

Revelation and Leadership in the Kingdom of God



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72

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Revelation and Leadership in the Kingdom of God

Studies in Honor of Ian Arthur Fair

Edited by

Andrei A. Orlov

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Ian Arthur Fair

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	ix
List of Contributors.....	xv
Ian Arthur Fair: A Tribute.....	I
<i>Royce Money</i>	
Ian A. Fair as Academic Dean: Personal Reflections.....	5
<i>Jack R. Reese</i>	
Jacob of Sarug's New Testament Text.....	13
<i>Jeffrey W. Childers</i>	
Alexander Campbell's View of Baptists.....	47
<i>Dyron B. Daugherty</i>	
Becoming God's Clients: Patronage, Clientelism, and Christian Conversion in Contemporary Thailand.....	65
<i>Christopher Flanders</i>	
Social Actors in the Ten Commandments.....	91
<i>Mark W. Hamilton</i>	
On Being Human.....	105
<i>Randy Harris</i>	
Biblical Composition and Biblical Inspiration.....	117
<i>Christopher Heard</i>	
The Narrative of the Judgment on Jesus in the Fourth Gospel in the Context of the Polemics with Jewish Mystical and Apocalyptic Traditions.....	145
<i>Tomás García Huidobro, S.J.</i>	

For God and Liberty: Edmund Opitz and the Moral Logic of Christian Libertarianism	161
<i>Vic McCracken</i>	
Which Moses? Jewish Background of Jesus' Transfiguration.....	181
<i>Andrei A. Orlov</i>	
Leadership and Mutual Ministry in Hebrews	269
<i>James W. Thompson</i>	
“The Communion of Voice, Ears, and Text”: Singing the Scriptures in Early Christianity	281
<i>Darryl Tippens</i>	
Co-Heirs of Abraham's Promise: A Radical Application of the Gospel?	305
<i>Timothy M. Willis</i>	
Revelation, Apocalyptic and Kurt Vonnegut	331
<i>Wendell Willis</i>	
Index	347

PREFACE

This collection of essays is intended to honor Ian Fair, a distinguished biblical scholar and leader in Christian education.

Ian Arthur Fair was born in Pietermaritzburg, Province of Natal, Union of South Africa, on October 3, 1934, the son of Harold Wallace Fair and Alice Lillian (née Linforth) Fair.

Fair's family has Scottish roots traced back to the Muir and Fair families in early 18th century. He attended elementary and high schools in the Pietermaritzburg area.

On February 1, 1952 Fair began his working career as a draughtsman and then as a civil engineer in the Land Survey Office of the South African Railways and Harbors Administration (SAR). At that time the SAR operated the large and efficient South African railway system, all the South African ports and harbors, and all the South African airports and airlines. Many of Fair's family members worked for the SAR as well, including his father Harold, who had started his career as a blacksmith with the SAR in Pietermaritzburg. During his work with the SAR Fair completed his training in civil engineering at Witwatersrand Technical College (Technikon Witwatersrand), graduating in 1955. His work with the SAR as a civil engineer involved land surveying, drawing land survey plans, purchasing land for railroad and airport construction, and the study and application of town planning in railroad and airport construction.

On October 15, 1955 Ian married Moira June (née Stent) Fair. They eventually had three sons - Deon Bernard (born August 18, 1956), Nigel Roy (born December 2, 1958), and Douglas Ian (born July 4, 1960).

Fair's successful career in civil engineering soon took a dramatic turn, when in 1959 he and his wife June became Christians, joining a

congregation of the Churches of Christ. An American missionary from Texas, Robert Harold (Tex) Williams, played a very special role in this conversion. He introduced Ian to the Stone-Campbell heritage, fixing his faith deeply in the Word of God. Tex remained Fair's important mentor and friend in the years to come. For Fair, his conversion was laden with profound changes, not only in his spiritual and social life but also in his professional career, when he decided to become a minister for the Churches of Christ. In 1959, Fair started working with Tex Williams as a missionary minister in Pietermaritzburg and, in 1960, he and his family moved to Benoni to lead his first congregation. They then spent three years in Benoni, where their church increased from 25 members to over 250. Ian and his family eventually moved back to Pietermaritzburg where he began working in a mission to the Zulu people.

During his first years in ministry, Fair realized that he needed solid theological education in order to be effective in his ministry and missionary work. In 1965, Fair and his family moved to the USA where he enrolled as an undergraduate student at Abilene Christian University, at that time Abilene Christian College (ACC). In 1968, he received a B.A. in Bible and Psychology from ACC, as he completed a four year degree, *summa cum laude*, in just two years and eleven months. His teachers at ACC comprised a distinguished cohort of the best scholars in the Stone-Campbell tradition, including Neil Roland Lightfoot, J. D. Thomas, William (Bill) Humble, J. W. Roberts, Eugene Clevenger, Robert Johnston, Anthony (Tony) Lee Ash, George Ewing, Abraham Malherbe, LeMoine G. Lewis, and Thomas (Tom) Olbricht. Many of them eventually became his colleagues and close friends when, in 1978, he joined the biblical faculty of the Abilene Christian University (ACU) in his new role as Professor of Biblical Studies. Abraham Malherbe, one of Fair's undergraduate instructors, made a special impact on Fair's formation as a biblical scholar and exegete of the New Testament. As Fair later recalled, Malherbe's class on the Thessalonian correspondence was a pivotal point in his growth as a scholar, which established a solid basis for his future exegetical methodology, especially in relation to apocalyptic texts and traditions. Malherbe also introduced Fair to the legacy of Wolfhart Pannenberg, a theologian who later became the focus of both his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees at the University of Natal. For Ian,

theology and praxis were always inseparable, and so while pursuing his undergraduate degree at ACC, he also served as a minister for the congregation of South 11th and Willis Church of Christ in Abilene.

In August 1968 Fair and his family returned to South Africa to embark on an extensive evangelical program among the Zulu and Xhosa tribes. Already in Abilene, Fair had decided to commit to a program of planting indigenous churches which would have their own native preachers and conduct their ministry without foreign involvement. With this purpose in mind, he and Delbert McCloud established the Natal School of Preaching in 1969 near Pietermaritzburg to train local ministers for indigenous churches. Ian served as director and instructor of the Natal School of Preaching from 1969 until 1974.

While teaching and ministering in the Natal School of Preaching, Fair completed, as a part-time student, three theological degrees: a B.A. (Honors), an M.A. in New Testament Theology, and Ph.D. in systematic theology from the University of Natal. His B.A. (Honors) degree was a two year program, similar to the American Master of Divinity degree, which covered the wide range of theological subjects. His M.A. in New Testament resulted in a thesis devoted to the theology of Jesus' resurrection in three New Testament theologians: Wolfhart Pannenberg, John A. T. Robinson, and Willi Marxsen. In 1975, Ian completed his doctoral studies and defended a Ph.D. dissertation on Pannenberg's theology as a reaction to the dialectical theology of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann. His doctoral work was supervised by Victor Brendenkamp, who served as head of the Department of Divinity at the University of Natal.

In 1974, Cline Paden, at that time the director of the Sunset School of Preaching in Lubbock, Texas, offered Fair a job in his school. Ian accepted the invitation and joined the faculty of the Sunset School where within six months he was promoted to the position of dean. At Sunset, he taught mostly in the School of World Missions, with a broad array of courses ranging from world religion and apologetics to mission philosophy and cultural anthropology.

In April 1978, Fair was invited by Bill Hamble, Vice-President of ACU, to join their Department of Bible. Ian accepted the offer, and in the Fall of that same year took up a permanent faculty position at ACU, where over the next two decades he established himself as a leading biblical scholar in the Stone-Campbell tradition. Alt-

though most widely known for his ground-breaking scholarship on the Book of Revelation and church leadership, he also became an exceptional teacher of undergraduate and graduate students, and later, in his capacity as chair of the Bible Department and eventually dean of the College of Biblical Studies, an important mentor for faculty, often protecting them in difficult situations.

Returning to his alma mater in a new academic role invigorated Fair's scholarly career, resulting in several influential books. In the world of biblical scholarship he is widely known for his research on the Book of Revelation, especially his study *Conquering with Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, published by ACU Press in 2011. In his commentary, Fair rightly places the Book of Revelation in the context of the Jewish apocalyptic movement, the theological trend which, in the words of Ernst Käsemann, became the mother of the New Testament theology. The study provides in-depth analysis of the socio-religious and political situation of the Christian churches in Asia Minor at the close of the first century. Fair's book, written in a very lucid and readable style, is comprehensive and detailed. Important linguistic issues involving the author's use of Greek language are given appropriate weight. Textual and theological analysis found in the commentary reveals the practical, pragmatic thrust of Fair's methodological approach, as he strove to make his writing accessible not only to scholars and theological students but also to readers in the Church. Analysis of the important exegetical issues is usually followed by a study of the history of patristic, medieval, reformation, and modern interpretations. On the whole, Fair's seminal commentary represents a remarkable compendium of exegetical insights that have lasting methodological value not only for the study of the Book of Revelation but also for the study of Jewish apocalyptic literature in general.

Another important aspect of Fair's scholarship deals with understanding the sociological, ecclesiastical, and spiritual dimensions of church leadership in a time of deep and broad cultural change. Many of his intuitions, of course, originated from his close reading of the Book of Revelation and other New Testament writings, as he offered expositions of biblical models of church governance and leadership. Alongside this scholarship, his extensive experience as a

minister, missionary, professor, and academic administrator offered invaluable raw material for his reflections.

Fair's insights about leadership, informed by his own experience as one of the most distinguished leaders of Christian education in the Stone-Campbell tradition, found their most profound expression in his pioneering study, *Leadership in the Kingdom: Sensitive Strategies for the Church in a Changing World*, initially published by ACU Press in 1996. Although written primarily for the Churches of Christ, Fair's book found a broader readership among congregations of various Christian denominations. The study focuses on leadership style as a fundamental ingredient of church organization and polity. Fair argues that dramatic changes taking place in modern society represent not only challenges but also opportunities for developing new models and styles of leadership based on biblical patterns.

In 1983 Fair was appointed Chair of the Bible Department. When the department became a college in 1985, Fair became the founding Dean of the College of Biblical Studies and remained in that role until 1997. In his capacity as the Chair and the Dean, Ian was able to hire and retain the best theological minds of the Stone-Campbell tradition, making ACU's College of Biblical Studies one of the strongest theological faculties in the United States of America.

*

In the present volume, many of Ian Fair's former colleagues and students have joined together to celebrate his distinguished contribution to scholarship, Christian education, and ministry. This Festschrift contains essays which mirror Fair's own scholarly interests, including biblical studies, with particular attention to the New Testament apocalyptic traditions, philosophy of missions, theology of worship, history of the Restoration movement, and modern theology. The content of the Festschrift thus closely follows Ian's own spiritual and scholarly journey and also reflects the breadth and scope of Ian's own work and his influence on the church and the academy.

The editor wishes to express his appreciation to George Kiraz, Brice Jones, and the Gorgias Press' editorial team for bringing this volume to completion.

Andrei A. Orlov

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Jeffrey W. Childers

Carmichael-Walling Chair for New Testament
and Early Christianity
Professor of Church History
Abilene Christian University

Dyron B. Daugherty

Professor of Religion
Seaver College
Pepperdine University

Christopher Flanders

Professor
Abilene Christian University

Mark W. Hamilton

Onstead Professor of Biblical Studies
Abilene Christian University

Randy Harris

Professor
Abilene Christian University

Christopher Heard

Professor of Religion
Seaver College
Pepperdine University

Tomás García Huidobro, S.J.

Wade Chair
Theology Department
Marquette University

Vic McCracken

Associate Professor
Abilene Christian University

Royce Money

Chancellor
Abilene Christian University

Andrei A. Orlov

Kelly Chair in Theology
Professor of Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity
Marquette University

Jack R. Reese

Professor
Former Dean of the College of Biblical Studies
Abilene Christian University

James Thompson

Professor Emeritus
Abilene Christian University

Darryl Tippens

Professor
Former Provost of Pepperdine University

Timothy M. Willis

Professor of Religion
Seaver College
Pepperdine University

Wendell Willis

Professor Emeritus
Abilene Christian University

IAN ARTHUR FAIR: A TRIBUTE

ROYCE MONEY

The gift of leadership: some people are born with it. Others spend their lives in relentless pursuit of it. Still others abuse it for selfish gain. My friend, Ian Fair, was born with this gift in abundance. He also has the extraordinary gift of teaching and scholarship. In a most unusual way, Fair combined these gifts at Abilene Christian University and its College of Biblical Studies for 23 years, and we are forever changed for the better because of him.

Ian had a way of convincing other Christian scholars in Churches of Christ to come to ACU to teach. Tony Ash, Jack Reese, Doug Foster, Jeff Childers, Carroll Osburn, James Thompson, Wendell Willis, David Wallace, Gailyn VanRheenen, Charles Siburt, David Wray, and Jeannene Reese are but a few of the notable professors who were persuaded by this great Christian man to join the ACU faculty. After I had served a short stint in ACU's Marriage and Family Institute, he convinced me that I should join the Bible faculty in 1984, an academic appointment I still proudly hold as a professor emeritus. Obviously, he is a hard man to turn down! Even after I moved into administration (provost from 1988-1991) and later served as president (1991-2010), Ian was one of my most significant encouragers, constantly affirming me in the mission of Christian education at ACU.

The above list of ACU faculty does not take into account a number of young scholars in the Stone-Campbell Restoration heritage who received a timely word of encouragement somewhere during their graduate studies to devote their lives to scholarship and ministry. Ian was serious about both. He would not hire professors who

did not have extensive ministry experience in the church and believed vigorously (Ian does everything vigorously!) that scholarship and ministry belong together. Scholars serve the church, and the church comes to maturity through their contributions. He was, and continues to be, first and foremost a churchman.

Ian's administrative ability and his natural leadership skills made him the logical choice in 1985 to serve as the university's first Dean of the College of Biblical Studies, as the university engaged in extensive structural reorganization. He served in that role until 1997, when he retired.

"Retired," however, does not exactly capture the status of this brilliant and energetic servant of the Lord. Since his transition, he has written several books, the most notable being an excellent commentary on the book of Revelation in 2011 (*Conquering in Christ*, ACU Press). As always, Ian aimed his writing to benefit church leaders and teachers. Surrounding that work is a multitude of study aids to benefit congregational leaders in their understanding of John's Apocalypse. In 1996, Ian authored a seminal book on church leadership entitled, *Leadership in the Kingdom: Sensitive Strategies for the Church in a Changing World* (ACU Press, 1996; 2nd ed. 2008). In the last few years, Ian also has completed a commentary on Ephesians (2014) and is currently in the final stages of producing a commentary on Galatians and on Kingdom Theology.

While at ACU, Ian launched the Center for Church Enrichment. Through that outreach aimed at congregational leaders, Ian wrote countless white papers and curricula to benefit the teaching ministers and lay leaders of the church, and he has continued to do so through the years. That center became the precursor of what is now the Siburt Institute for Church Ministry at ACU, with a global outreach of a variety of services designed to benefit congregational leaders.

In the last 20 years, Ian has frequently traveled internationally, assisting church leaders and consulting in Christian education enterprises. Without a doubt, his crowning achievement in international outreach is his work in Accra, Ghana, where he joined his son, Deon, and a multitude of Christians in establishing Heritage Christian College (HCC). Ian consulted frequently about administrative matters and was instrumental in writing several of the HCC Bible course

curricula. He even served for a time as interim department head for its Department of Theology. Full recognition of HCC as an accredited institution of higher learning by the Ministry of Education in Ghana may well not have been possible without Ian. He currently serves on the HCC Governance Advisory Board. The significance of the establishment of this beacon of Christian higher education in West African is enormous for the development of Christian ministers and leaders in that part of the world.

IAN A. FAIR AS ACADEMIC DEAN: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

JACK R. REESE

Rarely, perhaps once in a generation or so, a figure emerges at an institution or in one's own life whose influence, whose life and work, are so substantial that nothing afterwards is quite the same. For more than a few individuals—scholars, professors, students, ministers, elders, and church members—Ian Fair is such a figure.

Few people I know have excelled in as many roles over a lifetime as has Dr. Fair, any one of which would be considered a successful life's work for most people. He was a first-rate mechanical engineer in South Africa before becoming an effective church planter and missionary. He established and directed a school for indigenous South African preachers. He became an expert in the theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg, a professor of New Testament texts and biblical theology, and a specialist in the study of Revelation. Throughout his career, Dr. Fair has been an engaging classroom teacher, passionate preacher, popular Bible class teacher, effective congregational elder, and author of multiple books. He has been an innovator in the use of technology in teaching, a specialist in church leadership, and a consultant for churches around the world. His competence and influence in all of these areas are notable, to be sure. But, arguably, his most significant contribution was as a visionary academic leader.

Fair joined the faculty of Abilene Christian University in 1978 and was appointed chair of the Bible Department in 1983. The department became a college in 1985. Fair was the founding dean of the College of Biblical Studies and served in that role until 1997. The fourteen years of Dean Fair's academic leadership were years of sub-

stantial change—in the larger culture, in the university, and in the college. A generational shift occurred among the students during these years, with Baby Boomers giving way to Gen Xers who had different life questions and different ways of relating to the church and the university. As an older generation of venerable professors began to retire, Fair hired a new generation of professors, many of whom had different views about the Bible and culture, about church and university, adding to his and the university's challenges. Under Fair's leadership, significant new academic programs and emphases were launched in every department in the college. Enrollment grew substantially in every area, both undergraduate and graduate, led by Dean Fair's innovations and energy. During those years, Churches of Christ were also experiencing profound changes, creating opportunities for Dean Fair to exercise both diplomacy and courage with the school's primary constituency.

These were years of academic change throughout the country. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools raised its expectations for schools of higher education under its purview and changed its standards and processes of assessment, an academic disruption Dean Fair had to manage both in the college and, substantially, in the university. Similarly, the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy refocused its standards, impacting one of the premier academic programs of the college, which Dean Fair had to oversee. And significant initiatives were begun by the college to seek accreditation for the graduate programs in Bible and Ministry by the Association of Theological Schools, soon to be renamed the Graduate School of Theology. Adding to these profound challenges, the faculty and staff whose offices were scattered around the campus, moved into the newly constructed state-of-the-art Biblical Studies Building in 1989, a project overseen detail by detail by Dean Fair.

During these times of profound stress and change within the university, Dean Fair exhibited unusual strengths, three of which should be especially noted.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER

When Fair was first appointed chair of the Bible Department, not everyone expected him to function as the transformative figure we now know him to be. He was a relatively new faculty member. He

was not widely known as a teacher or administrator. In fact, questions of concern about his unexpected appointment to leadership were quietly expressed by a few. These questions did not linger long. Within weeks it was clear that Fair was a whirlwind of activities and ideas. By the end of his first year as chair, the only question was whether the rest of the faculty could stay up with him.

Fair quickly began to both embody and shape the ideals of the college. He seemed to be larger than life. He taught often and well. He engaged in research. He wrote, consulted, mentored, raised funds, managed finances, and created new academic initiatives, all with clear purpose. Most importantly, he helped set and fought hard for certain values within the department and later the college, especially two:

First, Dean Fair believed that scripture—biblical texts and biblical theology—should be at the center of the curriculum. He was unbudging in his commitment to protect the central place of the Bible within the department/college. However valuable a course or program might be on its own, it had to find its place in relation to biblical study, never as a replacement of it. For Dean Fair, everything began with a broad grasp of scripture, which included proficiency in biblical languages and well-honed skills in exegesis. But it also meant students would gain theological sophistication and cultural sensitivity. For Fair, good scholar-ministers should allow a rigorous understanding of biblical texts to inform their theology and shape their practice, no exceptions.

Second, Dean Fair believed the curriculum should focus primarily on the training of ministers. Fair's greatest legacy may be the transformation of the department, which had a long history of producing world-class scholars and teachers, into a college whose primary passion was equipping ministers and missionaries. He was able to accomplish these changes without undermining the crucial role of research and scholarship. During his fourteen years of leadership, the number of graduates who went on to do doctoral research at world-class schools actually grew, while the number of students training for ministry and missions increased more than fivefold. In 1983, the reputation of the Bible Department at ACU was primarily one of excel-

lence in research and scholarship. By 1997, without undermining its international reputation for excellence in scholarship, the College of Biblical Studies had become the largest training ground for ministers and missionaries within Churches of Christ, as well as a growing number of ministry students from other faith groups, with over 550 undergraduate and graduate majors.

As the academic leader of the college, Fair both influenced and embodied its ideals. He engaged the faculty and students in rethinking scholarship and ministry. He transformed the academic culture. He challenged how things were done. He fought for things he thought were most important. And he was wise enough to equip others to lead and humble enough to praise them when they succeeded, because that is what transformational leaders do.

VISIONARY MANAGER

One of the reasons Dean Fair was able to change the academic culture so substantially was because he combined the ability to see the big picture with an eye for fine details. He was both visionary and manager, both planner and analyst, both prophet and priest.

Fair's vision of the college was more expansive than what most of us at the time could imagine. He saw a curriculum spanning broad, integrated fields of study, not narrow, exclusive disciplines. He envisioned a co-curriculum of intense ministry engagement, with churches as classrooms and learning as a lifelong commitment. He saw ministry as the locus of theology, history, languages, and praxis. He then created and oversaw the academic machinery needed to bring about these changes and the interpersonal skills to instill real ownership for these changes by the faculty. The department he entered would hardly have recognized the college he left behind.

Fair's attention to detail in the process of achieving a vision reached almost legendary proportions as the Biblical Studies Building was being planned and built. At first, the local contractors in charge of the construction had no idea why an academic dean, sporting a well-tailored suit and a distinctive South African brogue, would come to the construction site almost every day, wearing a hard hat, blueprints in hand, looking over their shoulders, asking questions, offering advice, and providing expert critique. They soon discovered that the combination of Dean Fair's training as an engineer and his

attention to the smallest details made him a formidable partner in the process of building construction. It is difficult to imagine that any other person could have talked to electricians, carpenters, and engineers as one of them while also envisioning how future teachers and students would use such a building. This combination of micro- and macro-manager made Dean Fair particularly qualified to serve as leader during these substantial years of change and growth.

ADVOCATE/PROTECTOR

For many, perhaps most, university faculty anywhere in the world, the most important role of an academic leader is not so much to supervise them but to advocate for them. During a time of significant transition in the university and within Churches of Christ, faculty and students needed an environment in which to ask questions, explore, think, challenge, and grow. The faculty especially needed someone to protect them from some particularly irascible critics and to serve as an advocate for the causes they shared. This Dean Fair did with remarkable courage and tenacity.

Occasionally and unsurprisingly, some faculty spoke or wrote things that had consequences they had not imagined, creating more than a little heartburn among certain constituents. But even in the face of substantial criticism, and even if the faculty had acted naively or unwisely, Dean Fair was pointed in their defense. In Fair's early years as department chair, the university faced an unrelenting attack concerning the teaching of evolution in science classes. As opponents verbally besieged the university, Dean Fair served as one of the primary respondents even though the external criticism did not target his own faculty or curriculum, at least at first. His ability to formulate responses, hold critics accountable for their own actions, and articulate the university's position became the foundation for the defense of his own faculty and curriculum against attack in later years.

In the early 1990s, Fair often sought out the school's critics, meeting with them one-on-one or in preachers' gatherings. He visited with elders. He talked to people all over the world. He never backed away from the attacks. He listened, he challenged, he refuted.

He reframed the arguments and redefined the issues. He spoke out of a well-studied theology but also a deeply embedded compassion. Anything less than such tenacious advocacy would have led to a different college, a different future.

Fair's role as college advocate, however, was not confined to the politics of churches. At the academic deans' table he was outspoken and passionate. Fair had an unusual ability to see the needs of the whole university while also championing the college he led. He fought for increased scholarships, pushed for new programs, and lobbied for increased attention to financial support. He created the position of development officer for the college. He argued successfully for substantial increases in unfunded scholarships to the college, a move that greatly increased the number of majors in a very short time. When university budget figures differed from his, he often camped in administration offices, his own spreadsheets in hand, arguing his case.

While Fair's bull-doggedness, a quality he fully recognized in himself, did not always win others' affection, it always won their respect. He knew who he was. He knew what was important. He knew how to get things done. His language was plain when nuancing would only obscure. In the process, he carved out a space for expansive ministry preparation, which could come only in the wake of such aggressiveness and tenacity.

In each of these roles, Dean Fair exhibited an unusual array of leadership skills. He was adept both at vision casting and implementation. He inspired in his faculty both collegiality and professionalism. He promoted academic rigor and cutting-edge research while at the same time pushing every program, every faculty member, every student toward constructive engagement with church and culture. He loved the churches that served as the university's primary constituency, but he was willing to challenge ideas and practices that were unhealthy to them or detrimental to the university, doing so with both candor and tenderness. His goal was not merely to encourage excellent teaching and competent research but to produce effective ministers and missionaries and to help churches become more theologically reflective. During his years as dean, Ian Fair never took his eyes off the larger goal, nor did he allow his faculty to forget what was important.

Many other stories could be told, of course—his advocacy of missions, his championing of computer-assisted teaching, his promotion of off-campus teaching and learning. All who have known him have their stories to tell. But all would agree, Ian Fair was an extraordinary academic leader in an extraordinary time.

Rarely, perhaps once in a generation or so, a figure emerges whose influence is so substantial that nothing afterwards is quite the same. It is certainly true for me. As his immediate successor, I inherited the fruit Ian Fair's remarkable legacy. And while his advice and expertise were and are immensely helpful, it is his friendship I cherish most. Along with all those who served with him and learned from him and were loved by him, I am grateful.

JACOB OF SARUG'S NEW TESTAMENT TEXT¹

JEFFREY W. CHILDERS

INTRODUCTION

Jacob of Sarug († ca. 521) was chorepiscopus of Ḥawra in the early sixth century, shepherding rural churches in the easternmost parts of the Roman Empire until he was appointed bishop of Baṭnan by about 519. From Baṭnan, the main city of the district of Sarug near the border of modern Syria, Jacob visited churches and monasteries in the towns and villages of the area, preaching and exercising pastoral care. He was a profound biblical exegete and gifted preacher, a worthy heir to the Syriac tradition of intoning sermons in the form of poetic verse. Celebrated as “the Flute of the Holy Spirit and the Harp of the Church,” Jacob’s contributions to early Syriac literature make him one of the most prolific and creative Christian authors of Late Antiquity.² In many respects our knowledge of Jacob’s work is still in its early stages.

Jacob is well known for his rich imagination. Yet most of the raw material out of which he fashions his powerful rhetoric and creative theological proposals is quarried from one source: the Syriac Bible. It is a singular authority for Jacob; he likens it to the sun, a doc-

¹ An earlier version of this study was presented in the “Workshop on Jacob of Serugh” that took place at Princeton University in January, 2015. The author is grateful for the feedback and remarks offered by the workshop participants.

² See Sebastian P. Brock, “Ya‘qub of Serugh,” in Sebastian P. Brock, Aaron M. Butts, George A. Kiraz, and Lucas van Rompay, eds., *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2011), 433-435.

tor, a river, a field of grass on which to graze, and a pile of gold. It is a pearl, a nurse, a lamp, the ocean, and a port of refuge.³ For one so enthralled by the biblical text, Jacob does not disappoint. He quotes from it and alludes to it constantly in his writings. The present study analyzes Jacob's use of the New Testament in particular. Although some attention has been given to the subject, no thorough examination of Jacob's New Testament citations has been conducted. The lack of research in this area prompts us to conduct a survey, in which a preliminary analysis of references in representative selections of Jacob's verse homilies (mêmrê), prose homilies (turgâmê), and his epistles⁴ will help us characterize his citation habits and the nature of the New Testament text that he uses. The analysis follows accepted principles of identifying and classifying biblical citations that have been developed in the field of New Testament textual criticism.⁵

This study is offered in honor of Ian Fair. As teacher and mentor, Fair never failed to encouraged the author in the study of scripture, early Christianity, and Syriac. For the author and for many others, Fair has been a model of ecclesial leadership exercised through the apt theological reading of scripture for the sake of the church. In this regard Fair has much in common with Jacob of Sarug. It is a privilege to offer this study of Jacob's biblical citations in appreciation of Ian Fair's scholarship, his love of scripture, and his leadership in both church and academy.

³ See Benham M. Boulos Sony, "La méthode exégétique de Jacques de Saroug," *Parole de l'Orient* 9 (1979-80): 71.

⁴ For purposes of this study, the authenticity of the accepted works of Jacob will be assumed. Indeed, it is on the basis of analyzing features such as Jacob's citations that we may develop more refined criteria by which to judge the authenticity of works ascribed to him and normally presumed to be his.

⁵ See especially Carroll D. Osburn, "Methodology in Identifying Patristic Citations in NT Textual Criticism," *Novum Testamentum* 48 (2005): 313-343; and Sebastian P. Brock, "The Use of the Syriac Fathers for New Testament Textual Criticism," in Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes, eds., *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, 2d ed. New Testament Tools, Studies, and Documents 42 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 407-428.

THE NEW TESTAMENT IN JACOB'S MÊMRÊ

Most of what survives from Jacob's pen are his *mêmêrê*,⁶ hundreds of verse homilies employing the meter of twelve-syllable couplets for which Jacob is famous. In his *mêmêrâ* on Elisha and the king of Moab Jacob says, "God put the scriptures into the world as lamps of great light in the darkness in order to illumine (it) by them."⁷ Scripture itself may be illuminating, but Jacob's use of scripture in the verse homilies is anything but clear and plain. Jacob's *mêmêrê* are truly saturated with references to the biblical text but his methods of handling the text are so dynamic and creative that his patterns of citation resist easy classification. Commenting on Jacob's fluid references to 1 Kings 10:10 in one of the *mêmêrê* on Elijah, Stephen Kaufman emphatically declares, "Clearly under no circumstances must Jacob's wording ever be used as evidence of an alternative biblical text."⁸ It must be observed that while references and allusions to the New Testament in the *mêmêrê* are extremely common, direct citations are rare and brief. The influences of context, poetic meter, and the fecundity of Jacob's own imagination are constantly reshaping the language of the biblical text. Variation is the norm rather than the exception and extreme caution is necessary if any effort is to be made to analyze the *mêmêrê* in order to determine whether they shed light on the form of Jacob's New Testament.

Given the severity of these cautions, one might suppose that little of text critical value is to be gained by an analysis of the *mêmêrê*'s biblical references.⁹ Yet Jacob's *mêmêrê* are held to be the most revealing of

⁶ *Mêmêrâ* text references from Paul Bedjan and Sebastian P. Brock, eds., *Homiliae selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis*, 6 vols. 2nd ed. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006) are cited by *mêmêrâ* and line numbers. *Mêmêrê* from other editions or manuscripts are cited accordingly (e.g. page number).

⁷ Bedjan and Brock, *Homiliae selectae*, 4:282, 5-6.

⁸ Stephen A. Kaufman, ed., *Jacob of Sarug's Homilies on Elijah*, Texts from Christian Late Antiquity 18 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2009), 138, n. 44.

⁹ For instance, Barbara Aland and Andreas Juckel, eds., *Das Neue Testament in syrischer Überlieferung*, 2 vols. Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung 7, 14, 23, 32 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986-2002), now complete for Paul and the major Catholic Epistles, make no attempt to provide evi-

his thought and exegesis and therefore should not be dismissed. The magnitude of their reliance on scripture is staggering, entreating us to make some attempt at characterizing their use of the New Testament text beyond a gesture towards the futility of doing so. Furthermore, a case has been made for Jacob's reliance on the Diatessaron¹⁰ on the basis of references in the *mêmnrê*. This assessment continues to be repeated without adequate testing or further research.¹¹ Due to the basic importance of Jacob's *mêmnrê* and the need to respond to the aforementioned judgment, we offer the following analysis and some conclusions regarding their use of the New Testament.

The study surveys fifty-six *mêmnrê*, scouring Jacob's homilies for New Testament references.¹² Recognizing that this represents a mod-

dence from Jacob's published *mêmnrê*. This is partly due to the lack of indices for most of the *mêmnrê* at the times of the volumes' publication, but also reflects a lack of confidence regarding the text critical value of the references; see the explanation in Aland and Juckel, *Das Neue Testament in syrischer Überlieferung, I. Die Grossen Katholischen Briefe*, 23.

¹⁰ In its Syriac version, the second-century Gospel harmony was a highly influential form of the text in the early Syriac tradition. See William L. Petersen, "Diatessaron," in Sebastian P. Brock, Aaron M. Butts, George A. Kiraz, and Lucas van Rompay, eds., *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2011), 122-124.

¹¹ E.g. see Sony, "La méthode exégétique de Jacques de Saroug," 70; Isabelle Isebaert-Cauuet, ed., *Jacques de Saroug. Homélies sur la Fin du Monde, Les pères dans la foi* 91 (Paris: Migne, 2005), 12.

¹² The *mêmnrê* analyzed are: Bedjan and Brock, *Homiliae selectae*, numbers 8, 18, 15, 20, 31, 32, 33, 49, 51, 54, 55, 58, 67, 68, 71a, 72, 79, 82, 95, 107, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 126, 155, 159, 165, 192, 193, 194, 195; eight *mêmnrê* on Mary, the Nativity, and the Ascension in Paul Bedjan, ed., *Martyrii qui et Sabdona, quae supersunt omnia* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1902), 614-684, 709-831; the first *mêmnrâ* on Elijah preserved in Mardin 137, edited by Kaufman, *Jacob of Sarug's Homilies on Elijah*, 11-109; four *mêmnrê* on Creation edited by Khalil Alwan, ed., *Jacques de Saroug, Quatre homélies métriques sur la Création*, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 508 (Leuven: Peeters, 1989); *mêmnrâ* on Ephrem edited by Joseph P. Amar, ed., *A Metrical Homily on Holy Mar Ephrem by Jacob of Serugh*, *Patrologia Orientalis* 47.1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995); seven *mêmnrê* on the Jews edited by Micheline Albert, ed., *Homélies contre les Juifs par Jacques de Saroug*, *Patrologia Orientalis* 38.1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976); *mêmnrâ* on Hosea edited by Werner Strothmann, ed., *Jakob von Sarug, der*

est sample of the published corpus, the selected *mêmârê* cover varied subject matter: some deal with New Testament texts and themes, some with the Old Testament; others with festivals or lives of saints. The sample is representative of Jacob's corpus, though of course the study of an even larger number of *mêmârê* would be welcome and might produce different results. The survey found hundreds of references, most of which fit the category of mere *reminiscences*¹³ that are normally of little use in reconstructing an author's biblical text. Yet the survey also found scores of instances in which the language is such that it bears closer comparison with one or more forms of the Syriac biblical text. After closely analyzing over 130 such instances, we may offer the following characterization of them, identifying *allusions*, *adaptations*, and even a few *citations*.¹⁴

By far the most rare category is that of the *citation* proper.¹⁵ Whereas Jacob's references often provide explicit indicators that he is

Prophet Hosea, Göttinger Orientforschungen, Reihe 1, 5 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1973); *mêmârâ* on the Seven Sleepers edited by Bedjan and Brock, *Homiliae selectae*, 6:324-330.

¹³ "A clear reference to a particular biblical text, but lacking significant verbal content and reflecting no intent to cite; an echo of a biblical text that has little or no sustained verbal correspondence to the text." Osburn, "Methodology in Identifying Patristic Citations," 318.

¹⁴ Syriac biblical texts are taken from the following editions: Peshitta Gospels: Philip Edward Pusey and George Henry Gwilliam, *Tetraeuangelium sanctum juxta simplicem Syrorum versionem ad fidem codicum, Massorae, editionum denuo recognitum* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1901); Sinaitic Old Syriac (S): Agnes Smith Lewis, *The Old Syriac Gospels or Evangelion da-Mepharreshe* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1910); Curetonian Old Syriac (C): Francis Crawford Burkitt, *Evangelion da-Mepharreshe. The Curetonian Version of the Four Gospels*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901); the Peshitta of Paul's epistles and the greater Catholic epistles: Barbara Aland and Andreas Juckel, eds., *Das Neue Testament in Syrischer Überlieferung*, vols. 1-2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986-2002); the remainder of the Peshitta New Testament: *The Syriac New Testament* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1920).

¹⁵ "A verbally exact quotation, whether it corresponds entirely... or largely..., and whether made from a text or from memory, often having an introduc-

quoting, whether by mentioning an author or source (e.g. “the Lord,” or “Paul”), using some form of the verbs, “wrote” (ܘܒܪܗܘܢ), “says” (ܘܥܢܐ), or the particle *lam* (ܠܡ), the subsequent texts do not normally approximate verbally exact quotations. The rare exception occurs when the quotation is brief enough to fit the context and the meter. Out of over 130 instances studied, only about twelve fit this category, as illustrated by the following examples:¹⁶

Matthew 28:13

ܘܡܘܨܘܢ ܘܥܢܐ ܠܡܢܘܨܘܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܠܡܢܘܨܘܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܠܡܢܘܨܘܢܐ
Mêmṛā 54:91¹⁷

The guards shouted, “The disciples came and stole him!”

ܘܡܘܨܘܢ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ
Peshitta¹⁸

John 8:58

ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ
Mêmṛā 165:131¹⁹

“Before Abraham was,” he says, “I am.”

ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ
Peshitta

ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ
S

Acts 2:13

ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ
Mêmṛā 58:213²⁰

“They have drunk new wine and become drunk.”

ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ ܘܥܢܐ
Peshitta

tion and always having an explicit or implicit cue to the reader that it is intended as a deliberate citation.” Osburn, “Methodology in Identifying Patristic Citations,” 318.

¹⁶ English translations are provided for examples drawn from Jacob, not for Syriac biblical versions. Where the Syriac indicates quotation, the English translation provides quotation markers for purpose of illustration.

¹⁷ Bedjan and Brock, *Homiliae selectae*, 2.615, 14.

¹⁸ Neither S nor C is extant for this passage.

¹⁹ Bedjan and Brock, *Homiliae selectae*, 2.615, 14.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.680, 12.

2 Corinthians 6:9

ܐܘܢ ܕܠܐ ܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܡܝܢ ܕܠܐ ܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܢܘܨܝܢ
 Mardin 137, 853²¹
 as what is written, “(though) unknown, and we are known”
 ܐܘܢ ܕܠܐ ܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܡܝܢ ܕܠܐ ܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܢܘܨܝܢ
 Peshitta

Luke 14:11

ܘܡܝܢ ܕܠܐ ܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܡܝܢ ܕܠܐ ܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܢܘܨܝܢ
 Mêmṛā 115:373²²
 and as it is said, the one who humbles himself will be exalted
 ܘܡܝܢ ܕܠܐ ܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܡܝܢ ܕܠܐ ܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܢܘܨܝܢ²³
 Peshitta S C

John 20:13

ܘܡܝܢ ܕܠܐ ܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܡܝܢ ܕܠܐ ܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܢܘܨܝܢ
 Mêmṛā 54:129²⁴
 “They have taken my Lord and I do not know where they have put him.”
 ܘܡܝܢ ܕܠܐ ܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܡܝܢ ܕܠܐ ܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܢܘܨܝܢ
 Mêmṛā 54:141
 ܘܡܝܢ ܕܠܐ ܢܘܨܝܢ²⁵ ܘܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܡܝܢ ܕܠܐ ܢܘܨܝܢ ܘܢܘܨܝܢ
 S Peshitta

In these examples, we see that Jacob prefers to link biblical references to the context by using clues such as ܘܡܝܢ (“it is written”) or the quotation marker, ܘܡܝܢ. The references are more verbally exact probably because they are brief and their content and meter fit the context of the mêmṛā. They tend to match the Peshitta; indeed, the analysis found no citation as such that agreed distinctively with the Old Syriac (O or S) against the Peshitta. This is not the case with certain allusions, as we shall see. Nor are quotations from texts with which an exegetical mêmṛā is especially concerned more likely to cite closely—e.g. Matthew 4 in a mêmṛā on Jesus’ temptation.

²¹ Kaufman, *Jacob of Sarug’s Homilies on Elijah*, 93.

²² Bedjan and Brock, *Homiliae selectae*, 4.244, 17.

²³ S C have ܘܡܝܢ.

²⁴ Bedjan and Brock, *Homiliae selectae*, 2.617, 13; 2.618, 4.

²⁵ S has ܘܡܝܢ.

ܐܘܬܝܪ ܕܘܚܝܐ ܡܝ ܘܬܪܐ ܕܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ
 Mêmṛā 159:44³⁸

He said, “the time is too short to tell about Jephthah.”

ܘܬܝܪ ܕܘܚܝܐ ܡܝ ܘܬܪܐ ܕܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ
 Peshitta

ܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ ܕܘܬܝܪ ܕܘܚܝܐ ܡܝ ܘܬܪܐ ܕܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ.

Luke 7:39

ܐܠܝ ܒܘܨܐ ܡܝ ܘܬܪܐ ܕܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ
 Mêmṛā 51:32³⁹

“If he were a prophet he would have known what sort (of woman) she is.”

ܐܠܝ ܒܘܨܐ ܡܝ ܘܬܪܐ ܕܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ
 Mêmṛā 51:33⁹

“If he were a prophet he would have known,” as one may say.

ܐܠܝ ܒܘܨܐ ܡܝ ܘܬܪܐ ܕܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ
 Peshitta

ܐܠܝ ܒܘܨܐ ܡܝ ܘܬܪܐ ܕܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ ܕܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ ܕܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ.

ܐܠܝ ܒܘܨܐ ܡܝ ܘܬܪܐ ܕܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ ܕܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ ܕܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ
 S C

ܐܠܝ ܒܘܨܐ ܡܝ ܘܬܪܐ ܕܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ ܕܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ ܕܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ ܕܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ.⁴¹

In certain respects the adaptations are similar to allusions, yet they are closer to the biblical text. The example from Luke 12:49 is nearly a citation, though it gives ܠܚܝܬܐ rather than ܕܠܚܝܬܐ. The examples from Hebrews 11:32 and Luke 7:39, in addition to providing clues that the author is referring to a biblical context (ܘܬܝܪ and ܠܚܝܬܐ), exhibit a common feature of the adaptations: abbreviation. Slight changes in wording are also common. Nevertheless, the categories of allusion and adaptation overlap in Jacob’s mêmṛê. They share in common Jacob’s tendencies to mark references, to use recognizable terms and expressions from scripture, while altering the biblical text for the sake of recontextualizing it within the mêmṛā.

³⁸ Ibid., 5.327, 2; 327, 9.

³⁹ Ibid., 2.417, 16; 418, 8.

⁴⁰ S has ܘܬܝܪ rather than ܡܝ ܘܬܝܪ.

⁴¹ S has ܠܚܝܬܐ rather than ܕܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܗܝܠܐ ܒܫܘܒܐ.

fourth-century writers used syr[a] v[e]t[us] and Diat[tessaron].⁴⁷ We may agree that Jacob's use of the Peshitta is inarguable. As for the Diatessaron, Connolly based his conclusion partly on the observation that certain of Jacob's *mêmrê* use terms and images that evoke Diatessaronic texts. In particular, Connolly drew attention to the use of the expression, ܡܥܬܠܐ ܕܫܥܘܠ ("the bars of Sheol") with reference to Matthew 16:18 and the occurrence of the term ܠܥܘܨܐ ("lance") at Christ's passion rather than the Peshitta's ܠܥܘܨܐ ("spear") in the reference to John 19:34, echoing the term as it occurs in Luke 2:35.⁴⁸ He also noticed that in *Mêmrâ* 8, "On the baptism of our Redeemer," Jacob makes reference to the light and fire on the Jordan at Jesus' baptism in two different contexts.⁴⁹ Connolly took these allusions as evidence of Jacob's "free" reliance upon the Diatessaron.⁵⁰ He also observed harmonistic elements in Jacob's treatment of Christ's passion,⁵¹ drawing the conclusion that Jacob follows the order of the harmonizing Diatessaron.⁵²

Connolly's conclusions raise important questions about method. Harmonization of Gospel narratives may be seen as a natural result of Jacob's hermeneutic and his rhetorical style, whereas the

⁴⁷ Robert H. Connolly, "Jacob of Serug and the Diatessaron," *Journal of Theological Studies* 8 (1907): 590.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 581-83. The contexts are *Mêmrâ* 8.139-142, 335-355.

⁴⁹ Bedjan and Brock, *Homiliae selectae*, 1.174.10-12; 1.183.17-184.16. See William L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron. Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance & History in Scholarship* (Leiden; Brill, 1994), 18-20; Sebastian Brock, "Baptismal Themes in the Writings of Jacob of Serugh," in François Graffin and Antoine Guillaumont, eds., *Symposium Syriacum 1976*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 205 (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1978), 326-328.

⁵⁰ Connolly, "Jacob of Serug and the Diatessaron," 581-582.

⁵¹ Bedjan and Brock, *Homiliae selectae*, 1.566-623.

⁵² Connolly's second article treats apparent correlations between Jacob's *mêmrâ*, Robert H. Connolly, "On the Paralytic of Thirty-Eight Years," (Bedjan and Brock, *Homiliae selectae*, 4.701-724) and the Diatessaron: Robert H. Connolly, "A Side-Light on the Methods of Tatian," *Journal of Theological Studies* 12 (1911): 568-573.

does not in any of them go on to comment on the mention of water suggests Jacob may have been familiar with a Gospel text having this reading. Scribes were puzzled by it as well and several manuscript variations in the turgāmê attempt to bring the text into line with the Peshitta.

Alongside the early exegetical traditions we see in Jacob's references to the New Testament in his mêmêrê, these examples show that the mêmêrê may occasionally preserve vestiges of pre-Peshitta wording. However, the references are allusive and mixed. Some of the ostensibly Old Syriac echoes may themselves preserve Diatessaron readings, but that is far from certain. In light of Jacob's clear preference for the Peshitta it may be that he knows pre-Peshitta language that was preserved in Peshitta texts; others, such as the quotation of Matthew 6:11, may be due to the influence of liturgical or exegetical traditions. These instances do not indicate that Jacob's text was fundamentally different from the Peshitta. We are reminded that the early Peshitta text was neither fixed nor uniform and we may see Jacob's mêmêrê as further evidence of the Peshitta's fluidity during his time. As the reference to Matthew 4:4 shows, Jacob's text included noteworthy readings not attested in other known witnesses. So perhaps Kaufman's warnings about quotations in the mêmêrê is somewhat overstated, though still basically sound.

THE NEW TESTAMENT IN JACOB'S TURGÂMÊ

We turn now to a much smaller corpus: the prose homilies. Frédéric Rilliet edited six prose homilies (turgāmê) attributed to Jacob.⁷³ They deal with festal topics and make constant reference to New Testament texts. Though they manifest an elevated prose style, Jacob's turgāmê are free of the metrical constraints of the mêmêrê; by comparison, they display a tendency to quote longer portions of text and do so more precisely. Many allusions occur; this study focuses on *citations* and *adaptations* in the turgāmê. Out of about seventy clear

⁷³ Rilliet, *Jacques de Saroug. Six homélies festales en prose*. Aland and Juckel, *Das Neue Testament in syrischer Überlieferung* make only sparing reference to the festal homilies in their presentation of the New Testament in the Syriac Tradition.

ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ “Glory to God in the heights.”	Turgāmā 1:4 ⁹²
ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ. ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ	Peshitta
ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ	S

Matthew 27:28; John 19:2 (Mark 15:17)

⁹⁵ ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ⁹⁷ ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ.	Turgāmā 5:25 ⁹³ ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ. ⁹⁴ ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ. ⁹⁶
One of the evangelists said, “They clothed our Lord in a robe of purple, ⁹⁵ ” but another said, “a robe of scarlet.” ⁹⁷	
ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ	Peshitta Matt 27:28
ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ	S Matt 27:28
ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ	Peshitta John 19:2 ⁹⁸
ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ	Peshitta S Mk 15:17

Matthew 3:11 (Luke 3:16)

ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ... ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ	Turgāmā 2:3 ⁹⁹
ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ	
ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ	

He said, “I baptize you with water... but that one who is more powerful than me comes after me, and he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

⁹² Rilliet, *Jacques de Saroug. Six homélies festales en prose*, 538.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 622.

⁹⁴ Manuscript B has ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ.

⁹⁵ Manuscript M has ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ.

⁹⁶ Manuscript D has ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ.

⁹⁷ Manuscript D has ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ.

⁹⁸ C and S are not extant for this passage.

⁹⁹ Rilliet, *Jacques de Saroug. Six homélies festales en prose*, 550.

¹⁰⁰ Manuscripts LM have ܕܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ.

The quotations from Luke 2:14 illustrates a phenomenon not uncommon in the turgāmê: one context may have multiple quotations from the same biblical text yet treat them differently, even within the space of a few lines. The citations from 1:6 and 1:29 mentioned above exhibit more exactness. Both of the adaptations here introduce some commentary on the passage, but the reference in 1:4 is more exact, whereas the reference in 1:3, while still close, has been adapted. A number of the other citations studied also have corresponding adaptations within the same context, as illustrated here. The main adaptations in the quotation from Matthew 3:11 involve omissions of phrases. The quotation follows Matthew's wording but the omission of ܠܬܝܒܘܬܐ (‘‘for repentance’’) and the use of ܫܠܬܢܐ (‘‘powerful’’) instead of ܫܪܝܦܢܐ (‘‘strong’’) indicates harmonization with Luke 3:16. Harmonization of this type occurs occasionally, especially in Gospel quotations, though none suggest a specifically Diatessaronic background. For instance, in Turgāmā 5:25 the first reference conflates the wording of the narrative of the Peshitta of Matthew 27:28 (ܘܠܘܫܘܗܝܡ ܕܥܝܘܒܐ ܕܥܝܘܒܐ, ‘‘they clothed him in a robe’’) with the description of ‘‘purple’’ (ܘܠܘܫܘܗܝܡ ܕܥܝܘܒܐ) in John 19:2 and Mark 15:17. The Sinaitic Old Syriac conflates the two as well, but this is quite different—indeed, Jacob's entire discussion about the discrepancy presumes he is reading a non-harmonized source text; his concern is to reconcile the apparent contradiction. He goes on to explain that both descriptions are correct, purple and scarlet, expounding on the meanings and complementarity of the colors. His harmonizing reference in this adaptation should be taken as evidence of his citation habits rather than reliance on a harmonized source text or even evidence of variant readings. Manuscript D resolves the problem by transposing the terms, thereby making the adaptation conform better to the Peshitta and alerting us to the need for good editions that present data from all the available manuscripts.

The quotation of Matthew 28:13 illustrates the problem. The reference has been adapted slightly by the omission of ܕܠܝܠܐ (‘‘at night’’), yet two manuscripts (B, N) correct the deficiency by adding the term, making the text conform to the Peshitta. Instances of manuscript variation, usually slight and bringing quotations closer to the

Peshitta standard are evident throughout the *turgāmê*; e.g. in the quotations of John 1:27 we see similar variations correcting the text in small ways. This occurs occasionally in the *mêmre* as well, though the manuscript bases of most of the editions of Jacob's *mêmre* are so slight as to mask this phenomenon. This sort of variation is unsurprising, given what we know about scribal habits and manuscript transmission; biblical citations were prominent targets for scribal revision. However, we are reminded once again of the need for better editions. Editions that do not present all the available evidence accurately are able to contribute only partially to a sound understanding of Jacob's use of the New Testament. Analyses that rely on inferior questions—including the present study—must be considered preliminary.

The quotation of John 1:27; Luke 3:16 (cf. Matthew 3:11) in *Turgāmā* 2:11 reflects the Peshitta text in that it speaks of John's unworthiness to untie the straps of Jesus' sandals. In *Turgāmā* 2:27, however, John is simply "unworthy of the straps of his sandals." This adaptation is echoed in three different places in Jacob's *Mêmre* 8, on the Epiphany, where John is described as being "unworthy even of his sandals." The simplified wording does not occur in Jacob's *mêmre* on the Blessed Virgin Mary cited above, nor is it echoed in the Old Syriac witnesses or most other early citations.¹²⁶ However, Ephrem has essentially the same wording in *Hymn on Faith* 5. These are noteworthy correspondences, yet several factors favor the conclusion that this was simply a way Jacob and Ephrem happened to condense this text rather than being indicative of a different form of the biblical text: Jacob's wording varies in different contexts; both Jacob's and Ephrem's poetic style can account for such variations; and

¹²⁶ For instance, see the texts collected in Ignatius Ortiz de Urbina, ed., *Vetus Evangelium Syrorum et Exinde Excerptum Diatessaron Tatiani*, *Biblia Polyglotta* 6 (Madrid: Matriti Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, 1967), 20-22.

in the *Commentary on the Diatessaron*, 6.22; 9.1 Ephrem has the more usual wording: “unworthy to untie the straps of his sandals”¹²⁷

These quotations illustrate the rare but striking occurrence of some distinctive wording in certain biblical references in Jacob’s turgāmê. It has already been noted that in two places Turgāmā 3, on the forty days’ fasting (3:10, 41) has “not by bread *and water* alone shall a person live,” agreeing with quotations in two different mêmêrê on Jesus’ temptation (82:281; 126:266). As suggested previously, Jacob may have been familiar with a text that had this unusual reading.

To summarize: Jacob’s prose homilies tend to quote scripture at greater length and more precisely than we see in the mêmêrê. Numerous citations occur, though adaptations are more common and allusions are frequent. As in the mêmêrê, Jacob’s provision of clues such as ܐܠܗܐ ܕܘܪܝܢܐ (“it is written”), ܐܘܪܝܢܐ (“he said”) are not of much help in discriminating between types of quotations, since Jacob’s rhetoric deploys these expressions constantly and indiscriminately. Jacob’s text in the turgāmê is basically that of the Peshitta, though certain exceptional readings provide hints that the form of his text had distinctive features. That we have the turgāmê in a critical edition helps us to appreciate the textures of the manuscript tradition in ways that are presently much more difficult for most of the mêmêrê. For example, some manuscripts show a tendency to standardize biblical quotations and can therefore mislead our researches into Jacob’s Bible.

THE NEW TESTAMENT IN JACOB’S EPISTLES

When we turn to Jacob’s forty-three epistles¹²⁸ we find that scholars have done more to research their biblical quotations. In particular,

¹²⁷ See Louis Leloir, ed., *Saint Éphrem. Commentaire de l’Évangile Concordant. Texte Syriaque (Manuscrit Chester Beatty 709). Folios Additionnels*, Chester Beatty Monographs 8 (Louvain: Peeters, 1990), 82, 126.

¹²⁸ Text in Gunnar Olinder, ed., *Iacobi Sarugensis. Epistulae quotquot supersunt*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 110 (Louvain: Peeters, 1937); translation by Micheline Albert, ed., *Le Lettres de Jacques de Saroug*, Patrimoine Syriaque 3 (Kaslik: Parole de l’Orient, 2004).

“probably... a sample of the Syriac Harmony.”¹⁴⁷ Yet even this tentative identification is based on a series of suppositions regarding the use of a single term.¹⁴⁸ The mixed quality of many readings and the elusiveness of clear Diatessaron indicators lead Black to speculate that Jacob’s original Diatessaron text forms may have been accommodated later to the Peshitta.¹⁴⁹ Yet he finally concludes, “there cannot be the least doubt that Jacob’s basic text and his authoritative version is the Syriac Vulgate,” by which he means the Peshitta, and that even the mixed readings are mainly due to vestigial traces of the Old Syriac in Jacob’s Peshitta Gospels.¹⁵⁰

Albert agrees that Jacob basically cites the Peshitta in his letters and does so in an exacting manner, frequent adaptations and allusions notwithstanding.¹⁵¹ But Albert also draws attention to a distinctive quotation:

John 19:34

ܠܗ ܒܘܚܘܪܐ ܡܝܡܢ ܡܘܬܐ ܡܘܬܐ ܡܘܬܐ ܡܘܬܐ ܡܘܬܐ Epistle 36.5¹⁵²

he was struck with the lance and water and blood came from him

ܡܘܬܐ ܡܘܬܐ ܡܘܬܐ ܡܘܬܐ ܡܘܬܐ Epistle 7.3¹⁵³

for you have been quenched by the water and the blood from the
mount of Golgotha

ܡܘܬܐ ܡܘܬܐ ܡܘܬܐ ܡܘܬܐ ܡܘܬܐ Peshitta

ܡܘܬܐ ܡܘܬܐ ܡܘܬܐ

Apart from the reference to the exegetical tradition of the lance in John 19:34 that occurs in several of Jacob’s epistles,¹⁵⁴ Albert notes that the order has been inverted to read, “water and blood came from him.” Jacob’s discussion of the terms also follows this order, an order

¹⁴⁷ Black, “The Gospel Text of Jacob of Serug,” 63.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁵¹ Albert, “À propos des citations scripturaires,” 345.

¹⁵² Olinder, *Iacobi Sarugensis. Epistulae*, 263.28.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 35.24.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.11; 234.17; 239.6.

that occurs in two of Jacob's epistles but not in Syriac versions of the Gospel. The Old Syriac witnesses are not extant here and Diatessaron witnesses are of no help. However, von Soden signals that this reading occurs in two Greek witnesses and the Bohairic Coptic version, pointing to 1 John 5:8 as a possible source for the inversion.¹⁵⁵ Albert finds further traces of this order in several patristic sources,¹⁵⁶ including Theodore of Mopsuestia and particularly the Greek text of Chrysostom's treatment of the passage in his exegetical *Homily on John* 85.3 (ἐξῆλθε γὰρ ὕδωρ καὶ αἷμα).¹⁵⁷ The Syriac version of Chrysostom has the same order (ܠܘܘܐ ܠܘܥܝܢܐ ܝܘܢܝܘܢܐ; "for water and blood came forth"),¹⁵⁸ as Albert presumed would be the case. It seems likely that Jacob knew a text with this order, and perhaps a tradition that had been influenced by Theodore and Chrysostom as well. This intriguing reference highlights the interest attaching itself to Jacob's use of the New Testament in his epistles.

CONCLUSION

What may we conclude from this overview of Jacob's New Testament text? First of all, we see that references to the New Testament text are extremely frequent in all of Jacob's writings: *mêmre*, *turgâmê*, and epistles. In all three of these genres Jacob tends to signal his references, but not in such a way that his patterns of quotation help us distinguish allusions, adaptations, and citations. Predictably, the *mêmre* have the highest proportion of allusions and the lowest of citations. The *turgâmê* cite more carefully but are still likely to adapt

¹⁵⁵ Hermann Freiherr von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt hergestellt auf Grund ihrer Textgeschichte. 2. Teil: Text mit Apparat* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1913), 482.

¹⁵⁶ Albert, "À propos des citations scripturaires," 347-352.

¹⁵⁷ PG 59, 463.

¹⁵⁸ Text in London, British Library Additional MS 12161, folio 160ra. The parallel manuscript British Library Additional MS 14562 alters the phrase, having ܠܘܘܐ ܠܘܥܝܢܐ ܝܘܢܝܘܢܐ ("for false prophets have come forth;" folio 124va), presumably an error owing to the wording of 1 John 4:1.

quotations to the context. The epistles have numerous allusions and adaptations as well—but they also have the highest proportion of extended and careful citations. The precision and length in the epistles are probably due both to their dogmatic contents and their discursive style. The survey of all three genres confirms that Jacob's New Testament text is basically that of the Syriac Peshitta. However, all three also exhibit awareness of Syriac exegetical traditions that draw on earlier biblical versions, i.e. the Old Syriac and Diatessaron. Furthermore, Jacob's Peshitta text bears distinctive features, perhaps pre-Peshitta readings, or characteristics indicative of a somewhat fluid early development in the Peshitta version.

Reliably reconstructing Jacob's New Testament in these passages will depend on getting a better picture of the early development of the Peshitta, improving our editions of Jacob, and refining our ability to perceive Jacob's own creative transformations of the New Testament text. One avenue of research could entail working on Jacob's handling of one well-substantiated Syriac biblical context (e.g. a portion of Hebrews) to which he refers repeatedly in order to characterize his methods more fully on the basis of a single context. With respect to Jacob's methods of citation and interpretation, another avenue of research could entail studying select biblical passages in the epistles first of all, establishing Jacob's exactitude in handling them, then working through his usage of the same passages in the *turgâmê*, secondly, and finally in the *mêmrê*, observing the transformations that occur in different contexts. In addition to providing important insights into the shape of Jacob's biblical text, such a study would help us better understand his interpretive methods and to define how his exegesis shapes his manner of quotation. Much work remains to be done, but the present study has laid methodological groundwork and provided some clues as to helpful trajectories in the further study of Jacob's biblical text and the Syriac New Testament tradition generally.

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL'S VIEW OF BAPTISTS

DYRON B. DAUGHRITY

INTRODUCTION

For a decade and a half, from 1815 to 1830, Alexander Campbell was a card-carrying Baptist preacher. During this time, he edited a well-read magazine called *The Christian Baptist* and enjoyed numerous Baptist affiliations and friendships. However, in 1830, repercussions from a document called the “Beaver Anathema” began to unravel the relationship. The anathema, pronounced by a small group of Baptist preachers in Pennsylvania, set into motion an organized opposition to Campbell, boldly declaring him and his followers to be heretics. The Beaver Anathema is considered:

The thing that precipitated general and determined action against [the Campbellites] as a party not entitled to fellowship in Baptist churches.¹

¹ Errett Gates, *The Early Relation and Separation of Baptists and Disciples* (Chicago: The Christian Century Company, 1904), 91-92, emphasis mine. From here on I will refer to this publication as *Baptists and Disciples*. Errett Gates (1870-1951) was the first professional Disciples historian to write a history of the movement with his publication of *The Disciples of Christ* in 1905. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1902 and his dissertation was on Baptist-Disciple relations. He was lecturer in history at the University of Chicago Disciples Divinity House from 1902 to 1917. He was also a preacher and associate editor for the *Christian Century*. Gates is considered a watershed figure in Disciples historiography. His interpretive

This paper is an overview of Alexander Campbell's relations with the Baptists, and a description of how and why that relationship disintegrated. Since I work in California, I have appropriately organized the paper much like a Hollywood marriage: the courtship, a turbulent period of matrimony, and a messy divorce.

COURTSHIP: CAMPBELL QUESTIONS INFANT BAPTISM (1809-1815)

Members of the Restoration fellowship think of Alexander Campbell (1788–1866) as the real fountainhead of the Stone-Campbell Movement, or, the Churches of Christ, Christian Churches, and Disciples of Christ.² Alexander Campbell and his father Thomas were from the Church of Scotland; they were Presbyterians. However, the Presbyterian Church had been splintering since the days of John Glas (1695–1773) who in 1725 broke away to form an independent movement. Glas is considered an antecedent to the Restoration traditions because of his desire to replicate the New Testament church.³ His reforms shattered the Scottish church into numerous factions including the Seceders, who broke away in 1733. The Seceders subsequently split into Burghers and Anti-burghers over the issue of pledging oaths to the state.⁴ Around 1800 both of these groups split into “Old

stance was that the Disciples movement was riddled with controversy due to two conflicting principles: restoration and unity. This perspective has become “a mainstay of Stone-Campbell historiography.” See Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers, Anthony L. Dunnivant, and D. Newell Williams, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Stone Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), introductory article “Stone-Campbell History Over Three Centuries: A Survey and Analysis,” xxii. See also the ESCM entry “Gates, Errett,” by Jason Mead, on p. 353.

² The Restoration Movement comprises around 14 million people in 180 countries. See Lyndsay Jacobs, “The Stone-Campbell Movement—A Global View,” *Leaven: A Journal of Christian Ministry* 17:3 (Third Quarter 2009): 141.

³ See Dyron Daugherty, “Glasite Versus Haldanite: Scottish Divergence on the Question of Missions,” *Restoration Quarterly* 53:2 (2011): 65-79.

⁴ See Keith Huey, “Seceders,” and James O. Duke, “Presbyterians, Presbyterianism,” in Foster, Blowers, Dunnivant, and Williams, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Stone Campbell Movement*.

Light” and “New Light” movements. To make a long story short, Thomas and Alexander Campbell were Old Light, Anti-Burgher, Seceder Presbyterians within the Church of Scotland in Ireland.⁵

Thomas Campbell's (1763–1854) ancestral family was not even Presbyterian. His father was a Roman Catholic who later became an Anglican. Additionally, Thomas Campbell's wife was from an exiled French Huguenot family.⁶

Considering the complicated ecclesial background, it is not hard to figure out how the Campbells could break from the church of their youth. There were other issues involved as well, however. Thomas Campbell had become “extremely pale, dyspeptic and debilitated” and saw opportunities in America such as religious freedom, financial promise, and a chance to recover his health.⁷

Thomas Campbell moved to America in 1807. He settled in Washington County, Pennsylvania, among friends from Ireland who had already made the trek. He began itinerant preaching among small Seceder churches and quickly fell into trouble for allowing non-Seceders to attend his services on the open frontier. His superiors were “shocked and embittered” and promptly censured him.⁸ He withdrew from the Seceder synod and began preaching in recep-

⁵ See Richard M. Tristano, *The Origins of the Restoration Movement: An Intellectual History* (Atlanta, GA: Glenmary Research Center, 1998), 63.

⁶ Thomas W. Grafton, *Alexander Campbell, Leader of the Great Reformation of the Nineteenth Century* (St. Louis, MO: Christian Publishing Company, 1897), 18. On Thomas Campbell's upbringing, early life, and immigration to America, see Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, Volume 1 (1868), chapter 1.

⁷ See Leroy Garrett, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1981), 137. See also Garrett's excellent article “Campbell, Alexander” in Foster, Blowers, Dunnivant, and Williams, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Stone Campbell Movement*. The primary source is Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.77.

⁸ Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 11.

tive homes to modest audiences. His message was a plea for “Christian union based on the Bible alone.”⁹

On August 17, 1809, at Buffalo, in Washington County, Pennsylvania, Thomas Campbell and several colleagues who shared his interests formed “The Christian Association of Washington.” They commissioned Thomas Campbell with the chief duty of drawing up a “Declaration and Address” which is to this day considered, ironically, the founding document of a movement that prides itself on having “no creed but the Bible.” The document promotes “simple evangelical Christianity,” in its “original form,” “without attempting to inculcate anything of human authority, of private opinion, or inventions of man.” The document rejects anything “for which there cannot be expressly produced a ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ either in express terms or by approved precedent.”¹⁰

Both Thomas and son Alexander realized that by adopting the phrase “thus saith the Lord” they were headed towards a rejection of infant baptism. It dawned on them they might have to become Baptists. If they were correct, whoever had been baptized as an infant would now have to “go out of the church merely for the sake of coming in again.”¹¹ Because of the enormous implications, it took three more years before they would get re-baptized.

The years 1811 and 1812 were momentous for Alexander; they pushed him and his father closer to the Baptist fold through two key

⁹ E. L. Williams, A. L. Haddon, and C.H.J. Wright, *The Declaration and Address of Thomas Campbell is Now 150 Years Old*, Provocative Pamphlets No. 52 (Melbourne: Federal Literature Committee of Churches of Christ in Australia, 1959). See also Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.230. Richardson describes Thomas’s plea for “Christian liberality and Christian union upon the basis of the Bible.”

¹⁰ See Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.243.

¹¹ See Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.249-51 for Alexander’s first misgivings of infant baptism. Robert Richardson (1806–1876) was a physician, churchman, theologian, prolific writer, and a committed member of the Campbellite agenda. His two-volume biography is considered “truly an insider’s perspective on the whole making of the reformer [Campbell] and his reformation.” See Paul Blowers, “Richardson, Robert,” in Foster, Blowers, Dunnivant, and Williams, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Stone Campbell Movement*.

events. First, in March 1811, Alexander married Margaret Brown—a Presbyterian.¹² Shortly before the marriage, however, he was soundly defeated in debate by Mr. Brown's friend, "an eccentric Baptist preacher."¹³ The "animated" debate on the issue of baptism took place at Brown's house and lasted all night.¹⁴ Campbell was utterly "baffled" that he could not manage to counter the clear and direct meaning of the scriptures quoted by his opponent on the issue of baptism.

After being rebuffed and alienated by the Presbyterians, the Campbells and a few of their friends organized the Restoration Movement's first official congregation at Brush Run, Pennsylvania.¹⁵ The founding of the "Brush Run Church" in May of 1811 precipitated the second important event pushing Alexander toward the Baptist fold—his ordination to ministry on the first day of 1812.¹⁶ Alexander

¹² See Richardson's *Memoirs*, 1.356. The 23-year-old Campbell and 18-year-old Brown were married on March 12, 1811, by Presbyterian pastor Rev. Hughes. See Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.362.

¹³ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.361.

¹⁴ For the details of the debate, see Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.361.

¹⁵ According to the court records printed in Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.390, the Brush Run Church was officially known as "the First Church of the Christian Association of Washington, meeting at Cross-roads and Brush Run, Washington County, Pennsylvania." In other words, it was not so much "Brush Run Church" as it was "the Christian Association of Washington" that *met* at Brush Run. However, historians in the Restoration Movement tend to view the end of the Christian Association of Washington—which began in 1809—as coinciding with the founding of Brush Run Church on Saturday, May 4, 1811. Lester McAllister's view is representative: "Therefore, at the last meeting of the association, May 4, 1811, the Christian Association of Washington constituted itself a church with a congregational form of church government and thereafter was known as Brush Run church." See McAllister's article "Christian Association of Washington" in Foster, Blowers, Dunnivant, and Williams, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Stone Campbell Movement*.

¹⁶ It should be noted, however, that Alexander had already been "licensed to preach the gospel" on Saturday, May 4, 1811—generally considered the founding date for the Restoration's first official congregation: Brush Run

received the laying on of hands from his father and four deacons, becoming “formally set apart by ordination ... to the office of the ministry.”¹⁷

Predictably, the new church had to make decisions about polity and practice. Thomas was declared the church’s sole elder and “Senior minister.”¹⁸ They chose to have weekly communion. Baptism, however, posed serious questions. What mode of baptism should be employed? They opted for immersion on the following argument: “Water is water, and earth is earth. We certainly could not call a person buried in earth if only a little dust were sprinkled on him.” With that quickly reasoned doctrine, they “went down into the water” and baptized the candidates accordingly on the 4th of July, 1811, in a “deep pool of Buffalo Creek.”¹⁹ The event is recorded meticulously in Alexander Campbell’s biography:

The water came up to the shoulders of the candidates when they entered ... Thomas Campbell, then, without going into the water, stood on a root that projected over the edge of the pool, and bent down their heads until they were buried in the liquid grave, repeating at the same time, in each case, the baptismal formula.²⁰

Any immersionist worth his salt would love that story.

Church. See Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.366, “At this meeting, Thomas Campbell was appointed elder, and Alexander was licensed to preach the gospel. Four deacons were also chosen.” See also Garrett, “Campbell, Alexander” in Foster, Blowers, Dunnivant, and Williams, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*.

¹⁷ For a full discussion of Alexander’s ordination, see Richardson’s *Memoirs*, volume 1, chapter 18. The quotations are found on p. 382 and p. 389. The location of the ordination—deacon John Dawson’s house—is found on p. 390. See also Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 17.

¹⁸ See Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.366 (for “elder”) and 1.390 (for “senior minister”). See also George F. Miller, “Brush Run Church,” in Foster, Blowers, Dunnivant, and Williams, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*.

¹⁹ See Richardson’s *Memoirs*, 1.371. The first baptismal candidates were Margaret Fullerton (“whose father had been a Baptist”) and Abraham Altars, “whose father had been a Deist.” See Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 17.

²⁰ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.371-72.

The baptisms provoked alarm for one present named James Foster. He had reservations about two things: the submerging of the candidates, as well as the fact that Thomas had himself not been immersed, so what was he doing immersing someone?²¹

The small congregation was uneasy with the tensions. The issues came to a head when Alexander's first child was born.²² Would he baptize his infant daughter or not? He chose not. The decision was excruciating for the entire Campbell family. Alexander's younger sister, Dorothea, frantically confided to him that she could not go on like this. She had come to the conclusion there was "no authority whatever for infant baptism."²³

Dorothea's decision triggered changes. Alexander sought out a Baptist preacher, Matthias Luce, and asked him to perform the rite. On June 12, 1812, seven persons, including Alexander and Thomas Campbell and their wives, were immersed at Buffalo Creek. Thomas delivered an enormous discourse explaining how and why they had come to the decision, and Alexander followed with a sermon of his own. The service went on for "*seven hours*." The meeting lasted so long one of the witnesses, Joseph Bryant, "had to leave, in order to attend a muster of volunteers for the war [of 1812] against Great Britain." However, after returning from battle, he still managed "to hear *an hour's preaching* and to witness the baptisms."²⁴

The Baptist preacher involved had misgivings about two things: one, the Campbells insisted there be no conversion experience related orally prior to the baptism. Secondly, the immersions would take place on the simple confession that "Jesus is the Son of God." No creedal assent was necessary. Both were in conflict with Baptist cus-

²¹ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.372.

²² Campbell's first child was born on March 13, 1812. Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.380.

²³ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.394.

²⁴ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.397, both sets of italics are his.

tom, but Rev. Luce agreed to go through with it, knowing full well that “he would run the risk of censure” from his association.²⁵

The Brush Run Church was soon comprised exclusively of immersed believers. They were “... a Baptist church without the name.”²⁶ Campbellites were no longer paedobaptists. They had decisively exited Presbyterianism. An important threshold had been crossed. The Campbells knew it. As a result they began to reach out to area Baptists. And the Baptists reached out to them. Alexander remarked, “They pressed me from every quarter to visit their churches and, though not a member, to preach for them.”²⁷

The warming relations were not entirely agreeable for the Campbells. They “... had always entertained a kind of antipathy towards the Baptists as a comparatively uneducated people.”²⁸ In a long discussion of his preconceptions of Baptists, Campbell explained:

I had no idea of uniting with the Baptists more than with the Moravians or the mere Independents. I had unfortunately formed a very unfavorable opinion of the Baptist *preachers* ... as narrow, contracted, illiberal and uneducated men. ... The *people*, however, called Baptists were much more highly appreciated by me than their ministry. [Their ministers] seemed to think that a change of apparel [or] ... or a prolongation of the face and a fictitious gravity ... [or] a long and more emphatic pronunciation of certain words rather than scriptural knowledge ... were the grand desiderata. ... They were little men in a big office.²⁹

Campbell went on to describe the Baptist clergy as “illiterate and uncouth men, without either learning or academic accomplishments or polish.” He concluded his diatribe with the admission that he was

²⁵ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.397.

²⁶ Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 18.

²⁷ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.439.

²⁸ Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 18.

²⁹ See Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.437-38, italics mine. Richardson is actually quoting from Campbell's *Millennial Harbinger* magazine, 1848, 344. See also Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 19.

“better pleased with the Baptist *people* than with any other community” because of their Bible reading ways.³⁰ His view of their *clergy*, however, remained very low indeed.

TURBULENT MATRIMONY: CAMPBELL'S YEARS AS A BAPTIST (1815-1830)

In 1815, after three years of careful consideration, the Brush Run Church officially applied for membership in the Redstone Baptist Association, on the condition that they “... be allowed to teach and preach whatever [they] learned from the Holy Scriptures, regardless of any creed or formula in Christendom.”³¹ They were referring to the Philadelphia Confession, which the Redstone Association had previously adopted.

The Campbells held many points of contention with Baptist teaching: the meaning of baptism, confession of faith, frequency of Communion, significance of ordination for ministry, and regeneration.³² The most damaging issue, however, had to do with the Old Testament. It was considered “a broadside against the traditional Calvinist identification of the purpose of the Law.”³³ Let us unpack what happened.

On August 30, 1816, Alexander Campbell attended a Redstone Association meeting as the representative of Brush Run Church. He

³⁰ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.438-39.

³¹ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.440.

³² On Confession, Campbell argued that the biblical confession was sufficient as opposed to the Baptists who argued that Confession must be accompanied by the candidate relating an experience proving how s/he had come to faith. On regeneration, Campbell denied that a person “must be regenerated previous to the first act of faith.” His reasoning was that if this were so, then “a man may live and die and enjoy eternal life without faith.” See Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.422-23. See also Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 24.

³³ For two previous quotations, see James B. North, “Redstone Baptist Association” in Foster, Blowers, Dunnivant, and Williams, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*.

was asked to preach beforehand and chose the text Romans 8:3 as the foundation for what became his famous, or infamous, “Sermon on the Law.” This sermon is perhaps Campbell’s most scrutinized, as it boldly declared “that the Christian is not under the law of Moses or the old covenant ... the old covenant had been abrogated, and was therefore not binding upon Christians.”³⁴ His conclusion was thus: “There is no necessity for preaching the law in order to prepare men for receiving the gospel.”³⁵ Campbell’s biographer declared:

This sermon, though containing in reality nothing but plain Scripture teaching ... was so bold an assault upon the theology and style of preaching current at that time amongst the Baptists, that it created an extraordinary sensation.³⁶

Clearly the reaction was “unexpected” for Campbell.³⁷

While the Campbellite-Baptist marriage limped along, it was full of “bickerings and controversies” due largely to the “Sermon on the Law.”³⁸ Nonetheless, Alexander Campbell was still a Baptist, and it was to Campbell the Baptists turned when a controversy arose with Presbyterians. The year was 1820 and a Baptist preacher named John Birch was converting Presbyterians in Ohio.³⁹ Presbyterian minister John Walker publicly criticized the Baptist encroachment and challenged “Mr. Birch, or any other Baptist preacher of good standing,” to a public debate.⁴⁰ Mr. Birch called out to Campbell. He wrote the following: “I can truly say it is the unanimous wish of all the church to which I belong that you should be the disputant. ... Come, brother; come over into Macedonia and help us.”⁴¹ Campbell

³⁴ The quote is from Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 28. See also Everett Ferguson, “Sermon on the Law” in Foster, Blowers, Dunnivant, and Williams, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*. For Campbell’s account of the events, see Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.469.

³⁵ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.476.

³⁶ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.478.

³⁷ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.479.

³⁸ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 1.484.

³⁹ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.14.

⁴⁰ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.14.

⁴¹ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.15.

agreed and in June 1820, at Mount Pleasant, Ohio, he defended the Baptists, in particular their rejection of infant baptism. However, in doing so, he further marginalized many Baptists because of his central argument—that the Old Testament had been abrogated by the institution of the New.⁴²

To make matters worse, during the debate—and for the first time in his life—Campbell introduced “an entirely novel position concerning the design of baptism ... [that] it is connected with the promise of the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.”⁴³ No other doctrine in all of Campbellite theology could be considered as crucial and distinctive as this one. To the present day, this teaching is recited at nearly every baptism that takes place within the Churches of Christ. However, this doctrine, “more than any other, was to separate [Campbell] ... from the Baptists.”⁴⁴ While many Baptists “felt a keen pride” in Campbell’s defense,⁴⁵ they also “remained extremely dubious in regard to the orthodoxy of their champion.”⁴⁵ As per Campbell’s view of the debate, it was a resounding success. He wrote, “A week’s debating is worth a year’s preaching.”⁴⁶

The Walker debate and its subsequent publication was the first of several that catapulted Campbell to national prominence and, over time, inflicted palpable damage on Baptist numbers. By all accounts, Campbell was a fierce, troubling opponent. People were drawn to his oratorical power, confidence, and relentless philosophical arguments. Campbell was described by a contemporary as having

⁴² Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 33.

⁴³ Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 34. For a thorough discussion of the Walker debate, see Richardson, *Memoirs*, volume 2, chapter 1. See p. 19, “Baptism,” he said, ‘is connected with the promise of the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.’ This utterance is worthy of notice as his first definite and public recognition of the peculiar office of baptism.”

⁴⁴ Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 34.

⁴⁵ First quotation from Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 34; second quotation from Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.42.

⁴⁶ See Alexander Campbell, *The Christian Baptist*, Vol. 1. Second Edition (Buffaloe Creek, VA, 1824), 248. See also Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.89.

“Cold, incisive logic; crushing strength derived from his singular knowledge of unwelcome facts; shafts of piercing satire; a sharp, two-edged sword of the divine word.”⁴⁷

In 1823, on the fourth of July, Campbell began publishing *The Christian Baptist*.⁴⁸ Campbell used this widely-read medium to “launch a devastating attack on everything and everyone who did not agree with his vision of the ancient Christian faith.”⁴⁹

From a Baptist perspective, what was really happening in the expanding readership of the *Christian Baptist* was regrettable: Campbell was building his base; he was stealing sheep. Consisting largely of Baptists that would eventually break away to form their own sect, the Disciples were more or less distinct from Baptists by 1830—when Campbell changed the name of his journal from *The Christian Baptist* to *The Millennial Harbinger*.

1823 was also the year of Campbell’s public debate with a second Presbyterian pastor, William McCalla, again on baptism. The debate lasted seven days and made Campbell a Baptist hero.⁵⁰ Many of the most influential Baptist preachers were present, and Campbell won some of them to his cause.⁵¹ The debate was in Kentucky, where Campbell was “comparatively unknown” at the time.⁵² During the evenings, when resting from battle, he gathered privately with his Baptist brethren to explain “candidly and fairly” his positions, even if it hurt them. On the fifth night, Campbell frankly explained:

Brethren, I fear that if you knew me better you would esteem and love me less. For let me tell you that I have almost as much

⁴⁷ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.62.

⁴⁸ See Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.48. There is a bit of ambiguity regarding the date of the first number of *The Christian Baptist*. The “Preface to the First Edition” has the date July 4, 1823. However, the paper is dated August 3, 1823. It could be that the release of volume 1, number 1 was in August and included the preface which Campbell may have written on July 4, shortly before going to press.

⁴⁹ Richard Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2008), 22.

⁵⁰ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.86.

⁵¹ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.86.

⁵² Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.86.

against you Baptists as I have against the Presbyterians. They err in one thing and you in another; and probably you are each nearly equidistant from original apostolic Christianity.⁵³

After the debate, Campbell's reforms began to advance with great rapidity in the region.⁵⁴ Campbell described the Kentucky Baptists as "highly-intelligent" and "deeply interested in the subject of religion."⁵⁵

By the mid-1820s, Campbellite reforms were being preached by numerous other evangelists, some of them distinguished in their own right. One of these was Walter Scott (1796–1861), considered today as "one of the four founders of the Stone-Campbell Movement" due to his extraordinary number of converts—around 30,000!⁵⁶ One historian calls him "*the evangelist* whose success in the field brought stability to the fledging reform movement ... as it moved toward separation from the Baptists."⁵⁷

DIVORCE: CAMPBELL'S EXIT FROM THE BAPTISTS (1830)

In 1826, Alexander Campbell wrote the following:

I and the church with which I am connected are in 'full communion' with the Mahoning Baptist Association of Ohio; and through them with the whole Baptist society in the United States; and I intend to continue in connection with this people so long as they will permit me to say what I believe. ... I have no idea of adding to the catalogue of new sects.⁵⁸

⁵³ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.87.

⁵⁴ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.89.

⁵⁵ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.114.

⁵⁶ Scott was appointed "general evangelist" by the Mahoning Association between 1827 and 1830. See Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 66. See also Mark Toulouse, "Scott, Walter," in Foster, Blowers, Dunnivant, and Williams, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, 673.

⁵⁷ Toulouse, "Scott, Walter," in *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, 673.

⁵⁸ Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 51.

Only four years later he could not make those statements.

Campbell's divorce from the Baptists was complex and has many tributaries, but a good starting point would be with Bishop Robert Semple, an eminent Baptist minister in Virginia.⁵⁹ Semple wrote a "kind letter" to Campbell, objecting to his "harsh and bitter sarcasms" in the *Christian Baptist*.⁶⁰ Campbell replied that he was just behaving according to the New Testament pattern; one has to be severe with those who corrupt the gospel. The two men continued their exchange until 1828, when Semple wrote: "Taken as a whole, I am persuaded [*The Christian Baptist*] has been more mischievous than any publication I have ever known ... sowing the seeds of discord among brethren to an extent in many places alarming." His scathing conclusion was thus: "there is much less ground for fellowship with such a sect, than with Presbyterians, Methodists, or even evangelical Episcopalians." In his estimation, they agreed on baptism, but "very few other matters."⁶¹

Bishop Semple's public conflict with Campbell caused Baptists to take sides.⁶² Opposition gained traction in 1829 when the Beaver Association of Pennsylvania pronounced anathemas on Campbell and his reformers, declaring them heretics. One Baptist asked a successful Campbellite evangelist—the former Baptist pastor Raccoon John Smith—a sensible question: "Why is it that you Reformers do not leave us? Go off quietly now and let us alone." Smith replied, "We love you too well for that."⁶³ The Campbellites believed they

⁵⁹ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.129. Richardson further described Semple as "a most estimable man, and stood deservedly high in influence and reputation ... being of a very mild and amiable temperament."

⁶⁰ Quotations from Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.130.

⁶¹ For previous quotations, see R. B. Semple, "To Silas M. Noel," *The Christian Baptist* 5.9 (April 7, 1828): 431.

⁶² In 1826, the Washington Association became the first Baptist association to publicly oppose Campbellism. However, they were a breakaway association from Campbell's previous Redstone Association, and had opposed Campbell from early on. The detailed account can be found in Richardson, *Memoirs*, volume 2, chapter 5.

⁶³ Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 91.

were correcting erroneous beliefs and practices in the church. It was too serious a matter to simply walk away.

The Beaver Anathemas were distributed widely amongst Baptist associations, attacking the Campbellites on four major issues: baptism, creeds verses “Bible alone”, the clergy, and the Law of Moses.⁶⁴ Baptists were urged to “drop correspondence” with anybody practicing “the heresy of Campbellism.” Many Baptist Associations joined in the public denouncement of Campbell: Beaver, Franklin, North District, Boone’s Creek, Tate’s Creek, Elkhorn, Bracken, Ap-pomattox, Union, and Campbell County.

Crucially, in December 1830, the Dover Association joined in, marking “the beginning of the end of the process of separation. It was decisive for all other associations.”⁶⁵ The leader of the Dover Association was the highly esteemed Robert Semple.⁶⁶ It is clear that Campbell saw the gravity of being opposed by such a “pious and devoted Christian.”⁶⁷ In a desperate plea, Campbell wrote to Semple:

And now, Brother Semple, I call upon you as a man, as a scholar, as a Christian bishop, to come forward and make good your assertions ... My pages are open for you. You shall have line for line ... page for page with me. ... There is no man in America I would rather have for an opponent, if I must have an opponent,

⁶⁴ Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 92-93. The following account of rising opposition to Campbellism is from Gates, chapter 9. Gates uses an impressive array of primary sources to piece together the chronology, including Richardson’s *Memoirs*, the final two years of *The Christian Baptist* (1829-1830), the early years of *The Millennial Harbinger* (from 1830), A. S. Hayden’s *History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve* (1875), John Augustus Williams’s *Life of Elder John Smith* (1870), David Benedict’s *History of the Baptists* (1850), and J. B. Jeter’s *Campbellism Examined* (1855).

⁶⁵ Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 95.

⁶⁶ Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 95. For Richardson’s account, see his *Memoirs*, volume 2, chapter 5.

⁶⁷ These are among the many favorable words Richardson chose to describe Semple. For the quotation, see Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.160.

than thee. Come forward then, Brother Semple—choose the topics ... show me where I have erred. And if I cannot present reason, Scripture and good sense to support me, I will yield to your superior discernment, age and experience⁶⁸

Semple dismissed Campbell as being cut from the same quarrelsome cloth as the Glasites, Sandemanians, and Haldanes. He viewed them all as masters of the “same system.”⁶⁹

The writing was on the wall: Campbellism should be forcibly cut out of the Baptist fold. The whole episode became sad. Churches split, associations were forced to choose sides, friendships were estranged, excommunications were pronounced, church buildings were closed, and some congregations even ceased to meet.⁷⁰ In 1831 Alexander’s father Thomas preached in a Baptist church—it would be the last time for either one of them.⁷¹

The Campbellite schism within the Baptist church spread quickly. For example, as far away as Halifax, Nova Scotia, the Second Baptist Church began to take on a “Disciples Baptist” identity that resulted in a church split in 1830.⁷² In the United States, the Disciples began to “compete as equals with the Baptists and Methodists, and in time outgrew the Presbyterians.” By the outbreak of the Civil War, the Disciples could claim around 200,000 members. That number “doubled by 1875 and exploded to well over a million by

⁶⁸ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.159-60.

⁶⁹ Richardson, *Memoirs*, 2.158-60.

⁷⁰ Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 102.

⁷¹ Gates, *Baptists and Disciples*, 100.

⁷² For the Halifax situation, see Philip Griffin-Allwood, *First Baptist Church, Halifax: Its Origin and Early Years* (M. Div. Thesis; Acadia Divinity College, 1978), 99. Griffin-Allwood argues that five churches came out of this period of turmoil: Granville Street, African Baptist, Hammond’s Plains, Preston, and the Disciples of Christ. According to Griffin-Allwood, the Disciple Baptist influence was probably the catalyst that set into motion the fragmentation (p. 119). The church that met at Granville Street was also known as “Second Baptist Church.” See Griffin-Allwood, “First Baptist Church, Halifax: Its Origin and Early Years,” 128.

1900.”⁷³ Today the Restoration movement claims around 14 million members worldwide.⁷⁴

CONCLUSION

Looking back, surveying the debris, a Baptist preacher from Tennessee named Garner M'Connico reflected on the turbulent Campbellite era in the Baptist churches. He was angry, and he felt justified in his longstanding skepticism and ultimate damnation of Campbell's regrettable influence in his denomination. He wrote an emotional, moving letter which I believe captures the deep betrayal felt by many Baptists in the aftermath of an ecclesial disaster that rocked their fellowship:

When Alexander Campbell came before the public by his debate with Walker, and rendered himself notorious, I saw something in the debate very objectionable ... I was *doubtful* of the Scotchman. ... And religion is now made a mere human science—and consequently all the standing religious sects are wrong, and a new theory, *falsely*, called the Ancient Gospel, is introduced. What a Pope!! ... Campbell ... proceeded to say, “*The best thing we could do would be to forget all we had ever learned, and begin*

⁷³ See Paul Conkin, *American Originals: Homemade Varieties of Christianity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 28, 37.

⁷⁴ It is common for Restoration members to think of “the three streams” of the movement, but some argue that globally there are actually more streams, an assessment with which I agree. Lyndsay Jacobs, past president of World Convention (Christian Church, Churches of Christ, Disciples of Christ), wrote: “We are used to referring to the three streams, but it is more helpful when thinking globally to refer to six streams. We can add to those in the United States a “Commonwealth” stream, a stream of churches involved in uniting churches (for example, the Philippines, Japan, Thailand, the United Kingdom, Southern Africa and India), and a stream of emerging national churches. Two examples of the latter would be in Vanuatu and Zimbabwe, where our movement is defining itself.” See Lyndsay Jacobs, “The Stone-Campbell Movement—A Global View,” *Leaven: A Journal of Christian Ministry* 17.3 (Third Quarter 2009): 141-42.

to learn anew." Yes, said I, and you are to be the teacher. He again looked and smiled. ...

My beloved brethren—Campbellism has carried away many whom I thought firm. ... O Lord! Hear the cries and see the tears of the Baptists: for Alexander has done them much harm. The Lord reward him according to his works. ... Such shuffling—such lying—such slandering—such evil speaking—such dissembling—such downright hypocrisy—and all under the *false* name of reformation.

Save me from *such* a reform, and *such* reformers. ... I am this day 59 years old. I have baptized about 1200 persons. When I am old and weak what shall I say? Give up the ship? No—never—never.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ The letter was written by Garner M'Connico to "Elders Clopton and Jeffries" on July 22, 1830, from Franklin, Tennessee. It is included in Campbell's *Millennial Harbinger* 12:1 (December 6, 1830), 539-42 in a section entitled "Mr. Clopton's Review of Campbellism—No. VI." A note in the *Harbinger* reads "From the Columbian Star and Christian Index" indicating it was probably published elsewhere before Campbell printed it. Italics are not mine; they are used in the version of the letter in the *Harbinger*.

BECOMING GOD'S CLIENTS: PATRONAGE, CLIENTELISM, AND CHRISTIAN CONVERSION IN CONTEMPORARY THAILAND

CHRISTOPHER FLANDERS

INTRODUCTION

Though contemporary missiology generally recognizes the critical connection between conversion and mission,¹ it has often been slow to engage critical developments in the academic study of conversion. In this chapter, I intend to add to the missiological literature on conversion in two distinct ways. First, I investigate recent literature involving patronage-clientelism, particularly as to how this social arrangement provides a profitable way to understand some forms of Christian conversion. Second, based upon a study of conversion narratives of Thai converts to Christianity from Buddhism, I argue these converts embody dynamics that generally fall outside of traditional Western conversion models. I suggest a more adequate framework to account for their experiences is that of Thai patronage-clientelism.² For these converts from a Thai Buddhist-Animistic context, a pervasive way to view God was as a great and powerful patron who be-

¹ Richard D. Love, "Conversion," in Michael J. Anthony, Warren S. Benson, Daryl Eldridge, Julie Gorman, eds., *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001) 231-232.

² Hereinafter, I use the abbreviation PC to indicate "patronage-clientelism."

stowed upon these converts manifold gifts and blessings. God was the great divine patron and the converts functioned as God's clients.

CONVERSION AND PATRONAGE-CLIENTELISM DYNAMICS

Conversion is a complex phenomenon that continues to garner significant attention from historians and sociologists of religion. Research in the area of religious conversion,³ particularly in the past four decades, has highlighted the diversity of the experiences of religious alteration. Some have viewed personal or social deprivation as the primary motivational dynamic,⁴ whether subconscious anxieties or more explicit and rational doctrinal appeal.⁵ More recent sociological and theological research takes into account critical material factors, networks of social relations, gender, age, culture, and religious traditions that impact the experience of religious change.⁶ Scholars today now view religious conversion—what some once viewed reductionistically as a singular experience of the individual in a moment of sudden religious insight and change—as a social phenomenon that exhibits diverse motivation and dynamics.

Patronage-Clientelism (PC) is for many not as familiar of an area as is that of conversion. Particularly in the Western world, even for

³ For this paper, I use the definition of Stark and Finke: "Conversion refers to shifts across religious traditions." That is, in contrast to forms of religious switching or "reaffiliation", which include religious changes within a larger tradition (e.g., a Baptist becoming a Catholic or a Theravadan Buddhist becoming a member of Soka Gakkai), conversion refers to shifts in religious allegiance that tend to be more dramatic and involve greater social disruption. Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 114.

⁴ Charles Y. Glock, *The Role of Deprivation in the Origin and Evolution of Religious Groups* (Berkeley, CA: Survey Research Center, University of California, 1961).

⁵ Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, 115.

⁶ For a helpful summary of these issues, see Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); also see Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014); Andrew Buckser and Stephen D. Glazier, *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003).

those who have familiarity with this type of social relationship, PC dynamics are often viewed ambivalently if not negatively.⁷ Many in modern Western contexts are often simply unfamiliar with the terminology of PC. Yet, even when they do have a level of familiarity with PC dynamics, a frequent reaction is that of significant “otherness.” That is, PC belongs, many assume, to ancient or non-Western cultures, not prevalent in modern Western contexts. Furthermore, many view PC as a fundamentally negative phenomenon, assuming such social dynamics to be contrary to canons of fairness, egalitarianism, or healthy meritocracies. Those who view PC negatively assume that such phenomena likely involve manipulation of power hierarchies, various forms of social coercion for personal gain, or nepotism. This perspective assumes that PC systems perpetuate unjust social inequalities and lead to corruption. In terms of personal relationships, many assume PC systems involve tit-for-tat instrumental exchanges, rather than loving and authentic relationality. Thus, for many today, PC evokes either an ambivalent or a strongly averse response.⁸

From an anthropological perspective, PC describes how those of unequal social power attempt to attain goals through relationships

⁷ Recently, I presented a paper at a conference focusing on PC dynamics in global expressions of Christianity. At lunch one day, I struck up a casual conversation with two others who were staying at that facility for research purposes. They asked what I was presenting on and I noted that my paper involved PC relationships in Thai Christianity. After explaining the terminology and framework in greater detail, one exclaimed with a burst of sudden recognition, “Oh, yes, you mean like the mafia?”

⁸ This reaction is similar to the modern Western reception of “face,” which similarly views face issues either as foreign or negative. In my work on face and facework theory, I term these reactions “face-oblivion” and “face-aversion.” Christopher L. Flanders, *About Face: Rethinking Face for 21st-Century Mission* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 44-46.

and personal ties.⁹ As Carl Landé notes, PC relationships constitute “a vertical dyadic alliance, i.e., an alliance between two persons of unequal status, power or resources, each of whom finds it useful to have as an ally someone superior or inferior to himself.”¹⁰ These structures involve direct personal attachment of individuals, exist to exchange favors, and provide mutual aid. They are distinct from the dyadic relationships of equals. Typically, patrons provide material favors (e.g., economic assistance, physical protection, etc.) and clients provide some specific service to the patron. PC relationships are valuable because frequently they persist beyond typical institutionalized relationships, which often run the risk of becoming exploitative, impersonal, and harsh. PC often provides a significant relational value, i.e., “special concern for each other’s welfare.”¹¹

In his famous study of rural Greek Sarakatsani society, J. K. Campbell notes how PC relations that endure for any length of time tend to generate moral obligations. This is where the patron “feels obliged to assist and take a general interest in all the client’s affairs, and in doing so he is able both to sense his superiority and approve his own compassionate generosity.”¹² The patron provides various benefits and the client, by accepting the relationship of dependence, becomes morally indebted, specifically to honor the patron.¹³ This “bond of debt” thus functions as a linking mechanism by which the PC relationship endures.

Two additional considerations are critical to understand PC properly. First, though PC relations hold to a typical structure, each specific instantiation involves variegated, culturally specific pat-

⁹ See Alex Weingrod, “Patrons, Patronage and Political Parties,” in Steffen W. Schmidt et al., eds., *Friends, Followers and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), 323-25.

¹⁰ Carl H. Landé, “Introduction: The Dyadic Basis of Clientelism,” in Steffen W. Schmidt et al., eds., *Friends, Followers and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), xx.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, xxiii.

¹² John K. Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage: A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Community* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), 262.

¹³ *Ibid.*

terns.¹⁴ Second, contra the notion that PC relations exist mostly in ancient or non-Western contexts, PC dynamics are ubiquitous and exist in all societies. Indeed, French sociologist Marcel Mauss in *The Gift*,¹⁵ his seminal work on social reciprocity, claimed that reciprocal giving might be *the* primary act of all individual human relationships and all societies. Such is especially obvious in contexts where this reciprocity is formalized into structural hierarchy, power distance, and other inequalities. Yet, as Mauss claims, reciprocity is never lacking in human relationships, forming a primary dynamic of all human relationality, even those in modern Western contexts. Because of this, PC dynamics, though culturally variable, undergird much of all human societies, not just ancient or non-Western societies.

PATRONAGE-CLIENTELISM AND CONVERSION IN NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

Biblical scholars have utilized the framework of PC as a profitable way to understand social dynamics in the biblical texts. PC structures, gift-reciprocity, and the “bond of debt” were persistent realities in the ancient Greco-Roman and Jewish worlds that carry over into the pages particularly of the New Testament.¹⁶ Though many

¹⁴ See for example the excellent work of Eisenstadt and Roniger, which lays out clearly the culturally specific shape PC patterns take in varying cultural and historical contexts. Stuart N. Eisenstadt and Luis Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁵ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2011).

¹⁶ Bruce J. Malina, “What is Prayer?” *The Bible Today* 18 (1980): 214-20; Frederick W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman Semantic Field* (St. Louis, MO: Clayton, 1982); John H. Elliott, “Patronage and Clientism in Early Christian Society: A Short Reading Guide,” *Forum* 3 (1987): 39-48; Bruce J. Malina, “Patron and Client: The Analogy Behind Synoptic Theology,” *Forum* 4 (1988): 2-32; Halvor Moxnes, “Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts,” in Jerome H. Neyrey,

have examined conversion in the New Testament,¹⁷ of particular interest to this project is the research of Zeba Crook. Crook's work is especially helpful as he highlights the deep PC dynamics of first-century Christianity, particularly in relation to conversion in the earliest Christian communities. In *Reconceptualising Conversion*, Crook examines the dynamics of early Christian conversion from the perspective of patronage, benefaction, and clientelism. Crook argues that PC was the dominant social framework within which people in Graeco-Roman antiquity would have experienced what we typically designate as "conversion."¹⁸

That modern readers often miss this social dynamic is likely due to viewing these ancient experiences through the models and expectations of modern Western lenses. Crook argues that much modern interpretation of early Christian conversion, especially studies that focus on the experience of Paul, is grounded more in Western individualism, which emphasizes very particular psychological, emotional, and introspective features of the conversion experience.¹⁹ That is,

ed., *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 241-68; John K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1992); Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1997); David A. deSilva, "Patronage and Reciprocity: The Context of Grace in the New Testament," *Ashland Theological Journal* 31 (1999): 32-84.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Arthur D. Nock, *Conversion; The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933); Beverly R. Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1986); Ramsay MacMullen, "Two Types of Conversion to Early Christianity," *Vigiliae Christianae* 37.2 (1983): 174-192; Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostle and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).

¹⁸ Zeba A. Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion: Patronage, Loyalty, and Conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 4.

¹⁹ Much of this Western interpretive tradition dates back to the influence of William James who famously located the conversion experience in the divided self. Conversion for James consisted of the process by which a con-

modern Western notions assume conversion to be “an event marked more by its internal effects and features than it is by its external effects and features.”²⁰ These modern conversion expectations rest upon notions of the human self²¹ and emotional experience²² as universally monolithic, thus generalizing to the rest of the world those experiences particular to the West. Many modern Western missionaries in their evangelistic work have made such naïve assumptions, expecting the qualities of conversion to exhibit relatively stable characteristics universally, always following these Western expectations.

PATRONAGE-CLIENTELISM AND THAI CULTURE

There exists substantial literature on indigenous Thai social patterns of PC. Scholarly opinion is united that social PC structures in Thai society, both historically and currently, constitute pervasive and powerful dynamics in Thai culture.²³ The PC structures of early feu-

flicted self was brought together into a happy unity. His approach was profoundly individualistic, psychological, and interior-focused. See Richard M. Gale, *The Divided Self of William James* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²⁰ Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*, 14.

²¹ For discussion on the false notion of the “presupposition of psychic unity” of humanity upon which much missionary activity trades, see Richard A. Schweder, *Thinking Through Cultures: Expeditions in Cultural Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 85-89. For a discussion of the notion of the cultural variability of the self, see Chapter 2 of Flanders, *About Face*.

²² In particular, emotional experience “does not lend itself to cross-cultural transfer.” Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion*. 4.

²³ Akin Rabibhadana, “Clientship and Class Structure in the Early Bangkok Period,” in Lauriston Sharp et al., eds., *Change and Persistence in Thai Society: Essays in Honor of Lauriston Sharp* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 93-124; idem, *The Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period: 1782-1873* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Dep. of Asian Studies, Cornell, 1970); Suntaree Komin, “Culture and Work-Related Values in Thai Organizations,” *International Journal of Psychology* 25 (1990): 681-704; idem, *Psychology of the Thai People: Values and Behavioral Patterns* (Bangkok, Thai-

dal Thai society, historian Akin Rabibhadana argues, continue to manifest powerfully in contemporary Thai society. The hierarchical “higher-lower” class distinction has functions as an organizing center within Thai society where varied layers of both formalized and non-formalized PC relationships persist.²⁴

Thai PC is characterized by a strong fluidity and looseness when compared to other contemporary forms, a version some have termed “personal impermanency.”²⁵ Thai literature often portrayed the patron as a large shade tree whose nurturing branches provided rest and contentment to clients. The Thai patron settled disputes, gave protection, and personal assistance.²⁶

The operative verb used to describe the client’s attachment to the patron was the Thai word *pheung*, to “depend” or “rely upon” someone or something. So important was this relationship that, as

land: Research Center, National Institute of Development Administration, 1991); David A. Owen, “Political Clientelism in Thai Provinces: A Novel Empirical Test,” *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics* 1, no. 2 (2016): 190–214; Daniel Arghiros, *Democracy, Development and Decentralization in Provincial Thailand* (Richmond, UK: Curzon, 2001); Clark D. Neher, “Stability and Instability in Contemporary Thailand,” *Asian Survey* 15.12 (1975): 1097–1113 at 1097; Niels Mulder, *Inside Thai Society Religion, Everyday Life, Change* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm, 2001); Barend J. Terwiel, “Formal Structure and Informal Rules: An Historical Perspective on Hierarchy, Bondage, and the Patron-Client Relationship,” in Han ten Brummelhuis and Jeremy H. Kemp, eds., *Strategies and Structures in Thai Society* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 1984); David W. Conner, *Personal Power, Authority, and Influence: Cultural Foundations for Leadership and Leadership Formation in Northeast Thailand and Implications for Adult Training* (Ph.D. diss.; Northern Illinois University, 1996). Others have studied Thai leadership through the framework of PC dynamics. See Larry S. Persons, *Face Dynamics, Social Power and Virtue Among Thai Leaders: A Cultural Analysis* (Ph.D. diss.; Fuller Theological Seminary, 2008); Alan R. Johnson, *Leadership in a Slum: A Bangkok Case Study* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009).

²⁴ Akin Rabibhadana, “Clientship and Class Structure in the Early Bangkok Period,” 112–119.

²⁵ Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends*, 137.

²⁶ Akin Rabibhadana, “Clientship and Class Structure in the Early Bangkok Period,” 111.

Akin Rabibhadana notes, a “person who had no *thiipbueng* (someone to depend upon) was unfortunate indeed.”²⁷ The proper response of the client involved *katanyuu katawethi* (gratitude or reciprocity), which gave structure to this relationship.

A similarly important term that manifests in the Thai PC exchange of favor and resources is *bunkhun*.²⁸ *Bunkhun*, or “indebted goodness,”²⁹ structures most Thai relations and creates a psychological bond between individuals. In fact, the concept of *bunkhun* and relational exchange may perhaps be the single most important aspect of all social relationships in Thailand. It is this flow of reciprocal exchange that forms the basis of psychological positive feelings in Thai relations and the social glue that bonds relationships to persist over time. Those who “recognize the *bun khun* of others,” i.e., do not fail to return the favor, are always praised but anyone who neglects this obligation is disliked and shamed.³⁰ “The Thai are brought up to value this process of gratefulness, the process of reciprocity of goodness done, and the ever-readiness to reciprocate. Time and distance are not the factors to diminish the *bunkhun*.”³¹

In terms of PC relations, this *bunkhun* bond rests on the favor and goodness of the patron coupled with a response of gratitude from the client. This grateful response involves recognition of the patron’s goodness (*roo bunkhun*—“to know *bunkhun*”) and is recip-

²⁷ Ibid., 109.

²⁸ Chai Podhisita, “Buddhism and Thai World View,” in Amara Pongsapich et al., eds., *Traditional and Changing World View* (Bangkok, Thailand: Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute, 1985), 39.

²⁹ Komin, *Psychology of the Thai People*, 139.

³⁰ “A person who initiates a *bunkhun* relationship by providing a benefit that establishes the debt of gratitude is called *phu mi pra khun*. Beneficiaries of such favors who respond with proper gratitude are called *phu mi khwam katanyu ru khun*. If on the contrary, they do not show gratitude and do not return the favour as they should, they are referred to as *khon nerakhun* and nobody will want to make friends with such people.” Steve Taylor, “Gaps in Beliefs of Thai Christians,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 37.1 (2001): 21.

³¹ Komin, *Psychology of the Thai People*, 169.

rocal (*tawb thaen bunkhun*— “reciprocate/return *bunkhun*”), usually expressed in various forms of gratitude, gift giving, and honorification. This is a critical dynamic to understand properly the complexities of Thai PC. Many Thai PC relationships are not merely instrumental. Thus, Jeremy Kemp notes that viewing PC relations primarily through the lens of mere exchange is inadequate.³² Kemp argues that relational closeness between Thai patron and client, symbolized by the use of fictive kinship terminology, creates “a greater element of commitment and trust” which derives from this type of social exchange.³³ The system of Thai PC creates a type of familial bond that involves emotional affiliative connection and mutual trust.

Neither Thai PC relations nor *bunkhun* are univocal social dynamics. At least two types of this social resource exist—“affectionate *bunkhun*” and “instrumental *bunkhun*.”³⁴ Instrumental *bunkhun* is calculated to indebt a client and creates a burdensome feeling of heaviness on the part of the client, which provokes perfunctory if not begrudging repayment. People tend to enter into such a relation for personal advantage. The relation is formal (though likely polite, meeting normal social protocol), marked by a clear pragmatism and instrumentality. This type of reciprocal arrangement is temporary and terminated when the social debt is met. Affectionate *bunkhun* is typically the result of something significant that individuals cannot do for themselves. It results not in coercive forms of relationality but sincere and heartfelt responses. Here the client realizes the social debt is not repayable and instead of attempting to resolve the social indebtedness by paying back the patron, instead develops enduring affection for the patron, living out an intrinsically motivated pattern of voluntary giving to and honoring of the patron.

³² Jeremy H. Kemp, “The Manipulation of Personal Relations: From Kinship to Patron-Clientage,” in Han ten Brummelhuis and Jeremy H. Kemp, eds., *Strategies and Structures in Thai Society* (Amsterdam: Anthropological-Sociological Center, University of Amsterdam, 1984), 55.

³³ *Ibid.*, 67.

³⁴ Persons, *Face Dynamics, Social Power and Virtue Among Thai Leaders*, 126-132.

CONVERSION AND SOTERIOLOGY AMONG WESTERN MISSIONARIES

A very specific cultural model, one that assumed an explicit awareness of forgiveness of sins and a concomitant personal experience involving guilt-awareness, has been for recent Western Protestant Christianity a *sine qua non* of authentic conversion.³⁵ This model is critical as it represents the dominant framework within which modern Thai Christianity operates, dating to the beginning of Protestant missionary work in the early 19th century and continuing to the present.

Hindmarsh explains the outline of this conversion model. Such involves a U-shaped pattern that begins with serious religious impressions in childhood, followed by a descent into worldliness and hardness of heart, followed by an awakening or pricking of religious conscience, and a period of self-assertion and attempted moral rectitude, which only aggravates the conscience and ends in self-despair. This self-despair, paradoxically, leads to the possibility of experiencing a divinely wrought repentance and the free gift of justification in Christ. Forgiveness of sins comes as a climax and a psychological release from guilt and introduces ideally a life of service to God predicated on gratitude for undeserved mercy.³⁶

Key conditions in Europe and America for the emergence of this model were the rise of a sense of a distinctive self-consciousness and the development of a heightened sense of introspective conscience.³⁷ Such also assumed the juridical patterns of penal substitu-

³⁵ See Bruce D. Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), who traces how this particular model of conversion influenced the eighteenth and nineteenth century Protestant missionary movement.

³⁶ Bruce D. Hindmarsh, "Patterns of Conversion in Early Evangelical History and Overseas Mission Experience," in Brian Stanley, ed., *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 73.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 93. The seminal work regarding the emergence of the modern introspective conscience and its impact on Protestant conversion theory is Krister Stendahl, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *Harvard*

tion, in particular, the centrally important components of guilt and pardon, filtered through a Western interpretive grid. Although different plots emerge among the various religious traditions in America and Europe, “on the whole...the basic U-shaped pattern...remains consistent in all the evangelical autobiographies whatever their differences and variations at other levels.”³⁸

This evangelical conversion narrative assumed deep emotions of guilt and an explicit focus on forgiveness of sins, the central motivation for and chief benefit of conversion. Funded by the Protestant dialectics of law and gospel, judgment and mercy, and terror and comfort, this model assumed a level of internal tension that drove toward a crisis of conscience before the gospel resolved this crisis. Evangelical homiletics stimulated and expressed this pattern.³⁹ As missionaries did their work in non-Western worlds, they carried these expectations with them, assuming people of other cultures would exhibit similar experiences.

As Hindmarsh notes, however, the expectations for “proper” conversion were often not realized. A surprising discovery for many Western missionaries was the difficulty to reproduce this conversion model and concomitant psychological experiences in their non-Western mission contexts.⁴⁰ When missionary preaching did not result in the expected conversion experience, missionaries frequently blamed local culture or the hardness of hearts.⁴¹ Often, if religious

Theological Review 56 (1963): 199-215. Much biblical scholarship has followed Stendahl, that in favoring Jesus, Paul did not reject Judaism and Torah. Such has been the case with his other fundamental claim, i.e., that Paul was not introspective in any modern sense nor given to the type of burdened sinful conscience the Evangelical conversion narrative assumed.

³⁸ Hindmarsh, “Patterns of Conversion in Early Evangelical History and Overseas Mission Experience,” 75

³⁹ Bruce D. Hindmarsh, “‘My Chains Fell Off, My Heart Was Free’: Early Methodist Conversion Narrative in England,” *Church History* 68.4 (1999): 910-29 at 925.

⁴⁰ Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 326.

⁴¹ When Thai converts failed to exhibit the expected characteristics dictated by Western missionary expectations, the primary defect was thought to be in Thai culture itself. For example, influential 19th century missionary Jesse

change did happen among the local people, this “conversion” was viewed with hesitancy or suspicion if such lacked “authentic” conversion markers.

Accompanying these conversion expectations was the assumption that local cultures were dangerous, often poisonous. “Biblical truth,” (viz., a Western missionary gospel) was to trump local culture. Missionary practice assumed, because of their philosophical and theological commitments, that the message should be impervious to the perceived negative influence of non-Western cultures. This contributed to missionaries often failing to accept differences in conversion experiences.

In general, this mentality prevented creative dialogue with the culture, creating an asymmetry, which precluded any reflection on what today missionaries might term theological contextualization. In particular, this asymmetry was dominant in terms of the gospel message and its reception. Missionary practice was attached to a Western configuration of the gospel. This “pure” gospel could not be in any way altered or adapted. It came from God and missionary success depended entirely upon the ability to keep this message untainted.⁴²

Therefore, missionaries generally did not see local converts as materially contributing to the conversion experience. Missionaries expected converts to respond to the established message in expected ways, without altering the gospel message or response that Western missionaries assumed. These missionaries also assumed that a proper response to their message should exhibit similar markers that indicated authentic conversion.

Caswell notes that the Thai mind was “peculiarly unfitted for understanding and embracing the doctrine of the forgiveness of sin through an atonement.” Jesse Caswell, “Communications from the Missions. Siam. Annual Report of the Mission,” *The Missionary Herald* 44.1 (1848): 16.

⁴² Herbert R. Swanson, *Towards a Clean Church: A Case Study in 19th Century Thai Church History* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Office of History, Church of Christ in Thailand, 1991), 13.

CONVERSION, PATRONAGE-CLIENTELISM, AND THAI CHRISTIANITY

How did missionary activity and the dynamics of Christian conversion in the Thai context parallel this general Western Protestant pattern? One prominent researcher who has done considerable work in the area of conversion and Thai Christianity is Phillip Hughes. Hughes mines the historical records and notes that PC dynamics, sometimes to the consternation of missionaries, played a critical role in early Siamese Protestant Christianity.

Hughes contrasts the message that these 19th century missionaries brought and the response (or, as was often the case, a lack of response) of the Thai people. Typical of 19th century American and British Protestants, these earliest missionaries presented salvation in terms of forgiveness of personal sins, having eternal life, going to heaven, and relied upon the language of penal substitutionary atonement.⁴³ That is, the basic problem of humankind was guilt and the solution that Jesus's death wrought was forgiveness of their guiltiness due to their sin.⁴⁴ This comports with Hindmarsh's notions about the characteristic evangelical soteriology of the time.

Hughes highlights how in particular missionary patronage came in the form of offered help of various kinds of assistance, employment (through schools, hospitals, press, churches, and homes), and an associated status that converts derived from close association to foreign missionaries. Indeed, between 1910-1915, several hundred people were in direct employment of the Northern Siam Mission. A 1923 comment by Presbyterian Mission Board representative J. C. Millikan is stunning. He notes, "In at least one station it was regretfully admitted by the missionaries and apparent in the attitude of the church members that almost all the members of the local church were (present and past) servants in the homes of the missionaries, teachers or scholars in the schools, or other Mission employees, or

⁴³ Philip J. Hughes, *Proclamation and Response: A Study of the History of the Christian Faith in Northern Thailand* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Payap University Archives, 1989), 12.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

members of their families".⁴⁵ As Hughes notes, the larger circle of missionary dependents, direct and indirect, would have run into the thousands.⁴⁶ Daniel McGilvary, pioneer missionary to Northern Thailand, built a system of patronage that included distribution of quinine, Siamese language instruction, access to the increasingly important power center of Bangkok, and a compelling personal charisma, which would have elevated the social status of new converts in their local contexts.⁴⁷ McGilvary played the patron *par excellence* without fully realizing how he was fitting into Siamese PC expectations.

PC issues in early Siamese Christianity were not limited to missionary benefaction. God too was perceived as a great patron. Hughes concludes from his examination of missionary reports from the 19th and early 20th century that "many turned to Christianity...because they saw God as having great power, greater than that of the local spirits."⁴⁸ That is, it was not guilt-laden conscience the evangelical conversion narrative might assume or what moderns might consider internal, spiritual elements that factored into these early conversions. Missionary proclamation used the language of penal substitutionary atonement and salvation in terms of forgiveness of sins.⁴⁹ Their approach clearly formulated the basic problem of humankind as sin, with the solution the forgiveness of sin that the death of Jesus brought.⁵⁰ Yet, converts, it seems, were primarily attracted to the power and benefaction of a great divine patron.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Ibid., 27.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁷ Edwin Zehner, *Church Growth and Culturally Appropriate Leadership: Three Examples from the Thai Church* (Unpublished manuscript, author's files, 1987), 23-33.

⁴⁸ Hughes, *Proclamation and Response*, 17.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 12.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 13.

⁵¹ Herbert R. Swanson, *Krischak Muang Nua: A Study in Northern Thai Church History* (Bangkok, Thailand: Chuan Printing Press, 1984), 139.

A linguistic factor encouraged the Thai to see God as a great patron. The Thai term early missionaries used for God was a compound, bringing together two terms— *phra* and *jaaw*. The terms themselves each have a distinct meaning— *phra*, indicating a status of sacredness or holiness, and *jaaw*, a royal, lord, or superior of some kind. Together, they form part of a common word used as one of the titles for the king who is the “sacred lord of the land” (*phra jaaw paendin*). There was, of course, a compelling reason for use of this term. As Taylor notes, the king is the most wonderful patron in the eyes of the people. It follows, therefore, for Christians, that God is “a holy, powerful, benevolent Lord. He is the ideal patron spirit and king. His power is unlimited, and his love and benevolence is very great to those who respect and obey him.”⁵²

The two terms also appear in the Thai word for the Buddha, *phra phuta jaaw* (Sacred Enlightened Lord). Though this usage is specifically religious, in the more conservative Theravadan form of Buddhism that prevails in Thailand, the Buddha never occupied a godlike position but instead functioned as an enlightened teacher who brings truth. Rather than a term for a spiritual being, the choice of *phra jaaw* to refer to God clearly connotes resonances of lordship, royalty, and patronage.⁵³

Rather than a proper name or a title for deity, the Thai term for God, normalized now through more than two centuries of usage,⁵⁴ is created from the world of Thai PC social relations. This “Sacred Lord” or “Holy Liege” only secondarily connotes a spiritual being;

⁵² Taylor, “Gaps in Beliefs of Thai Christians,” 20.

⁵³ In his narrative of early Siam, the diplomat John Bowring mentions the various controversies that accompanied the decisions that led to the choice of *phra-jaaw*, which he notes at the time meant simply “respected Lord.” John Bowring, *The Kingdom and People of Siam: With a Narrative of the Mission to That Country in 1855. Volume 1* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Oxford University Press, 1977), 338.

⁵⁴ “Both examples show that the use of ‘Phrâcâaw’ was established right from the beginning of the Siamese Bible translation process. Any translation up to the present day is using this expression for God.” Harald Krahl, *The History of the First Translation of the Siamese Bible* (MA Thesis; Columbia International University, 2005), 86.

yet the patronage connotations are clear and primary. Thus, a critical point to understand is that to invoke God in the Thai language with the typical term for deity, *phra jaaw*, is to immediately enter into the dynamics of Thai patronage.⁵⁵ This is required linguistically but is often lost on those who come with different cultural or theological lenses, assuming the term to denote a spiritual being (viz., god) when in fact the primary sense is that of a patron.

That such PC connections are not merely limited to older versions of Thai Christianity is clear from further research Hughes has conducted. In a 1981 survey of several hundred students, Hughes discovered that the primary factor that made Christianity favorable to contemporary Thai Christians was not forgiveness of sins or relief from a guilty conscience but the spiritual patronage of God, the Great Spirit Lord—"Powerful and loving; and he is willing to help those who need him and believe in him. He is worthy of patronage. This is the Good News of Christianity for many Thai people."⁵⁶ In other words, the good news for many Thais was a message about a "powerful, spiritual being who is concerned about them, and who is willing and able to help them when they need help. They have heard the Good News about one who is willing to be their spiritual patron, and who is both able and willing to bless them."⁵⁷

CONVERSION NARRATIVE RESEARCH

My interest in PC structures within Thai culture began with an experience in 2003 when a student in a course I was teaching brought to my attention an article that missiologist Stephen Taylor had written on PC in Thai Christianity. In this article, Taylor argued that PC was a syncretistic aspect of Thai theology and Christian practice.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Phillip J. Hughes, *Christianity and Culture: A Case Study in Northern Thailand* (Th.D. diss.; Southeast Asia Graduate School of Theology, 1983), 195.

⁵⁶ Hughes, *Proclamation and Response*, 49.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁵⁸ Taylor, "Gaps in Beliefs of Thai Christians," 72.

For Taylor, PC represented a “gap” or “deficiency” in Thai theology,⁵⁹ arguing that such was contrary to evangelical soteriology, inserting into the conversion experience a type of human-divine resource exchange. This, he argued, led to human obligation and indebtedness, where people owed God something in exchange for their salvation. Taylor’s concern was with humans trying to repay God, creating a transactional human-divine relationship, which according to Taylor ran “contrary to the biblical doctrine of grace.”⁶⁰ This concern matches what James Barclay terms the non-circularity perfection of grace,⁶¹ prevalent in much Protestant soteriology, where the “gift” of salvation comes without God expecting any human response for fear that activity could be considered as repayment or servicing of a spiritual debt. Such a view of divine-human relationship logically resists the fundamental dynamics of PC, inherently a social exchange of resources.

Here I suggest that much of Taylor’s concern is in fact wrong-headed. Indeed, as I have already argued, conversion in terms of PC dynamics not only finds biblical precedence. Hughes’ work suggests that PC is also a prominent characteristic of Thai Christianity. Recent research I conducted also supports the notion that a natural way for Thai converts to conceive of their coming to faith and their relationship with God is in fact that of a spiritual patron who responds to and blesses human clients.

A decade ago, I collected conversion narratives for a research project. In total, I obtained 20 narratives of Thais who converted from Buddhism to Christianity⁶². My original research was to under-

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 74-75.

⁶² The only researcher who has investigated conversion narratives among Thai Christians is Edwin Zehner. See, e.g., “A Typology of Thai Conversions to Evangelical Christianity,” *Herb’s Research Bulletin* 10 (2004). No pages. Online: <http://www.herbswanson.com/post.php?pid=26>. Edwin Zehner. “Conversion to Christianity among the Thai and Sino-Thai of Modern Thailand: Growth, Experimentation, and Networking in the Contemporary Context,” in Richard F. Young and Jonathan A. Seitz, eds., *Asia*

stand narrative patterns that structured the conversion narratives of young adult Thais, in particular, hoping to understand how the conditions of and the passion for modern Western culture shaped how non-Western converts made their religious choices.⁶³ I was also seeking to understand how the residue of past religious conceptions and cultural experience influenced religious change.⁶⁴ My approach in the interviews was simple—interviewees narrated their own personal stories about their conversion experience and their reflections on the events that led to embracing Christianity. I recorded these, transcribed them, and analyzed the contents.⁶⁵

Several years later, I reengaged the same data set, believing it might profitably yield information on a new focus. I analyzed the twenty narratives with a new research question, “How do the dynamics and characteristics of PC inhere in conversion narratives of Thai converts from Buddhism to Christianity?”⁶⁶

in the Making of Christianity: Conversion, Agency, and Indigeneity, 1600s to the Present (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 403-426; idem, *Unavoidably Hybrid: Thai Buddhist Conversions to Evangelical Christianity* (Ph.D. diss.; Cornell University, 2003).

⁶³ See, for example, the research of Stambach and conversion and the impact of Western consumer culture in Tanzania. Amy Stambach, “Evangelism and Consumer Culture in Northern Tanzania,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 73.4 (2000): 171-179. Also, see Zehner, *Unavoidably Hybrid*, 65.

⁶⁴ Zehner, *Unavoidably Hybrid*, 28.

⁶⁵ Interviewees all originated from the same church network, affiliated with the acappella Churches of Christ in Thailand. This network of churches was relatively new, beginning in 1994. The ages of interviewees fell between 21-30 years old. None had been a professing Christian for more than ten years and most had converted much more recently. All interviewees were college or post-secondary educated and all were Northern Thai, living in the city of Chiang Mai. The interviews averaged ninety minutes, which resulted in transcribed interview text for each interview between 12-15 pages. I used no formal selection criteria other than they must have previously identified as Buddhist but currently identified as Christian.

⁶⁶ I did not structure my analysis to test any hypothesis. Rather, I utilized an inductive, grounded-theory approach to tease out PC dynamics. For coding,

What I was hoping to find was explicit language linking God as a divine patron and their move toward Christianity as one of clientelism. I was eager to see whether these new converts used indigenous PC tropes or rhetorical frames to describe their conversion experiences. As I re-read these interviews with this new lens, a PC framework became quite clear. It is fair to summarize these conversion narratives as stories of God's benevolent patronage. This is the case for at least two reasons.

First, a significant majority (eighteen of twenty) explicitly referenced a specific answer to prayer as the moment they began to believe in the reality of God or the moment they began in earnest to move toward acceptance of the gospel. Ostensibly, this may not seem related to PC issues. Yet, in Thai folk religion, this type of negotiation language is quite common. It is the typical form of Thai folk religious connection with the supernatural.⁶⁷ As a part of religious supplication, Thai worshippers often make similar requests to spiritual beings at votive shrines. That is, before they have entered officially into a dyadic arrangement, many Thais test the relationship with an "application" of sorts, expressing their particular needs or special requests, with the hope that the spiritual power will take notice and respond accordingly. Scholars note this type of spiritual patronage, where supplicants make specific votive requests (*bon*) to spiritual beings and powers, and then repay a positive answer to the request (*kae bon*) with various types of gifts or offerings to the spirit or shrine is extremely common and natural to most Thais.⁶⁸

In these interviews, the nature and scope of the resources asked for varied greatly. Categories of votive requests and answered prayer,

I utilized the program NVivo, coding in two phases. First, I used open coding and then added another level of axial coding once I began to discern PC terms, patterns, and ideas.

⁶⁷ Steven Piker, "The Relationship of Belief Systems to Behavior in Rural Thai Society," *Asian Survey* 8.5 (1968): 388-389.

⁶⁸ Alexander Horstmann, "A Church for Us: Itineraries of Burmese Migrants Navigating in Thailand Through the Charismatic Christian Church," in Juliette Koning and Gwenaël Njoto-Feillard, eds., *New Religiosities, Modern Capitalism, and Moral Complexities in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2017), 137.

in order of most to least frequently referenced, were as follows: 1) Personal problems; 2) Personal peace and happiness; 3) Financial issues; 4) School issues (tests, good grades); 5) Protection from spirits and evil forces; 6) Miscellaneous (which included the mundane to the miraculously extraordinary). These requests for God's assistance were often phrased formulaically as "God, if you are real, then please..." with a specific request or a challenge presented for God to fulfill.

What makes these votive challenge-requests significant is this—in the eighteen narratives that noted God responding positively, it was the *specific and direct answer* to their votive request that moved these Thais forward in a pursuit of God. It seems that God's patronage in the form of specific answers to their requests activated their seeking of God and increased openness to Christianity.

Several interviewees reflected that what was impressive was God being willing to play the patron, even if the request was mundane or self-serving. In their minds, such did not decrease God's magnanimity. Interviewees viewed God as a Patron who condescended to the level of human need to meet them where we were in order to get their attention, even if their request was trivial or flippant. From the perspective of these converts, God seemed quite willing to play the role of the patron in order to get a potential client's attention.

Second, scattered throughout the interviews were terms that are characteristic of PC relationships and responsibilities. These terms include: *duu lae* (to care for, look after); *faak tua* -a technical terms for placing oneself under the care and protection of a patron;⁶⁹ *maawb* (to entrust into the care of a patron); and *luuk phra jaaw* (children-underling of God/Sacred Lord).⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Akin Rabibhadana, "Clientship and Class Structure in the Early Bangkok Period," 94; Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends*, 137.

⁷⁰ Kemp notes that in closer patronage relationships, fictive kinship terms are common. Kemp, "The Manipulation of Personal Relations: From Kinship to Patron-Clientage," 55-69.

If the data here is any indication, it was the promise of God's beneficence in other more tangible ways that led Thai seekers to embrace the Christian faith. Indeed, from these interviews, it is quite clear that converts view God as quintessentially the good patron. Notably, converts frequently mentioned that God was "interested in us," "wants to have a relationship," "gives us good things," "helps us," "loves us," "watches out for us/takes care of us," and "seeks after us." Such terminology is typical of the responsibilities of a good patron in the Thai social worldview.

The presence of this votive application with answered prayers and the characteristic PC terminology was not the only pattern that was clear. Strikingly, there was a general lack of the traditional language of sin, sinfulness, forgiveness, and eternal life. These were present, but not significantly so. Converts did not prioritize either a sense of their personal sinfulness or the offer of forgiveness and eternal life as significant motivations in their own telling of their conversion stories.

The interview protocol did not ask questions designed to elicit pre-conversion understanding of personal sinfulness or feelings of guilt or shame. Only three respondents referenced their own sin, sinfulness, or forgiveness of sin as significant in their own conversion narration. This is not to say that others thought personal sinfulness or the forgiveness of sins unimportant. Rather, in their own natural telling of their conversion story, only three of twenty mentioned personal sin or God's forgiveness as material to their conversion. Such a silence of issues relating to personal forgiveness seems significant.

Another interesting lack related specifically to the role of Jesus. The majority of these converts did not make Jesus salient in their personal narrative, despite every interviewee having gone through the same catechetical evangelistic workbook.⁷¹ Several chapters in that book point to Jesus and focus on his identity and role. Yet, when new converts told their story in their own words, only two

⁷¹ This catechetical series of evangelistic lessons had extensive instruction on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and the soteriological significance of Jesus.

mentioned any salient role for Jesus. God, the sacred patron, was the significant actor and God's tangible benevolent patronage loomed large.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Data from these narratives suggest an experience of conversion that admits to the characteristics Crook describes existed among early Christian converts. These first-century PC dynamics meant the experience of conversion derived more from external benefits of God's gifting patronage than internal psychological experiences, particularly those that related to guilt, personal sinfulness, and forgiveness. The data in these Thai narratives indicate that Hughes is likely correct in his assertion that, for Thais, forgiveness of sins and eternal destiny are not the primary issues that motivate conversion. Given the power of Thai PC, it is not surprising for Thai converts to view their relationship with God through such PC lenses.

The evangelical conversion narrative that Hindmarsh describes reminds modern interpreters and missionaries of the ways Western frameworks often dictate missionary expectations, especially regarding conversion. That the majority of these recent converts fail to reference personal guilt and the forgiveness of sins as material to their conversion story should not be alarming. This matches what Hughes and Swanson both contend was the case historically. These recent conversion narratives confirm this pattern.

What are we to make of the superabundance of pre-conversion votive requests, especially as these appear in a challenge-response framework? My suspicion is that whether they realize it or not, these converts were acting with the normal Thai religious reflex of spiritual PC. That is, their votive challenge functioned as an application for a PC arrangement and, once answered, these formalized their relationship as clients by accepting Christianity.

One possible implication that derives from this research concerns pre-Christian instruction. Given the strong PC commitments Thais typically exhibit, it makes sense to frame evangelistic instruction and catechesis in PC terms. This would include highlighting God's invitation to accept him as a great Patron and intentional

work to create biblically informed frameworks that will assist Thai seekers by drawing on the rich patronage vocabulary already available in the Thai language. This would also include creating explicit taxonomies of God's benevolent patronage benefits and human client duties and obligations, based upon the affectionate *bunkhun* of the love of God and salvation that God extends.

A consistent theme Herbert Swanson, noted historian of the Thai Church, highlights in his work is that the Thai church does not need outsiders to help construct a local theology. It already has one. What it needs, rather, is assistance to make that theology explicit and examine it in terms of fidelity and relevance. This is particularly true in terms of Thai PC. "If one listens gently, however, it eventually becomes clear that Thai Protestants have a theology profoundly grounded in Thai social conceptions, one that takes God to be the church's Spiritual/Heavenly Patron."⁷²

Similarly, I seriously doubt Thai Christians or new Thai converts need help to conceive of God as a great spiritual patron and themselves as God's clients. It would be surprising if they did not do so naturally. What Thai Christians likely need is help to tease out the contours of this implicit theology and then work with the shape of that theological framework with explicit and focal attention.

Missionaries and those who work in contexts where PC is a powerful cultural force should recognize this important social dynamic and work alongside these indigenous PC impulses to encourage it as a profitable local theological framework to understand divine-human relationality. What this means practically is for missionaries to examine their conversion expectations and expand those frameworks. Certain contexts will quite possibly lack the affective reactions or theological pre-understandings missionary expectations might assume.

The conversion narratives I have discussed here provide a powerful reminder of the inevitable pre-understandings and cultural

⁷² Herbert Swanson, "Dancing to the Temple, Dancing in the Church: Reflections on Thai Local Theology," *Herb's Research Bulletin* (2002): 1. Online: http://herbswanson.com/post/_docs/HeRB_3_Dancing.pdf.

frameworks converts bring to their religious experiences. Contra the expectations that local cultures should not materially contribute to conversion experience, these Thai converts followed their natural religious reflex of PC, bringing those expectations and dynamics into the conversion process. From these narratives, Thai converts indeed experienced their Christian conversion as becoming God's clients.

SOCIAL ACTORS IN THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

MARK W. HAMILTON

In his *Erfurt Enchiridion* of 1524, a small hymnal used to spread the doctrines of the Reformation, Martin Luther included a hymn of his own composition, “Dys synd die heylgen zehn gebot” (“These are the holy Ten Commandments”).¹ After an opening verse explaining that God gave the words at Sinai to Moses, the commandments appear seriatim in the Lutheran reckoning, with the prohibition of idolatry and image-making as one command and the proscription of various forms of covetousness as two. Each verse ends with the liturgical refrain “kyrioleys” (*kyrie eleison*), transforming a beguiling way of memorizing the catechism into an overtly liturgical piece. And more tellingly still, the last two verses remind the Christian singer intent on personal and ecclesial reform that

Die gepot all vns geben synd
das du dein sund o menschen kind
erkennen solt vnd lernen wol
wie man fur Gott leben soll.

Das helff vns herr Jhesu Christ
der vnnser midler worden yst.

¹ For the original text, see the Deutsches Textarchiv (www.deutschestextarchiv.de). I follow here the original spelling, while the translation is my own.

Es ist mit vnserm thun verlorn
 verdienen doch eytl zorn.²

Besides the characteristic Lutheran theology, according to which Law chiefly signals human sin and divine wrath, the lines focus on Christ as the one who both shares our fate and equips us to conduct ourselves “wie man fur Gott leben soll” (“how one should live for God”). Singing forms community, and community forms individual lives.

Though the cachet of Luther led such composers as Johann Sebastian Bach to set this hymn to music (BWV 298), since the nineteenth century not only has it dropped out of the musical canon of most churches, but the very idea of setting the Decalogue to music has faded away. Even the most rabid American advocates of posting the Ten Commandments in public spaces have not called for the words to be put to music. That gap of understanding may have opened up as the words in question moved from a central place in the formation of Jewish or Christian communities to a public document more useful for creating a general sentiment of obedience than for inculcating a sense of wonder and group solidarity. This latter goal, however, relates much more closely both to the literary functions of the Decalogue in the various settings in which it appears in the Hebrew Bible. In each of its contexts, the Ten Commandments invites those learning the words to imagine themselves within a world of equity and appropriate piety.

The Decalogue achieves such a goal in part through its construal of social structure and social actors, by which I mean both God and the human beings who can rationally consider how their lives fit the criterion of “wie man fur Gott leben soll.” Luther rightly understood that the list of commands could function – and indeed had always functioned – through liturgy to shape Israelite communities’ self-definition as a network of extended families working together toward

² “The command was given to us all/so that you your sin, o human child/should recognize and learn well/as each one may live for God. So help us, Lord Jesus Christ/who has become our mediator./Our deeds (works) are futile,/worthy only of straight-up wrath.

a common end. That is, the Decalogue imagines a society, a collective of social actors whose interactions tend in a certain direction.

THE DECALOGUE'S SOCIAL ACTORS

The text constructs such a world not simply by setting forth norms (laws) to an unspecified community (much less the subjects of a human ruler as in the Mesopotamian precursors of Israelite legal collections), but by tracing out appropriate and inappropriate patterns of relationship and behavior. To understand that delineation, it is useful to draw on an idea from Max Weber. As one of the foundational concepts of his sociological edifice, he famously argued that "social action" occurs when a person's decision is "meaningfully oriented to that of others."³ That is, the "social" in "social action" demands intention, more or less available to the actors' consciousnesses. Such behavior, he continues, may be grounded in webs of meaning he characterizes as instrumentally-rational, value-rational, affectual, or traditional,⁴ though presumably a mix of motives may obtain in given circumstances. Weber's pure types are nevertheless heuristically valuable.

For the Decalogue, motivation certainly has affectual dimensions, with an appeal to pathos prefacing the list of commands proper in both Exodus and Deuteronomy.⁵ Pragmatic reasons for fol-

³ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff et al., ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 1.23.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

⁵ The relationship between the Exodus and Deuteronomy versions of the Decalogue has occasioned much discussion. The older view that Exod 20:1-21 comes from E, which Deut 5 then revises, is not the only option. A complex, back-and-forth process may be a reasonable explanation. But for the purposes of this discussion, I merely consider the Decalogue within its current literary settings. For a broader discussion, see, e.g., Jacques Vermeylen, "Les Sections Narratives de Deut 5-11 et leur Relation à Ex 19-34," in Norbert Lohfink, ed., *Das Deuteronomium: Entstehung, Gestalt und Bot-schaft*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 68 (Leu-

lowing the rules exist (“so it may go well for you and you may live long”). However, the primary motivation for the social actors described in the Ten Commandments is value-rational, “determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other form of behavior, independently of its prospects of success....”⁶ Both Deuteronomy and Exodus present the list of injunctions as divine speech whose credibility flows from the work of Yhwh as creator and exodus-bringer. As Thomas Aquinas already pointed out, however, the framing of the commands as divine speech does not imply their radical difference from other legal or moral traditions but rather underscores human empathy and a basic commitment to goodness common to all (most?) human beings.⁷

ven: Peeters, 1985), 174-207; Karin Finsterbusch, “Die Dekalog-Ausrichtung der deuteronomischen Gesetzes,” in Georg Fischer, ed., *Deuteronomium: Tora für eine neue Generation*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte 17 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 123-46. The rewriting of the Decalogue in various ancient manuscript traditions shows the multiple uses the text could serve. See Innocent Himbaza, *Le Décalogue et l'histoire du texte: Etudes des formes textuelles du Décalogue et leurs implications dans l'histoire du texte de l'Ancien Testament*, Orbis biblicus et orientalis 207 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004); Armin Lange, “From Many to One: Some Thoughts on the Hebrew Textual History of the Torah,” in Jan C. Gertz, Bernard M. Levinson, Dalit Rom-Shiloni, and Konrad Schmid, eds., *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, Forschungen zum Alten Testament III (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 121-95, esp. 141-43; Reinhard Kratz, “Reworked Pentateuch and Pentateuchal Theory,” in Jan C. Gertz, Bernard M. Levinson, Dalit Rom-Shiloni, and Konrad Schmid, eds., *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, Forschungen zum Alten Testament III (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 514-21.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ See the discussion in Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a2ae.100 esp. art. 2-4. For Aquinas, the laws of the Decalogue reflected natural theology, the proper moral and spiritual awareness available to all human beings as a divine gift.

The Actors

In both Exodus and Deuteronomy, then, the Decalogue identifies Yhwh as a social actor in relationship with an unspecified “you,” the collective of adult male Israelites. In addition, the communal “you” interacts meaningfully with other humans, including wives, children, servants, and migrants, as well as to parents. All of these persons depend upon “you,” though the presence of parents in the list should caution against an easy assumption of rigid hierarchies of domination and subordination. The formulaic nature of the Decalogue precludes description of the complex, varying balances of power in human marriages, business arrangements, and other social interactions.

This point relates to two others. First, the list of social actors is striking primarily for its omissions. King, priest, prophet, tradespeople, soldiers, and all other vocational distinctions disappear in favor of more primary social arrangements. The first two omissions are particularly significant since ancient Near Eastern law ordinarily rooted itself in human kingship, as in the famous preface to the so-called Code of Hammurabi, which justifies itself by claiming

at that time, the gods Anu and Enlil, for the enhancement of the well-being of the people, named me by name: Hammurabi, the pious prince, who venerates the gods, to make justice prevail in the land, to abolish the wicked and the evil, to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak, to rise like the sun-god Shamash over all humankind, to illuminate the land.⁸

While Israelite law consistently downplays a royal connection, it does emphasize the role of the priesthood as teacher and corrector of rul-

⁸ Trans. Martha Roth, “The Laws of Hammurabi,” in William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, eds., *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 2: *Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 336. On possible influences of the Hammurabi law collection on biblical law (though absent kingship!), see David P. Wright, *Inventing God’s Law: How the Covenant Code of the Bible Used and Revised the Laws of Hammurabi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

ers (e.g. Deut 17:14-20).⁹ So the omission of potential enforcers of the commandments underscores the didactic and ideological nature of the Decalogue.

Second, and more importantly, the stripped-down sociology of the Decalogue highlights what at least some Israelite thinkers perceived as the most essential human relationships: extended family, neighborhood or village, and then the entirety of Israel as a culture of memory. Even if patrimonial societies were the norm for all stages of ancient Near Eastern culture, with the state apparatus conceived of in quasi-familial terms,¹⁰ the simple society envisioned in the laws (and in the Covenant Code) may point to a time long prior to the composition of Deuteronomy, as Tigay argues,¹¹ or to nostalgia for such a time, but most of all it points toward a conception of action involving Yhwh and all Israelites irrespective of their place in social hierarchies. While the Decalogue does not pose a sharp divide between a first and a second tablet of law applying to God and humanity respectively, contrary to popular opinion,¹² the intertwining of actors whose activity is “meaningfully oriented to that of others”

⁹ Note the all too neglected article by Gerhard von Rad, “The Levitical Sermon in I-II Chronicles,” in Gerhard von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and other Essays*, trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 267-80. For an evaluation of von Rad’s theses, see the essays in Bernard Levinson and Eckart Otto, eds., *Recht und Ethik im Alten Testament: Beiträge des Symposiums “Das Alte Testament und die Kultur der Moderne” anlässlich des 100. Geburtstags Gerhard von Rads (1901-1971) Heidelberg, 18.-21. Oktober 2001*, *Altes Testament und Moderne* 13 (Münster: LIT, 2004).

¹⁰ As argued in the important study of J. David Schloen, *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the ancient Near East*, *Studies in the Archaeology and History of the Levant* 2 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001).

¹¹ Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), xxi-xxii.

¹² As argued by Eckart Otto, *Deuteronomium 12-34, vol. 1: 12,1-23,15*, *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament* (Freiburg: Herder, 2016), 1108; he follows Norbert Lohfink, “Zur Dekalogfassung von Dt 5,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 9 (1965): 17-32; cf. Johann Jakob Stamm, *Der Dekalog im Lichte der neueren Forschung* (Bern: Haupt, 1962), esp. 11-14.

does inform what the Decalogue highlights. Without Yhwh's actions, Israel cannot exist as a community, and without Israel's reciprocal actions, Yhwh cannot be in relationship with a community. Both covenant partners are necessary.

Emotion and Cognition

This necessity leads both presentations of the Decalogue in Exodus and Deuteronomy to address the emotional and cognitive states of both parties. Hence the Second Commandment's insistence that "I Yhwh your God am a jealous (*qannā*³) god, requiring the iniquity of the ancestors upon children up to the third or fourth (generation) of those hating me (*šōn'āy*)." Yhwh's attachment to covenant correlates with a strong repugnance to its violation, which is fitly described as a hateful attitude of the Israelite idolater toward the covenant-maker.

Even more overt in both the Exodus and Deuteronomy versions is the attempt at cognitive formation. Exodus 20, for example, frames the encounter at Sinai between two stories about managing the encounter with God so as to avoid killing off the humans involved (Exod 19:10-24; 24:1-2). The Israelite audience must think carefully about laws given through a mediator, even at some remove from their individual experience. The elaborate rhetorical shaping of the laws themselves, as well as of the prologue and epilogue in each presentation in the Pentateuch, signal an attention to the reasoning ability of the audience rather than an over-reliance on the raw power of the divine lawgiver.

To be specific, Exodus emphasizes the cognitive dimensions of encounter with the law through both the appeal to warrants justifying some of the commandments, and a call to memory. The several types of warrants include appeals to (1) the nature of the deity as one capable of retribution for idol-making (20:5; cf. Deut 5:9), committed to justice in the case of use of the divine name for nefarious purposes (20:7; cf. Deut 5:11), and acting to create for the benefit of all (20:11), and (2) the common human desire for well-being in the future (20:12). Such appeals signal a rhetorical strategy of promoting Torah observance through an address to the Israelites' sense of honor

and desire for well-being though still within a value-rational framework (in the Weberian sense).

Of course, the call to “remember (*zākôr*) the Sabbath” (Exod 20:8) does not just acknowledge the existence of a practice. Rather, it presupposes that the economic structure that the law seeks to regulate will draw the attention of the thoughtful Israelite. The “you” who remembers must acknowledge the rights of dependents to a day of rest because all of them, regardless of their place in the community’s hierarchy, depend on a higher patron whose creation of the world lies behind any economic structure rooted in the agricultural exploitation of precisely that creation.

The commitment to memory moves into overdrive in Deuteronomy, a book that seeks to create what Georg Braulik has felicitously called Israel’s “commemorative culture” (*Gedächtniskultur*).¹³ While changing the initial verb of the Fourth Commandment to “keep” (*šāmôr*), Deuteronomy both offers a warrant calling its audience to obedience through remembering (*wēzākartā*) the exodus story (Deut 5:15) and introduces the Decalogue as a whole with a strong appeal to communal memory that simultaneously emphasizes the wonders of the Sinai experience (as in Exodus 19-20) but innovatively insists that the encounter there did not involve the ancestors but rather their descendants (Deut 5:1-5), including any potential readers or hearers of the book.¹⁴ That is, the collective memory of the group comes to the fore.

¹³ Georg Braulik, *The Theology of Deuteronomy*, trans. Ulrika Lindblad (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL, 1994), 183-98, 263-70; the original German chapter appears as “Das Deuteronomium und die Gedächtniskultur Israels: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zur Verwendung von זָמַר,” in Georg Braulik, ed., *Biblische Theologie und gesellschaftlicher Wandel* (Vienna: Herder, 1993), 9-31.

¹⁴ One must thus reject the improbable claims of Brekelmans, who argues that the beginning and end of Deut 5, because they are redactional, say nothing about the Decalogue. See Christianus Brekelmans, “Deuteronomy 5: Its Place and Function,” in Norbert Lohfink, ed., *Das Deuteronomium: Entstehung, Gestalt und Botschaft*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 68 (Leuven: Peeters, 1985), 164-73

The differences between Deuteronomy's and Exodus's shaping of memory lead directly to discussions of the origins of the Decalogue, the complex redactional relationships between the two main versions, and the reasons for their placement within the final narrative form of the Pentateuch. Those issues are too complex to deal with at present, and perhaps less germane than the simple fact that the existence of multiple versions of the laws points to the need of Israelite thinkers to explore possible uses of them through narratives of wonder (Exodus) and sagacious reflection on wonder (Deuteronomy). Both discourse styles point to aspects of collective memory.

Memory as social action

This emphasis on collective memory is important if one recalls that the interiorization of memory – its location in the self individuated from other autonomous selves – postdates the biblical texts.¹⁵ Throughout the book and in its various redactional stages, Deuteronomy adopts a fairly heavy-handed approach to the public performance of shared story or collective memory, which it names as such. No doubt the book's emphasis on the shared story of the community overlaps with the Deuteronomi(sti)c circles' ongoing attempts to curate and interpret the nation's story from its beginnings to the great tragedy of the Babylonian deportations of the sixth century (the so-called Deuteronomistic History). But something more theologically vital comes into play as well, a deep conviction of the work of Yhwh primarily as a transcendental covenant partner with Israel. That basic theological idea caused a thoroughgoing reassessment of all the theological materials inherited from earlier Israelite traditions (as well as the generation of new materials). It also led the creators of Deuteronomy to adopt a self-consciously didactic approach to the transmission of their material. This approach informs the Decalogue's introduction as well.

¹⁵ For a brief but very helpful discussion of this point, see Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 93-132.

For the E and P hands responsible for the Exodus version of the Decalogue and the narrative surrounding it, the need to shape old material to community-formational ends was just as strong, though understood differently. This understanding shows in the P reworking of the Sabbath command, the warrant for which lies in the creative act of God rather than the exodus (Exod 20:11). For the priestly traditions, Israel's obedience to Yhwh must somehow conform to the shape of time itself, which points to Sabbath. Just as the calendar in Lev 23:3 follows Deuteronomy in separating the Sabbath from the sabbatical year (contrast Exod 23:10-13) and yet distinguishing it from the other annual holidays, the Decalogue's commands for Sabbath highlight Yhwh's free choice of the day, untied to the movements of heavenly bodies, for a day of rest.¹⁶

THE DECALOGUE'S SOCIAL ACTS

However, the Decalogue names not just actors, but social acts "meaningfully oriented to [those] of others." These acts can easily be identified by cataloguing the verbs assigned to each actor. Yhwh "brings" the human partner (*hōsē'tikā*) from Egypt, exacts retribution (*pāqad*, *lō' nāqā*) from wicked human beings, and commands (*sāwā*). That is, Yhwh plays the role of the divine monarch to whom Israel owes fidelity. The commands of Torah flow from Yhwh's status as the ruler who has defeated the oppressive system of Egypt.

Conversely, Israel's "you" often acts by not acting. That is, the commands take the negative form of actions to be avoided ("you should not...") as well as the cognitive and emotional actions already noted. The collective "you" can also "honor" (*kabbēd*) or "consecrate" (*lēqaddēs*), that is, acknowledge the superiority of persons or ritual acts or times. The combination of positive and negative acts creates a field of behaviors to be followed.

This text's strong preference for the prohibitions along with the identification of Yhwh's enemies ("those who hate me") signal two important aspects of the divine-human relationship, the human ca-

¹⁶ See Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, Anchor Bible 3C (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 1962.

capacity for dissent or even revolt, and the recurring need to legitimate divine rule. These features reveal themselves in various ways in the Decalogue. For example, in discussing Deuteronomy 5's arguments for aniconic worship of Yhwh, Yitzhaq Feder argues convincingly (*contra* Mettinger and others) that while non-Israelite traditions in the ancient Near East could be practically aniconic, the Israelite texts show a development from a pre-Deuteronomic prohibition of idols on the basis of their foreignness (as in Hosea) to Deuteronomy's arguments against idolatry on the basis of Yhwh's radical transcendence and otherness from the created order.¹⁷ The increase in sophistication reflects an ongoing theological discourse. And most to the point, the polemic against idolatry in Deut 5:6-9 acknowledges the existence of Israelite (not just foreign) opposition to the prohibition of idols.

The warrants expressed in the commands to honor parents and observe the Sabbath (Deut 5:12, 16's *ka'āšer šiwwēkā Yhwh ʾēlōheykā* ["just as Yhwh your God commanded you"]) may constitute cross-references leading the implied reader of the book to other parts of the Pentateuch, since they do not refer intratextually to the Decalogue itself,¹⁸ but more importantly these references underscore the non-negotiability of a social structure in which the Israelite "you" honors elders and refuses to measure dependents merely for their

¹⁷ Yitzhaq Feder, "The Aniconic Tradition, Deuteronomy 4, and the Politics of Israelite Identity," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132 (2013): 251-74; cf. Trygve N. D. Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in its Ancient Near Eastern Context*, Coniectanea biblica. Old Testament Series 42 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995); but Brian R. Doak, *Phoenician Aniconism in its Mediterranean and Ancient Near Eastern Contexts* (Atlanta: SBL, 2015); Manoj Kumar Korada, *The Rationale for Aniconism in the Old Testament: A Study of Select Texts*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology 86 (Leuven: Peeters, 2017).

¹⁸ As argued by Georg Fischer, "Der unterbrochene Dekalog: Zu Deuteronomium 5,12 und 16 und ihrer Bedeutung für deuteronomischen Gesetzbuch," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 120 (2008): 169-83.

economic or status-honor value. Yet at the same time, the insistence that the patron deity commands such actions addresses the reality that Israel may ignore or even reject such an approach to its social structure.

This tension between the placid surface of the text and the turbid subtext against which it responds should remind readers of not just the opportunity, but the limits of, dissent. Deuteronomy does not content itself with the prophetic decrees of some of its antecedent texts. It makes arguments. And it seems aware that its various audiences engage in what James Scott has called “infrapolitics,” or “the veiled cultural struggle and political expression of subordinate groups who have ample reason to fear venturing their unguarded opinion.”¹⁹ Whatever the relationship between Ur-Deuteronomy and the court of Josiah (a highly controversial topic), the book as it stands certainly does not merely defend the viewpoint of the Israelite power structure, whether in the seventh century BCE or later. Rather, it tries to reconstruct the social structure according to a well-developed conception of the logic of divine law, derived from fundamental conceptions of Yhwh’s transcendence as manifested in the saving work of the exodus.

The Decalogue aids this reconstruction of society by naming potential social actors and defining the actions that should characterize their stance toward each other and the deity. It invites its audience to manage key social interactions in order to minimize the harm that hierarchy potentially entails, closing the gap between subordinate and superordinate groups by subsuming all of them into the “you” who must obey Torah, without attempting to dissolve social distinctions altogether. The text thus avoids both the utopianism sometimes seen in the prophets and the conservative acceptance of the givenness of the political structures often apparent in Wisdom texts. The Decalogue features prominently, then, in the book’s sophisticated approach to political and social life.

¹⁹ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 184.

CONCLUSIONS

Finally, when Luther turned the Decalogue to music, he stood in a long tradition of engaging the text as communal catechesis and worship. This tradition appears in extant manuscripts predating the Christian era, such as the Nash Papyrus and the phylacteries of Qumran. And in some ways it goes back to Deuteronomy, if not perhaps Exodus. While the history of interpretation of the Decalogue takes many turns, its educational dimension has remained consistent. The text has functioned less in court than in home and village.

How did the creators of the Decalogue achieve such an outcome? One aspect of their work, as I have tried to show, appears in the consideration of social actors and actions present in both Deuteronomy and Exodus versions, even with their slight differences. By situating faithfulness to the covenant in families as the basic social unit, the Decalogue's creators removed the mediatorial apparatus sometimes surrounding ancient Near Eastern law, notably kingship and the functionaries of the state. The list of laws, without striving for any sort of comprehensiveness, highlights the actor, laying the groundwork for the much longer discussion of law as a way of forming character rather than merely behavior. Such a discussion could only begin with the Decalogue. It continues today.

ON BEING HUMAN

RANDY HARRIS

Reinhold Niebuhr was a theologian who made a rare impact beyond the walls of the academy. A true public intellectual, he advised presidents and was featured on the cover of Time magazine. Barack Obama claims to have read him. He is also the author of one of the most influential books on human nature of the 20th century. *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, volumes one and two, has influenced a century of Christian theologians. It seems many Christian thinkers, whether they acknowledge it or not, are either responding to Niebuhr or reiterating his case. While Niebuhr scholars may find crucial places where I depart from his argument, much of what I'm saying here is an effort to streamline and contemporize what I think is right about his argument. In our efforts to create a Christian anthropology, whatever we say about human beings must in some way resonate with how we actually experience ourselves, as well as the claims of scripture.

In Genesis 1-2 two fundamental claims are made about the human beings that God creates. First, human beings are *nephesh chayab*, "living beings:" "Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (2:7, NRSV). Though this passage sets human beings apart from the plants, which are not so characterized as "living beings," it does not separate human beings from the animals. In fact, the same phrase is used of the animals several different times in the first chapter. In Gen 1:20 it is used of the sea creatures and birds, and in 1:24 it is used of the land animals.

The point seems to be that human beings *are* animals. It is fascinating to note that, in the old King James translation, *nephesh* is translated as “creature” in Genesis 1, where it refers to the sea creatures, birds, and land animals. In Genesis 2, however, the same word is translated as “soul.” The translators have made the unfortunate decision to translate *nephesh* in a different way in order to set off the humans from the rest of the animals. This is exactly the opposite of what the text is actually doing. Human beings are animals. What does this mean?

In a word, humanity’s finitude is being highlighted. According to the logic of the text, human beings are first of all creatures just like all the other animate creatures that God has made. They have all of the same basic limitations of all animals. They have the limitations that come with embodiment and the need to sustain themselves. But it also means that they can die. Human beings were not created immortal. Immortality was never part of their basic nature. The fact that they were not subject to death in Genesis 1 and 2 has to do with the availability of the tree of life and not an inherent immortality. If we do not understand this truth we will misunderstand the disaster of Genesis 3.

The second claim made in Genesis 1-2 is that human beings are made “in the image and likeness of God,” referred to in the Christian tradition with the Latin phrase *imago Dei*.

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves upon the earth.” (vv. 26-28, NRSV)

This indeed does set human beings apart. The birds, fish, and non-human mammals are not made in the image of God. Of course, a great deal of ink has been spilled trying to explain exactly what the

phrase “the image and likeness of God” might mean. It is quite unavoidable, given the richness and complexity of this idea.

First, let us follow the logic of the narrative itself. It is clear that being made in the image and likeness is closely associated with exercising dominion. In fact, procreation itself seems to serve the purpose of being able to exercise dominion. However, we live in an age when dominion has become synonymous with exploitation and I have no interest in contributing to that. Nevertheless, in this passage human beings are invited to exercise an almost god-like prerogative within the created order.

I want to offer a tentative definition of the image and likeness of God that grows directly out of the text as it presents itself. The image and likeness of God is the totality of characteristics that allow human beings to exercise dominion in the created order. The temptation is to identify the image and likeness with one particular aspect or characteristic of human abilities, but I suggest that it is the whole complex of traits that empower human beings to exercise dominion. Even the instruction to be fruitful and multiply is itself a part of the exercising dominion, as it is rather difficult to claim dominion when there are only two of you.

I will not attempt an exhaustive list of such characteristics, but some present themselves quite obviously. Much of the Christian tradition has suggestion *rationality* as the trait human beings must possess to complete their God-given task. Let us reflect a little on some particular aspects of this rationality, a rationality which is not simply abstract thinking.

For instance, creativity is quite an astounding ability that we ought not to take for granted. The ability of a human being to see a tree and imagine a house is quite remarkable, that is, our ability to imagine things which do not yet exist and then to bring them into being. Equally important is our linguistic ability. I, like all true animal lovers, cannot resist talking to them. I was constantly in conversation with my pugs. Now, I will grant you that, despite their winning personalities, even in the dog world a pug is not the brightest bulb on the tree. But we do have a tendency to overestimate the very limited linguistic abilities of all the creatures around us. The differ-

ence in the DNA between human beings and other primates is relatively small. But the ability of human beings to pass on information among ourselves and between generations allows humans to exercise a dominion that is impossible for animals with less-developed linguistic abilities. I will for the moment not pause to consider the conundrums of human moral sense and what they might contribute to our understanding of the image and likeness of God.

The third and final characteristic I wish to highlight is the human ability of self-reflection. That is, we are able to make ourselves the objects of our own thought. It is one thing to be able to think carefully and deeply about the world outside of ourselves. It is quite another thing to be able to turn that critical eye back on ourselves. And upon this ability everything hangs.

The view of human beings as expressed in Genesis 1 and 2 is that we are both *nephesh chayah* and *Imago Dei*. We are not one or the other but both. And we are both all the time. As we read through the rest of Scripture there are some passages which emphasize our animal nature and others which emphasize the image of God. So human beings are like grass “which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven” (Matthew 6:30, NRSV). But we are also those “made a little lower than the angels, and crowned... with glory and honor” (Psalm 8:5, NRSV).

Much energy has been spent trying to sort out the relationship of body, soul, and spirit in the Bible. It may not be possible to do this in a perfectly consistent way. The Biblical use of the terms is simply too imprecise, and I suspect that we often read Plato and Freud into Biblical texts in ways that do not do justice to any of the three. Barth is surely correct when he argues that we are “embodied souls” and that we cannot fully understand either term without the other. However, I believe it is far more important to understand the constant interplay of *nephesh chayah* and *Imago Dei* than to try to parse the meaning of spirit and soul.

In contrast to a purely Biblical approach, I now want to make a brief philosophical and psychological foray into the doctrine of human nature. I suggest we circumscribe a guiding question as follows: what happens to our understanding of human beings if we fully embrace the *nephesh chayah* without the *Imago Dei* or conversely the *Imago Dei* without the *nephesh chayah*?

I have always had an attraction to dystopian novels. I don't particularly want to live in the worlds these novels describe, but I have always been fascinated by the alternative they create. And, let's face it, dystopia is much more interesting to read about than utopia. One such dystopian novel is *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess. I suppose it is better known by its movie version, which in this case (even though the movie is not exactly bad) is unfortunate. The anti-hero in the book is a gang member named Alex, who appears to be a sociopath. His gang goes about creating mayhem and violence, but he has a falling out with some of the gang who set him up to be caught by the authorities. Alex signs up for a program for early release involving a new kind of rehabilitation. In Burgess's world this rehabilitation turns out to be a dark form of Pavlovian/Skinnerian conditioning. Alex has his eyelids wired open and is shown nonstop scenes of violence while he is being pumped full of a drug that makes him extremely sick. Ring the bell, feed the dog. By the time the conditioning is done, and Alex is released, the mere thought of a violent act makes him so nauseated that he can't perpetrate it. It is really hard to be a violent sociopath when you're throwing up all the time.

There are many interesting things in Burgess's book, but I want to highlight how he draws our attention to the concept of morality in light of B. F. Skinner's behaviorist psychology. In the title of one of his most famous works, Skinner makes his point: "Beyond Freedom and Dignity." The "beyond" part suggests that human beings have neither freedom nor dignity. They are, finally, slobbering dogs, perhaps more complex in their stimulus response mechanism, but not really different in kind. This appears to be a human being that is entirely *nephesh chayah*. Human beings are simply one more animal. *Imago Dei* is nowhere in sight.

The reverse configuration, in which the *Imago dei* is emphasized at the expense of the *nephesh chayah*, is considerably more complicated. Although it seems odd, an emphasis on the transcendent characteristics of human beings without due attention to their finite animal nature often leads to a kind of godless humanism as epitomized in Jean-Paul Sartre. Thus, in Sartre's famous words "man makes himself" (the patriarchal language is his).

We now return to the road of biblical anthropology from which we have strayed. Human beings are both finite *and* transcendent. To neglect either is to forget who we really are. In this context Niebuhr introduces the concept of anxiety. Anxiety is not exactly worry. A closer synonym to anxiety would be angst: a feeling of deep dread, not so much focussed on a particular object but instead on the human condition or state of the world in general.

Anxiety has its ground in the twofold nature of human beings. Human beings are finite. That is, they carry about in themselves the possibility death. This in itself need not be anxiety producing. Although we are only beginning to learn more about animal emotions as our tools improve, there does not appear to be the same obsession with finitude in animals as in human beings. But because of those transcendent characteristics, which Genesis 1 and 2 describe as the image and likeness of God, human beings are able to ponder (or, perhaps more accurately, obsess over) their own death. This results in anxiety. Thus, if we had either of the characteristics of human beings without the other, there would be no anxiety.

This brings us at last to that most fundamental Christian theological concept: sin. At its most basic, sin is the refusal to be human. Sin is derived from the anxiety that is endemic to being human. In this refusal to be human, there are two broad categories of sins. Both are attempts to relieve the anxiety of being aware of one's own finitude.

The more obvious but less important of these sinful paths is the attempt to become an animal completely, and thus deny the *imago Dei* in us. This leads to what in the old days were called the sins of concupiscence. Or, to put it another way, the fun sins. I play the music as loud as I can, and I dance as fast as I can, and I keep myself as medicated as I can, and I have sex with as many people as I can, and I relentlessly work to banish silence from my life in an attempt to become an anxiety free animal. If you listen to much of preaching in Christian churches today, you might conclude that these were the only kind of sins that exist (which is interesting, because these type of sinners aren't often sitting in the pews on an early Sunday morning).

However, the second kind of sin is far more pervasive, and in fact could be described as the original sin. Let us return to the logic of the Genesis 3 story.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'you shall not eat from any tree in the garden?'" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. (vv. 1-6, NRSV)

In this story of the fall, the original sin, that is, the first sin, is not the human desire to become an animal. It is the desire to become like God. What exactly might this mean? To put it most clearly, it is the attempt to become the source of one's own security, to become the ultimate arbitrator of good and evil, and to relieve oneself of reliance on God. And, in fact, the rest of Scripture will play out the results of this original tragedy. What happens when human beings attempt to be the source of their own security?

There are many questions that arise from this cryptic Genesis 3 story upon which so much of the Bible hangs. Let me address two of the more pressing. First, why would the human beings who have so much, risk it all for a piece of fruit? As far as we can tell there is harmony in the garden between human beings and the world they inhabit, between human beings and the rest of the animal kingdom, between the two human beings themselves, and between the human beings and God, who together spend the evenings strolling through the garden. That appears to be a lot to give up for a piece of fruit. Most of us would choose world harmony over a tangerine.

However, it is crucial to remember that the human beings are not created immortal. They are *nephesh chayah*. This makes them

totally dependent upon God's gracious provision of the tree of life. And, in the logic of the story, as soon as they are cut off from the tree of life they begin the process of dying. And so, while their sin is often checked off to impetuosity (and there is no question that their decision turns out to be a very bad one), what is really at work here is the human desire for the one thing they do not have: their independence. This is the original sin.

Secondly, why would God put a tree in the garden, make it highly desirable and then order the human pair not to eat from it? Occasionally my students have suggested this is like putting a jar of cookies the middle of the table and then telling the children, "In this jar are the greatest chocolate chip cookies in the world, but you can't have any." This is a fair question. The most straightforward response to this question is with another: will human beings trust God? Or, to put it in slightly differently, will human beings fulfill their human destiny to be human—not just an animal, not God, but the beings who, in full understanding of their finitude, make the decision to address their anxiety by trusting their creator?

One of the best summation passages on the human attempt at self-security is in Jeremiah 9:23-24:

Thus says the Lord: do not let the wise boast in their wisdom, do not let the mighty boast in their might, do not let the wealthy boast in their wealth; but let those who boast boast in this, that they understand and know me, that I am the Lord; I act with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the Lord. (NRSV)

Here we see three of the four primary ways in which we attempt to become the source of our own security—wisdom, power, and wealth. The fourth, by the way, is religion. In fact, the entire Bible can be read through this revealing lens. Will human beings trust God, or will they attempt to secure themselves and thus forever commit the original sin?

Any effort in Christian theological anthropology must finally reckon with Jesus Christ. The fundamental theological assertion of Christian faith is that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human. At the moment I am only concerned with the second part of that claim. Much of the argument between Christians and non-Christians deals

with the claim of the deity of Jesus Christ. I also want to claim that Jesus Christ is the second face of the Trinity and is thus God. But I want to remind my readers that the first great Christian heresy was not a denial of Jesus' divinity but rather a refusal to accept his humanity (Gnosticism).

If we accept the traditional Christian claim, Jesus not only reveals to us God, but he also reveals to us our true humanity. Or, to put it another way, Jesus shows us what humanity looks like when it's done right. Our doctrine of human beings cannot be grounded in some general anthropology but must be grounded in a view of humanity that is revealed by Jesus Christ.

What does a close look at Jesus do to the understanding of human beings as it is revealed to us in Genesis 1-3? We are immediately reminded of the Adam-Christ comparison from Romans 5. It is not my burden at the moment to do a full exegesis of this rich and complex passage. But we must not overlook the most striking thing about this comparison and, that is, that Paul makes it *at all*. Somehow in Adam everything went wrong. And somehow in Christ everything is going to be set right.

At this point it is almost impossible to resist speaking poetically or narratively. This is the form of the original story. In what follows, it is not my intention to resist the rigors of theological reflection but to fully embrace them.

Once upon a time, a man was living in loving relationship with God, his wife, and the world around him. But there was the nagging anxiety that the security of these things resided outside himself in a place that he could not control. What if the God he depended on turned out to be unreliable? The man came to a tree. A tempting voice assured him that he can secure himself by eating thereof and thus becoming godlike. And so he made the decision not to trust God but to trust in himself and the whole world was plunged into chaos.

Once upon a time, there was another man living in loving relationship with God. He too came to a tree. And he, like the first man, is faced with a momentous decision. Will he trust God or become the

source of his own security? Just like the first man, the fate of the world rests on his decision.

When I was a little boy we would sing a song in church about the crucifixion of Jesus. One of the lines from the rousing chorus said this: "he could have called 10,000 Angels to destroy the world and set men free." But, of course, he didn't. For that would have been to merely replay the drama of the garden. Instead, Jesus fully entrusted himself to God and shows us what humanity looks like when it is done right.

Which brings me to the thinker who I believe most profoundly sheds light on the human condition. In fact, I read much of his work as a meditation on Original Sin, although he himself would never characterize it that way. Michel Foucault spent his career trying to understand how power operates in every strand of our society and life. It is not quite right to say that he believed everything was power and could thus be reduced to power. It would be more correct to say that power is never absent, whether we acknowledge it or not. While it is not the whole story, it is always part of the story.

I cannot at this point give an adequate account of power, but I will suggest that the notion of power cannot be separated from the concept of control. There is a tendency to think of power as neutral and the objectives of that power as either moral or immoral. I rather think of it as the sin we cannot keep from committing. Because of our anxiety we have a deep-seated need to be in control, the source of our own security, to be God: the original sin. Even when we assert our power in what we think is a good cause, our power is always to some degree self-assertion.

The depth of the dilemma that Niebuhr has presented to us now becomes clear. It is not just that we do bad things. It is not just that we fail to do good things. It is, rather, that every good thing we do is tainted by the human desire for self-security, for power, and by our refusal to trust God. The Genesis 1 account shows us that it is possible to exercise our God-given dominion and still trust God. But post-fall it is not clear that this has ever happened, or how it would. The only viable path to that illusive humanity would be in the *imitatio Christi*.

Jesus Christ is thus not just the atoning face of God but the trusting face of true humanity. As Barth says, the incarnation is not

just the humiliation of God, it is the elevation of humanity. Humanity at its best, what it was created to be, is not defined by control but by humble, obedient trust.

The history of Christianity and the West generally show our failure to understand our own story. We live in a dangerous world, where we are constantly confronted by otherness in all its forms, and in our desperate insecurity we are overwhelmed by the temptation to protect ourselves by power and control. But power and control are also world destroying. It has been from the beginning. There is another way.... The way of the God who goes the way of humiliation into the far country... The crucified Messiah.... The one who refuses the offer to save himself... But instead trusts the Father... And in refusing to save himself.... Saves the world.

BIBLICAL COMPOSITION AND BIBLICAL INSPIRATION¹

CHRISTOPHER HEARD²

Many have undertaken to set down orderly accounts of how the biblical books were composed, and what role, if any, God played in those processes. Some scholars proceed deductively, beginning with axiomatic statements derived from biblical texts or ecclesiastical affirmations, drawing out the implications, and applying those axioms to specific texts, resolving problems as they arise. Others proceed

¹ Ian A. Fair, who was Dean of the College of Biblical Studies at Abilene Christian University while I was a student there, impressed upon his students the value of critical inquiry tempered with respect for biblical inspiration, as in Ian A. Fair, "Disciplines Related to Biblical Interpretation," in F. Furman Kearley, Edward P. Myers and Timothy D. Hadley, eds., *Biblical Interpretation: Principles and Practice: Studies in Honor of Jack Pearl Lewis, Professor of Bible, Harding Graduate School of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1986), 36, 43. I trust that by using critical exegesis to refine common understandings of biblical inspiration, this study honors his contributions to my own and many other students' scholarly and personal development.

² My wife Rene Nicholas Heard was also one of Ian's students, and has contributed to this chapter by proofreading it carefully and making helpful suggestions about clarity in wording. Likewise my colleague Nicholas Zola, who began his studies at Abilene Christian University too late to work with Ian, but has been a stalwart dialogue partner on my topic. He also provided invaluable assistance in accessing Latin and nonbiblical Greek primary sources.

inductively; often affirming the same axioms as deductivists, they seek the operational meaning of those axioms by inferences drawn from various texts rather than by direct reflection on the axioms.³

Deductivists often stress “scripture’s self-attestation,” which they locate indirectly in New Testament references to Old Testament materials and directly in passages like 2 Tim 3:16–17; 1 Pet 1:10–12; and 2 Pet 1:20–21, taken as global statements about canonical scripture.⁴ Inductivists often stress “the phenomena of scripture,” including use of noncanonical sources, chronological and historical discrepancies, unscientific statements, theological variations between texts, and more.⁵

³ For a fuller description and analysis see William J. Abraham, *The Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 14–38; Paul J. Achtemeier, *Inspiration and Authority: Nature and Function of Christian Scripture* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 28–36. I consider Achtemeier’s labeling of the inductive view as *liberal* and the deductive view as *conservative* misleading, but much in his descriptions remains useful. Quite unfortunately, Norris C. Grubbs and Curtis Scott Drumm, “What Does Theology Have to Do with the Bible? A Call for the Expansion of the Doctrine of Inspiration,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53.1 (2010) 65–79 describe this distinction as a divide between theologians (deductive) and biblical scholars (inductive).

⁴ David S. Dockery, *Christian Scripture: An Evangelical Perspective on Inspiration, Authority, and Interpretation* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 41; Frank E. Gaebelein, “The Unity of the Bible,” in Carl F. H. Henry, ed., *Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1958), 390–91; J. Theodore Mueller, “The Holy Spirit and the Scriptures,” in Henry, *Revelation and the Bible*, 273. Even Dewey M. Beegle, *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) begins a purportedly inductive study with 2 Tim 3:16. Ned B. Stonehouse, “Special Revelation as Scriptural,” in Henry, *Revelation and the Bible*, 76 says he will examine the Old Testament’s self-witness, then spends three pages discussing covenant and concludes by admitting that an Old Testament reference to the Old Testament as scripture is inconceivable.

⁵ Abraham, *Divine Inspiration*, 41; Achtemeier, *Inspiration and Authority*, 45–79; Beegle, *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility*, 176–194, 242–263; Everett F. Harrison, “The Phenomena of Scripture,” in Henry, *Revelation and the Bible*, 237–50; I. Howard Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 16–17; John Scullion, *The Theology of Inspiration*

Combining elements of both approaches can, I suggest, bear significant fruit. Following the inductivists, I begin with specific texts. Following the deductivists, I focus on biblical self-attestation. Weaving these strands together leads me to first treat texts that fairly explicitly reveal aspects of their own compositional process, then to correlate the results with the general statement *πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος* in 2 Tim 3:16. Inductive study will show that no single compositional process can apply to *πᾶσα γραφή*; various *γραφαί* attest to various processes. By linking inspiration to composition, deductivists derive premises that cohere poorly with the results of inductive study, and inductivists infer generalizations that cohere poorly with the sense of *πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος*. Decoupling inspiration from composition⁶—letting inductive study form our understanding of biblical composition and *πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος* our understanding of biblical inspiration—reveals that 2 Tim 3:16 refers to the scriptures as writings enlivened by God regardless of their literary histories.⁷

BIBLICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF BIBLICAL COMPOSITION

Although biblical writers do not systematically theorize about biblical composition, occasional explicit statements or incidental comments provide glimpses of some writers' views of their own activity. Additionally, some biblical texts narrate the creation of oral or written texts by other actors. Statements in these two categories provide the raw material for inductive study of biblical writers' self-

(Notre Dame: Fides, 1970), 29–30; Bruce Vawter, *Biblical Inspiration* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 3.

⁶ Structurally, this call resembles Abraham's call for a distinction between divine inspiration of scripture and divine authorship of scripture (*Divine Agency and Divine Action* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017], 40), but that is a separate distinction than the one I am suggesting.

⁷ I am aware that by using phrases like "2 Tim 3:16 refers" I personify scripture as a speaking agent. I do this purposefully, partially for word economy but more to anticipate the proposal about *θεόπνευστος* made in this chapter.

attestation. Instead of replicating the text-by-text procedure of inductive study in the presentation of these results, I will group the relevant texts into clusters reflecting seven distinct compositional dynamics.

Direct Divine Discourse

Exodus (e.g., 24:12) and Deuteronomy (e.g., 4:13) credit God with inscribing words on stone tablets readable by humans.⁸ Daniel 5:5, 24–25 mentions a spectral hand sent by God to write visible words on Belshazzar’s wall, but does not identify the hand as God’s own. Thus images of God personally writing a biblical text occur within Christian scripture, but very rarely.

Theoretically, under divine possession, a person could channel direct divine discourse. Old Testament passages may describe something like this when a divine spirit acts on (על, היה על, צלח על, or לבש) someone such that the person prophesies (usually התנבא). For example, Samuel prepares Saul to “be turned into another person” by an influx of divine spirit (וַיִּצְלַח עָלָיו רוּחַ יְהוָה וַנְהַפְּכֵתָ לְאִישׁ אֲחֵר) (1 Sam 10:6).⁹ Ecstatic (for lack of a better term) prophets apparently lost control of their own speech and actions. However, no quotations report what the Israelite elders (Num 11:25), Eldad and Medad (Num 11:26), Saul (1 Sam 10:10, etc.), or Saul’s messengers (1 Sam 19:20–21) said while prophesying ecstatically.

First Kings 22 comes closest to describing possession (with התנבא), when Imlah’s son Micaiah attributes the words of Chenaanah’s son Zedekiah (vv. 11–12) to a lying divine spirit (vv. 19–

⁸ The ambiguity of the tablets’ contents in Exodus, and the discrepancies between Exodus and Deuteronomy surrounding these tablets, do not affect the point. References to a cosmic onomasticon, God’s “scroll of life” (Ps 69:28; Rev 13:8; etc.), also depict God as an author, but of course humans cannot access any such text. Similarly, the scroll that Ezekiel ate in his inaugural vision (Ezek 3:1–3) might enjoy direct divine authorship, but if its contents appear in scripture, they do so through Ezekiel’s preaching, not transcription. To remain focused on “scripture’s self-attestation,” I forego for now questions about the ontological or historical accuracy of biblical statements. Such questions deserve careful attention, but elsewhere.

⁹ I provide my own translations of biblical quotations.

23).¹⁰ But Zedekiah remains aware of his own identity, distinguishing this experience from possession. Elsewhere (without התנבא) a divine spirit may act on (על, היה על, על, צלח על, לבש, or πληρώω) someone, moving them to speak.¹¹ None of these “turn into another person” and utter first-person divine speech as if possessed. Ezekiel (Ezek 11:5–12) and Zechariah (2 Chr 24:20) quote first-person divine speech after a messenger formula; neither seems mantically possessed. The divine spirit apparently infuses boldness to speak, as in Acts 4:31, rather than words to say. Thus these passages parallel those where a divine spirit acts on (על, צלח על, היה על, or לבש) someone, infusing them with boldness to act violently (e.g., Judg 3:10; 1 Sam 19:9).

In 2 Sam 23:2, David says “The Lord’s spirit speaks in me, / his word upon my tongue.” However, v. 3a introduces the subsequent divine speech (vv. 3b–4) as a quotation, not a new utterance. Verses 5–7 lack first-person divine speech. Thus v. 2 does not indicate possession. Ordinarily, to put words in someone’s mouth, God tells them what to say (Num 23:5, 16; Deut 18:18). Humans also do this to each other (Exod 4:15; 2 Sam 14:3, 19). Similarly, Mark 13:11 // Matt 10:20 seem to forecast channeling of divine words by Jesus’s disciples when tried by various authorities, but Luke’s Jesus speaks instead of the Holy Spirit teaching the accused what to say (Luke 12:11–12). Likewise, Luke narrates no possession or ecstasy when Paul defends himself before assorted tribunals (Acts 23–28).

¹⁰ Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Spirit and the Word: Prophecy and Tradition in Ancient Israel*, Fortress Classics in Biblical Studies (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 83 regards this as a genuine case of spirit possession.

¹¹ Examples include Balaam (Num 24:3–9), Amasai (1 Chr 12:18), Azariah (2 Chr 15:2–7), Jahaziel (2 Chr 20:15–17), Jehoiada’s son Zechariah (2 Chr 24:20), Ezekiel (Ezek 11:5–12), Zechariah (Luke 1:67–79), Peter (Acts 4:8–12), and Paul (Acts 13:9–11). Stephen actually delivers his long speech (Acts 7:2–53) before the narrator reports that he was filled (πληρώης) with the Holy Spirit. When that notice comes in Acts 7:55, the immediate result is that Stephen can see heavenly realities, not that he receives power to make a speech.

Thus direct divine discourse via possession plays minimal, if any, role in the Bible.¹² Apparent instances of ecstatic prophecy never quote those prophets channeling divine speech. Some passages use vocabulary potentially associated with possession, but other details in the immediate contexts show that the prophet has not “become another person” and is not possessed by a divine spirit. Moreover, no biblical text portrays anyone writing a text while possessed or prophesying ecstatically.¹³

Divine Dictation

In Exod 34, God apparently dictates words and Moses inscribes them on stone tablets.¹⁴ About eight other instances of divine dictation of a written text appear in the Old Testament, and a few in Revelation.¹⁵ Such texts range from two words (“for Maher-shalal-hash-

¹² On the “classical” prophets’ scorn for mantic possession, see Mowinckel, *The Spirit and the Word*, 85–87.

¹³ Cf. Pierre Benoit, *Aspects of Biblical Inspiration* (Chicago: Priory Press, 1965), 81; H. Wheeler Robinson, *Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946), 179–80.

¹⁴ For now, to stay on task, I bypass questions about what “divine speaking” might mean. See Bernard L. Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 59–60 for a series of speculations that illustrate the need for more rigorous distinctions, as called for by Abraham, *Divine Inspiration*, 60. For the view that everything the prophets described as visions and auditions were really inner experiences, see Mowinckel, *The Spirit and the Word*, 91. As with the first set of tablets, ambiguity in Exodus surrounding the second set’s contents and discrepancies between Exodus and Deuteronomy raise important questions that do not materially affect the point here.

¹⁵ Exod 17:14; 28:36; Num 5:19–23; 17:2–3; Isa 8:1; 30:6–8; Ezek 24:2; Hab 2:2; Rev 2–3; 14:13–19:9. Benoit, *Aspects of Biblical Inspiration*, 80 offers a similar list. The “song of Moses” (Deut 32:1–43) may or may not belong in this group: God tells Moses to “write” the song (כתב, Deut 31:19), but Deut 31:19–22 implies oral, not written, transmission. On the propriety of assigning some but not all biblical texts to composition by dictation, see Dockery, *Christian Scripture*, 51; John Goldingay, *Models for Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 229. Notably, Beegle, *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility*, 125 and Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God*, 55 come close to conflating dictation with mantic possession.

baz,” Isa 8:1) to just over 1,100 (Revelation’s seven letters, collectively, minus introductory formulae). Very few passages describe a rapid move from dictation to written text. All such texts appear within longer texts that do not reflect dictation. Consider Isaiah 8:1:

1a α The Lord told me,
 1a β –1b α “Take a large tablet and write on it with an ordinary
 stylus,
 1b β ‘for Maher-shalal-hash-baz.’”

The whole verse directs Isaiah to transcribe a divinely dictated text, but only v. 1b β contains that text. God does not tell Isaiah to write v. 1a β –1b α , and certainly not the introductory comment in v. 1a α , on Maher-shalal-hash-baz’s tablet.¹⁶

The foregoing observations focus on written texts generated by dictation. Some texts composed for oral delivery but subsequently written down carry the introductory phrase “thus says the Lord.”¹⁷ As previously seen, this messenger formula does not signal possession, but it may imply dictation.¹⁸ If so, the scrolls Jeremiah and Baruch produced (Jer 36) and similar written versions of prophetic

¹⁶ See Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration*, 19–20 for a similar point about Jeremiah, and more generally David Lyon Bartlett, *The Shape of Scriptural Authority* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 17; Goldingay, *Models for Scripture*, 235.

¹⁷ Jer 26:20–23 indicates that prophets like Shemaiah’s son Uriah, whose sermons no one apparently committed to writing, would also have used the messenger formula.

¹⁸ Dockery, *Christian Scripture*, 51; Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration*, 31–32; Alan M. Stibbs, “The Witness of Scripture to Its Inspiration,” in Henry, *Revelation and the Bible*, 112. Gerhard von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1968), 53 infers that the messenger speech form requires exact reproduction of the message as such, but that the prophets exercised freedom in framing the messenger speech and addressing it to appropriate audiences.

speeches might qualify as time-delayed dictation¹⁹—but the surrounding narratives would not, just as in the cases of Moses and Isaiah.²⁰ Whether the messenger formula actually indicates dictation, though, requires further scrutiny.

Divine Delegation

Isaiah 36–37 contains messenger speeches by an Assyrian “field commander” (CEB, NIV; 36:4–10 and 13–20), Hezekiah’s officials (37:3–4), and Isaiah (37:5–7). It seems comical to suppose that Assyria’s King Sennacherib comprehensively anticipated all possible Judean responses to his message, and outfitted his field commander with complex branching logic and precise quotations for use along each branch. More likely, Sennacherib gave a general order like “secure Hezekiah’s surrender” and authorized the field commander to speak with royal authority, expressed through impromptu speeches introduced by “thus says Sennacherib.” Skill at impromptu composition may even qualify the field commander for his job. Similarly, “thus says the Lord” need not indicate precise quotation of divine speech but a prophet’s own composition stamped with divine authority.²¹

Consider also 1 Sam 8. God tells Samuel to warn the Israelites about royal behavior, but no divine speech outlining royal behavior

¹⁹ Beegle, *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility*, 225–26 insists that God was not dictating to Jeremiah while Jeremiah was dictating to Baruch, but that knocks down a straw opponent. Any claim of divine dictation would attach to Jeremiah’s original receipt of the LORD’s word.

²⁰ The editing and updating process evident throughout the Latter Prophets removes us still further from dictation, but exploring that here would divert attention from self-attestation to the phenomena of scripture. On composite authorship and inspiration, see Beegle, *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility*, 202–03; Benoit, *Aspects of Biblical Inspiration*, 24; Goldingay, *Models for Scripture*, 207; Scullion, *The Theology of Inspiration*, 56–57.

²¹ Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 98–115, esp. 108–109. For application to discussions of inspiration, see Benoit, *Aspects of Biblical Inspiration*, 72; Robert Karl Gnuse, *The Authority of the Bible: Theories of Inspiration, Revelation, and the Canon of Scripture* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 15–16; Goldingay, *Models for Scripture*, 228–30. For the contrary view, see Stibbs, “The Witness of Scripture to Its Inspiration,” 112.

appears in the text. Apparently Samuel already knows how the king will behave. Verse 10 complicates matters by stating that Samuel spoke “all of the Lord’s words.” This might imply dictation. Yet Samuel foregoes the messenger formula (contrast 1 Sam 10:18; 15:2) and speaks of God in third person. Elsewhere, when Samuel proposes to tell Saul “the Lord’s word” (1 Sam 15:10), the words Samuel utters (vv. 16–19) do not replicate the quoted divine words (v. 11a), but expand upon them considerably. Neither case shows God dictating words for Samuel to repeat. Rather, God delegates a verbal task to Samuel, which Samuel carries out by crafting appropriate words.²²

Divine Disclosure

Experiences justly described as verbal revelations have taken center stage thus far. Dreams and visions can also include substantial nonverbal components. Consider the shining humanlike figure described in Rev 1:12–16. The letters to the seven churches could reflect dictation, but John’s description of the humanlike figure does not. That figure did not describe his own appearance to John verbally; rather, John perceived him visually (or in an analogous mental state) and “translated” his appearance into words, using similes more accessible to ordinary human experience. The same applies throughout Revelation. By describing his visions’ contents, including nonverbal elements, John follows the instructions given him in Rev 1:11.²³

²² Goldingay, *Models for Scripture*, 207 derives a similar point from prophetic books’ characteristic opening formulae. Dockery, *Christian Scripture*, 54 unfavorably describes something like delegation as “the dynamic view.”

²³ John’s narrative both follows and modifies apocalyptic literary conventions, and John’s actual experience may be “more a God-given, scripture-inspired meditation than a revelation that came by surprise fully-formed to John ... a literary process, yet also a visionary process,” according to Goldingay, *Models for Scripture*, 301. Cf. David Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary 52a (Nashville: Nelson, 1997), lxxvii–xc; Craig R. Koester, *Revelation*, Anchor Bible 38a (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 105–11, 132–134; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, New

To John, and his distant predecessor Ezekiel (compare Rev 1:12–16 with Ezek 1:26–28), God disclosed something. They then reported those disclosures in their own words, with (John, Rev 1:11, 19) or without (Ezekiel) a specific command to do so. Second Corinthians 12:1–4 refers to revelations the recipient could not repeat, but this does not imply that all such revelations carried similar restrictions. Likewise, Rev 1:11, 19 does imply that all such revelations came with an implicit command to report them. But John’s and Ezekiel’s reports do reveal their responsibility for crafting textual descriptions of the revelations they received.

Description of Divine Deeds

History itself may prove revelatory. Accordingly, large portions of scripture take historiographical form.²⁴ Luke’s gospel describes what Jesus did and taught (Acts 1:1) as fulfillments of God’s purposes (Luke 1:1)—not mere events, but revelatory events.²⁵ The Former Prophets typically describe both human and divine causes for major events.²⁶ For example, the Assyrian destruction of Samaria constitutes both an Assyrian response to Hoshea’s disloyalty to Shalmaneser (2 Kgs 17:1–6) and a divine response to Israel’s continual disloyalty to God (2 Kgs 17:7–18).

Luke provides brief but explicit reflection on his historiography. He drew information from other written accounts and oral traditions originating in eyewitness testimony (1:1–2). He carefully reviewed the data (v. 3) to ensure accuracy (v. 4). Luke claims no di-

International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 1–8; Mitchell Glenn Reddish, *Revelation*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2001), 3–7.

²⁴ Fair, “Disciplines Related to Biblical Interpretation,” 47; cf. Bartlett, *The Shape of Scriptural Authority*, 43; Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God*, 71.

²⁵ For convenience, I follow tradition in calling this author “Luke,” without denying the complexities of precise identification, for which see Frank Dicken, “The Author and Date of Luke-Acts: Exploring the Options,” in Sean A. Adams and Michael W. Pahl, eds., *Issues in Luke-Acts: Selected Essays* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2012), 7–26.

²⁶ Goldingay, *Models for Scripture*, 248–51.

vine source of facts about Jesus (except, secondhand, Jesus himself), nor divine guidance in assessing his data's reliability. Luke ordinarily narrates the Holy Spirit's activity quite openly,²⁷ drawing attention to the Holy Spirit's absence from his methodological preface in Luke 1:1–4.²⁸

Both Old and New Testament writers described divine activity, drawing on information available in principle (though not necessarily in practice) to any of their contemporaries.²⁹ In contrast, private revelations could prompt prophets' messages. But biblical historians did not lack theological controls on their judgments.³⁰ The Former Prophets correlate their theological inferences with the teachings of the eighth- and seventh-century prophets and the "teaching scroll" associated with King Josiah, likely some version of Deuteronomy. The gospels correlate their theological inferences with Jesus's own teachings and further interpretations of existing scriptures, especially the prophets and Psalms. Their authors overtly identify such guides. Nevertheless, divine input into the content and wording of such works remains indirect.³¹

Discernment of Divine Will

First Corinthians 7 reflects Paul's attempts to discern God's will, largely without specific, on-point divine revelation. He responds to questions from his correspondents (v. 1), not to a divine prompting to write on these topics. Paul attributes the advice in 1 Cor 7:10–11 to the Lord, apparently referring to public tradition about Jesus's teach-

²⁷ E.g., Luke 1:67; 2:25–27; 3:22; 4:1, and over a dozen instances in Acts.

²⁸ Cf. Beegle, *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility*, 201; Goldingay, *Models for Scripture*, 25; Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration*, 32.

²⁹ Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God*, 98.

³⁰ Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God*, 97.

³¹ This account of description addresses, I think, Abraham's chief objection to the *heils geschichtlich* approach (Abraham, *Divine Inspiration*, 78–87) without positing divine speech where none is attested (or even the absence of such is attested) in scripture. Cf. Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration*, 14, 35.

ings (cf. Mark 10:2–12 // Matt 19:3–12) rather than a private revelation. But Paul attributes the advice in vv. 12–16, 25–31 to himself, not Jesus. In the latter case, he explicitly disclaims knowledge of any divine command. Paul considers his advice trustworthy (v. 25; cf. Rom 15:15; Gal 1:20), but openly tags it as his own discernment rather than divine revelation.³²

The book of Ecclesiastes rather plainly presents itself as a book-length exercise in discernment. Qohelet set out to apply wisdom to earthly activities (Eccl 1:13), to investigate wisdom, madness, and folly (1:17). His inquiry was quasi-experimental (2:1), and his repeated use of “I saw,” especially when paired with “under the sun,” suggests the results of normal human observation, not any sort of divinely-granted visionary experience. Indeed, Qohelet seems skeptical of allegedly revelatory dreams (5:3, 7), and goes so far as to suggest that God has actually obscured human perception (7:13b; cf. 3:11). To attribute dictation, delegation, or disclosure to Qohelet would contradict the entire tenor of the work.³³ Similarly, the anonymous compiler of the “words of the wise” (Prov 22:17–24:22) clearly has a theological orientation (22:19) but does not claim any sort of divine revelation, instead taking personal responsibility for the sayings (22:17–21, esp. v. 20). Curiously, Agur’s “oracle” that begins in Prov 30:1 speaks to God, not for God, and King Lemuel’s “oracle” (Prov 31:2–9, per-

³² Cf. Abraham, *Divine Agency*, 25; Goldingay, *Models for Scripture*, 4. To follow Scullion, *The Theology of Inspiration*, 58, one would have to deny that Paul was “scripturally inspired” when he wrote 1 Cor 7.

³³ Multiple voices seem to speak in the book of Ecclesiastes, though delineating them precisely presents a significant challenge. T. Anthony Perry, *Dialogues with Qohelet: The Book of Ecclesiastes: Translation and Commentary* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993) assigns all of the verses cited here to Qohelet (K) except for Eccl 3:11, which Perry attributes to the Presenter (P), who speaks of Qohelet in third person (1:1, 2b; 12:9–10; etc.). David Penchansky, *Understanding Wisdom Literature: Conflict and Dissonance in the Hebrew Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012) hears three voices in the book. He would assign 1:13, 17; and 2:1 to “Pessimistic Qoheleth” and 5:7 to “Fear God Qoheleth,” but he does not specifically mention the other verses cited here.

haps extending to v. 31) is explicitly attributed to his mother, not to God.

Devotion to the Divine

In biblical prayers and hymns, humans address God. The poems collected in the Psalter and embedded in narratives almost always refer to God in second or third person, with only a few quotations of first-person divine speech.³⁴

These prayers and hymns arise from human devotion to God.³⁵ Some describe God's deeds or discern God's will, but in many cases this takes a back seat to appealing for help or arousing positive emotions in one's fellow worshipers. The poets express themselves to God in first-person human speech that reflects their theological commitments.

Psalms prompted by the poet's devotion may resemble texts produced by discernment, but turned inward. The personal content and emotional tone of many psalms easily tempts readers to think of the psalm's text as emerging directly out of a psalmist's joyful or distressing experience. Careful attention, though, reveals many psalms as reflective rather than immediate responses to experience.³⁶ For example, Ps 18 does not constitute the words by which the psalmist cried out for help during distress (v. 6), but a retrospective consideration of the whole experience. Psalms 39 and 73 make this reflective compositional process more explicit. Psalm 39 reveals four compositional stages: a commitment to silence (v. 1), experiences that led to speech (vv. 2–3),

³⁴ Psalms 50:5, 7–23; 82:2–4; and perhaps 2 Sam 23:3b–4. Psalms references follow English Bibles, typically one verse “lower” than corresponding verses in Hebrew Bibles for psalms with superscriptions.

³⁵ Cf. Scullion, *The Theology of Inspiration*, 55.

³⁶ Refined poetic artistry also suggests this in principle, but this lies in the realm of “phenomena,” not “self-attestation.” Additionally, some ancient Israelites could surely compose poems impromptu as well as today's freestyle rappers—not to mention Sennacherib's field commander—although written versions of the psalms would still stand at least one degree of separation from such hypothetical freestyle oral compositions.

the resulting speech (the psalm within a psalm in vv. 4–11), and finally the report of all this (Psalm 39 itself). Psalm 73 reflects on a moral quandary resolved by visiting the sanctuary. The psalmist's sanctuary experience goes unnarrated, but it changed the psalmist's perspective and prompted the psalm's composition. Neither psalm reflects divine dictation of words or delegation of a communicative task. Psalm 73:17 could conceivably hint at a revelatory disclosure, like an oracular pronouncement, but nothing in the psalm strongly points this direction. A funerary rite (as in 2 Chr 16:14) seems equally plausible, given the focus on mortality (Ps 73:17b–20).

Hymns of praise exhibit similar reflective or meditative origins. Psalm 8 arose in part from the psalmist's contemplation of nature (v. 3); Psalm 119 from the psalmist's contemplation of Torah (v. 7 and too many others to list). In Pss 42–43, the psalmist writes with longing for a return to the temple, recalling prior worship experiences there (42:4). Psalm 122 emerges from an upswelling of affection for Jerusalem; Psalm 45 from a conviction that God has blessed Israel's king. In these cases, where compositional activity is mentioned briefly or indirectly, the character of hymns and laments as human expressions of devotion to God emerges plainly.

Summary

Based on biblical statements explicitly describing or rather transparently revealing the compositional processes that produced texts now found in the Bible—that is, based on biblical writers' attestations about their own and others' writing processes—the foregoing analysis has identified seven distinct dynamics resulting in the composition of such texts:

1. *Direct divine discourse*: God personally writes a text.
2. *Divine dictation*: God tells someone to repeat or record specific words.
3. *Divine delegation*: God assigns someone a verbal task without specifying the exact words they should use to complete it.
4. *Divine disclosure*: God reveals something to someone, and they report it in their own words.
5. *Description of divine deeds*: someone interprets historical events, large or small, as divine activity.

6. *Discernment of divine will*: someone seeks God's will, absent specific on-point divine statements.
7. *Devotion to the divine*: someone expresses their own thoughts and feelings to or about God.³⁷

More than one dynamic may undergird any given text, especially at the level of entire books. Some of these dynamics overlap with each other. Nevertheless, each has distinctive characteristics, and elucidating the full range of biblical authors' attestations about the composition of oral and written texts now found in the Bible requires space for them all.

COMPOSITION AND INSPIRATION

To call the compositional dynamics listed above "types of inspiration" would cohere well with ordinary modern use of English *inspire*.³⁸ This however would not guarantee coherence with the rare Greek adjective *θεόπνευστος* in 2 Tim 3:16, a verse widely regarded as the most direct biblical statement on inspiration.³⁹ In English, *inspire* and its cognates point to motivations and sources ("you inspired me

³⁷ This list resembles the "models for scripture" elucidated by Goldingay, *Models for Scripture* and agrees with Vawter's opposition to a "monolithic concept of inspiration" (*Biblical Inspiration*, 162). I submit that my list more directly reflects the biblical writers' understandings of their own activity than do inferences from "the phenomena of scripture."

³⁸ In this respect my list of compositional dynamics coheres well with Abraham's analogy of numerous ways in which a teacher may inspire a student (Abraham, *Divine Inspiration*, 63–64). Readers who continue to link *θεόπνευστος* with composition after reading the second part of the chapter would do better to think of my list of compositional dynamics as a "spectrum of inspiration" than to shut down inquiry by declaring the "how" of inspiration a mystery, as do Dockery, *Christian Scripture*, 55; Roger Nicole, "New Testament Use of the Old Testament," in Henry, *Revelation and the Bible*, 147; Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God*, 176, 179–180; and Stibbs, "The Witness of Scripture to Its Inspiration," III.

³⁹ Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration* criticizes Abraham, *Divine Inspiration* on this point.

to believe in myself,” “the atrocities inspired me to protest,” “a true story inspired this film”). Philological and exegetical considerations, however, point to a different sense for θεόπνευστος in 2 Tim 3:16: a text becomes θεόπνευστος after its composition, not by virtue of the compositional process. Many readers will find this statement surprising, even counter-intuitive, so it requires detailed justification.

The Sense of θεόπνευστος

Θεόπνευστος obviously prefixes θέος to a verbal adjective form of πνέω in -τος.⁴⁰ *God-breathed* and similar translations follow the Greek terminology closely.⁴¹ The more common *inspired by God* and

⁴⁰ Friedrich Blass, Albert Debrunner, and Robert Walter Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), §§112, 115, 117. As applied to θεόπνευστος, recent discussion tends to rely on Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948), 280–83. Θεοδίδακτος (1 Thess 4:9) provides the closest NT parallel. The syntax of 2 Tim 3:16 raises other questions that do not materially affect the argument presented in this chapter, but two deserve brief comment. (1) I concur with those commentators who assert that whether we πᾶσα γραφή as inclusive (“all scripture”) or distributive (“every [passage of] scripture”) does not really matter much; so Hulitt Gloer and Perry Leon Stepp, *Reading Paul’s Letters to Individuals: A Literary and Theological Commentary on Paul’s Letters to Philemon, Titus, and Timothy* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2008), 206; George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 445; I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 792; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary 46 (Nashville: Nelson, 2000), 566–68. (2) Whether θεόπνευστος stands as an attributive adjective (“all/every inspired scripture”) or a predicate adjective (“all/every scripture is inspired”) has little effect on the semantics of θεόπνευστος. I myself tend to think of everything from θεόπνευστος down to the end of v. 16 as one complex adjective phrase attributively modifying πᾶσα γραφή, with πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος ... δικαιοσύνη not forming a separate sentence, but standing apposite to τὰ δυνάμενά ... ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

⁴¹ For *God-breathed* or similar wording see e.g., ESV, ISV, MSG, NIV, and WEB. For *inspired by God* or similar wording see, e.g., CEB, CSB, GW,

similar translations follow the Vulgate's *divinitus inspirata*.⁴² For some, the choice between these translations equates to a choice between understanding θεόπνευστος as “breathed out by God” (*God-breathed*) or “breathed into by God” (*inspired*).⁴³ Depending on the relative dating of various texts, the author of 2 Timothy may have invented the word.⁴⁴ Discerning the word's intended sense requires a careful consideration of the way πνέω and its cognates function in related literature, a question that typically receives scant attention.⁴⁵

The Septuagint and New Testament use πνέω, ἐμπνέω, and ἐκπνέω infrequently, but enough to suggest some generalizations. In these collections, prefixless πνέω always refers to wind blowing. Blowing wind might initially seem analogous to exhalation, thus supporting the *breathed out* interpretation of θεόπνευστος, but the biblical usage does not attest such specificity. In English, *breathing out* can serve as a metonym for speech, but no Septuagint or New Testament instance of πνέω does so clearly. Only 2 Macc 9:7 (Antiochus was “breathing fire in his rage”) comes close. For *breathe out*, one might expect ἐκπνέω (Vulg. *exspiro*), but New Testament writers use ἐκπνέω for *expire* (that is, *die*), and only for Jesus at his crucifixion. Compare ἐκψύχω (also

GNT, LEB, MEV, NASB, NCV, NET, NLT, and NRSV (and its predecessors in the KJV family).

⁴² With respect to older Latin translations, Tertullian, *Cult. fem.* 1.3 (Patrologia Latina 1:1308a) reads *omnem Scripturam ædificationi habilem divinitus inspirari*. Rufinus, *Symb.* 36 reads *omnis scriptura divinitus inspirata utilis est ad docendum* (Patrologia Latina 21:373b).

⁴³ Examples include Donald G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 121; Dockery, *Christian Scripture*, 41; Goldingay, *Models for Scripture*, 201, 216; J. I. Packer, “Contemporary Views of Revelation,” in Henry, *Revelation and the Bible*, 96; Scullion, *The Theology of Inspiration*, 15; Stibbs, “The Witness of Scripture to Its Inspiration,” 109.

⁴⁴ Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 794; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 565.

⁴⁵ A thorough discussion appears in Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 245–96. More recent writers seem content to cite Warfield.

Vulg. *exspiro*), which describes the deaths of Ananias (Acts 5:5), Saphira (Acts 5:10), and Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:1).

As for ἐμπνέω, nine of its ten Septuagintal instances take the form πᾶν ἐμπνέον, translating שָׁנָה-לֵבָב or מָה־שָׁנָה-לֵבָב, denoting ordinary respiration.⁴⁶ In these cases, the Vulgate usually does not use a breath-related word at all, but rather a phrase like *omnes habitatores* (Josh 10:28) or *cunctis hominibus* (Josh 11:14). Wisdom of Solomon 15:11, where ἐμπνέω stands parallel to ἐμφυσάω, offers a key insight. This verse concerns the infusion of life (ψυχὴν ἐνεργοῦσαν // πνεῦμα ζωτικόν) into human beings.⁴⁷ Strikingly, Sib. Or. 5:406 and Vettius Valens, *Anthologies*, 11.1 use θεόπνευστος to denote the same phenomenon. In Latin, Wis 15:11 uses *inspiro* // *insufflo* (cf. 2 Esd 3:5) for ἐμπνέω // ἐμφυσάω. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, ἐμφυσάω aligns with *inspiro* in Gen 2:7 when God breathes life into a lifeless sculpture of a human, and with *insufflo* in Ezek 37:9 when the wind (הַיָּר, πνεῦμα) becomes life-breath in reassembled corpses. (Though not used in the Septuagint or New Testament, ἀπνευστος means “unbreathing,” that is, “dead” in other ancient Greek texts.) The Hebrew texts read בָּ-נִפְחָה in both cases. In the New Testament, ἐμφυσάω aligns with *inspiro* in John 20:22, when Jesus imparts the Holy Spirit to his disciples. Reading θεόπνευστος as *breathed into by God* coheres well with these patterns, summarized in table 1.

⁴⁶ Deut 20:16; Josh 10:28, 30, 35, 37, 39, 40; 11:11, 14.

⁴⁷ Heinrich Ewald, *Jahrbücher der biblischen Wissenschaft* 7 (Göttingen: Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1855), 89 suggested that the sense “breathed into by God” would require a form like θεῆμπνευστος, but no such word exists. Θεέκπνευστος is equally imaginary. Neither appears in any literature reflected in the Liddell-Scott or Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich lexicons, or in any of the literature searchable via the Perseus Digital Library or Thesaurus Linguae Graecae websites. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 278 n. 61 objects that ἐμπνέω should mean “inhale,” but clearly the author of Wisdom thought otherwise. Warfield thinks that *breathed into* should require εἰσπνέω, but θεεἰσπνευστος does not seem to exist either. Without the combined θεός, both εἰσπνέω and ἐμπνέω carry the sense *breathed into* in classical Greek literature, as Warfield himself notes. Patristic writers favor ἐμπνέω for this sense.

	<i>spiro</i>	<i>exspiro</i>	<i>inspiro</i>	<i>flo</i>	<i>exsufflo</i>	<i>insufflo</i>	πνέω	ἐμπνέω	ἐκπνέω	ἐκφυσάω	ἐκφυσάω
נפח			Gen 2:7			Gen 2:7; Ezek 37:9					ἐκφυσάω Gen 2:7; Ezek 37:9
נפש											
נשם	Ps 147:18			Ps 147:18*			Ps 147:18				
נשמה	Josh 10:40						1 Kgs 15:29				
נשף	Isa 40:24						Isa 40:24				
πνέω	Ps 147:18; 2 Macc 9:7			Ps 147:18*							
ἐκπνέω		Mk 15:37, 39; Luke 23:46									
ἐμπνέω	Josh 10:40		Wis 15:11; Acts 9:1								
Φυσάω	Wis 11:18 [19]										
ἐκφυσάω					Sir 43:4						
ἐκφυσάω			Gen 2:7; Wis 15:11			Gen 2:7; Ezek 37:9; John 20:22					

Table 1. Biblical Breathing Vocabulary: References indicate where the word in the row header appears in translation as the word in the column header. Asterisks (*) indicate Old Latin readings that differ from the Vulgate.

Beyond πνέω, Ps 27:12bβ and Prov 14:5b may use breathing (out) as a metonym for speaking, but the similar spellings and meanings of four Hebrew words confound this evidence. יפה, נפח, and פוח I all denote breathing or blowing, while פוח II denotes testifying. Some versions translate ויפח in Ps 27:12bβ and ויפִיחַ in Prov 14:5 with some version of *breathe*, suggesting that the translators perceive here forms of יפה, נפח, or פוח I.⁴⁸ Others use a different term for speaking, which could result from reading יפה, נפח, or פוח I and “decoding” the metonymy, or from reading ויפִיחַ as a form of פוח II. The Septuagint and Vulgate support פוח II for both instances; neither uses a word for breathing in either line.⁴⁹ Therefore, while Ps 27:12bβ and Prov 14:5b might possibly attest the metaphor of breathing as speaking, they provide no support for reading θεόπνευστος as *breathed out by God*.

Likewise, Acts 9:1 might use breathing as a metonym for speaking. Some English translations suggest such by translating ἐμπνέω as breathing out, against etymology and more importantly the pattern of Septuagint usage. The Vulgate’s potentially surprising translation of ἐμπνέω as *inspiro* in Acts 9:1, as in Wis 15:11, shows how closely early Christians came to associate those words. Whereas modern English Bibles have Saul issuing death threats, the Vulgate has Saul inspiring death threats. Since the ἐμπνέω // ἐμφυσάω — *inspiro* // *insufflo* axis otherwise centers on the infusion of life-breath into an unliving human body (Adam’s, or those of the corpses in Ezekiel’s vision), perhaps the Latin translator took Paul to be “animating” death threats against the Christians by putting them into operation. Or perhaps the translator simply rendered ἐμπνέω woodenly here, its only appearance in the New Testament. It seems imprudent to rest the interpretation of θεόπνευστος on the possible but not demonstrated use of ἐμπνέω as a metonym for speech in Acts 9:1.

Turning to nouns, breath as a metonym for speech appears in the parallelistic word pair breath // word (usually רוּחַ // דְּבַר = πνεῦμα // λόγος) in Ps 33:6; 147:18; and Isa 59:21. Compare Prov 1:23;

⁴⁸ Translations using some form of *breathe* in Ps 27:12 include ASV, CEB, [H]CSB, *ESV*, ISV, KJV, *LEB*, NASB, *NLT*, [N]RSV, WEB; those shown in italics also do so in Prov 14:5.

⁴⁹ Similarly, NJPS uses *testify* in both verses.

Job 15:13; 2 Sam 23:2 (the latter with מלה rather than דבר), but in these latter instances breath may not fit רוח as well as spirit. One could argue from Ps 33:6 for θεόπνευστος as breathed out by God in the sense of created by God,⁵⁰ but it would be hard to delineate a creative sense here apart from the metonymic sense of speaking, reflecting the same creative process as Gen 1, as Ps 33:9 makes clear (cf. 147:15). These verses provide some oblique support for θεόπνευστος as metonymic for spoken by God, but not really for a sense of created by God apart from speaking. Job 33:4 on the other hand, uses the same word pair for the infusion of life into a person (cf. Eccl 11:5; Job 32:8). Thus, this word pair cannot tilt the scales decisively toward either breathed out by God through creative speech or breathed into by God and thus given life.

In sum, the Tanak-Septuagint-Vulgate alignment of נפח ב-εμπνέω // έμφυσάω, and inspiro // insufflo supports an understanding of θεόπνευστος as breathed into by God rather than breathed out by God. Passages that, at first glance (especially in English) seem to use forms of the verb breathed out as a metonym for speech do not clearly do so on closer inspection, although some passages do use the nouns breath and word in parallel. Overall, the interpretation breathed into by God garners more support from patterns of word usage elsewhere in scripture.

The Locus of θεόπνευστος

Some interpreters agree that θεόπνευστος means *breathed into by God*, but transfer θεόπνευστος metonymically from πᾶσα γραφή to biblical authors.⁵¹ Allegedly, this aligns the sense of θεόπνευστος in 2 Tim 3:16 with five other early uses of the term. Pseudo-Plutarch,

⁵⁰ As does Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 284–96.

⁵¹ Goldingay, *Models for Scripture*, 216 (Goldingay's emphasis); cf. Gnuse, *Authority*, 14. William J. Abraham, "Inspiration, Revelation and Divine Action: A Study in Modern Methodist Theology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 19 (1984): 43 quotes a similar view from L. Harold DeWolf, *A Theology of the Living Church* (New York: Harper, 1953), 76.

Plac. philos. 904F⁵² applies θεόπνευστος to dreams, possibly but not clearly intending revelatory dreams.⁵³ Sibylline Oracles 5:308 may have mantic possession somewhere in the background, but literally describes streams of water, likely meant literally, as θεόπνευστος.⁵⁴ Pseudo-Phocylides applies θεόπνευστος to σοφία, possibly identified with Torah (if the line is genuinely Jewish and not a later Christian interpolation; cf. Sir 6:37; 19:20; 34:8).⁵⁵ In the two remaining cases (Sib. Or. 5:406; Vett. Val. 11.1), θεόπνευστος describes the infusion of human beings generally with divinely-given life. No early use of θεόπνευστος, then, clearly implies that a θεόπνευστος person would be moved by God to speak or write. Rather, a θεόπνευστος person has been brought to life, while a θεόπνευστος thing may be revelatory, though this sense is tenuous in the available examples.

If one nevertheless transfers θεόπνευστος from writings to people, this would not necessarily imply mantic possession. As shown earlier, biblical writers rarely describe mantic possession, even more rarely report texts uttered in that state, and never describe such possession directly producing written texts. Some scholars therefore elucidate θεόπνευστος, applied to people, as “concurrent” inspiration. Under concurrent inspiration, “the prophet or apostle speaks or writes without any consciousness of a divine afflatus. Yet the Holy Spirit moves along with the speaking and writing in such a manner that the thing spoken or written is also the word of God.”⁵⁶ Despite

⁵² Commonly cited as Plutarch, *Mor.* 904F.

⁵³ Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 264–65.

⁵⁴ Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 265–66 argues that θεόπνευστος in *Sib. Or.* 5:308 means simply “God-given” and has nothing to do with mantic oracles.

⁵⁵ Pieter Willem van der Horst, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*, *Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha* 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 201–02.

⁵⁶ Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God*, 59–60. Ramm particularly associates this sort of inspiration with the gospels, Acts, and epistles. Cf. Beegle, *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility*, 125; Benoit, *Aspects of Biblical Inspiration*, 73; Dockery, *Christian Scripture*, 55; R. A. Finlayson, “Contemporary Ideas of Inspiration,” in Henry, *Revelation and the Bible*, 223; Goldingay, *Models for Scripture*, 231–233, 251, 260; Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration*, 40–47; Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God*, 59;

the popularity of this model,⁵⁷ grounding it in scripture proves quite difficult. By definition, concursive inspiration would go undetected by its recipient; therefore, no writer could “self-attest” to it. Consequently, inductive study could not identify concursive inspiration. But neither does any biblical writer straightforwardly claim that other biblical writers really wrote God’s words, without knowing it, when they thought they were writing their own.

Interpreters sometimes invoke 2 Pet 1:20–21 to validate concursive inspiration, but this passage does not assert that prophets were unaware of the Holy Spirit’s activity when it moved them to prophecy.⁵⁸ First Peter 1:10–12, indeed, presupposes such a consciousness of divine activity when it asserts that at least some prophets inquired about the significance of their prophecies.⁵⁹ Additionally, 2 Pet 1:20–21 focuses on prophecy, and nothing in the context warrants a broader application to nonprophetic materials.⁶⁰

One could argue, obliquely, that New Testament writers testify to the concursive inspiration of Old Testament writers when they introduce scriptural quotations with phrases like “the Holy Spirit says.” In most such cases, the quotation consists of material already presented as divine speech in its original literary context. Quotations

Miikka Ruokanen, *Doctrina divinitus inspirata: Martin Luther’s Position in the Ecumenical Problem of Biblical Inspiration*, Publications of Luther-Agricola-Society 14 (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola Society, 1985), 20–22; Scullion, *The Theology of Inspiration*, 9. References to divine “superintendence” of scriptural composition comes close to concursive inspiration; for this, see Bloesch, *Holy Scripture*, 119.

⁵⁷ Abraham, *Divine Inspiration*, 5 calls concursive inspiration “the foundation for the doctrine of Scripture for many Evangelicals in the recent past.”

⁵⁸ Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration*, 25.

⁵⁹ 2 Peter appears not to have been written by the same person as 1 Peter, but 2 Peter 3:1 shows that its author and audience were aware of 1 Peter. See Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary 50 (Nashville: Nelson, 1983), 158–62; Lewis R. Donelson, *I and II Peter and Jude* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 208–209, 265–266; Jerome H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 134–135, 229.

⁶⁰ Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration*, 25.

presented as human speech in the Old Testament but as divine speech in the New Testament seem quite rare,⁶¹ limited chiefly to the chain of quotations in Hebrews 1:5–12, which alternate between first-person and third-person divine references. But the author of Hebrews quotes them because their content fits the argument, regardless of grammatical form. The author does not, in so doing, claim that God originally spoke the quoted words when they were first devised. Rather, the author shows God taking them up for a special purpose. The writer makes a similar transference in Heb 13:6, but there it is between two different (groups of) human speakers. The sequence in vv. 5–13 does not, therefore, require that the original words of the quotations in vv. 6–12 resulted from concursive inspiration.⁶² Still less does this one passage imply that all biblical historians, evangelists, and epistolographers unknowingly wrote under the influence of concursive inspiration.

In brief, the concursive inspiration model does not arise naturally from biblical texts themselves, but from a felt need to construe scripture “both entirely as words written by human agents and words written by God.”⁶³ Without that predetermined goal, the few texts frequently marshaled in favor of concursive inspiration do not really put forward such a model. The concursive inspiration model actually resists and even, on its face, contradicts what several biblical writers say about their own writing activity, as surveyed in the first

⁶¹ Despite the claims of Dockery, *Christian Scripture*, 39; Nicole, “New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” 139; Stibbs, “The Witness of Scripture to Its Inspiration,” 115; Stonehouse, “Special Revelation as Scriptural,” 78.

⁶² The case of Heb 1:6 is rather complicated, in ways that do not affect the argument developed here. In brief, Heb 1:6 relies on some version of Deut 32:34. Both the Masoretic Text and 4Q44 seem deficient here. The MT simply reads עמו גויים הרנינו. 4Q44 reads והשתחו לו / עמו הרנינו שמים עמו. The Septuagint reads εὐφράνθητε, οὐρανοί, ἅμα αὐτῷ, / καὶ προσκυνσάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες υἱοὶ θεοῦ // εὐφράνθητε, ἔθνη, μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ, / καὶ ἐνισχυσάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ. Heb 1:6 quotes καὶ προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ, a portmanteau of LXX Deut 32:43aβ and 43bβ.

⁶³ Abraham, *Divine Agency*, 38.

part of this chapter.⁶⁴ It also rewrites and thereby obscures the sense of 2 Tim 3:16 by transferring *θεόπνευστος* from *πᾶσα γραφή* to the human authors thereof.

CONCLUSION

Modern Christians have often read *πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος* in 2 Tim 3:16 as a claim about the origins of scripture. Since the biblical writers themselves testify that no single account of textual origins can apply to *all* scripture, interpreters have struggled to articulate an understanding of *θεόπνευστος*-as-origin that can cohere with biblical writers' self-attestations about their writing activity. When the writers' testimony depicts God as an agent of communication—as when God directly writes or dictates a text, delegates a verbal task, or discloses information in an audio-visual form—few problems arise, mostly as matters of nuance. But when the writers' testimony depicts God as a topic of communication—as when people write to describe God's deeds, discern God's will absent specific on-point revelation, and express their devotion to God—tensions arise between the local evidence for varied compositional processes and the global claim of *θεόπνευστος*-as-origin.

However, the semantic alignment of *-בּ פּנּוּ*, *ἐμπνέω* // *ἐμφυσάω*, and *inspiro* // *insufflo* as used in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin scriptures supports an understanding of *θεόπνευστος* as breathed into by God. Since the infusion of God's breath brings life (and its withdrawal brings death) in biblical metaphor,⁶⁵ breathed into by God means enlivened by God. This understanding dissolves

⁶⁴ Abraham, *Divine Agency*, 38–40 has also shown that recourse to a concursive inspiration model “ignore[s] the flexibility of the early tradition on exactly what divine action predicates to deploy” to describe inspiration.

⁶⁵ Genesis 2:7; Ezek 37:9; Wis 15:11; and 2 Esdr 3:5 have already received attention. For God's enlivening breath elsewhere, see Job 33:4; Isa 42:5; 2 Macc 7:23; 2 Esdr 16:61; Acts 17:25; Rev 11:11. For the withdrawal of God's breath causing death, see Job 34:14; Ps 104:29; Eccl 12:7. God's breath can also destroy (Job 4:9; Isa 11:4; 40:7; Wis 11:20) or enlighten (Job 32:8).

the tension between the global claim of θεόπνευστος-as-origin and local compositional self-attestation, because texts become θεόπνευστος after their composition, not by virtue of their compositional processes.⁶⁶

Discussing these matters with precision requires an adjustment in English terminology. The path of least resistance is to replace inspired with a different English term to translate θεόπνευστος. Modern English speakers normally do not use inspire to mean infuse with life, but rather something more like motivate. The Oxford English Dictionary flags the senses blow upon or into and breathe (life, a soul, etc.) in or into as obsolete. Resuscitating this obsolete sense of inspire seems unwise, since much value remains in speaking about the inspiration of biblical writers in the modern sense of the word inspiration.⁶⁷ The analogy of a teacher inspiring a student, for example, remains a powerful way of conceiving some of the relationship dynamics that may obtain between God and biblical writers as those writers crafted their books.⁶⁸ But this does not seem to be what 2 Tim 3:16 means by θεόπνευστος. I suggest, therefore, that we translate θεόπνευστος as enlivened by God or more compactly God-enlivened.

Readers of the New Testament should find the notion of God-enlivened texts somewhat familiar. Jesus characterizes his testimony (consisting of oral texts) about himself as “spirit and life,” commenting that “the spirit gives life” (John 6:63). Hebrews 4:12 characterizes God’s word—not the canonical scriptures, but textual neverthe-

⁶⁶ Space does not permit discussion here of additional important considerations, such as the implications of this understanding of θεόπνευστος for constructs like “inerrancy,” and the relationship between a text’s God-enlivened character and its canonical status.

⁶⁷ Not to mention that phrases like “inspired by a true story” are deeply ingrained into modern media culture.

⁶⁸ For the analogy, see Abraham, *Divine Inspiration*, 63–65. My argument demurs only from the equation of θεόπνευστος with modern usage of *inspired* (pp. 62–63)—not from the validity of Abraham’s observations as such. It remains proper to think of the scriptures as inspired in Abraham’s sense, but to dissociate that thought from 2 Tim 3:16.

less—as “living and active.”⁶⁹ And, of course, 2 Cor 3:6 famously avers that “the *γράμμα* kills but the *πνεῦμα* gives life.” This last statement makes 2 Tim 3:14–17 all the more striking, since *πᾶσα γραφή* in 2 Tim 3:16 seems to refer to the same body of texts as *ἱερὰ γράμματα* in 3:15. New Testament introductions of scriptural quotations that personify scripture—e.g., “scripture says to Pharaoh” (Rom 9:17)—may reflect this conception (or perhaps they simply follow convention). Being *θεόπνευστος* makes scripture a “living text” in contrast to a “dead letter.” A “living text” has the capacity to shape its readers’ thoughts and actions, even well beyond its original compositional context.⁷⁰ Second Timothy 3:14–17 focuses on scripture’s functional effectiveness;⁷¹ the *ἱερὰ γράμματα* “can make [one] wise for salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus,” and *πᾶσα γραφή* is “useful for teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, so that God’s person may be fully equipped for every good work” (cf. Heb 4:12–13). These effects constitute the end to-

⁶⁹ Compare Heb 11:3; 13:7. Commentators vary in specifying more precisely what the author labeled “the word of God.” Most of the various suggestions point to an oral or written text; so Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 260; Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews*, Anchor Bible 36 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 280; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, Word Biblical Commentary 47A (Nashville: Nelson, 1991), 102; Alan C. Mitchell, *Hebrews*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 99; but contrast Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 133. The author of Hebrews does not follow the gospel of John in using the phrase “Word of God” as an epithet for Jesus; so Attridge, *Hebrews*, 134; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 261.

⁷⁰ So, in relation to Hebrews 4:12, Attridge, *Hebrews*, 135; Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 112; Koester, *Hebrews*, 280; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 103.

⁷¹ Achtemeier, *Inspiration and Authority*, 93; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, Anchor Bible 35A (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 424; Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 795.

ward which all scripture has been God-enlivened, regardless of the compositional origins of any particular scripture.

THE NARRATIVE OF THE JUDGMENT ON JESUS IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL IN THE CONTEXT OF THE POLEMICS WITH JEWISH MYSTICAL AND APOCALYPTIC TRADITIONS

TOMAS GARCIA HUIDOBRO, S.J.

For many years scholars of the Fourth Gospel have been observing in the Johannine narrative polemical features directed against some conceptions encountered in early Jewish mystical accounts found in the apocalyptic and Hekhalot literature —for example, J. H. Bernard,¹ H. Odeberg,² R. Brown,³ F. Moloney,⁴ W. Meeks,⁵ J. Dunn,⁶

¹ John Henry Bernard and Alan Hugh McNeile, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, International Critical Commentary, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), 1.111.

² Hugo Odeberg, *The Fourth Gospel: Interpreted in Its Relation to Contemporary Religious Currents in Palestine and the Hellenistic-Oriental World* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1929), 72.

³ Raymond Brown, *El Evangelio según Juan*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1979), 1.343.

⁴ Francis Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man* (Roma: Ateneo, 1976), 54.

⁵ Wayne Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 157.

⁶ James Dunn, "Let John Be John. A Gospel for Its Time," in Peter Stuhlmacher, ed., *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 28 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 309–39.

P. Borgen,⁷ and J. Kanagaraj.⁸ These and others have noted a hostility expressed by the Johannine author toward visionary experiences allegedly attested by some Jewish biblical heroes, acquired in the course of their ascents to heaven in order to receive special revelations about world history and the structure of the universe, as well as the contemplation of the Heavenly Throne. Statements like “no man (οὐδεὶς) has ascended to heaven, except him (εἰ μὴ) who came down from heaven, the Son of Man (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου)” in John 3:13 are often interpreted as a Christological affirmation that only Jesus, the Son of Man, is able to ascend to or descend from the heavenly realm. Such affirmation can be seen as a rejection of the claims attested in Jewish accounts that speak about ascents and descents of Enoch, Moses, Abraham, Jacob, Levi, and other principal protagonists of apocalyptic stories. In this article I would suggest another text from the Johannine Gospel that, in my opinion, serves as further evidence for the presence of the polemical tendencies mentioned above, namely, the description of the trial of Jesus in John 18:28–19:16, taking into consideration its context, the Passion narrative. As will be demonstrated in what follows, it is possible to discern a variety of characteristic features in this text, and a careful analysis of these features can lead researchers to conclude that this text—given all other implications of its contents—functions as an important criticism or satire directed against Jewish visionary accounts. An analysis of the textual structure of the pericope under discussion will also be presented, focusing on its purpose in the whole drama of the Passion, as well as on its significance for the study of the Fourth Gospel.

⁷ Peder Borgen, “The Son of Man Saying in John 3:13–14,” in Peder Borgen, ed., *Logos Was the True Light and Other Essays on the Gospel of John* (Trondheim: Tapir Publishers, 1983), 133–48. See also Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 1, 147, 177.

⁸ Jey Kanagaraj, “Mysticism” in the *Gospel of John: An Inquiry into Its Background*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 158 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 200–203.

The text of John 18:28–19:16 is located within the context of the Passion narrative, which is commonly subdivided into four separate textual units: 18:1–11; 18:12–27; 18:28–19:16a; and 19:16b–42. In general, the emphasis in the Johannine Passion narrative centers on the theme of the royal dignity of Jesus, as well as on his role as judge. This emphasis becomes apparent by comparing the presentation of Jesus as the Suffering Servant in the Synoptic narratives with the role of supreme Sovereign ascribed to Jesus by the author of the Fourth Gospel. Unlike the authors of the Synoptic Gospels, the Johannine author portrays Jesus as a true ruler, confronting the world on an immense stage. The Gospel of John, for instance, does not mention Jesus's agony in Gethsemane, where he is seeking compassion or support from his disciples. Jesus is not a victim of some kind of conspiracy, about which he knows nothing, or that catches him off guard, since he foresees all that will happen (18:4). To emphasize the royal dignity of Jesus (19:16b–18), the road to Calvary is described concisely in John, without mentioning the lament of people (Luke 23: 27–30) or the episode of Simon of Cyrene helping Jesus carry his cross (Mark 15:21). An inscription above the cross is made in the three most important languages, by which a proclamation and a universal recognition of the royal dignity of Jesus is made manifest. In his role as king, Jesus bestows various kinds of mercy⁹ — in John 19:30, that of the Spirit. An abundant use of incense in the ceremony of his burial (19:39–40) calls to mind royal funeral rites (Josephus, *Ant.* XVII, 8,3), while a mention of the garden (19:41) is reminiscent of the burial places of the Judaic kings (2 Kings 21:18, 26).

What can we say about these characteristic features of the Johannine Passion narrative that seem so heterogeneous? All of them witness to the fact that in the textual units comprising the Johannine Passion narrative taken as a whole, Jesus is considered primarily as a king who, while reigning over the scene, finally completes it, in order to announce, “It is finished.” Jesus as the sovereign appears glorified

⁹ His mother (John 19:27), his royal vestments (19: 23), his authority (19:11).

and exalted in the moment of his Passion, in the *hour* when the Glory of God was shining upon those who stood by (John 12:23–28). In other words, while the synoptic Gospels present Jesus as the one who ascends and sits on the throne at the right hand of the Father according to the foreseen plan of the “resurrection-ascension,” in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus is portrayed as glorified, enthroned, and exalted at the very moment of the historical event of his crucifixion.

This kind of emphasis on the royal nature of Jesus should not be surprising, since the reader has been prepared to accept the title King for Jesus because of its frequent occurrence throughout the text of the Fourth Gospel. Already in the first chapter Nathanael, who represents the true Israelite, addresses Jesus by the titles *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ* (1:49) and *βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ* (1:49). The title *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ* evokes Old Testament passages mentioning the king, such as 2 Sam 7:14, Ps 89:27 and Ps 110, which became important in the formation of early Christological concepts. In these texts, God proclaims his fatherhood over the kings of Israel. This motif is evident in Ps 2:6–7, where both titles, *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ* and *βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ*, are connected in the text regarding God’s anointing David king of Israel and recognizing him as his son. Nathanael, as a true Israelite, recognizes Jesus as the King of Israel and the Son of God. Yet this recognition cannot be complete, since, according to Jesus’ promise, Nathanael will “see greater things than these” (John 1:50). It is not until the beginning of the Passion story that the royal identity of Jesus becomes finally evident. This happens at the moment of the enthronement of Jesus, the completion of his glorification and his return to the place whence he descended (John 17:5).

Special attention should be given to the promise made by Jesus to Nathanael, since it brings us to the very heart of the controversy with early Jewish mystical traditions. Jesus solemnly announces: “*ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὄψεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεωγῶτα καὶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*” (John 1:51). This promise brings to mind a tradition found in the *Targum Neofiti* on Gen 28:10–17, which speaks about the image of Jacob engraved on the Throne of God. From this tradition we learn

that the angels, accompanying him from the house of his father, ascended and descended, inviting other angels to gaze upon him.¹⁰ In this targumic interpretation the phrase “upon him” refers to Jacob. In this way, ascending and descending angels behold the image of Jacob on earth and on the Throne of God. The tradition about Jacob’s face engraved on the Merkabah appears to be connected with Ezek 1:10, where one finds a description of the Throne with four faces, that of a lion, an ox, an eagle, and a man. The *Targum Neofiti* on Gen 28:10–17 somehow associates this image of a man with the image of Jacob. Thus angels first descend to behold the earthly image of Jacob, and then ascend to behold the same image engraved on the Throne of God. The author of the Fourth Gospel interprets the promise of Jesus (1:51), taking into consideration this Midrash, which substitutes Jacob for the Son of God. We are told that angels will *ascend* and *descend* on Jesus (the King and the Son of God), crucified and at the same time glorified, since at that moment he will be the image of the Glory of God. The great irony of the royal dignity of Jesus can be discerned in that it manifests the Glory of God in the disgrace of the cross.

It seems evident that the royal dignity of Jesus is not of this world in the political sense. We learn about this already in John 6, where Jesus refuses to be proclaimed the political king of *this world*, to which he does not belong (6:15; 12:13–15). Jesus is *from above*, that is, his descent is opposed to all who belong to this world (3:31; 8:23, 42, 47; 16:28). As Jesus says to Pilate at his trial, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from the world” (John 18:36). At the same time, Jesus’s kingdom is realized, in an ironic way, *in this world* through his glorification and exaltation on the cross. In other words, Jesus’s kingdom is not *of* this world, but *in* this world. This element is im-

¹⁰ Alejandro Díez Macho, ed., *Neophyti 1. Tomo 1. Génesis*, Texts y estudios 7 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1968), 180.

portant in the context of the controversy with Jewish mystical accounts, where the enthronement often unfolds in a spectacular scenario in the highest of heavens, in contrast to the historical narrative of John, which takes place in this world.

What then is the nature of the kingdom to which Jesus belongs? Can we find anywhere in the Fourth Gospel a description of that heavenly world, whence Jesus descended, that would resemble representations of apocalyptic scenarios? Is this heavenly world inhabited by angels, cherubim, and celestial choirs, as is the world of the Jewish heavenly visions? To be precise, the paradox of the Fourth Gospel lies in the fact that nowhere in this Gospel can one find a description of that other, *heavenly world*, where Jesus is the King, and whence he became incarnate, and where he will return after being exalted on the cross. Thus, for instance, when Jesus reproaches Nicodemus for his inability to believe in *earthly things*, he then follows with a question about his capacity to *believe in heavenly things* (John 3:12). But what does Jesus mean when he speaks about “heavenly things”? The reader of the text would expect to find in what follows a detailed description of this heavenly world. However, nothing of the sort happens. The Johannine Jesus then expounds on the foundations of Johannine faith with a clear emphasis on the soteriological effect of the cross event and on the faith convictions that follow from it (John 3:13–21). Something similar happens when Thomas asks Jesus where he is going and how we can know the way (John 14:5). One might expect that the answer to this question involves the description of the heavenly world. In his reply, however, Jesus talks about himself and implicitly about his experience of suffering on the cross (John 14:6). In this textual unit Philip asks Jesus to show the Father to his disciples (John 14:8). Again, in the reply there is no description of the heavenly realities; instead, Jesus speaks only about himself and his oneness with the Father (John 14:10).¹¹ Eventually, the recognition by Jesus of his heavenly and universal royal dignity is implied in his speech before Pilate when he affirms his mission to bear witness to

¹¹ April DeConick, *Voices of the Mystics: Early Christian Discourse in the Gospels of John and Thomas and Other Ancient Christian Literature* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 68–73.

the truth (John 18:37), to which Pilate replies, "What is truth?" And once again readers could expect explanations concerning the heavenly world, but nothing of the kind happens. On the contrary, Jesus is silent. To be sure, there are some relicts of the heavenly world in the Gospel, such as the angels mentioned in John 5:4 and 20:12 and the heavenly voice in John 12:28. But again, they are relicts of the heavenly world acting *in this world*, not leading the reader or the audience to another, heavenly reality. Instead, as in the case of John 12:28, they point to the cross as the moment of his enthronement, glorification, and exaltation.

John's silence concerning the things pertaining to the heavenly world should not surprise us. Already in the prologue the reader is warned that Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε (John 1:18), and that only the Son can manifest Him. Now we learn that this manifestation takes place mainly on the cross, in the moment of the enthronement of Jesus and the manifestation of the divine Glory (John 12:23–28). Only through the event of the cross can we learn about and experience the Glory of God manifested in the royal dignity of Jesus.

In the context of Jewish apocalyptic and mystical testimonies, we can better comprehend the nature of the trial of Jesus before Pilate (John 8:28–19:16) as a great irony. Consider, for example, three episodes in which the enthronement of Jesus is emphasized: the crowning of Jesus with thorns (19:1–3), the royal epiphany of Jesus (19:5), and the scene in which Jesus occupies a judgment seat as King and Judge (19:12–16^a).

The crowning with thorns episode (19:1–3) is situated by the author in the context of a textual unit whose elaborate structure attests to its importance. Compared to the Synoptics' descriptions, Jesus's crowning by the soldiers is concisely described in simple words. John's literary austerity highlights the royal dignity of Jesus against the background of the most disgraceful and mournful of ironies: Jesus is crowned amid the most inconceivable humiliations. John so emphasizes this motif that, unlike in the synoptic Gospels, Jesus wears a purple mantle and the crown of thorns throughout the Passion narrative until he is undressed to be crucified (19:23). Jesus is King, and in this role he bears the cross. In the Johannine sequence

of events the climax is the moment of enthronement, when Jesus is exalted on the cross and proclaimed King by the title inscribed on the cross in the principal secular and sacred languages: Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. The Johannine Gospel, unlike the synoptic accounts, does not lay the foundation for the Passion story on the people's choosing of Barabbas. Instead, the whole Johannine narrative revolves around the contemplation of Jesus as King. Attention is focused on how Pilate and the Jews respond to the royal dignity of Jesus.

Nevertheless, this austere depiction of Jesus's crowning differentiates it not only from the Synoptic depictions but also from the stories of the so-called "Merkabah mysticism." One of earliest specimens of this conceptual trend can be found in the play *Exagoge* ("Exodus") of the second-century B.C.E. Jewish poet Ezekiel the Tragedian. In his enthronement pericope, Moses receives divine attributes including those of the divine seat and royal crown. The scenario is grandiose: from heaven the main protagonist contemplates the whole universe and is granted power to judge angels who, represented as stars, fall before his knees.¹² Another important evidence of grandiose enthronement is found in the *Book of the Similitudes* contained in the *First Book of Enoch*, where the hero is described as being transfigured in the heavenly realm into a celestial creature of great significance, namely, the Son of Man.¹³ Such an identification of Enoch is essential, if we consider the fact that this figure is presented as placed on the Divine Throne in order to judge the world (*1 Enoch* 62: 5; 69: 29). A similar conception can be found in the latter Enochic composition, *Sefer Hekhalot* of *3 Enoch*, where, in chapter 10, the seventh patriarch is transfigured into a cosmic body of great dimensions (9:2-3), enthroned, and by his immense stature made similar to the angels (10). He is vested with royal garments (12:1-4), and his head is adorned with a shining crown.¹⁴ Here again we find stunning descriptions that throw into even great relief the austerity of the

¹² Carl Holladay, ed., *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, 3 vols. (Atlanta: Scholars, 1983-95), 2.363-365.

¹³ Alejandro Díez Macho, ed., *Apócrifos del Antiguo Testamento*, 6 vols. (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1984), 4.39-146.

¹⁴ Díez Macho, *Apócrifos*, 4.221-293.

Fourth Gospel's depictions. Also, it is interesting to note that in the Johannine Gospel Jesus is presented as the king in the mockery context of the cross, in contrast not only to such figures as Enoch and Moses, but also Adam. According to early Jewish traditions, the prelapsarian Adam was placed in Paradise to be a king over the world (2 *Enoch* 11: 61). In the *Testament of Abraham*, the appearance of the first man is described as "seated on a golden throne" and as terrifying "like the sovereign" (11:4). From *b. Hag.* 13b one learns that "the king of the wild animals is the lion; the king of the cattle is the ox; the king of the birds is the eagle; and the man is exalted over all of them." In other words, when Jesus was crowned in the context of the mockery coronation in John 19:1-3, the author sees Jesus revealing himself as the new Adam.

The second episode, the royal epiphany of Jesus, represents the moment when Jesus, already vested with a purple robe and crowned with thorns, is proclaimed King, for people to greet him properly (19:4-8). In 19:5 Pilate announces, "Behold the man!" (ἰδοὺ ὁ ἄνθρωπος). Léon-Dufour suggests a connection between phrases ἰδοὺ ὁ ἄνθρωπος in 19:5 and ἴδε ὁ βασιλεὺς ὑμῶν in 19:14.¹⁵ The first phrase is a veiled hint at the assertion openly proclaimed in the second phrase. To this it may be added that the parallelism between these two verses is even more profound: in both, Jesus is presented vested with royal garments and led by Pilate, while the crowd exclaims, "σταύρωσον σταύρωσον" (crucify him) (19:6) and "ἄρον, σταύρωσον αὐτόν" (away with him, away with him, crucify him) (19:15). The two phrases explain each other, and even more significantly, the scene climaxes with the peoples' shout, "οὐκ ἔχομεν βασιλεία εἰ μὴ Καίσαρα" (19:5). In other words, we have two presentations of the royal epiphanies, where the exclamations of the Jewish people are contrasted with the praises of heavenly angels. For instance, in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* the main hero, after his Merkabah vision, announces that

¹⁵ Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Lectura del Evangelio de Juan*, 4 vols. (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1989-98), 4.83.

“incredible light surrounded the fiery people, and I heard the sound of their *qedusha* like the voice of a single man” (*Apocalypse of Abraham* 18:11).¹⁶ It is also worth mentioning the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, where the praises of the saints before the Throne of Glory follow one upon the other. See, for example, 4Q405, fragments 20–21–22, where we read that “the cherubim lie prostrate before him (God), and . . . when they rise . . . they bless the image of the throne-chariot (which is) above the vault of the cherubim, and they sing [the splendor] of the shining vault (which is) beneath the seat of his glory” (7–9).¹⁷ One can consider also 4Q403: “Song of the sacrifice of the seventh sabbath of the seventeenth of the month. Praise the God of the august heights, you august ones among the divinities of knowledge. . . . The chiefs of the praises of all the gods, praise the God of magnificent praises, for in the magnificence of the praises is the glory of his kingdom” (30–32).¹⁸ The exclamation of the crowd in response to the royal epiphany of Jesus is a brilliant irony directed against the descriptions of the angelic praises found in the early texts belonging to the tradition of the heavenly mystical experiences.

In this mockery context, Jesus also represents the new Adam as well. According to the Latin version of the *Life of Adam and Eve*, when Adam was created, God said: “Behold, Adam, I have made you in our image and likeness” (ecce Adam, feci te ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram). Then, according to the story, the Archangel Michael summoned the angelic hosts, including Satan and his angels, and ordered them to worship the image of God: “Worship the image of God Jehovah” (adora imaginem dei Jehova) (14,1–2).¹⁹ As the result of this command Adam was adored by most of the angels in heaven, but not by Satan and his companions, who refused to venerate him. The same story is told in the Slavonic version of 3 *Baruch*

¹⁶ Alexander Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha* (Atlanta: Scholars' Press, 2004), 24.

¹⁷ Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 429.

¹⁸ García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 422.

¹⁹ Gary Anderson and Michael Stone, eds., *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1999), 16E.

where, while some angels adored Adam as the image of God, Satan-ael and his hosts refused to do so. This story is important for understanding the ironic nature of some traditions found in the Gospel of John where Jesus, as the eschatological image of God, is “adored” and “proclaimed” by a multitude who represent the rebel angels in heaven and so refuse to bow down before the protological image of God, namely, Adam.

Finally, the third episode begins with Pilate’s enthronement of Jesus so that Jesus could judge the world (John 19:12–16^a). While the exegesis of this text is highly disputed by scholars, the text makes it possible to present Jesus not only as a king but also a judge. The verb *καθίζω* (to sit down) in 19:13 is transitive, although the direct object, *τὸν Ἰησοῦν*, is not mentioned. An explanation for this omission might be the fact that the second direct object is not needed, since it is placed between two verbs *ἤγαγεν* and *ἐκάθισεν*, where it can serve as a direct object of both verbs. This supposition can be corroborated by an absence of an article in the phrase *ἐπὶ βήματος* (in the judgment seat), since in this case “Pilate” becomes the subject while “Jesus” becomes the direct object. In the passage under consideration Jesus is presented as both king and judge. All the events take place in the Gabbatha (Gabbatha), whose Hebrew root *gbh* or *gb’* denotes a prominence, elevation, or ledge. The ironic sense of this moment can be grasped if we consider the fact that the image of the enthroned protagonist, in the role of the judge, corresponds to the common motif found in Jewish apocalyptic and mystical accounts. As mentioned above, in the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian, Moses is placed on the throne of God to judge angels. The same can be said about Enoch as the Son of Man in the *Book of the Similitudes* from 1 *Enoch* (62:5; 69:29). In the *Testament of Isaac* (2:7), at the end of time the throne is also promised to Abraham, Jacob, and Isaac, although not necessarily in heaven.²⁰ To this list the *Testament of Ben-*

²⁰ Díez Macho, *Apócrifos*, 5.290.

jamin adds Enoch, Noah, and Shem (10:6).²¹ In Matt 19:28 Jesus promises his apostles that they will be placed on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. In Pauline eschatology the Throne of God is presented as a judgment seat of the great Judge (τῷ βήματι τοῦ θεοῦ) (Rom 14:10–12 and 2 Cor 5:10). Moreover, Jesus is conceived as the one who will judge the secret thoughts of all people (Rom 2:16b; 1 Cor 4:5; 1 Thess 2:19).

Recall that the trope of Jesus as Judge of the world also has Adamic implications. The *Testament of Abraham*'s scene of the eschatological judgment portrays Adam enthroned in glory as everyone comes to him. Then, when he sees many souls entering through the strait gate, he rises and sits on his throne rejoicing and exulting cheerfully, because this strait gate is (the gate) of the righteous, which leads to life, and those who enter through it enter into Paradise. The first-formed Adam rejoices because he sees souls being saved. But when he sees many souls entering through the broad gate, he pulls his hair and casts himself to the ground, crying and wailing bitterly; for the broad gate is (the gate) of sinners, which leads to destruction and to eternal punishment (*Testament of Abraham* 10:10–11).

Jesus as the Judge in the Fourth Gospel presents himself as the new Adam standing before those who accept him (and will be saved) and those who deny him (and will be condemned).

In general, we can assert that the Fourth Gospel presents the glorification and exaltation of Jesus as King and Judge as completed not in the heavens (about which no mention can be found anywhere in the text) but, in an ironic sense, at the moment of his crucifixion. All the events described in John 18:28–19:16, contrary to all expectations, point to the fact that the enthronement of Jesus as King and Judge coincides with the Passion, Pilate's judgment, and the subsequent crucifixion. This is the Glory Isaiah sees in John 12:41, which alludes to the vision of God's throne in Isa 6:1–13., and by Abraham in John 8:56. In both cases the heavenly glory is replaced by the terrible scene of Jesus's crucifixion where his glory and royalty shine forth.

²¹ Díez Macho, *Apócrifos*, 5.156.

For a better understanding of the dramatic impact of the Johannine author's irony, we should contrast this text with numerous apocalyptic stories about Old Testament heroes whose heavenly ascents glorify and endow them with royal attributes. The juxtaposition of these Jewish ideas of royalty received in heaven with the Fourth Gospel's conception presented in its Passion narrative must have been astonishing and embarrassing for the Johannine community, which was destined to conceive the true sense of the royal dignity of Jesus as a fierce and dreadful irony. A fundamental experience and subject of exhortation throughout the fourth Gospel is faith, the confession of which, contrary to what is found in the apocalyptic literature, does not depend on any vision.

To conclude my study I would like again to draw attention to a controversy between the followers of the heavenly mystical experiences and the Johannine community. Johannine scholars unanimously highlight the dramatic features of the structure of John 18:28–19:16. In general, the author describes the sequence of events by following the principle of the unity of place, namely, the Praetorium (judgment hall), although he observes the distinction between the events that take place inside and outside the Praetorium, thus creating an elaborate succession of dramatic scenes. The author describes seven separate scenes that occur alternately inside and outside the Praetorium: outside (18:28–32); inside (18:33–38a); outside (18:38b–40); inside (19:1–3); outside (19:4–8); inside (19:9–11); outside (19:12–16a). Such spatial structure of the narrative reveals a chiasmic presentation of events. Thus, we can observe the correlation between the first (18:28–32) and the seventh scenes (19:12–16a): in both, the events happen outside, and the subject of the narrative is the controversy between Pilate and the Jewish high priests and leaders demanding the crucifixion of Jesus. The second (18:33–38a) and sixth scenes (19:9–11) are also correlative: in both, the events, including Jesus's interrogation, happen inside. Similarly we find correlations between the third (18:38b–40) and the fifth scenes (19:4–8): in both, the action takes place outside—Pilate announces that he finds no fault in Jesus (18:38 and 19:4), while the Jews demand that Jesus be crucified. Only in the fourth scene (19:1–3) are Pilate and the Jewish

leaders absent; Pilate is merely mentioned (19:1)—Jesus and the Roman soldiers assume the main roles.

Thus, in its final editing, the text constitutes a dramatic unity that overarches an elaborate succession of dramatic scenes, where the reader's attention is focused on an action bound to a single space, the Praetorium, inside or outside. The author seems not to have omitted a single detail portraying seven scenes with evident parallelism between the first and the seventh, the second and the sixth, and the third and the fifth, while the fourth scene emerges as the central event. In the succession of these seven scenes the transition from one to another is accomplished by presenting the leading figures as the characters entering and leaving the judgment hall. This text therefore serves as a piece of dramatic art, predominantly built on dialogue and an expectation of an alarming denouement.

If we can indeed trace in the Fourth Gospel the features of polemic with an early tradition of heavenly mystical experiences that emphasize visions, can the dramatic structure of John 18:28–19:16^a serve as a witness of alternative kinds of religious experience? It is worth noting that, implying the rejection of a visionary experience, the Johannine author asserts that though God is unapproachable (1:18), he is close and accessible through Jesus, whom the community commemorates again and again by *represented history*. Instead of presenting heavenly realities the way early mystical texts do, the Gospel of John dramatically expounds a historical narrative that climaxes in the hour of the cross, when historically the Glory of God and the exaltation of Jesus shone forth.

Some concluding questions: To what extent can this dramatic structure serve as an example of a special form of the transmission of history? Does it give us an idea of how this represented history was received? It should be noted that the historical event represented here becomes the focal point of all cosmic events: all time converges in it (hour: 12:23, 27; 17:1); all the glory and love of the Father is made manifest in it (3:14–15; 5:25, 36; 13:1, 31; etc.); in it the true nature of Christ as King, the supreme Judge, and High Priest is revealed (19:13–19–20, 23); and in it the Spirit edifying the community is bestowed (19:30). Salvation is accomplished in the course of a *history*, which is recalled and represented as a mockery of the Merkabah visions. To what extent did these tendencies predetermine the future develop-

ment of a Christian proto-orthodoxy? How and to what degree did speculations about cosmological and angelic visions pertaining to esoteric movements lose their significance in proto-orthodox theological developments—if in fact they did?

FOR GOD AND LIBERTY: EDMUND OPITZ AND THE MORAL LOGIC OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTARIANISM¹

VIC MCCrackEN

INTRODUCTION

In his book *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, Robert Nozick famously defines libertarianism as a social philosophy committed to a simple maxim: “from each as he chooses to each as he is chosen.”² The maxim well captures the moral ethos of libertarianism. What is mine is mine. What is yours is yours. Each of us has the right to labor and to risk, to reap the rewards of our labor or suffer the consequences of our foolish wagers. Individual liberty—my right to my body, my property, my future—is the primary value that just societies must protect. Libertarians are zealous advocates for individual autonomy and strident critics of those who wield power in ways that violate the rights of individuals.

Historically, secular thinkers such as Ludwig Von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, and Murray Rothbard shaped the trajectory of the 20th-

¹ I am indebted to the special collections staff of The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary and the Special Collections and University Archives staff at the University of Oregon for their expertise in assistance in accessing unpublished manuscripts and correspondence referenced in this essay.

² Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 160.

century libertarian movement.³ They and their intellectual disciples have cultivated an energetic network of scholars, think tanks, and private institutions devoted to advancing libertarian ideals. Despite the secular slant of the libertarian movement, today there is a small but growing number of voices within the Christian tradition who perceive libertarianism to be the logical conclusion of Christian belief. The Libertarian Christian Institute, for example, devotes itself to a fundamental mission:

to make the Christian case for a free society and provide the best content to proclaim that libertarianism is the most consistent expression of Christian political thought. We aim to persuade Christians that the political expression of our faith inclines us toward the principles of individual liberty and free markets.⁴

Libertarian Christians press the church to reconsider the ways in which Christians too readily embrace and justify state power.

The emergence of the contemporary libertarian Christian movement did not happen *ex nihilo*. In 1935 the Reverend James W. Fifield Jr., pastor of the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles, founded Spiritual Mobilization, a libertarian Christian organization that sought to counter the Social Gospel and New Deal social reforms enacted following the Great Depression.⁵ During its heyday, Spiritual Mobilization broadcast a nationally syndicated radio show, “The Freedom Story,” to over 800 radio stations, promoting limited government and the virtues of free market capitalism.⁶ Between 1949

³ See Ludwig Von Mises, *Human Action: The Scholar's Edition* (Auburn, AL: Ludwig Von Mises Institute, 2010); Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom: Texts and Documents*, ed. Bruce Caldwell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Murray Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty* (New York: New York University Press, 2002).

⁴ <https://libertarianchristians.com/mission/> (website access 4/9/2019).

⁵ For a detailed exposition of the rise and fall of Spiritual Mobilization, see Eckvard V. Toy, Jr., “Spiritual Mobilization: The Failure of an Ultraconservative Ideal in the 1950’s,” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 6.2 (April 1970): 77-86.

⁶ See Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

and 1960 Spiritual Mobilization published *Faith and Freedom*, a journal that at its peak was distributed to 20,000 Protestant ministers across the country. From 1935 until its demise in 1961 Spiritual Mobilization served as the institutional home for a small but energetic community of libertarian Christians intent on fighting an insurgent war against the “pagan stateism” [Sic] of the liberal Protestant establishment.⁷

Among the leaders of Spiritual Mobilization, the Reverend Edmund A. Opitz (1914-2006) is one whose legacy extended well beyond that of the organization. A Unitarian minister who spent most of his pastoral career in New York, Opitz was the regional conference director for Spiritual Mobilization during the mid-1950s. From 1955 until his 1992 retirement, Opitz served on the staff of the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE), a prominent libertarian think tank that today remains a vibrant center of libertarian thought. Opitz was the founder of “The Remnant,” a national fellowship of conservative and libertarian Christian ministers. During his career, Opitz published an extensive body of journal articles in FEE’s flagship publication, *The Freeman*, and authored several books, including *Religion and Capitalism: Allies, Not Enemies*,⁸ *Religion: Foundation of the Free Society*,⁹ and *The Libertarian Theology of Freedom*.¹⁰ While virtually unknown in mainstream Christian circles, Opitz was a unique and influential voice within the libertarian movement where he spent most of his life.

⁷ See Eckvard V. Toy, “*Faith and Freedom: 1949-1960*,” in Ronald Lora and William Henry Longton, eds., *The Conservative Press in Twentieth-Century America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 153-161.

⁸ Edmund A. Opitz, *Religion and Capitalism: Allies, Not Enemies*, 2nd edition (Irvington-on-Hudson, NY: The Foundation for Economic Education, 1992).

⁹ Edmund A. Opitz, *Religion: Foundation of the Free Society* (Irvington-on-Hudson, NY: The Foundation for Economic Education, 1996).

¹⁰ Edmund A. Opitz, *The Libertarian Theology of Freedom* (Tampa, FL: Halberg Publishing Corporation, 1999).

That Opitz is a figure shrouded in obscurity in the wider academy is not due to his lack of effort. During the 1950s Opitz carried on a series of written exchanges and public debates with some of the most prominent Protestant intellectuals of the day, including Reinhold Niebuhr, Liston Pope, James Luther Adams, and John Howard Yoder.¹¹ Largely dismissed, occasionally ridiculed, Opitz nonetheless pressed establishment voices to reconsider their allegiance to the modern welfare state. Opitz's efforts to exchange ideas with figures in the Protestant establishment bore little fruit, save for a single series of letters between Opitz and Dr. John C. Bennett (1902-1995). Initially a private exchange between a professor and his former student,¹² the correspondence between Bennett and Opitz was eventually published in Spiritual Mobilization's journal, *Faith and Freedom*¹³ and over the years was included by Opitz in several books that he authored or to which he contributed.¹⁴

At the time of this exchange Bennett was an internationally recognized intellectual leader in liberal Protestantism. A close friend and academic colleague of Reinhold Niebuhr, Bennett served as Professor of Christian Theology and Ethics at Union Theological Seminary—the academic flagship of 20th century liberal Protestantism—for nearly four decades and as president of the seminary, from 1963 to 1970. An important leader in the World Council of Churches,

¹¹ The Opitz collection, preserved at the University of Oregon library, includes private correspondence detailing the breadth of these exchanges.

¹² In his first letter to Bennett, Opitz recalls his seminary classes with Bennett at the Pacific School of Religion, where Bennett served on faculty from 1938 to 1943. "I recall my seminary classes under you," says Opitz, "they were occasion of mental adventure." Notably, James Fifield, the founder of Spiritual Mobilization, served on the Board of the Pacific School of Religion at the time Bennett was on the faculty.

¹³ "Dear Dr. Bennett: Dear Mr. Opitz," *Faith and Freedom* 4.8 (April 1953): 3-5, and "Dear Dr. Bennett: Dear Mr. Opitz, part 2," *Faith and Freedom* 4.9 (May 1953): 10-15.

¹⁴ See Opitz, *The Libertarian Theology of Freedom*, 23-57, and Edmund A. Opitz, *The Kingdom Without God: Road's End for the Social Gospel* (Los Angeles: Foundation for Social Research, 1956), 19-52. All references to the Bennett-Opitz letters are taken from *The Libertarian Theology of Freedom*.

chairman of the editorial board of *Christianity & Crisis*, and co-founder (with Niebuhr) of the progressive Christian parachurch organization, “Christian Action,” at the time of his debate with Opitz Bennett stood at the pinnacle of the Protestant establishment. In their correspondence Opitz and Bennett challenged one another as they discussed their own ideas about the nature of state action. Bennett defended a conventional view of the state power, one affirming the legitimacy of robust economic intervention to curb the excesses of capitalism and ensure the welfare of the most vulnerable in society. Opitz criticized Bennett’s embrace of state power and attempted to persuade him to recognize the merits of free market capitalism and a libertarian, minimalist state. Bennett and Opitz alike defended their respective accounts of the state as the natural embodiment of a Christian social ethic.

The 1953 debate between Bennett and Opitz is notable, one of the few instances of direct, substantive interaction between mainline Protestant thinkers and the libertarian counterculture that sought to challenge their influence. In this essay I offer up an introduction to Christian libertarianism by exploring Opitz’s libertarian critique of the welfare state, attending specifically to how Opitz frames libertarianism as a natural extension of claims central to the Christian story. Opitz offers a radical and controversial account of how Christian faith can be reconciled with the distinctive role of the state in human life. The Christian libertarianism he defends offers valuable insight into a fundamental but overlooked question: what is the *telos* of the state, and on what grounds can we justify the state’s existence?

THE PROBLEM WITH AGGRESSION

Consider for a moment just how pervasive the state is in our lives. What do states do? States prohibit individuals from consuming illicit drugs. States limit the choices that individuals make over their own bodies. They mandate that citizens serve on juries. They declare wars, and they conscript citizens to fight these wars. States regulate the economic system necessary for the exchange of goods and resources. They inspect food, drugs, and products sold on the market. They license who can sell to whom. States regulate the banks where we

deposit our paychecks, and they insure these deposits when banks collapse. Through a central banking system, states control the money supply and set interest rates. They restrict employers, mandating guidelines for what is legally necessary and what is prohibited in the workplace. They require employers to pay a minimum wage. They prohibit sellers from raising prices on essential goods and services in times of national emergency or natural calamity.

States also tax citizens to fund a variety of social program and services. They provide for police, fire protection, and military defense. They subsidize the cost of healthcare for consumers. They build and maintain interstate highway systems. Today many states have fashioned a complex network of programs that function as a safety net for the poor. States provide for the social security of citizens. They guarantee access to primary education for all children, and they mandate that these children attend school.

States are powerful, and their reach ubiquitous. The historic legacy and pervasive presence of the state is obvious enough that most of us take for granted the legitimacy of state power. We might debate the efficacy, the wisdom, or the likely consequences of state-subsidized healthcare, minimum wage laws, or drug policy, but rarely do we question the *moral* basis for the power that states wield. This is precisely what libertarians insist that we do; Libertarians call us to reassess our most basic assumptions about the state. They call into question the policies, programs, and prescriptions that states impose upon the communities they claim to serve. If libertarians are correct, there are compelling moral reasons to deny the state this power.

During the 1950s John Bennett wrote and lectured extensively on the topic of the state, describing its nature and function as “the most urgent problem in Christian social ethics.”¹⁵ In his speeches, written essays, and book-length treatment of the topic, Bennett offers a systematic defense of the modern welfare state. In his book *Christians and the State*, for example, Bennett argued forcefully that states play a vital role as agents that further the cause of social justice

¹⁵ John Bennett, “Christianity and the State,” *Seminarian May* (1952): 10-11, 13-14 (Bennett collection).

by ensuring fair opportunities and protecting the welfare of all citizens:

When the national community decides to use the agencies of the state to secure better opportunities for education and health for all children, it is serving justice and the sights of the community in regard to justice have been raised by love.... Among the other ways in which some modern states show concern for the dignity as well as for the material welfare of their people, one might mention the safeguarding of dignity that is possible when workers are able to bargain collectively and when retired people can count on annuities from Social Security which are theirs by right.¹⁶

Bennett's forceful articulation of the moral basis for the social welfare state embodied a common view of the mainline Protestant establishment of his day.

Bennett's extensive defense of the welfare state and his prominence in Protestant circles made him a fitting subject of Opitz's libertarian critique. Their correspondence began in 1953 with a letter from Opitz to Bennett in which Opitz responded to a speech of Bennett's entitled "A Christian View of the State." Opitz began the exchange with a summary of the prevailing view of the state in academic Christian circles:

It has not been easy, during the past fifteen years..., for a student going through college or seminary to escape being inoculated with a one-sided point of view. In this view, the instrumentality of government is regarded as a proper and efficient means to accomplish the end of general prosperity and security for individuals against the uncertainties of modern life.¹⁷

¹⁶ John Bennett, *Christians and the State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 63-64.

¹⁷ Opitz, *Libertarian Theology of Freedom*, 23.

Opitz invited his former professor to consider the libertarian alternative to the “collectivism” espoused by Bennett and other mainstream Protestant leaders.

So what is wrong with the welfare state? Opitz’s libertarian argument against Bennett draws heavily on one primary idea: the “Non-Aggression Principle” (NAP), a maxim that provides the philosophical foundation for many of the conclusions that libertarians raise about the state. In his 1963 essay, “War, Peace, & the State,” libertarian philosopher Murray Rothbard offers a succinct definition of the NAP:

No one may threaten or commit violence (‘aggress’) against another man’s person or property. Violence may be employed only against the man who commits such violence; that is, only defensively against the aggressive violence of another. In short, no violence may be employed against a nonaggressor. Here is the fundamental rule from which can be deduced the entire corpus of libertarian theory.¹⁸

Libertarians assert that the NAP is nothing more than a straightforward description of a commonsense moral intuition. If something is rightfully mine, it is wrong for you to use violence to take that thing for yourself. Likewise it would be wrong for me to threaten you with violence so as to compel you to act in a way that conflicts with your own desire for yourself or your property. As Christian libertarian scholar Jason Jewell says, “the Non-Aggression Principle is the consistent application of what we all learned in kindergarten: don’t hit others and don’t take what doesn’t belong to you.”¹⁹

The significance of the NAP to the libertarian critique of the state will become clear if you consider the following scenario. Imagine that you work 40 hours per week, a full-time job for which you earn \$1000. Every Friday you receive your \$1000 paycheck in cash

¹⁸ This essay is preserved electronically at the Mises Institute website, <https://mises.org/library/war-peace-and-state> (link accessed 5/10/2019).

¹⁹ Jason Jewell, “Libertarianism and Social Justice: A Christian Approach,” in Vic McCracken, ed., *Christian Faith and Social Justice: Five Views* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 23.

from your employer in an assortment of \$100, \$50, \$10, and \$5 bills. As you are leaving work one Friday with your cash in hand you are approached by a menacing group of masked armed men who are all wearing black "Society for the Care of Cute and Furry Homeless Creatures" (SCCFHC) polo shirts. The men approach you with guns drawn and tell you that you must give them \$75. You consider declining this request, but you feel threatened, so you begin counting out the money for them. While you are handing the armed men your \$75 the group leader apologizes to you for the inconvenience. He informs you that you are not alone, that they have approached a lot of people in this same fashion and that virtually every person is giving them money. They also tell you that the money they are collecting will be put to good use. These funds will go toward the construction and maintenance of a permanent adoption center for cute and furry homeless creatures. With your money in hand, the armed men in black polo shirts enter their car and drive away.

Now consider a different scenario. Imagine that you work 40 hours per week, a full-time job for which you earn \$4000 per month. At the end of every month your monthly paycheck is deposited electronically into your bank account. Prior to the money entering your account, however, federal and state government offices withhold \$248 in Social Security and Medicare taxes. The state also withholds \$75 in income tax from your monthly paycheck. Every other person you know of has their paycheck deposited electronically, and every other person you know similarly has some of their money withheld by federal, state, and local offices. You would prefer to spend this money in your own way, but you fear the consequences of resisting, knowing that if you fail to have this money withheld you are likely to be taken from your home by strangers and imprisoned. You say nothing.

Consider both scenarios closely. Now consider this question: in scenario one, have you been treated unjustly? Given the circumstance, would you not feel that the gunmen have harmed you? Isn't this money yours? Yes, the gunmen have promised you that your money will be put to good use, but what of this? The social benefits borne from this theft do not justify the theft. Yes, you may have a

deep affection for cute and furry homeless creatures. You may even be willing to contribute charitably to shelter them. What you resent is that these armed gunmen are *coercing* you to give your property for their good cause. In so doing, the gunmen are violating your rights. *They are violating the NAP and are treating you unjustly.*

But what of the second scenario? Here we have another example of a forced transaction in which money that belongs to you is being taken from you. However, this transaction is commonplace, something that most of us today take for granted. You receive your monthly paycheck and know that the state will confiscate a portion of what you have earned before it ever makes it into your account. It happens every month; you can see evidence of this transaction every time you glance at your pay stub. You have many things you might otherwise do with your money. You might prefer to spend it on your hobbies or your children. You might prefer to contribute to your favorite charity or to invest in your future retirement. You might prefer to gamble this money away at a casino, an unwise choice to be sure, but a choice that you could have made. In scenario two you can make none of these choices. You never see this money. You know that you could protest, and you might even be able to find a way to circumvent this withholding, but you don't. You know that others are also forced to pay their taxes, and you know that the consequences of not paying are severe, perhaps even as severe as the consequences of refusing to give money to the masked gunmen. So you pay. You say nothing.

I have employed these two scenarios in my ethics classroom for years, and a curious thing happens when I introduce these scenarios to my students. While most students argue that the forced transaction in scenario one is unjust, these same students believe that the forced transaction in scenario two is perfectly acceptable. This forced transaction is facilitated not by armed gunmen but by the state, after all. The state has legitimacy in a way that armed gunmen do not. *But why should we believe that this is so?* This is the central point. In scenario two, it is the state that is violating the NAP. From the libertarian perspective, *scenario two is no different than scenario one.* Both scenarios offer up examples of unjustifiable coercion in which individuals are compelled to give up something that belongs to them without their consent. The fact that those taxes that you pay go to

fund really good things—public schools, public parks, children’s healthcare, a highway system, a social safety net, and the like—does not justify the aggressive means that the state employs to further these ends, any more than the good of the shelter for cute and furry homeless creatures justifies the violence of the masked gunmen. The state is just another armed robber. Murray Rothbard makes this comparison explicit:

If, then, taxation is compulsory, and is therefore indistinguishable from theft, it follows that the State, which subsists on taxation, is a vast criminal organization far more formidable and successful than any ‘private’ Mafia in history.²⁰

Indeed, libertarians might well conclude that scenario two is *worse* than scenario one to the extent that some people are so willing to mask this robbery behind a veil of legitimacy. The fact that so many are so willing to give the state a pass illustrates just how far gone most of us are, morally speaking.

In short, the essential problem with modern states is that they are *coercive*. According to libertarians, states by definition are in the business of acting *aggressively*. The fact that it is an IRS bureaucrat threatening you instead of a masked gunman does not make the threat less aggressive, nor does it make the violation of the NAP justifiable. The fact that our politicians insist that a war is just and necessary, or that poor families will benefit greatly from social welfare policies, or that other sicker people need me to pay for insurance to keep their healthcare costs down is beside the point. The NAP renders in philosophical form a principle that most of us find intuitively compelling, at least when we think about our interactions with other individuals. Libertarians argue that these intuitions should apply equally to those institutions like the state that have become so central to our life together.

²⁰ Murray Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 166.

The problem of aggression is central to Opitz's critique of those who defend an expansive welfare state. In his correspondence with Bennett, Opitz appeals directly to the problem of aggression as one that Bennett and other defenders of the welfare state neglect:

When we speak of political power, we mean the legal warrant of those who exercise that power to interfere with willed action; to interpose by violence or the threat of violence between a man's will and conscience and the conduct these would enjoin on him. One does not employ political power, i.e., violence or the threat of violence, to make men act as they would act without it. For the kind of conduct men engage in normally and naturally, or can be educated or induced to engage in, political power is not needed. It is only where persuasion is ineffective that force is needed, and this force is exercised by society's agency of power, the state.²¹

Even beyond the moral argument against the welfare state, Opitz argues that there are compelling practical reasons for removing the state from the business of promoting social welfare. Bennett and other "collectivists" assume that political action has some sort of "magical efficacy," that states are actually capable of achieving the moral ends that advocates intend. Opitz rejects the idealism of such presumptions. "I do not believe that political action is a panacea for institutional unemployment and other economic ills" says Opitz.²² Quite the contrary, political intervention is precisely what causes many of the ills that collectivists assert the state is responsible for correcting. Political intervention caused the Great Depression, for example, and political engineering wreaks havoc in society when politicians enact solutions that worsen the problems of poverty, homelessness, and unemployment that they intend to solve.²³

In the end, however, it is the moral case against the state that is primary to the libertarianism that Opitz defends. Individual liberty is an essential value of a just society. Bennett, as other "collectivists"

²¹ Opitz, *Libertarian Theology of Freedom*, 21.

²² Opitz, *Libertarian Theology of Freedom*, 43.

²³ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

who attempt to justify state power, give legitimacy to state aggression. “The libertarian philosophy,” by contrast, “aims to give every person full scope for the exercise of his faculties by allowing him the complete range of alternatives from which to choose. In order to secure this freedom for every person, one condition is laid down: No man has a right to impair the freedom of another.”²⁴

PUTTING THE “CHRISTIAN” IN CHRISTIAN LIBERTARIANISM

While Opitz does not develop a detailed theological argument in support of his libertarian views in his letters to Bennett, his correspondence relies on theological ideas that he expands on more fully in his book *Religion and Capitalism: Allies, Not Enemies*. Opitz argues that the conclusions reached by libertarians outside of the Christian community are themselves the necessary conclusions to be drawn from a Christian understanding of God’s own nature and purpose for creation. Consider first that God himself does not coerce humankind into relationship but has created humankind with an “inner freedom,” free to choose or reject relationship with God the Creator. The fact that God pursues relationship with humankind in ways that affirm this capacity to choose is essential, for it implies something about God’s intention for human community:

It is a short deduction from this belief to the conclusion that the God who gave us inwardly such complete freedom that we could either accept or reject Him wills that the relationships of men should be voluntary.... Outer and social liberty, in other words, is the necessary completion of inner and spiritual liberty.²⁵

Political freedom—our capacity to live together free from the coercive authority of others—is a natural and necessary complement to

²⁴ Opitz, *Libertarian Theology of Freedom*, 35.

²⁵ Opitz, *Religion and Capitalism: Allies, Not Enemies*, 194.

the inner freedom that is part of our nature as beings created in God's image.

If political liberty is a natural consequence of God's desire for human community, Opitz further argues that economic liberty is a corollary value that is equally critical to a proper ordering of human life. Humans should be as free to choose how they use their talents and resources as they are to choose relationship with God. While Christianity offers no single economic theory, according to Opitz capitalism is a system most compatible with the ideal of liberty because it is an economic system premised wholly on the liberty of individuals to act voluntarily, to exchange their labor and contract with others. "If a society enjoys political liberty," says Opitz, "a certain pattern of economic activity will be precipitated.... This pattern is capitalism, the posture assumed by economic actions when men are free."²⁶ State intervention into the economy—even well-intended interventions that claim to promote human welfare—are nothing more than actions that grant privileges to some at the expense of others.²⁷ Free markets provide humans with ideal space for the exercise of individual liberty.

Natural law upholds the essential value of political liberty in God's divine economy, but this truth is further reinforced by Christ's own teaching. Christ commands humankind that we should love our neighbor as ourselves, a command that is itself incompatible with any form of aggression that would compel people to act against their will. Christ unites people with the bonds of "unyielding good will, understanding, and compassion." Human welfare is properly achieved through voluntary action and inwardly motivated compassion. The "collectivism" of the social welfare state can only rely on "command and coercion." Says Opitz, "[t]his is the nature of the means which must be and are being employed in even the most well-intentioned welfare state. In practice, every collectivized order careens toward a police state whose own citizens are its first victims."²⁸

²⁶ Opitz, *Religion and Capitalism: Allies, Not Enemies*, 2.

²⁷ Opitz, *Libertarian Theology of Freedom*, 33.

²⁸ Opitz, *Religion and Capitalism: Allies, Not Enemies*, 195.

God's intention for human community is thus fully realized in a society in which inner and outer freedom are woven together. This ideal is frustrated by sin, Opitz notes—echoing Augustine—for the present age is one in which the city of God and city of man commingle, God's rule encountering the stubborn will of a humanity that is free to choose, and too often chooses rebellion. In this present age of the already and not yet, human government is itself nothing more than an extension of human rebellion against God's reign. Government did not exist prior to the Fall. Government is, in Opitz's words, "a reflection of man's corrupted nature in our fallen world. Government, in other words, is a consequence of sin; it appears only after the Fall."²⁹ And because this is so, argues Opitz, *government can never be a remedy for sin*. The very nature of government is directly contrary to that "outer and social liberty" that is basic to God's creative purpose for humanity. Thus, collectivist efforts to use the state to promote human welfare misconceives that the state is always a manifestation of human rebellion.

In short, God's own nature, God's creative purpose for humankind, and Christ's own moral instruction point naturally to the libertarian conclusion: Christians should be wary of the power that states wield in human life. Given the coercive nature of the state, the libertarian question is obvious: how do we properly limit the violence and coercion that is the character of the state? In his correspondence with Bennett, Opitz argues that only a minimalist state is morally and theologically justifiable. The violence of states should be strictly limited. States should be subject to the same moral norms that we apply to individuals. Individuals possess a natural right to self-defense, and they are likewise permitted to delegate this right to another agent, the state. States, like the individuals who delegate these powers, may only engage in violence that is defensive in nature. "It is morally right," says Opitz, "to use the coercive apparatus of the government to defend each person in his life and possessions against

²⁹ Ibid.

the murderer, the thief, the libeler, the fraud.”³⁰ The violence that states employ is morally justifiable only when it is used defensively to combat the unjust violence of another. The “true prototype” of government is the constable, “a man whose specialized occupation is to perform the necessary and social function of defense for members of society.” (31) This is the extent of what states may properly do.

If one accepts the validity of the libertarian critique of the state described above, the practical implications are profound. From this perspective many of those things that states do—those prohibitions, regulations, and services that most of us take for granted—are morally illegitimate. States ought not to regulate the exchanges of employers and employees. Taxing some citizens to provide benefits to other citizens is morally reprehensible, just another example of theft. Free markets are the natural and appropriate sphere for individual freedom to be expressed through the voluntary exchanges of freely choosing actors. State intervention into the economy violates individual liberty. Contrary to those who see such prescriptions as a recipe for disaster, Opitz concludes that the free society regulated by a minimalist state that protects the freedom of individual actors in a free market is the best society that we can possibly hope for:

The mutual actions of men in society, when uncoerced, helps all participants attain their own ends without injuring others. Social cooperation based on the marketplace puts a surplus of energy at the disposal of human beings which makes it possible for individual men and women to seek and find that fulfillment which each regards as his own destiny.³¹

CONCLUSION

So what is one to make of the Christian libertarianism that Opitz defends? To his credit, Opitz raises an important moral question that has been largely neglected by non-libertarians. On what grounds can the power of the modern welfare state be justified? Given the growing prominence in American politics of those advocating for

³⁰ Ibid., 35.

³¹ Opitz, *Libertarian Theology of Freedom*, 52.

vast reductions in the power and role of the state and a society that abandons a mixed economy subject to regulations for a laissez-faire free market system, the present moment is one in which the moral basis of the state demands further attention.

Given the limits of this essay, I haven't the space to develop an expansive analysis and response, so my initial critique here can only map out the contours of a response that needs further elaboration. Three points deserve mention. First, it is difficult to see how the minimalist state that Opitz himself affirms can be justified given the premises of his critique of the social welfare state. Says Opitz, the problem with welfare state policies is that they coerce people, effectively stealing resources from some to benefit others. Given this critique, one wonders why Opitz deems it justifiable for the state to coerce individuals to provide for the services of the minimalist state that he himself defends. How is it any less aggressive when the state forces citizens to provide police and fire protection for members of the community? It is certainly possible to imagine a society without a state in which defense services are purchased in a free market, each individual contracting with their own protective association, no individual forced to provide this service to others.³² The logical conclusion to which Opitz's argument points is not the minimalist state; it is *anarchism*. Opitz himself rejects anarchism as a viable alternative to the welfare state, though he does not make clear why.³³ Opitz's monarchism is self-defeating. The case that Opitz makes against state aggression calls into question the legitimacy of the minimalist state that he himself advocates.

³² Robert Nozick pursues this idea in some detail in part I of *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, 10-25.

³³ In one private letter Opitz criticizes anarchists for relying on a naïve metaphysics and a shallow view of economics. "I don't think the anarchists would allow me to even poke my nose inside their tent, as I do believe in a strong, virile, but limited government," says Opitz. See "Letter to John Haynes Holmes," *Mises Collection* (Collection 9, Box 1, Folder 2).

Second, Opitz's theological case for Christian libertarianism relies on an overly thin account of the state that belies the breadth of Christian scripture and the broader Christian tradition. For Opitz the state is *only* a manifestation of human rebellion, but as Bennett correctly observes, Christian scripture offers up a dialectical vision of the state that belies Opitz's one-sided caricature. On the one hand, Christian scripture sometimes depicts the state as a force that is the embodiment of rebellion against God's reign, the iconic "Beast" of Revelation 13, uttering blasphemies and making war against God's saints. From this vantage point, Christian libertarians are correct to see that the state is the embodiment of human rebellion. On the other hand, Christian scripture also depicts the state as an institution that is divinely ordered by God, an instrument that God uses to accomplish God's own purposes (cf. Romans 13, 1 Peter 2). Christian scripture offers up an ambivalent picture of the state, one that recognizes the tensions of a human institution that can at the same time be a remedy for and expression of human sin.³⁴

Beyond the ambivalence found in scripture, the Christian tradition itself divides over how to understand the divinely-ordered purpose that God intends for the state.³⁵ With Opitz, some Christians view the state as a purely negative institution that exists solely for the purpose of restraining human sin. Protestant reformers like Martin Luther, for example, depict political authorities as "a dark but providential coercive power which exists only to keep man's sin in check," an institution that exists "to restrain disorder and anarchy."³⁶ By contrast, the Catholic tradition offers up a more robust, positive theory in which the state is divinely ordered for the purpose of aiding humankind in the fulfillment of its social nature, steering human action toward the pursuit of shared values and common goods.³⁷

³⁴ See Bennett, *Christians and the State*, 28-31.

³⁵ For a detailed collection surveying this rich historical diversity, see Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, eds., *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

³⁶ Bennett, *Christians and the State*, 37.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Opitz's Christian libertarianism outright dismisses the constructive possibilities suggested by this later view.

Finally, Opitz's case for Christian libertarianism relies on an insufficiently thin account of human freedom. The problem with Opitz's view is not that he values freedom too much; it is that he doesn't value freedom enough. In focusing his attention solely on external coercion as the primary threat to individual liberty, Opitz neglects the manner in which the freedom of individuals even in a "free market" can be unduly constrained by circumstance. For an impoverished parent struggling to feed her children or the laborer unable to find a job in an economic depression, the state itself might be the best guarantor of liberty, as Bennett well argues:

Instead of looking upon the state only as an enemy of freedom, it is more accurate to see the state as in many situations the best protection of freedom, especially the freedom of the economically weak.... The state is an instrument of freedom for those who are the victims of circumstance, of the impersonal economic forces that may throw them out of work, of the power of employers unless their right to collective bargaining is protected, of all kinds of injury incidental to employment unless the law of the state provides some means of redress. The abstract individualism of the market combined with the abstract individualism of the law turned out in practice to favor the rights and the welfare of the strong and it was the state alone that could chance that tendency.³⁸

The moral logic of Christian libertarianism elevates liberty as value that rightly informs Christian social ethics. If libertarians are correct in valorizing liberty as such, it remains to be proven whether the minimalist state that libertarians like Opitz defend is capable of guaranteeing the equal worth of liberty for all. I, for one, am skeptical.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 119-120.

WHICH MOSES? JEWISH BACKGROUND OF JESUS' TRANSFIGURATION

ANDREI A. ORLOV

The importance of Mosaic traditions for understanding Jesus' transfiguration has long been noticed by many distinguished students of the New Testament. While the role of Mosaic motifs found in the Hebrew Bible has been duly acknowledged, these studies often neglect extra-biblical Mosaic developments that might also constitute a conceptual background of Jesus' metamorphosis on the mountain. The purpose of this paper is to explore early para-biblical traditions in which the son of Amram was understood not merely as a prophet, but also as a divine figure.

MOSAIC SETTINGS OF THE TRANSFIGURATION STORY

The synoptic accounts of Jesus's transfiguration exhibit the features of a theophany. In analyzing the theophanic features, it is important to recognize a possible source of conceptual influences stemming from previous biblical and extra-biblical accounts. Memory of these influences is reflected not only in the special features of the crucial symbolic nexus of this theophany, the transfigured Jesus, but also in the distinctive actions and reactions of the beholders of this crucial vision, not to mention the peculiar spatial and temporal settings of the entire event. In this respect, the reactions of those present at the affair, along with the peculiar depictions of their appearance and behavior, may provide relevant information about the exact nature of the epiphany and its conceptual roots. Even a preliminary glance

at the transfiguration account reveals the unmistakable presence of motifs tied to Moses' encounters with the divine *Kavod* on Mount Sinai.

It is not a coincidence that early Christian authors relied on the memory of this paradigmatic theophanic event of the Hebrew Bible,¹ since the recollection of the Sinai apparition of the divine Glory and its prominent beholder, the son of Amram, became a theophanic blueprint for this Christological development. Many ancient and modern students of the transfiguration account have previously discerned explicit and implicit influences of the Mosaic theophanic patterns.² Ancient Christian exegetes — Irenaeus,³ Eusebius of Caesa-

¹ Scholars have noticed that the transfiguration account draws on a panoply of biblical and extra-biblical theophanic conceptual streams, including Ezekielian, Danielic, and Enochic imagery. On this, see Christopher Rowland and Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament*, *Compendia rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum* 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 106.

² See William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, *International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*. 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 2.686-7; James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 47; Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27—16:20*, *Word Biblical Commentary* 34B (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 34; Leroy A. Huizenga, *The New Isaac: Tradition and Intertextuality in the Gospel of Matthew*, *Supplements to Novum Testamentum* 131 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 211; Simon S. Lee, *Jesus' Transfiguration and the Believers' Transformation: A Study of the Transfiguration and Its Development in Early Christian Writings*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 2.265 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 17–22; M. David Litwa, *Jesus Deus: The Early Christian Depiction of Jesus as a Mediterranean God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 123; Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 81–83; Candida Moss, "The Transfiguration: An Exercise in Markan Accommodation," *Biblical Interpretation* 12 (2004): 72–73; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 416–417; Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 131.

rea,⁴ Ephrem the Syrian,⁵ and many others entertained such connections.⁶ In the context of modern history of biblical studies David Friedrich Strauss has already outlined the essential points of similarity between the transfiguration accounts in the synoptic gospels and Moses' ordeals on Sinai in the Old Testament, concentrating mainly

³ Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* 4.20.9 reads: "And the Word spake to Moses, appearing before him, 'just as any one might speak to his friend.' But Moses desired to see Him openly who was speaking with him, and was thus addressed: 'Stand in the deep place of the rock, and with my hand I will cover thee. But when my splendour shall pass by, then thou shalt see my back parts, but my face thou shalt not see: for no man sees my face, and shall live.' Two facts are thus signified: that it is impossible for man to see God; and that, through the wisdom of God, man shall see Him in the last times, in the depth of a rock, that is, in His coming as a man. And for this reason did He [the Lord] confer with him face to face on the top of a mountain, Elias being also present, as the Gospel relates, He thus making good in the end the ancient promise." Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* in: Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 5.446.

⁴ In his *Proof of the Gospel* 3:2, Eusebius unveils the following tradition: "Again when Moses descended from the Mount, his face was seen full of glory: for it is written: 'And Moses descending from the Mount did not know that the appearance of the skin of his face was glorified while He spake to him. And Aaron and all the elders [of the children] of Israel saw Moses, and the appearance of the skin of his face was glorified.' In the same way only more grandly our Saviour led His disciples "to a very high mountain, and he was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments were white like the light." William John, ed., *The Proof of the Gospel: Being the Demonstratio Evangelica of Eusebius of Casarea* (2 vols.; London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1920), 1.107.

⁵ Reflecting on Jesus' transfiguration, Ephrem in his *Hymns on the Church* 36:5-6 recounts: "the brightness which Moses put on was wrapped on him from without, and in that differed from the light of Christ, which shone from within in the womb, at the baptism, and on the mountain top." Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World of St. Ephrem* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 71.

⁶ Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 243.

on the biblical traditions reflected in Exod 24:1-2, 9-18 and Exod 34:29-35.⁷ Since Strauss' pioneering research, these parallels have been routinely reiterated and elaborated by various modern scholars.

The appropriation of the Mosaic theophanic motifs in Mark, Matthew, and Luke is a complex and multifaceted issue, since evolution of these traditions in the synoptic gospels remains a debated matter. Although some scholars argue that the Mosaic allusions appear to be present in their most articulated form in the Gospel of Matthew,⁸ already in the Gospel of Mark one can detect the formative influence of the Mosaic blueprint. Mark, however, does not mention several of the Mosaic features found in Matthew and Luke, including the motif of Jesus' luminous face. Some scholars have suggested that Mark could be intentionally silencing Mosaic allusions,

⁷ Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 82; David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 544-545.

⁸ Allison notes that "among the Matthean manipulations of Mark's text are the following: Moses has been given the honor of being named before Elijah; 'and his face shone like the sun' has been added; the cloud has been made 'bright' (*photeine*); 'in whom I am well pleased' has been inserted; and the order of *akouete autou* has been reversed. Various suggestions for these alterations can and have been made; but simplicity recommends one proposition to account for them all: Matthew rescripted Mark in order to push thoughts towards Moses. Thus the lawgiver now comes first, and no priority of significance is given to Elijah. 'Face' and 'sun' recall the extra-biblical tradition that Moses' face (cf. Exod 34:29) shone like the sun (Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 2:70; 2 Cor 3:7-18; *LAB* 12:1; *Sipre Num.* §140; *b. B. Bat.* 75a; *Deut. Rab.* 11 (207c); this is to be related to the idea that Moses on Sinai went to the place of the sun — *LAB* 12; cf. *2 Bar.* 59:11). *Photeine* alludes to the Shekinah, which accompanied Israel and Moses in the wilderness and tradition associated Moses' radiance with the glory of the Shekinah. The citation of Isa 42:1 ('in whom I am well pleased') makes Jesus the *cebed YHWH*, a figure with Mosaic associations (see pp. 68-71, 233-35). Finally, the change to *autou akouete* strengthens the allusion to LXX Deut 18:15 (*autou akouesthe*), which speaks of a prophet like Moses (cf. Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 4:22)." Allison, *New Moses*, 244.

battling early “prophetic Christology,”⁹ which attempted to envision Jesus as a prophet like Moses.¹⁰ Nevertheless, as William Davies and Dale Allison point out “although Mark ... does not appear to have stressed the Mosaic background of the transfiguration, the tradition

⁹ One of the proponents of this perspective, John McGuckin, suggests that “the fact that Mark deliberately omits reference to the Shekinah light on the face of Jesus, and chooses to speak instead of a thoroughgoing metamorphosis (a striking Hellenistic word, very rare in the NT, signifying radical spiritual transformation) argues that he wished to remove any overtly Sinaitic theme in his version of the narrative, and his main reason for doing this, I suggest, is to remove the Moses-Jesus analogy from centre stage, along with its inherently prophetic Christology.” John A. McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1986), 15. In another part of his study McGuckin proposes that “by removing reference to the shining face Mark economically removes the Mosaic Christological typology from the narrative. It is his concern to obviate this type of prophetic Christology in the Transfiguration story, and although he retains a Sinai archetype as a structural form, he does not retain the original theological point of using such an archetype in the first place.” McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ*, 66-67.

¹⁰ On this, see Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 36-37; Michael Goulder, “Elijah with Moses, or a Rift in the Pre-Markan Lute,” in David G. Horrell and Christopher M. Tuckett, eds., *Christology, Controversy and Community: New Testament Essays in Honour of David R. Catchpole*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 193-208; Tobias Hägerland, *Jesus and the Forgiveness of Sins: An Aspect of His Prophetic Mission*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 150 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 217-218; Wolfgang Kraus, “Die Bedeutung von Dtn 18,15-18 für das Verständnis Jesu als Prophet,” *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 90 (1999): 153-76; John Lierman, *The New Testament Moses: Christian Perceptions of Moses and Israel in the Setting of Jewish Religion*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.173 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 271-86; Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 45-6, 87-99; Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 97.

he received was largely formulated with Sinai in mind.”¹¹ Therefore, parallels between Mk 9:2-8 and Exod 24 and Exod 34 are rather abundant.¹²

¹¹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.686-7. In relation to these developments, Adela Yarbro Collins argues that “the account of the transfiguration evokes the Old Testament genre of the theophany and especially the Hellenistic and Roman genres of epiphany and metamorphosis. The affinity with biblical theophany is especially apparent in comparison with the account of the theophany on Mount Sinai ... Although it is used differently, both texts have the period of ‘six days’; both have a cloud on a mountain signifying the presence of God; both have the presence of Moses on the mountain; and both report speech of God on the mountain. In Exodus, the speech of God is reported in 25:1-31:18. This speech concerns the construction of the ‘tent’ or ‘tabernacle’ in the wilderness, including its furniture and rituals.” Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 416-417.

¹² While reflecting on possible parallels between Exodus and Mark, they notice that “in both (i) the setting is the same: a high mountain (Exod 24.12, 15-18; 34.3; Mark 9.2); (ii) there is a cloud that descends and overshadows the mountain (Exod 24.15-18; 34.5; Mk 9.7); (iii) a voice comes from the cloud (Exod 24.16; Mark 9.7); (iv) the central figures, Jesus and Moses, become radiant (Exod 34.29-30, 35; Mark 9.2-3); (v) those who see the radiance of the central figure become afraid (Exod 34.30; Mark 9.6); (vi) the event takes place ‘after six days’ (Exod 24.16; Mark 9.2); and (vii) a select group of three people is mentioned (Exod 24.1; Mark 9.2).” Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.686-7. Further commenting on Elijah and Moses’ appearance in the transfiguration story, Davies and Allison note that these two characters both of whom “converse with the transfigured Jesus, are the only OT figures of whom it is related that they spoke with God on Mount Sinai. So their appearance on a mountain in the NT should probably evoke the thought of Mount Sinai.” Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.686-7. Some other scholars also registered the overwhelming presence of the Mosaic Sinai motifs by noting that “there are many features about the transfiguration that have led commentators to conclude that this episode is intended to have some sort of typological connection to Exod 24 and 33-34, passages that describe Moses’ ascent up the mountain where he meets God and then descends with a shining face ... The following specific parallels between Mark’s account (9:2-8) and Exodus are evident: (1) the reference to ‘six days’ (Mark 9:2; Exod 24:16), (2) the cloud that covers the mountain (Mark 9:7; Exod 24:16), (3) God’s voice from the cloud (Mark 9:7; Exod 24:16), (4) three companions (Mark 9:2; Exod 24:1, 9), (5) a transformed appearance (Mark 9:3; Exod

The memory of Mosaic Sinai encounters is even more apparent in the Matthean version of the transfiguration.¹³ In fact, the influx of Mosaic allusions has caused some scholars to suggest that Matthew attempts to portray Jesus as a “new Moses.” One of the proponents of this idea, Dale Allison, argues that in Matthew “the major theme of the epiphany story would seem to be Jesus’ status as a new Moses, and Exod 24 and 34 would seem to be important influences.” Reflecting on the motif of Jesus’ luminous face found in Matthew, Allison proposes “there is scarcely room for doubt that Matthew has modified Mark for the deliberate purpose of presenting Jesus after the manner of Moses.”¹⁴

However, in the scholarly debates about Jesus as the new Moses it often remains uncertain which Mosaic developments are under consideration by scholars — traditions of the human Moses found in

34:30), and (6) the reaction of fear (Mark 9:6; Exod 34:30).” Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27—16:20*, WBC 34B (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 34.

¹³ In his recent study, Leroy Huizenga reflects on these previous scholarly insights by noting that “reigning interpretation of the Matthean transfiguration in particular concerns the perceived foregrounding of Sinai motifs and the presentation of Jesus as a new Moses. Commentators point to a multitude of details for support. The phrase ‘after six days’ (Matt 17:1) seems reminiscent of Exod 24:15–18, which relates that the Shekinah covered Sinai for six days (Exod 24:16). Like the Matthean Jesus, Moses is accompanied by three named adherents (Matt 17:1; Exod 24:1, 9). The mountain of Matt 17:1 perhaps recalls Sinai. Like Moses, the Matthean Jesus becomes radiant (Matt 17:2; Exod 34:29–35). Jesus’ radiance and Moses’ radiance arouse fear (Matt 17:6; Exod 34:29–30). Moses and Elijah appear in Matt 17:3, both of whom conversed with God on Sinai (cf. 1 Kgs 19:8–19). The cloud of Matt 17:5 may concern Moses and Sinai (Exod 19:16; 24:15–18; 34:5), and a cloud was certainly a major feature of wilderness traditions (Exod 13:21–22; 33:7–11; 40:34–38; Num 9:15–23). Both Matt 17:5 and Exod 24:16 share the feature of a voice from a cloud. The word *ἠπυσκιάζω* in Matt 17:5 is found also in Exod 40:35. Finally, the last two words of the heavenly voice in Matt 17:5, *ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ*, may allude to Deut 18:15, Moses’ words concerning the coming eschatological prophet.” Huizenga, *The New Isaac*, 211.

¹⁴ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.685–686.

the biblical theophanic accounts or portrayals of the deified Moses attested in the *Exagoge* of the Ezekiel the Tragedian and the writings of Philo. In these extra-biblical renderings of Moses' story that precede Christianity, the prophet's visionary ordeals were often envisioned as his angelification or deification. Moreover, in the course of these encounters Moses himself often absorbs some divine features, including the attributes of the divine Glory (*Kavod*).¹⁵

Scholarly discussions which attempt to envision Jesus as the new Moses often ignore these extra-biblical testimonies, where Moses was portrayed not merely as a seer, but as an embodiment of the divine *Kavod*. Instead, contemporary theories about Jesus as the new Moses prefer to rely solely on the memory of biblical Mosaic tradi-

¹⁵ In this respect, Jarl Fossum argues that "although we would be right to see a Moses pattern behind the synoptic account of Jesus' 'transfiguration,' the usual citation of texts from Exodus cannot throw much light on Mark 9:2-8 and its parallels." Jarl Fossum, "Ascensio, Metamorphosis: The 'Transfiguration' of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels," in Jarl Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism on Early Christology*, *Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus* 30 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 76. For Moses' exaltation, see Richard Bauckham, "Moses as 'God' in Philo of Alexandria: A Precedent for Christology?" in I. Howard Marshall et al., eds., *The Spirit and Christ in the New Testament and Christian Theology: Essays in Honor of Max Turner* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 246-65; George W. Coats, *Moses: Heroic Man, Man of God*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series* 57 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 155-78; Donald A. Hagner, "The Vision of God in Philo and John: A Comparative Study," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 14 (1971): 81-93; Wendy Helleman, "Philo of Alexandria on Deification and Assimilation to God," *Studia Philonica Annual* 2 (1990): 51-71; Carl Holladay, *Theios Aner in Hellenistic-Judaism: A Critique of the Use of This Category in New Testament Christology* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977); Larry Hurtado, *One Lord, One God: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 56-59; Lierman, *The New Testament Moses*; David Runia, "God and Man in Philo of Alexandria," *Journal of Theological Studies* 39 (1988): 48-75; Ian W. Scott, "Is Philo's Moses a Divine Man?" *Studia Philonica Annual* 14 (2002): 87-111; Jan Willem van Henten, "Moses as Heavenly Messenger in Assumptio Mosis 10:2 and Qumran passages," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 54 (2003): 216-27.

tions, while the non-biblical allusions are largely ignored. Yet the complex and multifaceted nature of Mosaic influences on the transfiguration accounts should not lead us to simplified conclusions that the synoptic gospels' intention was merely to portray Jesus as a transformed visionary, similar to the biblical Moses.¹⁶ Scholars have convincingly demonstrated that Jesus' transfiguration clearly supersedes the biblical patterns of the son of Amram's transformation. As we recall, in the Hebrew Bible the luminous face of the great Israelite prophet serves as a mere reflection of God's Glory.¹⁷ However, in the transfiguration account, where God assumes the aural invisible profile, being depicted as formless divine Voice, some peculiar features of the missing divine *Kavod* are transferred to the new personalized nexus of the visual theophany — Jesus, now understood as a center of the theophany. In this respect one of the significant details underlying the difference between Jesus' luminous metamorphosis and the luminosity of Moses's face is the order of the deity's appearance in the respective visionary traditions. In the biblical accounts, Moses' face becomes luminous only *after* the prophet's encounter with God. The appearance of God's Form thus precedes the transformation of the seer's face, which in these theophanic currents is often understood as a mere mirror of the divine Glory. However, in the transfig-

¹⁶ On Jesus as the new Moses, see Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.696; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary 33B (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 492-493; Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 80-93; François Refoulé, "Jésus, nouveau Moïse, ou Pierre, nouveau Grand Prêtre? (Mt 17, 1-9; Mc 9, 2-10)," *Revue Théologique de Louvain* 24 (1993): 145-62.

¹⁷ On the luminosity of Moses' face, see Menahem Haran, "The Shining of Moses's Face: A Case Study in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography [Exod 34:29-35; Ps 69:32; Hab 3:4]," in W. Boyd Barrick, John R. Spencer, eds., *In the Shelter of Elyon*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 31 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1984), 159-73; Julian Morgenstern, "Moses with the Shining Face," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 2 (1925): 1-27; William Propp, "The Skin of Moses' Face — Transfigured or Disfigured?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49 (1987): 375-386.

uration story, Jesus' luminous metamorphosis occurs *before* the apparition of the Divinity. This manifests a striking contrast to the biblical Exodus theophanies where the initial source of Moses' glorious face, or his glorious apotheosis, the divine Form, appears first.¹⁸ Jesus himself thus became understood as a revelation of the divine Glory and not as its glorious "mirror." In relation to these developments, Adela Yarbro Collins notes that

the connection with the text from Exodus, however does not explain the statement in v. 2 that Jesus was transfigured. A later passage in Exodus says that, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai, his face "shone" or "had been glorified" because he had been talking with God. One could argue that, analogously, Jesus was transfigured because he was talking with two heavenly beings, the glorified Elijah and Moses. The text, however, seems to imply that Jesus' transfigured state is part of revelation, rather than a result of it.¹⁹

Furthermore, unlike in Exodus, where the deity is clearly conceived as the divine *Kavod* (and initial theophanic cause for Moses' facial luminosity), in the transfiguration story God is not fashioned as the anthropomorphic divine Glory, but instead as an aniconic aural manifestation. Some of these differences between the two metamorphoses, Moses and Jesus, have been discussed by scholars. Criticizing the hypothesis about Jesus as new Moses, Heil rightly observes that the fatal flaw of such an interpretation is that the transformation involves only the face of Moses and *follows* his speaking with God. Jesus' transfiguration involves not only his face but his clothing and *precedes* his encounter with the deity.²⁰

¹⁸ Arthur Michael Ramsey highlights the difference, noting that whereas Moses' glory on Sinai was reflected, Jesus' glory was unborrowed. Arthur Michael Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1949), 120.

¹⁹ Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 417.

²⁰ John Paul Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus: Narrative Meaning and Function of Mark 9:2-8, Matt 17:1-8 and Luke 9:28-36*, *Analecta Biblica* 144 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), 78-79.

Keeping in mind a rich and multifaceted legacy of the Mosaic developments in the Second Temple Jewish environment, which included not only formative biblical accounts but also their extra-biblical elaborations, we now turn to some of these testimonies, as reflected in the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian, Philo, and the Qumran writings. Within these traditions Moses himself becomes envisioned as the nexus of theophany, often being understood as a celestial being, endowed with the distinctive ocularcentric attributes of the deity.

THE EXTRA-BIBLICAL MOSAIC DEVELOPMENTS

Joel Marcus draws attention to three dimensions of Mosaic developments in early Jewish extra-biblical lore which are for him significant for understanding Jesus' transfiguration. These include Moses' enthronement, his translation to heaven at his death, and his divinization.²¹ With respect to this study, these dimensions are important precisely because in these extra-biblical elaborations Moses is often endowed with the attributes of the divine Glory.

Moses' Enthronement

The conceptual trajectory of Moses' enthronement is already present in the work of the second-century B.C.E. Jewish poet Ezekiel the Tragedian where Moses receives tokens of kingship from God on Mount Sinai.²² Moses' enhanced profile in the *Exagoge* represents one of the most significant advancements, propelling the prophet's story into an entirely new theophanic dimension.

Preserved in fragmentary form by several ancient sources,²³ *Exagoge* 67–90 reads:

²¹ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 84.

²² Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 84.

²³ The Greek text of the passage was published in several editions, including: A.-M. Denis, *Fragmenta pseudepigraphorum quae supersunt graeca*, Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 210; Bruno Snell, *Tragicorum graecorum fragmenta I* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck &

Moses: I had a vision of a great throne on the top of Mount Sinai and it reached till the folds of heaven. A noble man was sitting on it, with a crown and a large scepter in his left hand. He beckoned to me with his right hand, so I approached and stood before the throne. He gave me the scepter and instructed me to sit on the great throne. Then he gave me a royal crown and got up from the throne. I beheld the whole earth all around and saw beneath the earth and above the heavens. A multitude of stars fell before my knees and I counted them all. They paraded past me like a battalion of men. Then I awoke from my sleep in fear.

Raguel: My friend, this is a good sign from God. May I live to see the day when these things are fulfilled. You will establish a great throne, become a judge and leader of men. As for your vision of the whole earth, the world below and that above the heavens – this signifies that you will see what is, what has been and what shall be.²⁴

Given its quotation by Alexander Polyhistor (ca. 80–40 B.C.E.), this Mosaic account has been often taken as a witness to traditions of the second century B.C.E.²⁵ The text exhibits a tendency to adapt some Enochic motifs and themes into the framework of the Mosaic tradition.²⁶

Ruprecht, 1971), 288–301; Howard Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 54; Carl R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, 3 vols. Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations 30. Pseudepigrapha Series 12 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), 2.362–66.

²⁴ Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 54–55.

²⁵ Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 149. See also Holladay, *Fragments*, 2.308–12.

²⁶ On the Enochic motifs in the *Exagoge*, see Pieter van der Horst, “Moses’ Throne Vision in Ezekiel the Dramatist,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 34 (1983): 21–29; Andrei A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum 107 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 262–268; Kristine Ruffatto, “Polemics with Enochic Traditions in the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 15 (2006): 195–210; idem, “Raguel as Interpreter of Moses’ Throne Vision: The Transcendent Identity of Raguel in the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 17 (2008): 121–39.

With respect to the present study, the most salient feature of the account is the transfer of several distinctive theophanic attributes, including the attribute of the divine seat, to Moses. Notably, God himself appears to execute the transferal when he orders Moses to take the seat he previously occupied. The enthroned celestial figure then vacates his heavenly seat and hands his royal attributes to the son of Amram.

Marcus notices similarities of the *Exagoge* with Daniel 7, which royal features are now transferred into a distinctive Mosaic context. Marcus points out that in the *Exagoge*, “which has some striking similarities to the vision described in Dan 7:13-14, the ascent of Sinai ... is linked with Moses’ reception of a kingly scepter and of a crown, and with his mounting of a throne.”²⁷ Marcus notices that Jethro’s interpretation of the dream also contains a reference to Moses’ enthronement since it predicts that “Moses will ‘cause a mighty throne to rise ... will rule and govern men’ (lines 85-86), thus cementing the royal interpretation of the Sinai ascent.”²⁸

These developments attested in the *Exagoge* are significant for our investigation of the Mosaic traditions in the transfiguration story. As previously noted, in this early text Moses’ story makes an important symbolic turn by upgrading the protagonist’s status from a visionary to an object of vision. It is also notable that we can trace this transition in the *Exagoge*, since such a paradigm shift literally unfolds before the eyes of the account’s readers. As one remembers, Moses first sees the *Kavod* and then he himself becomes its embodiment. The implicit postulation of the heavenly locale of Moses’ ordeal is also significant. Commenting on the *Exagoge*’s portrayal of Moses, Jarl Fossum notes that “although the author here speaks about ascending Mt. Sinai, it is clear that the locale described is a heavenly one. The throne of the ‘noble Man’ is enormous, reaching to the ‘corners of heaven.’ From its place Moses can see everything.

²⁷ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 85

²⁸ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 85

The ‘heavenly bodies,’ which in Israelite-Jewish religion are identical with the angels, fall down and worship him.”²⁹

A significant detail of the *Exagoge* account, relevant to our study of the transfiguration story, is a designation of the celestial man, whose place is later taken by Moses as *phos*. The term $\phi\omega\varsigma/\phi\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ was often used in the Jewish theophanic traditions to label the glorious manifestations of the deity as well as his anthropomorphic human “icons,” who radiate the luminosity of their newly acquired celestial bodies. These traditions often play on the ambiguity of the term, which, depending on the context, can designate either “a man” ($\phi\acute{\omega}\varsigma$) or “light” ($\phi\omega\varsigma$), pointing to both the luminous and anthropomorphic nature of the divine or angelic manifestations.³⁰

The *Exagoge*’s identification of the great Israelite prophet with a celestial form is not a unique occurrence. Scholars often point to some Samaritan materials suggestive of Moses’ installation into the heavenly realm. Although these traditions survived in the later macroforms, they are similar to some early Jewish pseudepigraphical developments. Jarl Fossum draws attention to a text from the third century hymn cycle known as the *Defter*, where one finds the following tradition:

Great God, whose like there is not! Great assembly [i.e. the angelic host] without compeer! Great Prophet the like of whom there has never arisen! ... Verily he was clothed with a garment with which no king can clothe himself. Verily he was covered by the cloud and his face was clothed with a ray of light, so all na-

²⁹ Fossum, “Ascensio, Metamorphosis,” 75.

³⁰ On the $\phi\omega\varsigma$ traditions, see Gilles Quispel, “Ezekiel 1:26 in Jewish Mysticism and Gnosis,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 (1980): 1–13 at 6–7; Jarl Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 36 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 280; idem, *Image of the Invisible God*, 16–17; Silviu N. Bunta, *Moses, Adam and the Glory of the Lord in Ezekiel the Tragedian: On the Roots of a Merkabah Text* (Ph.D. diss.; Marquette University, 2005), 92ff.

tions should know that Moses was the Servant of God and His Faithful One.³¹

Looking closely at these Samaritan developments, Fossum concludes that “there can be little doubt that this is a description of the installation of Moses as king in heaven.”³²

Moses’ Glorification at His Death/His Translation to Heaven

Marcus calls attention to another important cluster of para-biblical developments which unveil a tradition about Moses’ translation to heaven. For our study it is important to note that in some renderings of this story, Moses’ earthly body undergoes a fiery or glorious transformation. These traditions, moreover, try to connect the metamorphosis of the prophet’s face at Sinai with his final full glorification. This correspondence between the seer’s proleptic partial and temporary glorification and his future full glorification at the point of his departure from the earthly realm is an important detail for our analysis of the transfiguration story, since Jesus’ metamorphosis on the mountain is often understood as a proleptic glimpse into the eschatological role of Christ as the embodiment of the divine Glory. In relation to such an understanding, Joel Marcus observes that “in Mark the transfiguration narrative is not an end in itself; rather, it points beyond itself to an eschatological event, Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. The royal Mosaic features of the transfiguration narrative, therefore, foreshadow the enthronement of Jesus that occurs at his resurrection.”³³ Marcus further suggests that this association of enthronement with an after-death experience also has Mosaic precedent.³⁴

³¹ Fossum, “Ascensio, Metamorphosis,” 73-74.

³² Fossum, “Ascensio, Metamorphosis,” 74.

³³ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 87.

³⁴ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 87. Marcus further notes that “the linkage of the transfiguration narrative with the resurrection is established redactionally by its juxtaposition with 9:9-10 and is underlined in an intriguing manner by the larger context of the Old Testament passage cited in 9:7. In

The traditions of Moses' glorification at his death or his translation to heaven have very early conceptual roots in the pre-Christian Jewish lore. The motif of Moses's translation to heaven at the end of his life plays an important role already in Philo. In relation to these developments, Wayne Meeks observes that

Philo takes for granted that Deuteronomy 34:6, "no man knows his grave," means that Moses was translated. Doubtless this view was traditional in Philo's circle, for he states matter-of-factly that Enoch, "the protoprophet (Moses)," and Elijah all obtained this reward.³⁵ The end of Moses' life was an "ascent,"³⁶ an "emigration to heaven," "abandoning the mortal life to be made³⁷ immortal."³⁸

De Vita Mosis 2.288–91 portrays Moses' departure from the earthly realm as follows:

Afterwards the time came when he had to make his pilgrimage from earth to heaven, and leave this mortal life for immortality, summoned thither by the Father who resolved his twofold nature of soul and body into a single unity, transforming his whole being into mind, pure as the sunlight ... for when he was already being exalted and stood at the very barrier, ready at the signal to direct his upward flight to heaven, the divine spirit fell upon him and he prophesied with discernment while still alive the story of his own death.³⁹

9:9, which is a redactional verse, the Markan Jesus establishes a link between the transfiguration narrative and the resurrection by ordering the disciples not to tell anyone what they have seen on the mountain until the Son of Man is raised from the dead." Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 87–88.

³⁵ *QG* 1.86.

³⁶ *QG* 1.86.

³⁷ *Mos.* 2.288–292; *Virt.* 53, 72–79.

³⁸ Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 124.

³⁹ Francis Henry Colson and George Herbert Whitaker, eds., *Philo*, 10 vols. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929–64), 6.593–5.

Analyzing this passage scholars often see within the statement that God transformed Moses' "whole being into mind, pure as the sunlight" an implicit reference to his glorification.⁴⁰ Similarly, Josephus also describes Moses in the same paradigm of otherworldly translation,⁴¹ which vividly recalls the departures of Enoch and Elijah. *Ant.* 4.326⁴² unveils the following tradition:

And, while he [Moses] bade farewell to Eleazar and Joshua and was yet communing with them, a cloud all of a sudden descended upon him and he disappeared in a ravine. But he has written of himself in the sacred books that he died, for fear lest they should venture to say that by reason of his surpassing virtue he had gone back to the Deity.⁴³

While Philo and Josephus only implicitly intimate Moses' glorification at the point of his transition to the upper realm, some testimonies found in Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* explicitly express this possibility. Kristine Ruffatto argues that "Pseudo-Philo goes beyond the traditional narrative to ascribe luminosity to

⁴⁰ Lierman, *The New Testament Moses*, 201.

⁴¹ James D. Tabor, "Returning to the Divinity': Josephus's Portrayal of the Disappearances of Enoch, Elijah, and Moses," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989): 225–38; Christopher Begg, "Josephus's Portrayal of the Disappearances of Enoch, Elijah, and Moses," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109 (1990): 691–93.

⁴² The motif of Moses' translation is also attested in *Ant.* 3.96–7: "There was a conflict of opinions: some said that he [Moses] had fallen a victim to wild beasts – it was principally those who were ill disposed towards him who voted for that view – others that he had been taken back to the divinity. But the sober-minded, who found no private satisfaction in either statement – who held that to die under the fangs of beasts was a human accident, and that he should be translated by God to Himself by reason of his inherent virtue was likely enough – were moved by these reflections to retain their composure." Henry S. J. Thackeray, ed., *Josephus, Jewish Antiquities*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press/London: Heinemann, 1967), 3.363.

⁴³ Thackeray, *Josephus, Jewish Antiquities*, 4.633.

Moses multiple times: on his first ascent of Sinai as well as his second, and just prior to his death on Nebo.”⁴⁴ The assignment of luminosity to Moses before his death is crucial for our study of the Christian developments, in which the luminosity of Jesus’ face is put in conspicuous parallel with the glory of his resurrection.

In *LAB*, Ruffatto notes that just prior to his death, when Moses ascends Abarim/Nebo, his “appearance became glorious; and he died in glory according to the word of the Lord” (*et mutata est effigies eius in gloria, et mortuus est in gloria secundum os Domini* – 19:16).⁴⁵ Ruffatto points out that “this assertion of Moses’ pre-death luminosity is not present in Deut 34.”⁴⁶ She further suggests that the author of *LAB* evidently “saw Moses’ radiance as an experience of actual transmutation into transcendent form.”⁴⁷

The lore about Moses’ translation to heaven and his bodily metamorphosis during this transition receives further development in later midrashic materials. These accounts often speak about the glorious or fiery form of the prophet’s body during his final translation. For example, *Deut. Rab.* 11:10 contains the following:

When Moses saw that no creature could save him from the path of death ... He took a scroll and wrote down upon it the Ineffable Name, nor had the Book of Song been completely written down when the moment of Moses’ death arrived. At that hour God said to Gabriel: “Gabriel, go forth and bring Moses’ soul.” He, however, replied: “Master of the Universe, how can I wit-

⁴⁴ Kristine J. Ruffatto, *Visionary Ascents of Moses in Pseudo-Philo’s Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum: Apocalyptic Motifs and the Growth of Visionary Moses Tradition* (Ph.D. diss.; Marquette University, 2010), 152.

⁴⁵ Ruffatto, *Visionary Ascents of Moses*, 168. Other scholars have also noticed these developments. Thus, John Lierman points out that “Pseudo-Philo writes that Moses at the very end of his life ‘was filled with understanding and his appearance was changed to a state of glory; and he died in glory (*et mutata est effigies eius in gloria et mortuus est in gloria; LAB* 19:16),’ words that recall Philo’s description of the physical transformation and endowment with special insight that came upon Moses at his final prophecy.” Lierman, *The New Testament Moses*, 204.

⁴⁶ Ruffatto, *Visionary Ascents of Moses*, 168.

⁴⁷ Ruffatto, *Visionary Ascents of Moses*, 170.

ness the death of him who is equal to sixty myriads, and how can I behave harshly to one who possesses such qualities?" Then [God] said to Michael: "Go forth and bring Moses' soul." He, however, replied: "Master of the Universe, I was his teacher, and he my pupil, and I cannot therefore witness his death." [God] then said to Sammael the wicked: "Go forth and bring Moses' soul." Immediately he clothed himself with anger and girded on his sword and wrapped himself with ruthlessness and went forth to meet Moses. When Sammael saw Moses sitting and writing down the Ineffable Name, and how the radiance of his appearance was like unto the sun and he was like unto an angel of the Lord of hosts, he became afraid of Moses.

In *Midrash Gedullat Moshe*⁴⁸ the motif of Moses' translation to heaven coincides with the fiery transformation of his earthly form. In this text God commands the angel Metatron to bring Moses up to heaven. Metatron warns the deity that the prophet would not be able to withstand the vision of angels, "since the angels are princes of fire, while Moses is made from flesh and blood." God then commands Metatron to change the prophet's flesh into torches of fire.

While thoroughly considering the aforementioned traditions and their relevance for the transfiguration accounts, Joel Marcus notes that the parallelism between Sinai and Moses's translation often found in the extra-biblical interpretations "provides a plausible background for the redactional linkage made in Mark 9:2-10 between the events on the mountain and the reference to resurrection, since resurrection and ascension to heaven are related concepts, although admittedly they have different history-of-religions backgrounds."⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Solomon A. Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1950-53), 1.27.

⁴⁹ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 88.

Moses' Angelification and Divinization

Another important aspect in the development of the para-biblical Mosaic lore are traditions of Moses' angelification and divinization. Moses' endowment with a unique celestial status and form often coincides in the extra-biblical Jewish materials with assigning to him attributes of the heavenly beings. For example, the *Animal Apocalypse*, an Enochic writing usually dated to the second century B.C.E.,⁵⁰ hints at an angelic status and form of the son of Amram in its enigmatic rendering of the Sinai encounter. *1 Enoch* 89:36 depicts Moses as the one who was transformed from a sheep into a man at Sinai. In the metaphorical language of the *Animal Apocalypse*, where angels are portrayed as anthropomorphic and humans as zoomorphic creatures, the transition from sheep to a man clearly indicates that the character has acquired an angelic form and status.

Crispin Fletcher-Louis draws attention to already mentioned developments in Pseudo-Philo which also seem to hint at Moses's angelic status. He notes that in *LAB* 12:1, "Moses ascends Mount Sinai where he is 'bathed with light that could not be gazed upon,' surpassing in splendor the light of the sun, moon and stars. Because of his glory the Israelites could not recognize him on his descent. The

⁵⁰ In relation to the date of the text Daniel Olson notes that "fragments of the *An. Apoc.* from Qumran provide a *terminus ad quem* before 100 B.C.E., but greater precision is possible since the allegory appears to describe the ascendancy of Judas Maccabee (90:9), but says nothing about his death (90:12). Based on this, most scholars agree that the *An. Apoc.* was written between 165–160 B.C.E., and they further agree that the author was probably a member of or a sympathizer with the reform group described in 90:6–9 and a supporter of the Maccabean revolt when it broke out, expecting it to evolve into earth's final battle, God's direct intervention in history, and the inauguration of the eschatological age (90:9–20). If this is correct, one may suppose that one reason the *An. Apoc.* was published was to encourage readers to back the Maccabean revolt." Daniel Olson, *A New Reading of the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch: "All Nations Shall be Blessed"*, *Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha* 24 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 85–86. See also Daniel Assefa, *L'Apocalypse des animaux (1Hen 85–90): une propagande militaire? Approches narrative, historico-critique, perspectives théologiques*, *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period Supplement Series* 120 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 220–232.

failure of others to recognize the transformed mortal also appears in some Latin texts for the parallel episode in *Biblical Antiquities* 27:10, where Kenaz is assisted by an angel.⁵¹ According to Fletcher-Louis, “the visual transformation of the mortal and, sometimes, their consequent unrecognizability, is a frequent motif in angelomorphic transformation texts with a close parallel in the deification of Moses in 4Q374.”⁵²

Fletcher-Louis’ reference to 4Q374 brings us to the Qumran materials, which often feature Moses as an angelomorphic being. Fletcher-Louis suggests that in the Dead Sea Scrolls Moses’ divine or angelomorphic identity is often associated with his ascent up Sinai and in the giving of the Torah.⁵³ To quote his words: “4Q374 frag. 2 and 4Q377 specifically locate events at Sinai, although it is true that they do not exclude some earlier angelomorphic identity for Moses and, of course, 4Q374 uses the statement that Moses became God to Pharaoh in Egypt (Exod 7:1).”⁵⁴ Furthermore, it is possible that the Dead Sea Scrolls entertain not only the possibility of Moses’ angelification but also his divinization at Sinai. For example, 4Q374 alludes to the deification of the great prophet by saying: “he made him [Moses] like a god⁵⁵ over the powerful ones, and a cause of reel[ing] (?) for Pharaoh ... and then he let his face shine on them for healing,

⁵¹ Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 42 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 416-417.

⁵² Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 416-417.

⁵³ Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 149.

⁵⁴ Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 149. See also Crispin Fletcher-Louis, “4Q374: A Discourse on the Sinai Tradition: The Deification of Moses and Early Christology,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 3 (1996): 236-52.

⁵⁵ The Mosaic title “god” is already attested in Exod 7:1: “See, I have made you a god to Pharaoh.” See also Philo’s *Life of Moses* 1.155-58: “for he [Moses] was named god and king of the whole nation.”

they strengthened [their] hearts again.”⁵⁶ Another feature of this Qumran passage significant for our analysis is that the radiance of the glorified Moses’ face, similar to the divine luminosity, appears to be able to transform human nature.

Yet another important cluster of Mosaic traditions which attests to the son of Amram’s possession of angelic attributes are the stories regarding his miraculous features revealed at birth. Although these stories are preserved in their full scope only in later rabbinic materials,⁵⁷ these narrative currents appear to have early pre-Christian conceptual roots, since they parallel stories of Noah’s miraculous birth found in Jewish pseudepigrapha and Qumran materials.⁵⁸ Some have persuasively argued that the stories of Moses’ birth

⁵⁶ 4Q374 2:6–8. Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 2 vols. (Leiden; New York; Köln: Brill, 1997), 2.740–41.

⁵⁷ Fletcher-Louis points out that there is “no parallel to the birth of Noah for Moses among the Dead Sea Scrolls.” Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 149.

⁵⁸ The traditions are discernible, for example, in Pseudo-Philo. Kristine Ruffatto notes that “*LAB* 9 contains a colorful introduction to Moses’ birth and life, the vast majority of which is not present in the Hebrew Bible. Pseudo-Philo’s considerable embellishment of the traditional canonical text of Exod 1-2 includes the proclamation by God to Amram that Moses will see God’s ‘house’/heavenly temple (9:8) and the statement that Moses was born circumcised (he was ‘born in the covenant of God and the covenant of the flesh’ – 9:13). The text goes on to proclaim that Moses was nursed ‘and became glorious above all other men’ (*et gloriosus factus est super omnes homines*), a declaration of Moses’ singularity among humans and a likely reference to Moses’ future luminosity.” Ruffatto, *Visionary Ascents of Moses*, 154–55. Looking at *LAB*’s tradition that Moses was born circumcised, Ruffatto says that “the commentators note that this is, surprisingly, the only reference to circumcision in all of *LAB*. One may ask why only Moses is singled out as circumcised in the text, and why the author has stressed that the covenant mediator was born that way. It may well be a statement about Moses’ unique angel-like identity as one who, like the angels, was born in this holy state. *LAB* knows *Jubilees*, and *Jub.* 15:27 links circumcision to the angels, who were born circumcised (‘the nature of all the angels of the presence and all of the angels of sanctification was thus from the day of their creation’).” Ruffatto, *Visionary Ascents of Moses*, 155.

influenced the Mosaic typology of Jesus' nativity stories found in the synoptic gospels, especially in Matthew. Later rabbinic stories reminiscent of the Noachic lore reflected in *1 Enoch* and the *Genesis Apocryphon* provide interesting details about the miraculous birth of the great prophet. According to *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 48, at birth Moses' body was like an angel of God. *b. Sotah* 12a recounts that at his birth the house was filled with light. According to *Deut. Rab.* 11:10, the young prophet who was only a day old was able to speak, and at four months, to prophesy.⁵⁹ These later rabbinic traditions echo previously discussed traditions within Qumran literature in which Moses is envisioned as a celestial being.

Another cluster of conceptual developments related to angelification and divinization of Moses is found in the works of Philo of Alexandria. Scholars who have engaged with these traditions are often perplexed by the motif of Moses' divinization as it relates to prevailing concepts of Jewish monotheism. Joel Marcus notes that in the *Life of Moses* 1.158⁶⁰ "Philo implies that the enthronement of Moses

⁵⁹ See also *Exod. Rab.* 1:20 and *Zohar* II.11b.

⁶⁰ *De Vita Mosis* I.156-158 reads: "For if, as the proverb says, what belongs to friends is common, and the prophet is called the friend of God, it would follow that he shares also God's possessions, so far as it is serviceable. For God possesses all things, but needs nothing; while the good man, though he possesses nothing in the proper sense, not even himself, partakes of the precious things of God so far as he is capable. And that is but natural, for he is a world citizen, and therefore not on the roll of any city of men's habitation, rightly so because he has received no mere piece of land but the whole world as his portion. Again, was not the joy of his partnership with the Father and Maker of all magnified also by the honor of being deemed worthy to bear the same title? For he was named god and king of the whole nation, and entered, we are told, into the darkness where God was, that is into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal and archetypal essence of existing things. Thus he beheld what is hidden from the sight of mortal nature, and, in himself and his life displayed for all to see, he has set before us, like some well-wrought picture, a piece of work beautiful and godlike, a model for those who are willing to copy it." Colson and Whitaker, *Philo*, 6.357-359.

on Sinai involved his becoming a god.”⁶¹ David Litwa recently offered a nuanced and insightful reassessment of Moses’ divinization’s motifs in Philo. He writes that

in his *Questions on Exodus*, for instance, Philo says that Moses was “divinized” (2.40), “changed into the divine,” and thus became “truly divine” (2.29). Moreover, ten times Philo calls Moses “(a) god” (θεός) in accordance with Exod 7:1: “I [God] have made you a god to Pharaoh.” In *On the Sacrifices*, for instance, Philo says that God appointed Moses as god, “placing all the bodily region and the mind which rules it in subjection and slavery to him” (§9).⁶²

Comparable to the *Exagoge* and Qumran materials, Philo’s reflections on Moses’ exaltation are often put in the context of Sinai traditions. According to Litwa, “Philo presents Moses’s ascent on Sinai as a proleptic experience of deification.”⁶³ The tendency to view Moses’ encounter on the mountain as the proleptic experience that anticipates Moses’ permanent deification after his death is important for our analysis of Jesus’ transfiguration; like Moses, his acquisition of the divine Glory on the mountain also anticipates his future role as

⁶¹ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 90.

⁶² M. David Litwa, “The Deification of Moses in Philo of Alexandria,” *Studia Philonica Annual* 26 (2014): 1-27 at 1. For discussion on the concept of deification in Philo, see Ronald Cox, *By the Same Word: Creation and Salvation in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 145 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 87-140; Roberto Radice, “Philo’s Theology and Theory of Creation,” in Adam Kamesar, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 128-29; David T. Runia, “The Beginnings of the End: Philo of Alexandria and Hellenistic Theology,” in Dorothea Frede and André Laks, eds., *Traditions of Theology: Studies in Hellenistic Theology, Its Background and Aftermath*, *Philosophia Antiqua* 89 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 281-312 at 289-99; David Winston, “Philo’s Conception of the Divine Nature,” in Lenn E. Goodman, ed., *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought* (Albany: SUNY, 1992), 21-42 at 21-23.

⁶³ Litwa, “The Deification of Moses in Philo of Alexandria,” 14-15.

the divine *Kavod* after his death and resurrection. Touching on Moses' final translation Litwa observes that

Moses's translation was his final pilgrimage to the heavenly realm in which all the transformations he experienced at Sinai became permanent (*Mos.* 2.288). Just as in *Questions on Exodus* 2.29, the departing Moses is resolved "into the nature of unity" and "changed into the divine." His "migration" from this world was an "exaltation," in which he "noticed that he was gradually being disengaged from the [bodily] elements with which he had been mixed" (*Virt.* 76). When Moses shed his mortal encasing, God resolved Moses's body and soul into a single unity, "transforming [him] wholly and entirely into most sun-like νοῦς" (ἔλκον δι' ἔλων μεταρμυζόμενος εἰς νοῦν ἡλιοειδέστατον) (*Mos.* 2.288; cf. *Virt.* 72-79). It is important to note the brilliant light imagery here, since it connects Moses to divine Glory traditions. At Sinai, Moses saw the divine Glory (the Logos), and participated in it. Philo translated these scriptural ideas into philosophical terms. Moses, who once saw God's glorious Logos (or Mind), is now permanently transformed into the brilliant reality of νοῦς.⁶⁴

Litwa points out an important connection between Moses' deification and Philo's attention to the visionary traditions, observing that

perhaps the clearest indication of Moses's deification is his vision of (the second) God and its results ... The Existent granted Moses's request. He did not, however, reveal his essence to Moses. Rather, he revealed his Image, the Logos. ... By gazing at the Logos, the Existent's splendor reached Moses in order that through the secondary splendor, Moses beheld "the more splendid (splendor of the Existent). In Exodus, Moses descends Mt. Sinai with a radiant face (Exod 34:29-35). Philo interprets this radiance in terms of beauty: Moses was "far more beautiful

⁶⁴ Litwa, "The Deification of Moses in Philo of Alexandria," 20-21.

(πολὺ καλλίων) with respect to his appearance [or face, ὄψιν] than when he had gone up [Mount Sinai].” Beauty was one of the trademarks of divinity. Diotima asks Socrates in Plato’s *Symposium*, “Don’t you say that all the gods are ... beautiful (κάλους)?” (202c)? The historian Charax says of Io that she was considered a goddess on account of her beauty (θεός ἐνομίσθη δία τὸ κάλλος). Brilliance and beauty, furthermore, are often revealed in a divine epiphany.⁶⁵

Other scholars have also reflected on the value of the Philonic portrayals of Moses’ divinization and enthronement for our understanding of the transfiguration story. Commenting on the Philonic rendering of Moses’ experience on Sinai, Joel Marcus notes that “Moses’ ascent of Mount Sinai (his entry into the darkness where God was; cf. Exod 20:21) is interpreted as an enthronement (‘he was named ... king’).”⁶⁶ Marcus further suggests that

the connection between Moses’ transfiguring experience on Sinai and his reception of God’s kingship is strikingly reminiscent of the fact that the account of Jesus’ transfiguration immediately follows 8:38-9:1, in which the coming of the kingdom of God (9:1) is paralleled to Jesus’ own coming as Son of Man (8:38).... Like Moses, then, Jesus ascends the mount and there is seen to be a king, a sovereign whose kingship partakes of God’s own royal authority over the universe.⁶⁷

According to Marcus, “in line with this royal context, the transfiguration of Jesus’ clothing, like Moses’ transfiguration in some Jewish traditions, is probably symbolic of a royal robbing. For biblically literate readers, therefore, one of the chief functions of the Mosaic typology in the transfiguration narrative would be to drive home the association between Jesus’ kingship and the coming of God’s kingdom.”⁶⁸ Marcus’ suggestion that the tradition of Jesus’ garment may

⁶⁵ Litwa, “The Deification of Moses in Philo of Alexandria,” 17-18.

⁶⁶ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 85.

⁶⁷ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 86.

⁶⁸ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 87.

also have a Mosaic provenance is significant and will be explored later in our study.

The Afterlife of Biblical Mosaic Traditions in Other Second Temple Mediatorial Trends

Earlier, we mentioned that many who espouse “Mosaic typology” limit their comparison of Jesus and Moses to the Exodus account. Only a small number of experts dare to extend their reach to the extra-biblical Mosaic elaborations found at Qumran, in Philo, Pseudo-Philo, the *Exagoge* and other early Jewish accounts. Often, however, even they fail to recognize other dimensions which are crucial for understanding the transfiguration story, contained not inside the Mosaic lore but outside its symbolic fence. Frequently, these expansions do not bear Moses’ name and are not explicitly related to his story, but unfold in the accounts of other biblical heroes, such as Enoch, Abraham, or Jacob. Within these mediatorial trends the imagery of Moses’ incandescent face often receives its novel and complex afterlife.

One cluster of such traditions that reveals a panoply of distinctive Mosaic motifs, is present in *2 Enoch*, an early Jewish apocalypse written in the first century CE. Within the narrative of Enoch’s metamorphosis into the supreme angel and the heavenly power, (which in later Jewish mysticism will be labeled as the Lesser YHWH), one finds familiar Mosaic motifs. Although the main protagonist of this text is not Moses, but instead the seventh antediluvian patriarch, Enoch’s exalted profile is built on the foundation of the biblical and extra-biblical Mosaic traditions, similar to Jesus’ exaltation in the transfiguration account. Here one can find an interesting specimen of a pre-Christian “Mosaic typology.” Like in the synoptic gospels, the story of Moses’ elevation is perpetuated through a biography of his conceptual rival, the seventh antediluvian hero, who became regarded as a new Moses. Several features of this novel “Mosaic” account are important for our future analysis of the transfiguration story. One such detail relevant for our study is *2 Enoch*’s tendency to designate God’s anthropomorphic extent as His Face. This termino-

logical application, in fact, may provide crucial insights into the symbolism of Jesus' luminous face in some versions of the transfiguration story.

2 Enoch contains two theophanic portrayals involving the motif of the divine Face. The first occurs in *2 Enoch* 22 which portrays Enoch's encounter with the deity in the celestial realm. Later in chapter 39, the seventh patriarch recounts this theophanic experience to his sons, adding new details. Although both passages demonstrate a number of terminological affinities, the second explicitly connects the divine Face with God's anthropomorphic extent, the divine *Kavod*.

Elsewhere, I have argued that Mosaic traditions played a formative role in shaping the theophanic imagery of the divine *Panim* in *2 Enoch*.⁶⁹ It is not a coincidence that both the Bible and *2 Enoch* associate the divine extent with light and fire. In biblical theophanies smoke and fire often serve as a divine envelope, protecting mortals from the sight of the divine form. Thus it is easy to recognize *2 Enoch's* appropriation of familiar theophanic imagery from the Exodus accounts.⁷⁰

In *2 Enoch* 39:3–6, as in the Mosaic account from Exod 33, the Face is closely associated with the divine extent and seems to be understood not simply as a part of the deity's body (his face) but as a radiant *façade* of his anthropomorphic form.⁷¹ This identification between the deity's Face and the deity's Form is reinforced by additional parallels in which Enoch's face is identified with Enoch's form:

You, my children, you see my face, a human being created just like yourselves; but I am one who has seen the face of the Lord, like iron made burning hot by a fire, emitting sparks.... And you see the form of my body, the same as your own: but I have seen

⁶⁹ See Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 254ff.

⁷⁰ See Exod 19:9; Exod 19:16–18; Exod 34:5.

⁷¹ The Face terminology as relating to the entire extent of the deity was already known to the authors of the *Book of the Watchers*. It seems to apply also to the body of the transformed visionary, not only in *2 Enoch*, but in *Ascension of Isaiah* 7:25 as well, where the seer, describing his journey through the seven heavens, attests that his "face" was being transformed.

the form (extent) of the Lord, without measure and without analogy, who has no end (2 *Enoch* 39:3–6, shorter recension).

This passage alludes to the biblical tradition from Exod 33:18–23. Similar to the biblical text, the divine *Panim* of 2 *Enoch* connected to the glorious divine form – God’s *Kavod*:

Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.” And the Lord said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence... but,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”

Here the impossibility of seeing the Lord’s Face is understood not simply as the impossibility of seeing a particular part of the Lord but rather as the impossibility of seeing the full range of his glorious body. The logic of the whole passage, which employs such terms as God’s “face” and God’s “back,” suggests that the word *Panim* refers here to the forefront of the divine form. The imagery of the divine Face found in the Psalms⁷² also favors this motif of the identity between the face and the anthropomorphic form of the Lord. For example, in Ps 17:15 the Lord’s Face is closely tied to his form or likeness: “As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with beholding your form.”

The early Enochic accounts appear to follow these biblical parallels. Thus, the identification between the Face and the divine form also seems to be hinted at in the *Book of the Watchers*, where the

⁷² On the Face of God in the Psalms, see Samuel Balentine, *The Hidden God: The Hiding of the Face of God in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 49–65; Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), 2.35–9; Michael Fishbane, “Form and Reformulation of the Biblical Priestly Blessing,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103 (1983): 115–21; Joseph Reindl, *Das Angesicht Gottes im Sprachgebrauch des Alten Testaments*, Erfurter theologische Studien 25 (Leipzig: St. Benno, 1970), 236–7; Morton Smith, “‘Seeing God’ in the Psalms: The Background to the Beatific Vision in the Hebrew Bible,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50 (1988): 171–83.

enthroned Glory is designated as the Face (*gasy*). *1 Enoch* 14:20–21 reads: “And no angel could enter, and at the appearance of the face (*gasy*) of him who is honored and praised no (creature of) flesh could look.”⁷³

It is possible that Exodus 33:18–23, Psalm 17:15, *1 Enoch* 14, and *2 Enoch* 39:3–6 represent a single conceptual stream in which the divine Face serves as the *terminus technicus* for the designation of the deity’s anthropomorphic Form. It is also clear that all these accounts deal with the specific anthropomorphic manifestation known as God’s *Kavod*.⁷⁴ The possibility of such identification is already hinted at in Exod 33; Moses, upon asking the Lord to show him his *Kavod*, hears that it is impossible for him to see the deity’s Face.

Moreover, the anthropomorphic extent of the patriarch Enoch is also labeled in *2 Enoch* as the “face.” According to *2 Enoch*, beholding the divine Face has dramatic consequences for Enoch’s appearance: his body endures radical changes and is covered by divine light. Describing the patriarch’s metamorphosis, *2 Enoch* 39 underlines peculiar parallels between the deity’s face and the face of the transformed patriarch.⁷⁵ The description of Enoch’s transformation pro-

⁷³ Michael Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch. A New Edition in the Light of the Aramaic Dead Sea Fragments*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 2.99.

⁷⁴ *Contra* Walther Eichrodt, who insists that the *Panim* had no connection with the *Kavod*; he argues that the two concepts derived from different roots and were never linked with one another. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2.38.

⁷⁵ *2 Enoch* 39:3–6 reads “And now, my children it is not from my lips that I am reporting to you today, but from the lips of the Lord who has sent me to you. As for you, you hear my words, out of my lips, a human being created equal to yourselves; but I have heard the words from the fiery lips of the Lord. For the lips of the Lord are a furnace of fire, and his words are the fiery flames which come out. You, my children, you see my face, a human being created just like yourselves; I am one who has seen the face of the Lord, like iron made burning hot by a fire, emitting sparks. For you gaze into (my) eyes, a human being created just like yourselves; but I have gazed into the eyes of the Lord, like the rays of the shining sun and terrifying the eyes of a human being. You, (my) children, you see my right hand beckoning you, a human being created identical to yourselves; but I have seen the

vides a series of analogies in which the earthly Enoch likens his face and parts of his body to the attributes of the Lord's Face and body. These comparisons manifest the connection between the divine corporeality and its prominent replica, the body of the seventh antediluvian hero. In light of this evidence, it is possible that the luminous face of Jesus in some versions of the transfiguration story serves more than just an allusion to biblical motif of Moses' luminous visage, but instead serves as a reference to the entirety of the patriarch's anthropomorphic extent, now envisioned as the divine *Kavod*. We will explore such possibility later in our study.

Furthermore, an important detail can be found in Enoch's radiant metamorphosis before the divine Countenance which further links Enoch's transformation with the Mosaic accounts. *2 Enoch* 37 includes information about an unusual procedure performed on Enoch's "face," at the final stage of his encounter with the deity. According to the text, the Lord called one of his senior angels to chill the face of Enoch. The angel was "terrifying and frightful," and appeared frozen; he was as white as snow, and his hands were as cold as ice. With these cold hands he then chilled the patriarch's face. Immediately following this chilling procedure, God informs Enoch that if his face had not been chilled here, no human being would have been able to look at him.⁷⁶ The dangerous radiance of Enoch's face parallels the incandescent countenance of Moses after the Sinai experience (Exod 34).

The appropriation of the Mosaic motif of the seer's radiant face is not confined in *2 Enoch* to the encounter with the "frozen" angel, but is also reflected in other sections of the book. According to the Slavonic apocalypse, despite the chilling procedure performed in

right hand of the Lord, beckoning me, who fills heaven. You see the extent of my body, the same as your own; but I have seen the extent of the Lord, without measure and without analogy, who has no end." Francis Andersen, "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983-85), 1.163.

⁷⁶ Andersen, "2 Enoch," 1.160.

heaven, Enoch's face retains its transformative power and is even capable of glorifying other human subjects. Thus, in 2 *Enoch* 64:2 people ask the transformed Enoch for blessings so they can be glorified in front of his face.⁷⁷ This theme of the transforming power of the patriarch's visage may here be polemical; it recalls the Mosaic passage⁷⁸ preserved among the Dead Sea Scrolls in which Moses' face is able to transform the hearts of the Israelites.

The aforementioned developments that shepherd familiar biblical Mosaic motifs into their novel conceptual existence are important for our investigation as they provide unique spectacles which enable us to discern additional facets of Mosaic imagery in the synoptic transfiguration accounts.

MOSAIC FEATURES OF THE TRANSFIGURATION STORY

Keeping in mind the preceding biblical and extra-biblical testimonies, we now turn to analyze certain Mosaic features of the transfiguration accounts.

Timing of the Story

The transfiguration story in Mark begins by mentioning that Jesus took his disciples up the mountain after six days.⁷⁹ Scholars have noted that no other temporal statement in Mark outside the Passion Narrative is so precise.⁸⁰ Among several other possibilities,⁸¹ this

⁷⁷ See 2 *Enoch* 64:4 (the longer recension): "And now bless your [sons], and all the people, so that we may be glorified in front of your face today." Andersen, "2 Enoch," 1.190.

⁷⁸ 4Q374 2:6–8: "and he made him like a God over the powerful ones, and a cause of reel[ing] (?) for Pharaoh ... and then he let his face shine for them for healing, they strengthened [their] hearts again." García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 2.740–41.

⁷⁹ Yarbro Collins notes that "although the epiphany of the Markan Jesus is depicted as real, rather than faked, it is staged in the sense that Jesus chooses the time and place. It thus may be seen as a device for authorizing Jesus and instructing the disciples." Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 419.

⁸⁰ Joel Markus claims that "Mark's readers would have been immediately alerted to this Mosaic typology by the first four words of his account, 'and after six days,' which correspond to the six days mentioned in Exod 24:16;

chronological marker has often been interpreted as an allusion to Mosaic encounters at Sinai.⁸² Reflecting on Mark 9:2 (“and after six days Jesus takes along Peter and James and John”), Craig Evans suggests that “the chronological notation ‘after six days’ recalls Exod 24:16.”⁸³ In an attempt to elucidate the conceptual background of this numerical symbolism, Evans reminds us that “it was after six days that God spoke out of the cloud to Moses. No other event in Jewish salvation history was remembered with greater reverence.”⁸⁴

the similarity is particularly impressive because time indications outside the passion narrative are rare and tend to be vague.” Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 27 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 1114.

⁸¹ Analyzing scholarly hypotheses regarding the transfiguration story, Yarbro Collins notes that “in keeping with his theory that the transfiguration was originally a resurrection story, Wellhausen suggested that the six days refer to the period between Jesus’ death and his appearance in Galilee. Others have argued that they allude to the six days between the appearance of the cloud on Mount Sinai and God’s calling Moses. Yet others that ‘after six days’ is equivalent to ‘on the seventh day’ and that therefore the allusion is to the Sabbath. Foster McCurley argued that ‘after six days’ is a Semitic idiom in which decisive action is then described on the seventh day.” Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 420.

⁸² For criticism of this hypothesis, see McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ*, 53.

⁸³ Evans, *Mark 8:27—16:20*, 35. Exod 24:16 reads: “The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud.”

⁸⁴ Evans, *Mark 8:27—16:20*, 35. Similarly, A. D. A. Moses draws his attention to the unusually precise time reference in Mark 9:2 and Matt 17:1 which recall Exod 24:16-17, where for six days the cloud covered Mount Sinai, and on the seventh day Yahweh called Moses out of the midst of the cloud. A. D. A. Moses, *Matthew’s Transfiguration Story and Jewish-Christian Controversy*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 122 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 43-44.

Chosen companions

Another possible Mosaic feature also situated in the initial verse of the transfiguration account is the recognition that Jesus took with him *three* disciples. Scholars often see in this peculiar number of chosen companions an allusion to Moses' story. Clarifying connections with the Exodus encounter, A. D. A. Moses notes that "both accounts have the idea of chosen companions: in Exodus 24 Moses separates himself first from the people, taking with him the seventy elders and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (Exod 24:1, 9)⁸⁵ and later, further up the mountain, takes only Joshua (Exod 24:13). This parallels (not in every detail) Mark 9:2-3 ... where Jesus takes with him the three disciples."⁸⁶ Morna Hooker also believes the peculiar number of Jesus' companions represents a Mosaic allusion, observing that "Moses was accompanied by Joshua, who later succeeded him; Jesus takes three of his disciples with him — those who, in Mark's account, are closest to him — and goes up a 'high mountain.'"⁸⁷

A notable difference, however, is that while Moses and his companions are regarded as a group of seers, in the transfiguration account Jesus is not a part of the visionary cohort, but rather the vision's center. Because of this, Charles Cranfield concludes "it seems clear that what is related, whether visionary or factual, was directed toward the three disciples rather than toward Jesus ... If it was a vision and audition, then it was apparently shared by the three disciples."⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Exod 24:1: "then he said to Moses, 'Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship at a distance.'"

⁸⁶ Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story*, 43-44.

⁸⁷ Morna D. Hooker, "What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?' A Look at St Mark's Account of the Transfiguration," in Lincoln D. Hurst and Nicholas Thomas Wright, eds., *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 59-70 at 60.

⁸⁸ Charles E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 294.

Motif of the Mountain

Another important feature of the initial verses of each of the transfiguration stories is the reference to a mountain. This motif again brings to mind Moses' theophany. Thus, in Exod 24:12 the deity summons the prophet to the mountain by issuing the following command: "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." Several verses later in Exod 24:15-18 the motif of the mountain appears again:

Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

The same theme is found in Exod 34:3: "No one shall come up with you, and do not let anyone be seen throughout all the mountain; and do not let flocks or herds graze in front of that mountain."

Scholars have suggested a connection between the mountain of Jesus' metamorphosis and Mount Sinai. According to Morna Hooker, "the traditional site of the transfiguration is Mount Tabor, which is hardly a high mountain, but the exact location is unimportant, for the mountain is the place of worship, the place of revelation, perhaps also the new Sinai of the messianic era."⁸⁹ Several other scholars also affirm this connection with the famous Mosaic locale by noting that in both stories (Exod 24:16 and Mk 9:2-8 and par.) the setting is a mountain.⁹⁰ For our study it is also important that the high place in the transfiguration story can be understood not simply as a geo-

⁸⁹ Hooker, "What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?" 60.

⁹⁰ Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story*, 43-44.

graphical space, but also as a mythological one, with the latter referring to the mountain of *Kavod*. In her reflection on the mountain of the transfiguration, Adela Yarbro Collins entertains its broader mythological significance, noting that

if the account is pre-Markan, the mountain was apparently unspecified at that stage of the tradition. Even though it is unlikely to have been Mount Sinai itself, the generic character of the mountain would allow that association to be made. Furthermore, “a high mountain” would, in Mark’s cultural context, call to mind the mythic notion of the cosmic mountain or the mountain as the dwelling place of a god or of the gods.⁹¹

It has also been suggested that the mountain can be understood as a heavenly or para-heavenly location. Weighting in on this option, Simon Gathercole observes that “a number of commentators interpret the mountain as something of a ‘suburb of heaven,’ or a ‘half-way house between earth and heaven.’”⁹²

Mountain as the Throne of the Divine Glory

Separating the transfiguration story from some previously explored Jewish extra-biblical accounts is a lack of explicit reference to Jesus’ possession of the divine throne — the theme which features prominently in the *Book of the Similitudes* and the *Exagoge*, and is possibly hinted at in the Book of Daniel. Yet such enthronement motif can still be implied by the reference to the mountain on which Jesus’ transfiguration takes place. In this respect, it is instructive that in some pre-Christian Jewish accounts the mountain itself is envisioned as the throne of the deity.

Recall that Exod 24:16-18, a formative passage with regard to the transfiguration account, describes the theophany of the divine *Kavod* on the mountain. Similar to the transfiguration story, Exod 24 does not provide any reference to the attribute of the divine seat, a crucial feature of the *Kavod* symbolic complex. This leaves the impression

⁹¹ Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 421.

⁹² Simon J. Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 48.

that the mountain may itself fulfil this function, being conceptualized as the divine Throne.⁹³

Although in the Exodus account the role of the mountain as the divine Seat remains hidden, in the *Book of the Watchers* this possibility becomes explicit. In this early Enochic composition, the mountain of God's presence is repeatedly labeled as the deity's throne. From *1 Enoch* 18:6-8 we learn the following: "And I went towards the south – and it was burning day and night – where (there were) seven mountains of precious stones.... And the middle one reached to heaven, like the throne of the Lord, of stibium, and the top of the throne (was) of sapphire."⁹⁴ In this passage an enigmatic mountain is compared with God's Throne and described as being fashioned from the material (sapphire) often mentioned in the prophetic and apocalyptic depiction of the *Kavod*.⁹⁵ Analyzing the mountain motif pre-

⁹³ On the mountain as a throne of a deity, see Ronald E. Clements, *God and Temple: The Idea of the Divine Presence in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), 52-54; Richard J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 57-79; Kelley Coblentz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography of 1 Enoch 17-19: "No One Has Seen What I Have Seen,"* Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period. Supplement Series 81 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 120-25; Robert L. Cohn, "The Mountains and Mount Zion," *Judaism* 26 (1977): 97-115 at 98; Terence L. Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement Series 8 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985); Timo Eskola, *Mesiah and the Throne: Jewish Merkabah Mysticism and Early Christian Exaltation Discourse*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 142 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 74-75; Francis T. Fallon, *The Enthronement of Sabaoth* (Leiden: Brill, 1978); Laszlo Gallusz, *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation*, The Library of New Testament Studies 487 (London: T&T Clark, 2014) 29, 245; Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, "Sanctuary Theology in the Hebrew Cultus and in Cultic-Related Texts," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 24 (1986): 127-45.

⁹⁴ Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2.104.

⁹⁵ Reflecting on these connections, Kelley Coblentz-Bautch notes that "the reference to sapphire/lapis lazuli and the suggestion that this mountain is in some way like a seat for God call to mind several of the theophanies in the

sent in this text, George Nickelsburg notes that “its apex, to the northwest, is the throne of God, and its two sides, comprising three mountains each, lie on west-east and north-south axes.”⁹⁶ Experts, furthermore, have argued for similarities between the mountain throne in *1 Enoch* 18 and the Sinai imagery. According to Kelley Coblentz Bautch “it appears quite plausible that *1 Enoch* 18:8 might well have in mind Mount Sinai itself as the mountain throne of the Lord.”⁹⁷

In *1 Enoch* 24:3 the motif of the throne-mountain appears again: “And (there was) a seventh mountain in the middle of these, and in their height they were all like the seat of a throne, and fragrant trees surrounded it.”⁹⁸ Yet, from the preceding passages it remains unclear if these descriptions of the mountainous seats are directly related to the actual Throne of YHWH. Such an affirmation, however, is made explicitly in *1 Enoch* 25:3, where we learn from an *angelus interpres* that the mountain indeed serves as the Throne of God

Hebrew Bible... Exod 24:9–10 suggests that the bottom surface of God’s realm is made of lapis lazuli. Ezek 1:26–28 and 10:1 also know of a throne of God that is in the appearance of lapis lazuli. The description of a mountain-top throne recalls the setting of Isaiah’s vision in the temple, where he sees the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne (Isa 6:1). The references to lapis lazuli and to a summit like the throne of the Lord in *1 Enoch* 18:8 indicate that the mountain will be the site of a theophany, a place where God would appear and could be seen on earth.” Kelley Coblentz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography of 1 Enoch 17–19: “No One Has Seen What I Have Seen,”* Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period Supplement Series 81 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 120–121.

⁹⁶ George W. F. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: Chapters 1–36; 81–108*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 285. In relation to this imagery, Coblentz Bautch notes that “one fascinating hypothesis regarding the purpose of the mountains is suggested by Nickelsburg: since the middle mountain represents the throne of God (*1 Enoch* 18:8; 25:3), perhaps the six mountains to the east and west are thrones of his divine entourage. A similar phenomenon may be attested in a later Zoroastrian work. A. V. Williams Jackson, reflecting upon the seats of the archangels around the throne of God in *Num. Rab. 2*, calls attention to a passage from the Zoroastrian Great Bundahishn.” Coblentz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography*, 114–115.

⁹⁷ Coblentz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography*, 121.

⁹⁸ Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2.113.

during the deity's visit to the earth: "And he answered me, saying: 'This high mountain which you saw, whose summit is like the throne of the Lord, is the throne where the Holy and Great One, the Lord of Glory, the Eternal King, will sit when he comes down to visit the earth for good.'"⁹⁹

Due to the antediluvian perspective of the Enochic narration, it is possible that, besides the eschatological allusions, the text's authors also had in mind the future Sinai ordeal, an event which occurs many generations after the revelation given to Enoch.¹⁰⁰

In light of the aforementioned traditions it is possible that the understanding of the mountain as the throne of the divine *Kavod* may also feature in the synoptic renderings of the transfiguration. Scholars have suggested that such a motif of enthronement may be hinted in the account of Jesus' transfiguration. In previous studies,

⁹⁹ Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2.113.

¹⁰⁰ Coblenz Bautch points to this possibility, noting that "perhaps the presence of Michael, the archangel in charge of the people of Israel (*1 Enoch* 20:5) who provides Enoch a tour of the mountain throne of God (*1 Enoch* 24–25), also hints that this mountain is Sinai." Coblenz-Bautch, *Geography of 1 Enoch*, 124. She further states that, "given the significance of Sinai in *1 Enoch* 1:4 (along with Hermon, it is one of the few locales to be referred to by name!) and the important role the south plays as the site where the Most High will descend (*1 Enoch* 77:1), connecting the mountain of *1 Enoch* 18:8 that reaches to heaven (a mountain with a lapis lazuli summit that is a veritable throne of God) with Sinai appears a most plausible reading. This interpretation is confirmed as well by the parallel tradition in *1 Enoch* 24–25 which provides more information about the coming theophany and the tree of life to be replanted in the north near the temple." Coblenz Bautch, *A Study of Geography*, 124–5. On parallels between mountain-throne in *1 Enoch* 18 and *1 Enoch* 24–25 and mountain-throne in Exodus 24, see also August Dillmann, *Das Buch Henoch. Übersetzt und erklärt* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Vogel, 1853), 129; Adolphe Lods, *Le Livre D'Hénoch: Fragments Grecs, découverts à Akhmîm (Haute-Égypte) publiés avec les variantes du texte Éthiopien* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1892), 185; Pierre Grelot, "La géographie mythique d'Hénoch et ses sources orientales," *Revue Biblique* 65 (1958): 33–69 at 38–41.

however, such enthronement is often connected with Jesus' messianic or royal role,¹⁰¹ while the theophanic dimension, tied to Jesus' role as the divine *Kavod*, has often escaped scholarly attention.¹⁰² However, the insights coming from proponents of the messianic or royal enthronement view are valuable, since they allow us to see additional biblical allusions present in the transfiguration account. One of these important facets is God's utterance "This is my Son," which some scholars argue represents a typical enthronement formula reminis-

¹⁰¹ One of the recent proponents of this hypothesis, Terence Donaldson, argues that "the possibility presents itself that the mountain setting of the Transfiguration Narrative functions as a mountain of enthronement." Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 147. He further notes that in the Hebrew Bible, "the mountain is referred to as the site for the throne of Yahweh (e.g. Ps 48:2; cf. Ps 99:1-5; 146:10; Jer 8:19), or for his anointed king (e.g. Ps 2:6; cf. Ps 110:2; 132:11-18). And this theme was carried over into Zion eschatology as well: on that day Yahweh (Isa 24:23; 52:7; Ezek 20:33, 40; Mic 4:6f.; Zech 14:8-11) or the messianic king (Ezek 17:22-24; 34:23-31; Mic 5:2-4) will reign on Mount Zion." Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 147. Donaldson further recalls that "in Second Temple Judaism, the mountain was also seen as the seat of God's throne (*Jub.* 1:17-29; *1 Enoch* 18:8, 24:2-25:6; *Tob.* 13:11; *Sib. Or.* 3:716-720) and the place where the Messiah will exercise his rulership over the nations (*4 Ezra* 13; *2 Bar.* 40:1-4; cf. *Ps. Sol.* 17:23-51)." Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 147.

¹⁰² On the transfiguration as a messianic or royal enthronement see Jean Daniélou. "Le symbolisme eschatologique de la Fête des Tabernacles," *Irénikon* 31 (1958): 19-40; Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 146-149; Maria Horstmann, *Studien zur Markinischen Christologie: Mk 8.27-9.13 als Zugang zum Christusbild des zweiten Evangeliums*, Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen 6 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1969), 80-103; Harald Riesenfeld, *Jésus transfiguré: L'arrière-plan du récit évangélique de la transfiguration de Notre-Seigneur* (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1947), 292-99; Maurice Sabbe, "La rédaction du récit de la Transfiguration," in Edouard Massaux, ed., *La venue du Messie*, Recherches bibliques 6 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1962), 65-100. For criticism of these hypotheses, see Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 495-502; Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story*, 202ff.

cent of 2 Sam 7:14¹⁰³ and Ps 2:7¹⁰⁴ in which the king's ascension to the throne coincides with his adoption as Son by the deity.¹⁰⁵

Additionally, some features of the previously explored Mosaic extra-biblical accounts also hint at the possibility that the mountain was understood as both the divine seat and the seat of a deified human being. Thus, as we recall in the *Exagoge*, the motif of Mount Sinai was juxtaposed with the theme of the divine throne and the seat of the deified Moses.

An objection to the motif of Jesus' enthronement is the absence of any references to his sitting position. Yet, already in the biblical Mosaic theophanies God is described as standing on the mountain. This position of the deity is later emphasized in Philonic and Samaritan sources. Charles Gieschen argues that the Philonic and the Samaritan understanding of God as "the Standing One" "probably originates from Deut 5:31, where God invites Moses to 'stand' by him as he delivers the Law."¹⁰⁶ The concept of the standing position of the translated person as an enthronement is also discernible in some previously explored Jewish extra-biblical traditions. For example, in 2

¹⁰³ "I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings."

¹⁰⁴ "I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, 'You are my son; today I have begotten you.'" Commenting on the use Ps 2:7, Ulrich Luz notes that "the transfiguration story is reminiscent of an enthronization. ... We are on safer ground if we think of Ps 2:7, which stands behind the heavenly voice of v. 5. It is a psalm that comes from the enthronement ritual of the Jerusalem kings and that was a major influence on the New Testament Son of God Christology. In the early confession of Rom 1:3-4 Jesus' 'enthronization' as Son of God was connected with the resurrection (cf. Acts 13:33-34). It meant at the same time Jesus' exaltation and his association with divine spirit and power." Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 396.

¹⁰⁵ Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 146.

¹⁰⁶ Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*, *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums* 42 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 31.

Enoch, the translated seer in the form of the seventh antediluvian hero is promised a place to stand in front of the Lord's Face for eternity and takes a seat next to the deity. Such a conceptual constellation of standing/sitting may also be present in the *Exagoge*, where Moses is described as standing (ἐστάθην) and then sitting on the throne.¹⁰⁷

Secrecy

The singling out of three trusted disciples brings us to another important element of the transfiguration story connected with the Mosaic visionary ordeals, namely, an emphasis on secrecy and concealment. Yarbro Collins brings attention to the distinctive language used to convey this conceptual dimension in Mark, noting that the narrowing of the group, which heightens the awesome and secret character of the transformation, is supported in Mark 9:2 by the phrase "alone by themselves" (κατ' ἰδίαν μόνοι).¹⁰⁸

The motif of secrecy appears again, even more forcefully, in the conclusion of the story, where Jesus asks his disciples¹⁰⁹ not to share the memory of their visionary experience with anyone.¹¹⁰ The repeat-

¹⁰⁷ Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 54.

¹⁰⁸ Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 421. Further in her study, Yarbro Collins notes that "in keeping with the theme of the section 8:27-10:45, the identity of Jesus is revealed in a special way to three selected disciples. That only three disciples see the transfiguration indicates that Jesus' identity is still to some degree a secret. That the identity of Jesus is concealed here as much as it is revealed is supported by the ambiguity in the statement of the divine voice." Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 426.

¹⁰⁹ Regarding this tradition, Ulrich Luz notes that "while coming down from the mountain he commands them to be silent about their mountain experience until his resurrection. As in 16:20, the command to silence serves to define the boundaries against outsiders. The revelation on the mountain is granted only to the disciples, who as a special group are contrasted with the people." Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 399.

¹¹⁰ See Mark 9:9: "As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead." This tradition is attested also in Matthew and Luke: Matt 17:9: "As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, 'Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been

ed occurrences of these peculiar indicators of secrecy and concealment placed at the beginning and end of the transfiguration story are noteworthy, since similar constellations often occur in Jewish apocalyptic and mystical accounts dealing with the construction of the theophanic profiles of various translated persons.

Furthermore, scholars often connect the motif of concealment with the revelation of the glory. With relation to this theme, Morna Hooker observes that

the theme of suffering (8:31) is taken up again immediately after the story of the transfiguration, when Jesus warns his disciples to tell no one what they have seen, until the Son of Man has risen from the dead (9:9). This particular demand for secrecy suggests that the vision which the disciples have shared is of the glory which belongs to Jesus after the resurrection; this would mean that Mark intends us to see the transfiguration as a confirmation not only of Jesus' messianic status, but of the necessity of the way of suffering, death, and resurrection which lie before him. The story itself is often interpreted as a fulfilment (or a foretaste) of the promise in 9:1 about the coming Kingdom of God; but it seems more likely that Mark sees it as a prefigurement of 8:38, which speaks of the future glory of the Son of Man.¹¹¹

Such an aura of secrecy and concealment which accompany the revelation of the divine *Kavod* is typical for Jewish apocalyptic and mystical lore. There the apprehension of the divine Glory enthroned on the Chariot is often listed among the utmost secrets which were prohibited from being revealed to the wider public.¹¹² For our study it is

raised from the dead." Luke 9:36: "And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen."

¹¹¹ Hooker, "What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?" 59-60.

¹¹² *m. Hag.* 2:1 unveils the following tradition: "The forbidden degrees may not be expounded before three persons, nor the Story of Creation before two, nor [the chapter of] the Chariot before one alone, unless he is a Sage

important that the aesthetics of concealment pertaining to the revelation of the divine Glory are already discernible in the formative depiction of the Sinai encounter found in Exod 33 where Moses is told that it is impossible for him to see God's Face and live. Here we find reference to the deity's glorious *Panim*, itself synonymous with the divine *Kavod*.

Jesus' Metamorphosis

The theophanic proclivities of the transfiguration story reach their symbolic threshold in Jesus' metamorphosis. The conceptual roots of this enigmatic transformation remain a contested issue among scholars.¹¹³ Some argue for a Greco-Roman background, while others see formative influences of the Jewish theophanic traditions in relation to putative Greco-Roman influences. According to Adela Yarbro Collins, "the author of Mark, or his predecessor(s), appears to have drawn upon the Hellenistic and Roman genres of epiphany and metamorphosis, but in a way that adapts them to the biblical tradition, especially to that of the theophany on Sinai."¹¹⁴ Besides allusions to Sinai traditions, many scholars find in the metamorphosis of Jesus traces of other Jewish theophanies, including the vision of the Ancient of Days from Daniel 7.

that understands of his own knowledge." Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 212-213.

¹¹³ Andrew Chester observes that in the transfiguration accounts "the disciples have a vision of Jesus taking on heavenly form. Thus Jesus here assumes, apparently, the form of an angelic figure: or better, perhaps, the form of a being who belongs in the heavenly world. The point also needs to be made that the designation of this vision as a 'Transfiguration' is misleading; it should in fact be called 'Transformation.'" Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 207 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 98.

¹¹⁴ Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 419. Joel Marcus also points to the Mosaic connections by noting that "Philo, for example, uses *metaballein* ('to change') and *metamorphousthai* ('to be transformed'), the word employed by Mark in 9:2, to describe the prophetic exaltation that gripped Moses (*Life of Moses* 1.57, 2.280)." Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 1114.

The exact nature and extent of Jesus' transformation remains also a debated issue. Ramsey points out that "the word *μετεμορφώθη* tells of a profound change of the form (in contrast with mere appearances), without describing its character."¹¹⁵ In light of these peculiarities, some scholars argue that the terminology suggests a change of Jesus' "form." Jarl Fossum, for example, argues that "Mark's verb implies that Jesus' form or body was changed."¹¹⁶ Heil notes that "the verb *μεταμορφώω*, employed by Mark and Matthew to describe the 'transfiguration' of Jesus, refers in a very general sense to a 'transformation' or 'change in form' of some kind. What it means more specifically must be determined by the context. Thus, Jesus' transfiguration is further defined as his clothing as becoming extremely white in Mark 9:3 and as both his face shining and clothes becoming white in Matt 17:2."¹¹⁷

Moreover, with regard to Mark's unique word choice, some scholars see a connection with the glory traditions.¹¹⁸ As Morna Hooker observes, the same term is used in 2 Cor 3:18 where Paul speaks about the glorified believers. She writes: "the verb *μεταμορφοῦν* itself is an interesting one, used in the New Testament only in this story (by Mark and Matthew), in Rom 12:2 and in 2 Cor 3:18."¹¹⁹ According to her, 2 Cor 3:18 "is of particular interest ... since

¹¹⁵ Ramsey, *The Glory of God*, 114.

¹¹⁶ Fossum, "Ascensio, Metamorphosis," 82.

¹¹⁷ Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus*, 76. George Henry Boobyer suggests that despite the fact that in Mark only the garments are explicitly said to assume this glistening appearance, *μετεμορφώθη* in his opinion "without doubt implies a similar change in Christ's whole figure. Matthew and Luke make that plainer by adding that his face was involved in the transformation." George Henry Boobyer, *St. Mark and the Transfiguration Story* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1942) 65.

¹¹⁸ Thus, Boobyer suggests that "Jesus was changed into a body of radiant *δόξα* which shone with exceeding brightness, although only Luke uses the word *δόξα* in describing the vision." Boobyer, *St. Mark and the Transfiguration Story*, 65.

¹¹⁹ Hooker, "What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?" 60.

it refers to Christians who with unveiled faces see (or reflect) the glory of the Lord, and are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory.”¹²⁰ Yet, unlike 2 Cor 3, which hints at the believer’s changed anthropology via reference to the image, the synoptic accounts do not explicitly delve into such elaboration. Instead, only “visible” things appear to be revealed; so for the recipients of the transfiguration vision, especially in its Markan version, metamorphosis is manifested largely through external features of the adept, including Jesus’ attire. Compared to other synoptic authors, these external features in Mark are rather subdued. Reflecting on Markan peculiarities, Morna Hooker further observes,

the statement that Jesus “was transfigured before them” reminds us of the gulf between him and his disciples: he is revealed as sharing in God’s glory, while they are the witnesses to his glory. Unlike Matthew, who refers to Jesus’ face shining like the sun (Matt 17:2), Mark does not explain in what way Jesus himself was transfigured: he refers only to the transformation of his clothes, which became whiter than any earthly whiteness.¹²¹

Scholars have noted that the transfiguration account appears to be underlining the *external* nature of Jesus’s transformation, visible to the beholders of this event, represented by the disciples. As Heil notes, “since it is seen by the disciples, the transfiguration of Jesus refers to an external transformation outwardly visible rather than an internal transformation invisible to the physical eye The aorist passive form (μετεμορφώθη) indicates that this external transformation of the physical appearance of Jesus was effected objectively, from outside, by God (divine passive) rather than subjectively or interiorly by Jesus himself.”¹²² Heil also sees the external aspect of the transfiguration in the Lukan rendering of the transformation of Jesus’ face, noting that the phrase “the appearance (τὸ εἶδος) of his face,” rather than just in his “face,” underscores the external rather

¹²⁰ Hooker, “What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?” 61.

¹²¹ Hooker, “What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?” 60.

¹²² Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus*, 76-77.

than the internal nature of transformation.¹²³ Heil concludes by arguing that

the depiction of Jesus' transfiguration in all three versions as an external change, a transformation from outside of Jesus effected by God, does not support those interpretations that speak in terms of a "revelation," or "disclosure," or "unveiling" of an inner, permanent glory or heavenly status which Jesus already possesses. Although the transfiguration of Jesus takes place on a mountain that he ascends together with three of his disciples, it does not represent an "ascension" into heaven. Rather, he has been temporarily transfigured into a heavenly being while on a mountain still on the earth.¹²⁴

As mentioned above, the verb μεταμορφόω, employed by Mark and Matthew, also occurs in several Pauline passages, including 2 Cor 3:18, where Paul anticipates the believer's metamorphosis: "all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are *being transformed* (μεταμορφούμεθα) into the same image *from one degree of glory to another* (ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν); for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit." This rare terminology of transformation coincides here with the *Kavod* imagery. Scholars also note connections with Phil 2:6-11 where once again the transformation of believers is surrounded by *Kavod* symbolism. In light of this link, Yarbro Collins notes:

the narrator's statement that 'he was transfigured in their presence' evokes the ancient genre of the epiphany or metamorphosis. This statement may be understood in either of two ways. One is that Jesus walked the earth as a divine being, whose true nature is momentarily revealed in the transfiguration (cf. Phil 2:6-11). The other is that the transfiguration is a temporary change that Jesus undergoes here as an anticipation of his glorifi-

¹²³ Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus*, 77.

¹²⁴ Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus*, 78.

cation after death (cf. 1 Cor 15:43, 49, 51-53). The motif of a temporary transformation, anticipating the final one, is typical of a group of apocalypses, but there it is associated with a heavenly journey.¹²⁵

These connections indicate that the term “metamorphosis,” as found in Mark and Matthew, represents the concept found elsewhere in the New Testament materials, which are, in turn, closely associated with the ocularcentric theophanic imagery.

Jesus' Garment

The account of Jesus' transformation in Mark is accompanied by the reference to his dazzlingly white garment. Scholars have linked this particular attribute of Jesus with the multifaceted legacy of the Jewish biblical theophanies. Commenting on Jesus' attire, Davies and Allison note that “the supernatural brightness of the clothes of divine or heavenly beings or of the resurrected just is a common motif in the biblical tradition Like God, who ‘covers himself with light as with a garment’ (Ps 104:2), those who belong to him are also destined to shine like the sun.”¹²⁶

The symbolism of Jesus' garment also evokes imagery contained in the Jewish pseudepigrapha.¹²⁷ John Paul Heil calls attention to 1

¹²⁵ Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 421.

¹²⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.697. Lee notes that these connections are present not only in Mark but also in other synoptic accounts by arguing that “in the transfiguration story, the radiant face of Jesus and his white garments also serve Matthew in his understanding of the story as an apocalyptic ‘vision’ (17:9). In Jewish apocalyptic writings, a facial radiance and white garments are general characteristics of belonging to the heavenly world. For example, angelic beings are often portrayed with radiant faces and white garments (Dan 12:3; 1 *Enoch* 62:15–16; 4 *Ezra* 7:97; 2 *Bar.* 51:3).” Lee, *Jesus' Transfiguration*, 95.

¹²⁷ In relation to this Andrew Chester observes that “in Jewish transformation traditions ... a change into glorious (angelic) clothing symbolizes transformation into angelic form (or into a form, at least, that belongs fully within the heavenly world); that is so, for example, at 1 *En.* 62:15; 2 *En.* 22:8; *Apoc. Zeph.* 8:3. In other texts (for example, 1 *En.* 39:14), it is the face itself that is specifically said to be transformed; in 4Q491 it would certainly seem

Enoch 14:20, where the following description of the deity's attire is found: "And He who is great in glory sat on it, and his raiment was brighter than the sun, and whiter than any snow."¹²⁸ Reflecting on this clothing metaphor, Heil notes that

when Enoch had a heavenly vision (*1 Enoch* 14:8) of the "Great Glory," God himself, sitting on a throne, he described God's clothing: "as for his gown, which was shining more brightly than the sun, it was whiter than any snow" (14:20). Enoch goes on to mention the "face" of God: "None of the angels was able to come in and see the face of the Excellent and the Glorious One" (14:21). The vocabulary of *1 Enoch* 14:20-21 recalls especially the Matthean description of the transfigured Jesus: "his face shone as the sun, while his clothes became white as the light" (Matt 17:2). In *1 Enoch* 14:20 we have another example, in addition to Dan 7:9, of the white clothing of God himself indicating that white is the color of divine, heavenly clothing.¹²⁹

that the figure who is speaking has been transformed, and it plausible (but not provable) that in this text both face and clothes have undergone transformation. In any case, in those texts where the focus is on the clothing, the implication obviously is that the face and whole appearance are transformed into angelic or heavenly mode (as at *2 En.* 22:10)." Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation*, 96-7.

¹²⁸ Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2.99.

¹²⁹ Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus*, 86-87. These parallels were earlier noted by Christopher Rowland in his seminal study *The Open Heaven*. Rowland observes that "in *1 Enoch* 14:20f. two aspects of the divinity are mentioned, his clothing ('his raiment was like the sun, brighter and whiter than any snow') and his face. Precisely these two elements are mentioned in Matthew 17:2 and Luke 9:29, though no mention is made of Jesus' face in Mark. The presence of a man with shining raiment is thus remarkably like the two passages just quoted, both of which are intimately linked with the vision of the throne-chariot. No less than five words are used in both the Greek of *1 Enoch* 14:20f. and the synoptic accounts of the transfiguration, namely, sun, face, white, snow (in some manuscripts) and the clothing (which involves a different Greek word, *himatia* in the Gospels and *peri-*

Scholars have indicated that Jesus' white garment also evokes the memory of the attire of the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7. Some see in this clothing metaphor a transfer of the deity's attribute to a new scion of the theophanic tradition. According to Crag Evans, "Mark's depiction of Jesus is also reminiscent of Daniel's vision of the 'Ancient of Days,' whose 'clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool.'"¹³⁰ He further suggests that "perhaps in his transformation we should understand that Jesus ... has taken on some of God's characteristics (much as Moses' face began to shine with God's glory). If this is correct, then the transfiguration should be understood as a visual verification of Jesus' claim to be the 'Son of Man' who will come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels (see Mark 8:38; Dan 7:10)."¹³¹

Similarly, John Paul Heil underlines the connection with the Daniëlic account, noting that "in Dan 7:9, as part of his dream visions (cf. 7:1-2), Daniel watched God himself, as the 'Ancient One,' take his throne for judgment. God's clothing was 'like snow, white' (ὡσεὶ χιῶν λευκόν in the Theodotion recension) and the hair of his head like pure wool. Here, in a vision, God himself is dressed in white clothing indicative of his divine heavenly glory and splendor."¹³²

bolaion in 1 *Enoch*). What is more, the word translated 'dazzling' (*exastrapton*) in Luke 9:29 is reminiscent of the use of the word *astrape* (lightning) on two occasions in 1 *Enoch* 14 (vv. 11 and 17, cf. Ezek 1:4). Indeed, in the description of the angel in Dan 10:6, the appearance of that being is said to resemble lightning." Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 367.

¹³⁰ Evans, *Mark 8:27—16:20*, 36.

¹³¹ Evans, *Mark 8:27—16:20*, 36.

¹³² Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus*, 86. Likewise, Morna Hooker also attempts to interpret Jesus' white garments in the light of the symbolism surrounding the deity's attire in Dan 7:9. She says: "the whiteness of garments often features in apocalyptic writings which attempt to describe heavenly scenes, e.g. Dan 7:9, and Mark himself describes the young man in the tomb on Easter Day as wearing white — a hint, perhaps, that he is a heavenly being." Hooker, "What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?" 60.

These particular connections to the attributes associated with the Ancient of Days are important, since they recall the peculiar features of the Son of Man in the *Book of the Similitudes* as well as the portrayals of Yahoel and Metatron in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and *3 Enoch*, where the ocularcentric profile of the translated person is similarly constructed through the transference of divine features associated with the Ancient of Days.¹³³ In this respect, the transference of the garment does not appear coincidental, since it underlines the ocularcentric nature of the celestial manifestation.¹³⁴ To an even greater degree, the Gospel of Matthew highlights the ocular aspect of the garment's symbolism by saying that Jesus' garments became white as the light (τὰ δὲ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο λευκὰ ὡς τὸ φῶς).¹³⁵

Some supporters of the "Mosaic typology" hypothesis, who have previously attempted to explain all the details of Jesus' transfiguration solely through comparison with the biblical Mosaic traditions, often have encountered problems with the interpretation of Jesus' celestial garment. Although the tradition of Jesus' supernatural attire plays a prominent role in the transfiguration account, the bib-

¹³³ On this see Andrei A. Orlov, *Yahoel and Metatron: Aural Apocalypticism and the Origins of Early Jewish Mysticism*, *Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum* 169 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 83-85, 200.

¹³⁴ Simon Gathercole notes that "Jesus' clothes ... are whiter than any launderer on earth could wash them, hence they reflect a heavenly whiteness." Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son*, 48.

¹³⁵ Exploring this motif of shining garments, Richard Bauckham notes that "a standard set of descriptives that could be used to describe any heavenly being, including quite ordinary as well as quite exalted heavenly beings. The basic idea behind all these descriptions is that heaven and its inhabitants are shining and bright. Hence the descriptions employ a stock series of images of brightness: heavenly beings or their dress are typically shining like the sun or the stars, gleaming like bronze or precious stones, fiery bright like torches or lightning, dazzling white like snow or pure wool." Richard J. Bauckham, "The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus," in Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis, eds., *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*, *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period. Supplement Series* 63 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 43-69 at 51.

lical accounts are silent about the reception of a garment by the son of Amram. In relation to this situation, Jarl Fossum notes that “the Pentateuchal books have nothing to say about Moses’ garments being changed on Mt. Sinai. We should consider the possibility that Matthew and Luke have filled out Mark’s story about Jesus’ ascent and transformation with traditional elements.”¹³⁶ Nevertheless, in some extra-biblical accounts, Moses is often depicted as being “clothed” with glory, light, or the divine Name.

The theme of the prophet’s clothing with the divine Name received its most extensive elaboration in the Samaritan materials, including the compilation known to us as *Memar Marqab*.¹³⁷ In the very first chapter of this document, the deity himself announces to the great prophet that he will be vested with the divine Name.¹³⁸ Several other passages of *Memar Marqab* affirm this striking clothing metaphor.¹³⁹ Linda Belleville points out that in the Samaritan *Memar Marqab* “Moses’ ascent of Mt Sinai is described as an *investiture*

¹³⁶ Fossum, “Ascensio, Metamorphosis,” 78.

¹³⁷ The motif of the investiture with the divine Name can be found also in the *Defter*, the Samaritan liturgical materials in which praise is given to the great prophet who clad himself in the Name of the deity.

¹³⁸ *Memar Marqab* I.1 reads: “He said *Moses, Moses*, revealing to him that he would be vested with prophethood and the divine Name.” John Macdonald, *Memar Marqab: The Teaching of Marqab*, 2 vols. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 84 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1963), 2.4.

¹³⁹ *Memar Marqab* I.9 iterates a similar tradition: “I have vested you with my Name.” Macdonald, *Memar Marqab*, 2.32; *Memar Marqab* II.12: “Exalted is the great prophet Moses whom his Lord vested with His Name.... The Four Names led him to waters of life, in order that he might be exalted and honoured in every place: the name with which God vested him, the name which God revealed to him, the name by which God glorified him, the name by which God magnified him.... The first name, with which Genesis opens, was that which he was vested with and by which he was made strong.” Macdonald, *Memar Marqab*, 2.80-81; *Memar Marqab* IV.7: “O Thou who hast crowned me with Thy light and magnified me with wonders and honoured me with Thy glory and hid me in Thy palm and brought me into the Sanctuary of the Unseen and vested me with Thy name, by which Thou didst create the world, and revealed to me Thy great name and taught me Thy secrets....” Macdonald, *Memar Marqab*, 2.158.

with light: he was ‘crowned with light’ (*Memar Marqah* 2.12) and ‘vested with glory’ (*Memar Marqah* 4.1): as he descended Mt Sinai according to *Memar Marqah* 4.4) he ‘wore the light on his face.’¹⁴⁰ Fossum draws attention to another Samaritan text where “Moses upon his ascension was clothed in a super-royal robe.”¹⁴¹

A significant feature of this tradition within the Samaritan materials is that the investiture with the Tetragrammaton entails a ritual of “crowning” with the divine Name.¹⁴² Thus, *Memar Marqah* 1:9 unveils the following actions of the deity:

On the first day I created heaven and earth; on the second day I spread out the firmament on high; on the third day I prepared a dish and gathered into it all kinds of good things; on the fourth day I established signs, fixing times, completing my greatness; on the fifth day I revealed many marvels from the waters; on the sixth day I caused to come up out of the ground various living creatures; on the seventh day I perfected holiness. I rested in it in my own glory. I made it my special portion. I was glorious in it. I

¹⁴⁰ Linda L. Belleville, *Reflections of Glory: Paul's Polemical Use of the Moses-Doxa Tradition in 2 Corinthians 3.1-18*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement Series 52* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 49-50. Joel Marcus also notes that “Markan Jesus’ shining garments are in line with some postbiblical Mosaic traditions, since Samaritan texts, *Memar Marqah* 4:6 and passages from *Defter*, describe Moses as being clothed with light or with a garment superior to any king’s.” Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 1115. Marcus further notices that “one of the *Defter* texts ... depicts Moses on Sinai as being covered with a cloud (Cowley, *Liturgy*, 1.40-41), and this is reminiscent of Mark 9:7 (‘And there came a cloud, overshadowing them’) and different from the Exodus account, in which the cloud covers the mountain rather than the person on it.” Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 1115.

¹⁴¹ Fossum, “Ascensio, Metamorphosis,” 83.

¹⁴² On crowning with the divine Name in later Jewish mysticism, see Arthur Green, *Keter: The Crown of God in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 42ff.

established your name then also—my name and yours therein as one, for I established it and you are crowned with it.¹⁴³

In this passage the endowment of Moses with a crown is given a creational significance when the letters on both headdresses are depicted as demiurgic tools, instruments through which heaven and earth came into being. In light of this imagery, it is possible that the motif of the investiture with the divine Name is also present in another Mosaic account — the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian. As we recall from the *Exagoge*, Moses receives a mysterious crown and immediately thereafter is able to permeate the secrets of creation and to control the created order. *Exagoge* 75-80 relates: “Then he gave me a royal crown and got up from the throne. I beheld the whole earth all around and saw beneath the earth and above the heavens. A multitude of stars fell before my knees and I counted them all.”¹⁴⁴ Here, crowned, Moses suddenly has immediate access to all created realms, “beneath the earth and above the heaven,” and the stars are now kneeling before the newly initiated demiurgic agent.

In some Samaritan sources, Moses’ clothing with the Name is set in parallel to Adam’s endowment with the image. Fossum suggests¹⁴⁵ that in *Memar Marqah*, Moses’ investiture with the Name also appears to be understood as vestment with the image.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Macdonald, *Memar Marqah*, 2.31.

¹⁴⁴ Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 54.

¹⁴⁵ Fossum argues that “Moses’ investiture and coronation, which usually were connected with his ascension of Mt. Sinai, were seen not only as a heavenly enthronement, but also as a restoration of the glory lost by Adam. The possession of this Glory was conceived of as a sharing of God’s own Name, i.e., the divine nature.” Fossum, *Name of God*, 94.

¹⁴⁶ *Memar Marqah* VI.3 reads: “He [Moses] drew near to the holy deep darkness where the Divine One was, and he saw the wonders of the unseen—a sight no one else could see. His image dwelt on him. How terrifying to anyone who beholds and no one is able to stand before it!” Macdonald, *Memar Marqah*, 2.223.

Jesus' Luminous Face

Memories of the Mosaic Sinai encounters receive a more pronounced expression in Matthew and Luke's accounts of the transfiguration,¹⁴⁷ in particular, through the symbolism of Jesus' luminous face.¹⁴⁸ As previously mentioned, Jesus' luminous face was often interpreted through the lens of the biblical "Mosaic typology," which resulted in a portrayal of Jesus as the new Moses. Be that as it may, this link has often been criticized by scholars. For example, Simon Lee points out that the luminous face represents more than a mere replication of a Mosaic feature found in the Hebrew Bible. He argues that "while Jesus' radiant face at the transfiguration clearly reminds readers of Moses' experience at the Sinai Theophany, it is questionable whether Matthew, by mentioning his radiant face, intends to legitimize Jesus as the new Moses or affirm his teaching authority. For Jesus was already appointed as God's divine Son in the infancy narrative and at the baptism (3:1-17), and his teaching authority became manifest to the public (7:28)."¹⁴⁹ Lee further points out the limitations of the biblical Mosaic typology by noting that "Mosaic typology cannot be the single dominant hermeneutical key for the entire Matthean Christological project, including the transfiguration. Against Dale

¹⁴⁷ The absence of this tradition in Mark remains a debated issue. Cranfield proposes that "in view of the parallels it is surprising that Mark does not mention Jesus' face. That a reference to it has dropped out of the text by mistake at a very early stage, as Streeter suggested, is conceivable; but perhaps it is more likely that Mt. and Lk. have both introduced the reference independently under the influence of Exod. xxxiv. 29 ff." Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 290.

¹⁴⁸ The same theophanic constellations where the features of the Ancient of Days coincide with the symbolism of the shining face will appear in Rev 1. In relation to these developments, Yarbrough Collins notes that "Jesus is not depicted as luminous or as wearing white garments in the resurrection-appearance stories. He is so depicted, however, in epiphany stories, including Rev 1:16, which speaks about Christ's face shining like the sun." Yarbrough Collins, *Mark*, 422.

¹⁴⁹ Lee, *Jesus' Transfiguration*, 95.

Allison's new Moses Christology, I argue that Matthew reads the scriptural stories, including Moses, on the basis of his understanding of Jesus."¹⁵⁰ Yet it should be noted that Allison's own position might not be as straightforward as Lee envisions, since he is well aware that the face imagery far transcends the limited scope of biblical Mosaic traditions.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, a plethora of possible interpretations of the face imagery points not only to various possessors of this attribute but also to the ambiguity of the designation itself. This imagery can be interpreted in a variety of ways, namely, as a part of the human or divine body, as a glorious body itself, or as one of its cognates, such as an image or an *iqonin*.

Although scholars have attempted to interpret the symbolism of Jesus' luminous face through the biblical imagery of Moses' incandescent visage,¹⁵² another important theophanic trend, which speaks about the deity's *Panim*, remains neglected. This tradition, in which the deity's *Panim* becomes a technical term for the Glory of God, is rooted in the biblical theophanic accounts, where, in response to Moses' plea to behold the deity's *Glory*, God tells the seer it is impossible for him to see His *Face*. The tradition of the *panim* as a designation for the luminous divine body receives further development in the Enochic literature. In one of the earliest Enochic booklets, the *Book of the Watchers*, the notion of the deity's *Panim* plays

¹⁵⁰ Lee, *Jesus' Transfiguration*, 95.

¹⁵¹ Allison points to the ubiquity of such imagery by noting that "seemingly the most cogent objection to the Mosaic interpretation of the transfiguration is this: many stories from antiquity attribute radiance to others besides Moses, so why should the motif be especially associated with him? ... in view of all the evidence, it must be conceded that the motif of radiance was far from being exclusively associated with Moses." Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology*, 246.

¹⁵² Exod 34:29-30 unveils the following tradition: "Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him." Exod 34:35 affirms a similar tradition: "the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him."

an important role in theophanic descriptions. For our study it is significant that within these early extra-biblical accounts, the imagery of the deity's face often coincides (like in the transfiguration account) with the symbolism of its dazzlingly white/glorious garment. Regarding these developments, Christopher Rowland observes that "in *1 Enoch* 14:20 two aspects of the divinity are mentioned, his clothing ('his raiment was like the sun, brighter and whiter than any snow') and his face. Precisely these two elements are mentioned in Matthew 17:2 and Luke 9:29."¹⁵³

The symbolism of God's Face receives further elaboration in *2 Enoch* where God's *Panim* is understood not as a part of God's body, but as his entire extent. Moreover, the *panim* became a terminological correlative for another concept prominent in many early Jewish extra-biblical accounts, namely, the image of God or His *iqonin*. We can see this correlation in early Mosaic, Enochic, and Jacobite extra-biblical traditions, where *tselem* is often used interchangeably with *panim*. If in Matthew's and Luke's transfiguration accounts Jesus' luminous face was indeed understood as his *iqonin*, they provide an important connection with other early Jewish theophanic accounts. In these accounts, Jesus' luminous face may also be envisioned not merely as a part of the translated adept's body but as a reference to his glorious *tselem* or *iqonin*. An important feature — indicating that Jesus' face relates not to Moses's but to God's countenance — is the fact that the reference to "face" occurs in the account before the advent of the deified human, rather than after such theophany as is the case with Moses.

Another distinctive aspect of the transfiguration account which hints that it does not operate with the concept of Moses' face as understood in the Hebrew Bible is that, unlike the biblical account, where the prophet's face is understood as the mirror of divine Glory, a material testimony that the seer then carries to the lower realm as a witness of the divine encounter, here the glowing effects of Jesus'

¹⁵³ Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 367.

face are not retained in further narration.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, in Exodus and at Jesus' transfiguration the glorious face is manifested in two different realms: the upper realm in the case of Jesus and the lower realm in the case of biblical Moses. One can see in this topological situation a curious theophanic reversal: the face of the great prophet, not luminous on the mountain, started emitting light upon his descent from the high place; while Jesus' face, shining on the mountain, does not remain incandescent in the lower realm at his descent.¹⁵⁵

Also important for the interpretation of the transfiguration story is the attempt to connect the face with the imagery of the sun. Once again, this juxtaposition recalls extra-biblical Mosaic testimonies, especially ones reflected in Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*. There we learn that the light of Moses' face surpassed the splendor of the sun and the moon.¹⁵⁶ *LAB* 12:1 unveils the following tradition: "Moses came down. Having been bathed with light that could not be gazed upon, he had gone down to the place where the light of the

¹⁵⁴ Jarl Fossum underlines this discrepancy with Moses' situation by noting that the luminosity of Jesus' face unlike in Moses' story was not retained after the descent from the mountain of the transfiguration. He notes that "Matt 17:2 says that Jesus' 'face shone like the sun,' while Luke 9:29 states that 'the appearance of his countenance was altered.' In Exod 34:29-35 it is related that Moses' face shone while he descended from Mt. Sinai. It is tempting to see a connection here, but it should be borne in mind that neither Matthew nor Luke relates that Jesus came down from the mountain with a luminous face." Fossum, "Ascensio, Metamorphosis," 77.

¹⁵⁵ Ulrich Luz also notes this difference by arguing that "the transformation of Moses in Exodus 34 is also something different. It became visible after God had spoken with him, and it did not immediately end, while Jesus' transformation took place before God spoke and was only temporary." Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 396.

¹⁵⁶ Reflecting on these traditions in *LAB*, Kristine Ruffatto notes that "*LAB* 12:1 declares that when Moses descended from his heavenly ascent on Sinai, his radiant face 'surpassed the splendor of the sun and moon' (*vicit lumen faciei sue splendorem solis et lune*). Jacobson writes that comparisons to the sun and moon are fairly commonplace in classical Greek and Latin texts, and that a nearly exact parallel is found at *Pal. Hist.* p. 242 where Moses' face is said to shine *ὑπερ τὸν ἥλιον*. The idea that Moses' shining face surpassed the brilliance of the sun is also found in *Lev. Rab.* 20:2." Ruffatto, *Visionary Ascents of Moses*, 160.

sun and the moon are. The light of his face surpassed the splendor of the sun and the moon, but he was unaware of this.”¹⁵⁷ The same comparison between the face of the great prophet and sun is then perpetuated in rabbinic literature. For example, according to *b. Bava Batra* 75a, “the face of Moses was like that of the sun but the face of Joshua was like that of the moon.”¹⁵⁸

Earlier we suggested that the symbolism of Jesus’s face is connected with the notion of image or *iqonin*. Why is this important? Because in early Jewish materials, the translated seer is often conceived as the image or the *iqonin* of God. This is evident, for example, in the Adamic lore, where the protoplast is understood as the divine image. The same understanding is implied in the Mosaic and Jacobite extra-biblical accounts through the motif of angelic veneration and hostility. Furthermore, we learned that the role of the translated person as the image of God is closely intertwined in early Jewish accounts with the symbolism of the *panim* or the face. This is especially noticeable in the Slavonic *Ladder of Jacob*, where the conceptual bridge between the notions of image and face are openly expressed in the symbolism of Jacob’s *iqonin*.¹⁵⁹

If the concept of the *iqonin* is indeed present in the symbolism of Jesus’ luminous face, it is possible that such imagery does not originate in the traditions about the patriarch Jacob, but rather from the Mosaic developments, currents which, in turn, exercised an unmatched influence on this Christian theophany. In this regard, it is

¹⁵⁷ Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo’s Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum, with Latin Text and English Translation*, 2 vols. *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums* 31 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 110. For the discussion of this tradition see Belleville, *Reflections of Glory*, 41.

¹⁵⁸ Isidor Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud. Hagiga* (London: Soncino, 1935–1952), *Bava Batra*, 75a.

¹⁵⁹ The correlation between *panim* and *iqonin* is also discernible in *Joseph and Aseneth*. On this see Andrei A. Orlov, *The Greatest Mirror: Heavenly Counterparts in the Jewish Pseudepigrapha* (Albany: SUNY, 2017), 141–148.

noteworthy that in extra-biblical Jewish lore, Moses' luminous face was often reinterpreted as his *iqonin*.

For instance, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* of Exod 34:29, while rendering the account of Moses' shining visage, adds to it the *iqonin* terminology: "At the time that Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tables of the testimony in Moses' hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the splendor of the *iqonin* of his face shone because of the splendor of the Glory of the Shekinah of the Lord at the time that he spoke with him."¹⁶⁰ The next verse (34:30) of the same targumic account also uses the *iqonin* formulae: "Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the *iqonin* of his face shone; and they were afraid to go near him."¹⁶¹ Finally, verses 33-35 speak about Moses' veil, again demonstrating the appropriation of the image symbolism:

When Moses ceased speaking with them, he put a veil on the *iqonin* of his face. Whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would remove the veil that was on the *iqonin* of his face until he came out. And he would come out and tell the children of Israel what he had been commanded. The children of Israel would see Moses' *iqonin* that the splendor of the *iqonin* of Moses' face shone. Then Moses would put the veil back on his face until he went in to speak with him.¹⁶²

In these targumic renderings one detects the creative interchange between *panim* and *tselem* symbolism. The application of "image" terminology to Moses' story here has profound anthropological significance — since Moses' luminosity becomes envisioned as a restoration of Adam's original *tselem*, which, according to some traditions, was itself a luminous entity. The Adamic connection is often articulated in various non-biblical accounts describing Moses' face. The Samaritan *Memar Marqab*, for instance, makes this connection

¹⁶⁰ Martin J. McNamara, Richard Hayward, and Michael Maher, eds., *Targum Neofiti 1 and Pseudo-Jonathan: Exodus*, Aramaic Bible 2 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1994), 260.

¹⁶¹ McNamara et al., *Targum Neofiti 1 and Pseudo-Jonathan: Exodus*, 261.

¹⁶² McNamara et al., *Targum Neofiti 1 and Pseudo-Jonathan: Exodus*, 261.

between the shining face of Moses and the luminosity of Adam's image. According to Linda Belleville, several passages of this Samaritan collection link Moses' luminosity to the primordial glory Adam had prior to the Fall.¹⁶³

The understanding of Moses' face restoring the original luminous *tselem* is also expressed in later rabbinic midrashim where the protoplast's glorious image is put in conspicuous parallel with the radiant *panim* of the great prophet.¹⁶⁴ We find this correspondence divulged in *Deut. Rab.* 11:3:

Adam said to Moses: "I am greater than you because I have been created in the image of God." Whence this? For it is said, And God created man in His own image (Gen 1:27). Moses replied to him: "I am far superior to you, for the honour which was given to you has been taken away from you, as it is said, But man (Adam) abideth not in honour (Ps 49:13); but as for me, the radiant countenance which God gave me still remains with me."¹⁶⁵

Another specimen of this tradition is found in *Midrash Tadshe* 4 where the creation of the protoplast in God's image is compared with the bestowal of luminosity on Moses' face: "In the beginning: 'and God created man in his image,' and in the desert: 'and Moshe knew not that the skin of his face shone.'"¹⁶⁶ It is also noteworthy

¹⁶³ See Belleville, *Reflections of Glory*, 50.

¹⁶⁴ See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.705.

¹⁶⁵ Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 7.173. I have argued that already in 4Q504 the glory of Adam and the glory of Moses' face were creatively juxtaposed. The luminous face of the prophet serves in this text as an alternative to the lost luminosity of Adam and as a new symbol of God's glory once again manifested in the human body. On this, see Andrei A. Orlov, "Vested with Adam's glory: Moses as the Luminous Counterpart of Adam in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Macarian Homilies," *Christian Orient* 4.10 (2006): 498–513.

¹⁶⁶ Alon Goshen Gottstein, "The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature," *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994): 183. Examining this passage, Linda Belleville observes that "*Midrash Tadshe* 4 associates Moses' glory

that later rabbinic materials often speak of the luminosity of Adam's face,¹⁶⁷ a feature most likely pointing to an Adam-Moses connection. Take, for example, *Leviticus Rabbah* 20.2, which runs as follows:

Resh Lakish, in the name of R. Simeon the son of Menasya, said: The apple of Adam's heel outshone the globe of the sun; how much more so the brightness of his face! Nor need you wonder. In the ordinary way if a person makes salvers, one for himself and one for his household, whose will he make more beautiful? Not his own? Similarly, Adam was created for the service of the Holy One, blessed be He, and the globe of the sun for the service of mankind.¹⁶⁸

In a similar tradition, *Genesis Rabbah* II focuses not on Adam's luminous garments, but on his glorious face:

Adam's glory did not abide the night with him. What is the proof? But Adam passeth not the night in glory (Ps. XLIX, 13). The Rabbis maintain: His glory abode with him, but at the termination of the Sabbath He deprived him of his splendor and expelled him from the Garden of Eden, as it is written, Thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away (Job XIV, 20).¹⁶⁹

The roots of the preceding rabbinic trajectories can be traced to documents of the Second Temple period. For example, the theme of the superiority of Moses over Adam is already present in Philo. Wayne Meeks draws attention to a tradition from *Quaestiones et Solutiones*

with being created in the image of God, stating that God created man in his own image, first in the beginning and then in the wilderness." Belleville, *Reflections of Glory*, 65.

¹⁶⁷ According to Jewish sources, the image of God was especially reflected in the radiance of Adam's face. On this, see Fossum, *The Name of God*, 94.

¹⁶⁸ Harry Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds., *Midrash Rabbah*, 10 vols. (London: Soncino, 1961), 4.252.

¹⁶⁹ Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 1.81.

in *Exodum* 2.46, which identifies the ascendant Moses as the heavenly man¹⁷⁰ created in God's image on the seventh day:¹⁷¹

But the calling above of the prophet is a second birth better than the first.... For he is called on the seventh day, in this (respect) differing from the earth-born first molded man, for the latter came into being from the earth and with body, while the former (came) from the ether and without body. Wherefore the most appropriate number, six, was assigned to the earth-born man, while to the one differently born (was assigned) the higher nature of the hebdomad.¹⁷²

It is possible that such an interpretation of Moses' shining visage, not merely as the luminous face but also functioning as the luminous image, could stand behind the symbolism of Jesus' luminous face in the transfiguration accounts. In the peculiar theophanic context of the transfiguration, with its postulation of God's invisibility, the famous Pauline phrase — "Christ as the image of the invisible God" — can be seen in an entirely new light.

Elijah and Moses

One of the important features of the transfiguration account is the presence of Elijah — another prominent seer of the Hebrew Bible associated with aural apparitions of the deity.¹⁷³ The appearance of

¹⁷⁰ Meeks observes that in the early Mosaic accounts "Moses' elevation at Sinai was treated not only as a heavenly enthronement, but also as a restoration of the glory lost by Adam. Moses, crowned with both God's name and his image, became in some sense a 'second Adam,' the prototype of a new humanity." Meeks, "Moses as God and King," 365.

¹⁷¹ Meeks, "Moses as God and King," 364–65.

¹⁷² Ralph Marcus, ed., *Philo, Questions and Answers on Exodus*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press/Heinemann, 1949), 91–92.

¹⁷³ The Lukan version of the transfiguration story appears to further strengthen Elijah's and Moses' connections with the theophanic traditions by mentioning that both "appeared in glory." On this terminology see Jo-

two paradigmatic participants in the Old Testament theophanies at the transfiguration event is not coincidental. Morna Hooker suggests that the “link between Elijah and Moses, and one that is clearly relevant to the transfiguration, is the fact that both of them experienced theophanies on mountains.”¹⁷⁴ Both characters, it appears, were strategically placed in the story to bear witness to the novel divine manifestation in the form of Jesus. As in the Hebrew Bible, where both adepts are linked with the respective *Kavod* and *Shem* developments with their corresponding ocular and aural symbolism, the transfiguration account curiously unfolds both theophanic paradigms with their peculiar expressions at the same time: Jesus appears as a glorious form, while God is revealed as a formless voice.

As previously discussed, the biblical materials underline the role of Moses and Elijah as the respective exemplars of two rival theophanic trends: biblical encounters of Moses are permeated with ocularcentric motifs, while the story of Elijah is expressly linked to the aural ideology. Therefore, it may not be coincidental that Mark inverts the historical sequence by listing Elijah first, possibly attempting to underline the priority of the deity associated in the transfiguration story with the aural paradigm to which Elijah serves as the primary biblical exemplar. Ramsey suggests that “the order is peculiar to Mark, and it may be dictated by the greater prominence of Elijah in his gospel.”¹⁷⁵ The Gospel of Luke appears to further highlight Moses’ and Elijah’s connections with the theophanic traditions by mentioning that they both appeared in glory (Μωϋσῆς καὶ Ἠλίας, οἱ ὀφθέντες ἐν δόξῃ).

seph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, Anchor Bible 28 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 794–795.

¹⁷⁴ Hooker, “What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?” 61. Joel Marcus also suggests that “the key to the symbolism of the appearance of ‘Elijah with Moses’ on the mountain probably lies in their common association with Mt. Sinai = Horeb, where they both encountered God (Exod 19–24, 34; 1 Kgs 19).” Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 632.

¹⁷⁵ Ramsey, *The Glory of God*, 114.

Three Dwellings

Peter's statement about building three dwellings for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah has often puzzled scholars. Countless hypotheses attempting to contextualize this statement have been offered. Jesus' silence appears to underline the problematic nature of Peter's suggestion, as he places his teacher alongside the two prominent seers of the Hebrew Bible. Scholars have proposed that the essence of the statement could refer to Jesus' unique status in comparison with Moses and Elijah. Exploring the tradition of the three dwellings, John McGuckin suggests:

there is a presupposition of equality of status here ... that Mark is concerned to reject ... which is designed to correct Peter's faulty theology by emphasizing the unique and special status of Jesus ... a uniqueness that has replaced and outstripped all prophetic predecessors and hence the meaning of the phrase: "and looking around they saw no-one only Jesus."¹⁷⁶

Considering the peculiar choice of the characters, including two major participants in the Hebrew Bible's theophanies, it is not merely their abstract statuses which remain under consideration, but their position in relation to theophanic situation of the story. In these settings Jesus is clearly envisioned as the center of the theophanic event,

¹⁷⁶ McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ*, 17. Other scholars note that Matthew's phrase, that upon raising their faces the disciples saw "no one except Jesus himself, alone" (οὐδένα εἶδον εἰ μὴ αὐτὸν Ἰησοῦν μόνον) suggests that Jesus "alone remains on center stage" in order to reinforce for the disciples his uniqueness vis-à-vis Moses and Elijah. Michael Kibbe, *Godly Fear or Ungodly Failure? Hebrews 12:18–29 and the Sinai Theophanies* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), 104. On this see also Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.268; Huizenga, *New Isaac*, 233; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 441; John Nolland, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, New International Greek Testament Commentary 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 705; Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 648.

while Moses and Elijah are predetermined to constitute its periphery. The three booths tradition therefore may underline the unique status of Jesus as the symbolic nexus of the transfiguration theophany and clearly distinguish him from Moses and Elijah, who are mere recipients of theophanic encounters. Peter's way of addressing Jesus as "rabbi"¹⁷⁷ in Mark might further underline Peter's faulty "human" perception of the unique status of Jesus who became conceived in the transfiguration story as the divine *Kavod*.

The three dwellings tradition, with its tendency to emphasize the unique place of the main protagonist of the vision, helps to discern a peculiar multitiered hierarchy of various characters in the story, including crowds and chosen disciples, Elijah and Moses, the transfigured Jesus, and the divine Voice. If in our story Elijah and Moses are indeed envisioned as heavenly beings, as some scholars have suggested,¹⁷⁸ then their separation from Jesus in the episode of the three dwellings takes on another important function often found in Jewish extra-biblical accounts. This role involves a peculiar distancing of the deified human from the rest of the heavenly citizens and the simultaneous affirmation of his unique proximity to the deity. Such a role is often reaffirmed in various Jewish traditions through the routines of angelic obeisance and disdain. Although in the transfiguration story Elijah and Moses are not bowing down be-

¹⁷⁷ In relation to this term Joel Marcus notes that "in Jewish sources, 'Rabbi' and 'Rab' ('great one') eventually became technical terms for ordained teachers and/or jurists and are still used so today. Scholars of Judaism, however, debate how far the development toward 'Rabbi' as a technical term had gone in NT times. Some think that it was not yet a title but only a vague honorific, roughly equivalent to 'sir.' In support of this interpretation are Matt 20:33, which translates *rabbouni* from Mark 10:51 with *kyrie* ('sir'), and early inscriptions from Palestine and the Diaspora that use *rab*, *rabbi*, and related words as general terms of respect for influential men who were not necessarily teachers.... As Cohen sums up the situation, in the first several centuries of the Christian era the term was 'a popular designation for anyone of high position, notably — but not exclusively — a teacher.'" Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 633.

¹⁷⁸ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 396.

fore the transfigured protagonist, the prostration of the disciples may allude to angelic obeisance.

The Fear Motif

All three synoptic renderings of the transfiguration story speak about the disciples' fear. These references are important, since fear often accompanies a divine encounter in early Jewish accounts.¹⁷⁹ Early Pentateuchal stories of the primordial humans encountering divine manifestations contain references to the fear that otherworldly realities instill in humans. For example, immediately after the protoplast's transgression, Genesis 3 reports Adam's fear regarding God's visitation to the Garden. This biblical book also recounts the fear of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob during their encounters with divine and angelic manifestations. The fear of the visionary becomes a prominent motif in prophetic and apocalyptic accounts of the Hebrew Bible, including the Book of Ezekiel and the Book of Daniel.¹⁸⁰

The fear motif was not forgotten in extra-biblical Jewish literature, including early Enochic lore, a body of materials which represents one of the most extensive early compilations of Jewish visionary traditions. Already in one of the earliest Enochic booklets, the *Book of the Watchers*, we learn about the fear of the seventh antediluvian

¹⁷⁹ On fear as the human response to theophany, see James C. VanderKam, *From Revelation to Canon: Studies in Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 343; Joachim Becker, *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament*, *Analecta Biblica* 25 (Rome: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 22.

¹⁸⁰ For example, see Dan 8:17-18: "So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I became frightened and fell prostrate. But he said to me, 'Understand, O mortal, that the vision is for the time of the end.' As he was speaking to me, I fell into a trance, face to the ground; then he touched me and set me on my feet"; Dan 10:7-9: "I, Daniel, alone saw the vision; the people who were with me did not see the vision, though a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled and hid themselves. So I was left alone to see this great vision. My strength left me, and my complexion grew deathly pale, and I retained no strength. Then I heard the sound of his words; and when I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a trance, face to the ground."

patriarch as he approaches the divine presence. Chapter 14 of this early Enochic work portrays the seer's entrance into what seems to be regarded as the heavenly temple, the sacred abode of the deity, a very special *topos* that is terrifying not only to human beings but also to the celestial creatures. *1 Enoch* 14:9-14 offers the following report of the seer's progress into the celestial sanctuary:

And I proceeded until I came near to a wall which was built of hailstones, and a tongue of fire surrounded it, and it began to make me afraid. And I went into the tongue of fire and came near to a large house which was built of hailstones, and the wall of that house (was) like a mosaic (made) of hailstones, and its floor (was) snow. Its roof (was) like the path of the stars and flashes of lightning, and among them (were) fiery Cherubim, and their heaven (was like) water. And (there was) a fire burning around its wall, and its door was ablaze with fire. And I went into that house, and (it was) hot as fire and cold as snow, and there was neither pleasure nor life in it. Fear covered me and trembling took hold of me. And as I was shaking and trembling, I fell on my face.¹⁸¹

It is significant that Enoch is not simply frightened by his otherworldly experience, he is literally "covered with fear." Scholars have pointed out the unusual strength of these formulae of fear. For example, John Collins notes the text's "careful observation of Enoch's terrified reaction."¹⁸² Another scholar, Martha Himmelfarb, notices the power of the visionary's reaction to the divine presence, which in her opinion supersedes some formative biblical visionary accounts, including Ezekiel's visions. She points out that "Ezekiel's prostrations are never attributed to fear; they are reported each time in the same words, without any mention of emotion, as almost ritual acknowledgments of the majesty of God. The *Book of the Watchers*, on

¹⁸¹ Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2.98.

¹⁸² John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 55.

the other hand, emphasizes the intensity of the visionary's reaction to the manifestation of the divine."¹⁸³

For purposes of our investigation of the Mosaic influences, it is also significant that the fear motif plays a crucial role in biblical and extra-biblical renderings of Moses' story. In light of these traditions, scholars frequently connect the disciples' fear with the fear of the Israelites when they encountered Moses' luminous face. Thus, from Exod 34:29-30 we learn that "when Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him." Exod 34:35 then repeats this motif: "the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him."

Returning to the transfiguration story it is important to note that the fearful reaction of the disciples occurs at different places in each of the synoptic gospels. In Luke the disciples are terrified as they entered the cloud from which they will later hear the deity's voice.¹⁸⁴ In Matthew it occurs even later than in Luke, appearing after the divine utterance about Jesus' unique role in relation to the deity. Scholars argue that "in the Matthean version of the transfiguration it is actually the divine voice, and not Jesus' radiance, which provokes fear."¹⁸⁵

In Mark, however, the fearful reaction of the disciples happens before the aural theophany. Although it is not entirely clear what provokes the fear in this case, the sudden apparition of Elijah and

¹⁸³ Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 16.

¹⁸⁴ Davies and Allison note that "Luke makes the descent of the cloud the occasion for fear (Lk 9:34)." Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.703. Huizenga comments further that "in Luke 9:34 the three disciples become afraid as they enter the cloud." Huizenga, *New Isaac*, 218.

¹⁸⁵ Huizenga, *New Isaac*, 211. Davies and Allison also note that Matthew "reserves the experience of awe on the part of the disciples until immediately after the words, 'Hear ye him.' It is the divine word which is awesome." Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.703.

Moses or Jesus' metamorphosis,¹⁸⁶ scholars often see it as related to the transfigured Jesus.¹⁸⁷ For example, Davies and Allison note that "Mark places the awe felt by the disciples early in the narrative, immediately after the transfiguration and the vision of Moses and Elijah: not the fact that Jesus commands but his transfiguration itself is emphasized."¹⁸⁸ A similar correspondence — between fear and the ocularcentric manifestation — may also be reflected in Luke, since it is not entirely clear if the cloud's imagery in that gospel is related to Jesus' theophany, or pertains to the revelation of the divine Voice, or both. Luke's attribution of the theophanic fear, therefore, remains rather ambiguous.

In Mark, at least, the symbolism of theophanic fear can be compared to the aforementioned ocularcentric theophany found in biblical and extra-biblical accounts. An additional detail emphasizing the disciples' role as the visionaries of Jesus' glory is highlighted in unique fashion in Luke 9:32, underscoring the progress of the disciples' visionary abilities, since they were first depicted as "heavy with sleep" and then fully awake.¹⁸⁹ In the same verse, Luke also points out that they "saw his glory" (δέ εἶδον τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ).

Although scholars connect the disciples' fear in Matthew with the revelation of the divine voice, they often forget that the essence of this divine utterance is closely tied to the previous ocularcentric theophanic ordeal of the transfigured Jesus. In fact, it provides an interpretation of this theophany by telling the seers they are privileged to behold the divine Son. In this light, it is possible that even in Matthew the theophanic fear is related to Jesus' epiphany, since it coincides with God's revelation about his true status. Given this, it is

¹⁸⁶ Some scholars argue that the three disciples in Mark had become terrified at the appearance of Moses and Elijah in conversation with the transfigured Jesus. On this see Heil, *The Transfiguration of Jesus*, 30.

¹⁸⁷ Leroy Huizenga suggests "in Mark 9:6, Jesus' radiance and the appearance of Moses and Elijah precipitate the disciples' fear." Huizenga, *New Isaac*, 218.

¹⁸⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.703.

¹⁸⁹ Luke 9:32: "ὁ δὲ Πέτρος καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ ἦσαν βεβαρημένοι ὕπνῳ· διαγρηγορήσαντες δὲ εἶδον τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ καὶ τοὺς δύο ἄνδρας τοὺς συνεστῶτας αὐτῷ."

noteworthy that some scholars choose to read the fear motif in Matthew as indeed related to the ocularcentric theophany. For instance, Christopher Rowland observes that “Matthew 17:6 has the disciples falling on their faces, a typical reaction to a theophany or angelophany (cf. Ezek 2:1; Dan 10:9).”¹⁹⁰

Veneration Motif?

Among the synoptic gospels, only Matthew relates the tradition in which the disciples, upon hearing the divine utterance, fall to the ground in fear. Jesus then raises them up, encouraging them not to be afraid. For some, these additions are the most important Matthean contributions. Along these lines, Ulrich Luz argues that “the most important Matthean change in the transfiguration story is the addition of vv. 6-7, telling of the disciples’ fear and how Jesus raises them up.”¹⁹¹

The disciples’ reactions of fear and obeisance in Matthew are often seen as related solely to the aural manifestation of God, namely, His Voice.¹⁹² Yet Jesus’ peculiar affirmations to “get up” and “don’t be afraid,” can lead to a different interpretation. It is a significant that in Jewish and Christian theophanic accounts similar exhortations to visionaries to not fear or to get up usually come from the very objects of such visions: i. e., angelic or divine figures whose sudden appearance provokes feelings of fear and reverence.¹⁹³ This is the

¹⁹⁰ Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 367.

¹⁹¹ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 395.

¹⁹² Thus, Huizenga argues that “in the Matthean version, however, it is the divine voice which declares that Jesus is the beloved Son and commands Peter to remember the prior passion prediction which precipitates the fear.” Huizenga, *New Isaac*, 218.

¹⁹³ Loren Stuckenbruck notes that “the expression ‘Do not fear’ was frequently used in biblical and Ancient Near Eastern literature to communicate a message of divine comfort.” Loren Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.70 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 88.

case, for example, in Dan 10:9-12, where we can find a celestial visitor touching a prostrated seer filled with fear and telling him not to be afraid:

... then I heard the sound of his words; and when I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a trance, face to the ground. But then a hand touched me and roused me to my hands and knees. He said to me, "Daniel, greatly beloved, pay attention to the words that I am going to speak to you. Stand on your feet, for I have now been sent to you." So while he was speaking this word to me, I stood up trembling. He said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words."

In Dan 10:18-19 a similar cluster of motifs is repeated again: "again one in human form touched me and strengthened me. He said, 'Do not fear, greatly beloved, you are safe. Be strong and courageous!' When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, 'Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.'"

A similar arrangement of motifs can be found in the Jewish pseudepigrapha.¹⁹⁴ The shorter and longer recensions of *2 Enoch* 1:6-8 portray angels appearing before Enoch. The text recounts that as he was overwhelmed with fear, the patriarch prostrates himself before them. The angels then tell the seer not to be afraid: "Then I awoke from my sleep, and saw those men, standing in front of me, in actuality. Then I bowed down to them; and I was terrified; and the appearance of my face was changed because of fear. Then those men said to me, 'Be brave, Enoch! In truth, do not fear!'"¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ See also *3 Enoch* 15B:5: "At once Metatron, Prince of the Divine Presence, said to Moses, 'Son of Amram, fear not! for already God favors you. Ask what you will with confidence and boldness, for light shines from the skin of your face from one end of the world to the other.'" Philip Alexander, "3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983-1985), 1.304.

¹⁹⁵ Andersen "2 Enoch," 1.106-108.

In 2 *Enoch* 22 a similar motif appears during the patriarch's encounter with the deity's glorious form, labeled there as God's "face": "I saw the view of the face of the Lord, like iron made burning hot in a fire and brought out, and it emits sparks and is incandescent.... And I fell down flat and did obeisance to the Lord. And the Lord, with his own mouth, said to me, 'Be brave, Enoch! Don't be frightened! Stand up, and stand in front of my face forever.'"¹⁹⁶ Here again the phrase "do not fear" (or "be brave") coincides with the motif of bringing the adept into a standing position ("stand up").

It is important to note, that in the Gospel of Matthew the disciples' obeisance occurs immediately after the divine affirmation regarding Jesus' exalted status, and therefore it is possible that the content of the utterance and not the voice itself is what provokes the disciples' sudden reaction.¹⁹⁷ Davies and Allison recognize a certain correspondence between the disciples' bowed faces and the face of the transfigured Jesus, noting that "the motif of falling on one's face in fear is a standard part of any heavenly ascent or revelation story. But here there is more, for there is a contrast between Jesus' face, which is shining, and the faces of the disciples, which are hidden."¹⁹⁸ This motif of the covering/uncovering of faces has ancient roots in the biblical prophetic tradition. In Isaiah's vision, for example, the seraphim avoid looking God in the face. The same motif plays a prominent role in the Hekhalot literature, about which James Davila

¹⁹⁶ Andersen, "2 Enoch," 1.136-138.

¹⁹⁷ The motif of the disciples' veneration is reminiscent of the one performed by the magi earlier in the gospel. According to Allison and Davies, "the magi do not simply bend their knees (cf. 17.14; 18.29). They fall down on their faces. This is noteworthy because there was a tendency in Judaism to think prostration proper only in the worship of God (cf. Philo, *Leg. Gai.* 116; *Decal.* 64; Mt 4.9-10; Acts 10.25-6; Rev 19.10; 22.8-9)." Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1.248. Robert Gundry notes that "they (the magi) knelt down before him with heads to the ground." Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 31.

¹⁹⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2.703.

observes: “the attending angels ... must cover their faces to protect themselves from the divine radiance. Only then is it safe for God to uncover his face in this cosmic game of peekaboo.”¹⁹⁹

Unlike Mark, the Gospel of Matthew applies the symbolism of luminous *panim*/face to Jesus, which, as in other Jewish traditions, may signify the divine image. If so, the disciples’ obeisance provides additional evidence that in some versions of the transfiguration story Jesus’ face is envisioned as the *iqonin*. This links the transfiguration account to Jewish extra-biblical accounts, which often depict their protagonists as the image of God, an office requiring angelic veneration.

Another important similarity with Jewish accounts is that the disciples’ prostration occurs after the deity’s affirmation about Jesus’ unique status. This brings to mind a tradition found in chapter 4 of *3 Enoch* or *Sefer Hekhalot*, where angelic obeisance to the translated human is given after the deity’s assurance that Enoch-Metatron, who just underwent a celestial transformation, represents the “chosen one.”

As previously noted, early specimens of this tradition are present in *2 Enoch*²⁰⁰ and the *Primary Adam Books*,²⁰¹ where angelic obeisance coincides with affirmations of the new celestial power’s unique status.

¹⁹⁹ James Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot: The People behind the Hekhalot Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 139.

²⁰⁰ Cf. *2 Enoch* 22:5: “And the Lord, with his own mouth, said to me, ‘Be brave, Enoch! Don’t be frightened! Stand up, and stand in front of my face forever.’” Andersen, “2 Enoch,” 1.136-138.

²⁰¹ In the Georgian version of the *Primary Adam Books* the affirmation mentions Adam’s unique role as the divine image: “Bow down before the likeness and the image of the divinity.” The Latin version also speaks about the divine image: “Worship the image of the Lord God, just as the Lord God has commanded.” In the Armenian version too Adam’s name is not mentioned and the newly created favorite seems to be understood now as the divine manifestation: “Then Michael summoned all the angels, and God said to them, ‘Come, bow down to god whom I made.’” Gary Anderson and Michael E. Stone, eds., *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve. Second Revised Edition*, Early Judaism and Its Literature 17 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1999), 16E.

To conclude our analysis of the disciples' obeisance, we should note that in Matthew this motif fits nicely in the chain of previous veneration occurrences, evoking the memory of the prostrating magi and Satan's quest for worship.²⁰²

Imagery of the Cloud

All three synoptic accounts mention the cloud overshadowing the protagonists of the story. Scholars often see in this imagery a connection with the theophanic symbolism found in Exodus, where the cloud overshadows the mountain and the Israelite prophet.²⁰³ From Exod 24:15-18 one learns the following:

Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

²⁰² Another unique Matthean occurrence of this motif is found in Matt 18:26 where we find a familiar constellation of "πεσών" and "προσεκύνει." Gundry observes that, besides the magi story, "Matthew inserts the same combination of falling down and worshiping in 4:9 and uses it in unique material at 18:26." He further notes that, "[I]n particular, πεσόντες sharpens Matthew's point, for in 4:9 falling down will accompany worship in the alternatives of worshiping God and worshiping Satan, and without parallel it describes the response of the disciples who witnessed the transfiguration (17:6)." Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 31-32.

²⁰³ McGuckin notes that "both Matthew and Luke recount the awe of the disciples as a result of the cloud theophany. This is a common and typical theophany-form based upon the Sinai archetype." McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ*, 11.

In this passage the cloud serves as the screen which conceals both the divine Voice and the divine Form — the *Kavod*. This double function of the theophanic cloud, able to conceal both the aural manifestation of the deity and its ocularcentric counterpart, may also be present in the transfiguration accounts.

Although the cloud is traditionally understood as a part of the aural epiphany of the divine Voice, it is also possible that such overshadowing pertains to Jesus' glory, since he is described as enveloped in it.²⁰⁴ With regard to the cloud symbolism, Ramsey notes that Luke “infers that the cloud enveloped all, including the disciples who ‘feared as they entered into the cloud.’ Saint Mark leaves the point obscure.”²⁰⁵ He further suggests that “the *νεφέλη ἐπισκιάζουσα* is the sign of the presence of the glory; and the promise is being fulfilled that in the messianic age ‘the glory of the Lord shall be seen and the cloud’ (2 Macc 2:7).”²⁰⁶

Additionally, Matt 17:5 appears to highlight the “visual” dimension of the cloud symbolism by mentioning a “bright” cloud (*νεφέλη φωτεινή*). Such a reference (once again) may connect the cloud with the visual, rather than the aural, theophany.

Another important conceptual facet is that the bright cloud may be understood here as a kind of a garment of the aural deity, a counterpart to Jesus's dazzling attire. Indeed, scholars have entertained the possibility of interpreting the bright cloud as the “garment” of the aural Divinity, a vestment corresponding to the glorious clothes of his ocular counterpart. Jarl Fossum, for example, suggests that “the brilliant garment and the cloud ... are variants of the same theme. Matthew actually says the cloud was ‘bright’ (*φωτεινή*),

²⁰⁴ As in many others Jewish visionary accounts, the cloud here serves as a paradoxical theophanic device that simultaneously reveals and conceals the deity. In this respect, Charles Cranfield rightly observes that “the cloud is at the same time the sign both of God's self-revelation and of his self-veiling.” Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 295.

²⁰⁵ Ramsey, *The Glory of God*, 115.

²⁰⁶ Ramsey, *The Glory of God*, 115.

which suggests that he took it to be ‘the glory of the Shekinah’, as is the phrase in *b. Shab.* 88b.”²⁰⁷

The Divine Voice Traditions

Although all versions of the transfiguration story mention the apparition of the divine Voice, they fashion the context of the aural manifestation of the deity differently. Experts have suggested that in the Gospel of Matthew the voice of God plays a more central role than in other versions of the transfiguration story. Ulrich Luz proposes that for Matthew, it is “in substance the most important element, as the detailed reaction of the disciples demonstrates. Thus in contrast to the other synoptics, he has clearly made the audition (and not the vision of the transfigured one!) the center of his story.”²⁰⁸ A. D. A. Moses concurs, arguing that “the ‘voice from the cloud’ . . . undoubtedly is the climax of Matthew’s τὸ ὄραμα (Matt 17:9).”²⁰⁹

Often the centrality of the aural revelation in the Gospel of Matthew is postulated on the basis of the disciples’ reaction, or one might say, overreaction to the divine utterance. Yet, as I have suggested above, it is difficult to determine if the reaction is related to the aural manifestation itself or to the peculiar content of this aural message in which Jesus’ status is suddenly revealed. In other words, it remains unclear if the disciples’ fear and reverence were provoked by the revelation *of* the first “person” or the revelation *about* the second “person.”

²⁰⁷ Fossum, “Ascensio, Metamorphosis,” 93.

²⁰⁸ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 394.

²⁰⁹ Moses, *Matthew’s Transfiguration Story*, 138. A similar suggestion also comes from Donaldson. While exploring Matthew’s version of the transfiguration, he observes that “there can be no doubt that the key and climax to the transfiguration account is to be found in the content of the heavenly proclamation . . . It is the divine proclamation, with its identification of Jesus as the Son, that overshadows and clarifies all other elements in the narrative.” Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 148.

As in certain Jewish accounts, e. g., the *Apocalypse of Abraham*,²¹⁰ *b. Hag.* 15a and *3 Enoch*, in the transfiguration story the ocularcentric apparition of the deified person is followed by an epiphany of the divine voice. However, unlike in *b. Hag.* 15a and *3 Enoch*, this voice does not intend to expose or demote the new power's controversial stand, but is rather determined to affirm and elevate the extraordinary status of this new custodian of the ocularcentric trend. Scholars rightly make a connection between this aural manifestation of the deity and its earlier counterpart found in the scene of Jesus' baptism.

As with other details of the transfiguration story, the symbolism of the divine Voice again evokes the memory of the theophanic imagery found in the Book of Exodus.²¹¹ From Exod 24:16 one learns that "the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud."²¹² The crucial difference here is that while in the Exodus account the manifestations of the *Kavod* and the divine Voice belong to the single divine "power," in the transfiguration account these two manifestation are now divided between separate theophanic agents.

Many commentators have attempted to elucidate the symbolism of the divine voice in the transfiguration story through the Jewish traditions about the *bat qol* imagery.²¹³ These comparisons are

²¹⁰ Scholars sometimes compare the manifestation of the divine voice in the baptism and the transfiguration accounts with the personified voice in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. Thus, in relation to these parallels, Allison notes that "the voice itself (personified? cf. Rev 1:12; *Ladder of Jacob* 3; *Apoc. Abr.* 9) speaks." Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1.336.

²¹¹ A. D. A. Moses notes that both in Exod 24:16 and Mark 9:7, the divine voice speaks out of the cloud. Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story*, 43-44.

²¹² A. D. A. Moses suggests that "the 'voice' in Exodus 24-31; 33-34 is addressed to Moses, while at the transfiguration it is directed at the disciples (not Jesus)." Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story*, 45.

²¹³ Reflecting on the divine Voice traditions in the baptism and the transfiguration accounts, Davies and Allison note that it is natural to link the voice from the heavens with the rabbinic *bat qol* ("daughter of a voice"). This vehicle of revelation is sometimes quoted in Scripture, often to declare

important, since they provide an important parallel with rabbinic and Hekhalot accounts; here the aural reprimand of Aher and Metatron is clearly rendered as the *bat qol*.²¹⁴

We can see an almost identical withdrawal of the deity into an aural mode in the account of Jesus' baptism. For now we mention in passing that the parallelism between the epiphany of the divine Voice at the baptism (3:17) and the transfiguration (17:5) is especially lucid in Matthew, where the message is repeated verbatim.

Another important aspect of the divine Voice imagery in the synoptic gospels is its marked distance from the *Kavod* symbolism, representing a striking departure from the Jewish accounts. In the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and the *Ladder of Jacob*, the deity's Voice remained closely associated with the *Kavod* imagery. Thus, in chapter 18 of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, when the seer encounters the divine Voice in heaven, the divine utterance appears to be situated in close proximity to, if not enthroned upon, the Seat of Glory. *Apoc. Ab.* 18:2-3 reads:

And I heard a voice like the roaring of the sea, and it did not cease because of the fire. And as the fire rose up, soaring higher, I saw under the fire a throne [made] of fire and the many-eyed Wheels, and they are reciting the song. And under the throne [I saw] four singing fiery Living Creatures.²¹⁵

In the *Ladder of Jacob* the associations between the divine Voice and the *Kavod* are made clearer, since the symbolic link is found in the

God's favorable estimation of a righteous individual or to settle disputes, and it was often spoken of as being from the heavens, and could be thought of as the voice of God himself. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1.335-6.

²¹⁴ Although the *bat qol* has often been interpreted as an inferior revelation, scholars argue that in the transfiguration account, given its theophanic context, "the voice from the cloud is clearly a divine voice." Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 425.

²¹⁵ Alexander Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha: Toward the Original of the Apocalypse of Abraham*, Text-Critical Studies 3 (Atlanta: Scholars, 2004), 24.

midst of the “double” theophany. As one recalls from the *Ladder*, the divine Voice is portrayed as the apex of the *Kavod* complex, situated above the “upper face”:²¹⁶

And God was standing above its highest face, and he called to me from there, saying, “Jacob, Jacob!” And I said, “Here I am, Lord!” And he said to me, “The land on which you are sleeping, to you will I give it, and to your seed after you. And I will multiply your seed.”²¹⁷

Yet, in the synoptic transfiguration accounts and elsewhere in the synoptic gospels the divine Voice is never associated with the *Kavod*. Such a dissociation of the aural manifestation of the deity solidifies Jesus’ role as the unique custodian of features attributed to the divine *Kavod*. The same tendency is observed in the rabbinic and Hekhalot traditions which refrain from linking the *bat qol* and *Kavod* symbolism.

“Listen to Him”

In all three renderings of the transfiguration story the message of the divine voice climaxes with the command “listen to him.” Scholars often see this as a clear allusion to the Sinai encounters. For example, Joel Marcus suggests that “the concluding words of the heavenly voice, ‘Listen to him!’ (ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ) are so close to the exhortation of Deut 18:15, ‘To him you shall listen,’ (αὐτοῦ ἀκούσθε) that we may speak of a virtual citation.”²¹⁸ He further notes that

²¹⁶ I have argued that the upper fiery face in the *Ladder of Jacob* bears similarities with the *Kavod* complex. It brings to mind 2 *Enoch*’s depiction of the *Kavod* as the fiery Face in 2 *Enoch* 22. The salient detail that connects both texts is that the Face in 2 *Enoch* is similarly defined as “fiery” and “terrifying.” This tendency to equate the *Panim* with the *Kavod* is already present in some biblical accounts, including Exod 33:18-20, where in response to Moses’ plea to God to show him His Glory, God answers that it is impossible for a human being to see God’s Face.

²¹⁷ Horace G. Lunt, “Ladder of Jacob,” in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983-85), 2.407.

²¹⁸ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 80-81.

in its Old Testament context, the exhortation “to him you shall listen” is part of Moses’ instructions to the children of Israel to obey the prophet who will arise after his death: “Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren — to him you shall listen And Yahweh said to me ... I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him” (Deut 18:15-18).²¹⁹

Marcus concludes by suggesting that “if the larger context of this passage is in view in the words ‘listen to him!’ in Mark 9:7, then the Markan transfiguration narrative identifies Jesus as this prophet-like-Moses, who became an important figure in the eschatological expectation of postbiblical Judaism.”²²⁰

Adela Yarbro Collins also entertains the Mosaic connection, noting that

the command “listen to him” (ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ) was probably taken by some members of the audience as a general expression of the authority of Jesus and the attitude that his followers should take toward him. For those knowledgeable about scripture, it probably recalled the statement in Deut 18:15 LXX, “to him you shall listen” (αὐτοῦ ἀκούσεσθε). Those familiar with the expectation of an eschatological prophet like Moses were especially likely to make this connection.²²¹

²¹⁹ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 80-81.

²²⁰ Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 81. Jarl Fossum also argues that “ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ, undoubtedly refers to LXX Deut 18:15, where Moses says: ‘A prophet from the midst of your brothers, like me, the Lord your God shall raise up for you; him shall you listen to (αὐτοῦ ἀκούσεσθε).’ Jesus is thus designated as the Prophet like Moses. Like his prototype, he has to descend from heaven in order to proclaim God’s will.” Fossum, “Ascensio, Metamorphosis,” 93-4. See also McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ*, 79.

²²¹ Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 426. See also Cranfield who argues that “the last two words ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ, attest Jesus as the one in whom the prophecy of

While Mosaic connections have been acknowledged in previous studies, parallels with another mediatorial trend, the Angel of the Lord traditions, have consistently escaped scholarly attention. These associations with the chief angelic mediator of the Hebrew Bible are crucial for our study. The Angel of the Lord figure played a pivotal role in the conceptual framework of the Deuteronomistic aural ideology,²²² often functioning as a replacement for the divine visual presence. Comparable to the synoptic transfiguration accounts, where Jesus becomes the embodiment of the invisible deity, it is possible to discern early traces of a similar concept already in the biblical traditions regarding the Angel of the Lord. As in the transfiguration account, the deity in the Hebrew Bible also orders the people to listen to his mediator. From Exod 23:20–22 we read the following:

I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Be attentive to him and listen to his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him. But if you listen attentively to his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes.

The first important detail of this address is the phrase “listen to him,” found in Exod 23:21, which the Septuagint renders “εἰσακούε

Deut 18:15, 18 is fulfilled and underline his unique position.” Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 295-6.

²²² There are various opinions about the possible conceptual roots of Exod 23:20-22. Some scholars suggest that it represents the Deuteronomistic redaction of Exodus. On this, see William Johnstone, “Reactivating the Chronicles Analogy in Pentateuchal Studies, with Special Reference to the Sinai Pericope in Exodus,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 99 (1987): 16-37 at 26; Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Das Bundesbuch (Ex 20,22-23,33). Studien zu seiner Entstehung und Theologie*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 188 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 406-414; Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Deuteronomistic Contribution to the Narrative in Genesis-Numbers: A Test-Case,” in Linda S. Scheering and Steven L. McKenzie, eds., *Those Elusive Deuteronomists. The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 268 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 84-115 at 94-97.

αὐτοῦ.” This command is then repeated in Exod 23:22, as the deity again instructs the Israelites to listen attentively to the angel’s voice (ἀκοῆ ἀκούσητε τῆς ἐμῆς φωνῆς). The deity’s utterances thus parallel the tradition found in the synoptic transfiguration accounts, in which God’s instructions about listening to his envoy take on the form of a command.²²³

The parallels with the Angel of the Lord traditions are important for our study since Jesus’ novel theophanic identity, as with the Exodus angel, is constructed through the ocularcentric absence of the deity, now withdrawn in the aniconic aural dimension. Scholars have argued that a similar situation can be detected in the mediatorial profile of the Angel of the Lord. According to Darrell Hannah, “the Exodus angel ... becomes to some extent an expression of the divine absence in that he is a substitute for Yahweh (Exod 33:1-3). As a replacement for the divine presence, it would appear that the angel of the Exodus is beginning to have a quasi-individual existence.”²²⁴

²²³ On the commanding language in the transfiguration story, see Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 81, footnote 1.

²²⁴ Darrell D. Hannah, *Michael and Christ: Michael Traditions and Angel Christology in Early Christianity*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.109 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 21. On this see also Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 134. Charles Gieschen argues that the figure of the Angel of the Lord exhibits “a delicate distinction between YHWH and his visible form.... This text testifies that a figure that has some independence from YHWH can still share in his being through the possession of the divine Name (i.e., a divine hypostasis).” Charles Gieschen, “The Divine Name in the Ante-Nicene Christology,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003): 115-58 at 122-123. Camilla von Heijne, in her recent study, points out that “the relationship between God and this angel is far from clear and the identity of YHWH and His angel is merged in many texts, e.g., Gen 16:7-14; 21:17-20; 22:1-19; 31:10-13; 48:15-16; Exod 3:1-6; Josh 5:13-15; 6:2, and Judges chapters 6 and 13. In these pericopes, ‘the angel of YHWH’ seems to be completely interchangeable with YHWH Himself. According to Exod 23:20-21, the angel possesses the name of God, it is ‘in him,’ and it appears to be implied that this ‘divine Name angel’ has the

Scholars have argued about the formative role of the Angel of the Name within the conceptual framework of the Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic *Shem* ideologies.²²⁵ According to one hypothesis, the figure of the Angel of the Lord constitutes one of the conceptual roots of *Shem* theology. Thus, Mettinger observes: “it appears that when the Deuteronomistic theologians choose *shem*, they seized on a term which was already connected with the idea of God’s presence. Exod 23:21 tells us how God warned Israel during her wanderings in the desert to respect his angel and obey his voice, ‘for my name is in him.’”²²⁶

Some aspects of the aural ideology are already notably present in Exod 23 through the repeated references to the voice of the angelic mediator. Thus, in Exod 23:21-22 Moses is advised to listen to the Angel of the Name’s voice. In light of such affirmations, it is possible that the celestial messenger mediates not only the divine Name but also the deity’s Voice. Deliberating on the imagery of the voice in Exod 23, Moshe Idel notices that “this angel is not just a visual yet silent apparition, a sort of pillar that guides the tribes day and night; rather it has a voice that is its own, though at the same time it is God who is speaking. The ambiguity here is quintessential: though God is

power to forgive sins, an ability that elsewhere in the Bible is reserved for God. This angel is always anonymous and speaks with divine authority in the first person singular as if he is God Himself, thus there is no clear distinction between the sender and the messenger. Unlike other biblical angels, the ‘angel of the Lord’ accepts being worshiped by men and seems to be acknowledged as divine; e.g., Gen 16:13; 48:15-16; Josh 5:13-15, and Judg 13:17-23.” Camilla H. von Heijne, *The Messenger of the Lord in Early Jewish Interpretations of Genesis*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 42 (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 1.

²²⁵ Von Heijne discerns that in Exod 23, “the angel is apparently distinct from God and yet not completely separate from Him. By possessing the divine Name, he also shares the divine power and authority. Compare this to the Deuteronomistic theology, in which the concept of the name of God is used to describe the way in which YHWH is present in the Temple of Jerusalem.” von Heijne, *The Messenger of the Lord*, 97-98.

²²⁶ Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth. Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies*, Coniectanea biblica. Old Testament series 18 (Lund: Wallin & Dalholm, 1982), 124-125.

the speaker, it is the angel's voice that is heard. Thus it seems the angel serves as a form of loud speaker for the divine act of speech."²²⁷ The Angel of the Lord's abilities in mediating not only the deity's visible presence, but also functioning as its aural counterpart are intriguing. These features evoke the Christological developments found in the first chapter of the Book of Revelation where Christ assimilates both the divine Form and the divine Voice.

Not only does Exod 23:20–22 contain a command to listen to the mediator now embodying the deity; the passage also affirms his possession of the divine Name. The deity instructs the Israelites not to rebel against the Exodus angel, "for my name is in him." Here the call for obedience to the mediator and the divine command to listen to his voice is justified by his role as the embodiment of the Tetragrammaton.²²⁸ In light of this onomatological tradition, it is possible that God's aural address in the transfiguration story also contains an allusion to Jesus' possession of the divine Name. In this regard Jesus' designation as the "Son" is especially noteworthy. Already in the Gospel of John "Son" can be interpreted as the divine Name.²²⁹ This interpretation, in fact, was perpetuated in later Christian texts. Thus, for example, from the *Gospel of Truth* 38:6-7 we learn that "the name of the Father is the Son."²³⁰ The *Gospel of Truth* 39:19-27 contains the same tradition: "It is the Father. The Son is his name. ... The

²²⁷ Moshe Idel, *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism* (London: Continuum, 2007), 17.

²²⁸ On the language of abiding and its connection with the divine Name traditions see Joshua J. F. Coutts, *The Divine Name in the Gospel of John: Significance and Impetus*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.447 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 132ff.

²²⁹ On these traditions, see James McPolin, *The Name of the Father and of the Son in the Johannine Writings* (Ph.D. diss.; Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1971), 71; Fossum, *The Name of God*, 106, 122-123; Coutts, *The Divine Name in the Gospel of John*, 16; 206.

²³⁰ Harold W. Attridge, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, Nag Hammadi Studies 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), III.

name, therefore, is that of the Father, as the name of the Father is the Son.”²³¹ With regard to these passages Jarl Fossum argues that “the *Gospel of Truth* ... teaches that the Son, being born from the Father ... is the proper Name of God.”²³²

CONCLUSION

Our study illustrated the importance of extra-biblical Jewish traditions for better understanding the Mosaic conceptual background of Jesus’ theophany on the mountain.

To conclude our analysis of the transfiguration accounts, the question raised earlier must now be addressed: why are Jesus’ exalted attributes, including his luminous face and garment, not retained after his descent from the mountain? Such absence might serve as a key for better understanding the significance of Jesus’ transfiguration and its relation to his role as the Glory of the invisible God. Previous interpreters have rightly pointed to the proleptic nature of the transfiguration account, which attempts to provide a glimpse into Jesus’ role as the divine *Kavod*, the theophanic office fully revealed only after his death and resurrection. Cranfield suggests that the transfiguration “was a revelation for a few moments of the glory which even then, before his Passion, belonged to Jesus. It was a temporary exhibition of his glory ... which would enable the disciples after the Resurrection to realize for certain that even during the time that he emptied himself (Phil 2:7), he continued to retain his divinity entire, though it was concealed under the veil of the flesh.”²³³ The proleptic

²³¹ Attridge, *Nag Hammadi Codex I*, 113.

²³² Fossum, *The Name of God*, 107.

²³³ Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 295. Moving along the same lines, Boobyer also suggests that the transfiguration might represent a momentary breaking through of the body of Christ’s pre-existent glory, which throughout his life on earth was concealed beneath the outward human form. Boobyer, *St. Mark and the Transfiguration Story*, 66. He further add that “no doubt the evangelist could have conceived Christ’s δόξα appearance as the fashion of his pre-existent state. Christ had had such a form in heaven, according to the view of the early Church, just as God Himself was thought to possess a similar appearance.” Boobyer, *St. Mark and the Transfiguration Story*, 66.

nature of the transfiguration story again evokes the memory of Mosaic extra-biblical accounts where the prophet's luminous face serves as a preliminary glimpse into his final glorification at the time of his translation to heaven.

The transfiguration account thus prefigures Jesus as the divine *Kavod* and provides a glimpse into his reception of the theophanic attributes in this role. Ramsey sums up this idea by stating, "the transfiguration prefigures a glory that lies in the future."²³⁴ Although we do not yet witness a permanent ocularcentric manifestation of the deity, the stage is certainly set for such a transition.

²³⁴ Ramsey, *The Glory of God*, 117.

LEADERSHIP AND MUTUAL MINISTRY IN HEBREWS

JAMES W. THOMPSON

According to the commonly-held view, early Christian communities gradually developed from egalitarian charismatic leadership to a hierarchy of authoritative offices. Scholars have maintained that the Pauline corpus reflects this transition, proceeding from the egalitarian leadership of the earlier letters to the establishment of offices in the Pastoral Epistles, a trend that continued with Ignatius's insistence on the recognition of the monarchical bishop of Ignatius.¹ Ian A. Fair has contributed to this discussion by offering guidance to the

¹ Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM, 1977). See also Benjamin J. White, "The Traditional and Ecclesiastical Paul in 1 Corinthians," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 79 (2017): 651–669 at 653. This assumption is based on Rudolf Sohm's distinction between charismatic and legal authority and his claim that early Christianity first exhibited charismatic authority, which he argued in the late nineteenth century. Sohm was followed by Max Weber's classification of three types of leadership—charismatic, traditional and legal. According to White (653), "the devolutionary narrative is so comfortably fixed in our discipline now that it sets the framework for our introductory textbooks." Rudolf Sohm, *Kirchenrecht* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1892–1923), 54; Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, trans. Ephraim Fischoff et al., ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978; orig., 1922) 1.212–301.

churches on the topic of early Christian leadership.² In this article I shall explore the place of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the development of Christian leadership.

The place of Hebrews in the development of leadership structures has rarely been examined. This “word of exhortation” belongs to the second generation (2:1-4; 10:32-34) when the community could look back to the former days (10:32), to “those who heard [the Lord]” (2:3), and to the past leaders who have died (13:7). The community faces the danger of falling away (3:12; 6:4), and now needs endurance (10:36). As the reference to Timothy suggests (13:23), the author probably belongs to the circle of Pauline co-workers. Thus, the homily offers a window of ecclesiastical authority in one community in an unspecified location at the last quarter of the first century.

The author leaves no doubt that the ultimate authority is God, who has spoken in “many and various ways” (1:1; cf. 2:1-4) and continues to speak “today” (3:7, 13) through Scripture (cf. 1:5-13; 3:7; 12:25) and the Christ event (6:18-20; 12:25). God is the “one who warns from heaven” and will again “shake not only the earth, but also the heavens” (12:25). The one “to whom we must give an account” (4:13) is God, and thus “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (10:31).

Inasmuch as God has spoken in a Son (1:1-2), the authority is also Christ, to whom God declared at the exaltation, “You are my Son” (1:5; 5:5) and “you are the high priest after the order of Melchizedek” (5:5-10). The Son sits on the royal throne as Son of God and high priest (1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12). God subjected “the world to come” (2:5) and the entire creation (2:8) to him. The challenge to the church, therefore, is to “hear the voice” of the one who calls them and to follow the ἀρχηγός (2:10) and forerunner (6:20), who leads the way through periods of temptation (2:17-18; 4:15; 5:6-10) and discouragement into the heavenly world.

² Ian A. Fair, *Leadership in the Kingdom: Sensitive Strategies for the Church in a Changing World*, 2nd ed. (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2008).

In contrast to Pauline letters, this anonymous homily contains no claim of apostolic authority. Inasmuch as the writer is separated from the community, but hopes to be reunited with them (13:18-19), his exhortation and familiarity with the readers suggest that he is one of its teachers. He indicates his solidarity with the community, addressing the readers as ἀδελφοί (3:1; 10:19; 13:22) and speaking frequently with the hortatory subjunctive (4:14, 16; 10:19; 12:1; 13:13). Nevertheless, he also speaks in the imperative (12:25; 13:1, 3, 7, 17), and even chastises the community for its lack of spiritual growth (5:11-14). Thus, the author expresses both solidarity with the readers and the authority to address them in a word of exhortation (13:22).

LOCAL LEADERSHIP IN THE COMMUNITY IN HEB 1-12

The author addresses the entire community. In the first twelve chapters, he appeals to the readers to exercise mutual ministry. In warning them of the consequences of abandoning their journey toward the heavenly *κατάπαυσις*, he encourages the entire community to “take care . . . that none of you has an evil unbelieving heart (*μήποτε ἔσται ἐν τινι ὑμῶν καρδία*) that turns away from the living God” (3:12), and that they “encourage one another every day, so that none (*ἵνα μὴ σκληρυνθῇ τις ἐξ ὑμῶν*) of you fall to the deceitfulness of sin” (3:12-13). He reinforces this focus in 4:1, “Let us take care lest anyone among you (*τις ἐξ ὑμῶν*) should seem to have failed to reach (the promised land).” His concern that the whole community care for each individual is evident in the threefold use of *τις*. With the image of a community on a long journey through the wilderness, he evokes the image of stragglers along the way. The task of the whole community is to ensure that no one falls short. Members, like the author in this “word of encouragement” (13:22), “encourage one another” on the journey to the promised land.

After the extended description of the Christ event (7:1-10:18), the author continues to challenge the whole community to engage in mutual ministry. Although he does not say explicitly that the church is a

community of priests, the exhortation, “Let us draw near” to the sanctuary, employs priestly language (cf. 4:16; 7:25; 10:1; 12:18) to describe the new reality inaugurated by Christ.³ He exhorts those who are now able to “draw near” to the heavenly sanctuary to “hold firmly to the confession of hope” (10:23). As the parallel phrase, “Consider how to stir one another up to love and good deeds” (10:24) indicates, holding the faith firmly involves a care for others in the community. Indeed, it is the task of the entire church to “stir up” (εἰς παροξυσμόν) the community to its most basic moral values. A community on the way requires the solidarity, not only of mutual encouragement, but of care for each other. Indeed, the diminishing zeal of the community will result in a loss of moral cohesion. The author gives a concrete example of “love and good works” in his reminiscence of the community’s earlier days when they demonstrated their love, “ministering to the saints” (6:10). Similarly, he offers concrete examples of φιλαδελφία in 13:1-6, where he challenges readers to practice hospitality (φιλοξενία), visit the prisoners, keep marriages pure, and avoid the love of money. Indeed, the worship that is pleasing to God is the practice of doing good and sharing what one has (13:16).

As the author indicates in 10:25, to hold firmly to the confession (10:23) and to “stir up one another” is inseparable from the presence of all of the members in the assembly, where they “draw near” to the heavenly world (cf. 12:18, 22) and hear the one who is still speaking. The repeated warning against falling away (3:12; 6:6; cf. 10:23-31) is already taking place among those who are abandoning the assembly, a practice that is a rejection of the “great salvation” (cf. 2:1). Consequently, the author suggests that the assembly offers the opportunity for members to “encourage one another” (cf. 3:12-13).

The author elaborates on the meaning of holding firmly in 10:31-12:11, recalling past instances of those who endured (cf. 10:32, 26) in the midst of difficult circumstances. Examples include the community itself (10:32-34), the past heroes of faithfulness (11:1-40), and Jesus (12:1-3). The images of people without a homeland (11:7, 13-16) on a journey toward the heavenly world (cf. 2:10; 3:7-4:11) continues

³ On προσέρχεται as a priestly term for drawing near, see Lev 9:7-8; 21:18.

in 11:1-40, reaching its climax in the story of Jesus the ἀρχηγός, the model of faithfulness (12:1-3). The author's image of a journey to the promised land is now transformed into the image of the distance race (12:1), in which Jesus endured suffering before entering the heavenly world. These examples of endurance provide the basis for the exhortation for the whole community to endure (12:4-11).

The author maintains the image of the people on the way in 12:12-13, encouraging the readers with the language of Scripture as he applies to his own readers the words that the prophet once spoke to the exiles: "Strengthen (ἀνορθώσατε) the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees" (Isa 35:3). The prophet had envisioned a highway surrounded by rich vegetation through which the exiled community could return home. The prophet's words, which the author of Hebrews addresses to the entire community, appropriately reflects the need for endurance (10:36) and the danger of giving up the journey to the promised land (cf. 3:7-4:11). The "weak knees" are a metaphor for fear and lack of courage.⁴ Just as the task of the exiles is to encourage the fainthearted ("Be strong, do not fear!" Isa 35:4), the task of the audience of Hebrews is to care for others on the journey--to "make straight paths for the feet, so that the lame may not be dislocated but rather be healed." The author once more cites the Scripture in the first clause ("make straight paths for the feet"), which was originally ethical advice encouraging readers to maintain good behavior (Prov 4:26). The focus in Hebrews, however, is on the journey that requires endurance, as the purpose clause ("in order that the lame

⁴ Erich Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Zurich: Benziger Verlag, 1997), 3.280. ἀνορθώσατε means to restore to the original condition. It is used for the restoration of the woman who could not stand straight (Luke 13:13). See BDAG [Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)], 86.

not be dislocated (ἐκτραπή), but rather be healed”) indicates.⁵ The community is concerned not only for its own health, but for those who are lame—those who are abandoning the assembly and failing to endure on the journey.

The author encourages the entire community to “pursue holiness” (12:14), without which it will not “see the Lord.” The participial phrase ἐπισκοποῦντες μὴ τις is syntactically related to the preceding imperative, indicating how the entire community seeks after holiness.⁶ Ἐπισκοπεῖν, which signifies accepting responsibility for the care of others,⁷ is used elsewhere in the NT only for the task of elders (1 Pet 5:2); the noun becomes the title for the primary office in the local church (cf. Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2). Here, however, the term is used for the responsibility of all members. In one sense, the entire church is composed of bishops.⁸

The author elaborates on the community’s need to care for each struggling member in the three clauses introduced by μὴ τις in 12:15–27, which are structurally related to the μὴ τις clauses in Deut 29:18–30.⁹ Deut 29 is the affirmation of the Moabite covenant, with warnings against turning away to idols that are introduced by μὴ τις. These warnings are followed by the threat that apostasy will not be forgiven (Deut 29:20; cf. Heb 12:17). The author elaborates on the community’s care for each struggling member in a reprise of the earlier exhortation to the community to ensure that “not any of you (μὴποτε . . . τιμι ὑμῶν) have an unbelieving heart” (3:12) and that they be fearful lest “any one of you seem to fail to reach the goal”

⁵ Ἐκτρέπω, which means “turn away” in many instances, here means “be dislocated,” as the contrast to healing indicates. See BDAG, 311; Knut Backhaus, *Der Hebräerbrief*, Regensburger Neues Testament (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2009), 428.

⁶ Hans-Friedrich Weiss, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1991).

⁷ BDAG, 379.

⁸ See Grässer, *Hebräer*, 290.

⁹ David M. Allen, *Deuteronomy and Exhortation in Hebrews*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.237 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 85.

(δοκῆ τις ἐξ ὑμῶν ὑστερηκέναι, 4:1). The clause *μή τις ὑστερῶν ἀπὸ τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ*, maintains the imagery of the journey. The verb *ὑστερῶν*, used here and in 4:1, evokes the image of a kid lagging behind the rest of the flock.¹⁰ To “fall short of the grace of God” is to miss out on reaching the destination.

The second *μή τις* clause, echoing Deut 29:17, *μή τις ρίζα πικρίας ἄνω φύουσα ἐνοχλῆ*, describes the dangers of apostasy with the language from agriculture. This danger is indicated in the result of the apostasy: *καὶ αὐτῆς μιανθῶσιν πολλοί*. When individuals fall away, the entire community is defiled. The community thus stands before two alternatives: to pursue holiness (12:14) or be defiled.

The third *μή τις* clause appeals to Scripture, as the author appeals to ensure that no one follows the example of Esau (12:17). The author employs haggadic tradition to portray Esau as a sexually “immoral (*πόρνος*) and godless (*βέβηλος*) person.” In giving away his birthright for food (12:16), Esau’s conduct was the opposite of that of the patriarchs, who based their lives on invisible realities. His giving of his birthright for food is an illustrative metaphor for the temptation of the readers to abandon their pursuit of the invisible world.

These three clauses do not refer to separate offenses, but portray the danger of apostasy with separate images. The claim that Esau found no repentance recalls earlier warnings about the irrevocability of apostasy (6:4-6; 10:26-31), indicating in graphic terms the responsibility of the whole community to care for those who fall away.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP IN HEBREWS 13

A new turn in the argument occurs in Hebrews 13 with a series of imperatives that are concentrated in the final chapter (13:1, 3, 7, 16, 17, 18). After a series of imperatives in 13:1-6, the author summarizes the argument in 13:7-17, a unit that is framed by the *inclusio* marked by the instruction to recognize the *ἡγούμενοι* (13:7, 17), who are also

¹⁰ BDAG, 1043.

mentioned in 13:24. Having called for mutual ministry throughout chapters 1-12, this is the first reference to leaders in the letter.

The participle ἡγούμενος is used elsewhere in the NT in the plural to describe the “leading men among the brothers” (Acts 15:22); in the singular it is used to refer to Paul as the “chief speaker” (14:12), to Joseph the leader of Egypt (Acts 7:10), and to the Messiah (Matt 2:6). In the OT, the plural is used frequently. It refers to the “leaders of the tribes” (Deut 1:13; 5:23), leaders of the city (Judges 9:51), Jephthah (Judg 11:6), David (1 Sam 22:2; 25:30; 2 Sam 6:21; 7:8), Saul (2 Sam 2:5, 3:38), and Solomon (1 Kgs 1:35; 10:26). It is used frequently in the Maccabean literature for individual leaders (1 Macc 3:55; 5:6; 5:18; 9:30, 35, 53). In Greek literature it is used for the leader of an association.¹¹

The author refers to the leaders with participles, suggesting that function rather than a designated office is in view. The plural in Hebrews suggests that the term is not a fixed title, but a generic term for leaders. The use of the plural participles are reminiscent of Paul’s instruction to “know those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you” (1 Thess 5:12, εἰδέναι τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ νοουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς), and to the descriptive term πρεσβύτεροι (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22; 16:4; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:5).

Unlike the leaders mentioned in 13:17, 24, these leaders belong to an earlier generation. They are probably those who delivered them the word that they had heard from the Lord (cf. 2:3). The function of the ἡγούμενοι was to “declare the word of God.” As those who delivered the word to the community at first (2:1-4), they were probably the founders of the community. To “speak the word of God” is a fixed term for the preaching of the gospel (Acts 4:29, 31 xx; Phil. 1:14; 1 Pet. 4:11. Cf. 4:2, “the word of hearing”). In Hebrews, to speak the word of God is to communicate God’s voice, the voice that is still speaking (1:1; 12:25). It probably included speaking God’s word through Scripture; God’s word is “living and active.”

¹¹ BDAG, 434.

Remembering does not involve a mere recollection of the past, but a formative power for the present.¹² As the participial phrase *ἀναθωροῦνες τὴν ἔκβασιν τῆς ἀναστροφῆς* indicates, it involves careful consideration (cf. *ἀναλογίσασθε* in 12:3) of the outcome (*ἔκβασις*) of their way of life. The outcome was the death of the leaders, who lived faithfully until they died, even in the midst of discouragement and persecution.¹³ Just as the author challenges his readers to imitate the past heroes who “died in faith” (11:13, 39; cf. 6:12; Heb 11), he instructs the readers, *μιμῆσθε τὴν πίστιν*. Their leaders resisted the temptation to fall away that now confronts the community.

The author’s description of the past *ἡγούμενοι* indicates that they both declared the word of God and modeled Christian behavior. While the community practiced mutual ministry (10:24-26; 12:15-17), leaders were present from the beginning. Their role approximates that of the bishops/elders in the communities addressed in the Pastoral Epistles, where established offices are now recognized.

Before the author turns to the present leaders (13:17), he recapitulates the message of Hebrews (13:8-16). That Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, today, and forever” recalls the repeated emphasis on the eternity of the Son (cf. 1:10-12; 7:3, 24). That is the faith for which the past leaders died. This faith exists in contrast to the “diverse and strange teachings” (13:9). Indeed, the author articulates the alternative to these teachings in the summary of the argument of this homily in 13:10-16.

Although the founding *ἡγούμενοι* have died (13:7), the leaders in the present continue to preserve true teaching (13:17). Having encouraged the readers to remember past leaders (13:7), the author now instructs the community, *πείθεσθε τοῖς ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν καὶ ὑπέιχετε*. Thus, the deceased leaders should be remembered, while

¹² Grässer, *Hebräer*, 3,370.

¹³ Cf. Wis 2:17 for *ἔκβασις*, in Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, eds., *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 1.406.

the living leaders should be obeyed.¹⁴ The two verbs suggest different nuances of leadership. Πείθεσθε, literally “to be persuaded,”¹⁵ means “obey”¹⁶ in this context. Similarly, ὑπείκετε (“give way” or “submit”)¹⁷ signifies the community’s submission to the leaders. One may compare Paul’s instruction to the Corinthians to “submit” (ὑποτάσσησθε) to the first fruits of Achaia because of their work.

The reason for submission is that the leaders alone “watch (ἀγρυπνοῦσιν) over your souls (ψυχῶν).”¹⁸ The noun ἀγρυπνία is used by Paul for his sleepless nights (2 Cor 6:5; 11:27) as he cared for his churches, and the verb is used in the Gospels when the community is instructed to be vigilant in waiting for the return of the Lord (Mark 13:33; Luke 21:36). The watchfulness of the leaders is the intense “sleepless” care for the “souls” (ψυχῶν) of the readers.¹⁹ While the whole church ensures that no one lags behind on the journey, the leaders take on a special role. If the community remains faithful for the saving of the soul (περιποίησιν ψυχῆς, 10:39), leaders play a special role in the care of souls. Indeed, the task of the leaders is so urgent that they must give an account of their role in caring for the souls of the readers. While all members must give an account to God (cf. 4:12; 10:31), leaders have a special responsibility of accounting for their labor.

¹⁴ Backhaus, *Hebräerbrief*, 477.

¹⁵ BDAG 792.

¹⁶ BDAG, 792. See also Ceslaus Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 3:77. Cf. Jas 3:3, “We put bits in horses’ mouths so that they will obey us.” One obeys the truth (Gal 5:7) or unrighteousness (Rom 2:8).

¹⁷ BDAG, 1030

¹⁸ The emphatic αὐτοί indicates that they alone care for the souls of the community. See Grässer, *Hebräer*, 3:394.

¹⁹ Backhaus, *Hebräerbrief*, 478. Cf. the Cynic’s governing principle (ἡγεμονικόν): “When he sees that he has watched over men, and toiled in their behalf; and that he has slept in purity, while his sleep leaves him even purer than he was before; and that every thought which he thinks is that of a friend and servant to the gods, of one who shares in the government of Zeus” (Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.95).

The purpose clause introduced by ἵνα indicates that the task of the readers to ensure that the leaders fulfill their responsibility with joy (χαρά), not with groaning (μὴ στενάζοντες). The joy in their ministry is reminiscent of Paul's frequent indication that the progress of his churches is his joy (cf. Rom 15:32; 2 Cor 1:24; 2:3; 7:4, 13; Phil 1:4, 24; 2:2; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 2:19; 3:9; Phlm 7).

CONCLUSION

The Epistle to the Hebrews, which was probably written late in the first century, does not offer evidence of the progression from charismatic to institutional leadership. While the homily was written no earlier than the Pastoral Epistles, it exhibits the leadership patterns that are similar to those structures that are present in Paul's earliest letters. Using the image of the people on the way to the promised land, the author assumes that the members engage in mutual ministry to ensure that no one fails to reach the goal. Members encourage each other in their assemblies in an attempt to maintain cohesion. However, the community members also recall past leaders who taught them the word of God and submit to present leaders who continue to exercise vigilance to ensure that the community remains faithful, following the example of the past heroes who did not abandon the journey in the midst of disappointment and temptation.

“THE COMMUNION OF VOICE, EARS, AND TEXT”: SINGING THE SCRIPTURES IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

DARRYL TIPPENS

“Singing is being”—Rainer Maria Rilke

The title of this essay implies the central argument that something rich and deeply meaningful, something like a “communion” of body, mind, and heart, occurs when biblical texts are not just read silently, but are spoken, recited, chanted, or sung. However, because print technologies have been so thoroughly and unconsciously interiorized in modern biblical studies, it is challenging, this side of the Gutenberg revolution, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment, to realize how thoroughly modern scholarship privileges the written text over the spoken—or sung—word and how this privileging of print and silent reading shapes one’s experience of the Bible. According to Werner Kelber, today’s readers reside in a “textual universe” in which “the print Bible (in whatever language) and our daily interaction with printed scholarly literature has served as a filter for the ways we view ancient communication conditions of speaking, writing, and remembering. . . .”¹

¹ Kelber writes, “print is the medium in which modern biblical scholarship was born and raised and from which it had acquired its formative intellectual habits, its methodological tools, and, last but not least, its theories about the behavior of texts.” Werner H. Kelber, “The Oral-Scribal-Memorial Arts of Communication in Early Christianity,” in Tom

This essay proposes that the oral/aural dimensions of Scripture—and specifically the *musical* dimensions of Scripture—are relevant to understanding *what*—and *how*—Scripture means; that paying attention to the liturgical function of Scripture in early Christianity reveals how the first members of the Jesus movement heard the Bible and were moved by it. This essay begins by summarizing some of the evidence that Scripture in antiquity was not only oral in nature, but also specifically musical. That is to say, not only were psalms and odes sung in the assembly, but large portions of other parts of the Bible were also delivered in a melodious fashion—intoned, cantillated, or chanted.² The latter part of the essay examines some of the reasons why the musical dimension to Scripture mattered to ancient Jews and Christians, and why it should matter today. Anyone seeking to understand Scripture’s formative impact on the early Christian communities will consider music’s role in the phenomenon, for vocal music was not an incidental, but an essential element to Scripture’s formation, transmission, and reception in antiquity. This essay, then, is an invitation “to turn the sound back on,” to consider the intrinsically aural/musical nature of Scripture, and to reflect on how it once engaged—and can continue to engage—hearts and minds, individually and collectively.

Thatcher, ed., *Jesus, the Voice, and the Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 240. On the “anachronistic assumptions of modern, post-Gutenberg print culture,” see Judith H. Newman, *Before the Bible: The Liturgical Body and the Formation of Early Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 5.

² Ancient Jewish worship employed different musical styles: cantillation for “the melodic recitation of biblical texts,” psalmody for “the recitation of psalms or grouping of psalms,” and liturgical chant for “a broad range of melodic styles for non-biblical portions of the liturgy”). Mark Kligman, “Music in Judaism,” in Jacob Neusner et al., eds., *The Encyclopaedia of Judaism*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 2.908. This paper will not analyze these distinct musical styles, but assumes they were adopted in churches. On the challenge of reconstructing ancient musical events, see Joachim Braun, *Music in Ancient Israel/Palestine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), xii.

I. ORALITY AND NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

For almost four decades, a number of biblical scholars have worked to advance an understanding of the oral nature of the Bible, the Gospels in particular. Certainly since the publication of Werner Kelber’s landmark volume *The Oral and the Written Gospel* (1983), followed by the advent of rhetorical and narrative criticism, many biblical scholars have taken seriously “the oral communication environment” of the ancient world, one in which “the gospels were performed orally and received aurally.”³ Yet the assumptions of print culture remain strong. Holly E. Hearon argues that scholars in the twenty-first century must challenge the “almost exclusive” emphasis on the literary nature of the Bible and begin to study texts “as sound maps intended to be heard in a rhetorical culture that emphasized the persuasive power of the spoken word. . . . The impact of sound (versus sight) has only begun to be explored, but the combined effect of sound, pattern, and rhythm suggests a different way of receiving as well as processing the text.”⁴

Among those devoted to the orality of Scripture are those who practice “performance criticism,” an approach championed by Thomas Boomershine.⁵ No one before Boomershine, so it seems, thought to translate the Gospels’ oral, narrative qualities “into the actual practice of telling these originally oral stories out loud in order to explore how they might have sounded and how the sound and the experience of hearing the stories told from memory might affect

³ Richard Horsley, Jonathan A. Draper and John M. Foley, eds., *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory, and Mark* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006), x.

⁴ Holly E. Hearon, “The Implications of Orality for Studies of the Biblical Text,” in Richard A. Horsley, Jonathan A. Draper and John M. Foley, eds., *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory, and Mark* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006), 3-5.

⁵ Thomas E. Boomershine, *Story Journey: An Invitation to the Gospel as Storytelling* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988).

their meaning.”⁶ For these scholars it is not enough to discern and catalog the New Testament’s rhetorical features (the remnants of oral events). One must also make the biblical text an oral experience once again. David Rhoads writes: “After about twenty centuries, we are beginning to recover something that has been lost, eclipsed from the experience of the church and from the experience of Christians—namely, the sacred art of telling biblical traditions.”⁷

For these scholars a text’s meaning cannot be isolated from its performance. Meaning is an event, an experience, not disembodied mental abstraction. They make much of the fact that biblical works—like virtually all texts in the Hellenistic-Roman world—were originally performed in some way.⁸ People in the ancient Mediterranean world were enamored of the *spoken* word (and of the *chanted* or *sung* word). Words were designed to seize the ear, not the eye.⁹ Almost everyone experienced written works through oral presentation since the population of the ancient Mediterranean world was

⁶ Adam Gilbert Bartholomew and David Rhoads, “Introduction,” in Holly E. Hearon and Philip Ruge-Jones, eds., *The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media: Story and Performance* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), xvi.

⁷ David Rhoads, “What Is Performance Criticism?,” in Holly E. Hearon and Philip Ruge-Jones, eds., *The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media: Story and Performance* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 84.

⁸ Paul J. Achtemeier, “*Omne verbum sonat*: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109 (Spring 1990): 3-27; Raymond J. Starr, “Reading Aloud: Lectores and Roman Reading,” *Classical Journal* 86.4 (1991): 337-43; Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983). For a retrospective on the broad and continuing influence of Kelber’s work, see Tom Thatcher, ed., *Jesus, the Voice, and the Text: Beyond the Oral and the Written Gospel* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008). See also Brian J. Wright, *Communal Reading in the Time of Jesus: A Window into Early Christian Reading Practices* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017).

⁹ Harry Y. Gamble, “Literacy, Liturgy, and the Shaping of the New Testament Canon,” in Charles Horton, ed., *The Earliest Gospels: Origins and Transmission of the Earliest Christian Gospels* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 32. For bibliography on the oral reception of texts in antiquity, see Gamble, “Literacy, Liturgy, and the Shaping of the New Testament Canon,” 31, n. 12.

overwhelmingly illiterate, literacy being reserved for a “tiny elite” consisting of 10% of the population or less.¹⁰ In that oral culture Christian worship services likely included plenty of opportunity for Scripture to be heard in large portions, perhaps whole books heard at a time—“as long as time permits,” as Justin Martyr expressed it.¹¹ Employing practices common to the synagogue, the first Christians may have practiced *lectio continua*, weekly oral readings of the Bible following a reading cycle that covered a year or more. Jesus’ reading from Isaiah in his home synagogue may suggest first-century synagogue lectionary practices imitated by later Christian communities (Luke 4:16-30).¹²

Advocates of performance criticism deserve credit for introducing fresh ways of experiencing the Bible—especially in dramatizing stories from the Gospels; but as David Rhoads notes, these efforts are preliminary.¹³ One weakness in their approach is the tendency to imagine, anachronistically, the performance of biblical narratives according to the conventions of modern storytelling. They think in terms of stories *told* in a spoken, conversational voice, just as a contemporary audience would expect. They have less to say about the

¹⁰ Richard Horsley, *Performing the Gospel*, ix-x. Harry Gamble estimates that 10-15% of the population of the ancient world was literate. Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 10. Perhaps only 1% of the population of Mesopotamia and Egypt were literate according to Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word* (Louisville: John Knox, 1996), 39.

¹¹ “And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together in one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits.” *The First Apology of Justin*, 67, in Philip Schaff et al., eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers. Vol. 1. The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001) 1.187.

¹² Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 528-530. Newman, however, doubts the existence of lectionary cycles in early Judaism (*Before the Bible*, 7).

¹³ Rhoads, “What Is Performance Criticism?” 100.

impact of song or chant on a biblical reading, performed in a specifically ecclesial, liturgical setting.

2. SINGING THE WORD

Because music, liturgy, and biblical studies stand apart as distinct fields of study in the modern academy, disciplinary isolation makes it possible for biblical scholars to conduct their research with little thought given to the role music might have played in the reception of the Bible. Yet the meaning of the text requires attention to aural expectations of the ancient audience. As Hans Robert Jauss explains, the reader's or listener's horizon of expectation determines how a message is received. Citing a hermeneutical principle of scholastic philosophy ("*Quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*"—"Whatever is received can only be received in the manner of the recipient"), Jauss asserts that "any truth is received only according to the measure of the receiver."¹⁴ It is proper to ask: how might ancient audiences have heard Scripture in their liturgical setting, and how might the worship setting have shaped meaning?

In the context of ancient Christian worship, in which the prayer leader recited the biblical text and the congregation joined in, the meaning is not to be found simply by unpacking the grammatical, linguistic, and semantic elements of the text. Other factors count too: the audience's preexisting familiarity with and expectations of the text, the placement of the reading within the structure of the service, the recitation's position within the ecclesial calendar, the gestures of bodies, the presence of others, and the sounds of voices united in the recitation.¹⁵

Worshippers did not assemble only to learn the lesson, though the content was exceedingly important. They also gathered to become living instruments through which the Spirit of Christ made

¹⁴ Hans Robert Jauss, "The Theory of Reception: A Retrospective of its Unrecognized Prehistory" in Peter Collier and Helga Geyer-Ryan, eds., *Literary Theory Today* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 56.

¹⁵ "The written text gives evidence of the oral world behind it and is, as [Katherine O'Brien] O'Keeffe has termed it, a 'visible song,'" Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word*, 41.

music. According to Clement of Alexandria, “The Lord made man a beautiful breathing instrument after his own image. . . .”¹⁶ Just as Christ, “the heavenly Word” becomes the “New Song,” the worshipers sing the Word, as the Spirit breathes through them. The goal of hearing Scripture and reciting it in community was multifold. It included information, formation, inspiration, and transformation.

In the first-century Mediterranean milieu, singing in the assembly was not limited to the psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs (Eph 5:19). Worshipers recited in melodic fashion various parts of the Bible, not just the odes, psalms, or putatively “poetic” sections.¹⁷ Following Jewish practice, Christians recited in melodic fashion even what we might judge “prose” passages.¹⁸ According to Athanasius, “the Law and the Prophets,” the historical books, and the New Testament were sung. Similarly, Basil the Great writes that in addition to singing the Psalms, the church sang “prophecy, . . . the gospel precepts and the pronouncements of the Apostles.”¹⁹

Biblical scholars have given considerable attention to the hymnic material in Scripture, but rigid distinctions between “prose” and “lyric” texts are suspect since singing and speaking in antiquity were closely aligned: “the two verbs themselves are coupled and used in-

¹⁶ *Clement of Alexandria, Protrepticus I*, 5, 3-7, 3. Qtd. in James McKinnon, ed., *Music in Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 53. All patristic quotations come from McKinnon, unless otherwise noted.

¹⁷ Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 225. See also Cheslyn Jones et al., eds., *The Study of Liturgy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 39-50, 440-54; Joseph Gelineau, *Voices and Instruments in Christian Worship* (London: Burns & Oates, 1964); Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge: The Interdependence of Literature and Music in Synagogue and Church During the First Millennium*, vol. I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

¹⁸ Werner, *The Sacred Bridge*, I.62-63. Newman argues that the ongoing, embodied performance of Pauline epistles in worship led to their coming to be understood as scripture. Newman, *Before the Bible*, 75-105.

¹⁹ Athanasius, *Epistula ad Marcellinum de interpretatione psalms* 27; Basil, *Homilia in psalmum xxxviii*, 7.

terchangeably, and in numberless literary descriptions we cannot tell whether speech or song is in question.”²⁰ Joseph Gelineau explains that the frontier between singing and speaking was imprecise: “As soon as speech turned to poetry, or when public or ceremonial speaking was involved, rhythmic and melodic features were incorporated which today would be classified as musical, or at least pre-musical.”²¹ When Augustine praises “the great utility of music in worship,” he includes recitation, chanting, and singing. He is deeply moved by words “sung with a clear voice and an entirely appropriate modulation.” He approves of Athanasius of Alexandria’s practice of making “the Reader of the psalm chant with so flexible a speech-rhythm that he was nearer to reciting than to singing.”²² The juxtaposition of types of rhythmic utterances in a single work should not seem strange to today’s audiences familiar with rap or popular musical-theatre productions like *Hamilton*. We too live in a world in which the spoken word, rhythmic recitation, and song can be contiguous and fused.

A key point to understanding the musical nature of the Bible is to recognize its roots in liturgical worship.²³ The New Testament

²⁰ Edward A. Lippman, “The Sources and Development of the Ethical View of Music in Ancient Greece,” *The Musical Quarterly* 40 (1963): 195. Gamble writes: “No clear distinction between speech and singing was made in antiquity.” Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 330 n. 81. Both Ambrose (*Exc. Sat.* 1.61) and Augustine (*In Ps.* 138) speak of the reader as *singing* the Psalms.

²¹ Joseph Gelineau, “Music and Singing in the Liturgy,” in Cheslyn Jones, ed., *The Study of Liturgy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) 444. Cited in Edward Foley, “The Cantor in Historical Perspective,” *Worship* 56 (1982): 205.

²² Henry Chadwick, ed., *St. Augustine, Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), X. xxxiii (50), 208.

²³ Judith Newman argues that the Hebrew canon is a product of the worshipping community, “the liturgical body.” The liturgical and the scriptural cannot be “tidily” distinguished or separated: “They are in fact intertwined even at the compositional level.” Newman, *Before the Bible*, 7. Early Christian worship was liturgical as well, not in the valorized sense of highly formal, “high church” rites, but in the sense of shared practices, a liturgical habitus. Liturgy in this sense is not a late development, nor a deviation from

and early Christian liturgy enjoyed a symbiotic relationship, each influencing the other.²⁴ Worship was, in fact, the “cradle” and the “home” of the New Testament’s birth.²⁵ What in time came to be called “canonical,” originally meant something approved for reading in worship, something familiar because it was often recited in the assembly.²⁶ “Canon” didn’t mean “norm,” but “list”—“namely, a list of those books that were acceptable for public reading.”²⁷ The fact

some imagined pristine, ritual-free form of Christian worship. Indeed, there was no time when the Christian church did not have a liturgy.

²⁴ Edward Yarnold, “Liturgy and the Bible,” in Angelo Di Berardino, Thomas C. Oden, Joel C. Elowsky, and James Hoover, eds., *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014). “The entwinement of worship and scripture has a long history,” Newman, *Before the Bible*, 143.

²⁵ “[C]ertainly the early Christian literary achievement took place in an atmosphere of worship.” Horton, *The Earliest Gospels*, 12. “[I]t remains perfectly true that many of the component parts of the New Testament were forged in the flame of corporate worship....” Charles Francis Digby Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* (2nd ed.; San Francisco: Continuum, 1981), 20.

²⁶ According to Tomas Bokedal, what we call “canonical” originally signified that which is “read in corporate worship,” that is, those readings employed “on a regular basis in worship.” Tomas Bokedal, *The Formation and Significance of the Christian Biblical Canon* (London: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2014), 237, 243; “the foundation of the canon of scripture was nothing other than the church’s retrospective recognition of its own reading habits,” writes Harry Gamble, “Literacy, Liturgy, and the Shaping of the New Testament Canon,” in *The Earliest Gospels* (ed. Horton), 37. “The liturgy and the Bible have been mutual influences upon each other. On the one hand the NT, after it had reached its canonical form, was naturally an influence on the development of the liturgical rites, as was, for that matter, the OT. On the other hand, in earlier periods of church history, the primitive forms of the rites left their own imprint on the formation of the NT.” Yarnold, “Liturgy and the Bible.” See also Evert H. van Olst, *The Bible and Liturgy*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).

²⁷ Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 215. “The Gospels, at least Mark, Matthew and John, were written in the first place for worship,” according to Martin Hengel, “Eye-witness Memory and the Writing of the Gospels,” in Marcus

that the church, the New Testament, and worship practices emerged together in a culture that highly regarded the rhythmic recitation of words helps to explain the decided musical orientation of the Scriptures.

Delivering the Scriptures properly, in a sonorous and moving way, was so valued that that over time the office of the reader became an important position in both synagogue and church. The synagogue reader was the prayer leader, the *sheli'ah zibbur* (which came to be known as the *precentor* or cantor).²⁸ The early church developed the corresponding position of the *anagnostes* or lector, at first a non-professional leader; but by the end of the second century the role had become a lower office in the church. To “read” was to chant or sing the words, from a raised platform in the house church, the *domus ecclesiae*.²⁹

In antiquity oral expression took different forms, just as it does today. Words could be conveyed in the form of conversational speech, but when it came to public presentation a conversational tone was not the rule. Rather, texts were declaimed or recited in a formal manner. In many cases (as in the public presentation of a poem or a narrative tale) the words were intoned, chanted, or sung. When the author of Ephesians instructs his audience to “speak” (*lalō*) to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, he is calling for singing (Eph 5:18-19).

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to engage in a study of comparative liturgy, a thorough genealogy of musical practices in the ancient world would demonstrate historical links between ancient Jewish and Christian chanting practices, the emergence of plainsong chant in the medieval church, and the semi-musical chanting of the Quran in Islam (indeed, the Arabic word “Quran” proba-

Bockmuehl and Donald A. Hagner, eds., *The Written Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 92.

²⁸ The “prayer leader” would declaim “the prayers, creedal formulae or readings in musical or semimusical forms, which usually presumed some kind of congregational response, according to Foley, “The Cantor in Historical Perspective,” 194-95.

²⁹ Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 218, 225.

bly means “recitation”).³⁰ One may conclude that public recitations of sacred texts among the Abrahamic faiths in ancient and early medieval times were pervasively musical.³¹

While music is ubiquitous in modern culture, ours is not the first to be immersed in music. “Late Hellenistic civilization made music an all-penetrating cultural activity”; singers and musical contests were everywhere, as were pagan rites employing music that “intoxicated the masses.”³² Vocal music was similarly important in the Judaism of the Second Temple period. After the destruction of the

³⁰ Quran (or Al-Kurān) probably derives from the Arabic verb *kara’a* (“recite”) which appears seventeen times in the Quran. Others believe the word derives from the Syriac *keryānā*, “scripture reading, lesson,” a term used in Christian liturgy. J. D. Bearson, “Al-Kurān,” *The Encyclopedia of Islam. New Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 5.400-432. The style of Quranic recitation appears to be rooted in ancient Jewish and Christian recitation practices. There is overlap between the cantillation of Eastern churches, synagogue music, and the chanting of the Quran (“Islamic Arts: Music,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/Islamic-arts/Music). See Ingrid Mattson, “How to Read the Quran,” in *The Study Quran* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), 1595-97. Historians of both Jewish and Christian chant argue its antiquity: “The plainsong of Catholic, Byzantine, and Armenian Churches traces its origin” to temple and synagogue worship, according to Abraham Millgram, *Jewish Worship* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1971), 366. Millgram writes: “The tenacity of synagogue music has surprised many a musicologist.... [Scripture chants] have stubbornly resisted change or adaptation to new musical influences and have remained authentic to this day,” 364-65. Christopher Page agrees: “historians of chant and liturgy have concluded that certain configurations of words, melodies and readings are likely to be very archaic, perhaps testifying to liturgical states that are hundreds of years older than the earliest manuscript sources with music.” Christopher Page, *The Christian West and Its Singers: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 6.

³¹ Muslims understand the orality of their holy text in a way that many Christians do not. This is ironic, considering that the chanting of eastern churches likely influenced Islamic practice.

³² Gila Flam, “Music: The Emergence of Synagogue Song,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd ed (Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson/Gale, 2007), 14.643.

temple in C.E. 70, synagogues apparently increased the role of Scripture and liturgy, employing “musical forms of psalmody, chanted Bible reading and prayer tunes [based] on simple melodic patterns.” Readings were rendered primarily through cantillation, “a kind of music easily grasped and performed.”³³

There is disagreement concerning the degree to which Christian communities adopted synagogue practices. Given the linguistic, cultural, and geographic diversity of Christian communities in the Mediterranean world, there would have been variations in practice; but there were also common elements, and the singing of the Psalms and the cantillation of Scripture texts appear to have been widespread. Christianity owed its existence to Judaism—deriving much of its Scripture, theology, ethics, and worship from the Jewish faith and practice. Jewish converts, steeped in synagogue practices, brought their familiar liturgical practices into congregational life, in both Palestine and the Diaspora. Communications between Christians and Jews continued well into the fourth century, if not beyond, suggesting mutual influence for generations. While Christians borrowed much from Jewish practices and teachings, Lee Levine argues against a simple one-way transfer of influence because the synagogue, increasingly important to Jewish life after 70 C.E., evolved alongside the emerging church. Levine sees parallel development: “both [Judaism and Christianity] stemmed from common Second Temple worship and ritual configuration,” Levine maintains. Both traditions drew “heavily on earlier liturgical traditions and biblical texts. . . .”³⁴ It is not surprising, therefore, to see Jewish psalmody and cantillation practices being employed in early Christian churches under these circumstances, and it helps account for the traces of Jewish musical features in the chants of churches in the East and in medieval plain-song.³⁵

³³ Flam, “Music: The Emergence of Synagogue Song,” 14.643.

³⁴ According to Levine “there can be little question that the Jewish liturgical context of the first century was indeed a powerful influence on the fledgling Christian community.” Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 529.

³⁵ Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 528-530. See also Roger T. Beckwith, “The Jewish Background to Christian Worship,” in Cheslyn Jones et al.,

If it is true as Kelber argues that “oral and written words generate and communicate meaning in different ways,” then it is also proper to consider whether *sung* words generate and communicate meaning in ways different from *spoken* or *written* discourse.³⁶ Paul urges the Christians in Corinth to sing with the spirit (*pneuma*) and with the mind or the understanding (*nous*) also (1 Cor. 14:15). One wonders: how might a sung text differ from a silent reading? How might the body and the mind register the meaning of a sung text differently? If there is a hermeneutics of speaking and writing, might there also be a hermeneutics of singing? Because singing psalms, canticles, hymns, and other passages of Scripture was so prevalent in the early church, it is proper to reflect on the ways the musical experience of the Bible might have affected its reception.

SINGING, MEMORY, AND KOINONIA

Ritual practices, identity, and memory are profoundly intertwined. Identity is concretized through what we say and do collectively. Jan Assmann observes that “we are what we remember” and “we are what we belong to.”³⁷ Christianity survived because its adherents

eds., *The Study of Liturgy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 39-51; Jennifer Knust and Tommy Wasserman, “The Biblical Odes and the Text of the Christian Bible: A Reconsideration of the Impact of Liturgical Singing on the Transmission of the Gospel of Luke,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133.2 (2014): 341-365. Citing Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian, Knust and Wasserman add, “The sheer volume of surviving Psalters, psalm commentaries, allusions to psalms, and references to David and his songbook attest to the centrality of the psalms in emerging Christian liturgies, and from the earliest period.” Knust and Wasserman, “The Biblical Odes and the Text of the Christian Bible,” 344.

³⁶ Tom Thatcher summarizes Kelber’s theory of “the hermeneutics of speaking and writing.” Tom Thatcher, “Beyond Texts and Traditions: Werner Kelber’s Media History of Christian Origins,” in idem, *Jesus, the Voice and the Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 2.

³⁷ Jan Assmann, “Form as a Mnemonic Device,” in Richard A. Horsley, Jonathan A. Draper and John M. Foley, eds., *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory, and Mark* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006), 68. See also,

remembered the life and teachings of Jesus, which they passed on orally, long before the words were inscribed on scrolls or in codices. Critics who study the orality of Scripture point to oral recitation of communal stories as a primary device for remembering. Rhythmic, patterned speech—sung poetry, preeminently—helps one remember. We remember what we repeat and sing. A nursery rhyme or a children’s song, once learned, stays with one for life. Sung or recited Scripture, that which is memorized, interiorized, and learned “by heart” (a telling expression), has this effect as well. The words remain with (and in) us, not only because of the semantic content, but also because of how the words ring in the ear and resonate in the body.

According to Assmann, formalized utterances can survive in cultural memory across generations if they acquire certain distinctive features, which he calls “devices of stabilization.” In verbal communications intended for preservation

. . . there is manifest a will to form, which attempts to stabilize the word beyond its moment of pronunciation. Rhyme, assonance, parallelism, alliteration, meter, rhythm, and melody are devices of stabilization meant to render permanent the volatile words in the flow of time. . . .³⁸

The singing of Scripture in ancient communities supported this process of stabilization and recall. Melodic recitation was a brilliant communication strategy, providing the oral punctuation, the mnemonic cues, necessary to make the text comprehensible and memorable.

The rhythmic intonations and formal poetic devices of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, however, were not only mnemonic devices; nor were they mere superficial aesthetic flourishes, “coloring” to dress up doctrinal content. The melody and the rhythm carried memories and meanings not necessarily evident in the semantic content. In the singing one could catch a glimpse of

Jan Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 125-133.

³⁸ Assmann, “Form as a Mnemonic Device,” 72-73.

transcendence, intuit the sacred, and know that one is united with God and the community.

Tertullian describes an *agapē* feast that concludes with singing and a prayer. After the meal, “they converse as do those who know that God listens. After the washing of hands and the lighting of lamps (*lumina*), each is urged to come into the middle and sing to God, either from the sacred scriptures or from his own invention (*de proprio ingenio*).”³⁹ This scene of the worshipers moving together toward the middle of the gathering place as they sing is a compelling image of what the New Testament calls *koinonia*. Singing the faith was preeminently a performance of fellowship. To Assmann’s claims that “we are what we remember” and “we are what we belong to,” one could add, according to early Christian thinking, “we are what we sing.” Singing realizes *koinonia*.

SINGING AND PRESENCE

In oral performance the text becomes a “dynamic, temporal experience,” something you live, not just contemplate.⁴⁰ The performed word is not just a “message.” It is an *event*. According to Gamble, the practical effect of a liturgical reading is “to shape and re-enforce the self-understanding of the Christian congregation,” to help worshipers “to find themselves in the scriptural story, to enter the world of the text . . . to learn to live within scripture.”⁴¹ As the word is performed in community, worshipers see characters and events come to life through the body and voice of the *anagnostes* or *precentor* and through the assembled bodies and voices of the congregation.

³⁹ *Apologeticum* xxxix, 16-18.

⁴⁰ Robert M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 3. Note, however, that Fowler concerns himself with the *reader’s* reception of the text, not the *listening audience’s* reception.

⁴¹ Gamble, “*Literacy, Liturgy, and the Shaping of the New Testament Canon*,” 38-39.

In the Hellenistic world there was a deep and longstanding association of music with the gods. Music was inherently sacred, reflective of the “divine and ideal order.”⁴² Ancient Judaism and Christianity also associated music with the sacred. In Temple worship Yahweh is proximate to his people. Indeed, the Lord is “enthroned on the praises of Israel” (Ps 22:3). Worshipers “come into his presence with singing” (Ps 100:2). The New Testament associates singing with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Song is breath, and breath is spirit/Spirit (*pneuma*): “Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs . . .” (Eph 5:18-19). Clement of Alexandria imagines the believer as God’s wind instrument, the aulos: “The Lord made man a beautiful breathing instrument after his own image.”⁴³ God’s wind/breath/spirit flows through humans as they make (vocal) music. Thus when the lector recites the sacred words and the congregation sings, there is a sense of divine presence, for the singer’s breath is nothing less than God’s Spirit flowing through worshiper.

The Odes of Solomon, perhaps the earliest Christian hymnbook, associates the Holy Spirit and singing: “And open to me the harp of Your Holy Spirit / So that through every note I may praise You, O Lord!” (Ode 14) “I shall open my mouth, / And His spirit shall speak through me” (Ode 16).⁴⁴ Origen declares that the mind “cannot pray unless the Spirit, within its hearing, as it were, first prays before it. Nor can it sing and hymn the Father in Christ with proper rhythm, melody, meter and harmony, unless the Spirit who searches all things, even the depths of God, has first searched the depths of the mind with praise and song and, as far as it capable, has understood them.”⁴⁵

One of the powerful claims of the Gospel was the promise of the continuing presence of the risen Lord: “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20). A pressing con-

⁴² Lippman, “The Sources and Development,” 197.

⁴³ *Protrepticus* I, 5, 3-7, 3.

⁴⁴ James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Earliest Christian Hymnbook: The Odes of Solomon* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 40, 45.

⁴⁵ *On Prayer*, II, 4.

cern of the early church concerned whether this promise held true, especially as the first generation of followers passed away and the Parousia was delayed.⁴⁶ Hearing the Gospels declaimed in community, seeing characters and events come to life through the body and voice of the lector and through the assembled bodies of the congregation, singing the community’s story, responsively and antiphonally, would have conveyed reassurance. The spoken and chanted word—“living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow” (Heb 4:12)—must have generated a sense of a sacramental presence.⁴⁷

SINGING THE WHOLE PERSON

Music is concrete and kinesthetic. There is no singing without bodies doing it. Neuroscience and the emerging field of neuromusicology, using brain-imaging technologies, confirm something long believed by ancient people, that music affects the whole person—body, brain, and mind. Humans are hard-wired for music. All the brain lights up when music engages us: “[M]usic is distributed throughout the brain. . . . Musical activity involves nearly every region of the brain that we know about, and nearly every neural subsystem.”⁴⁸ In many ways science today is confirming what the ancients assumed as com-

⁴⁶ Markus Bockmuehl, “The Gospels on the Presence of Jesus,” in Francesca Aran Murphy and Troy A. Stefano, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 87-101.

⁴⁷ The disciples’ encounter with the Lord on the road to Emmaus suggests the ancient association of Word, Sacrament, and Real Presence (Luke 24:30-35).

⁴⁸ Daniel J. Levitan, *This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession* (New York: Plume/Penguin, 2006), 9, 11, 85-86, 223-230; Ted Gioia, *Healing Songs* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 6. Hearing a text read aloud is very different from a silent reading; fMRI’s of the brains of children who hear a story read aloud register significantly more neural activity than children who watch a video of the same story. Meghan Cox Gurdon, *The Enchanted Hour: The Miraculous Power of Reading Aloud in the Age of Distraction* (New York: HarperCollins, 2019), 11-13.

monplace and obvious, the holistic power of music. The church fathers also shared these common Greek assumptions about music, urging believers to sing psalms and listen to chants.⁴⁹

When Paul advises the Colossian believers to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly . . . and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God” (Col 3:16), one can infer the ancient understanding of music’s power to affect the whole person—both heart and mind—and to generate what moderns call “embodied cognition.” In the sonorous indwelling of the word, there is the implied understanding that body and soul are deeply connected, that in the singing of the word one experiences visceral knowing and deep wisdom.⁵⁰

SINGING, TRANSFORMATION, AND ACTION

From Plato to the church fathers, music’s power to transform a person was taken for granted. Hearing a heroic narrative sung was expected to have a moral impact: “moral instruction, intimately allied to music, runs through the entire history of Greek poetry and philosophy, and indeed through all the literature of antiquity.”⁵¹ For the ancient Christian, music was also a vehicle of spiritual formation. Music trains souls, Basil argued.⁵² The assumption that hymnody has ethical force helps explain why Paul quotes an apparently familiar hymn to motivate his Philippian audience to “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit,” but to look to “the interests of others” (Phil 2:3-4). Singing inspires good behavior, says Basil:

⁴⁹ Since the sixth century B.C.E. in Greece, “psychophysical beneficial effects were attributed to music.” Dimosthenis Spanoudakis, “Neuromusicology and Byzantine Chant: An Interdisciplinary Approach with Multiple Benefits: Preliminary Study, Goals, and Prospects,” in *Proceedings of the 1st International Musicological Conference*, 9 June - 3 July 2014, Volos, Greece.

⁵⁰ James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 38-41.

⁵¹ Edward A. Lippman, “The Sources and Development,” *Musical Quarterly*, 203.

⁵² *Homilia in psalmum i.*

The Holy Spirit sees how much difficulty mankind has in loving virtue, and how we prefer the lure of pleasure to the straight and narrow path. What does he do? He adds the grace of music to the truth of doctrine. Charmed by what we hear, we pluck the fruit of the words without realizing it.⁵³

When “the whole church assembles” (1 Cor 14:23), the sung word has the capacity to inspire virtuous behavior. The Word becomes deictic—pointing, convicting, and directing the audience. The Gospel of Mark, for example, performed in an Easter vigil, may function as a kind of commencement exercise, a call to the initiate, the catechumen, to courageous obedience—to decide, to choose to follow in the face of danger and risk.⁵⁴

“SINGING IS BEING”

Just as Pythagoras believed that the world was composed in harmony (the music of the spheres), so ancient Christians found music in both the universe (the macrocosm) and in the human person (the microcosm). When the Almighty laid the foundations of the earth, “the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy” (Job 38:7). Creation, creativity, and song are deeply related. Singing in particular expresses divine harmony because diverse voices unite to create a single melody. Chanting psalms and singing odes not only declare the fact of divine harmony; they also bring harmony into being in the very act of performance. Basil writes: “Thus psalmody provides the greatest of all goods, charity, by devising in its common song a certain bond of unity, and by joining together the people into the concord of a single chorus.”⁵⁵ In a shared song, unity

⁵³ Basil the Great, *Hom. in Ps. 1*, qtd. in Gelineau, “Music and Singing in the Liturgy,” 443. Also, John Chrysostom, *In Colossenses*, Hom. ix.

⁵⁴ Darryl Tippens, “Reading at Cockcrow: Oral Reception and Ritual Experience in Mark’s Passion Narrative,” *Essays in Literature* 20.1 (1993): 145-163.

⁵⁵ *Homilia in psalmum 1*, 2.

is simultaneously affirmed and enabled. Sacred song does not just “tell.” It gives birth to something; it creates and heals.⁵⁶

To practice “symphonic” love (to be “of the same mind,” to have “the same love” and be “in full accord”—Phil 2:2) is to “sing with one voice” to the Father. Ignatius of Antioch explains to the church in Ephesus:

Therefore Jesus Christ is sung in your harmony and symphonic love (*sumphōnōi agapēi*). And each of you should join the chorus, that by being symphonic in your harmony, taking up the divine inflection (*chrōma*) together, you may sing in one voice through Jesus Christ to the Father, that he may both hear and recognize you through the things you do well, since you are members [*melē*, perhaps punning on *melē* meaning ‘melodies’, or words to that effect] of his Son. Therefore it is useful for you to be in a flawless unison, that you may partake of God at all times as well.⁵⁷

Ignatius captures much of what was commonly believed in Hellenistic culture about the power of singing (specifically *unison* singing) to mold community. “And each of you should join the chorus,” Ignatius implores. In this declaration, another vital image emerges—the dance.

“Chorus” is a familiar term among the church fathers and was applied to Christians in worship.⁵⁸ This is significant because in ancient Greek “chorus” meant both a band of singers as well as a round dance with song.⁵⁹ Performing the word in song implies both sound and movement. In the Hellenistic drama and musical settings, physical movement of some sort accompanied the singing (cho-

⁵⁶ For Basil, psalmody inspires love, is creative and healing, and relieves pain, distress, and distraction. *Letter* ccvii. Modern research supports Basil’s claims. Gioia, *Healing Songs*.

⁵⁷ Page, *The Christian West and Its Singers*, 41.

⁵⁸ Clement of Alexandria describes the worshiper who, in his prayers and praises “before the banquet, psalms, and hymns. . . renders himself one with the sacred chorus,” *Stromata* VII, vii, 49.

⁵⁹ “Chorus,” in *Oxford English Dictionary*.

rus/choreography), but some sort of movement may have been present in Christian settings too. (Earlier we noted Tertullian’s description of worshipers coming “into the middle” to sing to God.) In the early second-century C.E. hymn collection, *The Odes of Solomon*, the singer makes the sign of the cross with his body as he sings, perhaps exhibiting the familiar *orans* prayer posture: “I extend my hands / And hallowed my Lord; / For the expansion of my hands / Is His sign” (Ode 27).⁶⁰ Clement, perhaps speaking metaphorically, praises the “daughters of God” who “celebrate the august rites of the Word, joining in modest choral dance.”⁶¹ In the parable of the Prodigal Son the older brother hears the music (*symphōnia*) and the dancing (*chorōs*) (Luke 15:25). His refusal to join the festivities is spiritually telling, for in the parable music and dancing are not incidental to the story; rather, they epitomize the theme. To dance is to enter a sacred space, a circle of charity and grace, that transcends the purely cognitive realm. The tragedy of the older brother is his refusal of what Basil called “the concord of a single chorus.”⁶² In refusing the dance and the song, the older son is the true prodigal, denying himself the life-giving joys of fraternal fellowship and union with the Father.

By analogy, in the context of Christian worship, the rhythm, meter, and melody of the sacred text are not mere embellishments, not just incidental to the “true,” essential, cognitive meaning of the Word. Some truths must be performed, rather than silently read. A dance, a song, a holy kiss, a warm embrace, or the receiving of the Eucharistic elements, for example, convey realities beyond words. The sacramental medium is the message. As the song and the dance in Luke’s parable are not merely decorative, but the visible and auditory embodiment of ineffable meanings, so also the gospel sung in

⁶⁰ Charlesworth, *The Earliest Christian Hymnbook: The Odes of Solomon*, 81.

⁶¹ *Protrepticus* XII, 119. Not everyone approved physical movement in worship. Tatian complains of “a man who is nodding and motioning in an unnatural way,” *Discourse to the Greeks*, 22.

⁶² *Homilia in psalmum* I, 2.

community, with the *agapē* feast or the Eucharist at hand, becomes a joyous chorus that “surpasses knowledge” (Eph 3:19). Just as one cannot reduce the meaning of a dance to a diagram or a verbal formula, neither can one capture the full meaning of Scripture in doctrinal abstraction. In music and song one approaches the holy and the numinous. “*Gesang ist Dasein*,” wrote Rainer Maria Rilke. “Singing is being.”⁶³

The contemporary church as well as the current field of biblical study, so influenced by Cartesian dualism, could benefit from attending to the Bible’s inherent musical dimensions. One wonders what would happen if students came to understand that the textual pericope was not meant to be a mute but a *speaking* witness. What would courses look like if teachers experimented with memorization, recitation, and rhythmic renderings of Scripture? What if more churches included extensive readings of the Scripture in worship and in classes, perhaps intercalated with sung Psalms or hymns? What if one goal of study was to demonstrate the differences between the word read silently and the word performed?

Contemporary people are like their ancient kin, responsive to sound and movement. “We can only hear music through the body,” says Julian Johnson.⁶⁴ The capacity of the sung text to resonate in the body is one of the best reasons to restore Scripture’s oral dimension. In *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity*, Luke Timothy Johnson notes that academics tend to resist addressing the role of religious experience in the Bible. In their “preoccupation with origin and development” issues of the text, they slight the psychosomatic character inherent in religious experience. Scholarship, he says, should “speak in an accurate and disciplined fashion about the experiential aspects of earliest Christianity.” Attending to the sensory dimensions of

⁶³ Rainer Maria Rilke, “Sonnets to Orpheus,” in *The Essential Rilke*, trans. Galway Kinnell (New York: Ecco, 2007).

⁶⁴ Julian Johnson, “Music and Modernity,” *Mars Hill Audio*, Vol. 130, June 2016.

Scripture is one way to restore some of its “emotional and intuitive power.”⁶⁵

If context determines meaning (a fundamental hermeneutical principle), then it follows that Scripture’s musical and liturgical dimensions are hardly incidental. Hans-Georg Gadamer notes that the performance of a play cannot be separated from the play itself, “as if it were something that is not part of its essential being.” Analogously, the meaning of a sacred rite must be interpreted in light of its ritual setting. Gadamer explains:

No one will be able to suppose that for religious truth the performance of ritual is inessential. . . . *It is in the performance and only in it*—as we see most clearly in the case of music—*that we encounter the work itself*, as the divine is encountered in religious rite.” (emphasis added)

To isolate a work from the conditions of its performance is to produce “an abstraction that reduces the actual being of the work.”⁶⁶

The vectors of evidence point in the same direction: toward restoring sensory engagement, the revival of “the liquid tapestry” of sacred story, and the return of the storyteller—the rhapsode, the lector, the cantor, the singer.⁶⁷ If Scripture is not *sung* in community (and I mean this both metaphorically and literally), then Wordsworth is right: “we murder to dissect.” Of course, critical analysis plays an essential role in every academic discipline, but recognizing the limits of analysis and encouraging a more embodied, auditory experience of the work could renew the study of the Bible.

A chemist might learn something important from studying the chemical composition of Matthias Grünewald’s Isenheim Altarpiece,

⁶⁵ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Religious Experience in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 41-47, 145.

⁶⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1995), 116.

⁶⁷ “Liquid tapestry” is Salman Rushdie’s term for story, qtd. in Gurdon, *The Enchanted Hour*, 23.

and a music scholar could benefit from a close study of the score to Johann Sebastian Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. But neither act of scholarly analysis will match the ineffable experience that comes from contemplating the agonistic beauty of Grünewald's painting or immersing oneself in an exquisite performance of Bach's masterwork. By analogy, the silent, printed Scripture is the "score." Voice, ears, body, and liturgical experience give life to the score.

James K. A. Smith asks: "How do we *teach* the body ... How is the body habituated? How do we recruit the imagination that is embedded and carried in our bodily comportment to the world?"⁶⁸ One answer is to give fresh attention to pedagogies that take seriously the relevance of the vocal practices of ancient Jewish and Christian worship. These strategies make possible "the communion of voice, ears, and text."⁶⁹ Scholarly methodologies must make room for the experiential, the phenomenological, and the performative. The study of Scripture must be both intellectual and incarnational. If we fail to take seriously Scripture's oral, musical, and liturgical dimensions, then we do our part to continue what Charles Taylor calls *excar-nation*: "the transfer of our religious life out of bodily forms of ritual, worship, practice, so that it comes more and more to reside 'in the head.'"⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 73.

⁶⁹ Gurdon, *The Enchanted Hour*, 37.

⁷⁰ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 613.

CO-HEIRS OF ABRAHAM'S PROMISE: A RADICAL APPLICATION OF THE GOSPEL?

TIMOTHY M. WILLIS

A basic principle of interpretation that Prof. Ian Fair emphasized in his classes was the importance of knowing the OT background to a NT passage. I remember him particularly applying this principle to one's reading of Revelation, because so many of the expressions and images in Christian apocalyptic works have antecedents in OT writings. Of course, recognizing the OT background to a NT passage is only one part of the interpretive process. In many cases, the original intentions of any given OT teachings or passages have been reshaped considerably before they reach the NT writers. Subsequent OT writings, the rich history of Jewish thought and interpretation during the Second Temple period, interactions with Mesopotamian and/or Greco-Roman political, philosophical, and religious schools of thought, and changing social realities that Israelite (later, Jewish) and early Christian believers experienced through the centuries could have become part of the social and intellectual background that influenced the expression of Christian teachings in NT passages.

The present study constitutes an initial inquiry into one foundational NT teaching and its antecedents. It begins with an observation about a few topically-related passages that might appear to be a mere coincidence; but I would suggest that knowledge of the complex social and religious background of the coincidence can bring greater clarity to the significance of the language employed by NT writers in communicating this teaching. The coincidence involves, on the one hand, Gal 3:28-29 – Paul's climactic flourish in an important discussion on faith and the “sons of Abraham” (Gal 3:6-4:7)

– and on the other hand, the use of the term “co-heir” (Gk. *sugklēronomos*) in the NT. Paul employs a common midrashic strategy in Gal 3-4, as he argues for a singular (not plural) meaning to the collective noun “seed.” He applies the term “seed” to a single individual, Jesus; but at the conclusion of the section, he deftly uses the same singular noun in its typical collective sense to refer to all who put their faith in Jesus (“you [pl.] are Abraham’s *seed*, heirs according to the promise” – v 29). This argument is part of Paul’s appeal to the Galatian Christians for the unity of all believers in Christ.¹

The crucial statement (for this study) comes where Paul characterizes those who are “Abraham’s seed...” in terms of three pairs of opposing social categories:

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise.”

The contrasted pairs he mentions typically identify groups that constitute opposite ends of a spectrum, groups that a society often regards as mutually exclusive of one another, in some sense. By joining these mutually exclusive categories, Paul argues for the fullest degree of inclusivity among believers. What he argues here is that all members of these mutually exclusive categories are “heirs” (*klēronomoi*) of the same man, Abraham, in Christ. It is an interesting coincidence, therefore – or perhaps more than a coincidence – that three of the four occurrences of the related term “co-heirs” (*sugklēronomoi*) in the NT affirm Paul’s appeal for inclusivity in relation to each of these paired categories. Paul speaks of Israel and the Gentiles in Eph 3:6 as “co-heirs,” declaring all to be members of one body in Jesus Christ. He says they share in “the promise,” just as he speaks of “neither Jew nor Greek” among those who are “heirs according to the promise” in

¹ Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary 41 (Dallas: Word, 1982/1990), 131-32; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 183-85; J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 344-47.

Gal 3:28-29.² Paul says there is “neither slave nor free” among the heirs of Abraham; similarly, he infers in Rom 8:15-17 that the gospel message challenges the social differentiation – recognized, for example, in inheritances – between slave and free in Christ by drawing a contrast for all Christians between seeing themselves as former “slaves” of their sinful nature and recognizing that all are now “children of God... heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17; cp. Gal 4:1-7).³ Paul’s third pairing, “nor is there male and female,” finds its affirmation in Peter’s appeal to Christian husbands to show consideration for their (Christian) wives “as co-heirs of the gracious gift of life” (1 Pet 3:7).⁴ Finally, in Heb 11:8-9, the anonymous writer points back to the origins of the heir/inheritance in the Abrahamic

² Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1-3*, Anchor Bible 34 (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 337-38. The idea of being “co-heirs, co-members, co-partakers of the promise” fit together well in the context of Paul’s interpretation of references to God’s dwelling-place from the OT in Eph 2:19-22. Believers are all heirs of the same promise to Abraham, but this is melded with the idea of Israel – not just the Temple or Jerusalem – being the dwelling-place of God. This is a place that must be holy in order for the Lord to be willing to dwell there (see Jer 7:1-15). Paul picks up on the idea from Ezek 36:26-27 that God will put his Spirit in them, he joins it with the idea of the glory filling his dwelling-place (see Exod 40:34-38; 1 Kgs 8:10-11), and he merges those with the idea that Christians now constitute the ‘temple’ of God (cp. 1 Cor 3:16-17).

³ Some make much of Paul’s use of “children” rather than “sons” in Rom 8:15. On this, see Alan Watson, “‘And If Children, then Heirs’ (Rom 8:17) – Why Not Sons?” *Australian Biblical Review* 49 (2001): 53-56; and Norm Mundhenk, “Adoption: Being Recognized as a Son,” *The Bible Translator* 59 (2008): 169-78.

⁴ For some recent treatments of research on this passage, see Sean M. Christensen, “The Balch/Elliott Debate and the Hermeneutics of the Household Code,” *Trinity Journal* 37 n.s. (2016): 173-93; Sandra L. Glahn, “Weaker Vessels and Calling Husbands ‘Lord’: Was Peter Insulting Wives?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 174 (2017): 60-76.

Covenant and describes Isaac and Jacob as (the initial) “co-heirs” of the promise that the Lord makes to Abraham (Heb 11:8-9).⁵

The issue I wish to investigate in a preliminary way here considers the assumed understanding among first-century Jews of the expression “Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise,” which Paul uses to describe all Christians in Gal 3:29.⁶ In the background of his characterization of Christians in Gal 3:28 – considered in conjunction with use of the term “co-heirs” in Rom 8:17, Eph 3:6, and 1 Pet 3:7 – was there an assumption among some (many?) Jews of the first century that “Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise” should be applied in exclusive ways to “Jews” (not Gentiles) who were “free” (not slaves) and “male” (not female)? Or, does Paul’s characterization in Gal 3:28 represent a sentiment shared by some (many?) first-century Jews of an existing attitude of inclusivism for all people who declared and demonstrated faith like Abraham in God through adherence to the Law, but now declared and demonstrated through faith in Christ? Both interpretations infer that the Christian gospel is a departure from one or more aspects of Jewish orthodoxy of the time, but the former would constitute a more radical departure from that orthodoxy than the latter. The search for answers to these questions involves gaining a clearer understanding of inheritance laws and practices of Israel and the surrounding ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman cultures, as well as investigating the religious-theological background of the semi-metaphorical concept of inheritance in relation to the Lord’s covenant relationship with Abraham and his descendants.

⁵ The same writer refers to the Lord’s promise to Abraham several chapters earlier, but there he elaborates that the promise is a promise of blessing and offspring (Heb 6:12-15).

⁶ The scholarship on these phrases and the broader passage is massive. Besides the numerous commentaries (on Galatians and Romans [see Rom 4:13; 8:15-17]), one might begin with the study conducted a generation ago by Brendan Byrne, and the extensive bibliography he provides. Brendan Byrne, S.J., *“Sons of God” – “Seed of Abraham”*: A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of All Christians in Paul against the Jewish Background, *Analecta Biblica* 83 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1979).

INHERITANCE LAWS AND CUSTOMS AMONG ISRAEL'S NEIGHBORS: AN OVERVIEW

Matters of inheritance are just one part of numerous laws and customs involving personal and family finance over an extended number of years. In the case of both Israel and her Mesopotamian neighbors, these laws and customs envision and address situations faced primarily within a “house,” which typically connotes an extended family (spanning 3-4 generations). A “house” in this sense involves not only blood relatives, but any domestic workers or field laborers attached solely to the family (servants), other individuals who were dependents of the family (clients, sojourners, cultic personnel), livestock, land, domiciles, money, and movable goods.⁷ The societies of Mesopotamia and Israel were essentially – but not exclusively – patrilineal and patrilineal, which means the “father” of a house was the primary possessor of property (master, lord), and he transferred this status to subsequent generations through his male offspring (those who would become fathers in succeeding generations). The various members of a house performed gender-, age-, and task-specific functions, so that all contributed in complementary ways to provide long-term stability to the house. Social patterns and traditions determined offsetting privileges and responsibilities for each member, but all operated under the ultimate authority of the father in such a patrilineal culture.⁸ There are numerous laws that regulate and facilitate the smooth transfer and distribution of ownership (that is, inheritance) – with rights, privileges, and responsibilities pertaining to that ownership – from the father in one generation to the next.

⁷ Harry A. Hoffner, “בית *bayith*,” in Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 15 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-2006), 2:107-16.

⁸ Larry E. Stager, “The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 260 (1985): 1-36; Carol Meyers, “The Family in Early Israel,” in Leo G. Perdue et al., eds., *Families in Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 1-47.

Our earliest examples come from Mesopotamia, where archaeologists have recovered copies of ancient law codes and financial records, including laws regarding inheritance, that date back as far as the 3rd millennium BCE. The primary concern addressed in these laws is the financial and social responsibilities borne by the master (father) of a house in one generation – and the resources necessary to fulfill those responsibilities – so that the house is properly maintained for the benefit and stability of the family members and the broader community. The most significant events that naturally create uncertainties about the smooth transfer of financial status and social stability of a house are marriages, births, and deaths. Mesopotamian laws consider a wide range of variables that might affect the transfer of family ownership and wealth, including inheritance, dowry, bridewealth, adoption, divorce, slavery, causes of death, extra-marital unions, religious or military obligations, and so forth.

A primary matter that concerns us here involves any distinctions that might be noted between heirs and non-inheriting dependents in a house. Such distinctions typically vary from society to society on the basis of criteria like gender, birth order and other circumstances of one's birth, blood descent v. adoption, and the number and social status of the mother(s) of the offspring. It is generally accepted that the firstborn son received a double portion as his inheritance, although there are examples of fathers designating another son as the recipient.⁹ Likewise, it was generally accepted that only sons would inherit the paternal estate, while daughters would receive a dowry from their father when they married. Wives and servants might receive an inheritance under special circumstances, but the more common concern reflected in the laws is what portion of the estate – if any – would go to the children of particular wives, free or slave. A man typically had complete control over designating his heirs, even to the point of disinheriting a son or elevating a servant to the status of “son” and “heir.” One unsurprising exception relevant to the present study comes from the laws of Lipit-Ishtar (king of Isin,

⁹ Jonathan S. Milgram, *From Mesopotamia to the Mishnah: Tannaitic Inheritance Law in its Legal and Social Contexts*, *Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum* 164 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 75-77.

in southern Mesopotamia, ca. 1925 BCE), which provide for the oldest unmarried daughter to become her father's "heir" in the absence of any sons (LL §§b-c; see below on the daughters of Zelophehad).¹⁰ Examples from the Code of Hammurabi (king of Babylon, ca. 1725 BCE) illustrate other typical variations. A woman whose husband is a soldier and absent for several years during war-time might marry another man during his absence, but allocation of the legal and financial obligations of any children she might bear to both husbands will have to be worked out on a case-by-case basis (LH §§135-136). Hammurabi allows for the possibility that a husband could declare his wife the heir to a certain portion of his estate, and she then had the authority to designate the inheritors of that portion (LH §150). A long series of laws (LH §§165-184) deal with variations on inheritance cases that involve: (a) the dispensation of a special inheritance to a man's "favorite heir" prior to the regular apportioning of the paternal estate; (b) the setting aside of money at a man's death – prior to the division of the estate – to be used as bridewealth by any unmarried sons; (c) the apportioning of inheritance when a man fathers children by multiple wives as a result of divorce or the death of his first wife; (d) addressing the financial needs of a widow and her children, if she desires to "enter another's house" (cp. MAL §28); (e) the legal procedures for denying a son his inheritance; (f) the legal status of sons born to a "first-ranking wife" and a servant-woman (it differs, depending on a formal declaration of the sons' status by the father; cp. Gen 16-21, 29-30); (g) the legal status of sons born to a servant father and a free mother (it differs, depending primarily on the respective social rankings of the servant's master and the free woman); and, (h) the financial and legal status of women who become priestesses rather than marry (in many ways, they are treated as sons; cp. LL §22). In all this, it is clear that while a man has financial obligations to his wives, children, servants, and other dependents,

¹⁰ All citations and abbreviations given here for Mesopotamian laws come from Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*, SBL Writings from the Ancient World 6 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1995).

sons born to him by a free (not servant) woman have assumed advantages over all others who might be able to claim the status of “beneficiaries” of his inheritance.

INHERITANCE IN ISRAEL AND THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

The strength and pervasiveness of Israel’s religious heritage plays a major role in shaping what we know about matters of inheritance in ancient Israel. The biblical writers often speak of Israel’s religion and its identity as a nation in familial terms, which naturally weaves the language of inheritance into its vocabulary. The writers teach the Israelite people to view themselves, and particularly their “houses” and land ownership, as an extension of their relationship with Yahweh (the Lord) their God. Their understanding of the people of Israel as a common lineage group is foundational to their worldview.¹¹ The account of the establishment of the Lord’s covenant with Abraham (and passed down through Isaac and Jacob) in the book of Genesis is well-known. The Lord promises to give Abraham land and offspring (“seed”) and blessing in his first recorded conversation with Abraham (Gen 12:1-3). Subsequent iterations of the promises in Genesis make explicit mention of one, two, or all three promises, making it clear that, in the present form of Genesis, the three items promised are indivisible components of a single covenant between the Lord and Abraham. Those designated as “heirs” of Abraham inherit this covenant and its promises (Gen 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:5, 7, 18-20; 17:3-8; 22:15-18; 26:2-5; 28:13-15; 35:11-12).

The religious criteria for distinguishing heirs of Abraham from non-heirs seems to have been a crucial aspect of the ancestral narratives. One portion of the narratives shows why Lot and his descendants are excluded (Gen 13:13; 5-17; 19:30-38); they are another “people,” and therefore “foreigners” or “strangers” excluded from being Abra-

¹¹ The earliest extra-biblical reference to Israel appears in the Merneptah Stele from Egypt, ca. 1200 BCE. The stele lists several places that Pharaoh Merneptah defeated in battle; but when it mentions “Israel,” it designates the nation as a “people,” not a place. This probably reflects a different (lineage-based) understanding of the nation’s political structure, even among Israel’s neighbors.

ham's heirs. Other portions of the narratives establish that the inheritance will not pass down through servants. This begins with the case of Eliezer, who is also a foreigner (Gen 15:2-5). The case of Ishmael develops the distinction between son and servant most forcefully, even though some of the language used to make the distinctions is more ambiguous than one might notice initially. Some foundational statements come in Gen 17, when the Lord distinguishes between promises for Ishmael and promises for Isaac, who is yet to be born. The Lord promises Ishmael numerous descendants and a nation (Gen 17:20), along the same lines as his promises to Abraham and Sarah in reference to Isaac (17:5-6, 16). The Lord requires both Ishmael and Isaac to "keep the covenant" of circumcision (17:9-14, 23-26). But the Lord states clearly that he is making "an eternal covenant" with Isaac and his descendants alone, excluding Ishmael (17:19-21). The unique promises of this eternal covenant involve a special relationship with the Lord ("to be God to you... [and] I will be their God")¹² and the designation of a certain land as Israel's "portion" from the Lord ("the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan" – 17:7-8; see Gen 26:3-5; 28:4, 13; 35:12; 50:24; Exod 6:8; 32:13; 33:1; Lev 26:42; Num 32:11; Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5; 30:20; 34:4; Ezek 33:24; Ps 105:6, 9-11, 42-44; 2 Chr 20:7; cp. Deut 32:9; Zech 2:12).

The distinction drawn between the Lord's relationships with Isaac and Ishmael can seem a bit imprecise in some passages, but the narrative provides further clarification in a somewhat parallel scene reported in Gen 21:8-21. Abraham is the father of both Ishmael and Isaac, and so both are his "seed" (Gen 21:12-13). Nevertheless, as Sarah declares to Abraham when she tells him to send Hagar and Ishmael

¹² See Gen 28:21; Exod 29:45; Lev 11:45; 22:33; 25:38; 26:45; Num 15:41; Ezek 34:24. Other passages state the complement to this statement, "to be his people" (Deut 4:20; 7:6; 14:2; 27:9; 28:9; 1 Sam 12:22; 2 Sam 7:23; 2 Kgs 11:17; Jer 13:11; Zech 2:15). Numerous passages contain the full "covenant formula" – "I will be your God, and you will be my people" (Exod 6:7; Lev 26:12; Deut 26:17-18; 29:12; 2 Sam 7:24; Jer 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38; Ezek 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zech 8:8).

away, “the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac” (21:10, ESV). The Greek translation here is significant, because it sets the stage for some of the language we encounter in the NT. A more literal rendering of the main Hebrew clause in v 10 (“[he] shall not be heir”) is “he will not possess” (*lō’ yīraś*), which the Greek translator renders “he will not inherit” (*ou klēronomēsi*). We find the same Greek term in the rendering of Abram’s complaint about Eliezer of Damascus in Gen 15:2-4, where he fears his Syrian servant “will inherit [from] me.” These two passages show that the Hebrew root *y-r-ś* (“[dis-] possess, possession”) often connotes more than mere ownership; the term extends ownership into perpetuity as inheritance.¹³ Both Isaac and Ishmael are Abraham’s “seed,” but only one “possesses” (Heb. *yāraś*) or “inherits” (Gk. *klēronomein*) what the Lord promises to Abraham as an “eternal possession” (*’aḥuzzat ’ōlām*; Gen 17:8; 48:4; cp. Isa 34:17; 60:21). Only Isaac inherits the eternal covenant (*bērīt ’ōlām*) that the Lord promises to Abraham and his descendants (“seed”). Only one is both “Abraham’s seed” and an “heir of the promise.”¹⁴

Several texts attribute the establishment of this covenant to divine mercy and love (e.g., Deut 4:37; 7:7-9; 10:15; Jer 31:3; Mic 7:18-20; Ps 47:5), which parallels the authority of earthly fathers to designate all or portions of their estate to one descendant among many (e.g.,

¹³ The overlapping nuances of the Hebrew terms *yāraś* (“possess”) and *nāḥal* (“inherit”) create occasional problems for modern translators. See Norbert Lohfink, “*יָרָשׁ yāraś*,” in Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 15 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-2006), 6:368-96 for a fuller discussion. The rabbis make an intriguing differentiation in their interpretations of this term in the Talmud, distinguishing between possession of someone’s “body” (like a slave) and possession of someone’s “labor” (like an employee) (*b. Yebamot* 46a).

¹⁴ I include this overly-simplistic interpretation of Gen 17 with a great deal of fear and trembling, fully aware that there have been extensive and complicated discussions going on for several decades regarding interpretations of this chapter (and its parallels) by Jewish and Christian readers. And in more recent years, some have shifted their attention to the relationship between Jews, Muslims, and Christians, with Gen 17 serving as a focal point of those discussions.

LH §§150, 165). The narrative pushes us even deeper into a recognition of the grace-based nature of the covenant status of the “heirs” of Abraham and Isaac with the story of Jacob and Esau. Both men are sons of Isaac and Rebekah – even born on the same day – and yet Jacob alone receives the identity and status of “heir” of the covenant that the Lord established with Abraham and Isaac. Some might contend that this distinction becomes necessary because Esau despises his birthright and sells it to Jacob (Gen 25:29-34), or because Esau marries foreign wives over the objections of his parents (26:34-35), or because Isaac gives Jacob the blessing of being “lord over your brothers” and Esau the curse of being “servant of your brother” (27:29, 40); but it is just as plausible to conclude that all these events merely fulfill what the Lord (graciously) promised to Rebekah at the birth of her sons, when he declared, “the older will serve the younger” (25:23; cp. Rom 9:10-13). The designation of Esau as a “servant” seems to place him at a different status relative to Jacob in terms of an inheritance. In any case, Isaac acknowledges and the Lord affirms that Jacob’s line alone will receive “the blessing given to Abraham,” and the clearest physical manifestations of this elevated status are Jacob’s “possession” of the promised land (*lě-rištěkā* – 28:3-4; cf. vv 13-15) and his pledge to recognize the Lord alone as his God (28:21-22). Isaac and Jacob each bear the status of “son of Abraham” and “heir” of his covenant with the Lord (“co-heir” in Heb 11:9), while Ishmael and Esau bear the lower status of “servant” relative to Isaac and Jacob, a status that denies them access to the privileges accorded to a full “heir” (they never bear the designation of “the Lord’s people,” nor can they claim possession of the land of promise).¹⁵

The canonical portrayal of who inherits the Abrahamic covenant and its promises highlights the notion that the Lord affirms and maintains his promises particularly through adherents of the Sinait-

¹⁵ In this vein, see the laws concerning redemption and enslavement in Lev 25:35-55.

ic/Mosaic Covenant.¹⁶ It is because God “remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” that he works to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage (Exod 2:23-25; Lev 26:42). The Lord speaks through Moses to the Israelites in Egypt as “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Exod 3:6, 15-16; 4:5; 6:3, 8; cp. 1 Kgs 18:36). Moses appeals to the Lord’s promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as a primary reason to forgive the Israelites when they sin in worshiping the Golden Calf (Exod 32:13; 33:1). The Lord leads the Israelites to the land of Canaan and puts them in possession of it solely because it is the land he promised (“swore”) to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen 26:3; 50:24; Exod 32:13; 33:1; Num 32:11; Deut 1:8; 6:10; 9:5, 27; 30:20; 34:4; cp. 2 Kgs 13:23; Neh 9:7-8; Ps 105:8-11). Moses and other religious leaders make a strong connection between obedience to the Mosaic laws and possession of (and prosperity in) the land (Lev 20:22-24; Deut 4:1, 5, 14; 5:33; 6:1-3, 18-19; 8:1; 11:8-9; 16:20; 30:16). The connection between the land and the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob strongly implies that those who wish to claim possession of “the promised land” must be “heirs” of the covenant promise to Abraham, and those who wish to “possess” the land must adhere to the Lord’s laws. The Sinaitic laws effectively serve to describe who may truly lay claim to the identity and status of “children of Abraham” and “heirs of the promise.” Any and all who are faithful to the terms of the covenant may lay claim to Abraham’s covenant and the privileges, rights, responsibilities, and liabilities that pertain to that covenant, and any and all who are unfaithful and transgress the terms of the covenant the Lord will “destroy,” and they will lose their “possession” of the land (Deut 4:23-27; 9:8, 14; 28:20, 24, 45, 48,

¹⁶ The historical origin of the relationship between the Abrahamic and Sinaitic Covenants has been a major issue of debate among modern scholars of the Hebrew Bible, with most concluding that the connection between the two developed relatively late in the history of Israel and the development of the Hebrew Bible. My assumption here is not that we can blithely dismiss those conclusions, but rather that, when we turn to the NT writings, we must acknowledge that Jewish and Christian writers of the first century assumed the veracity of the interconnections between the two covenants that we find in the present (canonical) form of the Hebrew Bible/OT.

61-63; Josh 23:15; 1 Kgs 9:7; Jer 24:10; 44:11; Ezek 14:6-8; 33:25-26; Ps 37:9, 22, 34).¹⁷

The majority of passages linking faithfulness to the Lord with possession of the land assume the perspective of Israel as a nation or people, but the Israelites' understanding of personal land ownership and inheritance is intertwined with that national perspective. We find examples in two types of stories from the OT where writers apply the principle that inheritance at the local level is divinely ordained, just like Israel's claim to the land as a whole is based on divine promise. One type of story is the accounts of leaders allotting specific portions of Israel's land as the inheritance for each tribe, apportioning that territorial allotment according to the tribe's clans and families.¹⁸ The book of Numbers reports two occasions in the wilderness wanderings when a census is taken of the nation of Israel. Moses and Aaron, assisted by one "head" from each tribe, take a census while the people are at Mount Sinai (Num 1:1-46); and Moses and Eleazar take a census a generation later, once the nation has encamped on the east bank of the Jordan River (Num 26:1 - 27:11). Information from each report contributes to a fuller picture of inheritance in Israel as divinely ordained. The first census establishes an accounting of each of the twelve tribes, "by their clans and their families [*bêt 'ābôt*], by the number of names, by their divisions, every male twenty years old and more, every one going out in the army" (Num 1:20, 22, 24, 26,

¹⁷ For more on the link between "destroy" and "inheritance," see Norbert Lohfink, "שמד *šamad*," in Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 15 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-2006), 15:183-84.

¹⁸ The terms "inheritance" (*nāḥālā*) and "portion" (*ḥēleq*) are a common word pair in the Hebrew Bible, ranging in application from the entire nation down to the property of individual families (Gen 31:14; Num 26:53, 55-56; Deut 32:9; Josh 13:6-7; 18:1-2; 19:9, 51; 2 Sam 20:1; 1 Kgs 12:16; Zech 2:12; Job 20:29; 27:13; Prov 17:2). The Levites receive neither "an inheritance" nor "a portion" of the land (Num 18:20; Deut 10:9; 12:12; 14:27, 29; 18:1; Josh 18:7). There are a few passages that pair "possession" (*yērūšā*) and "portion" (Exod 15:9; Josh 12:7; Isa 34:17; 61:7; Neh 9:22).

28, etc.). The second census gives a briefer description of those counted – “by their families, those twenty years old...” (Num 26:2), but the report concludes with instructions to “allot [*nēḥallēq*] the land to them as an inheritance by the number of names” (26:52-56). The implication is that everyone who had a “name” received an “allotment” [*ḥēleq*] as his inheritance. An important appendix to the second census reports the appeal by the (as yet unmarried) daughters of Zelophehad, who successfully petition for a “possession of an inheritance” (*’āḥuzzat nāḥālā*), so that the “name” of their father will not be blotted out from his clan (Num 27:1-11, esp. v 4). Moses adds the stipulation that the daughters must marry within their tribe (Manasseh), so that one tribe will not lose any of its inheritance to another tribe (Num 36:1-12). We see the fulfillment of the instructions for the allocation of tribal lands a generation later, when Joshua “allotted [*ḥālaq*] the land, just as the Lord had commanded Moses” (Josh 14:5). He apportioned each tribal territory “by their clans” (Josh 15:12, 20; 16:5; 17:2; 18:11, 20, 28; 19:8, 10, 16, 17, 23, 24, 31, 32, 39, 40, 48), including portions for the daughters of Zelophehad (Josh 17:3-6).¹⁹ There is no mention of “names” in the apportionment, but the description of the allotments is geographical in this case, rather than by a genealogical census.

Second, there are a few stories about individuals who are at risk of losing their inherited property because of some personal misfortune or misbehavior. Perhaps the most famous example is that of Naboth, who refuses to give his vineyard to King Ahab because “it is the inheritance of my fathers” (1 Kgs 21:3). Queen Jezebel arranges for two “scoundrels” to accuse Naboth of having “cursed both God and king,” for which the people execute Naboth. The king then “took possession” (*yārā*) of his vineyard (1 Kgs 21:8-16). The implication is that wickedness (in this case, cursing God and king) constitutes legal

¹⁹ The daughters of Zelophehad have garnered much attention through the centuries. In addition to the standard commentaries, see Jacob Weingreen, “The Case of the Daughters of Zelophehad,” *Vetus Testamentum* 16 (1966): 518-22; and, Yael Shemesh, “A Gender Perspective on the Daughters of Zelophehad: Bible, Talmudic Midrash, and Modern Feminist Midrash,” *Biblical Interpretation* 15 (2007): 80-109.

grounds for forfeiture of one's right to their inheritance. Some accounts of David's interactions with Saul reinforce this implication. In one episode, David defends himself against charges of "wrongdoing and rebellion" and "evil," saying he has not raised his hand against the king, "the Lord's anointed" (1 Sam 24:9-13). In his response, Saul acknowledges David's goodness and maintains his own, asking David that he not "cut off my seed after me or destroy my name from the house of my father" (1 Sam 24:22; see above on "destroy"). In a second episode, David says that some people "have driven me today from a share in the Lord's inheritance and have said, 'Go, serve other gods'" (2 Sam 26:19). When we put these two episodes together, we recognize that both men feared doing something that would justify having their "inheritance" or "name" removed from among the Lord's people (on this, note 2 Sam 20:1; 1 Kgs 12:16). Three centuries later, Jeremiah appeals to the Lord for deliverance after some opponents plot against him to "cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more" (Jer 11:19). A psalmist assumes the opposing perspective in the imprecation of Ps 109:13, where the speaker asks the Lord to take vengeance on his enemies and "cut off their descendants, blot out their names." These words are similar to those of the Tekoite woman whom Joab sends to speak with David. She appeals to David following the murder of one of her sons by his brother, citing the possibility of "leaving my husband neither name nor descendants" (2 Sam 14:1-7). A similar perspective probably lies behind the practice of levirate marriage. The primary impetus for Boaz to fulfill the levirate (brother-in-law) duties of a kinsman-redeemer for Ruth is "to maintain the name of the dead man on his inheritance, and the name of the dead man will not be cut off from among his brothers" (Ruth 4:5, 10). The levirate law itself is less clear about the consequences that come on a reluctant brother-in-law, but it sounds ominous that the "name" of his house will be changed (Deut 25:5-10).

A common element in both types of stories is the importance of the association between "name" and inheritance. The accounts of the taking of a census (Num 1, 26) and the allotment of the land according to tribes and clans (Josh 14-19) indicate that only those who have

a “name” in Israel have the right to claim an inheritance in the land. The initial impression is that this applies to all who can trace their physical bloodline back to Abraham through Isaac and Jacob and his sons, but further reading shows there is more to it than that. To be true “children of Abraham,” one must show and maintain the kind of undivided faith in the Lord that Abraham demonstrated. Anyone – Israelite or foreigner alike – who engages in idolatry will be “cut off from his people” (Lev. 20:1-3; cp. Deut 13:1-18). Israel “takes possession” of the land away from the previous inhabitants and drives them out because of their wickedness (Deut 9:1-6), but Joshua and the people are perplexed when they find themselves in danger of having the Canaanites “wipe out our name from the land,” until the Lord explains this is the result of an Israelite’s sin and violation of the covenant, which Joshua and the people then address (Josh 7:6-26). The nation as a whole risks the same fate if they turn to idolatry and wickedness, and the exile ultimately bears this out (see 1 Kgs 9:6-9; 2 Kgs 17:21-23; Isa 48:19; Lam 5:1-2).

The case of Zelophehad’s daughters is but one example that exposes ambiguities surrounding the status of females in matters of inheritance. The daughters are unmarried, and they apparently function as a bridge between their father and sons to maintain *his name* and inheritance. It is unclear whether they function as his “heirs” and become the owners of his estate, or they function as trustees of his estate until the rightful heirs (their sons) are of age. Interpreters point to similar ambiguities in the cases of Naomi and Ruth,²⁰ the (fictional) case of the woman of Tekoa (2 Sam 14:1-7), and the Shunammite woman who asks for the restoration of “her house and land” that her family had abandoned during a famine (2 Kgs 4:8-37; 8:1-6). I would insert into this discussion a few elaborative statements

²⁰ See Jack M. Sasson, *Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989), 111-15; James McKeown, *Ruth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 62. For inscriptional evidence on this type of case, see Jan A. Wagenaar, “‘Give in the Hand of Your Maidservant the Property...’ Some Remarks to the Second Ostrakon from the Collection of Sh. Moussaïeff,” *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 5 (1999): 15-27.

from Deuteronomy regarding families. Most of the laws address the hearers as “you” (usually in the singular form), but a few expand on this designation and specify as follows: “you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you” (Deut 12:12; 16:11, 14). The “you” in this situation is the landowner who has the responsibility to provide for the protection and needs of the others in the list; but conspicuously absent are “wives.” Does this mean wives shared the ownership of the land with their husbands, or was the identity of a wife subsumed within that of her husband, so that she acted in legal matters as an extension of him in his absence? The texts remain ambiguous on this point.

The general operating assumption regarding foreigners and servants is that they did not have a “name” (inheritance) in the land of Israel, but as in Mesopotamia, there are several examples of “exceptions.” (The laws often deal more with “typical” cases, leaving it to judges to address exceptions.) For example, distinctions between landowner and servant are evident in the laws of land redemption (Lev 25). Despite commands calling for the total destruction of the nations (Gentiles) inhabiting the land before the Israelites (e.g., Deut 7:1-26; Josh 1:1-6), there are several texts explaining that (a) people from the nations lived in the land alongside the Israelites, and (b) the Israelites often made servants of their non-Israelite neighbors (e.g., the Gibeonites in Josh 9, or Ittai the Gittite in David’s entourage in 2 Sam 15:19-22). The redemption laws in Lev 25 directly mandate that the Israelites make distinctions between Hebrew servants and servants from the nations. The former entered slavery through financial indebtedness but retain the opportunity to redeem any land they felt compelled to give up in the process of paying off the debt (Lev 25:25-31). The same opportunity does not fall to non-Hebrew debtors. However, the same group of laws indicate that individual Israelites could lose their landholdings to neighboring non-Israelite landowners (Lev 25:47-53). This raises questions about the broader status of non-Israelites in the land. How did such individuals fit into the picture of “heirs of Abraham” as possessors of the land? If they were

like Uriah the Hittite and married Israelite women, what was the status of their children when those children inherited the land? The laws do not address these questions.

The notion that foreign invaders might take possession of the land away from the Israelites is foundational to many prophetic warnings and descriptions of the exiles to Assyria and Babylon (e.g., Jer 7:1-15; 24:8-10; Hos 1:8-9; 9:15; Hab 1:6; cp. 2 Chr 20:11; Ps 83:4). The consequent notion that the Israel would regain possession of the land as its promised inheritance from the Lord is foundational to their desires to return and inhabit the land again following exile. Several writers call on the Israelites to restore justice and righteousness and obedience to the Lord's commands so that they can "take possession" of the land of promise once again (Jer 23:7-8; 30:3; Ezek 36:8-12 [cp. 37:24-28]; Obad 1:17-20). Some, like Ezra and Nehemiah, call for very strict adherence to marriage laws to combat idolatry and thereby preserve the purity of the lines of inheritance (e.g., Ezra 9:10-15; 10:12-17; Neh 13:23-31). But other texts suggest that the typical language concerning inheritance and clear distinctions between heirs and non-heirs is beginning to break down. The two clearest examples come in Isa 56:4-7 and Ezek 47:13-23. The Isaiah passage speaks of "eunuchs" and "foreigners" among those who will be permitted into the temple and the Lord's "holy mountain." They will have "a name better than sons and daughters... an everlasting name that will not be cut off." In other words, those who formerly could not claim an inheritance will be able to do so. Ezekiel's prophecy calls for a re-allotment of the land, but this time "sojourners" living among them will be permitted to receive a portion just like the "native-born of Israel" (Ezek 47:22). Those who formerly did not have a claim will now be able to make a claim.²¹

²¹ John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66 (Revised Edition)*, Word Biblical Commentary 25 (Dallas: Word, 1982/2005), 820-23; Shalom M. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66: Translation and Commentary*, Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 453-56; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 717-19.

INHERITANCE IN GRECO-ROMAN SOCIETIES AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

Greco-Roman laws and practices reveal two significant differences from the preceding Mesopotamian (and Israelite) laws. The first is that there is little evidence to suggest that firstborn sons enjoyed special privileges in terms of family inheritance. Firstborn sons do not expect to receive a greater portion than their siblings, nor do the people look to the firstborn to oversee the administration and distribution of the paternal estate at the death of the father. Milgram is probably right to attribute this to the more restricted concept of "house" (*oikos*) in Greek society and "family" (*familia*) in Roman society, where the nuclear family is more prominent as a social force than the more extended family units that dominate in Mesopotamia and Israel societies.²² The second difference is the status of daughters in an inheritance. Some Greek communities mirror the pattern of Mesopotamian and Israelite laws and have only males as heirs in an estate, but they grant an inheritance to one or more unmarried daughters when there are no sons.²³ Fathers in other communities designate daughters as direct heirs alongside sons, although the daughters typically receive a smaller share of the inheritance than the sons. It is likely that the common practice of fathers bequeathing dowries to their daughters had some influence in this. The typical Roman practice, however, was that a man might will his estate to his wife or his sons or his daughters.²⁴

Jewish inheritance laws and customs in the Greco-Roman period retain much from what we have seen in biblical writings; however, the dominance of Greco-Roman government and culture on Judea (exerting its influence in part through a large number of non-Jewish residents in Judea), the prolonged dispersion of significant

²² Milgram, *From Mesopotamia*, 75-81.

²³ In many instances, the daughters "inherit" merely to serve as conduits of their father's property to sons who would be born in the next generation. Milgram, *From Mesopotamia*, 128.

²⁴ Watson, "'And if Children, then Heirs,'" 53-56.

portions of the Israelite/Jewish population throughout the empire,²⁵ and the inevitable effects of population growth and urbanization among the Jewish population all worked together to challenge traditional ideas regarding inheritance in the Abrahamic Covenant. All three factors tended to raise unresolvable questions about long-held assumptions regarding the ownership and inheritance of actual arable land in a circumscribed region like Judea. How could such a small land accommodate the real-life fulfillment of the Abrahamic land promise for such a large population? But the same factors that raised questions about the fulfillment of the land promise raised other questions – just as impossible to resolve – regarding the divine promise to Abraham of a covenantal relationship between the Lord and Abraham’s descendants.²⁶ Who actually fits the definition of “the people of God” and “the children of Abraham”? It must be more than simple blood descent.

One might assume that shifting to a more eschatological point of view regarding the Abrahamic (and Davidic) promises could resolve the conundrum, but here again we confront a confusing array of potentialities. Many Jews – but not all – in the Greco-Roman world had some expectations about an ideal eschatological age, which would constitute the true fulfillment of the Lord’s promises to Abraham. The nature of those expectations was far from consistent, though. In the very broadest terms, many Jews expected a “restorative” eschaton, which could involve either the re-establishment of an earthly Davidic kingdom, ruling over the traditional territory of Israel or the emergence of a worldwide kingdom; other Jewish believers expected a more “utopian” eschaton, which could involve either a mixing of God’s earthly and heavenly dominions, or a complete tran-

²⁵ See Louis H. Feldman, “Conversion to Judaism in Classical Antiquity,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 74 (2003): 115-56.

²⁶ This takes us back to the conversation between the Lord and Abraham in Gen 17:7-8, where the Lord makes a distinction within Abraham’s “seed” based on two criteria. One criterion is the formula “I will establish an everlasting covenant... to be your God” (and its implied corollary, “and you will be my people”), and the second criterion is the “promised land.”

scendence of God's kingdom beyond any earthly realm to an entirely heavenly/spiritual existence.²⁷

We can probe these questions further from a slightly different direction. Rabbinic discussions about inheritance and similar matters among Jewish people in the Greco-Roman world primarily concern differentiations between native-born Jews and "proselytes" or "converts" (*gērīm*) and their children, with further differentiations made between those born of free Canaanite or Gentile fathers and those born of free Canaanite or Gentile mothers, and between those born of slave Canaanite or Gentile fathers and those born of slave Canaanite or Gentile mothers (see *b. Yebamot* 16a, 22a-b, 34b, 46a, 74b). Unconverted non-Jews living among Jews constituted an inherent threat to the ritual purity of the Jews (especially priests), and so faithful Jews typically strove to avoid contact with them. Converts to Judaism presented other challenges regarding purity, based primarily on the differentiations just mentioned, and Jewish legal experts deduced specific allowances and restrictions to address those concerns. Paul's language in Gal 3:28-29 makes good sense placed against the backdrop of typical measures taken by Jews to live as righteous "children of Abraham."

If we dig a little deeper, we come to a general assumption about drawing direct correlations between (a) variations in the rights and privileges of different sectors of the Jewish population (whether native-born or converted), especially those enjoyed by Jewish women and servants (and minors), and (b) corresponding variations in the obligations and responsibilities of the same groups. I point to two typical examples as evidence that we are correct to claim such correlations. One section of the Talmud concerning levirate marriages (see

²⁷ The terms used here come from Lawrence Schiffman, who attributes them to an earlier scholar. Lawrence H. Schiffman, "The Concept of the Messiah in Second Temple and Rabbinic Literature," *Review and Expositor* 84 (1987): 235-46; cp. Nelson S. Hsieh, "Abraham as 'Heir of the World': Does Romans 4:13 Expand the Old Testament Abrahamic Land Promises?" *The Master's Seminary Journal* 26 (2015): 95-110.

Deut 25:5-10) addresses questions of the rightful claims and responsibilities of the brothers of a childless man who has died. The rabbis determined the extent of both – i.e., of rights and responsibilities – by birth order (firstborn, then other sons) and the ethnicity of the mother (Hebrew, Canaanite, or Gentile). A brother of the deceased born to a Hebrew mother is “his brother in all respects,” meaning he has claims to their father’s inheritance and obligations to carry on the name of his deceased brother, as the levirate law requires. A brother born “from a Canaanite maidservant or from a Gentile woman” has neither claims to the inheritance nor obligations to the deceased (*b. Yebamot* 22a).²⁸ Subsequent discussion focuses on the perpetuation of the dead man’s “name” (Deut 25:6; Ruth 4:5, 10), implying that only those born of a Hebrew mother can perpetuate a “name” in this manner. The privileges and obligations associated with having a “name” cannot be fulfilled by the wife alone, nor by non-Hebrews or their offspring. We should interpret in similar fashion the first tractate of the first Seder (volume) of the Mishnah, where the rabbis deal with rules about obligations to recite the Shema. In one paragraph they exempt “women, slaves, and minors” from having to recite the Shema and the *tefillin* (*m. Berakot* 3:3). This might seem innocuous at first, but in view of the teachings on levirate marriage, it is likely that an obligation to fulfill a ritual requirement carries with it certain correlative privileges, and an exemption from fulfilling such obligations carries with it a diminution in the same privileges. If the teachings exempt women and servants from obligations as foundational as the daily recitations of the Shema, it is likely that related teachings place corresponding restrictions on the privileges that women and servants enjoyed. Overall, it is logical to conclude that the free adult male individuals of the Jewish population enjoyed a higher social status with greater rights and privileges (a “name”) in the Jewish community than did the women and servants, but that the men also felt they “offset” this by bearing greater responsibilities and liabilities than women and servants.

²⁸ The rabbis go on to apply the same principle to cursing one’s parents (see Exod 21:17), saying the latter type of brother is not liable to the punishment prescribed by the law.

CHRISTIANS AS HEIRS OF ABRAHAM

It is with these general understandings in mind that I now return to the NT, which is replete with the language of inheritance as part of the common vocabulary used by those in Christians' covenantal relationship with God. The writers of the NT, like the Jewish and early Christian audiences to whom they write, frequently appeal to promises made by God in his covenant with Abraham and promises made to the "children of Abraham" in Genesis and in the Sinaitic and Davidic covenants. They are concerned with being righteous "children of Abraham" and with the messiah being a "son of David," so that they can rightfully lay claim to the fulfillment of God's promises in Jesus and those who have faith in him. Many of their comments and questions point to a more utopian interpretation of an eschatological age that God will soon usher in, one with a more celestial and spiritual understanding of the Abrahamic promises (and the promise to the house of David) than the terrestrial and political understanding we see in most of the OT. We see, for example, a less terrestrial and more transcendental understanding of the inheritance they will receive in the questions they ask of Jesus and his disciples, such as: "What must I do to *inherit* eternal life?" Or, "What must I do to *inherit* the kingdom (of God)?" We do not find the question, "What must we do to have an inheritance in the (promised) land of Israel?"²⁹ The questions they ask reflect how they understand the concept of being "heirs" of God's covenant with Abraham. It is clear – from rabbinic sources and other writings of the period and historical events of the first century (viz., the First Jewish Revolt, 66-70 CE) and even from confusion among Jesus' disciples about the nature of the "messiah" – that notions of a physical restoration of the nation

²⁹ The clear avoidance by NT writers of the future inheritance of any "land" by Christians is telling. Any references to a physical "land of promise" are placed in the past. Cp. the comment of John Chrysostom – "Neither doth he promise a land flowing with milk and honey, but maketh us joint-heir with the Only-Begotten, so making us by every means stand aloof from things present..." (*Hom. Rom.* 14.34).

of Israel are alive and well at the time. But the dominant perspective assumed in these early Christian writings is of a more utopian eschatological age. Nevertheless, intermixed with these utopian expectations, we find ongoing customs and attitudes regarding physical inheritances within Jewish and Christian families and the status of foreigners, servants, women, and children in such matters (as suggested by the “household codes” – Eph 5:21-6:9; Col 3:18-4:1; 1 Pet 2:18-3:7).³⁰ Those customs and attitudes will invariably have some influence on the ways Christians interpret what it means to inherit the Abrahamic covenant promises, even if that inheritance is not earth-bound and/or political in nature.

The wide variety of views regarding the nature (whether earthly and restorative or utopian) of the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham in Jewish thought of the Greco-Roman period (the term “orthodoxy” in this case seems rather inappropriate) explains the wide variety of interpretations among Christian commentators of Paul’s teachings regarding the relationship between Jewish teachings and the Christian faith. Despite such uncertainties, it seems significant that Paul uses the terms “heirs” and “co-heirs” to describe ALL Christians – and that he specifies the unity of Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female (Gal 3:28) – because the use of such terms conveys a desire to reject differentiations according to these traditional categories. As we mentioned earlier, the Hebrews writer applies the term “co-heirs” to Isaac and Jacob, a father and son and the first two direct inheritors of the Lord’s promises to Abraham (Heb 11:8-9). The fact they are father and son implies that the term “co-heir” describes individuals with undifferentiated claims to the same inheritance. They are not a firstborn son and other sons, who might claim unequal portions of their father’s estate, nor is one an heir and the other a recipient of a special gift from the father. Both “receive the inheritance” to the same degree. The same implication of undifferentiated status arises from Philo’s use of “co-heir” in his treatise, *On the Embassy to Gaius*. Philo engages in a lengthy denouncement

³⁰ Stephen Motyer, “The Relationship between Paul’s Gospel of ‘All One in Christ Jesus’ (Galatians 3:28) and the ‘Household Codes,’” *Vox Evangelica* 19 (1989): 33-48.

of Gaius Caligula and the way he came to be emperor instead of his cousin who, though he was just a minor, was still “co-heir of the kingdom.” Gaius had this cousin killed on trumped up charges of insurrection, and he banished his sisters – whom he does not describe as “co-heirs” – to avoid any claims by them to some of his imperial power (see especially *Embassy* 12.86-87).³¹ Justin Martyr, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, justifies the inclusion of Greeks (“sons of Ja-pheth”) as “co-heirs” in Christ by analogy to Jacob’s full acceptance of his sons born to the handmaids of his wives. The sons of the handmaids are “co-heirs” with the sons of Rachel and Leah (*Dial.* 140.1).³² All possess undifferentiated claims to the Lord’s covenant with Abraham.

This understanding of Paul’s claim – that, as “Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise,” every Christian enjoys an undifferentiated claim to the Lord’s eternal promises to Abraham – provides only a foundational principle for their worldview; interpreters must still draw out the practical implications of the principle. Paul provides some examples of the implications he sees for his Ephesian audience when he speaks of Jesus breaking down a dividing wall between Jew and Gentile (Eph 2:14-17), when he calls on husbands and wives to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21-33), and when he admonishes masters and servants to recognize that both serve the same Master (Eph 6:5-9). But culture-based differenti-

³¹ In fact, because the young cousin was a biological descendant of the previous emperor and Gaius had been adopted into the family, Philo argues that the boy had a stronger claim to the throne (*Embassy* 4.23). In another treatise, Philo mentions how the Jews could charge interest on loans to “foreigners” or “strangers,” but they could not receive interest payments from their fellow Jews, because one’s fellow-Jews are “as if by nature co-heirs with themselves” (*Spec. Laws* 17.73).

³² In a similar vein, we read the words of an Egyptian prince in the story of Joseph and Aseneth. The prince plots to kill Joseph and take Aseneth as his wife, and he recruits some co-conspirators from his friends, promising them “you shall be my brothers and co-heirs of all my possessions” (*Jos. Asen.* 24.69).

ations persist and change with time and place, and each generation since Paul has had to wrestle with how to take this foundational principle and draw out its implications in ways that are appropriate and consistent with all of Christian teaching. So, “with fear and trembling,” they seek to apply the message of a common inheritance in Christ to the cultural situation in which they live.³³

³³ As one recent example, consider Caroline Schleier Cutler, “New Creation and Inheritance: Inclusion and Full Participation in Paul’s Letters to the Galatians and Romans,” *Priscilla Papers* 30, 2 (Spring 2016): 21-29.

REVELATION, APOCALYPTIC AND KURT VONNEGUT

WENDELL WILLIS

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Fair and I share an interest in the last book of the New Testament, the Revelation to John, although it has been much more of a focus for him than for me. Indeed, he has published an entire commentary.¹ The occasion of this honor for Ian has led me to reflect on our common interest in the Apocalypse, although in not a way typical to professional essays. I am persuaded that the key first step in studying John's book is the question of literary genre.² It is decisive in all literature, of course—how would one understand H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*, if one were unaware of the genre of science fiction? In my opinion, Revelation often has been misunderstood largely because of its genre. The problem is that for most New Testament readers the Revelation is the only apocalypse they have ever read, and therefore the genre is unfamiliar.

¹ Ian Fair, *Conquering with Christ* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2011). In this brief article, with its unique thesis, there is not space to engage the many publications on the Revelation. My major discussion partners are Dr. Fair's commentary and the two SBL definitions of apocalypse. Biblical quotations are from the NRSV.

² Fair, *Conquering*, 37-38 discusses the importance of genre in studying Revelation.

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

There are probably more books written on the book of Revelation than any other New Testament book. However, since most people who read Revelation have read only this one apocalypse, they are unaware of the many similar books written the two centuries before this text, as well as many afterwards. Someone who reads Revelation today is likely to begin by asking “What is this?” The first readers of Revelation, on the other hand, were likely to respond, “another one of those.” When I taught Revelation, we spent the first two to three weeks reading many other apocalypses, both Jewish and Christian, of the centuries before and after Jesus to become familiar with the genre.

If asked, the average contemporary reader of the Bible probably would put Revelation in the genre *prophecy*, as the book itself says in 1:3; 22:7, 10, 18. The danger with such categorization is that in common usage today the word “prophecy” means “to predict the future.” While the Biblical prophets very often gave a word of warning from God about a painful future for his people unless they repented, their messages were first of all an analysis of what was wrong in the *present*—as God views it. If the hearers do not repent, a warning is given by God. The book of Revelation is the same; while certainly pointing to future events, both as rewards and punishments, it is fundamentally a divine analysis of a present critical situation.

Another contemporary reader, if asked, might say Revelation is an apocalypse, which of course it is. But here, too, this correct word often evokes a present-day misunderstanding. “Apocalypse,” as heard or read today, is most often used to refer to a disastrous event—and its over-use in this way has dulled the sharp edge intended by the term. In popular speech there is abundant use of this word, “apocalypse.”³ As many can probably recall, the year 2000 was labelled “apocalyptic” in response to the threat of technological disaster. Similarly, the big snow storm that hit the southern states in 2014, the Japan tsunami of 2018, and the 2018 fires in California were

³ Interestingly, notice how often today modified words based on apocalyptic occur, e. g. “snowpocalypse.”

labeled “apocalyptic.” If one encounters the word “apocalypse” in some context other than the Biblical book, what would most people understand it to mean? What would be the preferred synonym? The most likely is “disaster.” This understanding of apocalypse as “disaster” is probably the basic assumption most people bring to their interpretation of the book of Revelation or other apocalypses. However, this assumption is partially a misunderstanding and is also too limited.

There are several other ways “apocalypse” is typically understood. Some see it as a “code” to be broken (the David Koresh disaster in Waco). Others see it as a prediction of a disaster created by humans (most often a third, nuclear, world war).⁴ Others see it as a disaster which originates from outside—another civilization, or aliens from elsewhere in the universe.⁵ Some see it as a natural disaster (although often one evoked by humans, as we destroy our world environmentally).⁶ Finally, still others see it as offering an alternate view of reality.⁷ In many cases several of these approaches are combined.

This essay begins with rather straightforward questions that are important for understanding Revelation: what is apocalyptic (adjective)? And what is the purpose of an apocalypse genre (noun)? The difference between the adjective question and the noun question is important – one can think apocalyptically (many would say that is

⁴ In the cold war period there were many popular books and movies describing a coming nuclear war of “apocalyptic” proportions. Among them are: Nevil Shute, *On the Beach* (New York: W. Morrow, 1957); Pat Frank, *Alas, Babylon* (New York: Harper & Collins, 1959) and, of course, *Armagedon* (by various authors in various incarnations).

⁵ Many examples, beginning with Herbert George Wells, *War of the Worlds* (New York: Bantam, 1980, originally serialized in 1897).

⁶ Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966) is a good example, although she did not cast it in apocalyptic language.

⁷ Jacques Ellul, *The Book of Revelation*, trans. George W. Schreiner (New York: Seabury, 1977).

true of St. Paul),⁸ without writing an apocalypse. But there is an obvious connection to investigate. These various ways to define ancient apocalyptic have been, and are, often employed. In many ways apocalyptic is a mindset, a vantage point from which to look at the world.⁹

PROPOSED EXPLANATIONS OF APOCALYPSE

1. *Etymological*. This approach focuses on the term "apocalypse" and its origin. The Greek word, ἀποκάλυψις, like the Latin *revelatio*, means "to take the cover off something." This reasonable definition leaves open what exactly is uncovered, and by what it has been covered.

2. *Word choices*. In defining apocalyptic, some have focused upon key terms, phrases, and images that are found in many such writings. D. S. Russell's book, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*,¹⁰ in is a good example of this approach.

3. *Form/Style*. Other scholars look at literary features, such as hymns about God's self-disclosure, descriptions of the world as dualistically good vs. evil, or the many imperatives urging readers to action. This approach is prominent in David Aune's three volume commentary.¹¹

4. *Function*. Finally, others ask, what do apocalypses do, how do they seek to benefit their readers? A good example of this approach is the work of Adela Yarbro Collins, who argues that apocalyptic is about psychological trauma, either experienced or expected.¹²

⁸ The impetus of the modern study is Ernst Käsemann, "The Beginnings of Christian Theology," in Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969). A full presentation is J. Christian Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) and his *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982).

⁹ Fair, *Conquering*, 38.

¹⁰ David S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964).

¹¹ David Aune, *Revelation*, Word Biblical Commentary 52ABC, 3 vols. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997-1998).

¹² Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), esp. 84-110.

All these considerations are present and should be considered, and all relate to the question of genre. These questions guided a lengthy research group in the Society Biblical Literature (SBL).

SBL APOCALYPTIC GROUP

In pursuing the larger question of the essentials of apocalyptic writings in the 1970's, the SBL featured a research group working on the genre of apocalypse. They sought to come to a consensus definition of the genre. The first version of this definition, presented in 1978 in a SBL book (*Semeia* 14), was the following:

A genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework in which a revelation is mediated by an other-worldly 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.¹³

Subsequently the definition was revised by the Apocalypse Seminar in 1987 adding:

... intended to interpret present earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority.¹⁴

SLAUGHTER-HOUSE FIVE

In what follows, I will use this definition from the SBL to conduct an experiment: I will compare modern literature with apocalyptic ideas in order to understand the apocalypse genre. I will consider that

¹³ John J. Collins, ed., *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, *Semeia* 14 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 1979). See especially the introductory essay by John J. Collins, "Towards the Morphology of a Genre," 1-20. There is a brief discussion in Fair, *Conquering*, 40-41.

¹⁴ Adela Yarbro Collins, ed., *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting*, *Semeia* 36 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 1987).

question using one work of a well-known American writer of science fiction, Kurt Vonnegut (1922-2007). His book *Slaughter-house Five*¹⁵ contains two narrative threads: one thread in the novel is based on Vonnegut's personal experience as a prisoner of war in a Dresden meat processing building at the end of WW II. He witnessed the firebombing of Dresden, when most of the city's population was destroyed in the most horrific conventional bombing of WW II, in February of 1945. It was already clear Germany was losing the war—the German surrender was less than three months later. Dresden was not of military significance and had therefore not been previously attacked. Vonnegut saw this almost total destruction, which he experienced first hand, as a stark example of unnecessary human suffering. He searched for and failed to find any meaning in this event. The second narrative thread in the novel tells the life of its fictional hero, Billy Pilgrim, through the interweaving of three sub-plots: his war time experiences (which reflect Vonnegut's own experiences), his post-war life as an optometrist in Ilium, New York, and his life as a captive of aliens. Most of the novel is narrative description in the third person, but occasionally there is a direct address by Vonnegut to the readers.

In a similar way John, the writer of the book of Revelation, only occasionally speaks directly to the reader from his own life ("I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day," 1:10) and John also is the one who communicates the revelations he receives to the readers (or, better, auditors, 1:3; 22:18) including the enigmatic 13:18 ("This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six"), although it is unclear who is speaking.¹⁶ Thus, Revelation contains both the revealed information and the author's comments or instructions.¹⁷

¹⁵ Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughter-house Five* (New York: Random House/Dial Press, 2009). First published in 1969.

¹⁶ Fair, *Conquering*, 267-268 does not discuss whether this verse is part of the revelation to John, or John's own comment.

¹⁷ In Rev 10:9-11 John is explicitly charged with speaking to "many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

Vonnegut was not a Christian. Rather, he was from a long line of German free-thinkers who were overt agnostics. (There are some explicit references to the Bible in *Slaughter-house*. For example, he has a minor character describe the coming judgment and eternal punishment, which he does not believe in, but therewith frightens a young woman, who does believe in it).¹⁸ And Vonnegut repeats the common cliché that Jesus and his father, as carpenters, made crosses for Rome.¹⁹ I do not suggest that Vonnegut had knowledge of or direct interest in the book of Revelation or its message. However, I think a comparison of how he uses the science fiction genre to explain his historical Dresden experience with the apocalyptic genre of Revelation can be informative. John, like Vonnegut, also explains his own historical situation as he begins his book.²⁰ There are arguments among Vonnegut followers who often debate whether he was a science-fiction author. He certainly did write many novels rightly styled science fiction. But *Slaughter-house Five*, Vonnegut's most famous novel, is partly auto-biography, recounting his own experiences as a prisoner of war. However, in many ways this novel is rather similar to many of his other books, and it is a work in which science fiction plays a large role, although that is not the focus of this specific book, which does not fit exactly the genre of science fiction.

¹⁸ Vonnegut, *Slaughter-house Five*, 172.

¹⁹ Vonnegut, *Slaughter-house Five*, 202. There is an interview with Vonnegut in which he expresses his admiration for Jesus, in particular his emphasis on peace. In 1980 he gave a Palm Sunday sermon at Saint Clements Episcopal Church in New York City, he said he was “a Christ-worshipping agnostic.” This interview by Dan Wakefield is found in *Image Journal*, 82. In this interview Vonnegut concluded with a poem in honor of Jesus. (available at: [https://imagejournal.org/article/kurt-vonnegut/.](https://imagejournal.org/article/kurt-vonnegut/))

²⁰ Fair, *Conquering*, 45, suggests Revelation has similarities to a drama. Once when I taught Revelation in college I tried to stage the reading of the first three chapters having two readers standing on two levels. There are many comments in the book which resemble stage directions, such “I looked and I saw.”

The hero of the book is Billy Pilgrim,²¹ whose experiences in World War II, especially as a prisoner of war, in many ways reflect the war-time experiences of Vonnegut. But that is only one of several subplots. The author does not explain the hero's name, but "Pilgrim" fits well with his role in the novel, because he floats through dimensions both of time and space. The first SBL definition of apocalyptic says it is "with a narrative framework," which is true of *Slaughter-house* and similar to Revelation, although the narrative is not linear. The novel traces Billy's life in very fragmented scenes which are not in chronological order. Rather, they are randomly scattered scenes from his somewhat normal and boring life as an ophthalmologist, his time as a soldier and prisoner in WWII, and his kidnapping by aliens from the planet Tralfamadore. The random interweaving of stories removes any concept of cause and effect, or plot development. Vonnegut explains this disorder of events by saying that Billy became "unstuck in time." With this explanation, Vonnegut is saying that human history is misunderstood if it is simply explained by time. Time is the common means of understanding life as a series of causes and effects. Rather, we are unwitting prisoners of time. (Time, too, is largely a human creation. Days, the solstices, and equinoxes are established in nature, and in a sense the 28-day month fixed by the moon. But the hours in a day and weeks in a month by which we mark time, are a human creation and vary among cultures). Thus, while the events in the novel are described in particular times, the time frames themselves are not sequential. Earth-time is inadequate to describe the events of Billy's life. As Billy's Tralfamadorean guide tells him, "All time is all time. It does not change. It does not lend itself to warnings or explanation. It simply is. Take it moment by moment, and you will see that we are all, as I've said before, 'bugs in amber.'"²²

²¹ Perhaps an implicit play on John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, but in Vonnegut's story Billy Pilgrim makes no progress.

²² Vonnegut, *Slaughter-house Five*, 86. It is important to recall that in the novel the Tralfamadoreans are the ones who understand existence rightly, and they are the source of revelation to Billy. And, of course, Vonnegut as

Similarly, there have been many attempts to explain the time sequence of the book of Revelation. There are interpretations which seek to correlate events described in Revelation with human history since the end of the apostolic age. In some models, Revelation describes a continuous history (although usually limited to the history of the West).²³ Others believe the true correlation began with a more recent specific event (such as the 1948 refounding of the modern nation of Israel). Others have suggested that Revelation has a circular time frame in which the events described are then repeated with different imagery later in the book. Still other interpretations do not look for any specific time line, but instead regard the visions described as just discrete images, without any specific time references.²⁴ Revelation certainly has a larger narrative framework and there is clearly a progression of time from creation to eschatology. However, it is not clear that the interim events progress on a unified time-line. There is a concern in Revelation for time, but that, too, is unclear, as in the expression “time, times and half a time” (12:14; 22:10). It has been suggested that the time frame in Revelation may be like going up a spiral staircase.²⁵ This image of time fits well with Vonnegut’s presentation of how the Tralfamadorians see not only time, but also writings holistically. Speaking of books, Billy’s alien guide says: “We Tralfamadorians read them all at once, not one after another. There isn’t any particular relationship between the messages, except that the author has chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and

the narrator represents these aliens as the knowledgeable instructors to the book’s readers too.

²³ Fair, *Conquering*, 421, fn. 135, notes that few writers point to events in Africa.

²⁴ Fair, *Conquering*, 50-61.

²⁵ This model is often called recapitulation, see Fair, *Conquering*, 52f. The frequent phrase in Revelation “time, times and half a time” is similarly vague in respect to chronological time.

deep. There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects.”²⁶

One of the differences, though, between Revelation and *Slaughter-house* which must be considered is that Revelation uses two Greek words for time. One, χρόνος (2:21; 6:11; 10:6; 20:2), means measured time (thus expensive watches are called chronometers). The other, καιρός (1:3, 11:18; 12:13, 14), means opportunity, or appropriate time. Thus, in 1:3, the point is that the opportunity (καιρός) for humans to hear and respond to the message of the book has come. In 12:12 and 14 the message is that, with Satan cast from heaven and hurled to the Earth, there will be only limited opportunity.

Slaughter-house has a frequently recurring lament when a death occurs: “And So It Goes.” This is a verbal thread throughout the narrative which is found after each death (and they are many) in the novel. By this mantra, Vonnegut underlines the absurdity and hopelessness of life. The essential tragedy of life is expressed in a simple comment: “Every so often, for no apparent reason, Billy Pilgrim would find himself weeping.”²⁷ There is a striking difference in how the two writings explain life’s disasters. Revelation regards death and evil as tragedies to be righted. *Slaughter-house*, on the other hand, explains death as simply a natural event. There is, however, a distinctive perception found among the alien Tralfamadorians. Since they see all time as a whole, not in segments, death is not a specific time event but a particular vantage on the whole. When the Tralfamadorians see a dead person they see that as temporary phase.²⁸ A person only seems to die. That is why, when bad things happen, the Tralfamadorians simply say, “and so it goes”²⁹ a response repeated often by Billy, and by Vonnegut as the narrator. This view of death contrasts strongly with Revelation, which describes those believers who

²⁶ Vonnegut, *Slaughter-house Five*, 88. This explanation of reality represents Vonnegut’s philosophy too, as is manifest in the book, and in other writings by him. Because Revelation is a unified message, it is best understood if read completely through at a single sitting—preferably out loud.

²⁷ Vonnegut, *Slaughter-house Five*, 61.

²⁸ Vonnegut, *Slaughter-house Five*, 26.

²⁹ Vonnegut, *Slaughter-house Five*, 27.

are faithful unto death as receiving eternal life posthumously (ch. 13; 14:13).

The first of the SBL definitions of “apocalyptic” stresses a revelation from an other-worldly being that is both temporal and spatially different to a human recipient. For example, in Revelation 4:1 the voice says “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” In 5:4 one of the elders around the heavenly throne comforts John by explaining that there is one capable of opening the seven-sealed scroll. The hero of *Slaughter-house*, Billy Pilgrim, finds the true explanation of his confusing world in science fiction. He believes the truth about his own world is known and received by interaction with another world, one not seen by most humans. This agrees with the SBL definition that an apocalypse is “mediated by an other-worldly being.” Billy Pilgrim receives this insightful information in two ways: first, in that Billy is kidnapped by the aliens from Tralfamadore who place him in a zoo on their planet as a specimen of Earth life. The Tralfamadoreans “simply were able to give him insights into what was really going on.”³⁰ The SBL definition spoke of “salvation,” which does not fit *Slaughter-house*, if one defines salvation in religious terms. But the Tralfamadoreans who kidnap Billy Pilgrim do offer a salvation in some ways. On Tralfamadore, he is given a mate – a woman described as an exceptionally attractive film star – and, more importantly, he is given information that allows him to better understand his earthly situation. He is instructed on the inevitability of events in life, and thus “saved” from a futile search for meaning or making good choices. This is stated clearly by one of the Tralfamadoreans: “If I hadn’t spent so much time studying Earthlings, said the Tralfamadorean, I wouldn’t have any idea what was meant by ‘free will’ . . . Only on Earth is there any talk of free will.”³¹ This truth comes from another other-worldly being, similar to the SBL definition of apocalyptic. But Revelation has sev-

³⁰ Vonnegut, *Slaughter-house Five*, 30.

³¹ Vonnegut, *Slaughter-house Five*, 86.

eral forms in which information comes, from visions, from heavenly voices identified and unidentified.

The second part of the SBL definition says that an apocalypse is “intended to interpret present earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural.” This is a major concern in Revelation, which is concerned with the question of how to explain the moral disjuncture of human life. However, it is also concerned about the presence and work of God in the true explanation.³² Therefore, unlike *Slaughterhouse*, Revelation is concerned with theodicy. While “supernatural” is not really appropriate for Vonnegut, the aliens of Tralfamadore do give Billy information that comes from another location. With this information, *Slaughterhouse* insists that life is simply tragic and there are no reasons to explain it. But the Tralfamadorian non-answer does offer the liberating knowledge that one should stop looking for meaning in life. When Billy asks his kidnappers why they chose him, the reply is “That is a very Earthling question to ask. There is no why.”³³

The second way Billy has access to true reality is through science fiction. When Billy is hospitalized following a car accident, he shares a room with Elliot Rosewater who introduces him to Kilgore Trout, an unsuccessful but prolific science fiction author. “Science fiction became the only type of tales he could read.”³⁴ In a later novel, Vonnegut says more about Rosewater and his saving influence on Billy.³⁵ Reading Kilgore Trout became the means by which Billy rightly understands his life.³⁶ It is typical to science fiction to use another, un-

³² Fair, *Conquering*, 38 rightly stresses apocalyptic is a mindset and world-view “extremely pessimistic about human effort and history.”

³³ Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five*, 76-77.

³⁴ Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five*, 101.

³⁵ Kurt Vonnegut, *God Bless you, Mr. Rosewater* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1965).

³⁶ In *Slaughterhouse Five* Vonnegut says that Kilgore Trout, wrote a book called *The Gospel from Outer Space*, in which he reinterpreted the story of Christ, in which Jesus associated with the nobodies and still got to say “all the lovely and puzzling things he said in the other Gospels.” Jesus is still crucified, but at the time the voice from God comes from Heaven and “From this moment on He will punish horribly anybody who torments a

seen world to explain the earthly, ordinary world Billy lived in. In *Slaughter-House*, Vonnegut describes the hinderance to comprehension most people experience in trying to understand this ordinary world without the unseen world, as Billy says: “The book was *Maniacs in the Fourth Dimension*, by Kilgore Trout. It was about people whose mental illness could not be treated because the causes of the diseases were in the fourth dimension, and three-dimensional doctors couldn’t see the causes at all, or even imagine them.”³⁷ Billy comes to see that only science fiction writers know the real world, and they seek to communicate to humans who pay no attention. While hospitalized, Billy, still haunted by his experiences of the war, and his roommate, haunted by his accidental killing of a 14 year-old boy he mistook for a German soldier, turn to science fiction to escape these realities. “So they were trying to re-invent themselves and their universe. Science fiction was a big help.”³⁸

This key information, like that of apocalyptic in the SBL definition, could not be gained by studying the experienced, ordinary world, but had to be delivered by someone from another dimension – revealed, if you will. A good example in the book of Revelation is chapter 12, where the explanation of the attacks on believers is that what has happened (or is happening) in heaven (Satan being cast out) is manifested in the persecution of the heavenly woman’s offspring (the believers) on earth. In Revelation these events are simultaneous.

Like the Tralfamadourians and the science fiction stories of Kilgore Trout, Revelation gives decisive information about rightly understanding life, understanding which cannot be found by observing human history. Revelation has “insider trading” information because God gives John the truth about what is real, which is not how

bum who has no connections!” This insistence upon an ultimate justice that punishes those who abuse the unimportant people has similarities to Revelation’s view of God punishing those who abuse believers.

³⁷ Vonnegut, *Slaughter-house Five*, 104.

³⁸ Vonnegut, *Slaughter-house Five*, 101.

history appears. Human history viewed solely from the human perspective clearly appears to be under the control of Satan (especially in situations of persecution for faith, such as the death of Antipas, Rev. 2:13, cf., 2:10, about Smyrna). But that is not true. God is actually in control and he is reclaiming his creation. What the book gives is a “revealing” of what is covered to human eyes but seen by John. We should notice how often the phrase, “I saw” (εἶδον) recurs in Revelation, often in association with the imperative “behold” (ἰδοῦ). The author “sees” things others do not see, because he is given “insight” into the truth about human history through access to information that has been “uncovered” by God. He is told by a heavenly voice what will be (4:1; 5:4).

The second SBL definition of apocalyptic says that the revelation which comes from the outside functions “*to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority.*” Neither Vonnegut nor Billy Pilgrim believe in a divine authority, so the closet point of contact between our two texts in this instance is the revelation given to Billy by the Tralfamadorians, a revelation to influence his understanding and behavior (and, implicitly, for Vonnegut to influence his readers). Vonnegut says that the Tralfamadorians were not responsible for Billy becoming “unstuck in time” during his first kidnapping. Rather, “they were simply able to give him insights into what was really going on.”³⁹ The purpose of this information was “Billy’s belief that he was going to comfort many people with the truth about time.”⁴⁰ The most important insight Billy receives is about determinism: “Among the things Billy Pilgrim could not change were the past, the present and the future.”⁴¹

Many, if not most, readers of Revelation think its purpose is to describe the end of the world. The study of this large question—how will the world end?—is usually described as *eschatology*, and there are many forms of eschatology. While Revelation and many apocalypses do describe—often in vivid imagery—the conclusion of

³⁹ Vonnegut, *Slaughter-house Five*, 30.

⁴⁰ Vonnegut, *Slaughter-house Five*, 28.

⁴¹ Vonnegut, *Slaughter-house Five*, 60.

the struggle between God and Satan, eschatology is not the central purpose of the book.⁴² The main purpose is to help persecuted Christians make sense of their desperate situation—if God is indeed in charge. The coming victory of God, the *heilsgeschichte*, has already begun in Jesus, inaugurated as the Messiah.⁴³ Nevertheless, for there to be justice there must be an end of human history, when God will be manifested as victorious (see Revelation 22). *Slaughter-house* also gives a reference to the end of the world. This end is revealed to Billy by his Tralfamadorian guide. “We know how the universe ends . . . and Earth has nothing to do with it, except that it too gets wiped out.” Billy asks, “How—how *does* the universe end?” The guide responds, “We blow it up experimenting with new fuels for our flying saucers.”⁴⁴ This explanation fits well with Vonnegut’s rejection of any and all reasonable explanations of problems or tragedies in human life.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

If *Slaughter-House Five* has these similarities to the SBL definitions of an apocalypse, should Vonnegut’s book be considered as an apocalypse? There are major differences, largely in what is *missing* in *Slaughter-House*.⁴⁵ The most significant omission is that there is no problem of theodicy, since Vonnegut does not explicitly address the question of God. That decisive question is the focus of the New Testament book, as well as other Jewish and Christian apocalypses. Vonnegut rejects any explanation (or solution) for the tragedies of

⁴² Fair, *Conquering*, 50-61 gives an extended survey of how eschatological concerns, especially the end, have been explained in Revelation.

⁴³ Fair, *Conquering*, 44.

⁴⁴ Vonnegut, *Slaughter-house Five*, 116-117.

⁴⁵ There are minor ones as well, Vonnegut does not have the unusual beasts and characters found in many apocalypses, and in many science fiction works which try to explain the problems of humans, such as Douglas Adams’ *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* (New York: Random House, 1981), where the meaning of life is “42.”

human life, as is explicit in his recurring phrase: “And so it goes.” Secondly, just as there is no god to save, there is no supreme evil power. This contrasts with Revelation’s picture of a “great Satan” (the devil, who leads the whole world astray, in 12:9). Finally, Vonnegut has no interest in a suffering group, the elect. Compare to this Revelation chapters 7 and 14, with John’s description of the suffering elect. Vonnegut features only one central character, whose experiences are shared by no one else. (Although there are his fellow soldiers, none of them are concerned about Billy). But Revelation *is* concerned with the elect, those who have committed to Christ—it is their sufferings that evoke the question of theodicy. This is explicit in Revelation 6:10, where the martyrs beneath the heavenly throne cry out: “Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be until you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?”

It is not only apocalypses which are concerned with theodicy, much wisdom and prophetic literature is as well. Without this fundamental concern, a writing is not really an apocalypse—despite many shared features. But *Slaughter-house Five*, like Revelation, assumes that the decisive information for facing life is not that of common wisdom but comes from outside. The truth about life must be “uncovered.”

INDEX

- Aaron, 13, 16, 183, 214, 236,
240, 249, 317
Abarim, 198
Abraham, 119, 146, 155-156,
207, 247, 305-308, 312, 313-
316, 320-321, 324-325, 327-
329
Abrahamic Covenant, 307,
324
Adam, 113, 136, 153-156, 194,
201-202, 204, 234, 240-243,
247, 254, 284
aggression, 172, 174, 178
Ahab, 318
Amram, 181-182, 189, 193, 200,
202, 232, 252
Ananias, 134
Ancient of Days, 224, 230-231,
235
Angel of the Lord, 194, 262-
265
angelification, 188, 200
angels, 108, 149-155, 194, 199-
200, 202, 211, 229-230, 252,
254, 264
aniconic ideology, 101, 190,
263
Anu, 95
apostles, 32, 156, 285
ascent, 186, 193, 196, 198, 201,
204, 206, 232, 238, 253
Aseneth, 239, 329
Assyria, 322
aural ideology, 189, 243-244,
249, 251, 256-260, 262-265,
282, 286
Balaam, 121
Barabbas, 152
bat qol, 258, 259-260
Beaver Anathema, 47, 61
biblical inspiration, 117, 119
Billy Pilgrim, 336, 338, 340-
341, 344
Buddha, 80
Buddhism, 65, 73, 80, 82-83
bunkhun, 73-74, 88
Calvary, 147
Canaan, 217, 316, 325
Chariot, 223-224, 254
Christian Association of Wash-
ington, 50-51
Christian Churches, 48
Church of Scotland, 48-49
Churches of Christ, 1, 6, 8-9,
48, 50, 57-58, 63, 83
Code of Hammurabi, 95, 311
commandments, 91, 96-97
conversion, 53, 65-66, 70-71,
75-79, 82-84, 86-89
Covenant Code, 95-96
crucifixion, 114, 133, 148, 156-
157

- David, 121, 148, 276, 319, 321, 327
 Decalogue, 92-98, 100-103
 Diaspora, 246, 292
 Diatessaron, 16, 25-26, 30, 37-39, 43-44, 46
 Diotima, 206
 Disciples of Christ, 47, 62-63
 Divine Voice, 189, 246, 250, 256-260, 265
 divinization, 200-201, 203-204, 206
 Dover Association, 61
- Eden, III-II2, II4, 147, 242
 Egypt, 100, 201, 276, 285, 312, 316
 Eldad, 120
 Eliezer, 203, 313-314
 Elijah, 15-16, 19, 184-187, 190, 196-197, 214-215, 223, 225-226, 230, 243-246, 249-250
 Elisha, 15
 Enlightenment, 75, 281
 Enlil, 95
 Enoch, 146, 152-153, 155-156, 192, 196-197, 200, 203, 207-212, 217-220, 222, 228-231, 237, 248, 252-254, 258, 260
 enthronement, 148, 150-152, 155-156, 191, 195, 203, 206, 216, 220-222, 234, 243
 epiphany, 151, 153-154, 181, 186-187, 206, 212, 224, 227, 235, 250, 256, 258-259
 Esau, 275, 315
- Gabbatha, 155
 Galilee, 31, 33, 213
 glorification, 148-149, 151, 156, 195-197, 267
 Glory, 31, 34, 108, 154, 156, 158, 183-184, 190, 198, 200, 209, 213, 215, 223, 225-227, 229-230, 232-234, 241-244, 250, 255-258, 266-267, 307
- Gnosticism, 113, 194
 Golden Calf, 316
 Golgotha, 44
- Hammurabi, 95, 311
 Heavenly Temple, 202, 248
 Herod Agrippa, 134
 Holy Spirit, 13, 34, 42-43, 57, 118, 121, 127, 134, 138-139, 296, 299
- idolatry, 91, 101, 320, 322
 Image of God, 106, 108-109, 154-155, 237, 239, 241-242, 254
ignonin, 236-237, 239-240, 254
 Isaac, 155, 182, 187, 245, 247, 249-251, 307, 312-316, 320, 328
 Ishmael, 313-315
 Israel, 94, 96-100, 102, 121, 126, 130, 148, 156, 183-185, 214-215, 217, 219-220, 240, 255, 261, 264, 282, 296, 306-309, 312-313, 316-317, 320-323, 328, 339
 Israelites, 95-97, 124, 129, 200, 212, 236, 249, 263, 265, 316-317, 321-322
- Jacob, 146, 148-149, 155, 207, 239, 247, 260, 308, 312, 315-316, 320, 328-329
 Jesus Christ, 2, 25, 32-33, 41, 48, 75, 77, 91-92, 112-114, 143, 158, 174-175, 183, 185, 188, 190, 195, 213-214, 225, 235, 243, 245-255, 261, 263, 265-266, 270-272, 277, 286-287, 296, 298, 300, 306-308, 328-329, 330-331, 337, 342, 346
 Jezebel, 318
 Joab, 319

- Jordan, 25-26, 317
 Joseph of Nazareth, 31
 Joshua, 197, 214, 239, 265, 318, 320
 Josiah, 102, 127
 Judas Maccabee, 200
 Judea, 323-324
- Kavod*, 182, 188-190, 193, 205, 209-211, 216-218, 220, 223-224, 227, 244, 246, 256, 258-260, 266-267
 Kenaz, 201
 Kingdom of God, 223
koinonia, 295
- leadership, 1-2, 5-7, 10, 14, 72, 269-270, 278-279
 Leah, 329
 Lesser YHWH, 207
 Levi, 146
 libertarianism, 161-162, 165, 173, 177-180
 liberty, 161-162, 173-176, 179-180
 Likeness of God, 106-108, 110
 Living Creatures, 259
 Logos, 146, 205
 luminosity, 189-190, 194, 198, 202, 238, 240-242
- Manasseh, 318
 Medad, 120
Merkabah, 149, 152-153, 158, 194, 217
 Merneptah, 312
 Merneptah Stele, 312
 Mesopotamia, 285, 309-311, 321, 323
 Messiah, 115, 182, 220, 224, 229, 276, 325, 345
 Metatron, 192, 199, 208, 231, 252, 254
- Moab, 15
 Mosaic typology, 203, 206-207, 213, 231, 235
 Moses, 31, 56, 91, 122, 124, 145, 152-153, 155, 182-215, 220-222, 224, 230, 232-250, 252, 255, 257-258, 260-261, 264, 316-318
- Naboth, 318
 Naomi, 320
 Nathanael, 148
 Nebo, 198
nephesh, 105-106, 108-109, 111
 "New Moses," 187-190, 208, 235, 236
 Nicodemus, 150
 Noah, 156, 202
- ocularcentric ideology, 191, 228, 231, 250-251, 256, 258, 263, 267
- paedobaptists, 54
Panim, 208-210, 224, 236-237, 260
 Passion, 146-148, 152, 156-157, 213, 266, 299, 304
 Pentateuch, 94, 97, 99, 101
 Pharaoh, 143, 201, 204, 212, 312
 Philadelphia Confession, 55
 Pontius Pilate, 149-153, 155-158
 Praetorium, 157-158
 Prodigal Son, 301
- Rachel, 329, 333
 Raguel, 192
 Redstone Association, 55, 60
 Reformation, 91, 281
 Restoration Movement, 48-49, 51
 Ruth, 319-320, 326

- Sabbath, 98, 100-101, 213, 242
 Samaria, 126
 Samuel, 120, 124-125, 209
 Sarah, 313
 Satan, 154, 155, 255, 340, 343-346
 Saul, 70, 120, 125, 136, 276, 319
 Scripture, 15, 56, 62, 95, 108, 111, 118, 122-128, 131, 133, 137-140, 185, 258, 270, 273, 275-276, 282-283, 285-287, 291-294, 302-304
 scroll, 120, 127, 198, 341
 secrets of creation, 234
 Sennacherib, 124, 129
 Serpent, 111
Shekinah, 184-185, 187, 240, 257
 Shem, 156, 244, 264
Shema, 326
 Simon of Cyrene, 147
 Sinai, 91, 97, 98, 182-187, 190-191, 193, 195, 198-201, 204-206, 212-213, 215-216, 218-219, 221, 224, 232-236, 238, 243-245, 255, 258, 260, 262, 317
 Son of God, 27, 42, 53, 148-149, 182, 221, 270
 Son of Man, 145-146, 152, 155, 196, 206, 222-223, 230-231
 soteriology, 78, 82
 Spiritual Mobilization, 162-164
 Standing One, 221
 Stone-Campbell Movement, x-xi, xiii, 1, 48, 59
 Suffering Servant, 147
 tablets, 120, 122, 215, 236
tefillin, 326
 Tetragrammaton, 233
 theophany, 181, 186, 189, 191, 215-216, 218-219, 224, 237, 239, 246-247, 249-251, 255-256, 260, 266
 Throne, 148, 153-156, 192-193, 216-222, 229-230, 234, 259, 270, 329, 341, 346
 Torah, 94, 97, 100, 102, 130, 138, 201
 Tralfamadore, 338, 341-342
 Tralfamadoreans, 338-341, 343-344
 Transfiguration, 182, 185, 190, 213-214, 216, 220, 224-230, 235-236, 245, 250, 257-258, 261, 266
 Trinity, 70, 113, 307
tselem, 237, 240-241
 Virgin Mary, 38
 Yahoel, 231
 Zedekiah, 120-121
 Zelophehad, 311, 318, 320
 Zion, 217, 220