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This present publication comprises the first part of Volume 2 of Semănătorul (The Sower): The Emanuel Journal of Ministry and Biblical Research. In spite of the continued pandemic in Romania, with all the subsequent challenges caused, the Journal has continued to present submissions by the Faculty of Theology of Emanuel University, Oradea, plus contributions from International scholars. They are not only published here but have been shared on line with Faculty members and are available on the Emanuel website.

The publication of the Journal has been made possible through the commitment of members of the Emanuel Faculty, in collaboration with Emanuel University Press, the Emanuel “Ethics and Society” Research Centre, and contributions from distinguished colleagues from Spurgeon’s College, London, the Irish Baptist College, Moira, the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky and Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Tennessee.

The journal includes a range of articles on various aspects broadly related to challenges in communicating Christian truth in a modern culture. It presents papers which address important biblical issues and practical pastoral themes.

Editor,
Dr. Hamilton Moore

CONTENTS

**“EMBLEM OF THE THROG THAT PRAISE THE LAMB”: THE
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ASSOCIATION IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

Michael A.G. Haykin 6

**A Vision to Emulate: Spurgeon's College and its Recognition of the
Importance of Principles from Charles Spurgeon to His Students**

Dr Philip McCormack 17

John and the Synoptic Gospels. What John Knew and What John Used

Corin Mihăilă 31

**Paul's Revelation of Jesus Christ: Christology on the Other Side of the
Cross and Resurrection.**

Hamilton Moore 57

A Contrast of the Pastoral Leadership and Secular Leadership Models

Kenneth R. Lewis 81

**Good without God? Paul's view of the Law as a response to Moral
relativism**

Ovidiu Hanc 97

**Pesikta D'Rav Kahana and the Concept of the Mourning of God in
Rabbinic Literature**

Aurelian Botica 110

“Emblem of the throng that praise the Lamb”: the Northamptonshire Association in the long eighteenth century

Michael A.G. Haykin¹

ABSTRACT

In the 18th century the Welsh pastor Benjamin Francis (1734–1799), pastor of the Horsley Baptist church in Gloucestershire, composed a poem entitled “The Association.” on the annual assemblies, where God’s people could be free to receive wise counsel and discuss in love non-essential issues on which they disagreed. The binding force on the conscience was Scripture. These meetings of eighteenth-century Baptists had a great impact for good in the Baptist denomination, the larger Evangelical circles, and in fact, their impact was felt throughout the world generally.

KEY WORDS: association, Scripture, circular letters, doctrine of the Trinity, missionary vision.

The ideal in Benjamin Francis’ “The Association”

Around 1790, the Welsh pastor Benjamin Francis (1734–1799), pastor of the Baptist church at Horsley, Gloucestershire, wrote a lengthy poem that he entitled “The Association,” a key section of which runs thus:

Thee, bless’d assembly! emblem of the throng
That praise the Lamb in one harmonious song
On Zion’s hills where joys celestial flow,
The countless throng redeem’d from sin and woe;
Thee, bless’d assembly, have I oft survey’d,
With sweet complacence, charmingly array’d
In robes of truth, of sanctity and love,
Resembling saints and seraphim above.
No worldly motive, and no base design,
But love of truth and purity divine,

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With pious zeal for the Redeemer's cause,
 That first conven'd thee and ordain'd thy laws,
 While Christian friendship join'd her aid apace,
 To give thee strength, stability, and grace.
 ... The sacred page thy only rule and guide,
 "Thus saith the Lord," shall thy debates decide;
 While charity wide spreads her balmy wings
 O'er different notions, in indifferent things,
 And graceful order, walking hand in hand
 With cheerful freedom, leads her willing band.
 Thy bond of union, truth, and love divine;
 Immortal honours, wealth, and pleasures, thine:
 One common interest, interest of the soul,
 The good of all, in thee directs the whole. ...
 In thee, the guardians of the churches' weal,
 Whose bosoms glow with unabating zeal,
 With balmy counsel their disorders heal,
 And truth and love and purity promote
 Among the sheep, Immanuel's blood has bought.
 In thee, impartial discipline maintains
 Harmonious order, but aloud disclaims
 All human force to rule the human mind,
 Impose opinions and the conscience bind.²³

To be sure, this is an idealistic rendition, yet it enables us to see what one eighteenth-century Baptist regarded as important about these annual assemblies. For Francis, they were times when sage advice could be sought and given, when God's people could be free to discuss in love and without rancour non-essential issues on which they disagreed, and when the sole binding force on the

² Benjamin Francis, "The Association: A Poem, Most respectfully addressed to the Members of Each Baptist Association" in John Rippon, ed., *The Baptist Annual Register for 1790, 1791, 1792, and Part of 1793* (London, 1793), between 1:16–17 [lines 21–34, 43–52, 129–137]. This poem runs four pages and is inserted without pagination between pages 16 and 17.

³ "The Association" in Rippon, ed., *Baptist Annual Register*, 1:17, 18, 20.

conscience was Scripture alone.⁴ Most significantly, Francis saw in these gatherings a visible token—in his words, an “emblem”—of the unity and joy that fills the saints in heaven as they worship Christ the Lamb.

The Northamptonshire Association in the 1760s and 1770s

Francis saw the association as the place where

... the guardians of the churches' weal,
Whose bosoms glow with unabating zeal,
With balmy counsel their disorders heal,
And truth and love and purity promote
Among the sheep, Immanuel's blood has bought.

Let us look at one actual association, the Northamptonshire Association, and the way in which “truth and love and purity” were generally and then specifically promoted in its annual meetings.

In October of 1764 plans were drawn up by William Walker (d.1792), the pastor of Olney Baptist Church in Buckinghamshire (see map), and five other pastors for the inaugural meeting of what became the Northamptonshire Association in May, 1765. Two of these pastors came from Northamptonshire churches, Moses Deacon (d.1773) of Walgrave and John Brown (d.1800) of Kettering, while the other three hailed from Leicestershire: Isaac Woodman of Sutton-in-the-Elms, John Evans of Foxton and Robert Hall, Sr. (1728–1791), of Arnesby. What led these six men to contemplate such an association was undoubtedly a consciousness of their own need of fellowship and a recognition of the great help and support their churches could derive from its existence. But they could hardly have envisaged the way in which their association would be instrumental in meeting the needs of many far from their fields, towns and villages. For it was in this association that the Baptist Missionary Society would be conceived and brought to birth before the end of the century, and in the course of the

⁴ Francis' convictions about scriptural authority are also well seen in the following two texts. In the *Circular Letter of the Western Association* (1778), 2, he writes: “we earnestly beseech you carefully to guard against all pernicious errors in doctrine, experience and practice, and to bring all your religious sentiments, feelings, and actions, to the unerring test of God's word, our only infallible rule in matters of religion. Buy the truth, cost what it will, and sell it not for all the world.” Six years later he makes a similar appeal: “Let the authority of Christ preside in your church meetings, and let his word, example, and spirit be the rule, and his glory the end of your church-discipline” [*Circular Letter of the Western Association* (1778), 5].

following century missionaries sent out from this society would take the gospel to such places as far afield as India and Jamaica, China and the Congo.

The first meeting of the association was held at Kettering on May 14–15, 1765, at which time Moses Deacon and William Walker preached.⁵ A circular letter was drawn up by John Evans of Foxton to be sent around to the churches who were part of the fledgling association. This first circular letter basically contained a brief report of the substance of Deacon's sermon on Acts 2:42 and that of Walker on 2 Thessalonians 3:1, as well as informing its readers and hearers of the fact that in meeting together the representatives of the churches had experienced "much of the Lord's presence," even as he had promised in Matthew 18:20. This letter was signed by twelve ministers. Handwritten copies were presumably made for all of the churches in the association, for this letter was not printed, though all the later ones would be.⁶

The following year, 1766, saw the association hold its annual meeting in Olney. The ministers and messengers sent by the churches stayed at the Bull Inn, which stood on the western frontage of the market-place. It was a convenient place to stay, since it was scarcely twenty yards from the entrance of the Bull Inn to that of the Baptist meeting-house. The meetings began on the evening of Tuesday, May 6. That evening was taken up with prayer and the ministers present discussing and sharing about their Christian experience. There was also time set apart to read the letters written by the various churches of the association for this very occasion, in which they catalogued their encouragements and discouragements, for it was expected that each of the churches in the association would send a letter to the annual meeting informing their sister congregations of their state, newsworthy items and prayer concerns. The following day—Wednesday, May 7—began with more prayer and sharing. Around 10 o'clock a public service was held at which first Robert Hall, Sr. and then John Brown preached. The evening of this day was also spent in prayer, further consideration of the state of the churches and the giving of direction to Moses Deacon as he drew up the circular letter to be sent around to the churches that year.

The meetings were again at Olney two years later in 1768. At 10 o'clock in the morning of Wednesday, June 15, John Gill (1730–1809), the pastor of the Baptist church in St Albans, Hertfordshire, and the nephew of the famous London Baptist divine of the same name, preached on 2 Corinthians 4:1, followed by John Collett Ryland (1723–1792) on Revelation 3:11. Abraham Booth (1734–1806), who was at that time living in Sutton-in-Ashfield,

⁵ For the early history of the association, see especially T. S. H. Elwyn, *The Northamptonshire Baptist Association* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press Ltd, 1964), 11–35.

⁶ For a copy of the letter, see Elwyn, *Northamptonshire Baptist Association*, 12–13.

Nottinghamshire, and who would become one of the leading lights in the Particular Baptist denomination in the late eighteenth century, preached that evening from Acts 11:26. The Anglican minister of Olney, the famous John Newton (1725–1807), and his equally famous friend William Cowper (1731–1800), both of whom lived in Olney, also attended the meetings, Newton having been asked to preach in the evening of June 16. Cowper later wrote down some of his impressions of the meetings in a letter to his aunt, Judith Madan (1702–1781), the mother of the evangelical clergyman Martin Madan (1725–1790), and made mention of the “excellent endowments” that the Lord had given to Booth.⁷ From these fairly small beginnings these annual association meetings grew tremendously. In 1774, when the association met in Carlton, Bedfordshire, the public meetings were so thronged that the Baptist church could not contain all who wanted to worship and to hear the preaching. The preachers on that occasion had therefore stood in a fairly spacious window from which the glass had been removed, so that the large numbers outside of the meetinghouse could also easily hear the sermons.

It was a similar situation two years in 1776 later at Olney. On the first day of the association meetings, Tuesday, May 28, the representatives of the churches gathered in the Olney meeting-house. Joshua Symonds (1739–1788), the pastor of the Congregational/Baptist church in Bedford that John Bunyan (1628–1688) had once pastored (today known as Bunyan Meeting), noted in his diary that there were forty-six ministers present, a clear intimation that the public meetings the following day would be well attended. The pastor of Olney Baptist Church, John Sutcliff (1752–1814), opened the meeting that evening with a prayer that was, Symonds tells us, “earnest, lively and fervent—suitable to the occasion.”⁸

The public meetings on the following day were indeed thronged. Unlike the Baptist church in Carlton, though, the Olney meeting-house did not have a spacious window-sill which could serve as a makeshift pulpit. So the large congregation was forced to reassemble under the open sky—*sub dio*, as Newton put it in his diary, for Newton and his friend Cowper were there.⁹ An orchard, which backed onto both Cowper’s garden and that of the vicarage where Newton lived, served as the place of worship. A platform was set up on which those who were involved in leading the worship and preaching could stand. A

⁷ William Cowper, Letter to Mrs. Madan, June 18, 1768 in *The Letters and Prose Writings of William Cowper*, eds James King and Charles Ryskamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), I, 197.

⁸ Joshua Symonds, Diary (1776), entry for May 28–30, 1776 (“Extracts from the Manuscript Diaries of the Rev. Joshua Symonds, pastor of the Bunyan Meeting, Bedford 1766–88,” transcribed H.G. Tibbutt, The Cowper and Newton Museum, Olney).

⁹ John Newton, Diary (1773–1805), entry for May 29, 1776 (Princeton University Library, Princeton, New Jersey).

few hundred seats were also procured and arranged for the congregation. Even so there was not enough seating for all who were present and several hundred people had to stand.¹⁰

The first sermon, by John Evans, was on Psalm 80:19. It was a short sermon and Newton felt that Evans was somewhat flustered by having to preach out of doors. After further prayer, John Ryland, Sr. spoke on Romans 3:27 with power, “originality and zeal.” Newton hoped that “many were impressed” by the sermon. In the evening, there was yet another sermon, this one by Robert Hall, Sr on Revelation 3:22. Again, the congregation, according to Newton, was “very large and attentive.”¹¹

The next day, May 30, there was in the afternoon a third public service at which Thomas Dunscombe (1748–1811) of Cote preached—Newton wrote that he “liked him much”—and in the evening Newton himself spoke on Zechariah 2:10. In his diary Newton said that he wanted his preaching not only to comfort the Baptists present, but also to convince them that though he and his fellow Anglicans “are not gathered exactly in their way,” yet God is “pleased to favor” them with his presence. Newton was convinced that God honoured this desire, for he spoke with liberty and, he felt, “with acceptance.”¹²

Specifics of a circular letter

These annual association gatherings also included more private meetings, at which the representatives of the churches would pray together, share about their Christian experience and listen to the circular letter which had been drawn up for that year. At the 1776 gathering it had been the responsibility of Robert Hall, Sr to write the circular letter that would be printed and then circulated among the churches of the association. The topic that was chosen for 1776 was the doctrine of the Trinity, and as we shall see, Hall’s letter proved to be a very timely and popular one.

At the time when he wrote this letter, Hall was the pastor of a small Baptist cause in the village of Arnesby, Leicestershire. He had served in Arnesby since 1753 and it would be his only pastoral charge. He had accepted the call to pastor this work not long after his coming to Baptist convictions. Like John Bunyan, the elder Hall was deeply distressed from a very early age by his own sinfulness. When he was only twelve years old, he was filled with “black despair ... continually ... accompanied with horrid temptations and blasphemies which

¹⁰ See “Breviates” in Robert Hall, Sr., *The Doctrine of the Trinity stated* (Coventry: J.W. Piercy, 1776), 16.

¹¹ For the sermons, see “Breviates” in Robert Hall, Sr., *Doctrine of the Trinity stated*, 16.

¹² John Newton, *Diary* (1773–1805), entries for May 29 and 30, 1776.

ought not to be uttered.”¹³ From this state he found no lasting relief until he read Paul’s statement in Galatians 4:4–5 that God sent Christ into the world to redeem those who were under the law. This text fully convinced Hall, now in his twenties, that, sinner though he was, he was not outside the bounds of Christ’s redemptive work. For some time after his conversion Hall resisted the idea of believer’s baptism, but, in 1752, having been convinced of its validity through a reading of Samuel Wilson’s *A Scripture Manual* (1750), he was baptized near Hexham, in Northumberland. Five months later he received a call to the ministry and in 1753 was invited to become the pastor of Arnesby Baptist Church.

Arnesby had been one of the founding churches of the Northamptonshire Association and Hall had been active in its affairs right from the initial meeting which had been held in 1764. By 1776 the Arnesby pastor had become a very valued member of the association. Twice already he had been asked to write a circular letter on key issues: in 1768, when he had penned a refutation of what he termed “conditional salvation,” and in 1772, when he had written on the nature of redemption. His 1776 circular letter on the doctrine of the Trinity was on just as foundational a doctrine.

Near the beginning of the letter, Hall mentioned that it was occasioned by “awful departures from, and artful oppositions made to, the fundamental doctrine of a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead.”¹⁴ This denial of orthodox trinitarianism was a prominent feature of the religious landscape for most of the eighteenth-century England, and the 1770s were a decade in which anti-trinitarians were especially vociferous. In 1771 an influential group of around 200 Anglican ministers had signed a petition known as the Feathers Tavern Petition, so named after a tavern in London where they had held their meetings. In this petition they called for the abolition of subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles, the doctrinal basis of the Church of England, in favour of a simple declaration of belief in the Bible. While some of the support for this petition came from clergymen who were definitely trinitarian in belief, it was widely believed that the driving force behind the petition was a group of men who had come to, or were about to, embrace Unitarianism, men such as Theophilus Lindsey (1723–1808). Although the petition was defeated in the House of Commons on February 6, 1772, the debate it had raised did not quickly dissipate.

The following year a number of Dissenters made an abortive attempt to free themselves from the legal obligation of the Toleration Act of 1689, which required that all who dissented from the Church of England and its worship

¹³ John Rippon, *Baptist Annual Register* (London, 1793), 1:226–227.

¹⁴ Hall, *Doctrine of the Trinity stated*, 2.

should nevertheless agree with the bulk of the Thirty-Nine Articles. Again, the most conspicuous support for this measure came from those who were theologically heterodox, in this case, Presbyterians on the verge of Unitarianism, which became the leading form of heterodoxy within English Dissent in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

The Feathers Tavern Petition thus sparked a debate that thrust the doctrine of the Trinity into the public eye, and it is no surprise that the Baptist leaders of the Northamptonshire Association felt that they had to make some sort of statement as to where they stood. Note that first place in the abstract of principles placed on the first page was commitment to the important doctrine of Three equal Persons in the Godhead.”¹⁵ Over against those who denied the deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit, Hall asserted on the basis of Scripture that the Son and his Spirit are “persons properly divine” and, together with the Father, “are the one living and true God.”¹⁶

Note how Hall begins. First, he affirms that the doctrine of the Trinity is a deep mystery that is not at all absurd — “We do not say God is one, in the same sense in which he is three”—but is beyond the powers of finite human ken. He then notes that the term “person,” though not in Scripture, is a helpful way of affirming the fact that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are all “intelligent agents.”¹⁷

In seeking to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is a person Hall turned to those scriptural passages where the Spirit is said to have a mind and a will (Romans 8:27; 1 Corinthians 12:11), where he is said to speak (1 Timothy 4:1; Ezekiel 3:24; Acts 8:29; 10–19–20; 13:2), and where he is spoken of as one with whom believers have fellowship (Philippians 2:1) and whom they can grieve (Ephesians 4:30).¹⁸

That the Spirit is divine Hall showed from the fact that he does what only God can do. For instance, when we are baptized we are engaged in an act of worship, thus, baptism is in “name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,” entails worship of all three persons. Then, the Spirit is involved in the creation of the heavens, the world and its inhabitants (Job 26:13; Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4). In a number of scriptural passages he is also (implicitly) called God (Acts 5:3–4; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19). Furthermore, the attributes which Scripture assigns to him are divine ones: he is depicted as omniscient (1 Corinthians 2:10),

¹⁵ Hall, *Doctrine of the Trinity stated*, 1.

¹⁶ Hall, *Doctrine of the Trinity stated*, 3.

¹⁷ Hall, *Doctrine of the Trinity stated*, 2–3.

¹⁸ Hall, *Doctrine of the Trinity stated*, 10–11.

omnipresent (Psalm 139:7), and eternal (Hebrews 9:14).¹⁹ Ending on a practical note. Hall concluded that the believer's:

obligations to the Lord the Spirit are great. He is the author and inditer of your Bible ... He is the Lord of the harvest, who prepares and sends forth labourers. He is the author of all edifying gifts to the Church. It is owing to him that you are renewed and strengthened in your minds. Look to him to create in you a clean heart and renew a right spirit within you.²⁰

This small work proved to be of such help to Hall's fellow Baptists that a second edition was soon called for and printed in the same year.

Friendships

In his poem on the association, Benjamin Francis noted a key aspect of these association meetings:

Christian friendship join'd her aid apace,
To give thee strength, stability, and grace.

At the 1776 association meeting in Olney that we have been considering an event took place that is neither recorded in the circular letter penned by Hall nor mentioned in the "Breviates" accompanying this letter." That is the fact that during these three days of meetings the pastor of the Olney Church, John Sutcliff, first made the acquaintance of the one whom C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) many years later described as "the greatest theologian" of the nineteenth century, namely, Andrew Fuller (1754–1815). In fact, at the heart of the Northamptonshire Association was a circle of close-knit friends, including Sutcliff, Fuller, William Carey (1761–1834) the missionary, and John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825), Fuller's biographer and the Principal of Bristol Baptist Academy.²¹

We see this friendship powerfully at work in the following diary entry of John Ryland for January 21, 1788, where he noted that he and the above-mentioned friends spent that winter's day thus:

Brethren, Fuller, Sutcliff, Carey, and I, kept this day as a private fast in my study: read the Epistles to Timothy and Titus; Booth's Charge to Hopkins; Blackerby's Life, in Gillies; and Rogers of Dedham's Sixty Memorials for a Godly Life: and each prayed twice—Carey with singular enlargement and

¹⁹ Hall, *Doctrine of the Trinity stated*, 11.

²⁰ Hall, *Doctrine of the Trinity stated*, 16.

²¹ On these friendships, see Michael A.G. Haykin, *One heart and one soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, his friends, and his times* (Darlington, Co. Durham: Evangelical Press, 1994).

pungency. Our chief design was to implore a revival of the power of godliness in our own souls, in our churches, and in the church at large.²²

Here, we have these friends praying and reading Scripture together, as well as reading Abraham Booth's (1734–1806) classic ministerial charge to Thomas Hopkins (1759–1787)—*Pastoral Cautions* (1785)²³—the life of the Puritan Richard Blackerby (1574–1648) as it was published in John Gillies' *Historical Collections Relating to Remarkable Periods of the Success of the Gospel, and Eminent Instruments Employed in Promoting It* (1754), and *Sixty Memorials of a Godly Life*, frequently assigned to John Rogers of Dedham (d.1636), a fiery Puritan preacher. Presumably they discussed the content of what they read and in this way sought to inflame their hearts and strengthen their wills in God's service.

And recall that it was out of this circle of friends that William Carey was sent to India and the modern missionary movement in the English-speaking world set afoot. As missiologist Harry R. Boer put it: "Fuller's insistence on the duty of all men everywhere to believe the gospel ... played a determinative role in the crystallization of Carey's missionary vision."²⁴ Fuller himself compared their sending of Carey to India as the lowering of him into a deep gold-mine to extract "gold"—precious Indian souls—for God. Fuller and his close friends, Sutcliff and Ryland, had pledged themselves to "hold the ropes" as long as Carey lived.

The meeting together of these eighteenth-century Baptists had an enormous impact for good in the Baptist denomination, in the larger sphere of Evangelicalism, and in the world at large. Who knows what God might do through such Associations today!

²² Cited J.E. Ryland, "Memoir" in *Pastoral Memorials* (London: B.J. Holdsworth, 1826), I, 17, note.

²³ See *The Works of Abraham Booth*, ed. Michael A.G. Haykin with Alison E. Haykin (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2006), I, 57–84.

²⁴ *Pentecost and Missions* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1961), 24.

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A Vision to Emulate: Spurgeon's College and its Recognition of the Importance of Principles from Charles Spurgeon to His Students

Dr Philip McCormack¹

ABSTRACT:

Charles Spurgeon's book *Lectures to My Students* has influenced tens of thousands of Christians since its first publication. In his weekly lectures, Spurgeon sought to impress upon future leaders key principles that he embodied in his own life and ministry. Although the focus of the article is upon how these principles have been embedded in the current College's strategic plan, they can apply to any Theological Training Institute.

KEY WORDS: Education, enterprise, mission, strategy, vision

INTRODUCTION

Spurgeon's College, London, was founded by the great Victorian preacher and philanthropist Charles Haddon Spurgeon in 1856. He recognised the injustice and frustration faced by those who desired to serve churches as ordained ministers but who had not benefitted from the academic education required to gain entry for professional training. Spurgeon wanted to embrace natural talents and abilities and looked for potential and passion, rather than academic privilege and family connections, when recruiting his students. From its modest beginnings in terms of student numbers, over 5000 churches worldwide have been served by Spurgeon's ministers and its trained ministers are active in over 35 countries. Today Spurgeon's College continues to prepare candidates for ordination to Baptist ministry within the Baptist Union of Great Britain and pastors from other denominations and those called to missional work in its ministerial formation programmes.

In the "Introduction and Apology" section in *Lecturers to My Students*,² Spurgeon recounts how he visited his College regularly on Fridays. During these visits he would meet with students and give a lecture to them on various subjects. He recalls how he found the students weary from studying and that he purposely made his lectures "colloquial, familiar, full of anecdote and often

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² C.H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to my Students*. Available from [www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/spurgeon/Lectures to My Students-C.H. Spurgeon.pdf](http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/spurgeon/Lectures%20to%20My%20Students-C.H.%20Spurgeon.pdf) (accessed 2 June 21).

humorous.”³ Today, *Lecturers to My Students* is known internationally and has remained in continuous print since its first publication in 1875. Despite their celebrated status, Spurgeon’s lectures were never intended, or prepared, for “the public eye” as he phrased it.⁴ In his reflection on why he was publishing, in essence, his insights into Christian ministry Spurgeon says that he was:

conscious of no motive in printing them but that of desiring to keep my counsels alive in the memories of those who heard them years ago, and impressing them upon others who dwell beyond the precincts of our classroom.⁵

It is interesting to note that Spurgeon was conscious of impressing his “counsels,” shared with his students, but upon others well beyond his College in London. Rather than focus upon how the counsel of the Prince of Preachers might be embraced by other theological institutions, this article will focus upon three key principles that may be identified in *Lectures to My Students*, and how these have been recognised by Spurgeon’s College in the 21st century. This genesis of this article is a reflection, by the author, on the educational and societal landscape within which the College has to operate in the contemporary world.

A critical element in the armoury of the leader of an organisation or institution is that of strategic leadership.⁶ At the heart of this concept is the leader’s ability to coherently express a strategic vision for their organisation, which becomes the basis upon they seek to persuade colleagues and staff to “buy in” to that vision. Needless to say, this is a difficult task and requires time, patience and absolute belief in the vision finally presented to others. There may be many contributing factors in why this is a difficult task but one of them is that the majority of people do not work or operate at the strategic or policy level within an organisation. The majority of people work at what may be described as the tactical level (i.e. where the focus is upon doing tasks or procedures), or at the operational level (i.e. where there is a coordinating of different tasks and procedures to ensure coherence or output). At the strategic and policy level the focus is different to the tactical and operational. It is not dislocated from the first and second order of focus but rather is primarily concerned with the direction of travel an organisation must take and underlying principles that shape that journey. Those who have the responsibility of working at the strategic and policy level will often seek to derive their strategic vision from core

³ Spurgeon, *Lectures to my Students*, “Introduction and Apology.”

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ For an interesting introduction to mapping the dimensions of strategic leadership, see, B.J. Davies & B. Davies. Strategic Leadership, in *School of Management and Leadership*, Vol 24, 2004, 29-38.

foundational principles, while ensuring that the broad goals the organisation is striving to achieve exist in symbiotic alignment.

This short article will explain some of the thinking underpinning important elements in the Spurgeon College’s current strategic plan and demonstrate that it takes seriously key principles that Mr Spurgeon shared with his students regarding his approach to education, enterprise and mission. Even though the current strategic vision of the College will result in change, the College is nevertheless, moving closer to critical components that can be identified in *Lectures to My Students*. Significant change within Christian communities can be disconcerting, especially if some within those communities do not fully understand the principles underpinning the change. The three principles explored in this reflection will provide assurance that the College not only recognises the importance of these principles but has embedded them in its strategic vision and plan. The focus remains the College’s ongoing mission of training and preparing gospel centred servants of the Living God, and as such it has been written for a Christian readership.



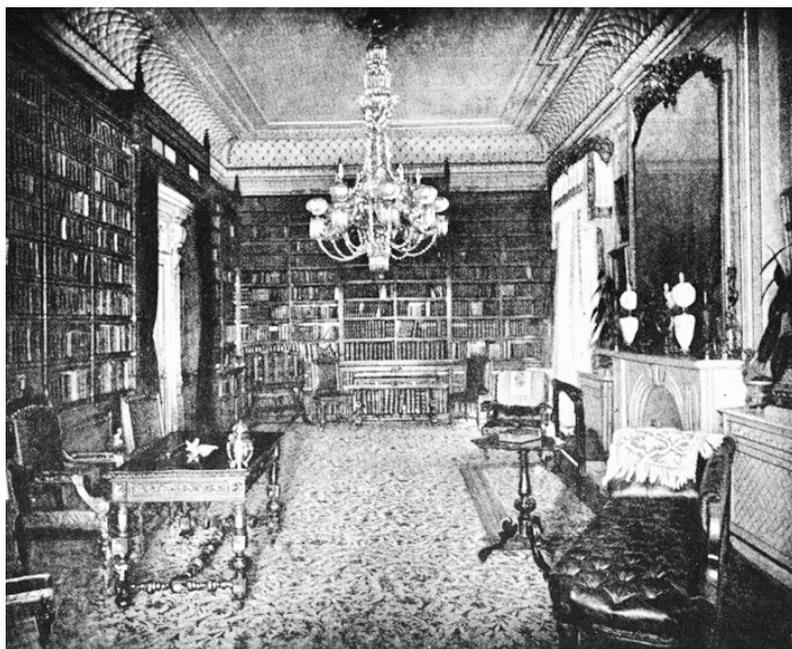
A frieze of Mr Spurgeon lecturing to his students

PRINCIPLE 1: MINISTRY DEMANDS EDUCATION

Charles Spurgeon declared to his students that “our ministry demands mind.”⁷ For Spurgeon, education was a critical part of the student and minister’s life.

⁷ Spurgeon, *Lectures to my Students*, “The Necessity of Ministerial Progress”.

This priority is shown in the earliest days of the Christian church, when the Apostle Paul admonished his protégé Timothy to “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). Spurgeon’s personal library was testimony to his lifelong desire to deepen his knowledge of God, the scriptures, and the world around him. The College library in Temple Street must have made a lasting impression on every student to the importance Spurgeon placed on providing the tools necessary to equip servants of God for ministry. For Spurgeon reading was a necessity not only for pastors but for all Christians.



Spurgeon’s library at Westwood



The college library in Temple Street

Spurgeon told his students that “we must give Him our mind as well as our affections, and that mind should be well furnished, that we may not offer Him an empty casket...we must cultivate ourselves to the highest point, and we should do this, first, by gathering in knowledge that we may fill the barn, and then by acquiring discrimination that we may winnow the heap.”⁸ The study of the scriptures was for Spurgeon, the main business of the servant of God but he was quick also to say “we must not confine ourselves to one topic of study.” Spurgeon stated that, “it seems to me that every student for the Christian ministry ought to know at least something of every science; [they] should intermeddle with every form of knowledge that may be useful in [their] life’s work.”⁹ The curriculum at Spurgeon’s College was educationally broad. Indeed, Spurgeon said, “to all we labour to give a liberal English education and sound Biblical education.”¹⁰ Included in the curriculum, along with the study of scripture, doctrine, church history and the conduct of church work was a basic introduction to: Astronomy, Chemistry, Zoology, Geology, Botany, Moral Philosophy, Metaphysics, Mathematics, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Poetry, the first six books of Euclid and Practical Oratory.¹¹ Studying at Spurgeon’s College,

⁸ Ibid.

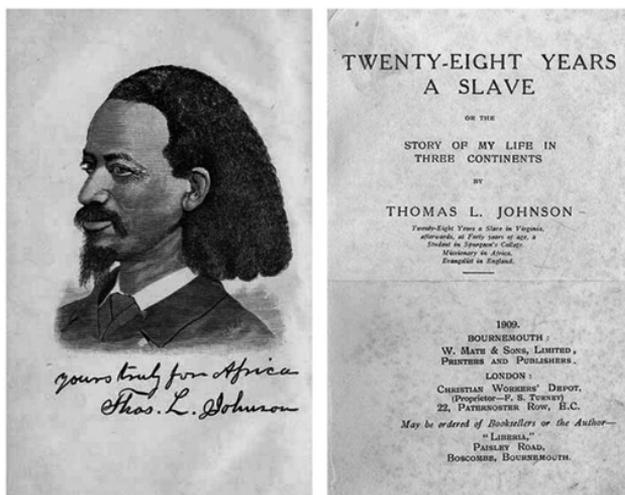
⁹ Spurgeon, *Lectures to my Students*, Lecture XXVIII, “The Sciences as Sources of Illustration Astronomy.”

¹⁰ *Annual Report* (1886) 32.

¹¹ See M. Nicholls, *Lights to the World: A History of Spurgeon’s College 1856-1992* (Harpenden, Herts: Nuprint, 1994).

both during and after the Presidency of Charles Spurgeon was extremely demanding and pressurised.

Thomas Johnson gives a fascinating insight into the demands upon students at Mr Spurgeon's College in his amazing book *Twenty-Eight Years a Slave*.¹²



As an enslaved man, Mr Johnson had heard about Charles Spurgeon, who was well-known in the United States as an abolitionist and fierce critic of slavery. After his emancipation, Thomas Johnson wanted to travel to England and study at Mr Spurgeon's College. When in England, his friend Mr Hind Smith wrote to Mr Spurgeon inquiring if Thomas would be admitted as a student. The reply was very simple: "Dear Mr. Hind Smith,—Yes, let the dear man come—C. H. Spurgeon."¹³ Mr Johnson talks of his relationship with Mr Spurgeon in his book but also provides a fascinating insight into the pressures and demands of studying at Spurgeon's College. One such example relates to the use of a "Blue Letter." In his account Mr Johnson says:

One day I heard that Mr.---- had received a "Blue Letter." "Blue Letter? Blue Letter?" I wondered what it could mean at all. I enquired of Brother Davis if he could enlighten me about the matter. "Well," said he, "You know Mr.----? He has made no progress, no proficiency. Men coming to the College are looked upon as men, not as children, and are supposed to take advantage of the opportunities offered them. If they fail to do this they are advised to leave, and the advice is generally given to them in the form of a letter." "That's it," thought I, "that 'Blue Letter' haunted me. Mr.---- had left quietly, and no one seemed

¹² Available at <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/johnson1/johnson.html> (accessed 2 June 21).

¹³ Mr. Spurgeon's reply is in the heritage collect at Spurgeon's College.

to know where he had gone. After this, in the tram, in the bus, in the railway carriage, at home, or at meeting appointments, not a moment would be lost in my effort to grasp my lessons. In fact, this 'Blue Letter' information was quite a help by stirring me up to more earnest endeavours. I regard my connection with the Pastors' College as the turning point in an important passage of my life's history, for which I feel continually grateful. I am sure that I never could have so well succeeded in the African Mission, or in Evangelistic work at home, had it not been for the training and fraternal helpfulness of the Pastors' College, with its many advantages, and I shall remember in all my work how that I gathered strength and wisdom from the faithful tuition so kindly given me.

While Spurgeon's College stopped using "Blue Letters" many, many years ago, it has never ceased striving to provide the highest quality of training and formation in its ministry of equipping the servant of God for the ministry that God has called them to. Part of its strategic plan will see a deliberate broadening of the educational programmes on offer at the College. This will take the shape of developing and then offering dual honours programmes/pathways (Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology, Counselling etc.), which in turn will create the opportunity for ministerial students to access a wider range of elective units as part of their overall ministerial formation, along much the same lines as described by Mr Spurgeon in his lectures to his students. The principle of "ministry demands education" reflects, in the opinion of the author, an important component of ministerial formation, in that ministers of the gospel must have a breadth of preparation that enables them to serve effectively in a modern setting and engage intelligently with a non-Christian, or even post-Christian society.

PRINCIPLE 2: MINISTRY REQUIRES ENTERPRISE

In Lecture XXI "Earnestness: Its Marring and Maintenance" Spurgeon tells his students to "look well to yourselves that you do not become flat, stale, and unprofitable, and keep yourselves sweet by maintaining an enterprising spirit."¹⁴ Turning the focus of his lecture upon those students who were about to leave College and embark upon their ministry Spurgeon says:

Stir the fire also by frequent attempts at fresh service. Shake yourself out of routine by breaking away from the familiar fields of service... I suggest to you, as a subordinate but very useful means of keeping the heart fresh, the frequent addition of new work to your usual engagements... You will have a good share of work to do, and few to help you in it, and the years will grind along heavily; watch against this, and use all means to prevent your becoming dull and sleepy, and among them use that which experience leads me to press upon you. I find

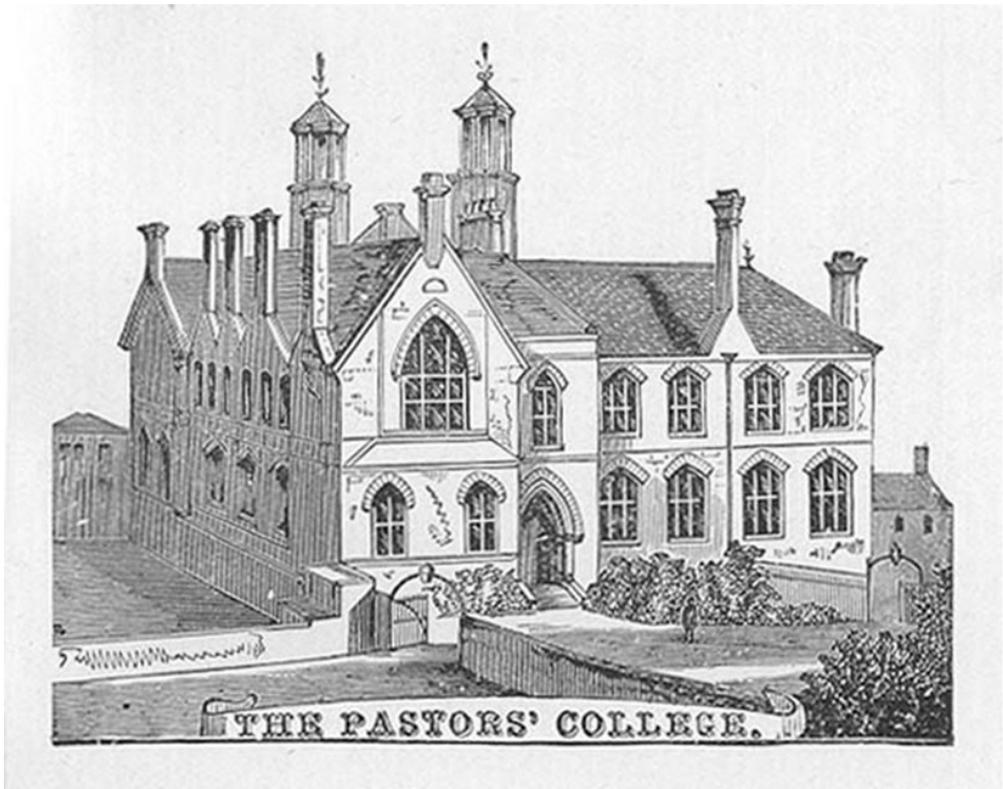
¹⁴ Spurgeon, *Lectures to my Students*.

it good for myself to have some new work always to hand. The old and usual enterprises must be kept up, but somewhat must be added to them...Never say "it is enough," nor accept the policy of "rest and be thankful." Do all you possibly can, and then do a little more.

The English word enterprise means "a project or undertaking, especially a bold or complex one." It is not possible to study the life of Charles Spurgeon and fail to see the lived example of this definition of enterprise in every aspect of his life and ministry. He was not someone who simply "talked a good talk." His whole life was a living testimony of ministry maintaining an enterprising spirit. In his life, Spurgeon pastored the largest church in the world (6000 members), preached between four to ten times a week, wrote about 150 books, edited a monthly magazine, sold thousands of copies of his sermons published in *The Penny Pulpit*, and established and oversaw sixty-six Christian charities, two of which continue to this day: Spurgeon's College and Spurgeon's children's charity.



MR. SPURGEON'S ORPHANAGE, STOCKWELL.



Spurgeon's enterprise and voluminous output was noticed among his contemporaries. The missionary David Livingstone once asked him "how can you accomplish so much in one day?" Mr Spurgeon replied, "you forget Mr Livingstone, there are two of us working."¹⁵ There is a very real sense in which Spurgeon's enterprising spirit embodies the great challenge from the father of modern Protestant missions, William Carey, who said "expect great things from God and attempt great things for God." Spurgeon lived his life as someone who attempted great things for God because he lived in constant partnership with the Lord he committed his entire life to and who achieves "for more abundantly than all we ask or think" (Eph 3:20).

Charles Spurgeon's ethos of never saying "it is enough," or "rest and be thankful" but "do all you possibly can, and then do a little more" can appear challenging to some modern Christians. The entrepreneurial spirit, however, frequently identifiable when God is at work accomplishing his sovereign purposes, is always recognisable in the enterprising spirit of those seeking to

¹⁵ Spurgeon was referring to his wife Susanna. For an excellent introduction into the life of this amazing servant of God see, R. Rhodes, *Susie: The Life and Legacy of Susannah Spurgeon, Wife of Charles H. Spurgeon* (Chicago: Moody, 2018).

work in partnership with their God. While every generation of Christians face challenges that may be distinct to their own age, the church in Great Britain is facing a well-documented decline in regular church attendance.¹⁶ The decline in church attendance has also been accompanied with a stark change in public attitude towards Christianity and Christians. The sociologist Steve Bruce observes that since the 1851 Census of Religious Worship in Great Britain, “the typical Briton has gone from churchgoing Christian, to nominal Christian, to non-Christian who nonetheless thinks religion (in the abstract at least) is a good thing, to being someone who supposes that religion does more harm than good.”¹⁷ In an increasingly secular, post-Christian age the church can not only survive but thrive if it looks to its heritage and embraces an entrepreneurial, enterprising spirit. Like the unchanging nature and character of God, the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, is still “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16).

In the introduction to his book *Lectures to my Students*, Spurgeon writes of wishing to “foster the spirit of consecration, courage, and confidence in God.” Godly courage comes from a consecrated heart and mind that has absolute confidence in God. Those who manifest these godly traits can, as Church history reveals, face opposition. William Carey was considered an enthusiast, a radical by his contemporaries and Spurgeon was regularly ridiculed in the British press for his uncompromising presentation of the gospel. Spirit filled entrepreneurial disciples who embrace and manifest an enterprising spirit will invariably face criticism and ridicule. A spirit of enterprise requires courage and a determination to hold one’s nerve. It means being willing to move dynamically out of well-defined comfort zones and being comfortable taking and holding critical things at risk, while taking balanced and measured decisions. Enterprise is not being radical for the sake of being radical. As Spurgeon told his students:

The old and usual enterprises must be kept up, but somewhat must be added to them...Never say “it is enough,” nor accept the policy of “rest and be thankful.” Do all you possibly can, and then do a little more.

“Ministry requires enterprise,” is and must remain a key principle that can provide a living link with the great heroes of the Christian faith but must be as natural to the servant of God as breath is to the lungs.

PRINCIPLE 3: MINISTRY INSPIRES MISSION

Charles Spurgeon’s passion for preaching the gospel of the crucified and risen Christ is infused in his sermons, books, letters and lectures to his students. In

¹⁶ See P. Brierley, *Pulling Out of the Nose Dive: A Contemporary Picture of Churchgoing; what the 2005 English Church Census Reveals* (Swindon: Christian Research, 2006).

¹⁷ S. Bruce, *British Gods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) 270.

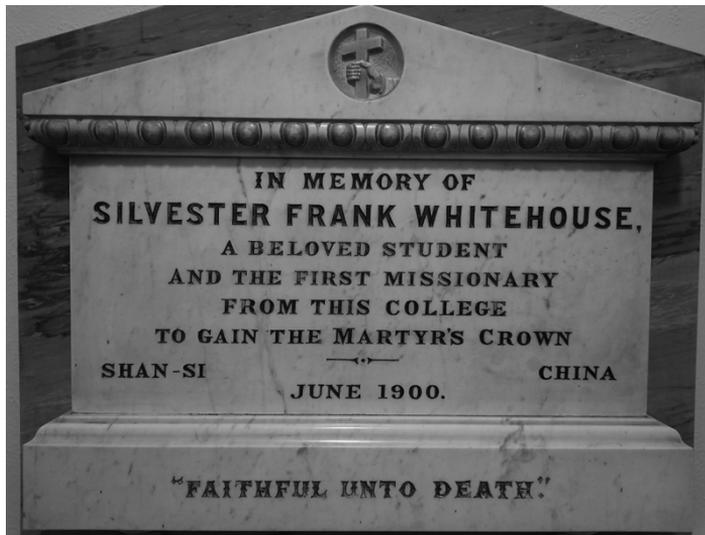
Lecture XV, “The Necessity of Ministerial Progress,” Spurgeon moves on from discussing the necessity of education to ministry and mission.¹⁸ Spurgeon’s last point in this lecture was the challenge to his students to consider mission. For him and many of his contemporaries, an important part of this was preaching the gospel at home and overseas. As an evangelical Calvinist, Spurgeon wrestled with what he described as the millions of people in many countries who “know nothing of our King.” He shared with his students that he had wrestled with the question of “whether I ought to go” but that “after balancing the whole thing I feel bound to keep my place.” For Spurgeon, “each student entering his college should consider this matter, and surrender [themselves] to the work unless there are conclusive reasons for [their] not doing so.” Spurgeon told his students that he was impressed by the German Pastor Harms whose church members had consecrated themselves to mission activity at home and overseas, which included the donation of a house that was used as a missionary college and funding the purchase of a ship to take missionaries to various countries. Spurgeon then turned his attention to Moravians:

Look at the Moravians! How every man and woman becomes a missionary, and how much they do in consequence. Let us catch their spirit. Is it a right spirit? Then it is right for us to have it. It is not enough for us to say, “Those Moravians are very wonderful people!” We ought to be wonderful people too. Christ did not purchase the Moravians any more than he purchased us; they are under no more obligation to make sacrifices than we are... “Forward” is the watchword today!¹⁹

In the reception of Spurgeon’s College today is a marble plaque in memory to Silvester Frank Whitehouse who, along with his wife and 32,000 Chinese Christians, was killed in China at the age of 33. It is an enduring testimony to the life of a student who went forward to serve his Lord.

¹⁸ Spurgeon, *Lectures to my Students*.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Lecture XV, “The Necessity of Ministerial Progress.”



The modern day Spurgeon's College draws its vision from three sources: 1, a confessional foundation. It is a Christ-centred, evangelical college in the Baptist tradition, engaged in biblical and theological education; 2, a formative ethos, flowing from our life as a community meeting daily for worship, where preparation for Christian service is enriched by the practice of gathering daily as a community to glorify God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and 3, A geographical location, which is intentionally London based but maintains a national focus and a global reach. In keeping with Charles Spurgeon's entrepreneurial, enterprising missional heart, the College entered into a formal partnership with BMS World Mission in 2019.

A central part of the vision behind this partnership was the opportunity to create a centre capable of meeting a wide range of spiritual and theological needs for global partners, the missional church worldwide and the equipping of missional disciples in the UK. The leadership of the College and BMS World Mission believe that the collaborative partnership could be a critical component in transformational change within the Christian community within the UK and internationally. BMS and Spurgeon's College are actively exploring new opportunities to work with international colleges and missional organisations as assistants and facilitators both in Europe and in the Global South. The College has a long (165 years) and rich experience in ministerial formation, theological and university education. BMS' extensive experience working with international partners, sometimes in demanding cultural contexts, brings a wealth of knowledge, which when combined with Spurgeon's UK higher educational expertise offers a unique combination that is resulting in new and exciting opportunities in a global context. Ministry inspiring mission remains very much a part of the College's strategic plan.

One example of this vision for mission in the contemporary age is a project the College undertook on behalf of the Baptist Union of Great Britain to develop and produce a suite of pioneering, missional leadership courses for Christians with the desire to be change makers through sharing the gospel of the risen Christ. Spurgeon's College was commissioned to create a bespoke suite of courses for pioneers, that had been designed by pioneers, written by pioneers, created by pioneers for pioneers working in new and imaginative ways in the 21st century. The global pandemic has impacted every aspect of life in the UK and time will reveal how enduring this will be as life returns to some form of "normality." Churches and individual Christians across Europe have had to adapt to new "digital" or online approaches to worship and what it means to meet together as a community of believers gathering unto the name of the Lord, using the realm of cyber-space as meeting space. Some commentators have said that Covid-19 only accelerated changes that were already evident in modern life. How churches move forward, as countries emerge from Covid-19 lockdowns and societal restrictions, is perhaps one of the most pressing question for Christian leaders. It is unlikely that the UK will simply resume the pre-Covid patterns familiar to so many; Zoom or Microsoft Teams will continue to play a key role as everyone builds upon the digital skills learned from necessity during the pandemic. The suite of missional leadership courses developed by Spurgeon's College has at their heart the desire to do mission in a contemporary and imaginative way in a rapidly changing and evolving social landscape. The century may be different but the deep desire to be involved in mission remains exactly the same; the gospel of saving grace has not changed, only the societal context in which the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ may be shared.

CONCLUSION

Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher of Ephesus c500 BCE, is well known for his argument on flux; he is reported to have maintained that "It is not possible to step twice into the same river."²⁰ In simple terms, although a river may look the same, it is in a state of continual change. The task of preparing men and women for mission, ministry and leadership in the contemporary world will have elements that remain, at least to some extent, consistent with the past, for example the study of scripture, doctrine, church history and the conduct of church work. This, however, must be contextualised to the societal environment in which ministry is and will be delivered, which in turn will mean that it may appear very different to the experience of those who have gone before. This ancient phenomenon complicates the task of the strategic leader in articulating a vision of the way forward because it may appear to some that too much change

²⁰ Daniel W. Graham, "Heraclitus", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/heraclitus/> (accessed 4 June 21).

is or is planned to take place. Every leader knows that sharing a vision for the future is a critical part of their role and although difficult, most will accept that change is necessary.

In a rapidly fluctuating world, in which significant components of change have been accelerated by the global pandemic, Spurgeon's College will remain faithful to its mission by continuing to embrace key principles that Charles Spurgeon shared with his students and manifested in his own personal life, namely:

Principle 1: Ministry demands education

Principle 2: Ministry requires enterprise

Principle 3: Ministry inspires mission

Spurgeon's College continues to seek to remain true to its founder's vision and principles.

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John and the Synoptic Gospels. What John Knew and What John Used

Corin Mihăilă¹

ABSTRACT

The relationship of John's Gospel to the Synoptic Gospels is difficult to explain. That is the reason why there have been many proposals, even from the beginning of the church. Not even today, scholars have reached consensus. Rather, there are many competing explanations. Yet, they can be grouped into three categories, according to what John knew and what he used in writing his gospel: (1) John did not know the Synoptics; (2) John knew the Synoptics and used them as literary sources; and (3) John knew the Synoptics but did not use them. Of these three categories, the third one best explains the similarities and the differences between John and the Synoptics. But beyond stating that John knew the Synoptics but did not use them as literary sources, one is on a rather uncertain territory. Therefore, it is historically and literarily plausible to see John as being aware of the Synoptics and even having read them, but whether he chose to harmonize them, adapt them, supplement them, or reinterpret them, is less clear. In the end, it is clear that John wrote a different Gospel, yet it should be read alongside and not instead of the Synoptics.

KEY WORDS: John, gospels, Synoptic, sources, relationship between John and the Synoptics, oral tradition, similarities, differences.

INTRODUCTION

D. Moody Smith concluded his essay "The Problem of John and the Synoptics in Light of the Relation Between Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels" with the following assessment of the Fourth Gospel: "[...] its presence in the canon is not only an historical fact, but a theological blessing as well as an exegetical challenge."² These three aspects in the study of the Fourth Gospel (i.e., history, theology, and hermeneutics) have constituted issues of great debate among scholars, particularly among the liberals over the last two centuries.³

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²In *John and the Synoptics* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 101; ed. Adelbert Denaux; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 162.

³See James Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), part I for the same three aspects in analyzing the Gospels.

Baur and Bultmann are among the early theologians who doubted the historical reliability of the gospels and raised questions about their historical accuracy.⁴ Over time, this radical rejection of the gospels as unreliable sources and windows into history had given way to a view that tended to differentiate between the Synoptic Gospels and the Fourth Gospel in terms of historical interests. It was argued that the focus of the author of the Fourth Gospel was not on historical facts, as was that of the Synoptics', but on theology.⁵ The consensus today, however, "is no longer historical versus theological, but that all four Gospel writers offer a portrait of Jesus that is both historically based and theologically developed."⁶ Nevertheless, scholars still rightly hold to the view that John is "the theologian *par excellence*."⁷ Andreas Köstenberger states:

⁴The first person to challenge the historical trustworthiness of the Gospels' account of the life of Jesus was Reimarus. See Henk J. de Jonge, "The Loss of Faith in the Historicity of the Gospels. H. S. Reimarus (ca 1750) on John and the Synoptics," in *John and the Synoptics* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 101; ed. Adelbert Denaux; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 409-21.

⁵What triggered this discussion was Clement of Alexandria's statement that John wrote a "spiritual

Gospel" while the Synoptic evangelists wrote history (*Hist. eccl.* 6.14.7). C. K. Barrett echoes this perspective in his suggestion of what should constitute the task of exegetical inquiry into the Fourth Gospel. He states: "It is for this interpretation [the theological meaning of the life and death of Jesus] not for accurate historical data that we must look in the Fourth Gospel," in *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 2nd ed., 1978), 54.

⁶Alan R. Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (Interpreting Biblical Texts; Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 23. For a thorough defense of the historicity of the Fourth Gospel, see Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), and D. A. Carson,

"Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel: After Dodd, What?" in *Gospel Perspectives, Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels* vol. 2 (eds. R. T. France & D. Wenham; Sheffield: JSNT Press, 1981), 83-145. See also, C. Stephen Evans, "The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: From What Perspective Should It Be Assessed?" in Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser (ed.) *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 120-141, who argues for John's historical reliability based on "non-academic" spiritual arguments. John Robinson, who was not of conservative persuasion, claimed, in his *The Priority of John* (London: SCM, 1985), 33, that John's "theology does not, I believe, take us further from the history but leads us more deeply into it."

⁷Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* (The Anchor Bible Reference Library. Edited, Updated, Introduced, and Concluded by Francis J. Moloney. New York: Double Day, 2003), 107. R. Bauckham, in *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 112, goes so far as to claim that "to its contemporaries the Gospel of John would have looked considerably more like historiography than the Synoptic Gospels would." He argues this based on the chronological and topographical precision, and on the discourses and dialogues of Jesus, concluding that John wrote as a sensible historiographer. See also J. Ramsey Michaels, commenting on Bauckham's conclusion in *The Gospel of John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 28.

“...once prepared by the Synoptic witness, the readers are readied to climb the Johannine peak.”⁸

Once the issue of the historical reliability of the Gospels (and of the Gospel of John in particular) has been accepted as a presupposition in exegesis, the next highly debated issue (not unrelated to the previous) has been the way we should account for the differences between the Fourth Gospel’s account of the life and death of Jesus and the Synoptic Gospels’ presentation of the same. If all four Gospels are equally historical and theological, how does one explain the differences between John and the Synoptics? Do such discrepancies betray a lack of knowledge of the Synoptic Gospels on the part of John? Or did John know and read the Synoptic Gospels, but chose not to use them as he wrote his Gospel?⁹

Such questions are legitimate even in the twenty first century, when postmodernism has called into question the validity of historical enquiry and the objectivity of meaning. Although the tendency these days is to seek for meaning in front of the text, in the reader-response, the text of the Gospel is still the object of our study. One does not have the luxury of ignoring the text and the difficulties it presents us and of constructing whatever meaning we may wish to in filling in the “gaps.”¹⁰ The reader must start from the text and discover meaning within the text. Meaning is text-conditioned and text-determined, the text as we have it. This synchronic approach to the text of the Gospel of John that sees the text as meaning-laden and seeks to unearth this meaning through exegesis, however, must account for the so-called “aporiai” in John’s narrative, that is, the apparent dislocations, abrupt changes, and awkward conjunctions that seem to point to disruptions between the elements from the same context.¹¹

⁸Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (BTNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

⁹The question of the relationship of John’s Gospel to the Synoptic Gospels starts with the presupposition that John wrote after the Synoptic Gospels were already circulating as text. For a conservative view of the dating of the gospels and the connection of the date with the issue of sources, see, e.g., D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2nd ed., 2005), 260.

¹⁰See Wendy E.S. North, “Why Should Historical Criticism Continue to Have a Place in Johannine Studies?” in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning. The Past, Present and Future of Johannine Studies* (ed. Tom Thatcher, Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 19-21.

¹¹Scholars have identified several aporiai. Here we will provide only a couple of examples: Jn.7:53-8:11 looks like later interpolation; the break in the “final discourses” at Jn.14:31 (“Arise, let us go from here”) seems to betray different sources; John 21 seems to be an appendix and possibly anticlimactic. Such apparent disjunctions in the text, however, should not be taken as proving lack of narrative unity, but neither should it deny the validity of investigating the sources behind John’s text and of raising questions about literary unity. See C.S. Keener “Gospel of John” in Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown and Norman Perrin (eds.) *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (second edition; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013), 421–2.

The presence of these apparent inconsistencies forces the reader to dig deeper and find an explanation.¹² In this process, the reader of the Gospel of John will inevitably raise the question of the sources and traditions of John, which he used, adapted, and possibly changed, more or less, which may account for these shifts in the text.¹³ In other words, the serious student of the Bible will start with the text and look within the text for meaning—the synchronic approach, but will also go behind the text, to the sources employed by John, to explain the apparent inconsistencies—the diachronic approach.¹⁴

In this article, we are concerned to understand how John used his sources and, more specifically, whether John knew and used the Synoptic Gospels. Such concerns will result from a comparison of the Fourth Gospel with the Synoptic Gospels, which will bring to light both similarities and differences between them.

Different answers have been provided to account for both the differences and similarities between John and the Synoptics over the last two centuries of the modern critical scholarship.¹⁵ James Dvorak, at the end of the twentieth century,

¹²Several explanations have been proposed. For instance, R. Brown, in his *Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (NY: Paulist Press, 1979) argued for stages in the community's development that betrays layers of text and revisions. Such attempts at reconstructing stages of redaction based on the apparent incongruities in the text have not convinced many scholars, however. Such an approach is rather speculative, subjective, and futile. R. A. Culpepper, in his *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), represents the majority view that focuses on the theological purpose that lies behind the way John constructs his narrative and on the stylistic cohesiveness.

¹³These disjunctions do not prove necessarily the use of various sources; it only raises the question of sources. See Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 38, where he states: "such dissonances need not in every case imply distinct sources." He provides examples in ancient literature of dissonances occurring in unified works. He also quotes Margaret Davies who contends that all source theories "fail because of the Gospel's impressive stylistic unity."

¹⁴These two approaches to the text of the Gospel of John (i.e., synchronic and diachronic) are not mutually exclusive, but complementary, and both should be the focus of the serious student. See the argument of John Ashton, "Second Thoughts on the Fourth Gospel" in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning. The Past, Present and Future of Johannine Studies* (ed. Tom Thatcher, Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 2-3. For an explanation of the synchronic and diachronic analysis of the text and how they complement each other, see Wilhelm Egger, *Methodenlehre zum Neuen Testament. Einführung in linguistische und historisch-kritische Methoden* (Herder, Freiburg, 1999).

¹⁵The relationship between John and the Synoptic Gospels has been a topic of discussion even from the early history of Christianity. Origen, for instance, to avoid the difficulty raised by the divergences between the two bodies of writings, adopted an allegorical interpretation of Scripture, while also stating that 'if someone carefully examined the gospels with regard to the historical disharmony that each one shows...then the person would surely become dizzy from trying to confirm that the gospels are true.' (*Comm. Jo.* 10.3). See J.W. Barker, *John's Use of*

summarized each view under three headings: dependence, independence, and mediating view.¹⁶ Such categories are correct when approaching the subject from a source critical point of view, though we believe it is more useful and more precise to discuss the different views according to what John knew and what John used.¹⁷ These are more adequate criteria, since categories of independence and dependence are too rigid.¹⁸ Thus, the categories in which we will discuss John's Gospel in relation to the Synoptic Gospels are as follows: (1) John did not know the Synoptics; (2) John knew the Synoptics and used them; (3) John knew the Synoptics but did not use them. Evidently, each of these three categories supports variations and there are nuances within each, as we will see, especially when it comes to the sources that may have been available to John, but most views fall within these three broad categories.

The purpose of this article is to analyze these three views concerning the relationship of the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels, build upon previous studies, and bring recent relevant material in this discussion (especially from the last two decades) in order to adjudicate between them.¹⁹ In the end, it will be shown that the best explanation both of the differences and similarities between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics Gospels is that John knew the Synoptics (at least Mark's Gospel), but did not seem to have used them nor followed them extensively and verbatim. Rather, he chose to write an independent Gospel with little overlap with the Synoptics and thus little influence from them.²⁰ Beyond this general conclusion, we believe we are on speculative grounds.

Matthew (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 3. For a detailed history of the explanations, see *ibid.*, 1-12; D. Moody Smith, *John among the Gospels* (second edition; Columbia: South Carolina University Press, 2001), the first seven chapters. For a summary of the options, see M.F. Bird, "Synoptics and John" in Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown and Norman Perrin (eds.) *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (second edition; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013), 922.

¹⁶James D. Dvorak "The Relationship Between John and the Synoptic Gospels," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (1998): 201-13.

¹⁷Our criterion of categorizing is in line with the more recent study by Wendy E.S. North in her book *What John Knew and What John Wrote: A Study in John and the Synoptics* (Interpreting Johannine Literature vol.2; Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2020), though she reaches a somewhat different conclusion from ours.

¹⁸For instance, independence does not rule out knowledge.

¹⁹For recent attempts in explaining the relationship, see S.E. Porter and H.T. Ong (ed) *The Origins of John's Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), particularly the essays by Ilaria Ramelli "John the Evangelist's Work: An Overlooked *Redaktionsgeschichte* Theory from the Patristic Age," 30-52, Michael Labahn "'Secondary Orality' in the Gospel of John: A 'Post-Gutenberg' Paradigm for Understanding the Relationship between Written Gospel Texts," 53-80, and Craig L. Blomberg "The Saying of Jesus in Mark: Does Mark Ever Rely on a Pre-Johannine Tradition?" 81-100.

²⁰We are aware that any view is a theory that seeks to best explain the evidence. In the end, all views are tentative and start from presuppositions regarding the inspiration, inerrancy,

An analysis of the relationship between the Synoptics and the Gospel of John is important because it will help the student to read the Gospels adequately. Once a conclusion will be reached concerning the relationship of John and the Synoptics, the reader will be able to answer further questions with more precision, questions such as: How did John intend his readers to read his Gospel in relation to the Synoptic Gospels? Should the reader of the Gospels read John in light of the Synoptic Gospels? Or should the reader read the Synoptic Gospels in light of the Fourth Gospel? Or should the reader read the Synoptic Gospels at all, since he has John? Or should the reader read all four gospels synoptically? And more importantly, is the theology of John of a different order than that of the Synoptic Gospels? The answer to all these questions will receive some clarity and direction once the question of John's knowledge (or lack of knowledge) of the Synoptic Gospels and their use (or lack of use) is answered.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE FOURTH GOSPEL AND THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Anybody who has read John's Gospel in parallel with the Synoptics has noticed both similarities and, especially, differences between them. But it is important to see clearly what we are dealing with when we are talking about differences and similarities between them so that we may not exaggerate the differences nor neglect the similarities. Thus, we will list specific cases of differences and similarities and then see how these have been explained. In comparing John with the Synoptics, one may ultimately have to decide whether the similarities or the differences constitute the starting point. Those who seek to prove John's knowledge and use of the Synoptics will point to the obvious similarities, while those who favor John's lack of knowledge of the Synoptics and therefore independence from them will give more weight to the differences. Those who account equally for similarities and differences will choose a more mediating position that supports knowledge of the Synoptics on the part of John (hence similarities), but not necessarily dependence on them (hence differences).

*Similarities*²¹

It is important to realize that there are clear similarities between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels. Otherwise, we may tend to exaggerate the differences and suppress the evidence to the contrary. The similarities are of different kinds.

reliability, and historicity of the Gospels. The more liberal scholars tend to see irreconcilable contradictions between the Gospels and possible corrections of each other while the more conservative scholars start from a belief in the inerrancy and historicity of the Gospels.

²¹ See Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 156–57; D.A. Carson, *The Gospel of John* (PNTC, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 46–47.

Both the Synoptics and John, for instance, contain some of the same stories such as the feeding of the five thousand (Mk. 6:32–44 par. Jn. 6:1–15), and the walking on the water (Mk. 6:45–52 par. Jn. 6:16–21).

They also narrate incidents, though not identical, but similar in subject: healing of paralyzed (Mk.2:1ff cf. Jn.5:1ff) and of blind people (e.g., Mk.8:22ff cf. Jn.9) and raising of the dead (Lk.7:11ff cf. Jn.11).

Also, Jesus' teaching in both the Synoptics and John is very similar. For instance, they both present Jesus as defying the traditional interpretation of the Sabbath law (Lk.6:1ff cf. Jn.5:1ff). Moreover, the macrostructure of John and the Synoptics (especially Mark) is identical. They both follow the same outline of Jesus' ministry: baptism of Jesus; Galilean ministry interspersed with Jerusalem and Samaria material; Jesus goes to Jerusalem, then passion, death, and resurrection. This outline is enriched by details present in all four Gospels, such as: Jesus speaks to the crowds, performs miracles, has disciples following him, is in conflict with the Pharisees, etc. In this respect, according to Culpepper, both John and the Synoptics are Gospel genre and were recognized as such even from the beginning.²² James Dunn is right then to state: "The theological corollary is clear: from its earliest format, a Gospel was 'a passion narrative with extended introduction,' the teaching and activities of Jesus set within a framework provided by the story of the cross and resurrection as climax so much so that it becomes at once questionable whether any Gospel lacking that framework deserved the title Gospel."²³ Therefore, the similarities are more and more evident as we near the end of the Gospel account. For instance, in the resurrection appearance narratives, each Johannine account, with the exception of the risen Jesus' conversation with Peter, has a Synoptic parallel, whether close or remote (e.g., Jesus' appearance to the women in Mk.16:1ff par. Jn.20:11-18).²⁴

Thus, one may see from this concise presentation of the similarities between the Synoptics and John that the greatest emphasis is placed on the macro-structure of the Gospels, but not to the exclusion of verbatim parallels (e.g., Mk.14:3 par. Jn.12:3; Mt.26:3 par. Jn.11:47-53; Lk.23:4, 14, 22 par. Jn.18:38, 19:4, 6).²⁵ It is

²²Culpepper, *John*, 18.

²³James Dunn, "John and the Synoptics as a Theological Question," in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith* (eds. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 306.

²⁴Cf., D. M. Smith, "The Problem of John and the Synoptics in Light of the Relation Between Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels," in *John and the Synoptics* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 101. Ed. Adelbert Denaux, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 160.

²⁵See J. Ramsey Michaels, *John*, 29, n.74, where he lists parallels between John and "every stratum of Synoptic tradition: Mark, the so-called 'Q,' material distinctive to Matthew and to Luke." Keener, "Gospel of John", 426: gives as examples of overlap material the following:

mostly for this reason that the Early Church canonized John. Of course, there is a long way from this observation to the statement that John used the Synoptics as literary sources. This is made even more difficult as one notices the dissimilarities at the micro-level of the Synoptics and John.

*Differences*²⁶

Several aspects of the differences between John and the Synoptics may be mentioned here.

Firstly, John omits material that is characteristic of the Synoptics such as discourses (e.g., the Sermon on the Mount, the Olivet Discourse, narrative parables, aphoristic sayings), events in the life of Jesus (e.g., Jesus' birth, baptism, temptations, transfiguration), themes (i.e., kingdom of God), the Lord's Supper, stories of demon exorcism etc.

Secondly, John includes stories not found in the Synoptics (e.g., Jesus' encounters with Nicodemus and with the Samaritan woman), miracles (e.g., the healing of the crippled man at the Pool of Siloam and the man born blind, the turn of water into wine in Cana, the raising of Lazarus from the dead), discourses that prove Jesus' relationship to the Father (e.g., 5:17-47; 6:22-59) and the nature of his mission (e.g., 3:16-17; 6:53-58; 10:10; 17:2; 20:23) and discourses about the coming of the Paraclete (e.g., 14:25-31; 16:5-15), Jesus' high priestly prayer (chap. 17), and distinctive themes (e.g., truth, light/darkness).

Thirdly, John seems to provide substitutes to what is omitted from the Synoptics (e.g., "signs"—*sēmeia* over "miracles"—*dynameis*; "eternal life" over "kingdom of God"; realized eschatology over "not yet" eschatology; the farewell discourse in chap. 13-17 over the Sermon on the Mount).²⁷

Fourthly, a *prima facie* reading of John leads one to conclude that John's Christology is of a different order than that of the Synoptics. For instance, John clearly identifies Jesus as God (e.g., 1:1, 14; 5:18; 8:58; 20:28) and he places

Jn. 1:26-32; 6:10-13, 19-20; 12:3-8, 14. See also Wendy E.S. North *What John Knew and What John Wrote*, 2.

²⁶Most commentators list these differences. See, e.g., Carson in *John*, 21-23; Craig Blomberg in *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 153-55; Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11* (The New American Commentary, vol. 25A; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 37; Barrett, *John*, 51; M.F. Bird, "Synoptics and John," 921. Mark Allan Powell claims that "about 90 percent of the material in John's Gospel is without parallel in the other Gospels." See "Supplement to *Introducing the New Testament. A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey* (2nd ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), found on http://cdn.bakerpublishinggroup.com/processed/esource-assets/files/1799/original/9.7.Comparison_of_John_and_the_Synoptic_Gospels.pdf?1524155201, accessed on 09.23.2021.

²⁷See Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999).

much emphasis on the “I am” statements (6:36—the bread of life; 8:12—the light of the world; 10:9—the door ; 10:11—the good shepherd; 11:25—the resurrection and the life; 14:6—the way, the truth, the life; 15:1—the true vine).

Fifthly, one may notice in comparing John with the Synoptics apparent contradictions especially in how the connection between John the Baptist and Elijah is to be viewed. While John records the Baptist’s denial of being Elijah (1:21), the Synoptics record Jesus’ affirmation of John's identity as Elijah (i.e., Mat.17:10-13).

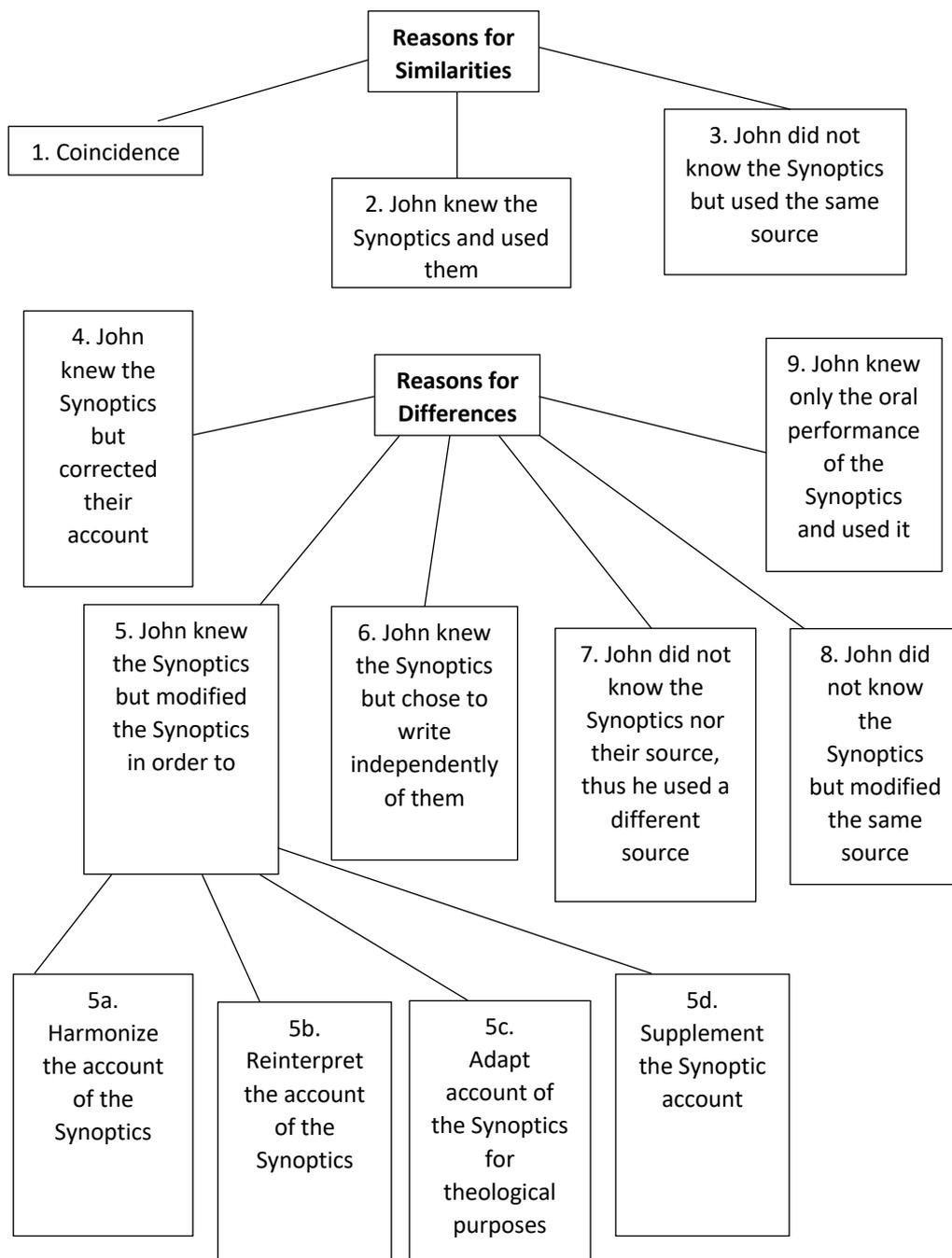
And lastly, there are chronological incongruities such as the cleansing of the Temple. In John, the cleansing of the Temple occurs at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (2:13-22) whereas in the Synoptics it occurs before Jesus’ arrest (e.g., Mk.11:15-19). Particularly noticeable here is the distinct events which constituted the catalyst of the events that ultimately led to Jesus’ crucifixion. According to the Synoptics, what led to the plot of the Jews to kill Jesus was the cleansing of the Temple (e.g., Lk.19:45-48), while according to John, the event was the raising of Lazarus from the dead (Jn.11:47-53). One may also mention here the apparent incompatibility between the emphasis of the Synoptics on Jesus’ ministry in Galilee and John’s presentation of Jesus making several trips to Jerusalem, the base of His ministry.²⁸ There have been different ways of dealing with the difficulties that arise from reading all four gospels in parallel. Conservatives have sought to harmonize the gospels whereas liberals have sought to draw even a bigger chasm between John and the Synoptics to the point of no reconciliation. In this article, however, we are not so much interested in explaining away the differences nor in using them to disprove inerrancy and inspiration. Rather, we are interested to see if these differences point in some way to John’s lack of knowledge of the Synoptics. Thus, we turn now to the question of the way we should account for both the similarities and the differences.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FOURTH GOSPEL AND THE SYNOPTICS

Considering the similarities and differences there are many views that seek to explain the relationship between John’s Gospel and the Synoptics. The possible explanations can be illustrated with the following chart.²⁹

²⁸Culpepper, *John*, 57.

²⁹We do not claim to have included in this chart all the various views. For a different chart, but less developed, see C. K. Barrett, “The Place of John and the Synoptics within the Early History of Christian Thought,” in *John and the Synoptics* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 101; ed. Adelbert Denaux; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 65-66.



Here, we will group all views under 3 broad categories, even if there are major differences between views from the same category: John did not know the Synoptics (no. 1, 3, 7, 8, and 9); John knew the Synoptics and used them (no. 2); and John knew the Synoptics but did not use them as literary sources (no. 4, 5 and 6).

John did not know the Synoptics

All the various views in this category claim that John did not know the Synoptics and thus had not read them nor used them as literary sources.³⁰ What differentiates the views within this category is the focus in their arguments: either on similarities or differences. Those who seek to explain the differences between John and the Synoptics, claim that John used a source that was completely different from what the Synoptics used (no. 7) even to the point of being divergent. Raymond Brown, for instance, argues that “the many differences cannot be accounted for without resorting to non-synoptic material.”³¹ The implication of such a view is that the similarities are pure coincidence (no. 1) or are based on common tradition (no. 3). Another possible explanation of the differences without recourse to complete independence is that John used the same source as behind the Synoptics, but modified it (no. 8), or that John knew the oral performance of the Synoptics and used it (no. 9).

Another way to differentiate between these views is based on the type of sources that lie behind John’s Gospel: either oral or written.³² If it is oral tradition, then

³⁰There is one variation of this as seen in Johannes Beutler, S.J. “In Search of a New Synthesis” in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning. The Past, Present and Future of Johannine Studies* (ed. Tom Thatcher; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), p.23-34, where he argues for a position earlier represented by Barnabas Lindars and René Kieffer, which sees the Gospel of John as a *relecture*, that is, “a re-elaboration of the Fourth Gospel by a redactor (or John himself) under the influence of the Synoptics tradition and early Christian theology and church structures,” 32. In other words, John’s Gospel was initially composed independently of the Synoptics, but through a process of re-editing, the redactor interacted later with, at least, the Synoptic tradition. See also Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament. Vol.2. History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Hermeneia Foundations and Faces Series. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 178, who allows for the possibility that John depended on the Synoptics in the final stage of the redaction.

³¹Brown, *Introduction*, 101. He also states on p.100: “If one cannot accept the hypothesis of a careless or a capricious evangelist who gratuitously changed, added, and subtracted details then one is forced to agree with Dodd that the evangelist drew the material for his stories from an independent tradition similar to but not the same as the traditions represented in the synoptic gospels.”

³²For argument in favor of oral tradition behind John’s Gospel, see James Dunn, “Let John be John: A Gospel for Its Time,” in *The Gospel and the Gospels* (ed. Peter Stuhlmacher; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 293-322; also his “John and the Oral Tradition,” in *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition* (ed. Henry Wansbrough; Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement 64; Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 351-79. See also his recent book *Jesus Remembered*, part I. Peder Borgen, likewise emphasizes the role of oral tradition in the formation of the Fourth Gospel as primary over written form, but he comes to it from a different angle: from Paul. He takes the example of the Lord’s Supper found in 1 Cor.11 as being transmitted orally as attested by Paul in 11:23. By using Paul, Borgen seeks thus to make the hypothesis of oral tradition less hypothetical. See his “John and the Synoptics,” in *The Interrelations of the Gospels* (ed. David L. Dungan; Macon: Mercer University Press, 1990), 409-37. F. Neirynek responds to Borgen’s approach in “John and the Synoptics. Response to P. Borgen,” in *John and the Synoptics. A*

John might have known a common tradition with the Synoptics, that circulated at the time he wrote, which he either used (no. 3) or modified (no. 8), or John might have known an oral performance of the Synoptics (no. 9). If it is written tradition, then it might have been something very different from the tradition behind the Synoptics (no. 7).

Regardless of how one groups these views, they are all based on the belief that there were sources behind John's Gospel that were more or less different from the Synoptics, but nevertheless different.³³ In other words, John did not know the Synoptics, only a possible version of the Synoptics (i.e., oral performance), or, closer to reality, a source other than the Synoptics, whether similar or identical to the sources behind the Synoptics or different from them.³⁴ So the views in this category stand or fall with the idea of sources behind John that are different from the Synoptics themselves. It remains for the views in this category to prove the existence of such sources and John's lack of knowledge of the Synoptics.³⁵

The problem is that such irrefutable proof has not been adduced. In fact, the idea of sources behind John's Gospel, whether identical or different from those behind the Synoptics, raises more issues than it solves. For instance, while it is true that Luke claims to have studied sources in composing his Gospel, we have no evidence in John that he did that. In fact, there may have been no need to, since the author of the Fourth Gospel claims to be John, an eyewitness to the

Symposium Led by M-E. Boismard, W. R. Farmer and F. Neirynck (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 101; ed. Adelbert Denaux; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 438-50.

For argument in favor of written tradition behind John's Gospel, see especially Rudolf Bultmann. See his *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Translated by G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971). For a critique, see D. Moody Smith, *The Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel: Bultmann's Literary Theory* (Yale University Press, 1965). Bultmann's theory is hardly followed by anybody these days. Among the most articulate advocates of a "gospel source" is Robert Fortuna Robert Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

³³The earliest modern advocate of John writing independently of the Synoptics is P. Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938). For a succinct review of his book, see J. Verheyden, "P. Gardner-Smith and 'the Turn of the Tide,'" in *John and the Synoptics* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 101; ed. Adelbert Denaux; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 423-52. Gardner-Smith was followed by his student C.H. Dodd *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), followed by Leon Morris *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969).

³⁴For a recent argument that John and Mark have a common written source, see Gary Greenberg, *The Case for a Proto-Gospel: Recovering the Common Written Source Behind Mark and John* (SBL 172, NY: Peter Lang, 2020).

³⁵From the start we can eliminate the idea of coincidence (no. 1) given the similarities, even verbatim, few as they may be. Thus, though a possible explanation, it is not viable.

events he relates in his Gospel, whereas Luke and Mark were not.³⁶ Michael Ramsey may be correct to attribute the unique character of the Gospel of John “to the interplay of inspiration and tradition (the “vertical” and “horizontal” if you will)—that is, on the one hand the testimony of the Advocate, or “Spirit of truth” (“he will testify about me,” 15:26), and on the other the testimony of the eyewitnesses (those “with me from the beginning,” 15:27), represented by “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”³⁷ Thus, there is a more natural explanation to the fact that John is different from the Synoptics: instead of postulating different sources behind the two, one may account for the differences in John to his take on the events he witnessed and his creative reflection on the facts, selecting those who fit his theological purpose, as we will see below.

Another problem with the idea that John relied on sources different from those behind the Synoptics is that such theory implies that either John or the Synoptics were incorrect, given the differences. From this point of view, the differences cannot be reconciled, and neither should we seek to; they stand as a witness to divergent sources for John and the Synoptics. But such a view turns us back to the issue of the historical reliability of the gospels (of either John or the Synoptics), an issue that has been answered. Today, we must start from what is widely accepted among scholars: all four Gospels are historically accurate. Such a starting point eliminates any view that presupposes that one or more Gospels got it wrong or were inadequate to convey the truth about Jesus and that would explain the contradictions.³⁸

Thirdly, John’s lack of knowledge of the Synoptics is historically unreasonable. Andreas Köstenberger contends that the argument that:

John was unaware of the existence of these Gospels or that he had never read them, raises the question where John must have been located, especially if he wrote considerably later than the Synoptists, so that he remained unaware of or unexposed to these other Gospels. Certainly, if the author of John’s Gospel was John, the son of Zebedee, this is unimaginable.³⁹

³⁶For the argument of John as witness, see “Richard Bauckham’s recent work, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses. The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (second ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017). See also his “The Fourth Gospel as the Testimony of the Beloved Disciple” in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 120-140. The fact that John wrote from the perspective of an eyewitness does not solve the fact that it seems that “what John wrote was a profoundly reconceived version of what he knew.” See Wendy E.S. North *What John Knew and What John Wrote*, 3.

³⁷Ramsey, *John*, 30.

³⁸James Baker states: “Did John want to supplement or to supplant Matthew? On the analogy of extracanonical gospels, I argue that John intended his Gospel to be read alongside Matthew’s, not instead of it.” *John’s use of Matthew* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), xvii.

³⁹Köstenberger, *Encountering John*.

Fourthly, John's lack of knowledge of the Synoptics and therefore his use of other sources relies too heavily on a source theory that is speculative. For instance, concerning the theory of oral tradition, D. M. Smith argues that "Oral tradition, as real as it may have been is uncontrollable and ephemeral unless it survives to us in written form."⁴⁰ But even when we postulate a written tradition behind John's Gospel, C.K. Barrett is quick to note that "Anyone who after an interval of nineteen centuries feels himself in a position to distinguish nicely between Mark and something much like Mark is at liberty to do so. The simpler hypothesis, which does not involve the postulation of otherwise unknown entities, is not without attractiveness."⁴¹

In light of these arguments, it is more plausible to look at the Synoptics as possible sources for John (besides his eyewitness testimony), in spite of the differences, than to postulate "unknown conjectural sources or traditions."⁴² Craig Keener contends: "scholars today are often unconvinced by hypothetical reconstructions of sources no longer extant. Unlike such sources, comparison with the Synoptics can afford an objective basis for comparison."⁴³ And when one takes notice of the points where John overlaps with the Synoptics, one cannot continue to uphold complete lack of knowledge of the Synoptics.⁴⁴ To the theory that John knew and used the Synoptics we now turn.

John knew and used the Synoptics

This theory starts from the literary observation of similarities between John and the Synoptics and from the historical argument that John must of known the Synoptics and even read them.

⁴⁰D. M. Smith in "The Problem of John and the Synoptics," 152. The theory of oral tradition behind the Fourth Gospel may have its origin in Papias' statement concerning the importance of oral tradition: "For I did not suppose that the information from books would help me so much as the word of a living and surviving voice," *ibid.*, n.14.

⁴¹*The Gospel According to St. John* (second ed., London: SPCK, 1978), 45. He goes so far to claim that "all source criticism of John is guesswork", *ibid.*, 17. The same can be said of the theory that John knew only the oral performance of the Synoptics (see for this theory I. D. MacKay, *John's Relationship with Mark: An Analysis of John 6 in Light of Mark 6-8* (WUNT 2/128; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004); it is nearly impossible to differentiate between oral and written Gospels. In other words, it is difficult to argue for any position that purports a source instead of the account itself.

⁴²See Gilbert Van Belle, "Tradition, Formation, and the Leuven Hypothesis" in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning. The Past, Present and Future of Johannine Studies* (ed. Tom Thatcher, Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 336.

⁴³Craig Keener, "Genre, Sources, and History" in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning. The Past, Present and Future of Johannine Studies* (ed. Tom Thatcher, Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 322-3.

⁴⁴Craig Keener contends that the similarities "reveal that John is not simply composing freely without respect to prior historical information," in "Gospel of John" 426.

The view that John must have known and used the Synoptics has been advocated most recently by the “school of Leuven” led by Frans Neiryck.⁴⁵ Another recent advocate of this position has been C. K. Barrett. He draws an important distinction between agreements and disagreements. In his view, “Differences can always be explained by means of what may be called internal considerations, considerations, that is, that are internal to the mind of the writer.” On the other hand, “Agreements can hardly be explained otherwise than by external considerations, considerations that are not from the mind of the writer but from objective circumstance in his environment.”⁴⁶ Based on this distinction, he concludes that John is literary dependent on the Synoptics.

Another important argument that Barrett uses in support of his theory of dependence is the argument from order. He lists ten key passages which relate incidents that appear in the same order in John as in the Synoptics and concludes that the similarity in order proves that John very likely knew Mark.⁴⁷ But the argument from order is rather meager, for the similarity in order can be easily explained as being largely determined by the order in which the events themselves happened.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the basic argument of this position is that the simpler hypothesis is the most likely hypothesis. In this case, according to Occam's razor, the simpler hypothesis is that John knew and used Mark (and the other Synoptics) rather than postulating the more difficult and complex hypothesis of different sources (written or oral). It is rather obvious in comparing John with the Synoptics that John was quite aware of them and expected his audience to know at least Mark.⁴⁹

⁴⁵See, e.g., his “John and the Synoptics.” in *L'évangile de Jean: Sources, rédaction, théologie* (M. De Jonge ed., BETL 45, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1977), 73–106. For a summary of this position and its history, see Gilbert Van Belle, “Tradition, Formation, and the Leuven Hypothesis” 325-338.

⁴⁶C. K. Barrett, “The Place of John and the Synoptics within the Early History of Christian Thought,” 65-66.

⁴⁷See the list as it is found in Leon Morris, *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 16.

⁴⁸Cf. Dvorak, “Relationship,” 203, following Morris who states: “There is nothing remarkable in their being in the same order in the two Gospels,” *Studies*, 16-17.

⁴⁹See Richard Bauckham, “John for Readers of Mark” in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Richard Bauckham ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 147–72. This, he proves by analyzing the parenthetical explanations in 3:24 and 11:2, intended specifically for readers who also know Mark's gospel. See also Craig Keener, who states: “I believe that John adapted (or at least selected) some details from the traditional passion story in a way that is theologically significant and that he expected his audience to notice.” In “Genre, Sources, and History” 323. See also Andreas J. Köstenberger *Encountering John*, for evidence in the Gospel of John of such expectation on the part of his readers.

This great emphasis on similarities, either of vocabulary or order, in the argument for John's literary dependence on the Synoptics, however, greatly neglects the striking differences between them and does not explain them satisfactorily. Andreas Köstenberger raises with other scholars the question why, if John knew the other gospels, he made so little use of them. In fact, while 93 percent of Mark is found in Matthew and Luke, only 8 percent of John parallels the Synoptics, and 92 percent is unique. What is more, even in the 8 percent of overlapping material, John rarely (if ever) is close enough in wording to justify the conclusion that he had one or several of the Synoptics in front of him as he wrote.⁵⁰

Thus, the differences between John and the Synoptics leads one to conclude that while John may have known the Synoptics, he is not literary dependent on them, at least not in the same way Matthew and Luke may be dependent on Mark.⁵¹ In this regard, D. M. Smith writes: "Possibly the Fourth Gospel can be adequately explained without primary or fundamental reference to the Synoptic gospels, but also without denying the fourth evangelist's awareness of them."⁵² J. N. Sanders and B. A. Mastin state this fact correctly: "But knowing Mark and using it as a source are two different things."⁵³ This view is well-summarized by Beasley-Murray: "While the Fourth Evangelist did not use any of the synoptics as his sources, neither did his Gospel take shape in isolation from them."⁵⁴

As a result, we now turn to what might be the most probable explanation of the relationship between John and the Synoptics, that draws an important distinction between John knowing the Synoptics and John using them.

John knew the Synoptics but did not use them

If we cannot show from data available that John did not know the Synoptics, without resorting to speculative reconstructions of sources, nor that John was literary dependent on the Synoptics, the question is how we should explain the relationship in such a way as to account both for his knowledge of the Synoptics and yet for his decision to go in a different direction with his Gospel. The views in this category differ among themselves not in their agreement that John knew the Synoptics but in what he did with that knowledge. Thus, we can distinguish

⁵⁰Andreas J. Köstenberger *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*.

⁵¹See Carson, *Introduction*, 259.

⁵²Smith, "John and the Synoptics: Some Dimensions of the Problem," *New Testament Studies* 26 (1980): 444. Carson concludes: "the burden of proving direct literary dependence remains overwhelmingly difficult" in *Introduction*, 260.

⁵³Sanders and Mastin, *The Gospel According to St. John* (New York: Harper, 1969), 10.

⁵⁴Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC vol. 36. Waco: Word, 1987), xxxvii, following D. M. Smith, "Dimensions," 444.

at least three positions: John corrected the Synoptics (no. 4), John modified the Synoptics (no. 5), John wrote independently of the Synoptics (no. 6).

From the beginning we can reasonably state that the view that John corrected the Synoptics is inconceivable, for the following reason. Such a view presupposes that the Synoptics were incorrect at several points and therefore John felt the need, even the obligation, to write another Gospel in order to replace and displace the three existing ones.⁵⁵ But such view is unthinkable, for “how could one divinely revealed text present itself as the replacement of three other divinely revealed texts?”⁵⁶ Moreover, all four Gospels were preserved by the church, believed to be inspired, and read alongside one another. The early church did not pit one Gospel against the others, as if God was not the author behind all four Gospels or as if God contradicted himself. Thus, such a view raises both theological and historical issues that cannot be explained satisfactorily. One would need a reason why John, having presumably known the Synoptics, made considerable changes to their accounts.⁵⁷ Thus, the theory of replacement and even correction has been long proven non-viable.⁵⁸

There remains, then, two other main views that must be considered. One view is that John modified the Synoptics for one of several purposes: to harmonize their account (no. 5a), to reinterpret their account (no. 5b), to adapt their account (no. 5c), or to supplement their account (no. 5d). The other view is that John, though he knew the Synoptics, chose to write a different Gospel (no. 6).

Based on the evidence of similarities and differences, we believe there is something to take from each of these views while each view does not sufficiently explain the relationship between John and the Synoptics.⁵⁹

⁵⁵For an earlier version of this view, see Hans Windisch, *Johannes und die Synoptiker* (J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1926).

⁵⁶I. D. MacKay, *John's Relationship with Mark: An Analysis of John 6 in Light of Mark 6-8* (WUNT 2/128; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 3.

⁵⁷One such explanation is the fact that they each wrote for different audiences and thus trying to prove different aspects of Christ's life. See, e.g., Thomas M. Dowell, “Why John Rewrote the Synoptics,” in *John and the Synoptics* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 101; ed. Adelbert Denaux; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 453-57, where he argues that John produces his high Christology in response to Jewish arguments based on the Synoptics.

⁵⁸See, e.g., Bauckham's critique of this theory including that of supplementation (no. 5d) in “John for Readers of Mark,” 158 and Smith critique of Windisch in “The Presentation of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Johannine Christianity: Essays on Its Setting, Sources, and Theology* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1984), 180.

⁵⁹See Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, where he states: “there are various strands of evidence that converge to suggest that John wrote to interpret, develop, and supplement the Synoptic treatment and that he did so in a most strategic and deliberate manner.”

Take for example the idea that John harmonized the account of the Synoptics.⁶⁰ There may be some merit to this theory in the sense that we have in John's Gospel material not present in the other Gospels that may help us better understand some details in them.⁶¹ The same can be said of the view that John wrote to supplement the Synoptic account.⁶² Scholars have pointed to details in John that show that he expects the readers to know the Synoptics and thus John starts with that presupposed knowledge and adds to their account. In this way, John and the Synoptics interlock, that is, all four Gospels "mutually reinforce or explain each other, without betraying overt literary dependence."⁶³ Likewise, it is not difficult to see that John writes a more profoundly theological and Christological Gospel and therefore we can say that he reinterprets the Synoptics' account not so much to replace it but to "transpose" it to a different and even a higher scale.⁶⁴ Not the least, John himself argues for a theological purpose (cf. Jn. 20:31-32) behind selecting and adapting the information available to him (i.e., by way of eye-witnessing and by way of the Synoptics).⁶⁵

Thus, one can see that there is merit in all these views. And yet, each, on its own, lacks the ability to explain all the aspects of the relationship between John and the Synoptics and at the same time to account for John's unique take on the historical events.

For instance, Carson argues against the idea of harmonization and contends that

⁶⁰Among the earliest proponents of harmonization is Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 3.24.2).

⁶¹For examples, see, e.g., Barker, *John's Use of Matthew*, 112. Most scholars who agree that John knew the Synoptics usually discuss the idea of supplementation and harmonization together.

⁶²For the idea of supplementation, see M.C. Tenney, *John—the Gospel of Belief: An Analytical Study of the Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 197, and D. Guthrie *New Testament Introduction* (4th ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990), 298, who argue John filling in the gaps in the Synoptics. He states: "Whatever view of their relationship is held, it cannot be denied that each is necessary to make the other intelligible," 287.

⁶³Carson, *John*, 50, following Morris, *Studies*, 40 in using the term "interlocking connections" in order to explain the relationship between John and the Synoptics. For examples of such interlocking connections, see Carson, *Introduction*, 258-9. One example provided by Carson is the following: "The charge reported in the Synoptics that Jesus had threatened the destruction of the temple (Mark 14:58 par.; 15:29 par.) finds its only adequate explanation in John 2:19." See also the table in M.F. Bird, *Dictionary*, p.922.

⁶⁴See Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, where he coins the term *Transpositionstheorie*. James Dunn states that John used the material he had available "to draw out fuller meaning of what Jesus had said and done", in "John's Gospel and the Oral Gospel Tradition" in *The Fourth Gospel in First-Century Media Culture* (A. Le Donne and T. Thatcher ed, London: T&T Clark, 2011), 179.

⁶⁵I.D. Mackay, in *John's Relationship with Mark* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004) proposed that John knew Mark, and that he adapted Mark's strategy and symbolism to suit his own apologetic.

...it is far-fetched to think that John provides the information he does in order to escape from some difficulty he finds with the Synoptics. Nor is this an instance of perversely conservative harmonization, as if John cannot properly be read without referring to the Synoptics and vice versa, resulting in a reductionistic flattening of the individual witness of each gospel.⁶⁶

Köstenberger believes that not even Carson's proposal of interlocking connections can account for all the aspects of the relationship... The notion of interlocking traditions helps alleviate the charge of historical discrepancies between John and the Synoptics, but it does so on the premise that these are, at least in part, undesigned coincidences. By contrast, I have suggested that John's transposition of various aspects of the Synoptic accounts was both conscious and deliberate.⁶⁷

Moreover, in the words of James Dunn, we must "let John be John" and not try to constantly compare John with the Synoptics. We may reasonably state that John wrote independently of the Synoptics, having his own distinct voice among the Gospels, yet he certainly knew them (no. 6). But even such a view does not account sufficiently for the similarities between John and the Synoptics.

In the end, one must not force the evidence one way or the other and seek to choose between the views from this category (i.e., John knew the Synoptics but did not use them extensively and verbatim). We must be content to state the obvious, even though it may not be satisfactorily specific, and contend that John knew the Synoptics, but we must refrain from resorting to speculative explanations. Thus, we believe that there is value in each attempt at explaining the relationship between John and the Synoptics (i.e., 5 and 6) and not see them as excluding one another.

CONCLUSION

This article has attempted to explain the relationship between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels, by looking at various attempts at accounting for both the similarities and the differences. We have grouped these views into three categories according to what John knew and used: John did not know the Synoptics, John knew the Synoptics and used them, and John knew the Synoptics but did not use them. We have seen that the only view that gives proper weight to both the differences and similarities is the third one. This view has the benefit of allowing for John's knowledge of the Synoptics (in light of the similarities) and at the same time allowing John a certain measure of

⁶⁶Carson, *John*, 55.

⁶⁷Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*. We believe Köstenberger here to be closer to the truth in claiming deliberate transposition rather than coincidence.

independence and creativity (in light of the differences and of the advantage of an eye-witness account).

Such a conclusion has great implications upon how one should read John in relation to the Synoptics. First, there are two ways of reading John: reading John in light of the Synoptics and reading the Synoptics in light of John. All four Gospels complement one another and should be read alongside one another. This is the reason the Early Church preserved a fourfold character of the written Gospel. No individual Gospel was thought to reproduce the gospel in its completeness.⁶⁸ Calvin agrees with this: “He therefore so dictated to the four Evangelists what they should write that, while each had his own part, the whole formed one complete body. It is for us now to blend the four in a mutual connection, that we may let ourselves be taught as by the one mouth.”⁶⁹

Another valuable implication is that John should also be read apart from the Synoptics in order to appreciate its distinctiveness. This recognizes the fact that John is not constrained by the Synoptic accounts, since he himself was an eyewitness of the events. Rather, John stands on its own and makes its own sense as a self-contained narrative and as a theological treatise.⁷⁰ One could go even so far as to claim with Calvin that, “This Gospel is a key to open the door to the understanding of the others.”⁷¹

Any explanation of the relationship between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics, however, is bound to be less than absolute even if one seeks the most probable explanation in light of the evidence. As a result, one must maintain humility regardless of which view he or she adopts and must refrain from being dogmatic. D. M. Smith is right about this: “The mystery of John’s relation to the synoptic tradition may always divide scholarship but two things are certain: there is a relationship and it is mysterious.”⁷²

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⁶⁸Cf., Dunn, “John and the Synoptics as a Theological Question,” 308.

⁶⁹Calvin, *The Gospel According to St. John 1-10* (Calvin’s Commentaries; trans. T. H. L. Parker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 6.

⁷⁰Bauckham, “John for Readers of Mark,” 158.

⁷¹Calvin, *John*, 6.

⁷²D. M. Smith, “John and the Synoptics,” *Biblica*, 113.

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Paul's Revelation of Jesus Christ: Christology on The Other Side of The Cross and Resurrection.

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ABSTRACT

As far as Paul's Epistles are concerned Paul is not to be seen as some sort of theological Christopher Columbus when it comes to his contribution to the New Testament. In certain Letters he can write of having received many traditions from those who were before him, including the apostles in Jerusalem, Peter, John, James the Lord's brother, John Mark, who could correct and supplement the knowledge of Jesus which he must have had before his conversion. Again, his supposed lack of reference to "Jesus in the days of his flesh" is challenged and qualified. Paul is presented also as an agent of revelation, standing on the other side of the cross and resurrection. He is therefore able to bring out to the full the eschatological and soteriological significance of Jesus' death. This article will focus upon Paul's Christology as he fills out the traditions of Jesus given in the Four Gospels, his reflection upon him, on the far side of the cross, through the Holy Spirit and with the extra dimension of the new revelations he received, presents him as Messiah, Lord, Son of God, Mediator, Saviour, Last Adam and the believer's unique relationship with him.

KEY WORDS: Occasional Writings, Judaism, Conversion, Revelation, Christology.

INTRODUCTION

Compared with the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of Paul contain little narrative. These are primarily correspondence in which Paul sends greetings, instructions, encouragement, and background information. They are in fact occasional writings, not treatises of systematic theology. Instead, the Letters were written to congregations or individuals in response to specific circumstances or problems and therefore emphasize or apply specific aspects of gospel truth, Christian principles for living, theology and Christology in response to the particular situation churches and individual believers may be facing.

Paul must not to be seen as some sort of Christopher Columbus when it comes to his contribution to the New Testament. In various Letters Paul can write of

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having received many traditions from those who were in Christ before him (e.g., 1 Cor. 11:23-26; 15:3-11). His lack of reference to “Jesus in the days of his flesh” can also be accounted for. Scholars have highlighted three reasons for the unique nature of Paul’s writings:

(a) *The didactic character of the Epistles.*

His Epistles are Epistles not Gospels and do not set out to recount “all that Jesus began to do and to teach.” His particular style lends itself only rarely to illustrative material.

(b) *Paul’s own experience of Jesus was not that of the Jesus of history but that of the exalted Lord.* Paul stands on the other side of the cross and resurrection and is able to bring out to the full the eschatological and soteriological significance of Jesus’ death, resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God. This teaching is not in any sense alien to Jesus’ own self-understanding or that of the Gospel authors. What is inherent in our gospels became emergent in Paul. The seed blossoms to full flower.

(c) *Paul himself was an agent of new revelation – as were other apostles.* Note first Galatians 1:11-17 where Paul insisted that his gospel was not “from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ,” (1:12).² But, as we will affirm, these gospel foundations of the faith and certain Christological truth which were revealed to Paul were to be only the beginning. However, it is important to begin here, in what is considered to be Paul’s first Epistle, since the apostle writes of the man he once was, how God stopped him on the Damascus Road and transformed his world-view and understanding of the person of Jesus Christ.

The phrase in Galatians 1:12 concerning Paul’s reception of “a revelation of Jesus Christ” has been variously discussed. Is it objective or subjective? Silva,³ after a careful discussion of the options, suggests that it should be interpreted as an objective genitive. Elsewhere Paul views God as the source of revelation, when he expresses the subject of ἀποκαλύπτω *apokaluptō* it is always God (1 Cor. 2:10; Gal. 1:16; Phil. 3:15). Longenecker⁴ differs from others in that he sees this statement of the revelation as setting out the *means* rather than the *content* i.e., Jesus Christ is the agent and God the Father is the source. He also makes the point that when it comes to Gentiles living as Christians apart from the regulations of the Jewish law and especially with no requirement of

² All quotations of Scripture are taken from the ESV translation.

³ M. Silva, *Explorations in Exegetical Method: Galatians as a Test Case*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 164-68.

⁴ R.N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC 41, (Dallas: Word, 1990), 24.

circumcision, “Paul saw this as a ‘mystery’ enigmatically rooted in the prophetic Scriptures but now made known to him by revelation (cf. Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:2-10; Col. 1:26-27), and so uniquely his.” However, it is important to note H.A.W. Mayer’s view in his NT Commentary⁵ in which he makes the point that in Galatians 1:12 Paul is not referring “to the revelations which were imparted to him *generally*, including those of the later period, for here mention is made only of a revelation by which he *received and learned* the gospel.” Paul in Galatians 1 is focusing upon what was only the beginning of all the theological and Christological truth that would be revealed to him throughout his many Epistles.

Yet it is helpful to begin here in Galatians 1 order to understand the phenomenal transformation which took place in the life of Saul of Tarsus. There were three chapters in that life highlighted here in Galatians.⁶

(a) *In the Jewish Religion.* Paul writes about the dark history of his former life before he met the Lord, (Galatians 1:13-14). He was a fanatic in persecuting (ἐδιώκων *ediōkon* and ἐπόρθουν *eporthoun* are both imperfects, “persecuting” and “seeking to destroy,” suggesting a period of persistent persecution and the use in v13 of καθ’ ὑπερβολήν *kath’ hyperbolēn*, literally “beyond exceeding measure” signals an “intensity” in persecution which was undiminished). Witherington⁷ explains that the above adverbial phrase, “indicates the level to which the persecution reached. Paul went to extremes, the persecutions being not merely extensive (in and beyond Jerusalem) but also intensive.” We also know that when he had ravaged the Christian community in Jerusalem, he set out for Damascus. So, he “tried to destroy” ESV, but did not succeed⁸ the church he now knew to be “the church of God” (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1, 13; 22:4). It was God’s church and he would come to see that he had actually dared to set himself against God!

Paul also was extremely zealous – a “zealot,” not for political ends but for the traditions of his fathers, advancing in Judaism, outstripping his young friends as he progressed as a Pharisee in the “strictest party” of the Jewish religion. Fung⁹ makes the point that to a Jew, a crucified Messiah was in itself a decisive refutation of any claim to messiahship – as in effect, Paul himself points out in

⁵ H.A.W. Mayer, in <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/mayer/galatians/1.htm>

⁶ For a fuller treatment of these verses, see my commentary, H. Moore, *Glory in the Cross, A Commentary on Galatians*, (Pontypool, Torfaen: Faithbuilders Ltd., 2019), 58-71.

⁷ B. Witherington, 111, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 100.

⁸ See also Silva, *Explorations in Exegetical Method: Galatians as a Test Case*, 71.

⁹ R.Y. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*. NICNT, (Michigan, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 59.

1 Cor. 1:17-24. A crucified Christ was an insult to every Jew and “impelled him (Paul) to give himself wholeheartedly to what he considered the unmistakable duty and sacred duty of uprooting the pernicious sect of Jesus’ followers.”

The verb προκόπτω *prokoptō* in its imperfect form (προέκοπτον *proekopton*), “I was progressing” will express the continuing religious and moral progress of Paul’s advancement in Judaism which was unparalleled among his contemporaries. The same word is used of Jesus’ development as he grew “in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man,” (Luke 2:52). Regarding the reference to the “traditions of my fathers” Longenecker¹⁰ suggests that Paul will be referring to (1) the teachings and practices developed in the Pharisaic schools of Second Temple Judaism, later codified in the Mishnah, Palestinian and Babylonian Gemaras, Midrashim, and various individual halakic and haggadic collections of rabbinic lore, plus (2) the more popular interpretations in the synagogues of the time, represented in the extant Targumim. Stott¹¹ affirms, “No conditioned reflex or other psychological device could convert a man in that state. Only God could reach him – and God did!”

(b) *On the Damascus Road.* Before this it was “I,” “I” (v13-14). Now it is “he” - the subject of the two participles is no doubt “God” (v15-16), *ho theos* – recognised by this addition in \aleph A, D and *et al.* In every stage of Paul’s experience, the initiative and grace of God are mentioned.

Paul was the object of God’s special electing purpose. He was once a Pharisee, a separatist, now he discovers that he himself was destined, set apart before he was born, like Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4f.), to be God’s chosen instrument, called by God’s grace - a calling by grace to preach the gospel of grace.

Paul testifies that God “was pleased to reveal his Son to me” (1:16). We can compare this statement with v12 above. Here there was a revelation made ἐν ἐμοί *en emoi* literally, “in him.” We do know that there was a great revelation made *to him* on the Damascus road – he saw the risen Christ (Acts 9:5, 27; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8). But this moment also involved an inner illumination – something like 2 Cor. 4:6, or the removal of the veil from his heart, 2 Cor. 3:14. Paul also through this encounter on the way to Damascus received a new understanding of Jesus Christ, his person, also the reason for his death and of

¹⁰ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 30. Fung sees the “tradition of the fathers” as “Pharisaic traditions and more particularly those enshrined in the oral law transmitted and expounded in Pharisaic schools, which comprised the 613 prescriptions (248 positive commands and 365 prohibitions) of rabbinic exegesis,” *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 57.

¹¹ J.R.W. Stott, *The One Way: The Message of Galatians* BST (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974), 32.

course his gracious calling to be the apostle to the Gentiles. For Bruce,¹² Jesus Christ is revealed, but the gospel and Jesus Christ are inseparable. The ESV, as we quoted above, uses the simple dative in the text i.e., “to me,” but then includes “in me” as the footnote. Are there not two aspects to the one revelation? Fung¹³ also insists that:

...the phrase should not however, be taken to suggest a merely inward revelation without a corresponding external object, for there is little doubt that the preceding phrase (“to reveal his Son”) refers to Paul’s vision of the risen Christ (also attested in 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8) on the road to Damascus ... the inward illumination and the physical vision were alike part of God’s revelation to him.

Paul’s testimony was that the revelation by God was of “his Son.” Note the other references to Jesus as “Son of God,” 2:20; 4:4, 6. This should not be understood as merely a reference to the incarnation for it is used in a resurrection context i.e., on the Damascus Road. As we will see shortly, it is Christological, Sonship in the ontological sense (see also Rom. 1:3f; 1 Cor. 1:9; 15:20-28; 1 Thess. 1:10). Fung¹⁴ affirms, “Paul is claiming that he received insight into the unique nature of Jesus’ sonship.” We recall how Luke tells us that “immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues saying, ‘He is the Son of God,’” (Acts 9:20). Stendhal¹⁵ is an example of scholars who consider that what happened on the Damascus was only a call, like other prophetic calls in the OT (e.g., Jer. 1:5-6; Isa. 6; Ezek. 1). It is true that the experience involved a call, but, in the light of Paul’s former views concerning Christians and Jesus Christ noted above, it was first of all primarily a conversion.

Damascus was all-important as to how it influenced Paul, his whole world-view, his Christology and theology. One is reminded of how Jeremias¹⁶ many years ago affirmed, “There is only one key to Pauline theology. It is called Damascus.” O’Brien¹⁷ also sees much more happening on the Damascus Road than just “a call.” He maintains:

To describe the Damascus Road experience as *simply* Paul’s “call” to the Gentiles does not account for the revelation of Christ and his gospel in which

¹² F.F Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1982), 89.

¹³ Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 64.

¹⁴ Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 65.

¹⁵ K. Stendal, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 7-23.

¹⁶ J. Jeremias, “The Key to Pauline Theology,” *Ex T.* Oct. 1964, 27-30.

¹⁷ T. O’Brien, “Was Paul Converted?” in D. A. Carson, T O’Brien, and M. A. Seifrid, *The Paradoxes of Paul*, Vol. 2 (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2004), 390. See also Galatians 1:6 where Paul describes the “conversion” of the Gentiles as their “calling” by God.

there was a radical change in Paul's thinking about Jesus as the Messiah and the Son, about the Torah, the messianic salvation, and not least Israel's and the Gentiles' place within the divine plan. In the Damascus encounter Paul underwent a significant "paradigm shift" in his life and thought; his own self-consciousness was that of having undergone a conversion.

Again, Witherington¹⁸ can say:

Paul's gospel of grace is bound up with Paul's experience of grace and is grounded in the content of God's revelation of his son in Paul, which Paul then worked out the implications of for his beliefs about God, messiah, law, salvation, who God's people are and a host of other subjects.

Many of the above were briefly worked out in this Epistle. Paul's whole gospel is centered in Christ – in fact in Christ crucified, (3:1; 6:14). His symbolic universe has been radically affected, we could say "turned upside down."¹⁹ So his conversion and call coincided in time, and the sightless days at Damascus gave him opportunity to reflect on his experience; it actually confirmed to him how mistaken he had been. To sum up, the Damascus Road brought to Paul truly a revelation of Jesus Christ, i.e., a whole new Christology. The purpose of his call was "to preach him among the Gentiles." Note the present tense (compared to the aorists, "set apart" and "called") affirms Paul's continual preaching of the Christ he had come to know. Note that in what follows the area of his ministry is now identified as a Gentile area (Galatians 1:17-21; 2:2, 8).

(c) *On the Missionary Trail.* Paul reveals that first there were some things he did NOT do, (v17-24). He did not confer with flesh and blood but remained independent of all human authority. He did not go up to Jerusalem. The mention of apostles "before me" implies that he is also now as much an apostle as they were (the words *πρὸ ἐμοῦ*/ *pro emou* are temporal, referring to time, not status). But then there were things which he DID do. Instead of "going up," he "goes away." He went to Arabia – see Acts 9:19, 23, and note the "some days" he was with the disciples in Damascus, followed by the "many days," implying a leaving from and a returning again to Damascus after his time away from the city.²⁰

¹⁸ Witherington, 111, *Grace in Galatia*, 115.

¹⁹ Witherington, 111, *Grace in Galatia*, 115.

²⁰ Witherington, 111, *Grace in Galatia*, 116 suggests that the word "immediately" v16 has an emphatic position and seems to go with what follows it. "Paul is denying any immediate consulting with humans including any immediate going up to Jerusalem. And by contrast an immediate departure to Arabia."

Arabia is generally understood as the Nabataean kingdom east of the Jordan valley established in the 2nd century BC. Bruce²¹ points out that there were many Gentiles there, settled and Bedouin and no doubt Paul preached to them. His presence there if only for “a contemplative retreat” – which must have certainly a big part of what occurred – would not explain why in 2 Cor. 11:32 he attracted the hostile attention of the governor. There was a time around 37CE when Caligula was emperor that Aretas was Ethnarch in control of the city of Damascus and because of Paul’s preaching in Arabia he went after Paul so that he had to escape in a basket. Therefore, he had returned from Arabia with his commission and message confirmed to the very city he had formally set out for, intent upon the destruction of the church. Now again he must secretly leave. Acts 9:23-25.

In v18 ἐπειτα *epeita* “then,” (the first of 3 successive occurrences of the word) as Paul emphasises the chronological or temporal sequence of events with no gaps between, 1:18, 21; 2:1, informing his readers that after three years²² (from the time of his first Damascus road experience) he goes up (reference to the city’s geographical location) to Jerusalem “to visit Cephas.”²³ While some scholars will stress that among other things this must have been for a history lesson about Jesus and that at the time he would receive earlier traditions, which has been acknowledged, as McDonald²⁴ also explains, not much could be learned in such a short time. “Indeed, he came knowing for himself the gospel as God’s ordained apostle. It was not to be instructed that he came, but to inform.” The visit was short – fifteen days – then he went off (with nothing intervening) to Cilicia (see Acts 9:30) – to Tarsus – through Syria and therefore via Damascus. So, he is far north and nowhere near Jerusalem. That is the argument Paul is stressing in Galatians. He is making clear that for ministry among them he had not received nor did he require any authorization or commission from the leaders of the Jerusalem church (see v16 “I did not immediately consult with anyone...,” literally “flesh and blood” – perhaps denoting human frailty over against God). In the context of the argument therefore, no directions, advice as to ministry opportunities, or interpretation of

²¹ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 96. See also Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 69.

²² Witherington suggests that we should understand this time reference to be an example of “inclusive reckoning” i.e., “in the third year,” not “after three full years.”

²³ Paul often called him Cephas “rock” or “stone” (Gal. 2:9, 11, 14; 1 Cor. 1:12; 15:5). Only in Gal. 2:7-8 is he “Peter.” Note also that there are some scholars who propose that the word “visit” would be better read as “to get acquainted with.” Fung, who is attracted to this view, also points out that however we translate, no doubt Paul would learn from Peter the early traditions about Jesus. Also, from James who is mentioned here – see the references in 1 Cor. 15:1-7 where both are highlighted in a passage about what Paul had “received.” “The theory of Paul’s lack of interest in the historical Jesus lacks a substantial basis,” Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 74.

²⁴ McDonald, *Freedom in Faith*, 34.

his experience on the Damascus Road was given.²⁵ *In his total isolation from the Jerusalem church leaders he demonstrates that his message was not from man but from God.* The “three years” can intentionally be contrasted with the “fifteen days.” There is no dependence here or major influence from Peter – nor James “the Lord’s brother” (Paul only “saw” James, but did not consult with him). James had been resistant to or at least in doubt about Jesus during his earthly ministry (Mk. 3:21, 31-35; John 7:3-5), but was transformed by a resurrection appearance of Jesus to him (1 Cor. 15:7) and was among the members of Jesus’ family²⁶ in the Jerusalem church (Acts 1:14). A brother of Jesus now also in the full spiritual sense, he had risen to leadership among them (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18-19; Gal. 2:1-10). But the point is that Paul did not get his gospel from either of them.

So, Paul was “still unknown” (v22), the grammatical sense is the continuance in that state,²⁷ to the churches in Judea. The Galatian readers (and the Judaizers, who were troubling them) needed to accept the divine origin of his message. His commission and gospel are based upon a revelation from God rooted in a direct encounter with Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road who called him and there was at that time no contact with the leaders in Jerusalem. His message, the revelation of Christ to him, a gospel of grace, of salvation without works apart from law was from God and was the only gospel! In v20, Paul had reaffirmed these facts by an oath “before God” that his statements are totally trustworthy, “I do not lie.” In the Galatian context, in this way he responds to the claims of the Judaizers that the apostle would have received his authority and learned his gospel from the Jerusalem leaders during his first visit there.

So, Paul is not in any area (Syria and Cilicia) where he would be under the supervision of the leaders in Jerusalem, nor were they aware of his movements. Paul uses the second “then” although this time, he does not mention the time period involved. Witherington²⁸ makes the point that “Antioch was the capital of the Roman Province of Syria-Cilicia at the time and the next most prominent city therein was Tarsus, and so we should certainly compare this text to what is said in Acts 9.30, 11.25-26.” The adverb μόνον *monon* “only” makes clear that there was only one exception to their lack of knowledge (v22) concerning Paul. They “kept hearing” (the grammatical sense of the Greek

²⁵ Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 70.

²⁶ There is no reason to regard Jesus’ “brothers” as really first cousins, children of Alphaeus and Mary of Cleopas (Jerome AD 347-420) or sons of Joseph by a previous marriage (Protoevangelium of James AD 145, see 9.2). But with Tertullian (AD 160-220) in *Adv. Marc.* and Helvidius (before AD 383) there is an insistence that one does not need to uphold the perpetual virginity of the virgin Mary subsequent to Jesus’ birth.

²⁷ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 41.

²⁸ Witherington, 111, *Grace in Galatia*, 124.

phrase, which can imply a considerable period of time) that the former persecutor (*νῦν nun* “now” emphasises the transformation) was preaching “the faith” he had formally “tried” to destroy. The term “faith” here with the article is a reference to the gospel or the content of the apostolic message, rather than the act of trusting.

Therefore, he was “not known” but “well known.” The Judean Christians (the churches of Judea that are said to be “in Christ”) “glorified God” for this early mission ministry of Paul reminding us of Isa. 49:3 LXX, God’s statement regarding glory brought to him by his Servant. After “trying” to destroy but of course unable to succeed – as many others have tried since – he ended up never “tiring” of preaching this “law-free” gospel of grace. As Witherington²⁹ has pointed out, “The choice of words here is to be explained by the fact that Paul thinks the content of his proclamation is being challenged in Galatia. This document is intended to argue for that content and against the alternative offered by the agitators.” We should note that this content of Paul’s gospel is focussed upon the revelation of Jesus Christ and his cross (Galatians 6:14) and the way of blessing is not “by works of the law” but by faith – a word used by Paul 22 times in this short letter to the Galatians.

Beginning with the revelation of Christ and his conversion on the Damascus Road, his time in the city, the meeting with Ananias, his “some days” with the disciples at Damascus, the reflective time in Arabia, (Acts 9:3-25) all led to a total transformation of Paul’s understanding of who Jesus was and his world-view. As Mayer reminded us, there were other “revelations” of Christ to come (cf. 2 Cor. 12:1). Note the references already given above in Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:2-10; Col. 1:26-27, all part of the full understanding on the other side of the cross, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus. Paul will continue to bring out the soteriological significance of Jesus’ death, our eschatological hope and a full Christology – the revelation of Jesus Christ. The rest of this article will summarise Paul’s Christology, in light of his own experience on the Damascus Road, his reflection upon the risen, exalted Lord and the insights and revelations graciously given to him.

CHRISTOS OR MESSIAH IN PAUL

From the day of his conversion Paul had no doubt that Jesus was the Messiah, (Acts 9:22). Yet we can say that Christ’s Messiahship is not prominent in his Letters. Also, the term *Christos* has become almost exclusively a proper name. Taylor³⁰ believes there is only one place where *Christos* is used as a title, (Rom.

²⁹ Witherington, 111, *Grace in Galatia*, 126.

³⁰ V. Taylor, *The Names of Jesus* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1953), 21.

9:5). Some scholars think a titular meaning is still possible in Rom. 10:6; I Cor. 10:4; 15:22; 2 Cor. 4:4, 5, 10. So the simple form “Jesus the Messiah” has altogether disappeared while “Jesus Christ” or “Christ Jesus” or “Lord Jesus Christ” are frequently used. Cullmann³¹ considers Paul’s occasional practice of putting Christ before Jesus shows how aware he is that the word was originally a title and not a proper name.

Ladd³² suggests that the disappearance of the titular use of Christos and its transformation into a proper name occurred probably in the Hellenistic church. Since Paul was writing to Gentile audiences in the main the titular sense would have conveyed little. Terms like kingdom (which is also little used by Paul) and Christos were open to gross misinterpretation, (Acts 17:3, 7).

Although there are few references to Jesus as Messiah, the kingdom of God and the Messiahship of Jesus are fundamental doctrines in Paul’s thought. The concepts are present without the terms. Where Paul speaks of the fulfilment of scripture or the promises given to the prophets regarding Jesus, (Rom. 1:2; I Cor. 15:3f), his reign and his victory over his enemies, (I Cor. 15:25, 26), his establishment of his kingdom, (2 Tim. 4:1; 2 Thess. 1:5), his role as Judge, (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 2:16) he is speaking of Messianic functions.

JESUS AS LORD

Kurios is the predominant description of Jesus in Paul and in Gentile Christianity. “Jesus” on its own is found only 8 times in Paul, while the title “the Lord” is found 144 times. In addition, on 95 other occasions it is connected with “Jesus Christ” (either Lord Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus the Lord). It was a title which was more meaningful to Gentiles with their “gods many and lords many,” (I Cor. 8:5).

(1) The use of Kurios in the Ancient World

(a) It was a flexible title and could be used of a person with possessions, e.g., it is used of the master of the house or the owner of the vineyard (Matt. 20:8; 24:45; Luke 13:8; Acts 16:16; Gal. 4:1; Eph. 6:5).

(b) It could mean “sir,” being found as a polite term to convey respect without reverence. In Gen. 18:12 it is used of a husband, “my lord being old also”; of a prophet, (1 Kings 18:7; Matt. 21:30), by a son to a father; or to a stranger (John

³¹ O. Cullmann, *The Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM. Press, 1959), 134.

³² G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1974), 409.

12:21; 20:15). There appears to be instances where it is used in this polite sense of Jesus in the gospels, (John 4:11, 15, 19, 49; 5:7).

(c) It appears as a courtly sense when addressing kings, governors or rulers of the Roman Empire, (Acts 5:26; Rev. 17:14; Matt. 27:63 (of Pilate)); of an angel, (Acts 10:4; Rom. 7:14).

(d) It is used with a religious meaning. The word is used to describe the gods of the mystery religions, (I Cor. 8:5). Also, more importantly, it is used in the LXX 8,000 times to translate the Hebrew for the God of the Old Testament. In addition, in the New Testament where Old Testament quotations with the name of God occur, *Kurios* is used.

(2) Use of the Title in Paul and Primitive Christian Thought

In Paul (and Gentile Christianity) it can be claimed that the title “*Ho Kurios*” (the Lord) as applied to Jesus had acquired an absolute sense implying sovereignty and deity. The question is when or where was the title in this sense first applied to Jesus?

W. Bousset³³ in the past and more recently R. Bultmann³⁴ maintained *kurios* was only used of Jesus when the gospel moved out into a Hellenistic environment. References in the Gospels to its use during the life of the Lord were either anachronistic, editorial or only polite usage. However, there is evidence that the title was used earlier. In 1 Cor. 16:22, “Our Lord, Come!” points to its use in the worship of the Aramaic-speaking Church. See also Acts 2:36; 7:59; and Acts 10:36 for use in Jewish Church circles by Peter and Stephen. Indeed, as we acknowledged, while many occurrences of *kurios* as applied to Jesus in the Synoptics and John are only titles of respect in the vocative, there are some which imply more. Again, there are instances where *Ho kurios* is employed by the evangelists because of the established usage at the time of writing (i.e., a deliberate anachronism – “He whom we now know to be the Lord”). Luke is particularly fond of describing Jesus in this way (Lk. 7:13, 19; 10:1, 39, 41; 11:39; 12:42; 13:15; 17:5-6; 18:6; 19:8; 21:61; 24:34).

There are also two other passages where Jesus uses the term of himself. See Matt. 7:21, “Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom

³³ W. Bousset, *Kurios Christos* FRLANT 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913, ET 1970). He asserts that the worship of Jesus as Lord developed on “Hellenistic soil” in places as Antioch and Damascus. See Bousset’s foreword, 11–23.

³⁴ R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols. (London: SCM, 1952-55), 1. See his discussion of Lord and Son of God, 121-133.

of heaven.” While the passage does not define what Jesus meant by Lord it certainly implies more than a courtesy title. Again, another passage, Matt. 22:41f., Mk. 12:36f., Lk. 20:42-44, “The Lord said unto my Lord.” Also, Jesus uses this title to designate his dignity in Mk. 2:28; 11:3; 12:37. The passages above with the quotation from Psa. 110:1, “The Lord said to my Lord,” where the Messiah is being called *kurios* by the Psalmist is “very important.” Taylor³⁵ thinks that this is probably one of the factors that led the early Christians to think of Jesus as *kurios*. It became a normal way of describing Jesus after the resurrection i.e., in its exalted Christological sense. This is only what we would then expect of Paul.

(3) *What the Title meant for Paul*

In light of the earlier former use the title *will* express his sovereignty and deity. Some scholars point out how Paul was strongly influenced by Old Testament thought and therefore, the LXX use of *kurios* should be regarded as the key to an understanding of the term when applied to Jesus i.e., it is an appellative for God. Ladd³⁶ maintains, “It is the ascription to Jesus of the function of deity.” As the Lord, the exalted Christ exercises the prerogatives of God (e.g., salvation, Rom. 10:13 and Joel 2:33), note that The Day of the Lord (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2) has become The Day of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 1:14), or The Day of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:8) and The Day of Christ (Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16).

Paul proclaims Jesus as the only true Lord in contrast to the imaginary lords of the Gentile powers (1 Cor. 8:5-6). Ladd³⁷ claims that it was, “A title which made sense to both Jews and Gentiles although the overtones for each group would be different.” But the common denominator is the notion of divine sovereignty. We can affirm, “Jesus is Lord!” In practical terms. What is the significance of recognising that Jesus is not only your Saviour but your Lord? Jeff Clarke³⁸ has set out the contrasts:

- (i) “Jesus is Saviour” emphasises sins forgiven. “Jesus is Lord” emphasises a reorientation in life, which includes sins forgiven. I’m no longer the king of my domain, he is. This reorientation changes everything.
- (ii) “Jesus is Saviour” impacts me. “Jesus is Lord” impacts me and everyone around me.

³⁵ V. Taylor, *The Names of Jesus* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1953), 42.

³⁶ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 416.

³⁷ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 299.

³⁸ www.jeffclarke.com/the-difference-in-calling-jesus-savior-and-lord-and-its-implications-for-discipleship/ Accessed August 2021.

(iii) “Jesus is Saviour” is often deeply personalistic and privatised. “Jesus is Lord” retains the personal dynamic, but spreads out to impact everything and everyone around me. It is mission-oriented; we are sent ones who seek to reflect Jesus to others.

(iv) “Jesus is Saviour” affects only the so-called spiritual aspects in life. “Jesus is Lord” affects all of life; it is holistic and all-encompassing. Everything is affected by it; every day and in every way. It isn’t limited to Sunday, or a mid-week program, or more generally to the religious side of life. It lies at the centre of life and thereby orientates, shapes and informs everything else.

In Acts 10:14 Peter does not fully grasp the implications of what he was saying. He is responding to the Lord’s directions in evangelism through the vision of the great sheet with “all kinds of animals” which he saw coming down from heaven. When advised to kill and eat he exclaims, “By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” But we cannot say, “By no means, Lord.” Only “Lord.”

SON OF GOD

As far as the Son of God is concerned, Paul does not attempt to demonstrate the divine sonship of Jesus; he assumes it. In all he uses the title seventeen times; four times “the Son of God,” on two occasions, “the Son,” eleven times “his Son” (including twice “his own Son”). In calling Jesus by this title Paul is doing no new thing. As with the title “Lord,” his Christian predecessors had done it. If we ask why they should have done so, no good reason can be given except that it was known that Jesus had so spoken of himself (Matt. 11:27; Mk. 12:6; 13:32; 14:62). As for Rom. 1:3-4, some have seen here a primitive “adoptionist” Christology i.e., in the flesh Jesus was a son of David: he “became” the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead. For example, E. Schweizer,³⁹ in *Lordship and Discipleship* proposes, “The exaltation [is] the first beginnings of Jesus sonship to God.” But an alternative explanation is possible i.e., the resurrection simply *declared* or *designated* what was already an eternal reality. Note Jesus was God’s Son when he sent him to do by his death what the law could not do (Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4). Often when speaking of God, Paul goes on to speak of his Son (Rom. 1:9; 8:29; Eph. 4:13; Gal. 4:6; Col. 1:13). There is an essential and unique relationship between God the Father and the pre-existent Son.

The Son of God, Jesus Christ was the subject of Paul's preaching to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 1:19). He is the object of faith (Gal. 2:20) and knowledge (Ephesians 4:13), and all Christians are called into fellowship with Him (1 Cor.

³⁹ E. Schweizer, *Lordship and Discipleship* Studies in Biblical Theology (London: SCM Press, 1960), 59.

1:9). The pre-existent Son was God's agent of redemption (Gal. 4:4; Rom. 8:3). By his sacrifice and by faith we are translated by God from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of the Son of his love (Col. 1:13). Note that "the kingdom of God" in the Synoptics and the teaching of Jesus has become "the kingdom of the Son," another indication of his divine status. Col. 1:15ff explains all that the Son is. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of (i.e., preeminent over) all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together ... in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." He is the one for whom we wait, (1 Thess. 1:10).

1 Cor. 15:28 suggests a kind of final subordination of the Son to the Father. Paul writes of the moment "all things are subjected" to the Son. At that time "the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all." Here Paul is not discussing the nature of God or the Son being some kind of lesser being than the Father. This is not a subordination to do with deity or nature, but a demonstration of the perfect harmony of all things in God. The Son has never been at variance with the Father's will in the outworking of his mission.

There are clear assertions of Christ's deity in Paul.

(i) We noted that Jesus is often called Lord, the very word used of God in the LXX. It is also significant that in Trinitarian contexts Lord is often used (1 Cor. 8:6; 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14). The implication is that the persons are equal but distinct.

(ii) Verses which refer to God in the Old Testament are applied to Christ in the New such as Joel 2:32 in Acts 2:21 and Rom. 10:13. Note that Phil. 2:9-11 has an allusion to Isa. 45:23. For the bride and bridegroom image, see Hos. 2:20 and Eph. 5:25. Other New Testament writers take a similar course.

(iii) There are clear affirmations of his deity in Phil. 2:5-11. Here Paul uses *morphe* of Jesus being in the "form" of God. It has been understood as having close links with *ousia* (essence). Lightfoot⁴⁰ explained, "the possession of the *morphe* involves participation in the *ousia* also." The suggestion is that being in the form of God means possessing deity. Guthrie⁴¹ also maintains, "When the *morphe* phrase is interpreted by means of the 'equality with God' statement which follows the conclusion is inescapable that *morphe* means existence equal to that of God." The term seems to point to the outward form corresponding to

⁴⁰ G.B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1878), 111.

⁴¹ D. Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 346.

underlying reality. As Motyer⁴² explained, “one who possessed inwardly and displayed outwardly the very nature of God himself.”

(iv) Divine works are ascribed to Christ. These include judgment (1 Cor. 4:4-5; 5:4f.; 2 Thess. 1:7-10), creation (Col. 1:16) and salvation (Psa. 130:8).

(v) Prayer is addressed to Christ. Very often prayer is associated with the name of the Lord (1 Cor. 1:2; 16:22; 2 Cor. 12:8), as are benedictions (Rom. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:14) and doxologies (Rom. 9:5). In these references, Paul does not identify God with Christ. He distinguishes their persons. Yet there may be two references where Paul calls Jesus Christ God. These are all the more remarkable given his strong monotheism. First, Rom. 9:5. Note the alternative translations.

KJV. “Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

NIV. “From them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, for ever praised. Amen.”

ESV. “according to the flesh is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”

But note RSV. “to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen.”

In the first three, we have a description of Christ. The final one is a doxology to God, although the RSV margin has the alternative rendering i.e., “*Christ, who is God over all, blessed for ever.*” The difference comes about by a change of punctuation. Since ancient Greek manuscripts did not have punctuation marks, we need to seek to resolve the problem on other grounds. Several points favour the KJV/NIV/ESV rendering.

Paul's normal practice in a doxology is that it must be seen as relating to the one immediately referred to (cf. Rom. 1:25). In this case, it is Christ. Again, a concluding doxology would usually have the word “blessed” placed at the beginning and not at the end. Also, there seems to be an antithesis here between flesh and God. It is common in the New Testament to contrast God and flesh. Finally, the Greek participle *hōn* must be considered as superfluous if the reference is to God, but not if it refers to the antecedent, Christ.

The second text to be examined is Titus 2:13. Once again different translations are possible.

⁴² J.A Motyer, *The Message of Philippians*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 109.

It could be argued that KJV misses the deity. “The glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” The reading could suggest two persons.

Modern Versions generally have “Our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Grammatical evidence favours the second, for if there had been any intention of differentiating “God” and “Jesus” a second article would have been used.

THE ONE AND ONLY MEDIATOR

In 1 Tim. 2:5-6 Paul affirms, “There is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” We have here Paul’s monotheism – one God. This is an abbreviation of the *Shema* from Deut. 6:4, the Jewish affirmation of faith which reflects a belief in the living God over against the many gods of the Gentiles. Paul has used it elsewhere, for example, Gal. 3:20; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:5-6 and in Rom. 3:29-30 where he writes of a God who includes Gentiles as well as Jews in the one way of justification through faith.

But that justification, that acceptance of those alienated from God required something, or rather someone. “There is one mediator.” The word here is *mesitēs*, the individual known from the legal or commercial world who as a negotiator can help two parties to make a transaction, to settle a dispute or effect a reconciliation. Job himself longed for this, “There is no arbiter (“mediator” NKJV) between us, who might lay his hand on us both” (Job 9:33). In theological use, the word will involve Jesus by his giving of himself for others providing the means of reconciliation between sinners and a holy God. Note that Paul affirms that Jesus is the *one and only* mediator for all men.

Stott⁴³ outlines three positions about other religions and the relationship of Jesus Christ to them.

(i) “exclusivism.” Jesus is the only saviour and salvation is only by faith in him. It involves inclusivism in one sense i.e., a universal offer of salvation – but in Christ.

(ii) “inclusivism.” Jesus Christ is the Saviour, but he saves different people in different ways, especially through their religion.

(ii) “pluralism.” This involves accepting the independent saving validity of the different religions, denying uniqueness to Christ.

⁴³ J. R. W. Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus* (Leicester, IVP, 1996), 68-69.

In Paul's day, while there were many religions, "many gods" and "many lords," the apostle affirmed that there was only ONE GOD and, exclusively, there was only ONE MEDIATOR who could reconcile sinners to him. Paul writes of "the man Christ Jesus." This "mediation" was accomplished by Christ in his humanity and through his human death for us. In the Greek text there is no article here, only "*anthrōpos* Christ Jesus," which points more to his nature and attributes as human. His birth as a man or his complete participation in humanity was necessary if his "human" death was to be representative for us, in solidarity with us and substitutionary, "*as a ransom*." A ransom was the price paid for the release of slaves. Here we have the *antilutron* – the exchange price which was the ground through which we have been delivered. Morris⁴⁴ explains that the word here means "substitute-ransom," highlighting the use of the preposition *anti*. The verse says he gave "himself," *heauton*, a pronoun that emphasises that his death was a voluntary self-offering. Also, this death was for all, both Jew and Gentile – effectively of course bringing salvation to all who believe (1 Tim. 4:10). Note that the use of "all" points to the universal emphasis of the whole passage (1 Tim. 2:1-7).

JESUS AS LAST ADAM AND SECOND MAN FROM HEAVEN

The Adam theme is by no means central to Pauline Christology, but it does play a significant role. There are two main passages, Rom. 5:12-21 and 1 Cor. 15:21-23 and v45-49. Jesus is likened to Adam and also contrasted with Adam.

In the Romans 5 passage Paul sees in Adam, the head and inclusive representative of the human race, all that pertains to him and of course in Christ, the Christian community, all that pertains to him. Jesus was the only one able to undo the effects of Adam's sin and become the inaugurator of a new humanity. Christ's obedience and righteousness is contrasted with Adam's disobedience and trespass. Jesus, as Adam was also a representative man. Through death and resurrection, he has restored humanity, a new kind of humanity. Note Romans 5:15-18 where Paul first uses *Alla*, "but..." to make the point that Adam was a type of Christ, but there are some significant differences, (5:15). Just as what Adam did had effects on a great number, so also it is with Christ. Adam, by his sin, greatly wronged his descendants, bringing them all down into condemnation; but Christ gave his people an abundant gift. His gift is said to overflow i.e., he not only reversed the effects of Adam's sin, but brought an abundance of positive blessings – "the free gift by the grace of that man Jesus Christ abounded for many." Dunn⁴⁵ makes the point that, "the implication is clearly that God's response to Adam's trespass sought not merely to make up

⁴⁴ L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 51.

⁴⁵ J.D.G Dunn, *Romans*, 2 Vols. (Dallas, Texas: Word, 1988), 280.

the ground which had been lost but also to bring to completion the destiny of which Adam had fallen short.” The grace we experience is embodied in him and in his one act of righteousness, i.e., the one act of obedience, the cross, (5:18). The *dōrea* “gift” will include the Holy Spirit, (Romans 5:5, justification, or imputed righteousness, (5:16-17), eternal life, (5:18, 21) – a fullness of blessing, an overflow,⁴⁶ which our federal head has secured for us.

In 1 Cor. 15:22 the contrasting results Paul sets out show vividly the supremacy of Christ to Adam. Adam is a man of death (Rom. 5:12), but Christ, the Last Adam, is the man of power to give life to a redeemed race (see also 1 Cor. 15:45, where he is “a life-giving spirit”). Again, in 1 Cor. 15:47, Adam “a man of dust,” liable to decay and dissolution, alluding to Genesis 2:7, is contrasted with Christ “the man from heaven” – the nearest Paul comes to the phrase “son of man.” Note that there is a textual variant here: some MSS read *kurios*, “Lord.”

The Last Adam, heaven in his source; he is part of that higher, imperishable order, as Norman Hillyer⁴⁷ explains, “originally as God become man, and eschatologically (i.e., now) in the glory of his resurrection.” In 1 Cor. 15:48, like Adam, we were “of the dust,” we all shared the corruption and mortality that is characteristic of the human race. Christians, because of their new life in Christ are already “of heaven” and to them, Paul holds out the certainty in his teaching on the future resurrection of that ultimate bodily likeness to Christ; that “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Cor. 15:19).

WHAT ABOUT SAVIOUR?

Note that as far as the title Saviour is concerned, it is only found in Paul in Eph. 5:23; Phil. 3:20 and Titus 2:13. Is there a reason for the infrequent use of this title for Christ? It was commonly applied in Paul's day to earthly rulers. Most consider that this is why it was rarely used by the Lord Jesus.

Towner⁴⁸ points out that, for example, when the victories of Augustus which brought the *pax Romana* to the Imperial Provinces were being honoured, he was referred to as the “Saviour” who “when he appeared” exceeded all the

⁴⁶ A word Paul can use expressing the fullness of God's grace in his blessings upon us, (5:17; 2 Cor. 9:8) and what should be our response to him, (1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Cor. 8:2, 7; Phil. 1:9; Col. 2:7 in our service, our joy, sacrificial giving, love and thanksgiving).

⁴⁷ N. Hillyer, “1 Corinthians” in *The New Bible Commentary Revised*, eds D Guthrie and J. A. Motyer (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), 1073.

⁴⁸ See P. H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 418, who quotes from the translation of N. Lewis and M. Reinhold, eds., *Roman Civilisation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955).

anticipated “good tidings” (called *euangelion* or gospel) concerning him. Another use in connection with Augustus is the following from the Priene Calendar Inscription,⁴⁹ 9 BCE:

Whereas the Providence which has guided our whole existence and which has shown such care and liberality, has brought our life to the peak of perfection in giving to us Augustus Caesar, whom it filled with virtue for the welfare of mankind, and who, being sent to us and to our descendants as a saviour, has put an end to war and has set all things in order.

So, the emperor was repeatedly called “the saviour of the world” and “the saviour of the inhabited earth.” Where Paul writes of the *euangelion* as he does at times, he not only wished to communicate in a language that would be understood in the culture but to make clear *the superiority* of the “epiphany” of Christ and the real blessings of peace with God, security and hope which it brought. This, therefore, appears to be the reason for the restrained use of the title. But the whole of the Epistles of Paul “bleed” with references to the work of the Saviour, the work of the cross and the precious blood.

IN CHRIST

To conclude this whole treatment of Paul’s teaching on Christology we need to consider Paul’s often employment of the concept “in Christ.” It is claimed that the heart of Paul’s religion is union with Christ. The terms “in Christ,” “in him,” “in the Lord” occur over one hundred and sixty-four times in Paul. This concept appears to be the creation of Paul. It was a new technical term to explain his relationship with Christ and the blessings he had received. On the Damascus Road Paul heard Jesus say “Why are you persecuting me?” – when Paul was persecuting the church. Reflecting on this, Paul came to understand that when Christ was summoning and welcoming him to be part of the church, he was also calling him into vital unity with himself. Note that when the Gospels speak of the disciples’ fellowship with Jesus they used “with” not “in” (e.g., Matt. 28:20). Yet the way was prepared in the Gospels – see Matt. 18:20, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I among them.” Matt. 25:40 reads, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” John 15:1f. says, “Abide in me and I in you.”

⁴⁹ The Priene calendar inscription of 9 BCE is an inscription in stone recovered at Priene, an ancient Greek city in Western Turkey. It uses the term “gospel” with reference to Augustus Caesar, announcing his kingdom, heralding peace and salvation for his people. It also was concerned with a Roman decree to start a new calendar system based on the year of Augustus Caesar’s birth.

This term has Christological implications. It is worth reminding ourselves that no such words have ever been used, or indeed could ever be used of any of the sons of men. Christ cannot be just a figure in history, but a living personal presence whose nature is the very nature of God himself. It would appear that to be in Christ is parallel to being in the Spirit. Paul thinks of the Christian as living in a *pneuma* element.

But what does the concept “in Christ” mean? Some see here the influence of mysticism in the apostle. In the ancient world “spirit” could be thought of as a fine invisible matter which could interpenetrate all visible forces of nature. Christ would therefore be seen as the all-pervasive Spirit, a kind of spiritual atmosphere in which the believer lives. With this view, Paul does not lose his personality but Christ does.

Schweitzer⁵⁰ in his 1931 book, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, suggested that for Paul believers are redeemed by entering already, through the union with Christ, through a mystical dying and rising again with him into a supernatural state of existence. We recall the teaching of Romans 6:5, “If we have been united with him in a death like his we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” The idea is developed further in Eph. 2:6. Made alive in Christ, God has “raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Neil Earle⁵¹ explains that Paul is speaking here metaphorically, and sums up his understanding of this great truth:

First of all, Christians are “as good as there,” concerning their salvation. Christians who are “in Christ,” raised in him, they can be said to be already in some sense living with him in the heavenly places. We already begin to participate in aspects of that new-creation life in our present union with him.

Secondly, being “in Christ” means Christians live in two realms—the physical world of everyday reality and the “unseen world” of spiritual reality. This has implications for the way we view this world. We are to live balanced lives. We bear primary allegiance to the kingdom of God and its values on the one hand but, on the other, are not to be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good. It’s a tightrope, and every Christian needs help from God to walk it securely.

Thirdly, being “in Christ” means we are trophies of God’s grace. Being “in Christ” means that when God looks at us he does not see our sins. He sees Christ.

⁵⁰ Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 380.

⁵¹ Neil Earle, “Resurrection and Ascension: What it means to be in Christ,” <https://www.gcs.edu/mod/page/view.php?id=4257>. Accessed August 2021.

There is no more encouraging teaching than that. This is reemphasised in Col. 3:3: “For you died and your life is hidden with God in Christ.”

For Earle, if God has done all this for us, has in some senses already inducted us into the heavenly realms, then that means we are to live as ambassadors for Christ. God has displayed his resurrection power to us to be a daily demonstration of God’s goodness, to show by our good works that he exists and that he cares.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come.” The prophets looked forward to the day when God would do a new thing. This would be an eschatological event when he would create new heavens and a new earth. This new age has dawned in Christ. It has broken into the old age. In Christ, men need no longer be confined to the old age but are partakers of the blessings of the new age. So, to be “in Christ” is to receive these spiritual blessing ahead of the coming of the new age; it means to be in the sphere of salvation – including seated in heavenly places.

THE HUMAN JESUS IN THE PAULINE CORPUS

To conclude, how much did Paul know about the historical Jesus? It has been often said in the past that Paul knew next to nothing about him. In the debate about the historical Jesus and the exalted Christ it has been suggested that Paul possessed practically no biographical material about Jesus and was not greatly interested in his life, words and deeds. Ladd⁵² explains how Bultmann and others saw this as a supporting factor in the assertion that the historical Jesus had been quite lost from sight behind the transforming power of Christian belief or Easter faith which changed a Jewish prophet into an incarnate deity. However, as we noted, Paul did receive earlier traditions and the reference to resurrection witnesses demonstrates that Paul is conscious of the historical basis of the Christian faith. His lack of reference to the Jesus of history had been exaggerated and often misunderstood.

It can be maintained that one could glean enough from Paul’s Letters to write a brief life of Christ. Paul knew Jesus was an Israelite of Abraham’s seed (Gal. 3:16, Rom. 9:5), descended from David (Rom. 1:3), born of a woman (Gal. 4:4) with his earthly lot, that of a poor man (2 Cor. 8:9). He had a brother called James (I Cor. 9:5, Gal. 1:19) and 12 apostles (I Cor. 15:4), two of them called Cephas and John (Gal. 2:9). Before the Jews killed him (I Thess. 2:15), in fact on the night he was betrayed (I Cor. 11:23), he instituted the Lord’s Supper (I

⁵² Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 412.

Cor. 11:23ff). On the third day he was raised and appeared to many witnesses (I Cor. 15:3ff).

Paul does not give us a full portrait of the character or personality of Jesus (neither do the gospel writers) but he does give us some valuable insights. He mentions the meekness and gentleness of Christ (2 Cor 10:1), his grace (2 Cor. 8:9), his humility (Phil. 2:5f), steadfastness (2 Thess. 3:5), obedience (Rom. 5:19, Phil. 2:8) and on his righteousness (Rom. 5:18) and sinlessness (2 Cor. 5:21) he built his doctrine of the believer's justification. See also Rom. 8:3 where Paul's Christology is so precise. To say Jesus came in "the likeness of flesh" would be docetic. To say he came in sinful flesh would make him a sinner. So, Paul says he came in real flesh like ours, but with one exception i.e., he did not share our sinfulness.

In comparing Paul's teaching to that of the Lord's many scholars have found many unmistakable echoes.

On non-resistance to evil (Rom. 12:17, I Thess. 5:15 cf. Matt. 5:3a).

On returning blessing for cursing (Rom. 12:14 cf. Matt. 5:44).

On love as the law's fulfilment (Rom. 13:8f cf. Mark 12:28-34).

On the need to restore an erring brother (Gal. 6:1 cf. Matt. 18:15ff).

The duty of rendering to all their dues (Rom. 13:7 cf. Mark 12:13-14).

On judging (Rom. 14:4-10 cf. Matt. 7:1).

Causing others to stumble (Rom. 14:13 cf. Matt. 18:6ff).

On freedom from worry (Phil. 4:6 cf. Matt. 6:25).

Being at once simple and wise (Rom. 16:19 cf. Matt. 10:16).

On mountain-moving faith (I Cor. 13:2 cf. Matt. 17:20).

What a revelation of Christ was given to the apostle Paul! Initially on the Damascus Road, when he is brought to realise that the Jesus whose followers he was fiercely persecuting was the true Messiah and Son of God. There is his further contemplation in Damascus and Arabia, also likely at Lystra, at his stoning, when he was caught up into the third heaven was given "revelations of the Lord," (Acts 14:19-20; 2 Cor. 12:1-4); and finally, in the further revelations to which he refers at various times throughout his ministry. Paul the persecutor became Paul the one "preaching the faith he once tried to destroy," (Gal. 1:23). He proclaimed Jesus on the other side of the cross, resurrection and exaltation as Messiah, Lord, Son of God, the one and only Mediator, the Last Adam and Second Man, Saviour, whose people are in Him and who presents Jesus as truly human and divine.

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A Contrast of the Pastoral Leadership and Secular Leadership Models

Kenneth R. Lewis¹

ABSTRACT

This article will contrast the models of pastoral and secular leadership. A synopsis of the foundational or more common secular leadership models will be discussed first. Following will be a discussion on the pastoral leadership model with contrasts to the secular paradigm. Biblical support for the pastoral leadership model will be given to prove this standard of leadership as the ideal for pastor or church leader. The pastoral and secular leadership models converge in some aspects. However, this article will focus on the differences, and more specifically, on the distinction of pastoral leadership in particular highlighting servanthood, shepherding, character.

KEY WORDS: Secular Leadership, Pastoral Leadership, servanthood, shepherding, authority.

INTRODUCTION

It is often quipped that the church is not an organization but an organism. Observation of the local church, however, invokes reconsideration of such a statement in light of biblical models. An organization is defined as “a group of persons organized for some end or work.”² The church consists of a group of God-called people who are called together (organized) for a God-ordained purpose. Any group of people assembled as a body needs some degree of organization. The local church, therefore, can be considered both an organism and an organization. Jay Adams defines the church as “an organic entity that manifests itself in the world through a visible structure that, for its maintenance, requires planning, organization and rule.”³

While some churches borrow from the secular model in their organization, discernment must be exercised to avoid mimicking secular leadership models. The local church is distinctive in how it is organized and led. This primary point of distinction lies within the leaders themselves. The pastoral leaders in a local church derive their commission, competency, and model of leadership from

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² Robert B. Costello, ed., *Random House Collegiate Dictionary* (New York: Random House, 1996), 953.

³ Jay Adams. *Shepherding God's Flock: Volume Three, Pastoral Leadership* (United States of America: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1975), 12.

Jesus Christ Himself rather than from the secular business philosophy. Jesus is the “head of the church”⁴ (Eph 5:23) and establishes the means and methods by which leaders serve under His headship. The pastoral model of leadership is not as an executive or manager in a business sense, but a shepherd or overseer in a biblical sense. This article will focus on the differences from that of secular leadership, and more specifically, on the distinction of pastoral leadership.

SECULAR LEADERSHIP MODELS

The secular leadership models are vast in theory and practice. There are too many to cover within the scope of this short article. Therefore, coverage will be given to the foundational leadership models from which emanate a broad range of leadership models with uniqueness in labels and implementations. Ernest White in his essay puts forth three common leadership models that have been born and shaped from the culture and society-at-large.⁵ First, there is the Organizational or Bureaucratic model or “Leadership by Organization.” Secondly, there is the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) model or “Leadership by Officer.” The third model is the Media Market Merchant model or “Leadership by Image.” Each of these models relates to the other and represents an emergence of one from the other. For example, the CEO model is a resultant model of the Organizational model, and the Media Market Merchant model was derived from the CEO model.

Organizational or Bureaucratic Model

The secular models of leadership are historically expressed through tiered organizations or bureaucracies. This structure is more often modeled in corporate and government organizations. However, such structure can be also seen in non-profit organizations and para-church organizations such as denominations. Roles and responsibilities within this organization are various and designated by titles of distinction according to the respective level of authority (e.g., president, vice-president, executives, directors, managers, supervisors). The different levels within the bureaucratic organization are often coveted by those seeking promotions or aspiring to positions of prominence.

White termed this leadership model as “Organization Man/Bureaucratic Leadership” that “features large administrative apparatus and an elaboration of detailed rules and regulations.”⁶ Historically, this model traces its roots back to the military following World War I and gained prominence during World War

⁴ Unless noted otherwise, all Scripture quotations are given in the New American Standard Bible (NASB) – Updated Edition.

⁵ Ernest White, “The Crisis in Christian Leadership.” *Review & Expositor* 83 no 4 (Fall 1986): 546-551.

⁶ White, 547.

II.⁷ The organization leadership model was eventually assimilated into many organizations throughout the United States and the world including church-related organizations.

The New Testament does not constitute a clear form of church structure and governance. Therefore, the biblical prescription for church structure or organization does not necessarily follow the hierarchical model seen in secular organizations. While some may point to Moses' leadership model in Exodus 18:25-26 as a form of organizational bureaucracy, such structure is not mandated for the church. Pragmatism may necessitate some delegation for more effective ministry as seen in Acts 6:1-7, but an overly-organized and heavily bureaucratic structure is often more problematic than pragmatic.

Chief Executive Officer Model

Another secular leadership style emerged from the organizational model that placed more emphasis in the chief leader or head of the organization. This leadership model is identified as the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) Model or "leadership by office."⁸ The CEO model became prevalent as the administrative functions in the organizational model moved toward an emphasis on the leader or leaders in the organization. The leaders in the CEO model are often characterized as people seeking self-ambition, self-fulfillment, and self-aggrandizement. The leaders typically make decisions based on what is good for the company or their own good. The leaders can be further characterized as "self-protective and sees people in terms of their use for the larger organization and the CEO's record."⁹

This CEO model can be seen in some local churches and pastoral leaders. It can be especially prevalent in the mega-church culture as the church assumes more of a corporation ethos. White denotes this model as the "Wall Street Baptist" phenomenon:

The Wall Street Baptist Church has all the features and measures of a successful American corporation listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Each quarter this church corporation must show an increase in budget receipts, baptism records, and building reports. Quality of worship life, wholeness of persons, service to human needs, and witness to society must be kept secondary to the corporation concerns of the three B's of the bottom line: budget, baptisms, and buildings. Otherwise, the CEO will not be considered for a larger ecclesiastical corporation.¹⁰

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ White, 548-549.

⁹ White, 549.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Pastoral leaders who see their respective ministries *only* in terms of numerical increase can find themselves captured by pursuits indicative of this model. They can also fall into discouragement and envy when their results do not meet their own self-seeking goals or when measuring themselves against another church's or pastoral leader's accomplishments. While numerical increase in baptism, budgets, and buildings can be a result of God blessing upon faithfulness in ministry, quantifiable increases cannot be the sole measure of ministry success.

Media Marketing Merchant Model

The third leadership model identified is the Media Marketing Merchant Model or "Leadership by Image."¹¹ The emergence of this model can be attributed to the power and pervasiveness of media and marketing in current times. The technological advances of media and marketing have provided many innovative means and opportunities to reach the masses. Leadership in the secular and pastoral disciplines realize the possibilities in leveraging media and technology to accomplish their respective agendas.

The pitfall of the media and marketing strategy, however, is "manipulating the appearing of reality to the desiring of the producers."¹² The model focuses on the putting forth a positive image of the organization or leadership and managing the perceptions of the people being targeted. In further critique of this paradigm, White notes:

The Media Marketing Merchant makes the priority of leadership the management of the image. The science and art of dramaturgy has been perfected so that impressions of the leader are carefully constructed and managed. Competence and content of leadership are irrelevant in this approach. The perceptions and impressions of leadership hinge on successful public performances, not on sound judgment and decisions.¹³

While media and marketing are effective tools for communication and outreach, the church must be careful to avoid misuse and overuse. Presenting an image of church and leaders that is different than reality is nothing short of sinful manipulation which does not please nor honor the Lord.

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP MODEL

The secular leadership models aforementioned have influenced the modern church in various ways. Leaders and congregants who serve in these churches are exposed to these philosophies and embrace them as applicable to the local church and even normative for modern times. Michael Quicke notes that

¹¹ White, 549-551.

¹² White, 549.

¹³ White, 550.

Christian leadership “has forcefully entered center stage, thriving on the opportunities that secularism provides.”¹⁴

While some of the principles and techniques from these secular leadership styles can be used in church leadership, there remains divergent contrasts between the secular and pastoral leadership models. Therefore, the wise pastor must be discerning of the leadership models being adopted and applied in the local church. Adams warned that “uncritical adoption of business model for applications to the management of the church is unsound and dangerous.”¹⁵ Quicke speaks to the danger in the uncritical acceptance of secular business practices in the church:

So absorbed are they in their pursuit of success defined in those terms, many churches have hungrily gobbled up secular leadership principles and practice. Indeed Henry and Richard Blackaby protest, “The trend among many Christian leaders for an almost indiscriminate and uncritical acceptance of secular leadership theory without measuring it against the timeless precepts of Scripture.” God-talk and spirituality are inevitably sidelined by leadership pragmatism when secular models exercise a hypnotic stranglehold on the church. It is hardly surprising that when churches use business models, little room is left for preaching to give significant leadership.¹⁶

Thus, the concern about the leadership models in the local churches is a valid one. Leadership models are not neutral in the local church that is called to be “set apart” for the purposes of God.

Observation of the local church reveals some questionable and outright secular business models executed in the church. Adams corroborates by stating that “there has been too much easy adaptation of pagan principles and practices by evangelical churches in recent times; and the area of leadership and administration has not escaped this baneful trend.”¹⁷ Pastoral leadership carries clear distinction from the secular leadership models. The more prominent attributes of pastoral leadership have to do with the attitude of leadership, style, and objectives. The church of Jesus Christ is unique and is “set apart.” Church leadership and the models within which it is carried out should likewise be “set apart” and distinct from the world.

¹⁴ Michael J. Quicke, *360-degree leadership: Preaching to Transform Congregations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 31.

¹⁵ Adams, 19.

¹⁶ Michael J. Quicke, 31.

¹⁷ Adams, 17.

Servant Leadership

The most fundamental difference between the pastoral and secular leadership model centers on the attitude of leadership. The biblical method for leadership is that of a servant leader. This notion of servant leadership may seem like a paradox when considering the common belief that leaders are typically served by subordinates rather than serving their subordinates. Those who hold the highest positions of authority in secular organizations typically require a high degree of service to be rendered unto them. But this model of leadership does not conform to the biblical standard taught and modeled by Jesus. Lawrence, in describing the distinctive of Christian leadership, states that it “is different from other kinds of leadership because no Christian leader can assume the position of being ‘number one,’ that is, the leader.”¹⁸ Jesus taught His disciples, those called and prepared to be leaders of the early church, the definition of godly leadership and its distinction from secular leadership. The Lord Jesus Christ states in Matthew 20:25-28:

But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Jesus establishes the leadership philosophy for His followers to be that of a servant. Malphurs, in commenting on this text, states that “Christian leadership is servant leadership, and any definition of a Christian leader must include the concept of servanthood.”¹⁹ He states further that “a biblical image that is most common and dominant for leaders is that of a servant.”²⁰ Pastoral leadership according to the biblical paradigm consists of leaders who seek to render service rather than receive service.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the supreme example for the servant leadership model. In the Matthew 20:28 mentioned above, Jesus asserts Himself as the standard when He declares, “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but *to serve*, and *to give* His life a ransom for many” (italics added). Jesus emphasizes that His mission did not consist of others catering to His every desire. Jesus rather came to serve the needs of others even to the point of giving His life as a ransom for rank sinners. Jesus modeled and established the leadership attitude

¹⁸ William D. Lawrence, “Distinctives of Christian Leadership.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 144 (July-September, 1987): 317.

¹⁹ Aubrey Malphurs, *Being Leaders: The Nature of Authentic Christian Leadership*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 32.

²⁰ Malphurs, 33.

for pastoral leaders. The godly and wise pastoral leader should seek to pattern his leadership on Jesus Christ as revealed in His Word.

Shepherding Leadership

Many pastoral leaders likely find it easier to relate to the CEO model due to the pervasiveness of the business and mega-church culture of the times. However, pastoral leaders in the church function more as shepherds than CEO's. The shepherding nature of pastoral leadership requires a biblical study to understand how it applies in modern leadership.

Reflecting back on Matthew 20:25-28, Jesus is clear in that the disciples' leadership does not function in the same way as that of leadership in society. Pastoral leaders do not lead in the context of human power and position but of humble service. Christian leadership is not about position and the power that goes with it, but about being an example, about leading from below rather than imposing from above.²¹

The pastoral leader is referred to in the New Testament as "elder" (Acts 20:17), "bishop" or "overseer" (1 Tim. 3:1), and pastor (Eph. 4:11). These terms for the pastoral office are used interchangeably. A careful study of the biblical texts that mention these terms will shed light on their respective function in the ministry of the church. Nonetheless, a common function for the pastoral leader is that of shepherding.

The shepherd metaphor for pastoral leadership is used throughout the New Testament to describe the attitude and function of leadership in the church. The apostle Peter in his epistle in 5:2 instructs the elders, or church leaders, to "shepherd the flock of God among you." The word "shepherd" in this verse carries the idea of dealing with the church (the flock of God) as a shepherd tends to sheep under his watch.²² Other shepherding responsibilities such as feeding, guiding, and protecting describe the pastor's ministry toward the sheep (God's people). Such pastoral responsibilities involve spiritual care of the church through the ministry of the Word such as preaching, teaching, and counseling.

As shepherds, pastoral leaders also hold governing responsibilities. Another word used in the New Testament to describe the pastoral leader is "bishop" or "overseer" (1 Timothy 3:1). While possessing governing authority in the church, the pastoral leaders are not unilaterally in charge of the sheep, but serve

²¹ Derek Tidball, *Ministry by the Book: New Testament Patterns for Pastoral Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 188-189.

²² The Greek word ποιμαίνω (*poimainō*) has the idea of to "watch out for other people," in the sense of "lead, guide, or rule." William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 842.

under the headship of the “Chief Shepherd” (1 Peter 5:4) to whom pastoral leaders are accountable. The Lord Jesus Christ is the “Chief Shepherd” and “that great Shepherd of the sheep” (Hebrews 13:20). The sheep belong to Christ and are entrusted to the care of the pastor, the undershepherd. This truth is a sobering reminder for the pastoral leader who will answer to the Lord Jesus Christ for how he carried out his shepherding ministry (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 5:4). This is a stark contrast to the secular business leader who can change jobs and companies with little or no concern for how he managed with his previous employer other than a favorable recommendation or the opportunity to return.

Relationships with people are an important aspect of Christian leadership. The shepherd metaphor illustrates this concept as Hemphill states that “the Christian leader cannot lead people unless he truly loves people.”²³ The pastoral model is to lead people rather than drive them (1 Pet. 5:3). Adams describes the shepherd leaders as participants in the activities into which they lead their sheep.²⁴ He further describes shepherding leadership as “participative, involved leadership” drawing upon the picture of the shepherd “down there on the plain, up there in the mountains, travelling the paths trod by the sheep themselves.”²⁵ Herein lays a stark contrast to the CEO model of leadership where the top leader (or leaders) can be disconnected or aloof from the people they lead.

Conflicts are inevitable in any organization. A key aspect of any leader, whether secular or pastoral, is dealing with conflicts. Conflicts can even occur in the pursuit of certain visions for the organization such as initiating a building program. The business (and some Christian) leaders who are deemed “successful” are often those seen as visionaries who lead an organization to some significant accomplishment or status that is impressive in the eyes of beholders. Sometimes the fulfillment of these visions comes at the cost of someone else’s well-being. Broken relationships and bruised spirits can fall casualty to the determined execution of a particular vision held dear by someone with higher authority. The shepherd leader should be considerate of the well-being of the people whom he leads regardless of the circumstances that led to the conflict. Oftentimes, the secular leadership model is more focused on the good of the organization rather than the good of the individual. Pastoral leadership that operates out of Christian love (1 Cor. 13:2) where the good of someone else is sought by all means (Gal. 6:10) is antithetical to such a philosophy.

²³ Ken Hemphill, *The Antioch Effect: Eight Characteristics of Highly Effective Churches* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 89.

²⁴ Adams, 6.

²⁵ Ibid.

Authority

The pastor's authority does not come from himself or from power vested solely from his position or office. His authority comes from the Lord, the Ultimate Authority. The Lord Jesus Christ has "all authority...in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18b). The calling and the commissioning of the disciples in Matthew 28:18-20 rest in the authority bestowed upon them by Jesus Christ. Likewise with men called to pastor, the authority bestowed upon them by Jesus Christ should never be considered their own. Jesus Christ "as the Chief Shepherd has appointed leaders and has given them *His* authority to lead and to manage the flock."²⁶ Lawrence states that, "It is when the leader learns to submit to Christ as the Leader, that is, when he learns to fly 'the white flag of victory,' that he becomes an authoritative Christian leader."²⁷

While the pastoral leader has authority to lead, he is not to be authoritarian in how he leads. Richard Land uses the word "authoritative" to describe the pastor-authority model of leadership in the local church.²⁸ In distinguishing between authoritarianism and authoritative, Land further writes: "Authoritarianism says, 'This is right because I say so.' Authority says, 'I say this because it is right.' A good leader has authority on his side but he is not authoritarian."²⁹ The pastoral leader recognizes his authority as belonging to Jesus Christ and nothing deserving or merited his (the pastor's) part (1 Cor. 15:10). Such reminder should affect humble service in the name of Jesus Christ rather than authoritarian leadership that is typical of the secular leadership model.

Secular and pastoral leadership both operate in the framework of authority. The vast distinction in the two leadership models does not rest on the issue of authority alone because authority is needed for any modicum of effective leadership. The difference between secular leadership and Christian leadership does not lie in the absence of authority but in the attitude that motivates authority, the sanctified nature of ambition and motivation.³⁰

The Scriptures are the authority of truth for the Christian believer and should be authoritative for the pastoral leader. Secular leadership assumes no such authority since it operates in an environment where faith is privatized and secondary to pluralistic ideals. The Christian leader must adhere to the authority of Scripture by which he shepherds the people of God. Adams states that "the

²⁶ Adams, 13.

²⁷ William D. Lawrence, "Distinctives of Christian Leadership," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 144 (July-September, 1987): 318.

²⁸ Richard Land, "Pastoral Leadership: Authoritarian or Persuasive?" *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* Vol. 3 No. 1 (Spring 2005): 74.

²⁹ Joe S. Ellis, *The Church on Purpose* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1982), 131; quoted in Land, 74.

³⁰ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Press, 1967), 13; quoted in Land, 77.

pastor must recognize that the Scriptures are the basic Management guide for the church.”³¹ Without the authority of Scriptures, the pastoral leader foolishly tries to lead God’s people in his own wisdom which is powerless to lead people in the way of righteousness and truth. Biblical principles can be applied in the secular workplace for effectiveness, but secular principles devoid of biblical truth are not effective in pastoral leadership.

Qualifications for Leadership

Secular leaders are typically acclaimed for their credentials accomplished through educational achievement and pertinent experience. Leaders with impressive credentials are often those highly sought and esteemed in their respective fields. The qualifications for pastoral leadership, however, are not bound by such quantifiable criteria. Credentials can be helpful for assessing a man’s background and experience in consideration for a pastoral leadership role but should not be the sole criteria upon which he is hired. The qualifications for pastoral leadership consist primarily of character qualities. The Biblical qualifications for pastoral leadership are given in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and worth quoting:

An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

The character qualities indicated in the above text reveal the importance of Christian character for those serving in pastoral leadership. Lawrence states that, “Christian leadership is unique in that it requires Christian character.”³² He states further that, “Other kinds of leadership speak ideally of the leader's character but none of them require Christian character.”³³ Such character must be a prerequisite for any pastoral candidate before he assumes the office of leadership. It is unbiblical to focus solely on other qualities such as credentials and experience for pastoral leadership. Prayer and watching must be in order to discern a man’s capacity to serve in the pastoral office.

³¹ Adams, 18-19.

³² Lawrence, 319.

³³ Ibid.

Secular leadership places less value on character and more on competence. A person's skill, accomplishments, recognition, and awards are often regarded as key factors in determining the facility for a particular leadership. However, assessing competence qualities alone can often overlook the most important aspects of a person and their ability to lead. The leader's authenticity is what is often overlooked in such a process of evaluating competency alone.

Authenticity is required of genuine and godly Christian leadership. Authentic Christian character is "congruence between attitude, word, and action, a congruence that speaks of integrity and serves as a magnet to draw others who listen and respond to the leader."³⁴ Lawrence further states the value of authenticity as "a commitment to Christ's lordship, recognizing Him as 'Number One,' enables the leader to carry out one of his major tasks, that of being a model of Christ-like maturity for those whom he leads."³⁵ A leader's authenticity cannot be inferred from evaluating competence alone by examining a person's resume and work history no matter how impressive the credentials. Hemphill states, "Competence is primarily an issue of skill and is easier than commitment to assess and develop."³⁶

The only quality of competency for the pastoral leader mentioned in the above Scripture text is "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2). Shepherding the flock of God involves teaching believers the Word of God (Acts 20:28). The pastoral leader needs to be able to explain Christian doctrine and refute error. Adams states, "If shepherds wish to exercise biblical leadership with authority, they themselves *must know and teach the Scriptures faithfully in depth.*"³⁷

The concern for competence raises the issue of training and preparation for leadership. Secular and pastoral leadership alike require some degree of training for skills needed to serve effectively. Secular leadership, however, relies more on such education and training to build competency for optimal job performance. The pastoral leader can benefit from educational training and experience serving in leadership. However, he should realize that his training does not occur only in a formal sense but also in an experiential sense from his walk with God. First Timothy 3:6 states that the pastoral leader must not be "a novice"³⁸ where he is immature in the faith. God's preparation is not confined to a classroom or educational curriculum. God sovereignly prepares His servants experientially through their relationship with Him and growing in His grace.

³⁴ Lawrence, 320.

³⁵ Ibid..

³⁶ Hemphill, 96.

³⁷ Adams, 15.

³⁸ KJV uses the word "novice" to describe a new convert.

Christian leadership is a gift from the Holy Spirit.³⁹ The equipping for effective service can only occur through God's gracious work in the life of the pastoral leader. Since God graciously gives such gifts for the benefit of the church (1 Cor. 12:7), pastoral leaders must serve with the focus on God's purpose. Spiritual gifts for pastoral leaders are vital for effective ministry. Unless the basic capacity to lead is present as a gift from the Holy Spirit, one cannot be a Christian leader.⁴⁰

The aspiration for pastoral leadership is not necessarily wrong considering a man's motives are pure. In 1 Timothy 3:1, the text says "if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do." The words "aspires" and "desires" used together describes a man who "outwardly pursues it because he is driven by a strong internal desire."⁴¹ Thus, the desire and pursuit of pastoral leadership is not wrong since God is at work in the called man's heart "both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). The desire and pursuit of the pastoral leader is distinguished from that of the secular leader in that the pastoral leader seeks the will of God above his own desires for position and power.

Leadership Effectiveness

Strong leaders – whether pastoral or secular – are concerned about effectiveness in their carrying out their responsibilities. Effectiveness is sometimes labeled "success" in the modern-day vernacular when judging a leader's effectiveness. Standards for measuring effectiveness vary greatly between the secular and pastoral leadership models. The secular leadership model is established so that effectiveness can be evaluated in tangible means such as profitability or number of customers. However, the pastoral leadership model should not be evaluated by such standards as profitability and number of new members. While healthy finances and a growing membership can be the consequence of solid leadership, such results will not always be the case. The pastoral leader must be more concerned with leading in integrity and patterning his life and ministry based on the Word of God (Acts 20:20-21). White profoundly states that "the concern about Christian leadership is not simply its effectiveness; the chief concern must be the moral responsibility of leadership."⁴²

Concerning ambition or drive within the pastoral leader, motive is once again a factor. A strong leader needs ambition to lead people with energy and vigor. Malphurs states that "while leaders' gifts provide them with special abilities for

³⁹ Lawrence, 320.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ John MacArthur, ed. *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville:Thomas Nelson, 2006), 1833.

⁴² White, 552.

their ministry, their passion supplies long-term direction and motivation for those gifts.”⁴³

Lethargic leadership is ineffective in leading people who themselves need to see energy in their leaders to follow them faithfully. Ambition keeps the leader passionate in pursuing and realizing his vision. The key is the right ambition as Lawrence states:

Ambition is essential in a leader for it provides the drive and the desire necessary to carry the burdens and responsibilities of leadership; ambition is the fuel of leadership. There is no problem with ambition in itself; the problem with ambition lies in its aim, not in its strength and its presence, as Mark 10:35-45 makes clear.⁴⁴

Inordinate ambition is a temptation for both secular and pastoral leadership. Christian leadership, however, is distinctive in that it does not pursue success with a “whatever-it-takes” or a “by-any-means-necessary” attitude. The Christian leader must beware of selfish or egotistical ambition as warned against and reprovved in Philippians 2:3. Christian ambition must be understood as the redirection of aim, not the denial of desire.⁴⁵

A pertinent goal of pastoral leadership is transformation of the people who are being lead. The leadership model in which he serves must be a catalyst for effecting Christ-like change in the people. Lawrence states concerning the goal of transformation: “The purpose of each Christian leader should be to guide others in following Christ. His aim should be to focus on Him and to show others how to do this.”⁴⁶ Secular leadership is not concerned with such inward change in their subordinates.

The pastoral leader should realize that they will not see in this lifetime all the change they desire from their service. Since believers are being prepared for eternity, the pastoral leader is God’s instrument in soul care of the flock until they are ultimately in the care of the Chief Shepherd in glory (John 21:15-17). Therefore, the pastoral leader should be encouraged about the eternal difference they are making in the lives of God’s people. No amount of pay, perks, or prominence can compare with such a high calling. Adams states:

The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is not merely a human organization; it was not created by men, nor was it intended to serve purely human needs. Therefore, many of its *objectives* will not be realized in time but only in eternity. Moreover,

⁴³ Malphurs, 78.

⁴⁴ Lawrence, 323.

⁴⁵ Lawrence, 324.

⁴⁶ Lawrence, 319.

objectives of both sorts (eternal, temporal) are not always subject to quantifiable measurement.⁴⁷

Competition is an issue that the pastoral leader must be watchful and diligent to avoid. The secular leadership model is organized to be competitive and “outdo” the competitors who threaten their potential or prominence. Such competition can lead to aggressive tactics such as criticism of the competitor and even questionable practices to get any advantage. The pastoral leader must understand that other churches (ones centered on biblical truth) do not pose any competitive threat even if they are in close proximity in meeting locations. Pastoral leaders have such a distinction in that they share in the successes of other leaders since all ministry is done to the glory of God. Jesus reprimanded His disciples who were concerned about competition by telling them that “he who is not against you is for you” (Luke 9:50).

The right concern about the effectiveness of pastoral leadership should not only be its ends but its means. Pastoral leadership can be deemed a “success” if it is carried on according the Scriptural precepts regardless of tangible and visible results. White states, “The concern about Christian leadership is not simply its effectiveness; the chief concern must be the moral responsibility of leadership. ‘Is leadership ethically and morally responsible?’ is a more appropriate question for the Christian than “Is it powerful?”⁴⁸

Pastoral leaders recognize that their calling is by the sovereign grace of God and realize they are privileged to be God’s servant (1 Tim. 1:11-14). While pastoral leaders serve in a role that can be very demanding with little temporal reward, the pastor’s sense of call and commitment to Christ supersedes the difficulties and dismal rewards. The mature pastoral leader knows his strength and sufficiency come from the Lord and not of his own (2 Cor. 3:5; 12:9). The pastoral leader reaps the rewards of joy in being used by God and seeing Him work in the lives of people, including his own. Tidball states that “as to reward, true Christian leadership is not undertaken for money but for the sheer joy of service.”⁴⁹ Such a sense of calling is significantly different from the typical secular leader who often works for the rewards and prestige of his position.

CONCLUSION

Secular thinking has influenced Christian leadership in subtle ways. Quicke summarizes the unhealthy effect of this influence in stating, “The tendency for secular leadership to focus exclusively on positives, playing to strength and

⁴⁷ Adams, 17.

⁴⁸ White, 552.

⁴⁹ Tidball, 188.

neglecting negatives, flies straight in the face of the Christian need for confession and dependence on God's grace."⁵⁰

The Apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthians believers to "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). This teaches believers to follow their pastoral leaders as they follow Christ. The goals of the pastoral leader should be commensurate with the purposes of Jesus Christ. Lawrence in quoting a private conversation with Howard Hendricks states that "a Christian leader will have goals in keeping with his Leader's goals, and motives that are in keeping with his Leader's motives."⁵¹ By following pastoral leaders who follow Christ, Christians follow Christ. The ultimate in pastoral leadership is following the leadership and guidance of Christ through His chosen servants. The pastoral leadership model is unique in that its means and ends for leadership is Jesus Christ Himself. The genuine aim is the shepherding of the flock of God in the way of Jesus Christ for His glory alone.

The principles of pastoral leadership should be biblical and its purpose should be the glory of God. David Steele gives an exhortation that "to best discover the function of a New Testament shepherd one must look to our model par excellence, the Great Shepherd of the sheep."⁵² Secular and pastoral leadership, while overlapping in some methods, are vastly different in its principles and purpose. It behooves the Christian leader to be aware of these distinctions to know the right way to embrace and the wrong way to evade concerning the leadership of God's people. No man-made methodology can outdo what God has ordained. The faithful Christian leader commits his life and leadership to God who is faithful (1 Thess. 5:24).

⁵⁰ Quicke, 31.

⁵¹ Lawrence, 319.

⁵² David A. Steele, *Images of Leadership and Authority for the Church: Biblical Principles and Secular Models* (Landham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 25.

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Good without God? Paul's view of the Law as a response to Moral relativism

Ovidiu Hanc¹

ABSTRACT

The idea that morality without God is possible is so prevalent in today's secular society. The Christian view on this topic is based on the fact that objective moral values cannot exist without being grounded in God. These two opposing views reflect the conflict between secular moral relativism and the theistic view of reality that advocates, from an anthropological point of view, that human existence cannot be analyzed without a moral framework. Without the moral dimension, the concept of the rule of law is not more than a utopia that cannot be applied in practice. This paper analyses the issue of morality from a biblical point of view in light of Paul's use of the Law. As a Pharisee, Paul used the Law as the foundation for moral living. This view was completely changed as Paul was transformed by God's grace. The aim of this study is to examine both the positive and negative aspects of the Law as man draws closer to God, but also the way in which Paul relates to the Law in terms of morality. Today's society debates the theme of good without God, while the first century society had in mind the theme of good for God. This paper argues that just as good without God is utopian, so, in Paul's understanding of the Law, good done for God cannot be used as a soteriological foundation.

KEY WORDS: Good without God; morality; Paul's use of Law (or Law); relativism; soteriology; legalism; lawlessness.

In his New York Times best seller book "Good Without God: What a Billion Nonreligious People Do Believe", Greg Epstein,

the president of the Harvard Chaplains Organization and Humanist Chaplain at Harvard University, argues that Humanism provide sufficient arguments for morality without an appeal to a higher being.² Right from the title of the book, Epstein wants to credit the idea that morality without God is possible, and the argument is the simple fact that a billion non-religious people believe in this concept. This logical fallacy, using *argumentum ad populum*, projects from the

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² Greg M. Epstein, *Good without God: What a Billion Nonreligious People Do Believe* (New York: William Morrow, 2009).

very beginning a reality in which truth is defined not by objective criteria but by community support.

This concept is not essentially new. Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical creation in the famous writing *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* is the *Übermensch*, a Superhuman that is meant to replace God who was considered dead. Historically speaking, the utopia of this dream, in which man became the measure of all things, did not materialize in an idyllic society but in the horrors and atrocities of the world wars and many other conflicts that uniquely marked the 20th century.

The issue of good without God has been debated from many angles using theology, philosophy, sociology, etc. William Lane Craig has argued from a rational perspective against the idea that objective moral values can exist without being grounded in God. He reasoned against Atheistic Moral Platonists that lack any adequate foundation for moral values and correctly noted that “[m]oral values seem to exist as properties of persons, not as mere abstractions.”³ Glenn Tinder has written extensively on the problem of good through a cultural and political filter.⁴ Analysis as these emphasize the conflict between secular moral relativism and the view that moral dimension is an axiom that cannot be explained in a world that is limited to physical reality.

THE NECESSITY OF GOOD

At the level of inter-human relations, we are forced to raise questions not only of human existence but also of morality. Human existence cannot be analyzed without a moral framework. Following the paradigm of evolution, we could argue that the principle of the 'survival of the fittest' is a principle that humans are guided by. In one of his comments on Sodom, Moses Rosen, Chief Rabbi of the Mosaic Cult in Romania and President of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania, pointed out that even the city of iniquity had laws. “Embezzlement, robbery, murder are also required to be legislated.” He correctly stated that from Sodom to Hitler it has been proven that in a society that despises morality, the absurd triumphs against logic and common sense. In all ages, the warning of Sodom remains valid. “Justice and morality must be confounded.”⁵ Rosen correctly linked the rule of Law with the necessity of a

³ William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd edition (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2008), 178.

⁴ The initial essay was published in the Atlantic Magazine. Glenn Tinder, “Can We Be Good Without God?,” *The Atlantic*, December 1, 1989, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1989/12/can-we-be-good-without-god/306721/>. This analysis was later published as Glenn Tinder, *Can We Be Good without God? On the Political Meaning of Christianity* (Vancouver, B.C.: Regent College Publishing, 2007).

⁵ Moses Rosen, *Eseuri Iudaice* (București: n.p., 1988), 17.

moral dimension. Without the moral dimension, law becomes nothing more than a utopia that cannot be applied in practice.

An analysis of the crimes of the communist atheist system and the Nazi religious system provides insight into the necessity of morality. Without the existence of God all atrocities produced outside an absolute moral framework are perfectly justified, yet wholly unjust. Hitler tried to create a perfect society considering that all actions were for the good of mankind. Hitler considered himself a good man, and in his speeches, he invoked his belief in the “Almighty”. We can debate whether Hitler was really referring to a higher being or merely invoking such a reality as a facade. However, his philosophy was based on a morality of its own that was founded in a belief in a supreme being and applied to the good of society

This article analyses the issue of morality from a biblical point of view in light of Paul’s use of the law. First century Jewish society was a religious society. The difference between that society and the society of the 21st century is that the existence of God was a fundamental reality, whereas today this reality is questioned. With the law as the foundation for moral living, the Apostle Paul, as a former Pharisee, in his New Testament writings considers both the positive and negative aspects of the law to draw closer to God. This article does not aim to analyze the theme of covenantal nomism postulated by E. P. Sanders, but merely outlines how Paul relates to the law in terms of morality.

If today's society debates the theme of good without God, the first century society had in mind the theme of good for God. This article argues that just as good without God is utopian, so, in Paul's understanding of the law, good done for God cannot be used as a soteriological foundation.

THE PAULINE PERSPECTIVE ON *NOMOS*

The Pauline views of the law are manifold. This concept is debated by Paul because of its implications. A misinterpretation of this concept will cause changes in soteriology, eschatology, ecclesiology. The law is a major theme in Romans. Between Romans 2:12 and 8:7 the term appears no less than 66 times.⁶ Galatians was written to clearly draw the line between salvation through acts of the law and salvation through grace.

Paul uses the concept of law in different ways: (1) the whole OT (Rom. 2:17-27; 3:19), (2) part of the OT (Rom. 3:21), (3) the Mosaic law (Rom. 4:16, 5:13, 20; 1 Cor. 9. 20; Galatians 3.17-23, 4.4-5, 21; Ephesians 2.15), (4). the will of God (Romans 3.20; 4.15; 7.2, 5, 7, 8-9, 12, 16, 22; 8.3-4, 7; 13.8, 10; 1 Corinthians 15.56; Galatians 3.13; 1 Timothy 1.8).

⁶ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 131.

In Pauline theology there is an apparent discontinuity in the teaching on *nomos*. Paul affirms both positive and negative things about the law. The discontinuity in Pauline nomism lies only in the different functions it performs. Ultimately Paul sees the law as both the way we come to the knowledge of sin and the way we come to the understanding and acceptance of God's saving grace.

Positive aspects of the Law

1. the law is not of human authority (1 Cor. 9:8)
2. the law is divine in nature (Romans 7:22, 25; 8:7, 9:4; 1 Corinthians 9:9; 14:21, 14:34; Galatians 3:19)
3. the law contains the will of God (Romans 2:17-18),
4. the law testifies to God's righteousness (Romans 3:21)
5. the law is holy, good and of the Spirit (Romans 7:12, 14, 16)
6. the essence of the law is love (Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14),
7. the law is the synthesis of knowledge and truth (Romans 2:20).
8. the law is strengthened by faith (Romans 3:31).
9. the law is fulfilled by the one who walks according to the law of the Spirit (Romans 8:4).
10. the law draws attention to the Messiah and the need for God (Romans 3:21)
11. the law is a caretaker until Messiah comes (Galatians 3:24)

Negative aspects of the Law

1. the law brings the curse (Galatians 3:3), wrath (Romans 4:15), sin (Romans 7:7-8) and death (Romans 5:12-13, 7:9-11; 2 Corinthians 3:6-7).
2. the law brings sin to life (Romans 7:8, 11)
3. the law gives power to sin (1 Corinthians 15:56),
4. the law implicitly leads to law-breaking (Romans 4:15; cf. Galatians 3:19),
5. the law multiplies sin (Romans 5:20),
6. the law leads to bondage (Galatians 3:23; 4:5, 21-31; Romans 6:14-15; 7:4-6, 23-25)
7. the law brings condemnation to death (2 Corinthians 3:9; Romans 2:12; cf. Romans 8:1, 3; Col 2:14).

8. the law is the root of sin and death (Romans 7:23, 25; 8:7).

The Law - a teacher to Christ - Galatians 3.24

The idea of the law fulfilling the role of a παιδαγωγός (*paidagōgos*) is really the idea of a guardian who not only teaches students things but also keeps them from doing certain things.⁷ The purpose of the law is therefore to keep people “in the classroom” until they discover true righteousness. With the coming of Christ, the “lesson” is over, and so is the role of the teacher. In the Greco-Roman world, but also in the Jewish context, the teacher was more a disciplinarian and caretaker than a teacher.⁸ The term is formed by joining two terms παῖς (*pais*) ‘child’ and the verb ἄγω (*agō*) ‘to bring’.

Josephus Flavius (37-110 A.D.) uses the term several times to emphasize the status of the teacher: a slave, a eunuch whose role was to direct the child, to help him.⁹ In canonical Jewish literature there is no reference to the law as a pedagogue. However, in the Talmud there are a few references to Moses' role as tutor to Israel. In 4 Maccabees 1:17; 5:34 the teaching role of the law is described, but without a clear statement that the law is a teacher.

In the writings of Paul, the term παιδαγωγός (*paidagōgos*) has different nuances than the term διδάσκαλος (*didaskalos*). Longenecker states that the purpose of this analogy is not to point out that the law was in fact a preparation for the coming of Christ, but to show the inferior status of one who was under the guidance of a teacher, but also the temporary nature of such a situation.¹⁰ We must point out, however, that the analogy Paul appeals to is not only to emphasize the temporary aspect of the law, but also to point out that the law was also a teacher about Christ.

The parallel to which Paul later appeals in Galatians 4:1-4 is meant to explain what he said in 3:24. The terms ἐπίτροπος (*epitropos*) and οἰκονόμος (*oikonomos*) are terms that show the influence of Greco-Roman thought on Paul. He uses these legal terms, familiar both to him and to his readers. The terms of this analogy clearly underline the implications of the analogy in chapter 3: the son is kept under supervision in the period before maturity, the purpose is to help the child mature, maturity brings with it release, the decision about the time of release belongs to the father.¹¹ What we must add, however, is that once the child reaches the age and stage of maturity, the role of the teacher ceases.

⁷ Richard N. Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature Of The Law In Galatians 3:19-4:7,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25, no. 1 (1982): 61.

⁸ Longenecker, 61.

⁹ e.g. *Ant.* 1.56; 9.125; 10.186; 18.212; 20.183.

¹⁰ Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature Of The Law In Galatians 3,” 57.

¹¹ Longenecker, 57.

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

A much-disputed issue is Romans 10:4, where we are told that Christ is the *τέλος* (*telos*) of the law, the end or the goal/the purpose of the law. The interpretation of *telos* is different depending on which aspects are emphasized. When the positive aspects of the law are emphasized, *telos* is interpreted as the purpose of the law, and when the negative aspects are emphasized, *telos* is understood as the end of the law.¹²

Cranfield,¹³ Howard¹⁴ and Kaiser¹⁵ are of the opinion that *telos* has the meaning of end, while Bruce,¹⁶ Barrett,¹⁷ Drane,¹⁸ are of the opinion that *telos* has the meaning of end and purpose. These two divergent views differ on the manner in which the concept *telos* is interpreted. Charles Lee Irons realized a succinct taxonomy of interpretation on this matter in which *telos* is interpreted temporally or teleologically.¹⁹ He concludes that Christ has performed the object of the law, that is righteousness.

Christ ushered in the Messianic era, long awaited by the Jews. Some claim that this ended the law. Some have argued that by these verses Paul means to affirm that with the coming of Christ the ceremonial law was abolished. However, in this context no differentiation is made between the different types of law, so we must interpret the concept as a whole.

Paul's intended meaning in this statement is that Christ is the end of using the law for personal justification. The context of the verse, especially v.3, reinforces this interpretation. The law has been given and can no longer be annulled or ended. It continues to exist, however, without providing a genuine means of justification. Paul wishes to combat the attempt at justification by the works of

¹² Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1996), 636–51.

¹³ C. E. B. Cranfield, “St. Paul and the Law,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 17, no. 1 (1964): 42–68; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: Commentary on Romans IX–XVI and Essays*, vol. 2, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 2004).

¹⁴ George E. Howard, “Christ the End of the Law: The Meaning of Romans 10:4 Ff.,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88, no. 3 (1969): 331–37.

¹⁵ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: Do This and You Shall Live (Eternally?),” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 14 (1971): 18–28.

¹⁶ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1985), 190; F. F. Bruce, “Paul and the Law of Moses,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 57 (1975): 59–79.

¹⁷ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 137–38.

¹⁸ John William Drane, *Paul, Libertine or Legalist?: A Study in the Theology of the Major Pauline Epistles* (London: S.P.C.K, 1975), 133.

¹⁹ Charles Lee Irons, “The Object of the Law Is Realized in Christ: Romans 10:4 and Paul’s Justification Teaching,” *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 6, no. 1 (2016): 33–54.

the law. Christ abrogated the law of Moses (Romans 10:46; 2 Corinthians 3:7-18)

With the coming of Christ, the law was fulfilled. Christians are no longer under the law because of identification with Christ who has fulfilled the whole law (1 Corinthians 9:20). The believer had died by right, through identification with Christ, to pay for sins done by breaking the law. The curse of the law is death for those who break the law, those who do not fulfill God's requirements. By this identification with Christ, the believer has actually died to the law. Christ's resurrection has brought him to a new life, a living on another, higher level under Christ's law (1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2),

The law is not to be seen primarily as a tool of sin. Paul very carefully emphasizes that the law is spiritual. Without this remark and without this aspect, the law can be seen as only a negative thing. Ultimately, the law is rooted in God. The law itself is not sin but only the breaking of the law. The law encapsulates the need for God's grace.

Paul discusses the Mosaic law and any other use of this concept, pointing out that we cannot speak of a soteriological nomism. He emphasizes that no one can be saved by fulfilling the law and that Jews must also come to faith in Christ. The law is in fact the testimony of salvation which is received through Christ.

THE OUTCOME OF THE LAW

It is vital to emphasize that *de facto* the law is good. The law has made sin known, but with it also grace, because where sin multiplies, grace multiplies. The law brings to light the fact that man is a sinner.²⁰ The real dichotomy is not between law and gospel but between sin and grace. The law does not produce sin but only the breaking of the law. The law was given to identify the problem: sin.

Israel's heritage has become the best evidence of our need for God's grace. This grace transcends the national identity of the people of Israel in favor of all humanity. The law was not a hindrance to man, but to sin.

In Galatians 3.19 Paul raises the question of the role of the law: Why then the law? (Τί οὖν ὁ νόμος;). He raises this issue after arguing that righteousness is received on the basis of faith not the law (Galatians 3.11). The inferiority of the Mosaic law to the law of Christ is emphasized in Galatians 3:19 by the fact that "it was added because of transgressions;" had a role only "until the Seed should come;" and was not given directly by God but through intermediaries. The law became the ally of the power of sin and death. In itself is not a cosmic power

²⁰ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 237-68.

but God's tool to punish sin. The triumph of the law is precisely that God will transform the final judgment of the sinner into the complete destruction of sin itself.

MORALITY AND SOTEROLOGY

The problem of legalism

When Paul speaks of “the works of the law” he cancels out any attempt to apply the Mosaic law to new Christian converts from among the Gentiles. Furthermore, Paul emphasizes not only that Gentiles who wish to come to the salvation found in Christ do not have to obey the requirements of the law, but that even Jews no longer have to obey the law. Dunn states that the law labels all as sinners, both Gentiles and Jews. The Jewish people, however, regarded the law as a matter of national pride - they are the people to whom God gave the law.²¹

Judaism is called a religion of the law. The deeds of the law were only a sign of identity not salvation. Salvation and righteousness was received through faith in God. During the Old Testament history this salvation was associated with Jewish identity, but after the sacrifice of Christ the status of a saved man is no longer conditioned by any national identity (Romans 2:17-29).

God gave the law to His people so that all mankind could see that no one can attain righteousness by keeping the law, precisely because it is impossible to keep the law. The law is the stumbling block of the people of Israel (Romans 9:32-10:3). The people of Israel sought a righteousness that can be obtained through the law, through works. Paul redefines Jewish identity: who was saved in the Old Testament period, the sons of Abraham or the disciples of Moses? Sons of Abraham, those who had faith in God!

First century Judaism was not “legalistic” in the pejorative sense of the word. Law-keeping was seen as something positive (Romans 10:2), which is why Paul points out that the Jews had a zeal for the law but no understanding. The sin of the people of Israel takes the form of national pride.

The only way one can acquire righteousness is by God's grace. The law is very important because it defines the identity of the believer. In the presentation of Pauline soteriology, the issue of the law is dealt with because this issue is closely related to the Jewish national identity. The annulment of the law means the annulment of the central element of Jewish soteriology: the law. E. P Sanders

²¹ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 526–27.

argued that Palestinian Judaism at the time of the apostle Paul was characterized by covenantal nomism.²²

Israel's boastful pride was cancelled with the coming of Christ (Romans 3:27). Attempting to keep the law, in the context of Christ's work at the cross, is actually the sin of self-righteousness. The good news for the Gentiles becomes a stumbling block for the Jews since God is interested in the whole world not just Israel.

“Under the law” appears eight times in the corpus of Pauline writings (Galatians 3:23; 4:4-5, 21; 5:18; Romans 6:14-15; 1 Corinthians 9:20). Paul criticizes Israel's failure to recognize the eschatological change of the ages. The contrast between the ages (Moses and Christ; Adam and Christ; Sarai and Hagar; Abraham and Moses)²³ often described in Paul's writings precisely emphasizes the superiority of Christ in relation to the status of the law.

Dunn correctly noted that just as sin turns desire into pleasure, so it turns the law into grammar for Israel.²⁴ 2 Corinthians 3:6-7 states that while the Spirit gives life, the letter of the law kills. Through the law, Israel became a slave to the natural approach to relationship with God. Paul points out the inability of Israel to read the writings of Moses regarding the temporary status of the law and the revelation of righteousness that is received through faith in God.

So in the context of Christian soteriology, legalism is unnecessary. The weakness of the law is that it cannot stop sin, it only condemns or forbids it. Brice Martin correctly argued that “[t]o live *en nomos* (Galatians 3:11; 5:4), *ek (tou) nomou* (Romans 4:14, 16; 10:5; Galatians 3:18, 21; Philippians 3:9), *dia nomou* (Romans 3:20; 4:13; Galatians 2:21) or *hupo nomon* (Romans 6:14-15; Galatians 4:21; 5:18) is fatal.²⁵

In Galatians 3:23 the person of the verb is changed to emphasize that Paul was also under the law until Christ came. Paul states that he is free, delivered from the law, from the Mosaic law, but he is not free from the law of God, because he is only under the law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21 ἔννομος Χριστοῦ). Paul emphasizes the rejection of the law not only from the soteriological but also from the ethical context. He writes against an ethical nomism. The ceremonial stipulations of the Mosaic law, which have an effect on the moral law, are

²² E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1977). See also James D. G. Dunn, “Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3.10–14),” *New Testament Studies* 31, no. 4 (October 1985): 526.

²³ Romans 5.12-21; 2 Corinthians 3.1-18; Galatians 4.21-31

²⁴ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 161.

²⁵ Brice L. Martin, *Christ and the Law in Paul* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2001), 19.

nullified in the annulment of the law by Christ. Paul argues that an ethos based on *nomos* brings out the danger of becoming half Judaizers.

The problem of lawlessness

Those who have sinned without having a law are also condemned in sin, because the only solution to receive justification is faith. It is in this context that the importance of the law and the primacy of the Jews is seen, for the law, while not bringing justification, was a guide to Christ, while those without the law do not even have this guide. Lawlessness (*ἀνομία anomōs*) as presented in Romans 2:12 cannot be used as an excuse for sin.

A Jew who keeps the law is in the same position before God as a non-Jew who does good works, and a Jew who breaks the law is in the same position as a non-Jew who does bad works. With the coming of Christ, the only way of justification is by faith in Christ.

The law is like a two-sided coin. One side of the coin is what Paul points out that the law brings sin; through the law people became sinners. The law has not made anyone righteous and no one can claim to live by it (Romans 10:5) because no one has fulfilled its stipulations. The other side of the coin is that the impossibility of keeping the law is a sign of God's love. The law is a guide to Christ. It is through sin brought into being by the law that we come to understand our need for God. The “deeds of the law” are an authentication of the fact that no one can be saved by the “deeds of the law” because no one can fulfill all the deeds of the law.

The solution given by Paul is a law of the Spirit of life (Romans 8:2); or the law of faith (Romans 3:27). The hermeneutical key to the interpretation of this completed work with eschatological implications is the transition from the Jewish law to the law of the Spirit.

Christian moral perceptions are not nullified with the abolishment of the law. For Paul, the ethical life of Christians is an expression of the new identity found in Christ.

Some, however, believe that Christ has not freed us from the law in the sense of its moral, ethical but only soteriological stipulations. True sanctification is manifested in the continuous observance of God's law and the continuous effort to live in obedience to it as a rule of life. The freedom of the Christian is not a freedom without moral duty.

Christians are freed from the requirements of the Mosaic law. This does not mean that Christian life does not have a moral dimension. The moral law is not tributary to the Mosaic law. The moral law existed before the Mosaic law and will continue to exist. We note in the book of Genesis that before the Mosaic

law was given, people had the moral law in them. In addition to all the cases where we see how the patriarchs lived by a law (Genesis 26:5) doing what is pleasing before God, there are cases where even Pharaoh (Genesis 12:18) or Abimelech (Genesis 20:9-11) are led by a moral law. In Romans 1.18-20 this very idea of God's moral law being ingrained in people's lives without requiring a special decree is emphasised.

As Roy Aldrich correctly noted, much of the confusion about law and grace is due to the failure to distinguish between moral law and Mosaic law.²⁶ The Decalogue is not just the moral part of the Mosaic law. We must make clear the distinction between the moral law, the Mosaic law and the Christian law. Failure to distinguish between the Mosaic law and the moral law leads to legalism. We have been redeemed not only from the curse of the law, but also from under the law itself (Galatians 4:5). It was not the Mosaic law that produced the moral law, yet it includes it in its stipulations. The moral law existed before the Mosaic law and was not annulled with the breaking of the law through the work of Christ.²⁷ Christ is the end of the law, but the end of the Mosaic law not the moral law. The moral law transcends the Mosaic law – a law that was given only for a certain period of time.

The law of Christ, the law of the spirit of life and the law of faith, is a law superior to the law of retaliation in which the Christian loves not only his neighbor but even his enemy. Christianity is a religion of divine ethics, a personal and social ethics manifested in the law of love (Romans 7.14, 21, 22, 8.2), but this ethics is a product, a consequence of the salvation achieved through Christ and the acceptance of this salvation by faith not by the works of the law. Salvation is possible not by the law of works but by the law of faith, and the ethos is determined by the act of salvation not by the works of the law but by the works given by the law of Christ (Romans 3.27-28; Galatians 6.2, Philippians 3.9).

CONCLUSION

The denial of God will eventually lead not to a moral utopia, but also to the denial of man. The human ideal that is not grounded in truth will ultimately produce the exact opposite of what it intends. Although the secular or humanist approach tries hard to argue that morality can exist without being rooted in absolute truth, the historical reality of the times since man became the measure of all things reflects man's failure rather than his excellence.

²⁶ Roy L. Aldrich, "Causes for Confusion of Law and Grace," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 116, no. 463 (1959): 226.

²⁷ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 379.

The Apostle Paul argues against those who were wrongly approaching the Mosaic law by trying to be good for God. Today's world is attempting a somewhat reversed approach: good without God. In departing from the moral law of God, modern man is left without the necessary foundation for understanding God.

The Apostle Paul argues that man's goodness has value only insofar as goodness springs from God. For Paul it is the law through which people find the problem of humanity and also the solution: Christ. The work of Christ grants a new identity to those who believe, and this determines the whole Christian ethos. The Christian ethic is superior to any other ethic because it is based on a higher law: the law of Christ. The law makes us aware of our need for God, and faith in Him brings a new identity and a new ethic.

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Pesikta D'Rav Kahana and the Concept of the Mourning of God in Rabbinic Literature

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ABSTRACT

In the following article we will analyze the concept of the “mourning of God” in Pesikta D'Rav Kahana, a Rabbinical document dating to approximately late fourth century C.E. We will explore individual themes such as the “unauthorized worship”, the nature of the sin that caused the death of Nadab and Abihu – Aharon’s two sons, and the reaction of God toward the death of His people. The cultic context of Pesikta D'Rav Kahana is the celebration of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, which, among other purposes, served as a day of national mourning. We will show how the Rabbinical interplay between the specific and the general/indirect biblical texts enhance our understanding of the socio-religious world behind the text of Pesikta D'Rav Kahana. The purpose of this article is to probe into what the audience would have possibly heard from the pulpit when the rabbis preached sermons like these. What was their situation? What did they need to hear in order to receive hope, or that their lives might be set on the right course and thus avoid the shortcomings of their predecessors.

KEY WORDS: Sacrifice, Sin, Nadab and Abihu, God, Mourning, Yom Kippur.

INTRODUCTION²

Pesikta d'Rav Kahana is a homiletical work that belongs to the larger genre of the homiletic Midrashim.³ It has 28 paragraphs or chapters, each in the form of a sermon inspired from different readings of the Scripture. Sermon number 26, entitled *מִוֹת אַחֲרֵי מוֹת פְּרִשָׁה* falls under the theme of (Lev. 23:27) *יּוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים* (The Day of Atonement). The entire document has eleven chapters, organized around the exegetical verse from Leviticus 16:1. Although the author quotes only the first verse of chapter 16 in his sermon, the theme of the Day of Atonement

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² This article is based on the project *Pesikta D'Rav Kahana. Piska 26*, that I wrote for Dr. Goldman's Midrash 515 class at Hebrew Union College, December 2/2000.

³ For an analysis of Pesikta's historical, social and religious context in the fourth century C.E., see Rachel Anisfeld, *Sustain Me With Raisin Cakes. Pesikta deRav Kahana and the Popularization of Rabbinic Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), especially Part Four: “PRK [Pesikta D'Rav Kahana] in Historical Context,” 147-162.

presupposes – among others – verses 1 through 5.⁴ Notice too that not only did the author rely on a vast selection of Scriptural materials, but he also used numerous citations from the rabbinic literature. Part of the literary structure of the sermon is the fact the theme will not make full sense until the very end. Throughout the eleven chapters, then, we witness the unfolding of different ideas that may not seem to have any direct relevance for the theme of the Day of Atonement. The audience hears from Qohelet, Psalms, Job, and the Prophets in parallel with the theme verse, but as the sermon builds up each chapter seems to open a new window into an unexpected reality.⁵ We may never be able to reconstruct fully the specific background that motivated the authors of Pesikta D’Rav Kahana. Yet, it is conceivable that the Rabbis may have had in mind the dramas of the Roman-Jewish war in 67-70 C.E., the Bar Kochba Revolt 132-136 C.E., and other political and social upheavals that Palestine went through in the 3rd and 4th centuries. If the general theme of our text is that of the “mourning of God,” then it is possible that the Rabbis sought to present God as One who understands the suffering of His people because He himself mourned after the death of Nadab and Abihu. The history of the first four centuries of the Common Era was one of turbulence and upheaval.⁶

EXEGETICAL VERSE: Leviticus 16:1

To begin with, a “petihta” – or a proem - is a literary device that the rabbis used at the beginning of a larger sermon in order to interpret a verse by “reference to a second remote verse.”⁷ The term derives from the verb פתח (to open) and the

⁴ In fact, he will use several quotations from other chapters of Leviticus along with texts from Numbers which refer to the incident of Nadab and Abihu (among others, see Lev. 10:1, 9; 16:30, and Num. 3:4).

⁵ Notice Shmuel Safrai, Michael Stone, *The Literature of the Sages. Second Part: Midrash and Targum* (Assen, Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 2006), 2:117, as the “verse from Ketuvim is usually interpreted in sundry ways until the link is finally made to the verse from the Tora lectional reading (*seder*) of the day.”

⁶ Notice Rachel Anisfeld, *Sustain Me With Raisin-Cakes. Pesikta deRav Kahana and the Popularization of Rabbinic Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 67, for the view that Pesikta deRav Kahana sought to establish the vision of “a relationship between God and Israel that is down-to-earth and indulgent as God responds to every concern of the Israelites, speaking to them in a tender, colloquial voice,” a view that did not always prevail in previous texts of Rabbinic literature. In Part 4 of her work, “PRK [Pesikta D’Rav Kahana] in Historical Context” (esp. pgs. 147-162), Anisfeld also argues that PRK was edited and circulated during a time of upheaval in the life of Palestinian and diaspora Jews. The expanse of Christianity as the new religion of the Roman Empire meant that the Jews had a harder time of defending their identity. Among other purposes, PRK attempted to present God as personal and loving as possible in order to help the Jews not to abandon their religion.

⁷ *The Literature of the Sages: Second Part*, Shmuel Safrai ed. (Assen, Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcum, 2006), 2:117, and H.L. Strack, Gunter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and*

noun פתיחה (opening), signifying the “introduction to a lecture”, in general, and in particular the proems of longer literary works such as Pesikta de Rav Kana.⁸ The proem contains a verse:

In turn, a Pesikta is a section or a “portion” of the collection of Midrashim, exegetical commentaries on different readings of Scripture associated with special festivals.⁹ As we already mentioned, the *petihtha* to Leviticus 16:1 shifts the discourse to different readings from Tanakh in order to set the wider context for the interpretation of the death of the two sons of Aaron. Before we focus on the interpretation given by the rabbis, it is important to read the passage from Leviticus 10:1 which describes the cause of the death of Nadab and Abihu.

וַיִּקְחוּ בְנֵי־אַהֲרֹן נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא אִישׁ מִזְחָתוֹ וַיִּתְּנוּ בָהֶן אֵשׁ וַיִּשְׂמוּ עָלֶיהָ קִטְרֹת וַיִּקְרְבוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה אֹתָם:

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them (English Standard Version).

The biblical context for the sin of Nadab and Abihu is given in Exodus 30:9. One will notice that the Exodus text does not include the phrase אֵשׁ זָרָה (“strange/unauthorized fire”). It only includes the word זָר (“strange, illegitimate, unauthorized”), and thus concept of the illegitimacy of certain things, human beings, or actions which can render a cultic act invalid.¹⁰

Midrash (Minnesota, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 52-53, for *petihah*, “as a complete short sermon itself.”

⁸ Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Babli, Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature* (New York: Judaica Press, 1991), 1253.

⁹ Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1196.

¹⁰ The Bible uses the term זָר with the sense of (1) “unauthorized (a person other than a Levite trespassing the holy perimeter [Num. 1:51], or a non-Israelite roaming the desolate fields of Israel [Isaiah 1:7]), (2) “prohibited” or “that which does not belong” (of cultic items/actions [Lev. 10:1], Gentiles marrying/loving an Israelite person (Jer. 2:25), (3) “idolatrous” (i.e., new gods whom Israel must not worship [Deut. 32:16], (4) “adulterous/unchaste” (woman [Prov. 5:3]). Thus Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, זר, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the OT* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), L.A. Snijders, זר/זור, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, H. Ringgren ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 4:52-58, D.K. Stuart, Exodus (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 635. Of interest here may also be the verb זור, with the sense of a breath that “is abhorrent” (Job 19:17). Thus D.J.A. Clines, זור, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, vol. III (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). For the Rabbinic meaning of זר, Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 411, applies it only to human persons, not to objects. Thus, a זר could be a “non-priest, layman” or even “an outcast” or a “shunned” person, as a leprous. Note also Y. Frank, *The Practical Talmud Dictionary* (Jerusalem: Ariel Press, 1994), 101, for a “non-kohen” (non-priest) accepted by Talmudic authorities to slaughter an animal.

לֹא־תֵעָלוּ עָלָיו קִטְוֹת זָרָה וְעֹלָה וּמִנְחָה וְנִסֵּךְ לֹא תִסְכוּ עָלָיו: (Exod. 30:9)

You shall not offer unauthorized incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering, and you shall not pour a drink offering on it.

In commenting on the incident, Rabbinic literature proposed “twelve theories to justify their deaths,..., six of which are ritual and are grounded in the biblical text.”¹¹ The six theories are:

- (1) [Nadab and Abihu] entered the adytum,
- (2) Their incense offering was illicit,
- (3) They offered incensed on unauthorized coals,
- (4) They officiated while drunk (Lev. 10:9),
- (5) They neglected to wash their hands and feet,
- (6) They lacked one of the required priestly garments.

Given the wide semantical range of the term זָרָה, we may never know with absolute certainty the specific details of the Nadab and Abihu’s offence. Snijders suggests the fact that Nadab and Abihu violated the sacred order “because they are acting on their own initiative disregarding the cultic regulations governing time and place.”¹² Jacob Milgrom views theory number 3 as the most likely offence that Nadab and Abihu committed: Nadab and Abihu offered incense on 'unauthorized coals', in other words, not from the sacrificial altar but from a profane source. The problem may not have been the fire itself, but most likely the source outside of the holy perimeter from which the fire came.¹³ We will revisit the Rabbinic interpretations of this aspect of the text later. For now, however, the text of Pesikta D’Rav Kahana Leviticus 16:1 reads:

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אֹהֶלן בְּקִרְבָּתָם לִפְנֵי־יְהוָה וַיָּמָתוּ:
(Lev. 16:1)

Now the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they had approached the presence of the LORD and died.

¹¹ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, Anchor Bible Commentary (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 633ff.

¹² זר/זר, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 4:55.

¹³ Note also Aaron Rothkoff, “NADAB,” *Encyclopedia Judaica: Mel-Nas* (Farmington Hills, MI: Keter Publishing, 2007), 721-722. the Rabbinic scenario where Nadab and Abihu’s death may have been “a vicarious punishment for their father’s sin with regard to the golden calf,” as with Deuteronomy 9:20, “Moreover the Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him.” And destruction “means extinction of offspring (Lev. R. 10:5).”

Chapter 1

הָלַל פֶּאִשֶׁר לְכָל מִקְרָה אֶחָד לְצַדִּיק וְלְרָשָׁע לְטוֹב וְלְפָתוּר וְלְטָמֵא וְלִזְבָּח
(Eccl. 9:2)
וְלִפֶּאִשֶׁר אֵינְנוּ זִבְחָ כְּטוֹב כְּחָטָא הַנְּשַׁבֵּעַ כְּפֶאִשֶׁר שְׂבוּעָה יֵרָא:

It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath.

The Petihta begins with citing Qohelet 9:2 in order to affirm that both the righteous and the wicked suffered the same fate, i.e., dying “maimed.”¹⁴ Specifically, the rabbis point here to (tannaitic interpretations of the fate of) Noah and Pharaoh Neco – the righteous and the wicked. In what follows the rabbis will cite more opposing examples that will support this conclusion. Moses and Aaron, who were the “good” and the “clean,” as well as the spies (the “unclean” ones) failed to enter the land. Josiah and Ahab died because of wounds suffered in the battle, although they could not have been farther apart in the eyes of God. David and Nebuchadnezzar, Zedekiah and Samson, Aaron and Korah – all these, in spite of the differences that separated them, suffered the same fate. In the rabbis’ view, the fate of Aaron’s two sons perhaps resembles the fate of the people mentioned above. Hence, one might ask, with the audience listening to this sermon, “did his sons die unnecessarily, or not?” In the next chapters the rabbis will offer an answer and a Scriptural proof for this question as well.

Chapter 2

לְשִׁחֻק אָמַרְתִּי מִהוֹלֵל וְלִשְׂמֹחָה מִה־זֶּה עֲשֵׂה: (Eccl 2:2)

Of laughter I said, “Madness,” and of enjoyment, “Why are you doing this?”

The rabbis introduce here a second verse from Qohelet, namely Qohelet 2:2. In order to obtain a more creative reading of the verse, they will offer an alternate reading of the form מִהוֹלֵל. In Qohelet 2:2, the root הלל means “to be” or “behave like a mad man.”¹⁵ But R. Abba b. Kahana does not read the verb as a

¹⁴ For the Hebrew text of Pesikta D’Rav Kahana see https://www.sefaria.org/Pesikta_D'Rav_Kahanna.26.1?lang=bi.

¹⁵ Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, הלל, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the OT*, for the sense of “making a mockery”, “foolish” or “senseless.”

Poal form of הלל, but rather as the verb מהל, that is, “to mix,” or “dilute.”¹⁶ He has in mind not only the attraction of king Solomon to wives, horses and silver, but also the heathen of the world whose laughter in their theaters is mixed or mingled (perhaps with “grief”).¹⁷ As for the words וְלִשְׂמֹחָהּ מִהֲיָה עֲשֵׂה, the rabbis read them as advice for the disciples of the sages: the joy of studying the Torah is unmixed; why, then, would they be in the theaters? To do what?¹⁸

The rabbis employ here another “word-play” device in order to apply Qohelet 2:2 to king Solomon. They establish a link between the form שחוק, “laughter,” and the Syriac שחקא, “punishment.”¹⁹ Secondly, in order to arrive at the interpretation that they had in mind, the rabbis appealed to the alternate meaning for the root הלל, that is, “to be bright.”²⁰ The new interpretation, then, reads: “Things which are punishable by the measure of judgement are bright.”

In their view, Solomon saw that which is prohibited as being “radiant,” and this unacceptable “mixture” led to his fall. Another case in point where laughter is mixed with the grief of a father is in the death of a young man on the day of his wedding.²¹ Rejoicing is also contrasted with the grief of God over the fact that he had to destroy the generation of the flood, the very people for whom he had provided abundantly.²² Finally, the rabbis tie the petihta verse back to the theme verse by recalling the experience of Elisheba, the mother of Nadab and Abihu. On the one hand, she rejoiced over seeing her husband and other sons honored, while on the other hand she grieved following Nadab and Abihu’s death. Her

¹⁶ Thus Braude and Kapstein, *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1975), 529. For the root מהל - to “mix” or “dilute wine,” see Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 554; Koehler, Baumgartner, מהל, *HALOT*, to “water down; Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 737. Thus Isaiah 1:22 – כֶּסֶף הָיָה לְסִינִים סָבָאךְ מִהוֹל בְּמַיִם: (“Your silver has become dross; your wine mixed with water”).

¹⁷ The editors suggest the word אבל, i.e., “mourning;” thus Mandelbaum, *אוקספורד פסיקתא דרב כהנא*, 2 volumes (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1987), II, 385.

¹⁸ See Braude, *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana*, 394.

¹⁹ Braude, *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana*, 529.

²⁰ Thus Koehler, Baumgartner, אהל, *HALOT*, for אהל – to be bright, to shine (Job 25:5) – a “by-form of הלל”.

²¹ Braude, *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana*, 530.

²² To illustrate the people’s lack of gratitude, the rabbis quote from Job 21:14, “Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit is there for us if we pray to him?” God answers with the petihta verse, Qohelet 2:2, “and joy, what use is it?” Since the word שמחה (joy) can be vocalized as a verb (i.e., מוחה, to “wipe out”), we may have here a word play here. On the one hand, “joy” signifies the abundance God had bestowed upon the people, while on the other hand, their rejection of God compelled him to “wipe them out.” See also Braude, *Pesikta De-Rab Kahana*, 396.

“rejoicing was turned to mourning. As Scripture says, ‘After the death of Aaron’s two sons.’”

The rabbis found a rich source of exegesis in the interplay between Leviticus and Qohelet 2:2. Though not fully stated until later in the sermon, the possibility that grief transcends human experience is implied here. Suffering also occurs with God. As painful as parental grief is, the thought that the Creator himself should suffer have may come as a profound realization on the part of the audience. In itself, the notion of divine suffering would be nothing astounding for a biblical culture like fifth century Palestine. The comforting news, however, was the fact that God would understand the grief of those listening as well, just like it happened before.

Chapter 3

אֶמְרָתִי לַהוֹלָלִים אֶל-תִּהְיוּ וְלַרְשָׁעִים אֶל-תִּרְיֵמוּ קֶרֶן: Psalm 75:5

I say to the boastful, “Do not boast,” and to the wicked, “Do not lift up your horn;”

The rabbis continue to focus on the notion of “mixing” by citing another verse where the bible uses the verb הָלַל. In its original setting Ps. 75:5 reads, “I said to the arrogant, ‘do not act arrogantly’...” But the rabbis read הָלַל just like they did in chapter 2: replacing the root הָלַל with מָהַל, which means “to mix.” Based on the association he created earlier, R. Levi’s new petihta reads now like an admonition for those who let their negative thoughts affect the entire world: “I say unto those whose joy has become mingled [with joy].”²³

The rabbis apply the petihta verse to a second group of people as well. This time the verse אֶל תִּרְיֵמוּ קֶרֶן (do not lift up your horn) comes as an admonition against the arrogant who seek the experience of joy in spite of their indifference to God’s moral precepts. The authors do not really argue against “rejoicing” here. Rather, they look back at Israel’s ancestors and acknowledge that God allowed the experience of both joy and grief in their lives. This transition allows the rabbis to remind their listeners about the circumstances faced by Adam, Abraham, Elisheba (daughter of Amminadab who gave birth to Nadab and

²³ Braude, *Pesikta D’Rab Kahana*, 533. Playing on the same form, R. Levi also derives the expression אֶלִיָּא, “wow-makers” (from the root אָלִי, woe), producing the new sense of: “these are the ones who bring woe to the world.” Thus Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 70.

Abihu), and Israel.²⁴ Unlike the wicked ones, Israel’s ancestors walked with, and knew God intimately. And yet each one of them experienced the unsettling paradox of joy and tragedy. What we see here is not a complaint against the unfairness of suffering on the part of Israel. On the one hand, the rabbis assure the people that God knows about their grieving; he allowed Adam, Sara, and Abraham to grieve as well. Grieving, then, is a part of the mystery of the providence of God. It defines the experience of God as well. On the other hand, if the present historical circumstances seem to favor the wicked, our text has a warning for them: your rejoicing, as well as Israel’s grieving, is only *temporary*. Genuine and lasting happiness will only come in the *messianic future*, when the Holy One and Israel will rejoice in each other’s works. Until then, in spite of the reality of suffering, avoid becoming “grief-mongers, spreading your gloom everywhere you go in the world.”²⁵

Chapter 4.

(Job 39:27-30) אִם-עַל-פִּיךָ יִגְבִּיֶה נֶשֶׁר וְכִי יִרִים קִנּוֹ:
 סָלַע יִשְׁכֵּן וַיִּתְלַנֵּן עַל-שֵׁן-סָלַע וּמְצוּדָה:
 מִזֶּשֶׁם חִפְר־אֶכֶל לְמַרְחֹק עֵינָיו יִבִּיטוּ:
 (וְאֶפְרָחֹ) [וְאֶפְרָחִיו] יַעֲלֶוּדָם וּבְאִשֶׁר חָלְלִים שָׁם הוּא:

Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up and makes his nest on high?
 On the rock he dwells and makes his home, on the rocky crag and stronghold.
 From there he spies out the prey; his eyes behold it from far away.
 His young ones suck up blood, and where the slain are, there is he.

Chapter four introduces a new *petihta*, this time from Job 39:27-30. Using another word-play, the rabbis read the word נֶשֶׁר (“eagle”) as the verb יִשֵּׁר (to “dwell”). The new meaning points to the dwelling of the presence of God upon the ark and to Aaron’s role in eliciting the arrival or departure of the Presence.²⁶ The step-by-step exegesis transforms the “eagle” metaphor into a historical reality: the *presence of God* upon the first and the second temple. The *petihta* passage is also connected to the Second Temple, and in particular to the Day of Atonement, by quoting from the Oral Torah.²⁷ Here, the rabbis recall the prayer

²⁴ For example, Elishaba had the joy of four children, two of whom served as “adjutants to the High Priest,” Braude, *Pesikta D’Rab Kahana*, 535. Her joy, however, was turned to mourning when Nadab and Abihu were burned by fire.

²⁵ Braude’s own understanding of the text, *Pesikta De-Rab Kahana*, 397.

²⁶ As it shall become evident later, the status given to Aaron here is not accidental.

²⁷ The most direction here comes from Mishnah Yoma 5:2. The key word in both *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* and *Mishnah Yoma* is “the ark.” Again, this is not accidental, since the rabbis have just mentioned Aaron’s name in connection to the Ark. Since Aaron is also mentioned in the

of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. From the Temple, he intercedes with God on behalf of the people so that the entire land will have a year of blessing. But the readers cannot miss the reference to yet another High Priest; namely, Aaron, who officiated on the Day of Atonement in the wilderness. This beautiful interplay allows the authors to apply the *petihta* verse not only to God and Aaron, but also to Aaron's two sons. From the verse **וְאֶפְרָחוּ יַעֲלֵעוּ-דָם** (His young ones suck up blood) we are to understand that “his young rolled convulsively on the ground.”²⁸ This reinterpretation serves as a description of what in fact happened when Aaron's two sons were punished. The second part of Job 38:30 is even more illustrative: “and where the slain are, there is he.” For the rabbis the meaning here is quite clear: God himself was present when Aaron's sons died! This interpretation is also supported by the next verse, namely Leviticus 10:4 - “Come, take up your brothers from before the **קֹדֶשׁ**,” where **קֹדֶשׁ** is nobody else but the Holy One. In what follows the listeners will understand that the reason for the command to “take up your brothers” (i.e., Aaron's two sons) was so that the *mourner* would not suffer anymore “after the death of the two sons of Aaron” (Lev. 16:1).

Through this sermon, the audience realized how close was the relationship between God and his High Priest, Aaron. The word of Aaron was decisive in bringing in or dismissing the very presence of God in the sanctuary. The High Priest was endowed with a special prerogative to pray for the welfare of the land. In the end, the tragic death of Aaron's sons affected not only their parents, but God himself, who mourned their death. It is true that in Palestine *mourning* was an everyday reality. What is unusual, and yet uplifting for the audience here, is to hear that God shares in this very painful reality, just as he did when Aaron's sons died.

Chapter 5

אֵיךְ לְזֹאת יִחַרְדַּר לִבִּי וַיִּתֵּר מִמְּקוֹמוֹ: (Job 37:1)

The new *petihta* verse reads, “at this my heart *trembles* and *leaps out* of its place.” The verb **וַיִּתֵּר** is further defined in light of its occurrence in Leviticus 11:21, where it describes the *leaping* of an animal. Furthermore, we learn that

seder passage, we have here a nice interplay between the *seder* and *petihta* verses, and the Mishnaic passage.

²⁸ The biblical meaning is “[the eagle’s] young suck up blood.” For the alternate translation I relied in part on Braude’s interpretation, *Pesikta*, 400. He believes that the word **דָם** can also be translated as “ground,” that is, an apocopated form of **אֲדָמָה**. However, what Braude does not explain is the fact that the rabbis may have read the Hebrew root **עֲלַעַל**, to “sip up [blood],” as **עֲלַעַל**, that is, “to be whirled,” or to “hurl” (Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1085. We can now understand that the two sons of Abraham in fact “rolled on the ground.”

Job's heart leaped because the sons of Aaron were punished for a deed for which neither Aaron's sons, nor Titus – the Roman emperor who transgressed the same law and entered the sanctuary – were held accountable. In effect, the question now becomes: Why were Aaron's two sons punished?

Chapters 6-7

גַּם עֲנוּשׁ לַצַּדִּיק לֹא טוֹב לְהַכּוֹת נְדִיבִים עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל (Prov. 17:26)

To impose a fine on a righteous man is not good, nor to strike the noble for their uprightness.

Through the new petihta verse, the rabbis will explore the reason for the punishment of Nadab and Elihu – a theme only alluded to in chapter 5. As Proverbs 17:26 becomes God's statement on the punishment, we learn that God regrets punishing Aaron and taking his two sons away from him (part *a* of Prov. 17:26). R. Berechia uses the text in Proverbs to suggest that punishing the righteous – that is, Aaron – beyond measure – that is, measuring his guilt by the offence of his sons – is not good. But what then is the right way to do it?

To solve this dilemma, R. Berechia does not read verse 26a and 26b as synonymous parallelism, but interprets part *b* as a separate reality, not a parallel reality to part *a*.²⁹ In this context, verse 26b becomes the explanation: [the reason for their death was in fact] “to strike the nobles for the sake of uprightness.” The audience, then, realizes two things: on the one hand, God regrets the death of Nadab and Abihu. This message, which they heard before, is reaffirmed in chapter 6. On the other hand, they also understand that divine punishment is for the sake of uprightness; never arbitrary. As we explained in the beginning, Pesikta D'Rav Kahana never absolves Nadab and Abihu of guilt. And it does not portray Him as a strict punisher either. God loves and God is just and holy. God cannot truly love without being just.³⁰

²⁹ From a poetic perspective, Proverbs 17:26 has a “synonymous parallelism” structure: the second line repeats the theme of the first line in a different manner. Notice that the words “the righteous” and “nobles” function as a word-pair in this arrangement; thus G.E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: a Guide to Its Techniques* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 131. This means that line *b* of verse 26 parallels line *a*. The rabbis, however, interpret part *b* as a separate statement which reads something like “to punish the nobles for the sake of uprightness.”

³⁰ On the manner in which Rabbinic literature understood the love of God see Peter Knobel, “Love,” *The Oxford Dictionary of Jewish Religion*, R.J. Zwi Werblowsky ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 425, John. J. Collins, Daniel C. Harlow, *Early Judaism: a Comprehensive History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 126; Safrai, *The Literature of the Sages. Second Part: Midrash and Targums*, 51 (even God's attitudes toward non-Jews), George W.E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 272.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 continues the theme of guilt expressed in chapter 6. Instead of a new *petihta* verse, the rabbis begin here by quoting a Tannaitic statement: “Nadab and Abihu died only because they gave halachic instructions in the presence of Moses, their master.” The rabbis seem to read the Leviticus narrative in light of post-biblical prohibitions that read: “anyone who teaches a law in his master’s presence is liable to the death penalty.”³¹ We do not know the extent to which this was observed in practice, but the point made here serves as an explanation for the death of Aaron’s sons.

Chapter 8

The text continues the argument introduced in chapter 6 by mentioning *four scriptural passages* which describe the death of the sons of Aaron: Leviticus 10:1-2, 16:1; Numbers 3:4, 26:61. Each text mentions the offense of Nadab and Abihu. With one exception, the key phrase here is “unauthorized fire” (אֵשׁ זָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא צִוָּה אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת (שׁוֹמֵר)).

They... offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them (Lev. 10:1).

... the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died (Lev. 16:1).

... when they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD (Num. 3:4).

... died when they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD (Num. 26:61).

In the view of the rabbis, mentioning four times the death of the two brothers was not accidental. One reason for selecting the passages was to state clearly that they were not guilty of multiple sins. The rabbis would ask for what reason? “In order not to give the earth’s inhabitants an occasion for loose talk and not to give people a chance to say: Aaron’s sons were guilty of dissolute practices in secret, and it was because of these that they were brought to death.”³² A second reason for this apparent “repetition” might have been to serve as an indication of how much God suffered even when he allowed their death. Regardless of how serious their sin was, it would be even more distressing to degrade the two by accusing them of secret sins. Finally, Bar Qappara identifies the four sins of Nadab and Abihu. These were: drawing near to the holy place, the offering they

³¹ Braude and Kaupstein cite B.Yoma 53a to indicate the obligation of Nadab and Abihu to “bring fire made in an ordinary way.” However, “they incurred the death penalty for presuming to render such a decision in the presence of Moses their master instead of requesting him to render it for them” (*Pesikta*, 402).

³² Braude, *Pesikta De-Rab Kahana*, 540.

made, bringing strange fire, and failing to take counsel with one another. We have already summarized some of the Rabbinical views on the reason why Nadab and Abihu died. It is important now to see how Pesikta D’Rav Kahana dealt with this aspect in chapter 9.

Chapter 9

Following Bar Qappara, chapter 9 lists several Rabbinic interpretations regarding the sins Nadab and Abihu may have committed.³³ Considerations of space limit a thorough analysis of all the views expressed in chapter 9, but here are some of the more important ones. It appears that some of the offences listed here were strictly cultic, while others may have involved moral/ethical sins³⁴. Besides Bar Qappara, the tradition behind R. Levi mentions *drunkenness* (while officiating - prohibited in Lev. 10:9), *unwashed hands* (Ex. 30:20-21), *wearing improper vestments* (Ex. 28:43), and *lack of wives and children* (Lev. 16:6; Num. 3:4). On the other hand, other traditions saw them as *arrogant* and *hungry for power*; some even as “feasting their eyes on the Presence of God” (R. Hoshai, R. Yohanan, and R. Tanhuma).³⁵ In spite of their offences, the text makes it clear that their death was mourned not only by their parents, but also by God. This conclusion is warranted by Numbers 3:4, which reads:

וַיָּמָת נָדָב וַאֲבִיהוּא לִפְנֵי יְהוָה בְּהִקְרָבָם אֲשֶׁר זָרָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה בְּמִדְבַּר סִינַי
_(Num. 3:4)

But Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD when they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD in the wilderness of Sinai,

The expression *לִפְנֵי יְהוָה* (“before the LORD”) appears twice in one verse. Since there is no other place where the words “before their father” occur twice, the rabbis conclude that God suffered *twice as much* as did Aaron, their father.³⁶ Chapters six through nine deal exclusively with the reason for the death of Nadab and Abihu. For the rabbis, that episode may have raised a series of

³³ Judging from the effort and space given to this topic, we suspect a considerable debate must have been going on in rabbinic circles regarding the sins of Nadab and Abihu.

³⁴ Our separation between cultic and moral is obviously *artificial*. Suffice it to say that in ancient Israel, issues related to religion, morality, law, and even economics formed a continuum which seems foreign to modern Western societies.

³⁵ R. Joshua of Sikhnim compares them with Moses, “who did not feast his eyes on the Presence of God, but he benefited from the Presence:” Braude, *Pesikta D’Rav Kahana*, 541. One consequence of their arrogance was that they thought the women around them were unworthy to marry them; hence they died childless (R. Abba Hanin, R. Menahem, R. Joshua bar Nehemiah).

³⁶ Braude, *Pesikta D’Rav Kahana*, 544.

questions that could not be always reconciled with each other. But what did the audience need to hear? The rabbis made it clear that Nadab and Abihu had died as a result of sinning before God. Some traditions were more forgiving with their sins; others, less. But the authors also proved – scripturally – that God mourned their death to an extent that even Aaron could not experience. Essentially, what we witness here is a tradition doing its best to present human life in all its forms, even those we like the least. The compassion of God does not contradict his justice, and neither does misfortune minimize the human inclination for sin. Still, if there were any doubts left about what those who suffer should expect from God, the answer was: he understands even more than earthly parents can.

Chapter 10

The present chapter deals with the issues of sons inheriting the priestly prerogatives from their father (or brothers from their brothers), and whether it was possible that one may or may not serve as a High Priest while his father was still alive. This concern seems to fall outside the subject matter of the sermon so far. As usual the rabbis give reasons in support of both positions. For example, R. Hiyya b. R. Abba argued that Eleazar and Ithamar ministered only after the death of Aaron (see Gen. 23:3, offered as proof for this position). On the other hand, R. Isaac believed that Aaron suffered a cultic disqualification, which made Eleazar legible to serve while Aaron was still alive.³⁷

Chapter 11

In the last chapter the rabbis make a clear connection between the death of Nadab and Abihu and the Day of Atonement. We have stated in the beginning the fact that “Sermon number 26, entitled *מִוֵּת אַחֲרֵי מוֹת* falls under the theme of the Day of Atonement.” In order to link the former interpretations with the advent of *יּוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים* (The Day of Atonement), the rabbis resort to an analogy. The death of Miriam (Num. 20:1) was recorded in the Scripture “next to the passage on the ash of the Red Heifer” (Num. 19). Since the ashes of the heifer are said to atone for Israel’s sins, and the account of Miriam’s death is placed next to that of the ashes of the heifer, it follows by analogy that Miriam’s death served the same purpose: to atone for Israel’s sins.³⁸ By analogy, since the Scripture places the account of Aaron’s death (Deut. 10:6) next to the account of the breaking of the Tablets (Deut. 10:2), it follows that in the eyes of God the

³⁷ This point is illustrated by the story of Simeon b. Qimhit. He was replaced by his brother as High Priest because of a contact impurity. The rabbis extend the story to include the seven sons of Qimhit who served in the high priesthood while their mother was still alive.

³⁸ Braude, *Pesikta D’Rav Kahana*, 546-47.

death of Aaron was as painful as the breaking of the tablets. One will notice that the underlying term in these examples is the “death” of someone and, implicitly, the act of “mourning.” Among other connotations, Yom Kippur implied the mourning of the people of God.

As expected, the rabbis will draw the final analogy with the death of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 16:1) and the prescriptions for the Day of Atonement given to Aaron (Lev. 16:2ff). In R. Hiyya’s words, “just as the Day of Atonement makes atonement, so the deaths of the righteous ones make atonement.”³⁹ The proof for the first statement is well known (Lev. 16:30), but the second requires rabbinic creativity. The authors will then cite another biblical passage where “God heeded supplications for the land” after Saul and Jonathan were buried in Zela (2 Sam. 21:14).⁴⁰ Indeed, death can and does bring a favorable answer from God.

CONCLUSION

We can be certain that at this point the message of the sermon emphasized the positive aspect of Nadab and Abihu’s death. This may have not been possible at the beginning of the sermon, but it would make sense now, at the end. Both the righteous and the wicked seem to share the same fate. And it is true that joy is always accompanied by grief. But the wicked must remember that their joy is passing, and the righteous know that true joy is yet to come. Is the reality of grief enough reason for letting one’s gloomy thoughts affect those around us? In answer to this question, the rabbis would want people to remember that God mourned the death of his people; perhaps more than we human beings can comprehend.

It is at this point that we may ask if the concept of God “mourning” is an innovation of Pesikta D’Rav Kahana or it is a theme that appears in the Bible and/or other extra-biblical sources? We dealt with the issue of “divine emotions” in the Bible and various Targumic translations in our article “Does God Ever Feel Sorry.”⁴¹ For the sake of clarifying the larger context of Pesikta

³⁹ Ibid., *Pesikta D’Rav Kahana*, 547.

⁴⁰ It is possible that since both Lev. 16:1 and 2 Sam. 21:14 contain the word אָחַר – to indicate sequence in time - the authors may have used a *gezera shawah* argument here.

⁴¹ Aurelian Botica, “Does God Ever Feel Sorry? – Understanding Verbs of Emotion in the Pentateuch and the Targumic Versions of Onkelos, Neofiti and Pseudo-Jonathan,” *Seminatorul (The Sower): The Journal of Ministry and Biblical Research*, vol 1:2 (2021), 6-24. See also A. Marmorstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God. Essays in Anthropomorphism* (London: Oxford, 1937), 29ff., for the view that “neither the Tannaim, nor the Amoraim...were unanimous in their views and teachings about the problems of anthropomorphism and anthropathism,” and Paul Flesher, “Anthropomorphism,” *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical World*, 2

D’Rav Kahana, however, we may say that there are a few texts in the Old Testament that attribute emotions to God and that could fall in the category of “weeping” or “mourning.”⁴² Since Pesikta D’Rav Kahana does not quote the passages in Jeremiah or other passages related to “divine suffering,” we will not mention them in this theme here. The theme represents another project in itself that deserves its own analysis. Suffice to say that both early and late Rabbinic literature allowed for the presence of anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms, even though the formal consensus was one of caution rather than certainty. But what about Nadab and Abihu’s sins, and the way God reacted to their death in the view of Pesikta D’Rav Kahana?

Our study has shown that the rabbis agreed that Nadab and Abihu failed to observe the proper ritual laws. Multiple attempts were made in order to identify what exactly those sins were. The rabbis also speculated that their character was conceivably flawed. And yet, at the end, perhaps on an emotional/existential level, the rabbis felt and argued that God mourns the death of his people; even the death of Nadab and Abihu. We cannot be certain whether or not the authors of Pesikta D’Rav Kahana presupposed the Old Testament prophetic notion of “divine suffering.” Still, given the context of the turbulent history of the first four centuries of the Common Era, and on the occasion of celebrating the Day of Atonement, Pesikta D’Rav Kahana testifies that, in God’s providence, death

volumes, J. Neusner ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1996), who argues that “the Targums have a strong tendency to alter...anthropomorphisms.” For the presence of this phenomenon in Rabbinic and Medieval Literature see also M. Klein, “The Translation of Anthropomorphisms and Anthropopathisms in the Targumim,” *Congress Volume - Vienna 1980* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), L. Batnitzky, *Idolatry and Representation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 2000), 21ff., E. Urbach, *The Sages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 38, 44, 152-53, and G.F. Moore, *Judaism*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1960), 420.

42 It is interesting that verb *lba* (to mourn) appears some 30x in the Old Testament, but never with God as the subject. Thus Koehler, L. Baumgartner, W., *lba*, Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the OT. The Old Testament does attribute human emotions to God, even though we may not speak of the act of mourning. Thus Hosea 11:8: “My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender.” Another passage that may allude to the suffering of God is Jeremiah 9:10, “I will take up weeping and wailing for the mountains, and a lamentation for the pastures of the wilderness...” The word קִינָה means “dirge”, “wailing” or “eulogy,” and is a term that in 90% of cases appears in the prophetic books (BibleWorks 10, 2016). The majority of commentators believe that the “I” in “I will take up... wailing” is Jeremiah, not God. Terence Fretheim, *Jeremiah*. Smith and Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smith and Helwys Publishing, 2002), 159, disagrees and argues that “God is portrayed as one who weeps and wails,” and that “this depiction is continuous with the divine lament themes in this context (8:18-9:3; 9:17-19).” Fretheim develops the theology of divine suffering in *The Suffering of God: an Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1984), 116-17, where he asserts that Jeremiah relies heavily on the lament genre, and that in chapters 8-20 “we find a concentration of prophetic and divine laments interwoven.” The concept of divine suffering in the Old Testament deserves its own analysis, even though it represents at best a minority interpretation in the landscape of commentaries on the book of Jeremiah.

is hardly meaningless. Especially the death of those who sought to serve him, as imperfect as they were.

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