponding easily and usefully to women's experiences and lives, ancient sources deploy ancient ideas about gender, mapped onto female (and male) characters to explore a range of issues of concern to their largely elite male authors and ancient audiences."<sup>2</sup>

Acknowledging the embedded asymmetry of gender construction in biblical texts challenges many naïve reconstructions of "women in the Bible" or "women

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1. Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 62.

2. Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Unreliable Witnesses: Religion, Gender and History in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 31.

in early Christianity” that proceed on the premise that a sufficiently detailed historical reconstruction of the (unacknowledged) roles played by women in the first century can be opposed to the emerging patriarchal structures of subsequent generations. In their desire to unmask the effects of male domination while providing today’s Christians with a comfortable, biblical basis for affirming women as church leaders, these studies can be criticized as proof-texting a modern agenda.<sup>3</sup> Relationships of domination are internalized in both social structures and self-understandings. Once exposed, these relationships must be subjected to theological or ideological critique at all stages of the tradition. Gender asymmetry also renders problematic another assumption often encountered in contemporary New Testament scholarship, namely, that early Christian language about androgyny refers to an equality for male and female believers. As Dale Martin points out, one should view such texts as “unequal androgyny.” Assimilation to Christ meant incorporation into a “male person” (Gal 3:28). Martin even challenges the common view that gender asymmetry is erased in the eschaton: “He [Paul] can subscribe to androgynous statements without believing that Christian women are equal to Christian men ontologically—or that female will equal male eschatologically.”<sup>4</sup> Fitzmyer objects to the characteristic appeals to Gal 3:28 as evidence for an eschatological androgyne, arguing that the rhetorical intention of the phrase is the irrelevance of social and gender distinctions for baptism into Christ.<sup>5</sup>

Though gender study has been associated with the feminist theological recovery of women’s experience in Biblical studies, scholars have begun to challenge the tendency to focus gender studies entirely on the female.<sup>6</sup> An increasing number of them pose questions about the process of learning “manliness” in antiquity.<sup>7</sup> Even the stereotypical household code ethic, which was initially the feminists’ key to the corruption of an original egalitarian ethos among Christians by the values of a patriarchal culture, can be reframed as an affirmation of “manliness.” Margaret MacDonald points out that the codes not only reinforce male control of women and children, one should also attend to, “the close connection between household

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3. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 32; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008), 407.

4. Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 231–32.

5. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 478.

6. Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, *Gossip and Gender: Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles* (BZNW 164; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 21–29; Jorunn Okland, *Women in Their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space* (London: T&T Clark, 2004).

7. Maud W. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

norms and expectations and the articulation of male leadership structures.”<sup>8</sup> Conflict among males often was played out with accusations that one’s opponent is either “womanish” or “slavish” or both. Public figures had been schooled in habits of dress, grooming, speech and gesture to denote “manliness” from a young age.<sup>9</sup> Individual males were subject to constant scrutiny lest they slip off the masculine end of the scale. Clearly gender definition was perceived as the confluence of both “nature” and “culture”:

The physiognomists, astrologers, and popular moralists of antiquity thought in terms of degrees of gender-conformity and gender-deviance ... but actually divided the male sex into legitimate and illegitimate members, some of whom were unmistakable androgynes, while others were subtly deceitful imposters. Masculinity was still thought to be grounded in “nature,” yet it remained fluid and incomplete until firmly anchored by the discipline of an acculturative process.<sup>10</sup>

Gender studies also intersect with another aspect of investigation that is receiving considerable attention in contemporary discussion, namely, understanding the ways in which the body presents the self to the world and codes for the complex social relations in society. As Jennifer Glancy insists:

various dimensions of social identity in the Roman world, including gender identity and identity as freeborn, free, or slave, worked similarly to inform interpersonal interactions, which were inevitably embodied interactions. Corporal inflection of identity informed the kinds of social arrangements Christians constructed and ultimately informed moral imagining in Christian circles.<sup>11</sup>

Dress served to promote sharp divisions between the elite and the plebs in Roman society. For example, the populace assigned the crowded higher seats of the Roman arena were referred to as “dark clad” (*pullati*) in contrast to the glistening white of the toga clad senatorial class below. With the exception of the Vestal virgins and perhaps the elite, women were pushed to the furthest rungs of seat-

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8. Margaret Y. MacDonald, “Beyond Identification of the Topos of Household Management: Reading the Household Codes in Light of Recent Methodologies and Theoretical Perspectives in the Study of the New Testament,” *NTS* 57 (2011): 65–90 (86).

9. Gleason, *Making Men*, 58–81.

10. *Ibid.*, 80–81.

11. Jennifer A. Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11.

ing.<sup>12</sup> Of course, it is much more difficult to get at the somatic level of “knowing” in reconstructing ancient social relations, than it is for modern anthropologists describing a society to which observers have access. The temptation to simply lift elements from one or more contemporary anthropological theories and paste it on to our fragmentary ancient data often bedevils treatments of the “social world” of early Christianity.

With its explicit references to the contributions of status distinctions, treatment of the body and gender to disruptions in the church, 1 Corinthians provides a fertile area for these areas of research. Sociological interpretations of the conflicts in Corinth provide a methodological entry point for gender analysis.<sup>13</sup> How gender plays out in or behind the conflicts which threaten the community’s social integration makes the analysis even more complex than the model of privileged or elite over against the poorer members of the community.

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:2–16: GENDER DIFFERENCE CONFIRMED IN WORSHIP

The problematic of gender in New Testament studies appears in full view in 1 Cor 11:2–16. Paul’s arguments for imposing a custom, common in other churches though apparently not in Corinth, involve premises grounded in creation, custom and eschatology.<sup>14</sup> If the “shame” and “honor” cultural criteria associated with males (and their hair) in contrast to females whose dishonor could be clearly displayed with shaved heads are highlighted, two further topics essential to gender studies emerge: ambiguous male sexuality and the treatment of slave bodies.<sup>15</sup> Yet the male who prays with covered head shames his “head,” Christ (1 Cor 11:4).<sup>16</sup>

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12. Garrett G. Fagan, *The Lure of the Arena: Social Psychology and the Crowd at the Roman Games* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 105–19.

13. See, for example, Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (trans. John H. Schütz; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); Andrew D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1–6* (AGJU 18; Leiden: Brill, 1993).

14. Judy Gundry-Wolf, “Gender and Creation in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16: A Study in Paul’s Theological Method,” in *Evangelium, Schriftauslegung, Kirche. Festschrift für Peter Stuhlmacher zum 65 Geburtstag* (ed. Jostein Ådna et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 151–71.

15. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “Sex and Logic in 1 Cor. 11:2–16,” *CBQ* 95 (1980): 265–74; Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge*.

16. Francis Watson, *Agape, Eros, Gender: Towards a Pauline Sexual Ethic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 45.

If Paul thinks ahead to the scandalous behavior of elite Corinthians at the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17–34), his “long-haired males” need not be prone to homoerotic activity as Murphy-O'Connor thinks. Roman period art routinely portrays the slaves serving at banquets with long, curled hair.<sup>17</sup> On that reading, the disgrace displayed by long-haired males is that of enslavement. Glancy has pointed out that Paul's rhetorical display of his scarred body in 2 Cor 11:23–25 (and 1 Cor 4:9–13) has nothing to do with the honor accorded the warrior. Paul's beaten flesh evokes the dishonor of a slave or defeated and humiliated gladiator.<sup>18</sup> Paul has both particular, rhetorical reasons as well as theological ones for this treatment of his own body: “Paul boasts of beatings for strategic reasons: his abused body is already the subject of discussion and even derision in Corinth. He also boasts of beatings for theological reasons: he believes that the story of Jesus' death is legible in the scar tissue . . . Paul's share in the sufferings of Jesus is a source of corporal knowledge and ultimately of personal power.”<sup>19</sup>

Does the apostolic self-presentation have any connection to the gendered bodies of male and female prophets in 1 Cor 11:2–16? Or is the apostle caught in the contradiction between apostolic freedom and establishing a viable social order in the Corinthian church? Contemporary exegetes routinely strategize ways of affirming a mutual regard or reciprocity in Christ to override the gender asymmetry by appealing to the subordination of Christ to God and Adam to Christ,<sup>20</sup> or to earlier Pauline teaching. “Paul's teaching on the radical equality of men and women had apparently been misunderstood. Only such a misunderstanding would seem to explain adequately the forceful use of “I want you to understand” . . . (v. 3),” Raymond Collins asserts.<sup>21</sup> Paul's concluding disavowal of any possible dissent on the matter (v. 16) suggests both some insecurity about the persuasiveness of his argument and an importance to the question beyond establishing some uniform dress code. Although it has not been widely adopted, Murphy-O'Connor's efforts to recast the underlying dynamic in terms of anxieties about both male and female sexual identity properly focuses attention on these difficulties. Hellenistic Jewish authors do associate effeminate hair-dressing by males with homosexuality and pederasty (Ps.-Phoc. 210–12; Philo, *Spec.* 3.37–38).<sup>22</sup>

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17. Sandra R. Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 9–10.

18. Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge*, 26–47.

19. *Ibid.*, 47.

20. Morna Hooker, “Authority on Her Head: An Examination of 1 Cor 11:10,” *NTS* 10 (1964): 410–16.

21. Raymond E. Collins, *First Corinthians* (SP 7; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 399.

22. *Ibid.*, 399.

Paul's argument is quite disjointed. The opening "head of" series (v. 3) has not been arranged in a hierarchical order, but in roughly parallel clauses with the first and third landing on "Christ" and "of Christ, God." Consequently the authority underlying what follows is God's. But Paul does not articulate how the metaphorical use of "head" in verse 3 is linked to the specific rules about the actual heads, uncovered or covered, of men and women in the assembly (vv. 4–5a). Studies of Jewish and Roman liturgical traditions and art provide evidence of males covering their heads on the one hand. On the other, the elaborately coiffed hair of Roman matrons might be considered more than acceptable in public even without any form of covering.<sup>23</sup> To sustain the "obvious disgrace" Paul and his audience must be aware of additional factors in the Corinthian situation not represented in the text. Much of the debate over what is going on such as ecstatic prophecy in the mode of some mystery cults or ideological representation of their new equality in Christ turns on hypotheses about such missing information.

Murphy-O'Connor's efforts to construe the passage as addressed to men and women equally founders on the awkwardly formulated additional arguments that are addressed specifically to women's behavior (vv. 5c–6, 10) and the final argumentative section that is clearly framed as a demand that the audience make a judgment about what is appropriate for a woman (vv. 13–15). Consequently, feminist scholars like Antoinette Wire insist that more is at stake than correcting a few bad apples. They suggest that women prophets presented a powerful alternative to Pauline teaching in the community.<sup>24</sup> Wire thinks that the women may have been advancing their own interpretations of Genesis. "They lack the male viewpoint of themselves [males] as originally created to be God's image or of the other sex as created to glorify them."<sup>25</sup> When Paul makes statements about males in this context, he is doing so to support the requirements being imposed on women in the Corinthian assembly.<sup>26</sup>

Gender plays a key role in Paul's personal claims to authority over the conduct of believers. They are to imitate the apostle who stands in the place of a father to these children (1 Cor 4:16). In imitating Paul they learn to imitate Christ (11:1). Indirectly that exhortation endows the apostle with the authority of Christ

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23. David W. J. Gill, "The Importance of Roman Portraiture for Head-coverings in 1 Corinthians 11,2–16," *TynBul* 41 (1990): 245–60.

24. Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 116–34.

25. *Ibid.*, 130.

26. *Ibid.*, 118.

in the expanded hierarchy of power.<sup>27</sup> Most commentators point to the humiliating reversal of worldly values that Paul attaches to preaching Christ crucified and the personal suffering endured by the apostles (2:1–4:13).<sup>28</sup> A feminist gender-critical approach sees the problematic side of this tactic. It may invert elements in the fiercely competitive world of the male competition for power, but it leaves the subjection of women to that power firmly in place.<sup>29</sup> Even with the occasional participation of women in roles ordinarily reserved to males in synagogues or Christian assemblies, one cannot infer that such exceptions threatened or inverted the established codes of male superiority. As Kraemer concludes, “The issue is not really whether some women did or did not study Torah or read Torah in public . . . Only if, in doing so, they not merely threatened, but actually altered the gender systems in which these practices were embedded and constructed could we see these practices as truly transgressive and significant.”<sup>30</sup>

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12–26: ENDOWING THE DISHONORABLE MEMBERS WITH HONOR

Commentators recognize the set political image behind Paul’s description of the community as a body whose diverse members must act harmoniously. The exemplum was so widely used by orators and moralists to underline the disaster of civic discord that it needed no introduction of an audience.<sup>31</sup> “As in the body when inflammation attacks the principal member all the members catch the infection, so the sedition and disorder in the capital gave the scoundrels in the country free license to plunder,” Josephus says of the Jewish War (*J.W.* 4.406–407). Philo pictures the nation united in the prayers of the High Priest, “that every age and every part of the nation regarded as a single body may be united in one and the same fellowship making peace and good order their goal,” (*Spec.* 1.131). In his play, *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare repeats the tactic of the Roman senator Menenius, warning of the disaster when hands teeth and feet rebelled against the belly (Act 1, scene 1; from Livy, *History of Rome* 2.32.7–33.1). But he also puts on stage the gender complexity of male and female bodies, the social character of

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27. Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd Penner, *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse: Thinking Beyond Thecla* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 20.

28. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 223

29. Elizabeth Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1991).

30. Kraemer, *Unreliable Witnesses*, 259.

31. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 458–59.

gender identification and its political ramifications. Shakespeare recognized that the “body politic” is not gender-neutral. It is that of an adult, freeborn, male.

Consider the rebellious assertions by individual body parts in the opening verses. The foot and the ear assert that because they are not the hand and eye respectively, they are not part of the body (1 Cor 12:15–16). The initial riposte drops the foot-hand pair to focus on the sensory organs found in the head. A body cannot be all ear or all eye, since both hearing and sight are necessary (v. 17). Although cast as fictional protests by body parts, these objections evoke a tension evident in the Roman political context, social inferiors, the *plebs*, freedmen or slaves shouting or gesturing rudely at the emperor, the elite, their patrons or masters (Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.36).<sup>32</sup> In the social and political realm such challenges from below were to be firmly put down. “It did not matter whether the person insulted was the emperor or a governor; more often than not insults were met with savagery in order to make an important point. Dio (58.5.3–4) comments that to forgive an offense from someone of higher status is a virtue (it is also pragmatic!), but to forgive an offense from below is folly, a sign of weakness.”<sup>33</sup> By focusing on the fictional dispute between ear and eye, Paul takes a more irenic approach. He calls for recognition of their mutual necessity to the well-being of the whole.

This coordination reflects God’s ordering of the human body (v. 18). When the second riposte to the complaining body parts is given in verse 21, the hand-foot pair returns, but not partnered with each other. Instead it is the eye opposed to the hand; the head to the feet. Rather than present a challenge from inferior to superior as in the first round, this new pairing proceeds from higher to lower.

The social order encoded in the familiar metaphor presumes a hierarchy by which those “lower parts,” feet, hands, teeth and so on, are obedient to the instructions of the superior parts. In the case of the “belly” over against the limbs, it is the senatorial class which provides the nourishment required by the whole. Over against these conventions, Paul’s use of the topos has two unusual features: (a) subordination is muted by lack of a leading member, the “head” is on par with the “foot” (v. 21); and (b) substitution of an “honorable” versus “shameful” dichotomy (vv. 22–24). With an implied allusion to Gen 3:21, Paul suggests that God supplied a strategy of honoring the weaker, dishonorable parts so that the body would not be torn by division (vv. 24b–25). To the “governing” agency problem one suspects a pragmatic rhetoric on the apostle’s part seeking to avoid authorizing a particular individual or group that might further undermine his

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32. Zeba Crook, “Honor, Shame, and Social Status Revisited,” *JBL* 128 (2009): 591–611 (599–600).

33. *Ibid.*, 600.



unique role as founding “father” of the Corinthian church (1 Cor 4:14–21). Its theological correlate substitutes Christ (v. 12), the Spirit (v. 13) and God (vv. 18, 24) as the active agents. In referring the body’s harmonious organization to God, Paul has substituted the creator for the *physis* of philosophic moralists.<sup>34</sup>

The honor/shame designation is more ambiguous. The categories commonly used in New Testament scholarship rely on anthropological models that have been challenged for discounting the ways in which women contend for and embody honor.<sup>35</sup> If the “shameful” members are construed in social categories, then Paul might be referring back to “those who do not have (anything),” the divisions referred to in 1 Cor 11:17–22. But if “shameful” refers to sexual organs, as in the numerous terracotta male genitalia excavated in the Asclepius sanctuary,<sup>36</sup> then the issue of gender asymmetry returns. “Necessary member” (v. 22) can designate the male sexual organ (Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.45, 75, 80).<sup>37</sup> Are the three alpha-privative expressions, *asthenestera* (“weaker”), *atimotera* (“dishonored”), and *aschēmona* (“shameful”), in synonymous parallelism all referring to the same object? Or do they designate different bodily and social entities?

Does Paul’s “dressed up” body include women? Or has he effectively forgotten about their role in the assembly? Unlike Gal 3:28, the formulaic reference to baptismal unity in 1 Cor 12:13 makes no mention of “male and female,” a phrase that echoes Gen 1:27. Fitzmyer considers that distinction irrelevant, arguing that the Genesis allusion was insignificant to the rhetorical use of the expression in Gal and to incorporation of the formula in First Corinthians. He argues that 1 Cor 12:13 is a parenthetical remark between verses 12 and 14 which joins the section to verses 4–11 and includes diverse ethnic and social groups.<sup>38</sup>

Consistent attention to questions of gender does not permit such a rapid dismissal of the issue. The “dishonorable necessary members” (v. 22) most likely refers to the male sexual organ,<sup>39</sup> though female genitalia can be coded in association with the veiled head. Martin notes that examination of the head was employed in diagnosing gynecological problems.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, women have appeared repeatedly in the letter: Chloe’s people (1:11), an illicit wife (5:1), prostitutes (6:16), Christian women who are married (7:1–5), divorced (7:10–16),

34. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 460.

35. Crook, “Honor, Shame,” 598–609.

36. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 462.

37. *Ibid.*, 465.

38. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 474.

39. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1008; Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 95.

40. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 237–38.

unmarried/not yet married (7:25–28, 36–38) or widowed (7:8–9, 39–40), wives of Peter and other apostles (9:4–5), praying and prophesying in the assembly (11:3–16). The last instance focused the language of honor and shame on the exposure or veiling of the female head. The head makes another appearance in the personified body parts that Paul employs here. The prior images cannot have disappeared from the audience's mind. Therefore, attributing the erasure of gender difference to concern about Corinthian misunderstandings of sexuality in 1 Cor 5–7 as Collins does hardly seems an adequate response to the troubling ambiguity of this passage.<sup>41</sup>

Martin draws the logical conclusion from these ambiguities. Paul shares the larger cultural view that female bodies are weaker, more easily attacked by malign influences, than those of males.<sup>42</sup> He does not treat gender differences with the same hermeneutic applied to ethnic and social divisions between males. Martin observes, "Paul does not do for women in the church what he has, to some extent, attempted for slaves, Gentiles, and people of low economic status."<sup>43</sup>

### CONCLUSION: AGAPĒ BEYOND SHAME AND GENDER

Gender criticism with its attention to bodily codes of honor and shame has raised new questions about the extent to which canonical Christian texts presume social relationships that ought to be challenged or even discarded.<sup>44</sup> By contextualizing the body language of 1 Corinthians within the discourses of ancient medical and philosophical views of the body, Martin has shown how problematic this Pauline heritage is. Paul has engaged in powerful gestures that destabilize the hierarchy of elite domination by invoking an apocalyptic value system associated with Christ crucified.<sup>45</sup> The rhetoric of unity and mutuality employed in 1 Cor 12:12–30 rejects the routine objective of such speeches, namely, "to solidify social hierarchy by averting lower class challenges to the so-called natural status structures."<sup>46</sup>

Watson suggests that the ambiguity of early Christian texts on key issues of sexuality and gender should be tested against agape:

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41. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 463.

42. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 233–42.

43. *Ibid.*, 232.

44. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983); "Rhetorical Situation and Historical Reconstruction in I Corinthians," *NTS* 33 (1987): 386–403.

45. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, xvii.

46. *Ibid.*, 46.

it is agape that must provide the final criteria for Christian reflection on sexuality and gender. But this agape is not present to us in unmediated form, and can only be articulated through engagement with the canonical texts. What these texts say or do not say about sexuality and gender must be read in light of their unique and irreplaceable testimony to the divine agape that has taken the form of a corresponding human agape, in Jesus and, through his Spirit, in a community in which there are both men and women, together and not apart from one another.<sup>47</sup>

The hermeneutical circle in this instance involves contemporary reflection on Christian experience and praxis. Watson's phrase "their unique and irreplaceable testimony to divine agape" might suggest that this normative agape has been embedded in Scripture like a pearl in the oyster just waiting to be liberated from its shell. Of course that is not the meaning that Watson intends. His own hermeneutical method of employing contemporary literary and philosophical reflection, Virginia Wolfe juxtaposed with 1 Cor 11:3–16, for example, points to the way forward.<sup>48</sup> Wolfe's reflections on the masculine gendering of the military and the church led her to advocate a feminism that called for separation. To be included in the chain of command or the ecclesiastical hierarchy only reinforces the structures of male domination by requiring the women admitted to replicate them.

The vision of communal agape that Watson articulates requires that Christians resist the siren call of separation. By revising a political metaphor that usually coded for the honor and dominating authority of an elite in 1 Cor 12:12–30,<sup>49</sup> Paul suggests that the social norms of power and status do not apply within the Christian assembly. Since this section opens with a clear reference to the rite by which persons become its members, baptism (1 Cor 12:12–13), there is no explicit challenge to the larger political order in this passage. But a first century c.e. audience must have picked up its unusually mild tone, since they would have anticipated a harsh rebuke to those lowly members. By attributing to Paul the high authority his letters have in the Christian canon, interpreters misread his tone. Thus Scott Bartchy insists that Paul's personal conduct did not appropriate for himself the powers of a *pater familias*.<sup>50</sup> Instead of the harsh rebuke that demands conformity to the speaker's will, Paul's tone and demeanor are therapeutic.<sup>51</sup>

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47. Watson, *Agape, Eros, Gender*, ix.

48. *Ibid.*, 3–39.

49. Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1002.

50. S. Scott Bartchy, "Who Should Be Called 'Father'? Paul of Tarsus between the Jesus Tradition and *Patria Potestas*," in *The Social World of the New Testament. Insights and Models* (ed. Jerome H. Neyrey and Eric C. Stewart; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2008), 163–80 (173–75).

51. *Ibid.*, 176.

Gender studies require us to press the question further. Challenging the social structures which shape male identity and relationships does not transfer to those involving females.<sup>52</sup> The overblown crescendo to the argument for women prophets veiling their heads, with its allusion to endangered or endangering angels (1 Cor 11:10), has only one purpose, to demand submission. Insofar as the women prophesying in the assembly conform, they participate in their own erasure. The “authority” on the head of the veiled prophet is at the same time symbolic of her weakness.<sup>53</sup> Paul in effect insists upon retaining the cultural gender distinctions of the first century C.E.<sup>54</sup> Social propriety and church discipline coincide (1 Cor 11:13–16).<sup>55</sup> The erotic patterns of male desire projected onto the angels may be responsible for the peculiar argument about the angels in 1 Cor 11:10.<sup>56</sup> Believers today, who no longer share that social construction of gender or the medical views of the female body assumed by Paul and his readers, should challenge Paul’s conclusions.<sup>57</sup> They rightly ask that the vision of communal agape employed to unsettle the constructs of status, honor and power among males be expanded to the gendered body of Christ.

The veiling of female prophets cut off more than the erotic gaze of males (or angels). It became a barrier to agape.<sup>58</sup> In the Pastoral Epistles women have been cut off from a teaching ministry (1 Tim 2:11–15) and confined to the private spaces in which women assemble with each other (1 Tim 5:2–8).<sup>59</sup> Thus the veil that made the female prophet invisible also made her inaudible.<sup>60</sup> In the hermeneutical dialectic between sacred text, communal tradition, scientific knowledge, and women’s experience today some of the ears need to listen and the eyes to see what has been excluded as “Other.” Agape is hardly evident in the solution Jesus gives to Peter’s proposal that he exclude Mary Magdalene in *Gos. Thom.* 114: “Jesus said, ‘Look, I shall guide her to make her male, so that she too may become

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52. Vander Stichele and Penner, *Contextualizing Gender*, 46.

53. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 243–47.

54. Dieter Zeller, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament Bd.5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 363.

55. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 409–10; Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Why Aren’t Jewish Women Circumcised? Gender and Covenant in Judaism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 72.

56. Zeller, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 359–60.

57. Gundry-Wolf, “Gender and Creation.”

58. Watson, *Agape, Eros, Gender*, 53–54.

59. *Ibid.*, 73–74; Kartzow, *Gossip and Gender*, 7–28.

60. Watson, *Agape, Eros, Gender*, 72.

a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter heaven's kingdom."<sup>61</sup>

### FOR FURTHER READING

- Bartchy, S. Scott. "Who Should Be Called "Father"? Paul of Tarsus between the Jesus Tradition and *Patria Potestas*." Pages 163–80 in *The Social World of the New Testament: Insights and Models*. Edited by Jerome H. Neyrey and Eric C. Stewart. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2008.
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61. Marvin Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 153.



## REFLECTIONS ON THE CANON, ITS ORIGINS, AND NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION

*James Hamilton Charlesworth*

Jews and Christians revere “the Bible.” This collection of books preserves ancient writings that many salute as “God’s Word.” Over the past five decades and in light of perspectives of a global culture and research on the formation of “the Bible” and canonical criticism, it is pertinent to ask: What is the Bible? How should it be defined? In which documents do we now find God’s Word for all humans? For Jews, the Bible, the Written Torah, contains twenty-four books (which, in a different order, comprise the thirty-nine books in the Christians’ Old Testament). All these biblical books are dated before 164 B.C.E. and were later collected to comprise “the Hebrew Bible.” For most Jews, God’s Word also includes the Oral Torah, perceived to be given by God at Sinai, first codified in the Mishnah between 200 and 220 C.E. and later interpreted quintessentially in the Babylonian Talmud of the sixth century C.E. It is now wise to realize that as the New Testament reflects continuity with the Old Testament, so the Mishnah and Talmudim are in continuity with the linguistic features and perspectives of the latest tendencies in the Old Testament (and Mishnaic philology and halakot are evident in works composed at Qumran, like *Some Works of the Torah* and documents that probably received their final editing at Qumran like the *Temple Scroll*).

For present-day Christians, the Bible includes all the books in the Hebrew Bible (sometimes according to the Hebrew and sometimes according to the Septuagint version) and designated “the Old Testament.” They also consider divinely inspired twenty-seven documents composed between 48 C.E. and up to 150 C.E. and labeled “the New Testament.” Thus, Jews acknowledge a canon of twenty-four (thirty-nine books for Christians) but Christians have a canon of sixty-six books and perhaps others deemed “deuterocanonical.” Roman Catholics affirm “the canonicity” of eighty books (the additional books are “OT Apocrypha” for

Protestants).<sup>1</sup> The Eastern Orthodox Church accepts the canon of the Septuagint and the “Anaginoskoinena Books” (the Protestant or Apocrypha) are worthy “to be read,” but this Church uses the word “canon” to denote “the canon law” which numbers eighty-five (the Eastern Orthodox Church reads the Greek NT [but shuns the NA27] and has not produced an English translation but one is now needed especially in the United States). The Ethiopian Church has canonized Jubilees and 1 (Ethiopic) Enoch (widely considered documents in the OT Pseudepigrapha).<sup>2</sup> Mormons have an open canon, including “the Book of Mormon,” “the Pearl of Great Price,” and “the Doctrine and Covenants.”

Sociologically and theologically, Jews are frequently informed and defined by books not in the canon. That is, they memorize, read meditatively, and honor the wisdom in the Mishnah, the Talmudim, and in other Jewish writings accepted as “sacred.” Among the latter are the works of Maimonides or Rambam (1135–1204). Similarly, Christians are traditionally defined by the tomes of Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, or Karl Barth. For Jews and Christians today, the biblical canon may be judged to be closed, but additional books are also accorded honor as containing inspired words full of illumination.

Jews and Christians not only have different “collections” but also define, interpret, and perceive the Bible in markedly different ways. Different interpretations are tantamount to having a different book in the Bible. Following Luther (1483–1546), some Christians (“Protestors” or “Protestants”) rejected “Church tradition” as the norm for defining theology and morality. For these “Protestants” “only Scripture” (or canon) is sufficient for declaring and understanding salvation. As a result some books previously considered canonical by most early scholars of the Church (defined as the Apocrypha by Protestants), were rejected as “noncanonical” or relegated to secondary status within the canon. Protestants have not reached a clear agreement regarding the value of these so-called apocryphal books for Christian nurture and faith; some of these books continue to be exceptionally authoritative for some communities.

Since the sixteenth century, scholars (not only Protestants) have recognized the following regarding the biblical canon:

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1. The works in the Apocrypha of the Old Testament appear in many collections (notably the NRSV).

2. For works in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, see James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983–1985; now Yale Anchor Bible Series).



1. that this “unconditional norm” represents not “One Voice” but many opinions;<sup>3</sup>
2. that the search for a “center” may be conditioned by the presupposition that there is a center;
3. that during the time of Jesus “canon” was not a refined concept;
4. and that many pre-70 C.E. Jews affirmed God’s will was manifest in documents never canonized, but they were deemed *Scriptura* by various groups of Jews like those at Qumran and those who composed over centuries the Books of Enoch (*1 En.*).

What, then, is the “sure foundation” for theology and dogma? What books and what versions of them can be accepted as “God’s Word” and the basis for theological tomes?

Such questions indicate that few areas of biblical research shake the foundations of “biblical faith” as much as the far-reaching dimensions of canonical criticism (which often now includes textual criticism). This area of research becomes more complicated, yet enriching, when a perspective that is global and not Eurocentric enriches canonical criticism.

In light of these reflections, the present essay attempts to introduce the many questions and few answers that appear as we explore the origins of “the canon” and its importance for interpretation. The essay is not so much a status quaestionis of canonical criticism as it is a reflection on a field of research that has become exciting and enlightening.<sup>4</sup>

## THE OLD CONSENSUS

When distinguished colleagues, like Harry Attridge, were in college and graduate school in the 1950s and 1960s, canonical criticism was not a hot subject for discussion. Why? Many church historians and biblical scholars assumed that the Old Testament canon had been set long before, and perhaps finalized, at Yavneh (Jamnia) under the leadership of Johanan ben Zakkai, Rabban, “Our Master”

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3. I recall how in the sixties “biblical theology” became pejorative for many biblical scholars who emphasized that the biblical canon had been forced into a unity by nonbiblical agendas. Over the past decades, scholars tend to agree that the programs of Gerhard von Rad, Walther Eichrodt, and Rudolf Bultmann reflected more their authors’ contexts than the contexts of the biblical scrolls (or books).

4. It is a pleasure to honor Harry Attridge with these reflections. He and I have been colleagues and friends in many venues and international seminars since the early seventies. Harry achieves a rare mixture of erudition and humility.

(ca. 15 B.C.E.?–90 C.E.?), the most distinguished disciple of Hillel (*m. 'Abot* 2.8; *y. Ned.* 5.39b), a Pharisee, but not of the princely house or a purported Davidic like Hillel.

Jews divide the Hebrew canon into the Torah (or Law; תורה, *tôrâ*), the Prophets (נביאים, *nəbî'im*), and the Writings (כתובים, *kəṭûbîm*).<sup>5</sup> For millennia, leading Jewish and Christian scholars assumed that the Old Testament was canonized and closed successively, in this order: the Law by the fifth century B.C.E., the Prophets about the third century B.C.E., and the Writings shortly before the second century B.C.E. (as attested by the documents collected into the Septuagint).

Although Jews traditionally did not use the word “canon,” they tended to agree that sacred books, the books of prophecy (widely defined) ended with Malachi. That is, long before the first century C.E. the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) had been defined. Daniel was assumed (incorrectly) to be dated to the Babylonian Exile, so it was included in the canon.

What about the “Christian” canon? Before about 1960, New Testament experts and theologians often taught with clarity that the New Testament canon was closed during the fourth century C.E., during the debates at Nicaea (325), and was officially recognized by Athanasius in his Festal Letter of 367 C.E. The consensus was simply repeated and not challenged. These scholars overlooked three major factors. First, they assumed incorrectly that Nicaea was a council organized to define canon. Second, they failed to ponder the concept of “canon” reflected in authoritative collections of books, in papyri and codices like Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Third, they overlooked the quasi-canonical and even canonical (at least to some early Jews and Christians) documents like the *Books of Enoch*; this collection of Jewish writings is alluded to, and even quoted, within the New Testament<sup>6</sup> and revered as “scripture” by numerous early church authorities such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and especially Tertullian, who thought that Enoch composed the work with the help of “*Spiritus Sanctus*.”<sup>7</sup> Some other non-Jewish documents, even Greek and Roman works often branded as “pagan” compositions, are alluded to and even cited by New Testament authors.<sup>8</sup> Thus, we face

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5. Contrast the tripartite scheme of *Ptolemy to Flora*; the Valentinian Ptolemy taught that the Pentateuch was not from one author; it represents what belongs to God, what belongs to Moses, and what belongs to “the elders” who were with Moses.

6. See not only Jude 14–15 which cites *1 Enoch* but also Matt 19:28 which seems to be influenced by the *Parables of Enoch*.

7. Tertullian’s celebration of *1 Enoch* as “an inspired composition, and as the genuine production of him whose name it bears” was pointed out at the beginning of modern research on *1 Enoch* by Richard Laurence, *The Book of Enoch* (Oxford: Parker, 1833), xv.

8. Notably Aratus’s *Phaenomena* 5 in Acts 17:28, Epimenides’ *De oraculis* in Titus 1:12, Euripides’ *Bacch.* 795 in Acts 26:14, Heraclitus in 2 Pet 2:22, and Menander in 1 Cor 15:33

another question: If a work is quoted in the canon does it have revelatory status? For conservative scholars, these quotations are only illustrations of a point. If so, what is the relation between an illustration in Scripture, "revelatory status," and canon?<sup>9</sup>

### SEEKING A NEW CONSENSUS

Beginning in the 1960s the consensus that had held for millennia seemed imprecise, even wrong, and ceased to be supported. Scholars began to see that the Old Testament canon had not been closed by the end of the first century and that the New Testament canon was not defined in 312 C.E. or in the fourth century. On the canon within Judaism, clarifying and on target is the judgment of Jacob Neusner:

The Judaism of the sages, as portrayed in the fourth-century documents, is not a canonical system at all. For revelation does not close or reach conclusion. God speaks all the time, through the sages. Torah speaks of God's revelation of God's will to Moses, our rabbi. The Scriptures fall into the category of Torah, but they do not fill that category up. Other writings, and, more important, other things besides books, fall into that same category.<sup>10</sup>

Since about 1970, scholars slowly and sometimes reluctantly rejected the previous consensus that there had been two Old Testament canons, one for Alexandria and another for Palestine. Could this concept have developed by realizing a different collection in the Hebrew Scriptures and in the Septuagint? Did it result from a misreading of Origen (*apud* Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25) and Jerome (*Prologus in Libro Regum*) who from Palestine questioned the authority of an alleged Alexandrian canon?

Research on the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old and New Testaments became hot topics, thanks in part to the discovery of the Qumran Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Codices. Gradually experts

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9. See the reflections by John M. Court, David A. deSilva, Loren T. Stuckenbruck, Jack R. Levison, James D. G. Dunn, Craig A. Evans, Gerbern S. Oegema, David E. Aune, James H. Charlesworth, and Lee M. McDonald in *The Pseudepigrapha and Christian Origins: Essays from the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* (ed. James H. Charlesworth and Gerbern S. Oegema; Jewish and Christian Texts in Contexts and Related Studies 4; New York: T&T Clark, 2008).

10. Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and Christianity in the Age of Constantine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 124.

perceived at least four phenomena: First, now we possess a vast amount of previously unknown documents apparently judged “scriptural” by more Jews than the Qumranites and by more Christians than those in Rome. It became clear that the Old Testament canon was not closed in the first century. Second, while there are no extant proceedings of the meetings in Jamnia or at Usha (ca. 140 C.E.), their concern was not on defining a canon but on *halakah* and, *inter alia*, discussing the authority (not canonicity) of *Sirach* (*Ecclesiasticus*), Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes (Qohelet), and Esther (cf. *m. Yad.* 3.5; *b. Meg.* 7a).<sup>11</sup> Third, the diversity of text types within biblical books indicated a fluid biblical scribal tradition of “Scripture” and the Masoretic Text (or Proto-Masoretic Text) was not an obviously dominant one among the approximately twelve different types of biblical texts. Fourth, Christian communities in various parts of the world today have different canons and claim ancient traditions to support them.

In the late-first century C.E., Josephus and the author of 4 *Ezra* refer to books sacred to Jews; but these authors discuss neither what is in their lists nor what is out of a “canon.” In *Contra Apionem*, Josephus records a teaching probably held by some Pharisees:

From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets. . . . We have given practical proof of our reverence for our own Scriptures (*tois idiois grammasi*). For, although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured either to add, or to remove, or to alter a syllable; and it is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth, to regard them as the decrees of God (*theou dogmata*), to abide by them, and, if need be, cheerfully to die for them. (*C. Ap.* 1.41–42; Thackeray in LCL)

What is imperative here is the evidence that Scriptures are those writings that one is willing to die for (*ei deoi, thnēskein*; also see *C. Ap.* 2.219, 233). Josephus refers to “prophets,” the laws, and “allied documents.” It is not clear what books he means or what versions of them he knows.

Josephus defends his party’s preference for the cessation of prophecy and the superiority of the earliest of writings. He may allude to some ill-defined collection

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11. See Albert C. Sundberg, *The Old Testament of the Early Church* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964). Sundberg demonstrated that rabbis at Jamnia did not vote to close the “Old Testament” canon. Contrast the modern sensitivity with the old dogmatism found, e.g., in Albert Scheinin, *Die Hochschule zu Jamnia (Yavneh) und ihre bedeutendsten Lehrer: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Jüdischen Tradition* (Halberstadt: Meyer, 1878).

by mentioning writings important for conduct and not adding to or subtracting from them. But he scarcely mentions what is in “our own Scriptures” (if that is the best translation). It is possible to equate Josephus’s report with a closed canon only by deducing from other texts that such a decision had already occurred and that he supported it. Both elements in the argument are missing.

Josephus exaggerates when he reports that “to our own time the complete history has been written.” As a priest and well-read Jew, it is evident that Josephus must have known about writings some Jews considered sacred. His reference to the “complete history” since Artaxerxes means he knows about documents not in Scripture; these other writings have “not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records.” He obviously means that writings since “Artaxerxes” (probably Artaxerxes I who was king from 465 to 424 B.C.E.; cf. *Ezra* 7:12) are judged inferior to earlier documents.

He seems defensive but not threatened by another group. After all he was a Pharisee and they usually had control in religious matters. Other groups can be surmised, since numerous Jews (like the Qumranites) revered documents that showed the exact succession of the prophets had not ceased. Before 70 C.E. in diverse communities, many Jews claimed that prophecy was alive and that inspired books (equal to the canon) were composed. Josephus seems to know this fact when he refers to the Essenes as Jews who show extraordinary interest in ancient writings that provide insight for healthy souls and bodies (*J.W.* 2.136).

The Jewish author of *4 Ezra* 14, in the latter decades of the first century C.E., received a revelation that there are ninety-four sacred books. Of these twenty-four are to be published but seventy are to be given only to the wise:

And when the forty days were ended, the Most High spoke to me, saying, “Make public the twenty-four books that you wrote first and let the worthy and the unworthy read them; but keep the seventy that were written last, in order to give them to the wise among your people. For in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge.” (*4 Ezra* 14:45–47; Metzger in *OTP* 1.555)

The relevance of this passage for the evolution of the canon is not crystal clear, and is couched in terms of a revelation only to Ezra who “was called the scribe of the knowledge of the Most High forever and ever” (Syriac of *4 Ezra* 14:48). The author knows about some books written “first;” but scarcely describes them as a closed canon. Only “the wise” receive seventy books that contain “the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge.” One can easily imagine that these books are superior to the earlier books that even “the unworthy” may read. In fact, the books written “first” cannot be the most

important books. The ninety-four, or even seventy, books may constitute a canon but not one book is named; moreover, seventy books remain secret.<sup>12</sup>

The books are only numbered; in fact the entire passage bristles with numerology. The numbers are symbolic: forty (as the forty years after the Exodus), twenty-four (as in calendars), one (“first”), and seventy (recall the discussions about the LXX). The author is emphasizing the esoteric nature, even ineffableness of divine wisdom. The author’s intentionality is to demote the importance of anything, even an institution, in light of secret revelation—after all we are being allowed to read “the Apocalypse of Ezra” and what the archangel Uriel revealed to him. Ezra, the scribe of the Most High, is the only one chosen for revealed knowledge.

A *baraita* in the Babylonian Talmud, *Bava Batra* which may date from 70 to 200 C.E.,<sup>13</sup> lists the names of the twenty-four books that define the Hebrew Bible (*B. Bat.* 14b–15a).<sup>14</sup> The author explains, for example, what was written by Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Jeremiah, “Hezekiah and his colleagues” (*sic*), “the men of the Great Assembly,”<sup>15</sup> and Ezra. Since this important tradition was not included in the Mishnah, it probably did not have the approval of most rabbinic Jews by the end of the second century. Likewise, debates regarding some books and their worthiness of being in the canon continued within Judaism, especially within Palestine, until the sixth century.<sup>16</sup>

About the same time as Josephus and the author of *4 Ezra*, the New Testament authors referred to the “Old Covenant,” or “Old Testament.” Applying Exod 34:33b, 35 to the Jewish unbelief of “the good news,” Paul argued that their minds were hardened and the veil hides their perception: “But their minds were hard-

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12. This early tradition seems mirrored in the *Gospel of Thomas* (which may date from the early decades of the second century though earlier traditions are preserved in it). Note the following: “His [Jesus’] disciples said to him: ‘Twenty-four prophets (*prophētēs*) prophesied in Israel and they all prophesied concerning (lit. “in”) you.’” (*Gos. Thom.* 52). Later Victorinus (ca. 260), bishop of Pettau and the earliest exegete of the Latin Church, in his *Commentary on Revelation* 4.7–10 and Jerome (ca. 390) in his *Prologus in Libro Regum* judged that references to twenty-four elders meant twenty-four books.

13. The Amoraim of the third to the sixth centuries carried on the tradition of twenty-four books; see *b. Ta’an.* 8a; *Num. Rab.* 13.16, 14.4, 18; 18.21; *Song. Rab.* 4.11; *Eccl. Rab.* 12.11–12. I am indebted to Lee M. McDonald for discussions on these texts.

14. The Twenty-four are as follows (in the order given): Job, the Pentateuch, Joshua, Samuel, Judges, Ruth, Psalms, Jeremiah, Kings, Lamentations, Isaiah, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Ezekiel, 12 Minor Prophets, Daniel, Esther, Ezra, and Chronicles.

15. Most scholars now judge that “the men of the Great Assembly” is a topos and not a historical event.

16. See the informed and clear discussion by Lee M. McDonald, *The Biblical Canon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 160–65.

ened. Indeed, right up to the present day, when the old covenant is read out loud (*epi tē anagnōsei tēs palaias diathēkēs*), that same veil remains there” (2 Cor 3:14). The “Old Covenant (or Testament)” refers to “the Old Scriptures,” but it is uncertain what documents and what versions of them are thereby denoted. Perhaps the “Old Covenant” is more a theological term than a category or canon. Not until about 170 C.E., with Melito of Sardis and Irenaeus, are the terms “Old Testament” and “New Testament” used clearly to refer to sacred scriptures.

While the Gnostics did not apparently use the concept “the Old Testament” they did refer to the “Law,” “Pentateuch” (*Flor.* 33.4.1), and “the Prophets” (Basilides, according to Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.24.5), judging that the God who established the Law is not “the perfect god” (e.g., *Flor.* 33.7.3). Clement of Alexandria (Titus Flavius Clemens; ca. 150–ca. 215) and Tertullian of Carthage (Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullian; ca. 160–ca. 225) employed the concepts “the New Testament” and “the Old Testament,” but they do not inform us of what books are in each category. A category of unspecified books should not be declared a “canon,” and when these gifted scholars wrote there was no consensus on what books are in the Old Testament. For example, do the Psalms end at 150, as with the Hebrew Scriptures, with 151, as with the Septuagint, or with 155, as at Qumran and in some Syriac collections?

Following Jer 31:31—“The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant (*bērīt ḥādāšā; diathēkēn kainēn* [διαθήκην καινήν LXX]) with the house of Israel and the house of Judah”—and perhaps influenced by the Qumran concept of a “New Covenant,”<sup>17</sup> New Testament authors often refer to “the New Covenant” or “New Testament” (cf. Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:8, 13; 9:15, and 12:24).<sup>18</sup> It is imperative to observe, however, that in none of these references is a collection of sacred books presented.

As we explore the possibility of a new consensus regarding the origins of the canon, we need to perceive that now scholars who have studied the Council of Nicaea disclose that uncertainty surrounds what happened during this “First Council.” It is clear that the Emperor Constantine was the *Pontifex Maximus*, but we do not know who chaired the Council or where Eusebius (ca. 260–ca. 340) sat. No doubts or uncertainty appears when one explores the need for this Council; debates regarding Christology led to a need for some order, some definition of faith, and more harmony within the Church. Priests did not gather at Nicaea in

17. The “New Covenant” appears among the Qumran Scrolls only in CD, see CD 6.19, 8.21, 19.34, 20.12; cf. the restoration in 1QpHab 2.3.

18. The longest continuous Old Testament quotation in the New Testament is in Heb 8:8–12; the author cites Jer 31:31–34.

325 to decide what was in and what was out of a biblical canon. They convened to agree on the *regula fidei*.

Much is claimed about a closed New Testament canon of Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria (ca. 296–373). Athanasius' *Thirty-ninth Festal Letter* of 367 was not an official announcement regarding a canon recognized by the Church and it was not determinative for Christians even in Egypt (let alone Rome and Antioch). The list seems to be a statement of what Athanasius expected his congregation to recognize. He does list the twenty-seven books found in the present canon, but some copies of his letter do not include Hebrews. These twenty-seven books are also listed by the Council of Rome of 382, confirmed by Augustine and a council at Hippo in 393, and later reconfirmed by the Third Council of Carthage in 397, but church historians and specialists on canon criticism warn that the canon was not finalized once and for ever by these decisions.

It is evident that these early Councils did not represent the global dimensions of the expanding Church. For example, Melito, the insightful Bishop of Sardis (who died about 190), issued a canon list and supplied names for the books included as the “books of the Old Testament (*ta tēs palaias diathēkēs biblia*)”; but the list does not contain Esther and includes the *Wisdom of Solomon* (*apud Eusebius Hist. eccl.* 4.26). Moreover, Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem (ca. 315–386), included *Baruch* and the *Epistle of Jeremiah* in his collection or canon.

Perhaps, the first council to discuss books that should define a canon was at Hippo in 393; the records were lost, but they were reaffirmed in Carthage in North Africa from about 393 to 419; but other works could be also read as scripture.<sup>19</sup> A defined canon was articulated much later at the Council of Trent (1545–1563). This Council did focus on rejecting “forbidden” books in 1562 but the sessions sought primarily to answer and declare as heretical the opinions of Luther and those influenced by him. Scholars tend to agree that before the fourth century, many gospels, epistles, acts, and apocalypses were often accorded authority (canonicity) by many communities; and like the Temple before 70 C.E., Rome was both a stimulus for unity and a cause of disunity as the canonical process continued.

Canonical criticism, today, is thus a lively aspect of biblical research and the study of Early Judaism and Church History.<sup>20</sup> As research becomes less myopically Western, the issue of what is in the canon becomes more problematic.

19. See “Table C-2: New Testament Lists from the Fourth Century,” in McDonald, *The Biblical Canon*, 446–51.

20. I acknowledge indebtedness to conversations with Lee M. McDonald, perhaps the dean of specialists on the canon. See his authoritative and up-to-date works listed above in “For Further Reading.”



In Ethiopia, the canon is a loose category that traditionally contains eighty-one books including *Jubilees* and *1 Enoch*; but the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has not affirmed a complete (or closed) Geez or Amharic Bible.<sup>21</sup>

In Syria, the Apocalypse of John and other documents are not in the New Testament. Among the Mormons (Latter Day Saints) more books are judged to be within the canon, and we hear the charge that a closed canon must clarify not only what is within but also what is without. Many documents some experts contemplate could be perceived within the canon were most likely unknown to some of the early Jews (the *Temple Scroll* and the *Books of Enoch*) and Christians (*Odes of Solomon* and the *Gospel of Thomas*) who imagined they had a well-defined Scripture, or canon.

Also, scholars are now facing a major problem. The Septuagint preserves versions of the Hebrew Bible that now appear in Hebrew manuscripts preserved at Qumran. Similarly, we now see pre-70 C.E. Hebrew copies of 1 and 2 Samuel and Jeremiah that are not the versions selected in the Masoretic Text and all modern editions of the Bible.<sup>22</sup> Which version should be deemed “canonical”? And, should Bibles now contain sometimes at least two columns that represent the versions of a biblical book that was judged authoritative by the contemporaries of Hillel and Jesus?

Manuscript experts—especially Eleazar Sukenik, Shemaryahu Talmon, Geza Vermes, Roland de Vaux, Pierre Benoit, Frank Moore Cross, James A. Sanders, Emanuel Tov, Eugene Ulrich, and Peter Flint—have shown that the most ancient manuscripts of scrolls that contained biblical books present challenges previously unknown.<sup>23</sup> In discerning the transmission of the biblical text, many scholars are now following Paul Kahle’s concept of multiple vulgar texts and rejecting Paul de Lagarde’s concept of one *Urtext*.<sup>24</sup> It is now clear that we are faced with different

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21. The United Bible Society recently published an Ethiopian Bible in Ge’ez; it contains the Protestant OT and the twenty-seven NT books. In Ethiopia, the ancient sources containing canon lists are the books *Sinodos* and *Fetha Nägäst*. See R. W. Cowley, “The Biblical Canon of the Ethiopian Orthodox Today,” *Ostkirchliche Studien* 23 (1974): 318–23.

22. The vast number of examples of *pisqah be’emša’* Pasuq in the books of Samuel is an additional indication of the instability of the text and its transmission. See Shemaryahu Talmon, *Text and Canon of the Hebrew Bible: Collected Studies* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 375–77.

23. Now, see the reflections by James H. Charlesworth, James A. Sanders, Gabriele Boccacini, Frank M. Cross, Eugene C. Ulrich, Loren T. Stuckenbruck, Sidnie W. Crawford, Ronald S. Hendel, Donald W. Parry, Peter W. Flint, and J. J. M. Roberts, in *Scripture and the Scrolls* (vol. 1 of *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*; ed. James H. Charlesworth; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2006).

24. See esp. Talmon (*Text and Canon*), who led the way to see Kahle’s solution.

scripts, divergent texts, and a fluid order of sections, especially in the order of Psalms that will be judged “canonical” or “extra-canonical” (more precise nomenclature is Masoretic and non-Masoretic). We need to be ever cognizant to explore the various shapes of a document that will become “canonical” as we contemplate the origins of “canon.” The task also includes books included in “the New Testament.” For example, does the copy of John contain the pericope of the adulteress (John 7:53–8:11) and does the copy of Mark preserve the fuller ending (Mark 16:9–20)? The expert in canonical criticism needs to attend more to the books collected into the definitive codices, especially the uncials, and be attentive to how a variant may be original and how such scriptural changes redefine the intentionality and focus of an original author.

These questions now are beginning to be a major issue not only for biblical studies but also for theological reflection within seminaries, rabbinic schools, and a few universities. Leading scholars might not be disturbed by the opinions of the *hoi polloi*, but they would be rightly disturbed by misleading reports in authoritative books, such as the following: “After the 4th century A.D. the Christian church found itself with only 66 books that constituted its Scripture; 27 of these were the NT and 39 were the OT.”<sup>25</sup>

Obviously, canonical criticism may be looming as a tsunami within Judaism and within Christianity. If the Bible is not the authentic collection, the “Bible” of Hillel and Jesus, then on what *terra firma* do Jews and Christians stand? If the Masoretic Text is only one of the many versions of sacred documents before 70 C.E., and probably not the dominant one, then what authority has it lost? If Protestantism and all its theologies are defined by *ad fontes* and the search for the biblical fountain of biblical faith, then what becomes of assurance when the Protestant Bible is disclosed to be the result of a highly edited process? Moreover, if ancient readings that are closer to the original text have been discarded by scribes for christological reasons, then what authority remains in the received text?

### THE POSSIBILITY OF A NEW CONSENSUS

Fifty years ago scholars could refer to a consensus in Isaiah and Johannine Studies. The book of Isaiah disclosed two distinct authors and perhaps a third; only chapters 1–39 were attributed to the eighth-century prophet and those chapters had interpolations and later edited sections. The Gospel of John contained evidence of three and perhaps five stages in composition; none of them were composed

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25. Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, eds, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 300.

by John, the son of Zebedee. Today, all of Isaiah is sometimes attributed to Isaiah and the Fourth Gospel is frequently attributed to the Apostle John. Scholars are living now with global perspectives, a freedom to reject a revered teacher's conclusions, and a penchant to avoid a consensus on any issue. In this atmosphere, it is unlikely (indeed unwise) to launch out and claim that a new consensus is emerging in canonical criticism.

To be proficient in canon studies today, scholars need to become familiar with both the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Old Testament "Apocrypha" and "Pseudepigrapha," Philo, Josephus, the biblical texts found in caves and wadis west of the Dead Sea, the *lemmata* of the early scholars of the Church, Rabbis, as well as early versions of Scripture (Latin, Syriac [esp. the Old Syriac Gospels], Armenian, Gothic, Slavonic, Ethiopic, and others), as well as textual criticism that must include a study of the lectionaries in which Scriptures formed the faith of early Christians who did not have a Bible like ours.

What more may be reported? It is helpful to organize reflections into "Old Testament" and "New Testament," so long as we recognize that these titles are anachronistic and tend to misrepresent early Judaism and Christian origins, that they are interrelated and overlap in time for Christians, and that "Intertestamental" relates rather than separates the corpora and is misleading for Jews, who do have a New Testament. First, some general comments provide order and perception.

*General.* Jamnia (perhaps 70–90 C.E.) and Nicaea (325 C.E.) were not councils organized to define the biblical canon. Jamnia was the center for the teachings by Johanan ben Zakkai, the most famous student of Hillel; and under him, as president, the city (and not the burned Jerusalem) became the Supreme Court (Sanhedrin).<sup>26</sup> The Emperor Constantine either convened or instigated the meeting at Nicaea for political reasons and an attempt to settle disputes, arrive at some agreements fundamental to theology, and especially to clarify Jesus' relation to God (Christology). The Emperor's motives were to obtain peace (*pax romana*) and unity within the Roman Empire.

Global views challenge the Eurocentric canonical view that defines Rabbis and Church History. Moreover, the discussion of canonical developments in Rabbis and within Christianity is so complex that it is virtually impossible to

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26. J. P. Lewis, "Jamnia (Jabneh), Council of," in *ABD* 3.634–37; see esp. p. 637 (and the bibliography on that page). Also see Lewis, "Jamnia Revisited," in *The Canon Debate* (ed. Lee M. McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 146–62. Also see Jacob Neusner, "The Formation of Rabbinic Judaism: Yavneh (Jamnia) from A.D. 70–100," *ANRW* 2.19.2 (1979): 3–42 and David E. Aune, "On the Origins of the 'Council of Javneh' Myth," *JBL* 110 (1991): 491–92.

summarize the developments. For nineteen hundred years, and more, savants have written tomes that are based on information that we now know is imprecise and unrepresentatively select. Now canonical criticism depends on questions like the following: Why does Deuteronomy follow Numbers but precede Joshua? In a “canon” where is a book to be placed; for example, is Psalms to be after the Law and the Prophets, as in the Hebrew Bible or should we follow the order in English editions that follow the Greek and Latin manuscripts? Why did the translators of the Septuagint and the compilers of the Masoretic text choose vastly different versions of Jeremiah? It seems clear that not only pluriformity but also uniformity of the biblical text existed before 70 C.E.<sup>27</sup> If so, and if the Masoretic text of Hebrew Scriptures was not clearly the dominant version in Palestine before 70 C.E., why was it chosen and others rejected? If the Masoretic text was the official copy of Scripture in the Temple where is the evidence for this claim?

The study of canonization is also the study of de-canonization.<sup>28</sup> Some writings judged “sacred” became canonized, others de-canonized (even if these terms are strictly imprecise but seem demanded from a large perspective). Numerous compositions revered as Scripture (i.e., “canonical”) by some early Jews and Christians were “decanonized,” that means, learned and “ordinary” people who did not have the concept “canon” perceived documents as sacred that no one today includes in their canon. Sometimes authorities removed them from *sacra scriptura*, sometimes they just faded away from importance for diverse reasons.

Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon were eventually not canonized by Rabbis. Other books cherished by early Jews, including *Jubilees*, the *Books of Enoch*, and the *Temple Scroll* were not included in TANACH. Why was Sirach so influential in early Judaism almost included in, but eventually left out of, the canon (and yet Sir 3:21–22 is cited in *b. Hag.* 13a and *b. Yebam.* 63b)?<sup>29</sup> Why were the *Books of Enoch* selected for inclusion only within the Ethiopic canon? If at least one composition in the Psalter (Ps 72) is attributed “to Solomon” why were the *Psalms of Solomon* excluded?

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27. See esp. Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press and Assen: Royal van Gorcum, 2001). The MT consonant text was set before 70 C.E. but there are variants in the consonantal text when one compares the Palestinian and Babylonian tradition with the Tiberian tradition. There are variants in the Masorah. Tov rightly warns that we can speak of a “real Masoretic Text” only from the beginning of the Medieval period.

28. Arie van der Kooij and Karel van de Toorn, eds, *Canonization and Decanonization* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

29. In his *Wisdom in Israel* (translated by James D. Marton. [London: SCM, 1972]), Gerhard von Rad includes works in the so-called Apocrypha (*Sirach* [or *Ecclesiasticus*], *Wisdom of Solomon*, and *Baruch*) thus implying that they are also normative and that no barrier separates works in the canon and those judged to be in the “Apocrypha” (or “deutero-canonical” works).

Those who were interested in what was within Scripture or canon often did not know about many documents now known to us, including many of the Qumran Pseudepigrapha and documents found on Masada (like the *Apocryphon of Joseph*),<sup>30</sup> as well as many of the documents found over the past two hundred years.

The process of eliminating less attractive documents and choosing those which are determinative for self-definition in the canonical process flowed along with other similar needs. The canonization of liturgy among the Jews probably began long before 70 C.E. and became a major concern in the first, second, and third centuries.<sup>31</sup> Probably the *Thanksgiving Hymns* did not challenge Jewish self-definition as much as the *Psalms of Solomon* and the *Prayer of Manasseh*. The Passover Haggadah and the Amidah (Eighteen Benedictions) moved into the center of liturgical consciousness. In terms of sociology, sometimes liturgy becomes more important than canon. The Scriptures (which exceed the books within the canon) often appear in liturgies.

Likewise, in Christianity the threat of over twenty gospels had to be faced. Many of them were non-apostolic, challenged the *regula fidei*, and were in tension with the Christology in the major cities. On the one hand, some Christian leaders advocated one Gospel: A harmony of more than four gospels. The most important harmony is the *Diatessaron* (better "Gospel of the Mixed") by Tatian sometime about 170 C.E., and circulated widely in many languages, including Syriac, Greek, Latin, Persian, and Arabic well into the fifteenth century. On the other hand, slowly the "Great Church" (that is Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Caesarea, Nicaea, Carthage, and the leading Christian cities) chose four gospels. The Fourth Gospel was a threat to some established churches primarily because it was different than the others (the "Synoptics") and was the major gospel chosen by some, like Heraclian, who challenged "church authoritative teaching."

*Old Testament Canon.* Some movement toward authoritative texts took place during the sixth-century B.C.E. Babylonian Exile, and perhaps earlier, but a closed canon did not define Second Temple Judaism. The authoritative collection of books proceeded chronologically; the Pentateuch (Torah), then the Prophets (the precise identity is open with David considered a prophet at Qumran), and

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30. The *Apocryphon of Joseph* was introduced incorrectly as the *Genesis Apocryphon*. There is no literary relation between the two documents.

31. The canonization of Jewish liturgy is a long process; the genonim in the eighth and ninth centuries C.E. probably are the ones who tried to bring some order to a freedom within liturgical norms. See Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service* (University of Notre Dame Center for the Study of Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity 4; Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

finally the Written Books (debated for many centuries) were defined and evolved from scrolls with diverse readings and arrangements to a Christian codex that is "the Bible" (although the Uncials do not represent the same canon). When the collection of individual scrolls was replaced almost everywhere by a codex, a decision had to be made regarding what writings to include and what to exclude.<sup>32</sup> After Jamnia, Jews did not stop debating the sacredness or "canonicity" of books like Sirach, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Ezekiel, and Song of Songs; they continued such debates into the sixth century.

The failure to recognize Esther among the Qumran biblical manuscripts (a copy of Esther may have decayed or been eaten by worms) should be perceived with the recognition that some Jews, until the second century C.E., judged that it did not belong within the canon. It does not contain a direct reference to God (except in the Greek additions) and is a nonreligious book that was included in the canon by popular demand because it was central at Purim.

Many books mentioned in "the canon" cannot be included in any putative "new" canon; they are lost. The list is long, including "the Book of the Wars of the Lord" (Num 21:14), "the book of Jashar" (Josh 10:13), "the Book of the Acts of Solomon" (1 Kgs 11:41), and Jeremiah's lament for Josiah (2 Chr 35:25).<sup>33</sup> Moreover, no one has yet located the *Apocryphon of Lamech*, the *Interdiction of Solomon*, and the "Book of the Daughters of Adam." These are mentioned in early lists of "noncanonical" books or disputed Old Testament books (*ta antilegomena tēs palaias diathēkēs* and also *ta de apokrypha palin tēs palaias diathēkēs*).

*New Testament Canon.* Scholars also have inadequate data for discerning how the New Testament canon originated.<sup>34</sup> Four main factors should be considered as we seek to discern the canonical process within Christianity; but they have too often been assessed in a way that represented more of an ill-founded consensus than an insightful study.

First, Marcion listed as authoritative only ten letters of Paul and the Gospel of Luke, but the collection was theologically edited. It is not obvious how effective Marcion's list was for the formation of the canon. Most likely, Marcion was not the first to compile a list of Scriptures for Christians, and the leaders of the church did not respond to Marcion with an interest in a well-defined canonical list. It is

32. See esp. Robert A. Kraft, "The Codex and Canon Consciousness," in McDonald and Sanders, *The Canon Debate*, 229–33.

33. I list more lost books in "Introduction for the General Reader," *OTP* 1.xxi.

34. Careful scholarship and canonical criticism are not to be shaped by Christological affirmations; in contrast, note: "The principle of a New Testament canon existed in the authoritative presence of Jesus Christ." *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (ed. Allen C. Myers; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 190.

not wise to conclude that Marcion's selection and rejection of authoritative books stimulated an interest in a definitive list of books that would define Scripture or a canon.

Second, the Gnostics' Christology and production and transmission of books considered more authoritative than any other extant book (including those formative for Judaism and Christianity) threatened burgeoning "Orthodoxy" and may have helped define the evolution of a canon within the "Great Church." One must frame such judgments with the recognition that the Gnostics never defended or defined a canon, and that the rise of Gnosticism was met with treatises "Against Heresies" but not with a canonical list.<sup>35</sup> The interest in a defined canon postdates the second- and third-century crises church leaders had with Gnosticism. Third, some books were considered canonical because of their popularity and use in influential churches or by revered theologians. As Esther was added to the Hebrew Old Testament canon because of liturgical use at Purim and familiarity within Judaism, so Irenaeus's claim that we need four gospels mirrors the fact that many in his area of Europe had already accepted the four "canonical" gospels as authoritative. In the fourth century Eusebius, who reported the first catalogue of New Testament scriptures, used the criterion of acceptance by leading authorities as helpful in determining canonicity. He argued that those who belong to "the secession of the orthodox" did not cite or quote from the non-canonical books (*ouk endiathēkous*) (*Hist. eccl.* 3.25).

Fourth and most importantly, vast and diverse evidence indicates the church leaders needed to establish a rule (*regula fidei*) for theology. Over 150 books (the Gnostic texts, the NT Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha and the works of the Montanists) claiming to be apostolic or biblical circulated, but they did not generate canonical debates; they produced a search for precise theology and Christology.

The scrolls that would evolve into a codex called "the New Testament" developed in collections. Paul's letters seem to have been collected and read in some churches before 100 C.E. (cf. 2 Pet 3:16). Before 200 C.E., the four canonical gospels were recognized in some churches, but Irenaeus's late-second-century claim that we must have only four gospels because there are four winds does not indicate a universal judgment. Many gospels competed for acceptance as authoritative and even most authoritative (or canonical).

During the second century, the Gospel of John was frequently considered unacceptable and rejected (see Irenaeus, *Haer.* III.11.9). Why? Was it because its

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35. Note Bentley Layton's comment: "There is no evidence, either direct or circumstantial, for the exact contents of a canon read in gnostic churches, nor is it known how formal or informal that canon was." See Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1987), xxi. In my judgment, we may be imposing the concept of "a canon" on the Gnostics.



author was unknown, because it differed from the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark, Luke), because the “Alogi” reported the Gnostic Cerinthus wrote it (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 51.2–3), or because the Gnostics chose it as their favorite (the first commentary on John was by a “Gnostic”)? As C. K. Barrett reported long ago,<sup>36</sup> there was opposition to John, otherwise why would Hippolytus feel a need to defend it? By the end of the second century C.E., John was accepted as authoritative by many leading lights, including Tatian, Irenaeus, Theophilus of Antioch, Claudius Apollinaris, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. Eusebius, perhaps the most important scholar regarding the state of the canon in the fourth century, reported that among the disputed books (*antilegomenos*) were James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, and perhaps spurious (*nothos*) is the Apocalypse of John (*Hist. eccl.* 3.25).<sup>37</sup>

Focusing on the fourth century and Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*, one may discern three main tests of canonicity: (1) The document must have been composed by an apostle or by someone closely associated with the apostles and represent “apostolic style.” (2) The work must represent “true” and “orthodox” doctrine. (3) The work must be accepted or recognized (presumably by at least one of the leading churches).

Eusebius’ attempts to explain what was customarily considered Scripture show that the concept of canonicity was developing, but Christians were far from a consensus on what is in and what is out of the canon. Early scholars of the Church developed and knew critical terms that reflected concern with canon. “*Homologoumena*” denoted scriptures recognized as canonical. “*Antilegomena*” specified books whose canonicity was debated not rejected.

In the first century “*tas graphas*” and “*hai graphai*” indicated “the Scriptures;” note these examples:

Jesus said to them, “Is not this the reason you are wrong, that you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?” (Mark 12:24)

Then he [Jesus] opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. (Luke 24:45)

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. (John 5:39)

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he was buried,

36. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John* (London: SPCK, 1965), 96.

37. See the helpful discussion by McDonald, *The Biblical Canon*, 308–10.



and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. (1 Cor 15:3–5)

These Jews were more receptive than those in Thessalonica, for they welcomed the message very eagerly and examined the Scriptures every day to see whether these things were so. (Acts 17:11)

Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. (2 Pet 3:14–16)

The list is selective but impressive; yet, “the Scriptures” (*tas graphas*) should not be assumed to equal the well-known collection in the Old Testament. How do we know that “the Scriptures” is identical to a collection today, and which one in the world?

By the end of the first century C.E., it is clear that a tri-fold division of Scripture was known; for example note Luke’s reference to Jesus: “Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.’” [Luke 24:44 NRSV; a similar view is expressed by Josephus in *C. Ap.* 1.8)].

By the end of the second century, contemplating “a canon of truth” (Gk. *kanōn tēs alētheias*) and “a rule of faith” (Lat. *regula fidei*), some church leaders knew about spurious inauthentic writings, rightly judged them non-apostolic documents and rejected them. The *Gospel of Peter* introduces a cross that walks out of the tomb after Jesus. The infancy gospels portray a youthful Jesus who causes clay birds to fly and sends playmates to Hell because of rough playing. Another early document claims that Mary was physically examined after Jesus’ birth to prove that she still had a hymen. Not only early church leaders but modern thinkers judge such works to be inferior and to be excluded from the canon because they leave history with fanciful creations.

Some documents not in the New Testament seem to preserve authentic saying of Jesus. Some of the Agrapha may well preserve authentic Jesus traditions; likewise lost works, notably Papias’s five books on Jesus’ words, are not extant for scholars to examine and may not have been available for church leaders when canon came into focused discussion. Does the *Gospel of Thomas* belong on the fringes of canon? If so, what is the definition of such a concept?

Some early writings are filled with joy at the recognition that the Messiah has come and that God raised him from the dead. Do such works, as the *Odes of Solomon*, belong on the fringes of the canon or in an appendix (and what defines that concept)?

## THE CANON AND NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION

We have clarified the importance of the canon and that the “the Hebrew Scriptures” or “the Old Testament” evolved slowly over centuries within Judaism and within Christianity, and that “the New Testament” means diverse collections throughout time and even today. Many questions and issues have appeared; now it must suffice to focus on a selection of them.

What should be the canonical decision regarding the hundreds of early writings that once defined faithfulness to the God of Abraham? If the *Temple Scroll* is the quintessential Torah, at least for some early Jews, then should it not be placed in an appendix to the canon? If the followers of the Righteous Teacher, Hillel, and Jesus did not have a closed canon but often read and were influenced by documents “not in our canon,” then have we been deaf to the full spiritual message of our past by branding as “extra-canonical” previous books considered Scripture?

This year, 2011, Hendrickson Press announced the publication of the facsimile edition of *Codex Sinaiticus*.<sup>38</sup> In this early codex, often hailed as the most important collection of biblical books, are included some works never included in the *King James Version*, the *New Revised Standard Version*, or any present editions of the Bible. Two early Christian texts are in this “canon.” They are an Epistle by an unknown writer who claims to be the Apostle Barnabas, and *The Shepherd*, a document by an early-second-century Roman writer called “Hermas” who is judged one of the Apostolic Fathers. Should the canon today not have books considered apostolic and spiritual—and ostensibly canonical—by some early church authorities and by a codex commissioned by established ecclesiastics?

Are we so certain that no documents were included incorrectly, such as Esther because it is nonreligious and Philemon only because it was written by Paul? Can we be certain that the lost books mentioned in the Bible and others in lists of sacred books are not necessary for Jewish and Christian nurture? Do the lost letters of Paul known from the extant letters to the Corinthians contain only unimportant and unnecessary information? How do we know that they did not

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38. D. C. Parker, ed., *Codex Sinaiticus: The Story of the World's Oldest Bible* (London: British Library and Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2010).

contain revelation that is important for us? How do we know that the “lost books of the Bible” are superfluous for answering many of our perennial questions?

Does the world-wide antipathy to orthodoxy and authoritative institutions hinder a historical study of canon and a theological search for where God’s Word may be found in human words? Does dogma and confessionalism hinder a comprehension for understanding the canonical process?

*History and Interpretation.* In studying the history of the development of “the canon,” we should avoid the terms “canonical” and “extra-canonical” prior to their definition and social understanding. Sometimes “heresy,” connected with “excluded books,” antedates “orthodoxy”; and these terms are inappropriate in settings that antedate the fourth century C.E.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, these loaded terms are more appropriate of Christian than Jewish traditions and thought. Likewise, such terms as Bible, pseudepigraphical, apocryphal, unbiblical, and noncanonical are often prejudicial terms, hindering the appreciation of documents that often were considered “inspired” and “Scripture” by many Jews or Christians.

Some judgments regarding what is in or out of a list or a canon are not based on criterion for canonicity. Irenaeus (ca. 130–ca. 200), as is well known, judged there must be only four gospels because there are four winds. This claim reflects neither good theology nor astute cosmology.<sup>40</sup> Serapion, bishop of Antioch (died about 211), early accepted the *Gospel of Peter* as authoritative and authentic, to be read in churches. Serapion changed his mind, but not for canonical reasons. He came to doubt the “orthodoxy” of that gospel. A rule or “canon” for faith seemed more important than a list or “canon” of books.

Clearly, more attention should be focused on the reasons why some books are preferred over others. Theological content and struggles against the ideas and beliefs of others, within Judaism and Christianity, often determine the exclusion of a book. Such decisions may or may not have something to do with “canonical” decisions. Before Adronicus, perhaps in the second century B.C.E., some scribe added chapters with the name of God to Esther so that it could be included in the canon; even then, it does not appear at Qumran and in some earlier canonical lists.

*Theological Perspicacity.* Having spent over forty years studying and editing what the Church has considered “noncanonical,” including many sacred works never known to the fourth-century leaders of the Church (as, for example, the

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39. See Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (ed. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

40. Adronicus of Kirrha (flourished ca. 100 B.C.E.) proved long before Irenaeus that there are more winds than four and his Horologium (Tower of the Winds), indicating the eight winds, is still visible in the forum in Athens

*Temple Scroll* that was quintessential canon for some early Jews), I am persuaded that some Dead Sea Scrolls preserve theological profundities that are equal to the sublime passages in the Bible and that some whole compositions may be superior theologically and spiritually to some books now canonized. While I do not wish to add or delete documents to a canon, I do wish to stress that so-called noncanonical texts (a term that can be dangerously anachronistic) are not thus by definition works of inferior theological quality.<sup>41</sup> Surely, as we enter into the twenty-first century more attention should be given to the attractiveness of many voices in a biblical chorus and not attend to one voice within the canon (e.g., as is too often the case with Paul for Christians).<sup>42</sup>

While most scholars now perceive that an Old Testament canon, for example, was not yet defined in the first century C.E., there are still some misleading claims in influential publications. Thus, seriously misleading are rampant statements that mirror the old consensus. For example, note this excerpt:

That this Old Testament canon contained the same number of books as contemporary English versions is also apparent from Josephus *Contra Apionem* 1.8, where twenty-two books are listed as trustworthy and as such are to be distinguished from others. These books include the five books of Moses, the thirteen prophetic books (Judges and Ruth are one book, as are Ezra and Nehemiah, Jeremiah and Lamentations, and the twelve minor prophets; the book of Job also belongs to this group), and four books of the Writings. Thus, during the first century A.D. the canon of the Old Testament comprised all thirty-nine books present in English versions.<sup>43</sup>

The author continues by suggesting that Sirach, who refers to “the Law, Prophets, and other books,” indicates that “the Old Testament canon” was completed by the beginning of the early second century B.C.E. No mention is given to the *Temple*

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41. I thus agree with James Barr who rejects as uninformed “any completely decisive distinction in theological quality” between “canonical” and “noncanonical” books. Virtually all scholars would concur with Barr’s following statement: “The average modern scholar would say that there are marginal cases where the theological level of the noncanonical books rises above that of elements of the canonical books of comparable periods and genre, but that taken as a whole they do not approach, and certainly do not exceed the standard of the Bible.” Barr, *The Bible in the Modern World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 153–54.

42. Hans Küng rightly considers it “false . . . to limit the operation of the Spirit of God” in regard to Scripture “to any particular pieces of writing of an apostle or biblical author.” Küng, *Infalible? An Inquiry* (trans. Edward Quinn (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 216. In my judgment, this falsehood is tantamount to replacing “a canon” with “a canon within a canon” without any canonical norm to guide such a decision.

43. Myers, *Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, 188.

*Scroll*, the diversity of readings within the biblical books, or how many is meant by “other books.” Moreover, I doubt Sirach would have been pleased by citing him regarding the canonicity of an “Old Testament.”

*Transcription, Sacredness, and Inspiration.* A study of the variants in the Old and New Testament books impacts canonical criticism, since a book should be well defined if we are to discuss it meaningfully within a canon of books that represents God’s Word. About 900,000 variants are recognized within the manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible (the base for translating the Old Testament) and well over 300,000 variants are noted within New Testament manuscripts. Finally, over 5700 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament are available, but not one of them is identical to another.

What is in a sacred book? Thanks to research on the books of Jeremiah and Samuel found among the Qumran Scrolls, we know that two strikingly different versions of these books circulated within Judaism before 70 C.E. What version should be chosen for the canon today? Should both be presented in parallel columns? Can that choice be presented to the public without undermining the spiritual force of the Bible? These are questions unknown to our grandparents.

How are our theological and Christological perceptions shaped by the recognition that we have manuscript evidence to suggest that Mark ended at 16:8 (as in *Syrus Sinaiticus*) and that an “apocryphal” addition is found in Mark 16:9–20? Since the earliest manuscripts of John almost always do not contain 7:53–8:11, what constitutes the Fourth Gospel? What theological difference does it make to learn that Paul probably did not compose Hebrews and many of the documents attributed to him in the New Testament corpus? Is canonical inspiration due more to authorship or content; if so, was Hebrews included into the canon only because some thought it was composed by Paul?<sup>44</sup> Canonical criticism is not only a prelude to a better perception of the theologies in the New Testament; it is the beginning of theological sophistication.

In discerning the canonical process, one should consult the many books published from the erudite, representative, and focused research of Lee M. McDonald (see For Further Reading below). He rightly discloses that the debates regarding canonical books among Jews continued until the sixth century C.E. We should not forget that the evolution of Scripture and the claims that God makes and demands on those who believe the words of Scripture often involve the willingness to die for beliefs, and this willingness appears in 1–4 Maccabees (only

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44. Eusebius sometimes imagined Paul composed Hebrews though “the church of Rome” rejected this authorship (*Hist. eccl.* 3.3.5) and sometimes doubted, with Origen, this attribution because of the Greek style (6.25.11–14).

1–2 Maccabees is included in the Apocrypha, 3–4 Maccabees is placed in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha) and in Josephus, already cited.

## CONCLUSION

What is the future of canonical criticism? For some Jewish and Christian scholars, the canon is a hindrance, portraying a closed book that is antiquarian. They point out that a closed book masks a God who stopped speaking. For other scholars, Jews and Christians, canon provides focus and definition of authentic belief or faith; it is like a rudder that guides a craft homeward.

The noun “canon” began as a Hebrew word and denoted the standard by which something was to be measured. If we use that definition today, “canon” can mean theologically not so much a closed list of books as the measuring norm by which we can find God’s message in the canon and in other writings like those as varied as Maimonides, St Thomas Aquinas, Søren Kierkegaard, and Paul Tillich. Such a standard helps us to hear God’s message (and presence) in Mozart and Bach, and see God’s creation alive in rainbows and sunsets.

In a pluralistic world in which Jews and Christians (including Mormons) seek to communicate and find ways to agree and disagree, scholars should pay more attention to what is meant by Scripture and canon. Jews have as canon the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) according to the Masoretic Text but sociologically pay more attention to Mishnah and Talmudim. Christians acknowledge various canons. Roman Catholics include as canon the extended list of books found in the Septuagint but in various ways consider the additional books as “apocryphal” or “deuterocanonical,” with diverse appreciations of how canonical are such documents. Protestants tend to reject the “apocryphal” compositions; yet frequently in the most conservative denominations, Bibles enshrined on a pulpit contain such books as the *Prayer of Manasseh*. Christians, notably Luther, sometimes disparage and demote theologically some canonical writings, thus virtually excluding them from canon. Mormons have an open canon and include far more books than any Jew or Christian. Outside of the West, the works in the canon sometimes decrease and sometimes increase. Since a canon is defined by a confessing community, it is best for scholars to acknowledge a diversity that shaped both Jews in Second Temple Judaism (300 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.) and the followers of Jesus from 26 C.E. to 397 C.E. and even later.<sup>45</sup> The

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45. Doron Mendels and Arye Edrei prove that in antiquity there were two Diaspora; one spoke Hebrew and Aramaic, the other knew only Greek and Latin. See their *Zweierlei Diaspora. Zur Spaltung der antiken jüdischen Welt* (Toldot 8; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010).

diversity reappears, in vastly different ways, as we move to a discussion that is inclusive of global phenomena.

The complexity and diversity of “canons” may be too challenging for rabbis, priests and theologians. They will tend to retreat and reflect within closed borders, following the search for authoritative answers according to the “canon” adopted long ago by those in their synagogues, churches or seminaries. The central importance of the canon becomes clearer when we note how it divides communities seeking relations with others and in a universal search, in which Muslims join the book-based religions. Many are united by mutual concerns: How and in what ways may we now hear with pristine purity the call of the One and only God? How can we evolve from echoes from a closed book to the challenging and living call by the continuing Creator? These questions are among the most important as leaders and thinkers seek ways to be honest and responsive to God.

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## NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES AND POSTCOLONIALISM: PLACING JOHANNINE STUDIES WITHIN THE DISCOURSE

*Francisco Lozada, Jr.*

In contemporary biblical interpretation, several major paradigms and approaches are used in the discipline of New Testament studies, and particularly within Johannine Studies.<sup>1</sup> These approaches include historical criticism, literary criticism, cultural criticism, and cultural studies (or ideological criticism). It is this latter paradigm that I wish to focus on in this essay and particularly with one of the approaches emanating from it, namely, postcolonial studies. The approach itself is relatively new to biblical studies but it is growing in significance, especially in today's global affairs when the Christian Bible is used to justify global and local policies of inclusion and exclusion of the "other." I am particularly interested in Johannine studies, a field that has only recently been explored in terms of postcolonial perspectives. In this essay, I begin with a discussion of why postcolonial analysis matters, and of the general character of postcolonial biblical studies. That sets the stage for an exploration of how postcolonialism can be brought to bear on the field of Johannine studies, offering a comparative analysis of three Johannine postcolonial readings. I will conclude with some remarks regarding the contributions of these readings in relationship to postcolonialism, and where I think other questions need to be asked regarding the approach.

### WHAT IS POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS, POSTCOLONIAL BIBLICAL CRITICISM, AND WHY DO THEY MATTER?

#### POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS GENERALLY

Postcolonial analysis is important for a variety of reasons. Let me begin by reviewing

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1. This essay is dedicated to Harold W. Attridge with profound respect and admiration of his scholarship.

briefly the emergence of postcolonial theory and then call attention to three ways in which postcolonial analysis matters on a broad scale for our world today.

Postcolonial theory is not an established set method, governed by programmatic procedures, nor does it have a solid theoretical foundation accompanied by standard principles and assumptions.<sup>2</sup> Postcolonial theory is an amorphous approach that aims to de-ideologize dominant and colonial interpretations that universalize or totalize history, text, tradition, and the Other.

In the 1980s, diasporic intellectuals from “Third World” countries with long histories of political, economic, military, and cultural colonization by the United States and various European countries began to focus on the ramifications and implications of colonization.<sup>3</sup> Three interrelated geopolitical events sparked this new inquiry. First, the Soviet Union collapsed as one of the most powerful empires of the twentieth century, no longer politically, militarily, or economically controlling and supporting its client states throughout Eastern Europe and various other places throughout the globe. Second, as a result, the United States became the sole empire throughout the globe, extending its domination politically, economically, and militarily. Third, the rise of globalization principally out of the United States and western Europe began to disrupt many local economies and cultural identities, making them dependent upon the economies and “essentialized” identities of United States and western Europe. These more-or-less simultaneous events led intellectuals such as Edward Said (*Orientalism*), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (*In Other Worlds*), and Homi Bhabha (*The Location of Culture*) to open up the debate on the ramifications of colonialism and neo-colonialism, thus inspiring other diasporic intellectual communities (e.g., ethnic and racial minorities in the United States) to begin to examine colonial configurations or representations in many textual canons and interpretative traditions.

The term postcolonial theory is often understood to refer to a historical period, referring specifically to the period following the independence of a colony

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2. See an excellent delineation of postcolonial criticism and theory by Fernando F. Segovia, “Mapping the Postcolonial Optic in Biblical Criticism: Meaning and Scope,” in *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections* (ed. Stephen D. Moore and Fernando F. Segovia; New York: T&T Clark, 2005).

3. This perspective emanates from R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). See also his *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). See also R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *The Postcolonial Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

from its colonizer.<sup>4</sup> However, more often intellectuals use the term to refer to the various political phases and socio-psychological effects surrounding colonization. For instance, postcolonial theory studies the phase leading up to colonization (pre-colonization), the phase after colonization (post-colonization), and the phase after post-colonization (neo-colonization), which is the period when countries are formally independent from former colonizers but often dependent upon them politically, economically, and militarily. Postcolonial theory also examines the socio-psychological ramifications of colonization. In other words, it studies the frame of mind of individuals and communities who are examining their colonial memories, identities or alterity (i.e., the state of being other or different) as a result of colonialism.

So why does postcolonial analysis matter? First, it matters for many minoritized peoples who have traditionally found themselves in a context of marginality. Postcolonialism is a way to speak about that marginality. Take for example my own community of Latinos/as in the United States and the question of migration. Historically, the Latino/a community has come to the United States for a variety of reasons and from a variety of places. People have come to the United States due to economic reasons such as searching for employment, political reasons such as escaping political oppression or civil wars, social reasons such as joining family, and sometimes natural reasons due to hurricanes and earthquakes. Sometimes migration takes place internally as well. For example, many migrate from large Latino/a communities in San Antonio, Los Angeles, Miami, and New Orleans to rural counties, suburbs and cities throughout the country. In both these types of migratory patterns (external and internal migrations) people encounter similar experiences of living in a world that is somehow defined and positioned differently than their own understanding of home, and have to learn how to negotiate within these worlds. Postcolonialism is a way that Latino/a scholars can begin to talk about those factors—particularly those in which the United States' and other countries' foreign policies have had a direct impact upon their home countries' economic and political realities, which resulted in their migration to the United States. Postcolonial analysis is a way to understand this phenomenon of migration from an imperial-colonial formation, understanding the relationship between a powerful state and a less powerful one.<sup>5</sup>

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4. See Fernando F. Segovia, "Interpreting beyond Borders: Postcolonial Studies and Diasporic Studies in Biblical Studies," in *Interpreting Beyond Borders* (ed. Fernando F. Segovia; The Bible and Postcolonialism 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

5. Stephen Howe, *Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 13.

Second, these Latino/a migrants, especially within today's political climate, are all too often used as "scapegoats" supposedly to explain why the economy is struggling or why there is high unemployment, why values ("Christian values," that is) and the family are collapsing, and why there are very few resources for the public schools, health, and other social services.<sup>6</sup> Latino/a migrants are the scapegoats blamed for demographic changes in the United States following the 1965 Immigration Act.<sup>7</sup> The days when "we" (all those who espouse xenophobia) could walk down the street to the corner without bumping into a crowd of migrants looking for work, the days when "we" could speak to our home builders or landscapers without having to know Spanish, or the days when ethnic groups lived in their own particular enclaves throughout the city are forever lost for many. For many scholars of Latino/a studies, and particularly within the field of biblical studies, postcolonial studies have provided tools for understanding why their communities have been the "scapegoat" for the problems in the United States, politically, economically, and socially. It is a way to speak about their "otherness" and a way to provide them "agency" to challenge these perceptions. Postcolonial analysis is a way to challenge the dominant perceptions of Latinos/as portrayed in film and the news media as lazy, uneducated, breaking the law, and lacking creative skills. Postcolonial analysis turns these perceptions upside down, with the hope that the "Western" world will see Latinos/as as productive, educated, law-abiding, and highly creative. Postcolonialism gives non-Western people a voice, a language, and a politics that shifts their views and perceptions so that they can claim a place at the front of the line along with others.

A third reason why postcolonialism matters is because it is a way to begin to understand the geopolitical situation of the United States vis-à-vis the rest of the world. To understand the history of Iraq, for example, one needs to understand it from an imperial-colonial point of view at the turn of the twentieth century when the Western colonial powers, using organized violence, began to subjugate

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6. See the documentary film entitled *9500 Liberty*, which explores among other things the connection between religion (fundamentalism) and its use to critique current immigration patterns in Virginia. Directed by Annabel Parks and Eric Byler (Self-distributed by Annabel Parks, Eric Byler, et al., 2009), DVD.

7. See the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which repealed the national origins quota system, thus giving priority for families to reunite. See also the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 that provided amnesty to undocumented residents yet also punished employers who hired undocumented workers. For an excellent review of the history of immigration in the U.S., see Roger Daniels, *Debating American Immigration 1882–Present* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

Iraq.<sup>8</sup> To understand the history of Central America today, for example, one needs to understand the United States' economic and political interests there in the 1980s—even all the way back to the nineteenth century. To understand the history of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, one needs to understand the United States' colonial or neocolonial relationship to Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic, and how the United States' hand was very much involved in their political systems. Postcolonialism gives the non-Western world a discourse to understand this history and understand how imperialism and colonialism played a major part in portraying non-Western peoples as inferior, childlike, incapable of ruling themselves, and requiring patronizing rule for the interest of the West.

#### WHY POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS MATTERS IN BIBLICAL STUDIES

With regard to the discipline of biblical studies, postcolonialism matters for three particular reasons. First, the use of the Bible during the colonial enterprise in the 1800s and 1900s throughout the world to colonize the non-Western world is well documented.<sup>9</sup> In the course of European colonization of Latin America the indigenous populations were portrayed as “pagans” for resisting conversion to Christianity and even enslaved because they did not represent the image of God.<sup>10</sup> In the history of Africa, the use of the Christian Bible to subjugate and enslave many Africans and deport them to other parts of the worlds is also well-attested.<sup>11</sup> In the history of Asia (particularly India), R. S. Sugirtharajah has shown how Indians were taught and trained to read as British Christians in order to conform them to a British truth and justice perspective.<sup>12</sup> For these reasons, postcolonialism matters because it is concerned with contesting the previously dominant imperial and colonial ways of using the biblical text. Postcolonialism challenges not only the use of the Bible, but also its reception and history of interpretation and aims to provide a different, non-Western and nonimperial interpretation—it is a reading from a different perspective. Furthermore, it challenges those from the Western world, both within and outside the academy, to take these interpretations or perspectives as seriously as those of the West.

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8. See Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 33–44.

9. See Michael Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism: A Moral Critique* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. See Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*.

Second, the New Testament was composed during the Roman colonial period and consequently shows many imperial-colonial markers or features in the text. These markers pertain to the economic, political, and cultural Roman system and thinking.<sup>13</sup> Postcolonialism calls attention to these markers and borrows them to begin to nuance and challenge particular readings of the text. Postcolonialism disrupts the Western gaze of the text—the world behind, in, and in front of the text. It disrupts this gaze by moving away from any “orientalizing” of the text as if it were something to be subjugated and colonized and exploited. For this reason postcolonialism contests previous ways of seeing things in the biblical text. The more the reader can discern and question these pictures or representations of the ancient world, the more it becomes obvious that some attitudes or stances toward the text are problematic, both for Christianity and for the larger world as well.

Third, postcolonialism challenges the way we read and the methods we use to construct ancient texts. There was a time when the biblical text was taught primarily by Euro-American males. Colonized people (women and many from developing countries) were there in the classroom, but they were never asked to engage the text.<sup>14</sup> They were an object but not a subject. They were never asked to read with an observing eye. For many years, it was assumed that the colonized were less intelligent and did not merit the same degree of education as the dominant classes. The colonized were regarded as nonserious, superstitious, and lacking relevant knowledge. Their stories and experiences did not serve as a mode of entry into the reconstruction or interpretation of a text, and their questions were not central in relationship to the Western world. Postcolonialism, therefore, matters because it involves a reorientation toward knowledge, an openness to questions developed outside the West. It is committed to transforming the conditions of oppression and giving a voice to the subaltern, that is, the subordinated classes and peoples. It challenges the rules of hermeneutics emanating from the West.

For all these reasons, postcolonialism matters. It is a mental perspective that allows those who previously did not qualify as the norm a space to speak with authority and agency. It forces those who have been marginalized or colonized over the centuries to continue to ask and answer the question “Who am I?” rather than having the colonizers tell them who they are.

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13. See Warren Carter, *John and Empire: Initial Explorations* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008).

14. See the various essays in part 1 (“Changing the Ethos of Graduate Biblical Studies”) of *Transforming Graduate Biblical Education: Ethos and Discipline* (ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Kent Richards; Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship Series 10; Atlanta: SBL, 2010), which discuss the experience and impact of Western biblical studies upon minoritized peoples.

## WHAT IS POSTCOLONIAL BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION?

To understand postcolonial biblical criticism, allow me to briefly discuss its place among the various paradigms of biblical criticism. I will examine these paradigms in terms of four key categories: text, tools, the role of the interpreter, and the role of context.<sup>15</sup>

First, historical criticism, which examines the text as a means to the ancient world, remains a very strong approach for students of the New Testament in undergraduate classrooms, ecclesial communities, as well as in seminaries and divinity schools. It continues to give privileged standing to the author who composed the text and to the world in which the text was composed. The text is approached as multi-layered, consisting of different aporias that provide glimpses into the development of the text. The tools that are used remain the traditional ones such as source-, form- and redaction-criticisms, and the discussions regarding these tools remain an in-house dialogue with very little meta-critique of the methods' assumptions and principles. The role of the interpreter remains invisible, with the aim to interpret the text or to reconstruct the history of the development of the text in terms of objectivity and universality. Reason is the mode of entry to begin the investigation process. And finally, with regard to context, the method calls for contextualization of the world behind the text, but very little contextualization of the world in front of the text. In short, historical criticism, generally speaking, approaches the text as an Other, but an Other to be colonized.<sup>16</sup>

Second, the paradigm of literary criticism examines the text as a medium to the story world of the ancient text. In this sense, meaning is located in the narrative world of the text. Whereas historical criticism calls for contextuality of the world behind the text, literary criticism calls for contextuality in the story of the text itself, leading to the study of narrative plot, implied author and readers, point of view, and irony, to name a few. The text is not simply a text made up of different strata, but rather it is an artistic text meant to be read as a coherent whole. The tools employed are structuralism, narrative criticism, rhetorical

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15. Much of this discussion on the paradigms of biblical interpretation emanates from the work published in *Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States. Reading from this Place*, vol. 1 (ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) and *Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective. Reading from this Place*, vol. 2 (ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

16. Historical analysis is important to postcolonial analysis. While the modernist principles of historical criticism may be rejected, historical reconstruction continues with the understanding that historical reconstruction is always contextual. These contextual histories must always go through a critique.

criticism, reader-response, and deconstruction. Those who employ these tools maintain a discussion with one another but also with other literary disciplines outside the field of biblical studies. As with historical criticism, however, there is very little meta-critique of its assumptions and principles. For some literary critics whose focus tends to be text-dominant, very little attention is given to the role of the interpreter during the reading process. For those who tend to be reader-dominant, some attention is given to the role of the interpreter, but his or her true identity is masked by the constructs of the implied reader or community generally speaking. Universality and objectivity remain the order of the day, but the method is beginning to show cracks, especially with the help of reader-response criticism and its emphasis on the social location of the reader. With regard to context, the method calls for very little engagement with the outside world, allowing the literary text to speak for itself. The text is an Other, but an Other constructed—like historical criticism—principally by the West and engaged through the methods of the West. It is something to be conquered and subsumed.

Third, the paradigm of social-world history or social-scientific criticism engages the text in two ways, first, as a means (signified) to the social world of the text (particularly its socio-economic, socio-political, and socio-cultural worlds), and second, as a medium (signifier) with a social message from the author to the community of readers within a particular social contexts, with an emphasis on the codes and principles (e.g., honor/shame, purity/impurity) shaping the socio-cultural aspects of such communication. The text is not only a social-historical text, it is also an ideological text with social codes embedded in it. The tools used vary depending upon the particular approach in use, such as sectarian theory (sociology of religion), anthropological models (sociology of knowledge), and even socio-economic and ideological analysis evident among many Latin Americans engaged in liberation hermeneutics. Dialogue remains in-house for the most part, but has begun to cross over into other disciplines such as economics and cultural anthropology. Still, there is generally very little examination of the principles and assumptions employed by the method. The interpreter remains hidden for the most part. However, some of those working from a liberation hermeneutics approach point to the social location of the socio-contemporary readers. With regard to context, some attention is paid to the contemporary Mediterranean world as a window to the ancient Mediterranean world, but with very little critique of this translation. With regard to the liberation hermeneutics interpreters engaged under this model, attention to socio-political and economic matters informs their questions and their goal of transformation. As with historical and literary criticisms, the text is approached as an Other, but an Other constructed in the image of the dominant culture. There is very little attention to the world that is silenced or colonized within the socio-economic and cultural worlds of



the text. If I may use an analogy, it is as if an anthropologist entering into an unknown village and describing its culture were to assume that he or she is invisible and has no role in the new identity of the village.

The fourth and final paradigm I wish to speak about before moving toward postcolonialism itself is the paradigm from which I see postcolonialism emerging. Called cultural studies or ideological studies, this paradigm engages the text as a construction. That is, the reconstruction of history behind the text and the reconstruction of the story world of the text are both constructions. Even the reader who engages the text is a construction. With these guiding assumptions, the meaning of the text is a product of the exchange between the text and the reader, both components demanding a radical contextualization. In other words, all texts/interpreters are ideological (race, patriarchy, class, and colonialism) and intertwined with power and politics. The tools employed vary, ranging from feminism, contextual liberation hermeneutics, ideological criticism, and postcolonialism, and borrowing from the other paradigms or approaches delineated above. The interpreter does not remain neutral; in fact, the interpreter's social location is at times outlined explicitly or implicitly. With regard to context, the ideological studies approach engages the contemporary world with all its sexism/patriarchy, racism, classism, or heterosexism. The ideological studies approach has also, very recently, begun to examine more forcefully the issue of colonialism and imperialism embedded in the material matrix of the text—its historical world—as well as with the cultural production of the text—its reading/interpretation and reception.

Zeroing in on postcolonial biblical criticism as an approach within this paradigm, the key focus of study is the colonial. How has the colonial been constructed by the text and by the history of interpretation? How have readers contributed to a colonial interpretation? Postcolonial studies approaches the text as an ideological text and gives explicit attention to the context of imperialism-colonialism. Meaning is a construction and a negotiation between the reader and the text. And knowledge of the biblical world is seen differently from the construct of colonized and colonizer. The tools vary widely, drawing upon poststructuralism/deconstruction, neo-Marxism, cultural studies, minority discourses, and feminism. It is really not a method (as historical, literary, and cultural criticisms) but rather an approach or optic on imperialism and its components. It is really not about creating new knowledge but rather looking at existing knowledge differently.<sup>17</sup> It differs from location to location and discipline to discipline. Foci include empire and imperial studies of the ancient text (how

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17. Young, *Postcolonialism*, 1–7.

the past informs the present, if you will) to how the text—the colonial text—constructs images of the colonized back then as well as in the here and now. The interpreter is ideologically committed to decolonization and liberation and there is no notion that the reading is neutral or objective. Readers may stay hidden but realize that their reading is a construction. And some interpreters become re-empowered. With regard to context, the geopolitical world is at the forefront. Understanding global politics is essential to postcolonialists. For instance, how does colonial language (such as the iron curtain; axis of evil; wall between Mexico and the United States) generate particular understandings of places, communities, and identities?

Let me underscore that the application of postcolonial theory to the discursive field of biblical studies is not about creating new knowledge per se, as one might witness in the traditional fields of New Testament studies or Christian theology; rather it is about examining and critiquing existing knowledge embedded within colonial formations in the Christian tradition. For instance, a critique of the colonial formation of superior/inferior, center/margin, civilized/savage embedded in the language of the New Testament or Christian theology resists interpretations that support Christian superiority over and against other religions. Furthermore, examining the colonial formation of civilized/savage among interpreters of the tradition challenges the binary opposition that “true” theology emanates only from “the European West,” and all other theologies, particularly from the “third world” or from ethnic and racial groups within “the West,” have nothing to teach the world. As such, postcolonial theory questions the fixed boundaries of knowledge presumed by the framework of the imperial and the colonial, the center and margins, or the metropolitan and the local. It also analyzes those anti-colonial texts and traditions of opposition as resistance in order to understand how they contribute to liberation. In the end, postcolonial theory aims to open up critical, emancipatory discourse by undoing narratives and interpretations that are quintessentially colonial and oppressive. This particular undoing of the narratives is what the three Johannine readings aim to do.

## POSTCOLONIALISM AND JOHANNINE STUDIES

With this general understanding of postcolonial analysis and postcolonial biblical criticism, I now turn to a comparative study of three particular postcolonial readings of the Johannine tradition.<sup>18</sup> At the conclusion of this comparative analysis,

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18. For an earlier volume on John and postcolonialism see Musa W. Dube and Jeffrey L. Staley, eds., *John and Postcolonialism: Travel, Space and Power* (The Bible and Postcolonialism

some similarities and differences will be discussed briefly as well. The studies that will be examined are Stephen Moore's "Representing Empire in John: 'The Romans Will Come and Destroy Our Holy Place and Our Nation,'" in *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonialism and the New Testament*; Fernando F. Segovia's postcolonial reading of the Gospel of John, and R. S. Sugirtharajah's postcolonial reading of the Letters of John. Both of the latter readings are from the recently published *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*.<sup>19</sup> Let's begin!

STEPHEN D. MOORE, "REPRESENTING EMPIRE IN JOHN: 'THE ROMANS WILL COME AND DESTROY OUR HOLY PLACE AND OUR NATION.'"

In Stephen Moore's postcolonial reading of John, he argues that John is "one of the most—and the least—political of the canonical Gospels."<sup>20</sup> He sets out to delineate this argument with a six-fold reading of various Johannine issues or themes intertwined throughout the plot and theology of the Gospel. Moore engages these issues or themes with the aim of showing how empire is represented in them as well as how the Fourth Gospel (FG) as a postcolonial text perhaps influences other contemporary readings.

### "Prologue"

Moore's postcolonial analysis begins with the premise that John is like a travel narrative, perhaps very similar to the travel narratives by authors during the modern period of European colonialism. Moore is informed in part by Musa Dube's intertextual reading of the Fourth Gospel and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, where she argues that the Johannine Jesus is an envoy from a very distant place who journeys to the world below and claims it and all of its inhabitants.<sup>21</sup> Dube likens the Johannine Jesus to a colonial explorer, such as Mr. Kurtz.

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7; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002). For an excellent critical assessment of this volume, see Fernando F. Segovia, "Johannine Studies and the Geopolitical: Reflections upon Absence and Irruption," in *The Recent Past and Near Future of Johannine Studies* (ed., Thomas Thatcher; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 281–306.

19. See Stephen D. Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonialism and the New Testament* (The Bible in the Modern World 12; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press), 2006; Fernando F. Segovia, "The Gospel of John," in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (ed. Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah; The Bible and Postcolonialism 13; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 156–93; R. S. Sugirtharajah, "The First, Second and Third Letters of John," in Segovia and Sugirtharajah, *A Postcolonial Commentary*, 413–23.

20. Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse*, 50, 74.

21. See Musa Dube, "Savior of the World, But Not of This World: A Postcolonial Reading of Spatial Construction in John," in Sugirtharajah, *The Postcolonial Bible*, 118–35.

Working with the assumption that the FG is a travel narrative and following in Dube's footsteps, Moore sees similar parallels between the FG and another novel entitled *Feathered Serpent: A Novel of the Mexican Conquest* (2002) by Colin Falconer.<sup>22</sup> The novel, as the subtitled clearly suggests, is a narrative of the Spanish conquest of Mexico. The major characters are *Ce Malinali Tenepal* (*La Malinche*) and Feathered Serpent (Hernán Cortés) who is the personification of *Quetzalcoatl*—the Aztec God and ruler. Moore is not arguing that the author of the novel paralleled his novel after the FG (although he comes very close to this position), but he does find it interesting that the two plots—the FG and *Feathered Serpent*—have conceptual and textual similarities. Both are travel narratives and both confront the worlds they encounter. Furthermore, both plots include incarnations of their gods, characterize the protagonists as harbingers of good news, and narrate a cleansing of the temple scene. What is postcolonial about this? I read Moore's interpretation as suggesting that the FG contains imperial-colonial features that reflect a colonial travel narrative. His intertextual reading is a way to highlight this point, and a way to suggest subtly that sometimes the FG's colonial features finds their way into various modern, colonial travel narratives.

*"I Find This Man to Be Politically Innocuous"*

With the assumption that the FG is a colonial text, Moore proceeds to explore the political nature of John. As I mentioned, for Moore, John is the "most and the least political of the canonical Gospels." It is the most political for several reasons that he discusses briefly. Jesus is almost made "king" by some in the FG (John 6:15). The title "King of the Jews" is the only title used consistently of Jesus. The term *basileus* (which means king or emperor) occurs no fewer than eleven times throughout the plot of the FG, and the term *basileia* (kingdom, kingship, empire) is used three times between Pilate and Jesus in their short exchange. All of this leads to political charges by Pilate against Jesus. However, Moore underscores one main piece of evidence suggesting that John is also not so thoroughly political. Moore reads the Roman trial of Jesus as politically unthreatening to Rome.<sup>23</sup> For Moore, the Roman trial scene portrays Jesus as the King of the Jews (18:33–40; 19:14–15, 19–22)—and yet not the king. This ambivalence leads Moore to suggest that for Pilate, Jesus is "innocent" and therefore not a threat to the Roman Empire (18:38—Pilate says—"I find no crime in him").<sup>24</sup> He is a threat to the Jewish understanding of Messiah, and a threat to anyone who saw him as a threat,

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22. See Colin Falconer, *Feathered Serpent: A Novel of the Mexican Conquest* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002).

23. Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse*, 51.

24. *Ibid.*, 52.

but not a threat to Pilate. Perhaps this de-emphasis of Jesus as a threat to Rome—surmises Moore—is the beginning of a fusion of Christianity and Rome that de-emphasizes Rome.

*“Hurrying to the Praetorium”*

Moore points out two further aspects of the Roman presence in the Gospel. First, the face of Rome is Pontius Pilate. He is given more lines to speak than his synoptic counterparts, and the Judean religious leadership is not as prominent in John as in the Synoptic Gospels, thus giving Pilate a much more pronounced role. Second, present at Jesus’ arrest is a Roman cohort (*speira*)—possibly numbering six hundred soldiers—flooding the garden with Roman troops. Moore regards this as evidence that Jesus was more engaged with Rome’s imperial might during his trial than with the Jewish leadership. Moore speculates that the Jews’ de-emphasized involvement is due to the plot’s rush to arrive at the trial of Jesus, despite the constant confrontation the plot discloses between Jesus and the Jews prior to the Roman trial. Moore sees the Roman trial plot not so much interested in talking with the Jews regarding Jesus’ relationship to the God of Israel as with Pilate’s view of Jesus’ relationship to the Roman God, that is, the Roman Emperor. For Moore, the FG is quite political and representative of empire.

*“Pilate Picks Up the Lash”*

Expanding on his argument that the FG is political, Moore examines Pilate’s role as the chief inquisitor and head torturer, the one who questions Jesus and scourges the accused. Moore does address briefly whether a Roman prefect would have scourged a peasant with his own hands, but he does suggest that the ambiguity of the text (19:1) allows for the possibility that Pilate himself did the scourging. Even if he did not, those who did are clearly instruments of Pilate’s own hand. More important for Moore is the chiasmic structure of the Roman trial scene in John, which places the scourging of Jesus (19:1–3) as the middle or central component of the trial. For Moore, this middle component is an example of the Roman judicial torture. This act of torture is an act connected to empire. If we are in doubt about the connection between torture and empire, Moore parenthetically points to Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay as contemporary examples. For Moore, the Roman trial scene illustrates the relationship between torture and empire, and it is a “scathing indictment of the Roman imperial order in general and of Roman justice in particular.”<sup>25</sup>

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25. Ibid., 63.

*"Johannine Atonement: Propitiating Caesar"*

Moore cautions, however, that the FG is also not so political. The FG is a text that, in stark contrast to Revelation, never sees Rome as an object of divine punishment. The FG does portray Rome as an agent of torture and death, but unlike Revelation it does not cast Rome as an object of divine punishment. Moore wonders if this is because John is letting Rome (Caesar) off the hook for the death of Jesus, and shifting the scathing criticism onto the Jews. It is the Jews who are cast in John as having a political motivation to get rid of Jesus (11:47–52)—“If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy our holy place and our nation.” Even the temple incident in John 2 is a text that portrays the Jews, for Moore, as the engineers of Jesus’ shameful execution. Both the supersessionism (that is, Jesus will replace the temple of worship) and John’s theodicy (that is, the Jews are the agents of that destruction), frame the reading of this text. In other words, Moore argues that the FG favors Caesar over the Jews by casting the Jews as the scapegoats for Jesus’ death. Ironically, Moore points out, the plot strongly argues that Jesus must be executed, so that the world may be spared (atonement). As Moore points out, “it is only by appeasing Caesar that God can be appeased; or to put it another way, the propitiation of Caesar is the necessary precondition for the propitiation of God in the Fourth Gospel.”<sup>26</sup> Conquest, in the FG for Moore, takes place at home. It is in this Gospel that a nonmilitary conquest takes place with Jesus absorbing Jewish identity markers, sacred spaces, and reconquering the Holy Land.

*"The Romans Will Come . . . on the Clouds of Heaven"*

Finally, in his last section of reading the FG, Moore argues that the Gospel lacks an explicit *parousia* scenario, which has implications for the presence of Rome in the FG. In this absence, Rome assumes apocalyptic agency. Caesar as God is the one who will bring apocalyptic doom. For Moore, Johannine theology is intermeshed with Roman imperial ideology. Even the marks of death on Jesus, for Moore, convey Rome’s inscribing its imperial power upon as Jesus as a slave. Rome or Caesar is not easy to get rid of in the FG. Moore argues that Rome will eventually become Christianity and Christianity will eventually become Rome,<sup>27</sup> and perhaps this is why the FG shows itself to be a foundational text for Constantinian Christianity, not just in term of Christology but also in its political theology.

In short, what is postcolonial about this reading of John? For Moore, the FG is a book of the Empire. It calls for a postcolonial analysis of the material matrix

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26. *Ibid.*, 69.

27. *Ibid.*, 74.

(historical, economic, and political colonial worlds) and the cultural production (interpretation and reception) of the text. Moore reads the FG as reflecting the Roman Empire's ethos in the text's own proposed "Christian" imperial ethos. For Moore, such ethos must be engaged and critiqued so as not to duplicate an imperial theology. The FG therefore needs what the FG cannot provide, that is, an evaluation from a postcolonial perspective that deconstructs empire.

FERNANDO F. SEGOVIA, "THE GOSPEL OF JOHN"

Whereas Moore was looking for the remnants of empire in John, Fernando F. Segovia brings the postcolonial more directly to his reading of the plot of John. For Segovia, the Gospel of John is both a religious and a political text. The Gospel proposes a displacement of religious and political spheres represented by the world from below ("this world") with an alternative religious and political sphere promoted by the Gospel within an imperial-colonial framework of Rome and represented by the world from above ("the other world"). In this sense, for Segovia, the Gospel is a postcolonial text. He delineates this argument in his commentary on John by way of establishing some principles behind postcolonial criticism, followed by a postcolonial reading of John, and concluding with a critical summary of the Gospel's geopolitical agenda.

*Principles*

For Segovia, postcolonial analysis does not refer primarily to the historical period after colonization. Rather, he favors an understanding that takes on a socio-psychological understanding in which the term refers to a state of mind, that is, the unequal power relations emanating from an imperial-colonial world—a world of domination and subordination.

A second principle at work in Segovia's reading of John is that while the Gospel may or may not readily reveal its imperial-colonial origins and character, this Gospel does constitute a postcolonial writing, that is, "a text that reveals critical awareness of geopolitical power within the Roman Empire."<sup>28</sup> He also believes that the critical reader, in this case Segovia himself, is conscious of both the geopolitical issues that shape his contemporary social reality and similar issues within the imperial-colonial context of the Gospel of John.

A third principle reflected in Segovia's work with regard to postcolonial analysis is that there should be a broad transhistorical and cross-cultural application of the analysis, rather than only applying the analysis to the British Empire in

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28. Segovia, "The Gospel of John," 158.

particular. However, how the analysis is applied will differ due to the particularity of certain texts and historical knowledge and events being analyzed. Furthermore, Segovia acknowledges that postcolonial analysis is a filter, so will appropriately be complemented by other discourses or theories to help delineate the imperial-colonial realities under scrutiny.

A fourth principle in Segovia's work calls for a postcolonial analysis of the cultural production of the colonial-imperial formation; that is, an analysis of the text itself as well as its reception and representation. Also, he calls for a postcolonial analysis of the material matrix of the colonial-imperial formation; that is, the historical context involving the economic, political, and social worlds. His reading of the FG covers both, but with regard to the material matrix he is not examining the historical world but rather the narrative world—that world constructed aesthetically, strategically arranged, and politically informed. As such, the FG for Segovia is a literary, rhetorical, and ideological text.

A fifth operative principle at work regards the reader. For Segovia the reader must allow for active engagement with the text from a postcolonial analysis point of view, but also allow for other interpretations of imperial-colonial formations, whether those reconstructions are by a neutral or passive reader or by an engaged reader of postcolonial analysis. Segovia holds a middle position, allowing the text to speak for itself on the one hand, and for the reader to be engaged from a critical postcolonial view on the other. He does lean toward the latter just a bit, but also sees meaning—all meaning—as construction and available for discussion and evaluation.

Finally, Segovia sees the task of postcolonial analysis as the process of uncovering the imperial-colonial framework within the material matrix and cultural production of the text. Imperialism refers to the dominant center, whereas colonialism has to do with the subordinated periphery. For Segovia, "there can be no imperialism without colonialism and no colonialism without imperialism."<sup>29</sup>

### *A Postcolonial Reading of the Gospel*

In his reading of the Gospel of John, Segovia sets out in his first angle of inquiry to show how the Gospel outlines a postcolonial program—an intervention (colonial intervention) into a new world. Informed by literary or more specifically, narrative criticism, Segovia understands the plot as consisting of two bipolar or divided worlds: a world from above with God the Father as ruler and master of this world, and a world from below with Satan as the master of this world. The world above is represented as good, and the world below is represented as evil. These worlds will engage in a climatic confrontation with God sending the Word

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29. Ibid., 163.



to the world below as the sole revealer to all peoples and nations, and the world below represented by Satan promoting hatred among the people and directing imperial and colonial authorities to Jesus, which will eventually lead to his torture and execution. At one level, Satan is victorious. However, the Word from above does eventually prevail and triumphs over Satan in Jesus' resurrection and glorification at the end of the plot. This conflict continues after Jesus' resurrection among the followers of Jesus and Satan, when God sends the spirit from the world "from above" to the "world below" (another intervention) and the conflict continues among the followers.

Segovia's second angle of inquiry entails a reading of the prologue as establishing a postcolonial alternative. This alternative is a vision of absolute otherness. He establishes this reading with a threefold reading of the prologue which he argues entails (1) an envisioning of the Other-World establishing an ethos of hierarchy (patriarchy I would add) and obedience; (2) an envisioning of "this world" representing an extreme "othering" toward the outside and outsiders, leading to a harsh condemnation of all things within "this world," that is, the world from below; and (3) an envisioning of the relations between the worlds, giving way to a representation that all other knowledge of and access to God is to be denied except through the Word. For Segovia, the prologue sets the agenda for a postcolonial alternative. The prologue, artistically, rhetorically, and ideologically, establishes a postcolonial alternative.

Segovia's third angle of inquiry entails a plotting of Jesus. Segovia delineates the plot along two narratives. The first is a narrative of public life marked by three journeys to Jerusalem with a journey to Galilee (1:19–3:36; 4:1–5:47; 6:1–10:42), and a final journey to Jerusalem (12:12–17:26, including the Lazarus cycle of events in 11:1–12:11 and two visits to Bethany near Jerusalem). The second narrative is the narrative of public death. In his reading of both narratives, Segovia shows how the "growing rejection of Jesus in Galilee and Jerusalem as well as the increasing hostility in Jerusalem" unfolds.<sup>30</sup> The journey comes to an end when this "growing opposition and violence" leads to Jesus' execution. For Segovia, the plot represents a way of absolute opposition. The plot shows opposition toward Jesus from the perspective of "this world," and the plot discloses that the ruler only puts Jesus to death "out of obedience to the Father and not because he has 'power' over him. In the end, Jesus declares, he has conquered the 'world!'"<sup>31</sup> Both worlds are fighting for dominion of the world—this is why Segovia sees a postcolonial program present in the plot of the Gospel.

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30. *Ibid.*, 175.

31. *Ibid.*, 183–84.

Finally, the final narrative of death, encompassing Jesus' death and its aftermath, is a plot that represents a kingdom of God that rules supreme over "this-world" (the world from below) through the imperial-colonial framework of Rome—not in practice but rather in principle, argues Segovia. It is this latter element, in principle, that the followers of Jesus will expand in the aftermath of his death and resurrection. The plot at the end is a plot with a postcolonial program. A program that clears "a space" (tantamount to a colony) "for the other-world within the this-world—an outpost, as it were, of the kingdom of God in the kingdom of Satan, where light and life, grace and truth, are to be found."<sup>32</sup>

In short, what is postcolonial about this reading of John? The text calls for a postcolonial reading given both its postcolonial alternative to bring forth an intervention of a new colony, as well as a postcolonial program in which the "world from above" conquers—eventually—the "world from below"—again in principle, not in practice.

R. S. SUGIRTHARAJAH, "THE FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD LETTERS OF JOHN"

The last example that I will discuss is R.S. Sugirtharajah's readings of the letters of John. Whereas Moore uses postcolonial analysis to examine the representation of empire in John, and Segovia provides a reading to foreground a postcolonial alternative and program of John, Sugirtharajah examines various colonial features present in the letters of John. Bypassing any detailed discussion regarding authorship, date, or original readership, Sugirtharajah focuses on "the inner rhetorical logic of the narrative content of the epistles to reconstruct the situation and concerns that the first recipients were faced with."<sup>33</sup> He does suggest that he reads these letters as emanating somewhere out of the Roman Empire, perhaps from one of the cities of Asia Minor. He first begins with a delineation of those colonial features.

#### *Features of Colonial Discourse*

One of the colonial features of the letters identified by Sugirtharajah is the rejection of diversity. The author of the letters rejects any alternative theology or interpretation contrary to the author's understanding of the person of Christ. Rejection of diversity, for Sugirtharajah, is a feature of colonialism. All must be loyal to the exclusive truth and no dissent or opposition is tolerated. A second feature present in the letters that exhibits colonialism is the labeling of the oppo-

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32. Ibid., 191.

33. Sugirtharajah, "Letters of John," 413.

nents of the letters as sons of Satan; those who deny Jesus are followers of Satan. For Sugirtharajah, this demonizing of the enemy is a sure feature of colonialism. In an interesting hermeneutical move, Sugirtharajah likens this particular colonial feature to President George W. Bush's reference to an axis of evil as a way to demonize the enemy and silence those who question a particular understanding of American values. As such, these two particular colonial features—rejection of diversity and the demonizing of the Other—are strong signs of colonialism in the letters of John.

Other colonial features of the letters, framed as hermeneutical strategies, entail: (1) the author appeals to his own credentials as an eyewitness to the Christ event, thus maintaining colonial hegemony through the assertion of the master's credibility; (2) the author appeals to the authenticity of the message, thus rejecting and instilling fear of alternative interpretations; (3) the letters project an image of Jesus as the imperial Christ (1 John 4:14)—an image not friendly to religious plurality, as evident in the fact that in the name of the imperial Christ numerous cultures and countries have been conquered throughout history; (4) a rejection of hospitality is suggested in the letters (2 John 10) for those who do not conform to the teaching of Christ—not unlike today how ruling elites use food to eliminate their political opponents (Ukraine, Somalia, and Ethiopia), adds Sugirtharajah; and (5) the author's use of the colonial rhetoric of flattery and the threat to divide the community (1 John 4:4 and 1 John 3:15); for Sugirtharajah, this strategy is a way to de-privilege other theological views. These strategies, collectively, are also evident in today's world when political and religious people aim to divide the world between "us" and "them." The Johannine epistles, therefore, give people fresh tools to annihilate opposing and different views.

Sugirtharajah cites other colonial characteristics of the Johannine letters. For instance, the letters are examples of how "others" in the text are not allowed to speak. Opponents do not speak unless it is through the viewpoint of the author. The author also constructs a pervasive binarism, fostering an imperial ideology that characterized the opponents as colonies that need supervision and control. They will be uplifted after receiving a true gospel that will bring light into their dark worlds. Furthermore, the writer of the letters uses the metaphorical language of a father-child relationship. Such language, for Sugirtharajah, is colonial, enforcing conformity upon those who do not obey or accept the author's point of view. All of the above are features of colonialism in the letters that Sugirtharajah evokes through a postcolonial analysis.

### *Buddhized Christianity*

Having established that the letters have colonial features, Sugirtharajah further proposes that the letters propagate a hermeneutics of denial. This denial

does not only take place with the material matrix of the letters, but also with their cultural production, especially with Western Eurocentric scholarship that, for example, is unable to acknowledge any possible influence of other religious traditions such as Buddhism on the conceptual ideas within the letters. Informed by J. Edgar Bruns, Sugirtharajah argues that the letters do have Buddhist conceptual similarities such as the notion of “making God’s presence [known] through loving on the one hand and loving through the presence of God on the other.”<sup>34</sup> A second conceptual similarity can be found in the letters’ doctrine of indwelling (1 John 4:4, 15–16), which is similar to the Buddhist understanding of knowing within human beings. And finally, another similarity is the idea that Christians have passed from death to life (1 John 3:14), which is similar to the Buddhist notion of the state of Nirvana.<sup>35</sup> What Sugirtharajah is arguing is that readers of the letters of John perpetuate the letters’ rhetoric of exclusion by not considering the possibility of any conceptual similarities other than those emanating from the Jewish and Hellenistic cultural matrix.

Following his line of argumentation that the letters (and the Gospel of John as well) do not allow for oppositional voices to exist, Sugirtharajah provides a contrapuntal reading; that is, a reading that is intertextual with Buddhism and a reading that is not restricted. He argues that unlike the Johannine notion of love, which he finds quite restricting and limited, the Buddhist concept of *maitri* (loving kindness) is a much more encompassing notion that expresses love to all created humanity.<sup>36</sup> He engages in this comparative reading in order to show that John reflects a colonial and judgmental reading. Sugirtharajah’s postcolonial analysis calls for a reading that shows comparisons, connections, and readings that fulfill rather than destroy. For example, Sugirtharajah takes one more step toward this intertextual reading of the letters with Buddhism when he argues that the letters promote an ethical involvement. For Sugirtharajah, postcolonial analysis also calls for engaging the world to transform it for a better world. As such, he reads the letters as fusing theory and practice. This resonates with Buddhism’s call to live a life of commitment and compassion. The letters promote an idea that to appreciate the Word one must put it into the service of the disadvantaged and the unjustly treated. One is not called to blind obedience to the word to establish authority, but rather to live a life according to truth, justice, and love. For Sugirtharajah, out of the tensions of conflict, emerge at times a postcolonial vision of justice. “Everyone who does justice is born again” (1 John 2:29).

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34. Ibid., 419.

35. Ibid., 419–20.

36. Ibid., 420.

All in all, the letters exhibit a postcolonial ambiguity. On the one hand they contain the marks of colonialism, and on the other they call for ethical action. For Sugirtharajah reading the letters alongside a different tradition can help us see that truth, and especially the call to ethical involvement, may be found in more than one religious tradition.

In short, Sugirtharajah, as Moore, foregrounds those colonial features that are obvious as well as not so obvious in the letters of John. Like Segovia, Sugirtharajah examines the rhetorical strategy present in the letters of John. What makes Sugirtharajah's reading postcolonial is that he de-centers the authority and rhetoric of the text by using intertextuality (in this sense similar to Moore's strategy) with Buddhism. Sugirtharajah suggests that such a reading can help prevent any further colonial tendencies in the world today to pit a supposed world of good against a supposed world of evil.

## CONCLUSION

Let me summarize, some of the insights I have gleaned from the critical findings of the three Johannine readings. First, what postcolonial analysis entails is a foregrounding of those colonial features that are discernable in the material matrix of the text as well as those recognizable in the cultural production of the text. That effort may include, among other things, examination of the colonial representation (Moore), of the program of the plot (Segovia), and of the rhetoric of the texts (Sugirtharajah). Second, postcolonial analysis makes fruitful use of intertextuality, whether it is alongside other colonial texts (Moore), the reader him or herself as text (Segovia), or other religious traditions such as Buddhism (Sugirtharajah). This second insight—at least for me—helps counter the reification of the colonial aspects of the text in the world. And finally, what postcolonial analysis entails is an examination from a different perspective—listening to voices that perhaps have been silent in the material matrix of the text as well as the cultural production of the text.

The field of postcolonial biblical criticism is young, with much more to be done. Some issues that I would like to see addressed include the following: (1) further dialogue with other theoretical discourses, including feminism, minority discourses, and sexuality studies, as a way to challenge all forms of colonialism; (2) further postcolonial analysis not just of the U.S. or the British empires, but also of other empires, more specifically, the Spanish Catholic empire and its use of the Bible to colonize the indigenous and African peoples of Latin America and North America; and (3) further postcolonial analysis using intertextuality as a way to broaden and deepen the search for truth and liberation.

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