# SEMĂNĂTORUL (THE SOWER)

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This present publication comprises the second part of Volume 4 of *Semănătorul (The Sower): The Emanuel Journal of Ministry and Biblical Research.* *The Sower* Journal presents submissions by the Faculty of Theology of Emanuel University, Oradea, plus contributions from International scholars. The articles are not only published here but have been shared on line with Faculty members and are available on the Emanuel website.

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The Journal provides an opportunity for the Faculty members in Emanuel to present a range of articles on various aspects broadly related to challenges in communicating Christian truth in a modern culture. Along with their International colleagues, papers are presented which address important biblical issues, provide opportunity for research, and in addition, often cover practical pastoral themes. Since articles come from different communities across the world there are occasional differences in matters of style etc. But it has been deemed that these are not such as to detract from the profit to be derived from reading them.

Co-editor,
Dr. Hamilton Moore

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# DESTRUCTION AND DISPOSSESSION OF THE CANAANITES IN THE BOOK OF JOSHUA[1]

## DAVID M. HOWARD, JR.[2]

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ABSRTACT: In Joshua 6:17–21, we encounter the first significant discussion in the book of the related concepts of setting the Canaanites apart for destruction and driving them out of the land. The supposed "genocide" of the Canaanites is one of the most vexing questions in the entire Old Testament and a leading reason that many people dismiss the Old Testament as hopelessly barbaric, so an examination of the issues here is in order.

We will discuss this in five discrete sections: (1) the idea of setting people or things apart to the Lord for destruction; (2) the idea of driving out the Canaanites from the land; (3) the concept of "Yahweh war" (also known as "holy war"); (4) the ethics of Yahweh war; and (5) the New Testament and violence.

KEY WORDS: The Canaanites, inheriting the land, dispossession, holy war, violence.

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## 1 Setting the Canaanites Apart for Destruction (*hāram/hērem*)

In 6:17, Joshua instructed the people that Jericho and everything in it was "to be set apart to the LORD for destruction," and then in v. 18 he elaborated: "But keep yourselves from *the things set apart*, or you will be *set apart for destruction*. If you take any of those things, you will *set apart* the camp of Israel *for destruction* and make trouble for it."

The common element behind the italicized words is the Hebrew root *hrm*: it occurs in the Old Testament both as a verb (*hāram*: fifty-one times) and as a noun (*hērem*: twenty-nine times).[3] This is the term behind many people's calling God's instructions and Israel's actions *vis-à-vis* the Canaanite as "genocide."

The verb can be rendered "to set apart for destruction" or "to completely destroy," and the noun can be rendered as "things set apart" or "destruction."[4] The importance of this concept in Joshua is apparent from the number of times the root occurs, more than in any other Old Testament book. Of the forty-eight times the verb occurs in the Old Testament, fourteen times are in Joshua.[5] Of the twenty-nine occurrences of the noun, thirteen are in Joshua.[6]

Norbert Lohfink provides the following definitions for *hrm*. The verbal form (*hiphil*, the "causative" stem) means to "consecrate something or someone as a permanent and definitive offering for the sanctuary; in war, consecrate a city and its inhabitants to destruction; carry out this destruction; totally annihilate a population in war; kill." The noun form means

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3    Introductions to the concept may be found in the following works: N. Lohfink, "חָרַם *hāram*; חֵרֶם *hērem*," *TDOT* 5:180–99; C. Brekelmans, "חֵרֶם *hērem* ban," *TLOT,* 474–77; J. A. Naudé, "חרם," *NIDOTTE* 2:276–77. See also P. D. Stern, *The Biblical Hērem: A Window on Israel's Religious Experience,* BJS 211 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991); J. P. U. Lilley, "Understanding the *Hērem*," *TynBul* 44 (1993): 169–77; Yair Hoffman, "The Deuteronomistic Concept of the Herem," *ZAW* 111 (1999): 196–210.

4    So CSB; versions such as the NIV use terms like "devoted to destruction" or "devoted things."

5    Josh 2:10; 6:18, 21; 8:26; 10:1, 28, 35, 37–38, 40; 11:11–12, 20–21.

6    Josh 6:17, 18(3x); 7:1(2x), 11, 12(2x), 13(2x), 15; 22:20.

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"the object or person consecrated in the sense of the *hiphil* or condemned in the sense of the *hophal* [passive of the *hiphil*] or contaminated by entering into their deadly sphere; the act of consecration or of extermination and killing."[7] A common rendering of *hrm* as "ban" or "to place under the ban" is inappropriate, because *hrm* does not carry the ideas of secular lawlessness or ecclesiastical excommunication that the "ban" carries.[8] Lilley stresses that the essence of *hrm* "is an irrevocable renunciation of any interest in the object 'devoted'" and that it denotes "uncompromising consecration without possibility of recall or redemption."[9]

The concept of *hrm* is often found in sacred contexts, in which it has a strong connection with the idea of holiness. As such, these things were forbidden for common use, but rather were to be an "offering" to the Lord. Leviticus 27:28-29 illustrates this well:

> Nothing that a man permanently sets apart (*hrm*, twice)[10] to the LORD from all he owns, whether a person, an animal, or his inherited landholding, can be sold or redeemed; everything set apart *(hrm)* is especially holy to the LORD. No person who has been set apart for destruction (*hrm*, twice)[11] is to be ransomed; he must be put to death.

If something is dedicated or devoted to the Lord, it is *especially* holy. We find this idea in Joshua as well. In 6:18–19, the devoted things are holy (sacred):

> But keep yourselves from the things set apart *(hrm)*, or you will be set apart for destruction *(hrm)*. If you take any of those things *(hrm)*, you will set apart the

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7    Lohfink, *TDOT* 5:188.

8    Lohfink, *TDOT* 5:188.

9    Lilley, "Understanding the *Herem*," 176, 177.

10   A "wooden" rendering here would be "every devoted thing *(hērem)* which a man devotes *(hāram)* to the Lord."

11   Here again, *hrm* occurs twice: "every devoted thing *(hērem)* which is devoted *(hāram)* to the Lord that is human."

camp of Israel for destruction *(hrm)* and make trouble for it. For all the silver and gold, and the articles of bronze and iron, are dedicated to the Lord and must go into the Lord's treasury.

In 7:13, the people were to consecrate themselves (i.e., make themselves holy) and remove the devoted things from them: "Go and consecrate the people. Tell them to consecrate themselves for tomorrow, for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There are things that are set apart *(hrm)* among you, Israel. You will not be able to stand against your enemies until you remove what is set apart *(hrm)*."

More commonly, the idea of *hrm* is found in contexts of war. Numbers 21:2–3 illustrates this well: "Then Israel made a vow to the Lord, 'If you will hand this people over to us, we will completely destroy *(hrm)* their cities.' The Lord listened to Israel's request and handed the Canaanites over to them, and Israel completely destroyed *(hrm)* them and their cities. So they named the place Hormah" (*hormāh*, i.e., something completely destroyed).

In Joshua, the war context is also clearly represented. In most of the cities mentioned in the campaigns in chaps. 10 and 11, the Israelites completely destroyed the inhabitants who remained in these cities (10:28, 35, 37, 39–40; 11:11, 12, 20–21). And, in the case of cities such as Hazor, the destruction was of everything, including the city itself: "They struck down everyone in it with the sword, completely destroying them; he left no one alive. Then he burned Hazor. Joshua captured all these kings and their cities and struck them down with the sword. He completely destroyed *(hrm)* them, as Moses the Lord's servant had commanded (11:11-12).

We should not make too hard and fast a distinction, however, between the sacred and the war contexts. The context of the destruction of Jericho, for example, makes it clear that the destruction was not a secular activity, but a deeply sacred one: most of chap. 6 is devoted to the sacred ceremonial rituals of marching around the city, and only briefly is the actual conflict told. Thus, things would be offered to God by being utterly de-

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stroyed. This could happen with respect to material wealth,[12] people,[13] or even entire cities.[14]

## Dispossessing the Canaanites (*yrš*)

Equally important to our understanding of God's commands and Israel's actions *vis-à-vis* the Canaanites is the verb *yrš*. Understanding the nature and place of this root's meanings should dramatically revise many people's thinking about supposed "genocide" in Joshua, since it has nothing to do with killing, but rather inheriting the land or driving the Canaanites out of that land (i.e., displacing the Canaanites, not annihilating them).

The primary meanings of *yrš* are "to inherit" (*qal* stem) and "to drive out, dispossess" (*hiphil* stem). The verb occurs 232 times in the Old Testament; of these, almost half of the occurrences are found in Deuteronomy and Joshua: seventy times in Deuteronomy and twenty-nine times in Joshua. On *yrš* meaning "to inherit" (*qal* stem), see the Excursus entitled "Israel's Inheritance of the Land in Joshua." Here, we are concerned with the meaning "to drive out, dispossess" (*hiphil* stem). In this stem, the verb occurs sixty-six times in the Old Testament, more than a third of the occurrences being in Deuteronomy and Joshua: seven times in Deuteronomy, seventeen times in Joshua.

### 2.1 *yrš* as "to drive out, dispossess"

In the *hiphil* verb stem, the meaning of *yrš* primarily involves displacing or ejecting someone from his property or territory in order to be able to possess it for oneself (e.g., Num 32:21; Deut 4:38a; Judg 2:21). In almost every case, God is the subject of the verb, indicating that *he* would do the driving out. Deut 9:4–5 is a key text showing this:

> When the Lord your God drives them out (*hdp*, a synonym of *yrš)* before you, do not say to yourself, 'The Lord brought me in *to take possession (yrš, qal)* of this

12 .E.g., Josh 6:18–19; 7:1, 11

13 E.g., Josh 10:28, 35, 39–41; 11:11, 20.

14 E.g., Josh 6:21; 8:26; 10:1, 37; 11:12, 21.

land because of my righteousness.' Instead, the Lord *will drive out (yrš, hiphil)* these nations before you because of their wickedness. You are not going *to take possession (yrš, qal)* of their land because of your righteousness or your integrity. Instead, the Lord your God *will drive out (yrš, hiphil)* these nations before you because of their wickedness, in order to fulfill the promise he swore to your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

In Joshua, several references show God working in exactly this way, driving out Israel's enemies (3:10, 10; 13:6; 23:5a; 23:9). In other passages, Moses (13:12), Caleb (14:12; 15:14), and the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (17:18) drove out peoples and possessed their land, with God's help. Joshua instructed those lying in wait to ambush Ai that they should rise up and take possession of the city (8:7).[15] In a negative sense, several times in Joshua we read that the Israelites did *not*—or could not—drive out the Canaanites from various parts of the land (13:13; 15:63; 16:10; 17:12, 13(2x)), and once, Israel was warned that God would not drive out the nations before them unless they kept themselves pure and did not intermarry with the Canaanites and worship their gods (23:13).

A number of passages in the Old Testament include a wordplay that uses both the major stems of *yrš* (*qal* and *hiphil*). This wordplay illustrates both sides of the idea that God *drove out* the Canaanite peoples (*yrš, hiphil*) so that his own people could *take possession (yrš, qal)* of God's gift of the land.[16] Good examples of this are Deut 9:4–5 (quoted above), and Judg 11:23–24: "So then the Lord, the God of Israel, *dispossessed (yrš, hiphil)* the Amorites from before his people Israel; and are you *to take possession (yrš, qal)* of them? Will you not *possess (yrš, qal)* what Chemosh

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15  *yrš* is *hiphil* here; see Phyllis Bird, *YRŠ and the Deuteronomic Theology of the Conquest* (Th.D. Diss., Harvard Divinity School, 1971), 267–68 on this anomalous meaning of *yrš, hiphil*.

16  The list includes Num 21:32; 33:53; Deut 9:4–5; 11:23; Josh 23:5; Judg 11:23–24(2x). Cf. also Deut 18:12, 14 and Ps 44:2–3(Hb. 3–4), where the wordplays are in separate verses.

your god *gives you to possess* (*yrš, hiphil*)? And all that the LORD our God *has dispossessed (yrs̆, hiphil)* before us, we *will possess (yrs̆, qal)*" (RSV).

In Joshua, this wordplay is found once: "The LORD your God will force them back on your account and *drive them out (yrš, hiphil)* before you so that you *can take possession (yrš, qal) of* their land, as the LORD your God promised you" (Josh 23:5).[17]

The distribution of usage of *yrš* in the book of Joshua is instructive as well. *yrš* is found primarily in the second half of the book (twenty-one of twenty-nine occurrences). This should not be surprising, given that the primary focus in the second half of the book is the land distribution.

## 2.2 Further Dispossession Language

For all the discussion of the complete destruction of the Canaanites, what is too often overlooked is that the Bible has more language about driving them out of the land (*yrš* or *grš)*[18] than it does about completely destroying them (*hrm).*[19] Consider this: In Exod 23:23, God promises to "wipe them out"—the root here is *khd,* a close synonym of *hrm*—but then goes on to say that God himself would drive the Canaanites out:

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17  The continuity of meaning between *qal* and *hiphil* is explained well by Bird: "The idea represented by this *hiphil* is simply the corollary or counterpart of that found in the extended use of the *qal* to speak of 'inheriting' by conquest. It is 'inheriting' by dispossessing. The *hiphil* makes essentially the same statement as the *qal,* only it focuses on the former owners rather than their possessions" (Bird, *YRS̆,* 277). The essential idea of the *hiphil*, then, is not "to drive out" per se and certainly not "to destroy"; rather, it is "'dispossess' (with the aim of claiming the property of the dispossessed as an 'inheritance')" (p. 283).

18  *grs̆* is a close synonym of *yrs̆.* See the more detailed discussion of *grs̆* in the "Excursus: Israel's Inheritance of the Land in Joshua," after chap. 13. Some rarer but related terms are indicated here and below.

19  For the argument here, see also Paul Copan and Matthew Flannagan, *Did God Really Command Genocide? Coming to Terms with the Justice of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), chap. 6: "Thrusting Out, Driving Out, and Dispossessing the Canaanites—Not Annihilating Them," 76-83.

I will cause the people ahead of you to feel terror and will throw into confusion all the nations you come to. I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you in retreat. I will send hornets in front of you, and they *will drive (grš)* the Hivites, Canaanites, and Hethites *away* from you. I will not *drive them out (grš)* ahead of you in a single year; otherwise, the land would become desolate, and wild animals would multiply against you. I will *drive them out (grš)* little by little ahead of you until you have become numerous and *take possession (nhl)* of the land. I will set your borders from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates River. For I will place the inhabitants of the land under your control, and you will *drive them out (grš)* ahead of you" (Exod 23:27–31).

Notice that God does not promise to do this in one fell swoop; it would be a gradual process: "I will not *drive them out (grš)* ahead of you in a single year…. I will *drive them out (grš)* little by little ahead of you until you have become numerous and *take possession (nhl)* of the land" (Exod 23:29–30). And later: "The LORD your God will *drive out (nšl)*[20] these nations before you little by little. You will not be able to *destroy (klh)*[21] them all at once" (Deut 7:22).

The book of Joshua itself echoes such an emphasis on the process of dispossession taking a long time: "and the LORD said to (Joshua), 'You have become old, advanced in age, but a great deal of the land remains *to be possessed (yrš, qal)*. This is the land that remains…. *I will drive them out (yrš, hiphil)* before the Israelites, only distribute the land as an inheritance for Israel, as I have commanded you'" (Josh 13:1–6).

Note that the Lord's comment here comes *after* the supposedly "clean sweep" of destruction mentioned in chaps. 10-11. That is, in chap. 13, we see many inhabitants of Canaan still alive, despite the seemingly comprehensive statements in chaps. 10-11 about complete destruction. This echoes the thought in Deuteronomy 7: There, the language of dispossession *precedes* the language of destruction: "When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess, and he drives out

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20 This usage of *nsl* means "clear away, drive away," referring to nations.

21 This usage of *klh* means "finish (off), destroy."

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(*nšl*; cf. ESV: "clears away") many nations before you…you must completely destroy (*hrm*, 2x) them" (Deut 7:1–2). That is, presumably the first set of actions drove away the majority of the inhabitants, and the complete destruction mentioned after that involved those who refused to leave. Thus, the destruction was *not* a scorched-earth operation that left no living souls anywhere in the land.[22]

Was this "genocide"? No. If anything, it might be called "ethnic cleansing,"[23] whereby anyone not committed to Yahweh was driven out, so as to render the land "clean" for Israelite religion to take root (see below), though even here the terminology is misleading. The "cleansing" is not *ethnic*, it is *religious*. The examples of Rahab (and the Gibeonites) show that simply to be a Canaanite *per se* was not a death sentence. What God was "cleansing" was false religious beliefs and practices. Any kings, military leadership, armies, and any average citizens who refused to leave, were subjected to the complete destruction of the *hērem, not simply any Canaanite per se.*

Another term related to *yrš* and *grš* is *šlh, "to send away."* See, e.g., Lev 18:24–25:

> "Do not defile yourselves by any of these practices, for the nations I am *driving out* (*šlh*) before you have defiled themselves by all these things. The land has become defiled, so I am punishing it for its iniquity, and the land will *vomit out* (*qy'*) its inhabitants." Or, Lev 20:23: "You must not follow the statutes of the nations I am *driving out* (*šlh*) before you, for they did all these things, and I abhorred them."

In a survey of "dispossession" and "destruction" language in the Pentateuch, Glenn M. Miller notes that "**The "Dispossession" words**

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22  See also Copan and Flannagan here: *Did God Really Command Genocide?*, 78–80.

23  Joe M. Sprinkle, "Just War in Deuteronomy 20 and 2 Kings 3," in his *Biblical Law and Its Relevance: A Christian Understanding and Ethical Application for Today of the Mosaic Regulations* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), 180.

**outnumber the "Destruction" words by 3-to-1!**. This would indicate that the dominant 'intended effect' was for the peoples in the Land *to migrate somewhere else.*"[24] He cites Deut 12:29–30: "When the Lᴏʀᴅ your God annihilates (*krt*) the nations before you, which you are entering to take possession (*yrš, qal*) of, and you drive them out (*yrš, qal*[25]) and live in their land, be careful not to be ensnared by their ways after they have been destroyed (*šmd*) before you." Notice that the language of destruction occurs *alongside of* the language of dispossession, i.e., total annihilation is not the complete picture.

Along these same lines, an interesting perspective is found in the story of Israel's defeat of the Amorites, before they entered Canaan (Num 21:31–35):

> So Israel lived in the Amorites' land. After Moses sent spies to Jazer, Israel captured its surrounding villages and *drove out* (*yrš, hiphil*) the Amorites who were there. Then they turned and went up the road to Bashan, and King Og of Bashan came out against them with his whole army to do battle at Edrei. But the Lᴏʀᴅ said to Moses, 'Do not fear him, for I have handed him over to you along with his whole army and his land. Do to him as you did to King Sihon of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon.' So they struck (*\*nkd*) him, his sons, and his whole army until no one was left, and they *took possession* (*yrš, qal*) of his land.

Note the sequence here: First, the Israelites *drove out* the "regular" people (Amorites) who were living in Jazer and its villages; they did not annihilate them (v. 32). But then, when they turned to King Og and his

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24  Glenn M. Miller, "How could a God of Love order the massacre/annihilation of the Canaanites?" https://christianthinktank.com/qamorite.html (accessed 4/12/23); emphasis Miller. Miller is not a biblical scholar (by his own admission), but his blog posting nonetheless offers much helpful data in layman's terms (despite his occasional lapses into overly "cutesy" language; for example, his preferred term for Melchizedek is "Melky" (!)).

25  This is one of the few cases where *yrš, qal* means "to dispossess." See *HALOT, s.v.* ירשׁ.

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army, they struck him and his army until no one was left, just as they had previously done to King Sihon (vv. 34–35).

This is a strong indicator that the focus of the annihilation was any king and army opposing God's people, *not* a generalized, sweeping mandate to annihilate every last, living being. The majority of those people in Jazer and its villages were driven out, not annihilated.

Richard Hess has advanced a separate (and novel) argument that tends to support the point just made. He argues that when texts such as Deut 20:16–18 refer to "cities" to be destroyed, these cities were not large metropolises as we know them today; they were not even places where large numbers of average people lived. The word in question is *'îr* (usually translated "city") and, as Hess notes, "this term can describe a village Bethlehem (1 Sam 20:6)), tent encampments (Judg 10:4) and a citadel (2 Sam 12:26), or a fortress such as Zion in Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:7, 9)."[26] He references many Late Bronze Age and Iron Age sites where walled fortresses "were not habitations in which average persons lived. The masses lived in hamlets and other places nearby these forts. The forts themselves contained the palace, royal storehouses for the taxes 'in kind,' temples" and more. "These 'cities' were not the home of nonelites or of noncombatants. Rather, they represented the leadership, the military, and those most involved with the oppression and rulership of the land."[27]

### Summary: The Interplay Between *yrš* ("to drive out, dispossess") and *hrm* ("to set apart for destruction")

Thus, as we've noted, too often unnoticed in discussions of the *hrm* is the Bible's equal emphasis—if not larger emphasis—on the dispossession of the Canaanites out of the land, not their complete annihilation. To the

26  Richard S. Hess, "Appendix 2: Apologetic Issues in the Old Testament," in Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Second edition; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2022), 728 (the full essay is on pp. 717–31). See also his more technical treatment: "The Jericho and Ai of the Book of Joshua," in R. S. Hess, G. A. Klingbeil, and P. J. Ray, Jr., eds., *Critical Issues in Israel's History* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 33–46.

27  Hess, "Apologetic Issues," 729.

contrary, the use of *yrš* and related terms shows that the supposed "geno-
cidal" destruction of every last, living person (*hrm*) is not literally true in
most cases: the texts affirm over and over again that God drove out the
Canaanites from the land, so that, in most cases, they were not completely
destroyed.  Only those who remained in the "cities" after the expulsion of
most of their non-military inhabitants (and those in surrounding villag-
es) were "completely destroyed."  Both perspectives accomplished God's
purposes in giving Israel the land that he had promised to their forebears.

## The Concept of Yahweh War

Scholars have spoken of the idea of "holy war" to describe a large complex
of motifs in the Old Testament, in which the Lord fights for his people
and gives them the victory.[28] A more precise term for this would be "Yahweh
war," using the Bible's own term, *milhămôt yhwh*, "Yahweh's wars" (see Num
21:14; 1 Sam 18:17; 25:28; cf. also Exod 17:16; 1 Sam 17:47).[29] In these
passages, the Bible presents the battles as Yahweh's alone (see also Deut 20:1–
4). The model for what Israel's kings should be, laid out in Deut 17:14-20,
is profoundly counter-cultural: Rather than rely on the military (horses,
chariots) or foreign alliances, the king was to immerse himself in study of
Torah and leave the battles to the Lord.  More often than not, the Israelites
flipped that model on its head and looked to its human leader for military

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28  The foundational study on so-called holy war is G. von Rad, *Holy War in
Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991 (1952 original)). See also P. D.
Miller, Jr., *The Divine  Warrior in Early Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University,
1973); M. Lind, *Yahweh Is a Warrior: The Theology of Warfare in Ancient Israel*
(Scottsdale: Herald, 1980); S.-M. Kang, *Divine War in the Old Testament and
in the Ancient Near East*, BZAW 177 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989); T. Longman,
III and D. G. Reid, *God Is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995). More
recent and extensive bibliographic data may be found in Trent C. Butler, *Joshua
1–12* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 175–78, 353.

29  The key publication on this is Gwilym H. Jones, "'Holy War' or 'Yahweh
War'?" *VT* 25 (1975): 642–58.  See also Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Tough Questions
about God and His Actions in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2015),
34–45.

deliverance (e.g., Judg 8:22-23; 1 Sam 8:5, 20).[30] Even when such warriors as Samson, Gideon, or David engaged in battle, the text makes it clear that Yahweh gave them their victories (e.g., 2 Sam 5:10, 19; 8:6, 14).

Essential in the idea of Yahweh wars is that the people be properly prepared and consecrated to receive this gift of victory from Yahweh's hands. This idea is much broader than the idea of *hērem*, but the *hērem* is sometimes a component part of the Yahweh war.[31]

The practice of *hērem*, while referred to extensively in the Old Testament, is not commonly seen in surrounding cultures. This is somewhat remarkable, given the bellicose nature of so many of these cultures and also given their developed religious systems. The most well-known extrabiblical text with this meaning of the root is from the so-called Mesha Inscription, where Mesha, king of Moab, states that he had devoted Nebo and its inhabitants for destruction (*hrm*) to Ashtar-Chemosh, the national god of the Moabites.[32] Another is an Old South Arabic Sabaean text, where Karib-ilu, king of Sab*ā* (biblical Sheba) "devoted the city of Nashan to the *hērem by burning*"[33] *as an offering to the moon god 'Almaqah.*[34]

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30  See David M. Howard, Jr., "The Case for Kingship in Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets," *WTJ* 52 (1990): 101-15.

31  Kyle Dunham helpfully shows that the two concepts may overlap but are not synonymous.  See Kyle C. Dunham, "Yahweh War and *herem*: The Role of Covenant, Land, and Purity in the Conquest of Canaan," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 21 (2016): 7–30.

32  This is written on the so-called Moabite Stone (see *ANET*, 320). Mesha was a contemporary of the Israelite kings Omri and Ahab; indeed, he mentions both as enemies in his inscription.

33  Lauren A. S. Monroe, "Israelite, Moabite and Sabaean War-*hērem* Traditions and the Forging of National Identity: Reconsidering the Sabaean Text RES 3945 in Light of Biblical and Moabite Evidence," *VT* 57 (2007): 318–41; quote from p. 333. Karib-ilu was a contemporary of the Judahite kings Hezekiah and Manasseh.

34  A *hērem*-type practice has also been identified in a Hittite text—though the root *hrm* is not used.  See the discussion and bibliography in Dunham, "Yahweh War and *herem*," 24–25.  For other possible related ideas in the ancient Near East, see Theodore J. Lewis, *The Origin and Character of God: Ancient Israelite*

Second Kings 19:11 mentions the Assyrian kings "utterly destroy-ing" (*hrm*) lands they conquered, but it is not in the context of religious destruction. Some parallels between biblical "Yahweh war" and ancient Near East warfare do exist,[35] but the specific idea of *hērem* and parallels to it are rare.[36]

## 4 The Ethics of Yahweh War
## 4.1 The Problem
The most burning question for many people in this connection is, How can a holy, just, loving God have commanded such harsh actions (labeled as "genocide" by many)?[37] As mentioned above, this is probably the most vexing question in the Old Testament for many people, Christians and

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*Religion Through the Lens of Divinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 831, n. 142 and bibliography there.

35  See J. J. Niehaus, "Joshua and Ancient Near Eastern Warfare," *JETS* 31 (1988): 37–50.

36  See also Lohfink, *TDOT* 5:189–93.

37  Other treatments of the ethical issues raised by the *hērem* or Yahweh war that parallel the arguments herein are the following (only a small sample of the extensive literature on the subject): Eugene H. Merrill, "The Case for Moderate Discontinuity" in C. S. Cowles *et al., Show them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 61–94; Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 158–206; Kaiser, *Tough Questions about God and His Actions in the Old Testament*, 27–45; Kaiser, "The God of Love and His Command to Annihilate (herem) the Canaanites," in R. Dodson, ed., *The Old Testament Yesterday and Today: Essays in Honor of Michael P. V. Barrett* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), 245–55; Tremper Longman III, *Confronting Old Testament Controversies: Pressing Questions about Evolution, Sexuality, History, and Violence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 123–205; Paul Copan, *Is God a Vindictive Bully? Reconciling Portrayals of God in the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2022), 187–236. A helpful summary of the four major positions is Charlie Trimm, *The Destruction of the Canaanites: God, Genocide, and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022). An excellent, full-length treatment of the issues is Copan and Flannagan, *Did God Really Command Genocide?*

non-Christians alike. They are troubled (at best) and repelled (at worst) by what they see as a bloodthirstiness displayed by the Israelites and the God who had demanded the annihilations of the *hērem.*[38]

R. Goetz is representative when he states that "the book of Joshua is embarrassment enough, with its ferocity and its religious advocacy of mass murder." He speaks of Calvin's "cold-blooded acceptance of the Deuteronomic theology of the *hērem.*"[39] He goes on to speak of "the guilt of the living God" because of activities that, were they not committed or commanded by God, we would condemn as unspeakable and unjustifiable atrocities.[40] Or, see Carolyn Sharp's discussion of "Joshua and the Rhetoric of Violence," which begins "Joshua is a genocidal and colonizing text."[41]

In recent years, the "New Atheists" have pressed the argument even more strongly, represented by the famous quote from Richard Dawkins:

> The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all of fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.[42]

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38  See esp. Josh 6:21; 8:22; 10:26, 28, 30, 32–33, 35, 37, 39–40; 11:8, 10–14.

39  R. Goetz, "Joshua, Calvin, and Genocide," *TToday* 32 (1975): 263–74; quotes from p. 264.

40  Goetz, "Joshua, Calvin, and Genocide," 273. See also D. F. Wright, "Accommodation and Barbarity in John Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries," in A. G. Auld, ed., *Understanding Poets and Prophets* (JSOTSup 152; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 413–27.

41  Carolyn J. Sharp, *Joshua* (Smith and Helwys Bible Commentary; Macon, GA: Smith and Helwys, 2019), 44–53 (quote from p. 44); her next section is entitled "Postcolonial Resistance" (pp. 53–57).

42  Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 51.

## 4.2 Toward a Solution, Part A: First Principles

By way of response, we must first reiterate the point made above, namely, that a careful reading of the biblical texts reveals that God's commands were more focused on driving the Canaanites out of the land than they were on killing every last, living person. This point is too often misunderstood or ignored, whether by Christian apologists trying to justify the "total" exterminations or by non-Christians accusing Israel and the God of the Bible of barbaric "genocide." But, as we've seen, there was no genocide in the sense commonly understood.

Having said this, hard questions nevertheless remain, whether there was indeed a total extermination of almost all of the Canaanites (as is commonly supposed by many) or whether the killings were only partial, focusing on Canaanite leadership and militaries. Even if the main results were that most Canaanites were displaced from their lands (and not killed), the question still remains as to whether this was fair and just or not; after all, massive displacements still would have been extremely upsetting to people's lives and livelihoods. This also raises the question as to what claim Israel had at all to what many regard as the Canaanites' own land. What right did Israel have to displace the Canaanites from "their" lands?[43]

To address this last concern first, we must note that *no* peoples ever in history have had inalienable rights to "their" lands. The earth and all its lands were created by God himself and are owned by him, not by any peoples or nations. After all, the Bible asserts that "The earth and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants, belong to the LORD" (Ps 24:1) and "the earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it" (1 Cor 10:26). Furthermore, God rebukes the Israelites in Ps 50:10–12 by stating that "every animal

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43 Today, this also raises the controversial question as to whether the modern-day state of Israel and the Jews there have any right at all to live in lands where many regard them as "occupiers," even "genocidal." For a good example of such anti-Israel animus today, see Rachel Havrelock, *The Joshua Generation: Israeli Occupation and the Bible* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020). For a more moderating view, see Pitkänen, "Joshua, Israel, and the Palestinians," *Joshua*, 89–99.

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of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird of the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and everything in it is mine."

We should be very clear that God's own people Israel were not inheriting Canaan because of any merit of their own. Deuteronomy 9:5 states that "You are not going to take possession of their land because of your righteousness or your integrity. Instead, the Lord your God will drive out these nations before you because of their wickedness." Nor did they have any permanent claim of "ownership" on it. Before they even crossed into the land of Canaan, God warned Israel that if they turned away from him, "you will quickly perish from the land you are about to cross the Jordan to possess. You will not live long there, but you will certainly be destroyed. The Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be reduced to a few survivors among the nations where the Lord your God will drive you" (Deut 4:26–27). And we also see that God is not open to a charge of having a double standard, favoring only his own people, since he did follow through on this by exiling his own people into Assyria and Babylon because of their sins in 2 Kings 17 (Israel) and in 2 Kings 24–25 (Judah).

The earth and its lands have always been God's, and their apportionment to different peoples and nations—"on loan," so to speak—never has given any of them permanent, inalienable claim to them. Lands have been his alone to give or take away, so attempts to characterize the Canaanites as "victims," wrongly expelled from "their" lands, is to misconstrue or misunderstand the biblical picture.

Nevertheless, concerning the destructions of the *hērem,* the biblical record is stark and unblinking when it speaks of these things, which are indeed horrible and should cause all of us as human beings to cringe when considering them, even if the destructions were only partial. However, the human perspective is not always the divine perspective. God had commanded Moses that Israel was to carry out this destruction and/or displacement in Canaan (Deut 7:2; 20:16–17; Josh 11:15, 20), and Moses had so instructed Joshua (11:12, 15; cf. 10:40). God also commanded this

to Joshua himself (6:17, with reference to Jericho). Thus, the question remains concerning God's basic justice.

The Bible does not address the question directly in this way, but we can discern the outlines of an answer in the points below.

### 4.3 Toward a Solution, Part B: Purity of Israel's Worship

The special emphasis at the time of Joshua was that Israel was to keep itself holy, undefiled, and the land itself was to be undefiled. In the particular circumstances of the Israelites entering the long-promised land as a newly constituted nation, it was vitally important that they do so uncontaminated by pagan worship. Already they had yielded to temptation in connection with the Baal of Peor in the wilderness (Numbers 25; 31:1–4). In Deuteronomy, the Lord had made his intentions clear: "You shall utterly destroy them . . . *precisely so that* they might not teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done on behalf of their gods" (20:17–18; author translation).

When Israel did not obey the command to utterly destroy things, this did indeed contaminate its religion. This is most visible in the story of Achan's and Israel's faithlessness concerning things set apart to the Lord (Joshua 7). When Israel was defeated at Ai as a result of this, Joshua and the elders of the people went into mourning (7:7–9).

God's response to Israel's faithlessness was couched in terms of holiness (7:10–15). *Israel* (not just Achan) had sinned, and he would not tolerate it. This passage shows that God is not open to the charge of a double standard with reference to his treatment of Israel and the Canaanites, as we've also noted above. Earlier, God had ordered Israel to drive out and /or exterminate the Canaanites because of their sin, but now he also held all Israel responsible for the sin of one man. The overriding concern in *all* such episodes was his demand for holiness and obedience and the concern for purity of worship.

Thus, Josh 7:11 underlines the seriousness of the offense attributed to the nation: Israel had (1) "sinned," (2) "violated" the Lord's covenant, (3) "taken" some of what was set apart, (4) "stolen," (5) "deceived," and (6)

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"put" those things among their own belongings. The quick, staccato accumulation of these verbs in v. 11 accentuates the severity of the action, since it was essentially one act, but it is described in these various ways. Verse 12 shows that the people of Israel themselves now were, literally, a thing "set apart for destruction" as a result of this (as Jericho had already been). God would no longer be with Israel, until the sin was removed from the camp. Verse 13 again emphasizes the importance of holiness in God's eyes: the people were to consecrate themselves, since they had been defiled by the presence of the things set apart.

Achan was found out, and he and his family were stoned and burned (7:16– 26). Because he had violated God's command concerning the loot from Jericho, Achan found himself in the position of the inhabitants of Jericho: he himself was set apart for destruction. He in effect had become a Canaanite by his actions.

Another illustration of the effects of not completely destroying pagan influences comes in the book of Judges. Despite the indications in Joshua 10–11 that Israel completely carried out the requirements of complete annihilation, Judges 1 indicates that the various tribes did not fully obey.[44] Judges 2—and indeed the rest of the book of Judges—shows the effects this had on Israel's life: the people turned to the Baals, the gods of the Canaanites who were still living among them, and they forsook the Lord. Israel's worship did not remain pure.

Complete, total destruction of every last, living Canaanite was not necessary for accomplishing God's purposes in giving Israel a clean start in an uncontaminated land, spiritually speaking. This is why God's main emphasis was on driving the Canaanites out of this land, and exterminating only those who remained, whether religious, political, administrative, or military personnel—or simply "average" citizens who refused to leave.

And, related to this, we can hardly imagine that the average Canaanite, upon hearing of what Israel's God had done to the Egyptians and to Sihon and Og (Josh 2:9–11)—let alone what he was doing in an organized, se-

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44  See esp. Judg 1:19, 21, 28–34. See the comments on 10:40–43 for a discussion of the different perspectives in Joshua 10–11 and Judges 1.

quential fashion to places like Jericho (chap. 6), Ai (chap. 8), and the southern and northern coalitions of kings (chaps. 10–11)—would simply stay put, waiting to be annihilated. Israel's reputation continually preceded it (2:10; 5:1; 9:2, 3; 10:1; 11:1), so there would have been no excuse for the average Canaanite citizen not to take some action to avoid destruction. The example of Rahab (and even the Gibeonites) shows that destruction was not inevitable. Those who embraced Israel's God would be spared. Sadly, it appears that most Canaanites did not.

### 4.4 Toward a Solution, Part C: The Canaanites' Sins in General

Concerning sin, we should first note that, from God's perspective, *all* peoples have sinned and fallen short of his standards (Rom 3:23) and thus are deserving of the severest punishment (Rom 6:23). Thus, on this level, the Canaanites only received what all peoples—then and now—deserve, and any peoples who have been spared are so spared only by God's grace. Sin is a harsh reality, but its absolute affront to the holy God is clearly taught in the Scriptures and too often ignored in the modern day.

While it is entirely true that the Canaanites only received what all people deserve, and therefore this could conceivably stand as a sufficient answer to the question, this answer is somewhat incomplete, since it is clear that God did not choose to annihilate other peoples in biblical times (or since) who also were sinful. What was distinctive about the Canaanite situation that triggered the unprecedented injunctions to drive out or destroy everyone and everything?

While we cannot answer this question definitively, we *can* say that biblical and extrabiblical evidence alike portrays the Canaanites as wicked in the extreme, more so than almost any other nation. Early on, a preview of the Canaanites' sin was presented to Abraham, where he was told that the fulfillment of the promise to him would be delayed, in part because "the sin of the Amorites is not yet complete" (Gen 15:16; see also Deut 9:4–5). That is, the return of Abraham's descendants finally to inherit the land would have as part of its mission the punishing of the Canaanites for

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their sin.[45] For many years, the Canaanites' sins would not justify the annihilation that would come when the Israelites took the land. Indeed, here we see God's grace and long-suffering in full view, since he did not exact punishment immediately, but rather waited for centuries until their sins had reached a tipping point, so to speak. That point came in the time of Joshua.

In the Bible itself, the sins of the Canaanites are condemned in several places. In the most detailed passage (Lev 18:24–30), Israel is solemnly warned to abstain from the many abominations that the Canaanites had practiced (see also v. 3). The larger context makes it clear that the entire list of sins in 18:6–23 were ones that the Canaanites practiced. These included engaging in incest, adultery, child sacrifice, homosexual activity, and bestiality. Furthermore, in Deut 9:4–5, the wickedness of the nations in the land of Canaan is given as a major reason why the Lord would drive them out before Israel. So again the Israelites' displacement of the Canaanites was in part a punishment for their wickedness. Even further, we should note that the promise to Abraham included the provision that God would curse anyone who cursed Israel (Gen 12:3), and the Canaanites sought to destroy Israel on at least three occasions (Josh 9:1–2; 10:1–5; 11:1– 5).

The evidence outside the Bible confirms the biblical picture of aparticularly debased culture in Canaan. Archaeological excavation has shown that the practice of child sacrifice was particularly the province of the Canaanites (=Phoenicians) and their descendants who migrated westward to Carthage.[46] As one scholar notes, "The most famous—or noto-

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45 The term "Amorite" in Gen 15:16 is synonymous with "Canaanite" here. See the commentary on 3:10.

46 See Paul G. Mosca, "Child Sacrifice in Canaanite and Israelite Religion" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1975), esp. chaps. I-II. Mosca also showed that child sacrifice was practiced in Israel and Judah (chap. III). But, significantly, its practice in Israel was strongly condemned by God (e.g., Lev 18:21; Deut 18:10); it was the practice of those who turned away from God, such as Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:3). See also L. E. Stager and S. R. Wolff, "Child Sacrifice at Carthage: Religious Rite and Population Control?" *BARev* 10.1 (1984): 30–51.

rious—example of Phoenician religious practice is infant sacrifice. It is…
abundantly attested archaeologically, although virtually all such attesta-
tions come from the colonies. In Carthage as many as 20,000 urns with
infant and animal bones were buried in the tophet (the biblical word for
such sanctuaries) over 600 years."[47] Or this, from another scholar: "Child
sacrifice was an essential element of Phoenician religion. Although this
ancient rite seems to have been obsolete in the Phoenician motherland,
it continued to be practiced vigorously by the Western Phoenicians well
into the Late Roman period."[48] Despite the lack of clear evidence for this
practice in Canaan/Phoenicia proper, nevertheless "the Phoenician or-
igin of the rite stands starkly revealed in the antiquity and geographical
distribution of the western precincts.  By the seventh century B.C., we
find such precincts firmly entrenched in North Africa, Sicily, Sardinia,
and…Malta.  The only plausible conclusion is that these sacrificial en-
closures were founded by Phoenician colonists and modeled on main-
land prototypes."[49]

Canaanite religion was also highly sexualized, including incest, adul-
tery, homosexual activity, and bestiality, as noted in Leviticus 18.  For
example, Deuteronomy 23:17 (Hb 23:18) mentions both male and female
cult prostitutes: "No Israelite woman is to be a cult prostitute (*qədēšāh*),
and no Israelite man is to be a cult prostitute (*qādēš*)." These were not the
type of prostitute known the world over—like Rahab (*zônāh*).  Rather,
they were "sacred" or "cult" prostitutes; they were attached to shrines of
false worship imported from Canaan into Israel and Judah.  Most trag-
ically (and ironically!), these terms are related to the Hebrew word for

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47   Richard J. Clifford, "Phoenician Religion," *BASOR* 279 (1990): 58; the full essay
is on pp. 55-64.

48   Charles R. Krahmalkov, "Phoenicia," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. D.
N. Freedman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1056.  See also Krahmalkov,
*Phoenician-Punic Dictionary* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 90; Leuven:
Peeters, 2000), 39-40 (*s.v.* "ZRM" (the term for "infant sacrifice victim")) and p.
286 (*s.v.* "MLK VI" (the term for "human (child) sacrifice")).

49   Mosca, "Child Sacrifice in Canaanite and Israelite Religion," 98.

holiness: *qādôš*. This represented a complete and utter debasement of the idea of holiness.[50]

By the time of King Josiah, male cult prostitutes had even set up shop in the temple itself: "He also tore down the houses of the male cult prostitutes that were in the Lᴏʀᴅ's temple, in which the women were weaving tapestries for Asherah" (2 Kgs 23:7). The reference to Asherah here—the wife of the high god El in Canaanite mythology—adds to the debased picture. Josiah also "brought out the Asherah pole from the Lᴏʀᴅ's temple to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem. He burned it at the Kidron Valley, beat it to dust, and threw its dust on the graves of the common people" (2 Kgs 23:6).[51]

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50  Richard Hess downplays this idea (Richard S. Hess, "'Because of the Wickedness of These Nations' (Deut 9:4-5): The Canaanites – Ethical or Not?" pp. 17-38 in J. S. DeRouchie, J. Gile, and K. J. Turner eds., *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), arguing that Canaanite literature shows a higher ethics in some areas: "attempts to generalize regarding 'Canaanite ethics,' whether positive or negative, are over-simplified and not productive of a more accurate and nuanced understanding of these cultures using the available literary sources native to or at least copied by these peoples" (p. 36). He states that Christians' "own moral character and practice often appears very comparable to that of the Canaanites" and that we too have fallen short of the glory of God (p. 37). While it is of course true that "all have sinned" (Rom 3:23), Hess's attempts to draw moral equivalences between the Canaanites and other ancient (or modern) cultures seem somewhat of a stretch.

51  For more on Canaanite cultic practices, see J. Day, "Canaanite Religion," *ABD* 1:831–37; Keith N. Schoville, "Canaanites and Amorites," in A. J. Hoerth, G. L. Mattingly, and E. M. Yamauchi, eds., *Peoples of the Old Testament World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 157–82; William A. Ward, "Phoenicians," in *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, 183–206; Christopher A. Rollston, "Phoenicia and the Phoenicians," in B. T. Arnold and B. A. Strawn, eds., *The World around the Old Testament: The People and Places of the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 267–308.

## 4.5 Toward a Solution, Part D: The Canaanites' Sins Against God's People Israel

Another perspective on the sins of the Canaanites is provided in the book of Joshua. Beyond being a punishment for their sins in general—which were especially heinous, judged against those of nations around them—the dispossession or destruction of the Canaanites was also due to their rebellion against God and his people. This harkens all the way back to God's promise to Abraham that "I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt" (Gen 12:3). Here in Joshua, we see that almost every battle that Israel engaged in was defensive in nature, as Canaanite coalitions repeatedly arrayed themselves against Israel to attack them (see 9:1–2; 10:1–5; 11:1–5).

According to Josh 11:19–20, "No city made peace with the Israelites except the Hivites who inhabited Gibeon; all of them were taken in battle. For it was the LORD's intention to harden their hearts, so that they would engage Israel in battle, be completely destroyed without mercy, and be annihilated, just as the LORD had commanded Moses." This passage shows that the destruction of the Canaanites in chaps. 10–11 was orchestrated by God himself: he hardened their hearts so that he could completely destroy those opposing him.

Thus, the text is stark and harsh: the idea and activity of hardening originated from God himself, and it was for the purpose of destroying the Canaanite resistance through battle, with no mercy.

The reference to God's hardening the Canaanites' hearts obviously recalls the same idea in the events of the exodus, where God hardened the pharaoh's heart (e.g., Exod 9:12; 10:1, 27; 11:10) and sent the plagues. A careful reading of the Exodus passages, however, shows that God's actions in Egypt were tied to the pharaoh's defiance. His hardening of the pharaoh's heart must be seen in the context of the pharaoh's own stubbornness and resistance to God. Ultimately, he was not doing to the pharaoh anything that his heart was not already predisposed to do.[52]

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52  On this, see Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 252–56.

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The Canaanites' resistance to the Lord can be seen in a similar light. They heard about Israel's victories (2:9–11; 5:1; 9:1, 3; 10:1; 11:1), and most of them made war against Israel and its God; as a result, they were shown no mercy and were annihilated. God's hardening of their hearts (11:20) must be seen in the same way as the hardening of the pharaoh's heart: in the context of their own stubbornness and resistance of Israel's God. Had they been willing to react as Rahab (or even the Gibeonites) had done, or had they left the land on their own before the oncoming Israelites, the results would have been different for them.[53]

## 4.6 Toward a Solution, Part E: Hyperbolic Language in Joshua

Finally, we must also note, as hinted above, that some of the language in Joshua has to be read hyperbolically, not literally, based on internal evidence in the book. This helps to explain such verses as 13:1 ("a great deal of the land remains to be possessed") or the many places where we see people remaining in areas supposedly conquered and destroyed completely by the Israelites (see 11:22; 13:2–6; 14:12; 15:63; 16:10; 17:12–13; 18:2–3; 19:47; 23:4–5,7,12–13; and Judges 1)—all coming *after* such "total annihilation" passages such as 10:40: "So Joshua conquered the whole region—the hill country, the Negev, the Judean foothills, and the slopes—with all their kings, *leaving no survivors*. He *completely destroyed* (*hrm)* every living being, as the Lord, the God of Israel, had commanded."[54] So here, too, there is no "genocide" as it is commonly understood.

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53   See the commentary on 11:19–20 for further discussion of this perspective.

54   See further the introductory comments on 10:40–43, as well as such resources as Copan and Flannagan, *Did God Really Command Genocide*, 84–93; Copan, *Is God a Vindictive Bully?*, 200–6; James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 38–43; and K. Lawson Younger, Jr., *Ancient Conquest Accounts: A Study in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical History Writing* (JSOTSup 98; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 190–92, 227–28, 241–47.

## 5 The New Testament and Violence

The New Testament is usually thought of as the testament of peace and non-violence, and it does indeed affirm these many times. See, for example, Jesus's words in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matt 5:9), or "if anyone slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also" (Matt 5:39), or "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44).

Yet, the New Testament does not reject violence or harsh judgment in absolute terms. For example, Jesus himself did not hesitate to display righteous anger, most dramatically in his excoriation of the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. Or note when he forcibly cleansed the temple of the moneychangers: "Jesus went into the temple and threw out all those buying and selling. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves" (Matt 21:12). Note that the gospel of John tells us that this was more than a fit of passion, because Jesus took time to fashion a whip before driving them out: "After making a whip out of cords, he drove everyone out of the temple with their sheep and oxen. He also poured out the money changers' coins and overturned the tables" (John 2:15). The book of Jude even reminds us of Jesus' destructive actions against those who did not believe in Old Testament times: "Now I want to remind you…that Jesus saved a people out of Egypt and later destroyed those who did not believe" (Jude 5).

Note also the harsh fate of Ananias and Sapphira, who were struck dead at the apostle Peter's feet when they lied about their sale of land (Acts 5:1–11).

The apostle Paul certainly did not shrink from speaking of harsh retribution. Speaking to the high priest Ananias, after Ananias had ordered his men to strike Paul on the mouth, he responded, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall!" (Acts 23:3). Or this: "Alexander the coppersmith did great harm to me. The Lord will repay him according to his works" (2 Tim 4:14).

The book of Revelation is replete with harsh judgment and retribution against evildoers. See, e.g., the voice of the martyrs in Rev 6:9–10:

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"When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered because of the word of God and the testimony they had given. They cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, the one who is holy and true, how long until you judge those who live on the earth and avenge our blood?'" Lest it be countered that this refers to eschatological, not earthly, judgment, consider this *temporal* judgment that Jesus pronounced against the church at Thyatira: "Look, I will throw (the false prophetess Jezebel) into a sickbed and those who commit adultery with her into great affliction. Unless they repent of her works, I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am the one who examines minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you according to your works" (Rev 2:22–23).

And, significantly, the New Testament does not condemn the violence in the Old Testament, but rather assumes or even affirms it in many instances.[55] Even limiting ourselves to New Testament references to the violence in Joshua, we see Stephen affirming that *God* drove out the Canaanites before Joshua (Acts 7:45), Paul affirming the same thing (Acts 13:19), and the author of Hebrews *praising* Old Testament violent characters "who by faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the raging of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, gained strength in weakness, became mighty in battle, and put foreign armies to flight" (Heb 11:33–34). In none of these instances do New Testament characters or authors condemn the violence in the Old Testament.

## 6 Concluding Thoughts

What of the *hērem* and Christians today? Should we derive some imperatives for our own—or our nations's—behavior? In one sense, yes: The book of Joshua should remind us of the terrible affront that any type of sin is to a holy God. We should hate evil just as God does. But, should we

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55  My argument in this paragraph follows Copan and Flannagan, *Did God Really Command Genocide?* chap. 3: "The God of the Old Testament versus the God of the New?", 37–47, esp. 42–46.

take the types of actions we find in Joshua against the Canaanites? The answer here is "no."

We need to remember that the instructions to Israel to drive out or annihilate the Canaanites were specific in time, intent, and geography. That is, Israel was not given a blanket permission to do the same to *any* peoples they encountered, at any time or in any place. It was limited to the crucial time when Israel was just establishing itself as a theocracy under God, to protect Israel's worship, as well as to punish these specific peoples.[56] Thus, harsh as it is to our sensibilities, we should remember that it was for very clearly stated reasons, and that it was very carefully circumscribed.[57]

This should caution us in attempting to apply the principles of *the mass displacements or* the *hērem* to the modern day. While God abhors evil of every kind and Christians are to oppose it vigorously, the extremes of the *hērem* are not enjoined upon Christians to practice today.[58] Even

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56  Arie Versluis also makes this point: "in Genesis to Kings the root חרם is used almost exclusively in connection with the conquest of the land of Canaan and the associated elimination of (the practices of) the nations of Canaan," i.e., it was not an unlimited command to practice חרם against any nation at any time. See Versluis, "Devotion and/or Destruction? The Meaning and Function of חרם in the Old Testament," *ZAW* 128 (2016): 244 (the full essay is on pp. 233–46).

57  God commanded Saul to annihilate the Amalekites (an order he did not carry out; 1 Samuel 15) and Ahab to do the same to Ben-hadad (1 Kgs 20:42), but these again were circumscribed and limited orders. See Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Hard Sayings of the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), 106–9, on the Amalekite situation.

58  In today's post-9/11 world, many people wonder what similarities between the biblical *hērem* and Islamic *jihad* there might be (if any).  We cannot address this in any depth here except to say that there are many significant differences.  For in-depth engagement with this question (and bibliographies), see Paul Copan, "Aren't the Bible's 'Holy Wars' Just Like Islamic Jihad? Parts One, Two, Three" in *When God Goes to Starbucks* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), chaps. 12-14, esp. chap. 14; and Copan and Flannagan, "Are Yahweh Wars in the Old Testament Just like Islamic Jihad?" in *Did God Really Command Genocide?*, chap. 21.  More briefly, see Kaiser, "The Christian and Jihad," in *Tough Questions about God and His Actions*, 44.

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in what some people see as "barbaric" Old Testament times, the *hērem* was limited. God worked against evil during most of the Old Testament period, as he does today, in less drastic ways.

# THE BOOK OF ACTS: FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES[1]

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ABSTRACT: This article focuses on two issues that relate to the study of the book of Acts: the literary relationship between the third Gospel and the book of Acts and the purpose Acts. Often deemed as "introductory" or "foundational matters", clear thinking on these areas is essential for a correct understanding and interpretation of Acts (and indeed the third Gospel). The article examines and evaluates various scholarly proposals about both issues before drawing certain conclusions. With respect to the issue of literary relationship, the discussion follows the four-fold schema set out by I.H. Marshall. It concludes that the Third Gospel and Acts are best viewed as a two-volume work. With respect to the issue of purpose, six distinct proposals are investigated and assessed before concluding that the main purpose of Acts (and the third Gospel) is pastoral in nature. Whilst recognizing that this is the strongest of the six proposals, it does not exclude the possibility of subsidiary purposes.

KEY WORDS:  Luke, Acts, unity, purpose, pastoral.

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1    This article is a revised extract from the author's unpublished PhD Thesis entitled: "A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MIRACLE STORIES IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE LUKAN CONCEPT OF SALVATION." which was submitted to The Queen's University Belfast 2012.

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Within current New Testament studies, Acts continues to attract keen interest with new commentaries, articles, essays, and books being regularly published.[3] For those seeking to explore this fascinating section of the New Testament, it is important to be clear about issues often labelled by scholars as "foundational".[4] Clarity of thought at this level will not merely help to facilitate correct thinking about the nature of Acts and how it is to be interpreted, it will also engender confidence when analysing and assessing the growing number of academic studies on it. This paper will examine two such issues: the literary relationship between the third Gospel and Acts, and the purpose of Acts. It argues that the third Gospel and Acts are to be viewed as a two-volume composition and that the general purpose of this work is pastoral in nature. The writer assumes Lukan authorship for both the third Gospel and Acts.[5]

## The relationship between the third Gospel and Acts

Since the publication of Cadbury's work, *The Making of Luke-Acts,* (1927),[6] scholars have become increasingly accustomed to speaking of these books as a single literary work, written by a single author but divided for logistical reasons (i.e. the limits of what a single papyrus scroll could hold) into two volumes. Accordingly, Cadbury's hyphenated designation "Luke-Acts" has since been adopted by a majority of scholars when referring to the two books together. However, as Parsons and Pervo[7] point out, such unity must not simply be assumed; it needs to be argued.

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3   Craig Keener's four volume commentary *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids. Baker Academic, 2012-15) reflects the breadth and quantity of written material on Acts in recent years. See also Thomas. E. Phillips, *Contemporary Studies in Acts* (Georgia. Mercer University Press 2009).

4   Other such issues include authorship, date, recipients, genre etc.

5   For a helpful discussion on the topic of authorship, see Keener, *Acts,* Vol 1, 402-22.

6   Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (London: Macmillan, 1927).

7   Mikeal C. Parsons and Richard I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts,* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). Both scholars regard the issue as an open question and point to various differences between the two works which

Various theories have been proposed about the literary relationship between Luke and Acts. These are set out by Marshall[8] as follows:

## (i). Separate works by two different authors

At the turn of the last century Hawkins[9] produced a robust defence of the linguistic unity of Luke and Acts. In his research, he identified various linguistic differences between the two books. Two decades later, Clark[10] picked up on these and developed a case against common authorship based on linguistic evidence. Although he found no immediate followers, the issue was later revived by Argyle,[11] who gave a full list of linguistic differences and concluded that Acts was written by a different author. Much of Argyle's case was later subjected to a devastating critique by

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prevent a simple answer. In particular they highlight the problem of ascribing a single genre to both works, by identifying differences in the narrative and in the theology.

8    I. Howard Marshall, "Acts and 'The Former Treatise'" in *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting* (ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke; vol. 1 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1993), 163-182.

9    John Caesar Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae; Contributions to the Study of the Synoptic Problem* (2nd ed.; Oxford, Clarendon Press 1909), 177-82. Hawkins outlines the linguistic differences under five headings: (i) Words and phrases characteristic of Luke's Gospel in contrast to the other Synoptics, but used in Acts at least three times as often in Luke; (ii) Words and phrases never occurring in Luke, but frequently in Acts; (iii) Words and phrases rarely occurring in Luke, but frequently in Acts; (iv) Words and phrases frequently occurring in Luke, but never in Acts and (v) Words and phrases frequently occurring in Luke, but much more rarely in Acts. Based on these observations Hawkins suggested that while they are insufficient to throw doubt on common authorship, they do seem to indicate that a considerable time must have elapsed between the writing of the two books.

10   Albert C. Clark, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Critical Edition with Introduction and Notes on Selected Passages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), 393-408.

11   Aubrey W. Argyle, "The Greek of Luke and Acts," *NTS* 20 (1973-4), 441-5.

Beck.[12] However, as not all of the undeniable linguistic differences previously identified by Hawkins were addressed, some today still argue for separate authors of both books.[13]

## (ii). Separate works by the same author

Almost every scholar today accepts that Luke and Acts display authorial unity. This advance has been due largely to the work of writers such as Harnack,[14] Knox and Cadbury who pointed to such significant features as the common dedication of both books to Theophilus (Lk. 1:3; Acts 1:1), linguistic correspondence, common style, mode of composition as well as common themes. However, since Hawkins[15] had earlier suggested a possible gap in time between the compositions of the two works, this provided a basis for the hypothesis that Luke and Acts are in fact separate works by the same author. Occasionally, it is suggested that Acts may have been written before Luke,[16] or alternatively, that the Gospel was written first without any thought of a sequel, with Acts being composed

12  Brian E. Beck, "The Common Authorship of Luke and Acts," *NTS,* 23 (1976-7), 346-52.

13  Marshall, "Acts and 'The Former Treatise'" in *Acts* (ed. Winter and Clarke), 1:166. Marshall mentions the fact that David G. Weeks in his Fernley-Hartley lecture (1980) on "The Lukan School in Ephesus" (yet unpublished), puts forward the hypothesis that the Gospel of Luke and Acts were composed by different authors within the same school. He develops his argument in terms of differences in architecture, theology, style and historical usage. More recently, Patricia Walters *The Assumed Authorial Unity of Luke and Acts: A Reassessment of the Evidence* – SNTS 145 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) has argued against the single authorship of Luke and Acts.

14  Adolf Von Harnack, *The Acts of the Apostles (*transl. Rev. J. R. Wilkinson; London: Williams & Norgate, 1909); W.L. Knox, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1948).

15  Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae,* 177.

16  Marshall in "Acts and 'The Former Treatise'" cites G. Bouwmann, *Das dritte Evangelium*. Einübung in die formgeschichtliche Methode (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1968) 62-7, who finds it strange that Acts does not refer back to Luke and argues that the theology of Acts is more primitive.

much later.[17] If so, it raises the question as to whether the Gospel under-went any revision in the light of the composition of Acts. This view of separate works by the same author offers a spectrum of possibilities from the two books being substantially independent of each other (what might be called view ii a), to the notion that despite an unspecified interval be-tween their composition, they were assimilated to each other so as to become in effect a two-part work (what might be called view ii b).

### (iii). A two-part work composed as a whole

This third proposal, advanced by Pesch[18] *et al.,* affirms both books as a two-part work which was composed as a whole, divided into two parts from its inception, and carefully planned accordingly. This view will be returned to shortly.

### (iv). One continuous work later separated into two parts

A fourth suggestion is that the two books, as they presently stand, were originally written as one continuous work which was then separated into two parts, with Luke 24:50-3 and Acts 1:1-5 added to conclude the first part and introduce the second part respectively. Several problems, how-ever, are raised by this theory, two of which may be singled out. First, in the Greco-Roman world of the first century A.D., literary works were cus-tomarily published in the format of a scroll made of papyrus. As Metzger[19] points out, the length of such a scroll was limited by considerations of convenience in handling the roll; the normal Greek literary roll seldom exceeded 35 feet in length. Ancient authors, therefore, would divide a long literary work into several "books" each one being accommodated by one roll. Luke and Acts would each have filled an ordinary papyrus roll of 31 or 32 feet in length, which explains why they were issued in two

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17   Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte* I (Freiburg: Herder, 1980), 76-82.

18   Rudolf Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte* I (Zürich: Benziger/ Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1986), 24f.

19   Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration,* (3rd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 5-6.

volumes rather than one. Secondly, Acts 1:6ff. does not seem to connect smoothly with Luke 24:49. According to Luke 24:33, the disciples are located in a house in Jerusalem which Jesus enters (v. 36), yet in Acts 1:12 when the Ascension occurs, they are suddenly in an open area on the Mount of Olives. These and other problems have resulted in the proposal not finding support among contemporary scholars.[20]

Of the four proposals presented only two (i.e., ii.(a) and iii) command serious support within contemporary scholarship, with the latter one (i.e., Luke and Acts as a two-part work) being favoured more. Three principal arguments are advanced in support of it. First, attention is drawn to the prologues to the two books. Marshall[21] states, "the prologue to Acts, reminiscent in language of the prologue to Luke, establishes that in their present form they are two parts of one work." However, Alexander[22] suggests that the use of a re-capitulatory preface does not demand that two treatises are necessarily closely linked together: the evidence from ancient prefaces indicates that one could have two works which "while complementing each other, are none the less very different in conception." While this caution is fair, Marshall rightly considers it to be excessive, since more often the use of recapitulation does occur where the works are closely linked. Moreover, the similarity in theme between Luke and Acts as well as their close chronological relationship make it extremely likely that the author saw Acts as being closely tied to Luke.[23]

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20  For a more detailed treatment of the problems involved see Werner G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, (London: SCM Press Ltd. 1966), 109-11.

21  Marshall, "Acts and 'The Former Treatise'" in *Acts* (ed. Winter and Clarke), 1:172.

22  Loveday Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1-14 and Acts 1.1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 146.

23  Marshall, "Acts and 'The Former Treatise'" in *Acts* (ed. Winter and Clarke), 1:172-3.

The second argument relates to the evidence of certain material in Luke as a whole. This falls into four categories. As Pesch[24] notes, it appears that in a number of instances Luke has redacted material from sources in light of what was to follow in Acts. Thus, for example, the change from the dative plural nefe,laij (clouds) in Mark 13:26 to the singular nefe,lh in Luke 21:27, appears to have been made to suit the singular nefe,lh in Acts 1:9. Second, there are instances where Luke has not taken over material from his sources in the Gospel, but there is an equivalent in Acts. Luke, for example, has no parallel in his Gospel to Mark 13:32, but there is an equivalent in Acts 1:7. Third, there is some material in Luke which is prophetic of what is to happen in Acts. Barrett[25] offers a list of possible instances including Luke 3:6; 11:49; 14:15-24; 21:12-19; 22:31-34. Finally, there are alterations in Luke which reflect knowledge of traditions attested in Acts. One example is the setting of the Sanhedrin trial by day and not by night which, it is argued, shows the knowledge of procedure from traditions found in Acts 4-5.

The third principal argument centres on the ending of Luke. As Parsons[26] has shown the Ascension story provides both closure for the Gospel and the narrative beginning for Acts; the repetition serves to tie the two volumes together. Also significant are the prophetic elements in Luke which are especially noticeable in the concluding section (e.g. Lk. 24:49). However, since the other Gospels also have prophetic elements, and there are no grounds for suspecting a second volume to any of them, this point is at best one of many in a cumulative argument.

In addition to the above arguments, we might also add the large number of recurring patterns of parallelism between the two works.[27] These

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24  Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte* I, 24f.

25  C. Kingsley Barrett, "The Third Gospel as a Preface to Acts?" *The Four Gospels: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*  (ed. F. van Segbroek et al.; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), Vol. 2: 1453-61.

26  Mikeal C. Parsons, *The Departure of Jesus in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987).

27  For further parallels see Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological*

include the Spirit descending on Jesus as he prays (Lk. 3:21-23), and on the disciples as they pray (Acts 2:1-13); Jesus and the disciples both begin their ministries with sermons that focus on the fulfillment of prophecy (Lk. 4:16-30; Acts 2:14-40); similar accounts of lame men being healed (Lk. 5: 17-26; Acts 3;1-10), resulting in conflict with religious leaders (Lk. 5:29-6;11; Acts 4:1-8:3); both report missionary journeys to the Gentiles (Lk. 10:1-12; Acts 13-20) and conclude with a prolonged account of a journey to Jerusalem where the hero is arrested on false charges (Lk. 9:51-19:28; Acts 19:21-21:17). Although such parallels may serve a variety of purposes,[28] they only make sense if the writer intended both parts to be read together as a single work. The cumulative effect of these arguments points clearly in the direction of Luke and Acts being a two-volume composition, and therefore should be studied together. Regardless of the process which has led to their present form, it is reasonable to maintain that together they display authorial unity.

## The purpose of Acts

A cursory reading of the literature on this issue reveals a wide range of suggestions, some of which carry more weight than others. These may be broadly grouped under the following headings - historical, irenic, apologetic, evangelistic, theological and pastoral.[29]

(i). Historical – Luke wrote to provide the church with a historical record of its beginnings. Thus, the work is to be viewed as mere history.

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*Themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts,* Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974.

Also, Susan Marie Praeder, "Jesus-Paul, Peter-Paul, and Jesus-Peter Parallelisms in Luke-Acts: A History of Reader Response," in *SBLSP* (ed. K. Richards; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984) 23-39.

28  Suggested purposes include making the narrative more aesthetically pleasing; a mnemonic device; a means of highlighting the essential unity between the missions of Jesus and the church; or a combination of these factors.

29  For a more detailed survey of the various proposals regarding Luke's purpose see Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts, SNTW* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 29f.

While disagreement remains over whether Luke and Acts share a common genre, few today doubt that Acts is a piece of ancient historiography.[30] As to the reliability of the account, a much more positive assessment has prevailed since the second half of the nineteenth century, due largely to the works of such scholars as Lightfoot, Zahn, Ramsay and von Harnack.[31] More recent studies, including those by Hemer,[32] Sherwin-White[33] and Tajra,[34] have served to confirm this view.[35] However, although the provision of an accurate historical record is important to Luke, this proposal is unsatisfactory as a comprehensive solution to the purpose of writing for it fails, among other things, to account for many of subject areas of the book, including the complex relationship between Jews and Gentiles and the speeches in Acts. Moreover, it raises questions as to why Luke focuses mainly on Peter and Paul but does not give more details about other church leaders.

(ii). Irenic - In 1831, F.C. Baur advanced a theory that became one of the hallmarks of the famous "Tübingen school" of theology. He believed that Acts was written to repair a major breach in early Christianity which had arisen because of the different expressions that had been given to the

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30  See David Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 86-90, 116-57.

31  See the helpful survey in W. Ward Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles,* BGBE 17 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1975).

32  Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History.*

33  Adrian N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

34  Harry W. Tajra, *The Trial of St. Paul: A Judicial Exegesis of the Second Half of the Acts of the Apostles,* WUNT 35 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1989).

35  Those who express confidence in Luke's historical reliability often focus on the following: (i) the expectations of historians in antiquity; (ii) traditional authorship of Luke-Acts and Luke's access to eyewitnesses and his participation in Paul's journey (i.e. "we-sections" in Acts); (iii) confirmation of material from sources outside the New Testament; (iv) agreement of details with the Pauline letters and (v) Luke's use of Mark's Gospel.

faith by the apostles Peter and Paul. Baur argued that by the beginning of the second century the Petrine and Pauline parties in the church had become warring factions that threatened to split the new religion into two separate faiths. Acts was therefore written with a view to reconciling these factions and restoring unity to the church. Although somewhat dated, the theory has recently been revived by Goulder[36] who challenges the view that early Christianity was a strongly unified movement, with occasional off-shoots into heresy. He asserts instead that first and early second-century Christianity was set within a struggle between two competing, and at times antagonistic factions, Pauline and Petrine. This competition is seen as the context behind most, if not all, of the New Testament texts, including Acts.[37]

The "irenic" view is however, not without its weaknesses. First, it rests on the idea that Acts is a second-century work, which many scholars now question. Secondly, the relationship between Peter and Paul only forms a small part of Acts, which leaves other sections of the book unaccounted for. Finally, the view appears to be contradicted by Paul's own words in 1 Corinthians 9:5-6, in which he portrays Peter as a colleague. In addition to these criticisms is the fact that it ignores the first volume of Luke's writing.

(iii). Apologetic - At one time it was popular to view Acts as a political apologetic, written on behalf of the church or the apostle Paul. Because the church was being attacked by the Roman authorities, and Paul in particular was viewed as something of a threat to civil peace and unity, it is argued that it was necessary to show that Christians were law-abiding people and not dangerous revolutionaries. This would explain the em-

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36   Michael Goulder, *St. Paul versus St. Peter, A Tale Of Two Missions* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994).

37   Goulder's theory is not without its problems. The suggestion that it explains all the NT texts is, at the least, optimistic. While many texts have an underlying context of conflict, it is arguable whether the same group or groups are being engaged in each case. Thus, to funnel this diversity into two camps is an over-simplification of the true situation.

phasis on Paul not being guilty of any crimes against the Roman state (e.g. Acts 16:37; 18:14-15; cf. 19:37), a point that is repeated in successive trial scenes (Acts 24-26). However, the proposal fails to explain much of the other material in Acts. Moreover, it too fails to take into account Luke's first volume. At best therefore, the proposal provides something of a sub-purpose for Luke's writing; as a principal explanation it proves to be inadequate.

A related theory, by Walaskay,[38] takes a contrasting position by proposing that Luke's purpose is to present the Roman state in a favourable light to Christians so as to encourage them to work alongside it. Thus, the Roman recognition that there was no real case against Paul is used to commend the Romans and their system of justice to the Christians. However, this view is equally unconvincing for while it is correct that Luke believed that Christians should generally be submissive to the government, there is much in Acts that puts the Romans in a bad light (e.g. Acts 18:17; 24:26). Furthermore, the Roman material forms only a small of part of Luke –Acts.

(iv). Evangelistic - Both Bruce and O'Neill[39] argue that the author's purpose goes beyond apologetics. Luke's desire is not simply to dissuade pagans from persecuting Christians; he wants to convert them. This explains the inclusion of such stories as the Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus (13:7-12) and the jailer at Philippi (16:25-34), both of whom become Christians. Seccombe[40] likewise favours this view but is more specific and sees as significant Luke's emphasis on the proper use of possessions. He maintains that Luke is writing evangelistically for people whose devotion

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38   Paul W. Walaskay, *"And so we came to Rome": The Political Perspective of St. Luke,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

39   Frederick F. Bruce, *Book of Acts* NICNT. (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1988); John C. O'Neill, *The Theology of Acts in Its Historical Setting* (London: SPCK, 1961).

40   David Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts, SNTSU* (Linz: A Fuchs,1982).

to wealth might prevent them from accepting Christianity. However, all this presupposes that Luke's audience is outside the church and ignores much of the material which is only meaningful to believers. It therefore fails as a comprehensive explanation.

(v). Theological Polemics - This view argues that Luke has a definite theological axe to grind and that this explains his central purpose. Talbert [41] proposes that Luke wrote to counter early Gnosticism which threatened to infiltrate and undermine the orthodoxy of Christianity in its early years. To combat this, Luke appeals to apostolic authority in three ways. First, he emphasizes the motif of authentic witness particularly to Jesus' death, burial, resurrection and ascension as a protection against a docetic tendency. Secondly, in the face of Gnostic misinterpretation of Scripture, Luke appeals to the apostles' legitimate exegesis of the Old Testament. Thirdly, the motif of the succession of a tradition of eyewitnesses assured "the guarantee of the truth of the church's proclamation in the midst of Gnostic distortions of the gospel."[42] However, it seems unlikely that the purpose of Luke-Acts can be subsumed under the one category of defending against Gnosticism. Indeed, much of what is assumed as being directed against Gnosticism could just as easily have been directed against the orthodox Jews, who would have denied that Jesus was the Christ and that the Christ had to suffer. Moreover, how significant a threat Gnosticism was at the time when Acts was written remains uncertain.[43]

Conzelmann,[44] in a seminal study, maintained that "Luke"[45] wrote to the church of his day chiefly to explain the delay of the Parousia. He argued that for some time after Jesus' death, the early Christians believed

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41   Charles H. Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostics: An Examination of the Lukan Purpose*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966).

42   Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostics,* 56.

43   Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 23.

44   H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (trans. G. Buswell; London: Faber & Faber Ltd, 1960).

45   Conzelmann did not accept the traditional view of authorship.

that he would return in glory, in their own lifetime, to bring an end to this earth. At some point, however, as time went by and Jesus did not return, the church came to realize that he would not be coming back in the immediate future. Such a basic shift in eschatological expectation demanded a massive reinterpretation of Christian theology. It is this re-interpretation which the author provides. At the heart of his scheme is the replacement of the early Christian eschatological expectation with salvation history. In place of a church waiting for the Lord from heaven, the author offers a historical outline of the course of saving events, divided into three periods: the period of Israel, the period of Jesus' ministry, and the period of the church. It is this segmentation of salvation history into its separate stages that forms the structure of the two-volume work. The author, therefore, writes to encourage Christians in his day to endure the pressures of living as believers in an indefinitely continuing world order. He seeks to establish a role for the church and stresses its authority by locating its establishment in apostles accredited by Jesus himself. He provides for its effective working by organizing it with elders and bishops. This attention to the church, its authority and organization has come to be called "early Catholicism" because it is seen as leading on to the organized "universal" (catholic) church of the second century.

Reaction to Conzelmann's proposal has been vigorous and varied. Three points may be singled out. First, as Cullmann[46] shows, "salvation history" in the sense of a series of stages through which God has brought his salvation to the world, is integral to the New Testament and to the message of Jesus himself. It is not something invented by Luke. Secondly, it is questionable whether there was at any time in the early church a broadly held conviction that Jesus was certain to come back within a few short years. Those sayings of Jesus in which he is thought to have said that he would return in glory within the lifetime of the first apostles (e.g., Mt. 10:23; Mk. 9:1 par.; Mk. 13:30 par.) may be understood in other

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46  Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1950).

ways.[47] Moreover, several texts presuppose that the time of the Parousia may be delayed (e.g. Lk. 19:11-27; Jn. 21:20-23). Finally, many question Conzelmann's scenario of "early Catholicism" in Luke. Rather than having abandoned a doctrine of imminence, the church continues in "the last days" eagerly awaiting the return of Jesus from heaven. Moreover, Luke displays little interest in the church as an institution or in its sacraments.[48]

Each of the above proposals make valid observations, and together highlight something of the character of Luke's literary endeavour which is "as complex and rich… varied and mysterious…as life itself."[49] Moreover they alert us to the danger of oversimplification when it comes to identifying Luke purpose. However, no one proposal provides a satisfactory explanation to Luke's general purpose.

(vi). Pastoral - A different approach and one that commends itself to numerous scholars begins by asking the question - What claim does the author himself make (if any) for his work? In this regard, we are not left to speculate, for Luke provides an important piece of information in the preface of his first volume (Lk.1:1-4). Within this section, we discover that the entire composition is addressed to one called "Theophilus" (v3), an otherwise unknown individual, who was probably a Gentile[50] and possibly Luke's patron who could thus have been responsible for funding

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47  See for example Arthur L. Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1966).

48  A.J. Mattill Jr., *Luke and the Last Things,* (Dillsboro: Western North Carolina Press, 1979).

49  William H. Willimon, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 11.

50  Ramsay notes that Luke's care to inform his readers about points on the geography of Palestine, even the simplest, is in sharp contrast to his assumption of geographical knowledge on their part for the Greco-Roman world. He also deliberately avoids items that would be puzzling to Gentile readers such as the word "rabbi" that occurs four time in Mark and the same in Matthew. See William Ramsay, *Was Christ born in Bethlehem?* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898), 55-57.

the entire literary project.[51] Few scholars, however, doubt that Luke has a wider readership in view, given the extent of the material and the expense that such a venture would incur.[52] Theophilus may, therefore, be seen as representative of this group. It appears from verse 4 that, like Theophilus, this wider audience had been "instructed" in the Christian faith. While the verb kathce,w (to instruct/teach) may refer to the knowledge an outsider may have of Christianity, in the present case, it seems more likely that it denotes the kind of instruction given to somebody who had joined the church, since so much of the material in Luke-Acts deals with issues beyond simple evangelism. Again in verse 4 Luke states that his reason for writing is i[na evpignw/|j peri. w-n kathch,qhj lo,gwn th.n avsfa,leian. Van Unnik[53] points out that the noun avsfa,leia conveys the idea of "giving assurance", or reassurance. Moreover, Minear[54] maintains that by positioning the term at the end of the sentence, Luke deliberately gives it emphasis, thus making it a key term. This then raises the question- Why would such reassurance be necessary? Maddox[55] believes the answer lies in the circumstances of Luke's readers, adding that their faith was most likely being undermined by severe criticisms. Marshall,[56] who concurs with this view, suggests that the source of the problem was most likely Jews who did not accept Jesus as the Messiah, refused to believe in his resurrection and disputed that the Christians were truly part of the people of

51  By calling him, kra,tiste (most excellent) Luke may be implying that Theophilus was a person of rank perhaps a Roman aristocrat (cf. Acts 24:3 and 26:25).

52  See Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament,* 3-35.

53  Willem Cornelis van Unnik, "The 'Book of Acts' the Confirmation of the Gospel,'" *Novum Testamentum* (1960) 26-59. In Acts 2:36; 21:34; 22:30; 25:26 Luke consistently uses the term in reference to assurance or determining the facts with certainty.

54  Paul S. Minear. "Dear Theo. The Kerygmatic Intention and Claim of the Book of Acts," *Interpretation* 27/1973, 148f.

55  Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts,* 184f.

56  I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles,* NT Guides. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 39f.

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God. In the face of such strong opposition and overwhelming numbers, it therefore seems that many of Luke's readers were beginning to doubt their spiritual position before God. Were they right to believe in Jesus as the Messiah when official Judaism rejected him? Could Gentiles become part of the church without being circumcised? Were Jewish Christians in fact apostates? Judging from the subject material that Luke records in his two volumes[57] it appears that these were key questions that Luke was seeking to address for his readers. If correct, we may conclude that Luke's general purpose was pastoral in nature, to provide reassurance to Christians. This proposal doesn't exclude other subsidiary purposes such as those previously mentioned, but it does help to explain much of the material found in both volumes, and ties in with what many scholars see as the central theological concern of Luke: to show that God's end-time salvation, predicted by the prophets, has now arrived through the coming of Jesus the Messiah, the Saviour of the world, and that this salvation is now going forth to the whole world.[58]

Scholars may view Luke from one of three different perspectives: historian,[59] theologian,[60] and literary artist.[61] Yet when it comes to Luke fulfilling his purpose it is unhelpful to highlight one at the expense of another. Rather, it seems Luke employs all three skills to fulfil his objective. His work is profoundly theological from start to finish, though not a systematic treatise. It is skilfully crafted; it grips the reader, captivates the mind and inspires the will with every twist and turn of the narrative. And it historically based. Luke carefully grounds the entire literary en-

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57  See especially, Luke 1, 2, 7:18-35 and Acts 7, 10-11 and 15.

58  Mark Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus,* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 260.

59  Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian,* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 53-76.

60  Conzelmann was one of the first scholars to view Luke's writings from this perspective. See Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke.*

61  Robert Karris, *Luke: Artist and Theologian. Luke's Passion Account as Literature.* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985).

terprise in the bedrock of human history. To have done otherwise, observes Marshall[62] would not only have been grossly reprehensible (given the gravity of issues involved), but it would reduce the work to a piece of "irrational fantasy".

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62  Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian,* 46.

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# THE LOVE CHAPTER, 1 CORINTHIAN 13, AND ITS SETTING WITHIN THE EPISTLE

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ABSTRACT : I Corinthians 13 has often been used in isolation from the context in which it finds itself. This popular use of it as a separate entity has also been how it is studied in many academic studies where both the unity of the chapter and its setting in the epistle as a whole has been questioned. The two transitional clauses in 12:31b "And I will show you a still more excellent way" and 14:1a "Pursue love…" have been interpreted as editorial linkages. Yet, this article will maintain that, for example, verses 4-7 are far from detached from the situation at Corinth, where virtually every behavioural problem at Corinth is mentioned. It is clear that in many writings, speakers can break off from the use of prose and actually draw upon the help of poetry to express themselves. There is a strong connection between Paul's exaltation of love and the problems relating to the exercising of spiritual gifts as discussed in chapters 12 and 14. The place of chapter 13 should not be assessed as much from a literary perspective as to seek to note the theological connections between it and the gift chapters.

KEY WORDS: Love, Greek and Hebrew poetry, edification of the church, exercising spiritual gifts, spiritual gratification.

1 Corinthians 13 is commonly known as the love "chapter." The content of this section of the epistle is familiar to many people throughout the world. As well as appearing on wedding invitations, greeting cards and other such sentimental memorabilia it is commonly read during wedding services. While this is to be expected the chapter is often used

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in isolation from the context in which it finds itself and is treated as a separate and individual entity. What is true in the popular treatment of the chapter is also true of many academic studies. Various works have been produced questioning both the unity 1 Corinthians 13 and its setting in the epistle as a whole.[2] In many ways this is understandable since the chapter is a literary masterpiece and is well able to stand alone as a self-contained unit. Spicq's comments regarding the apostle's ability to express himself in a variety of forms shows how significant the style of the chapter is in the debate about whether or not this was written by Paul and intended for use here or whether it was inserted at this point by a later editor. 1 Corinthians 13 clearly adopts a more literary style than the epistolary style which is characteristic of the rest of the letter. Héring[3] points out that although the passage does not have the rhythm, style and structure of Greek poetry the stanzas are nevertheless reminiscent of Hebrew poetry as found in the LXX. Scholars such as Héring[4] and Schmithals[5] who question the position of the chapter within the book believe that the two transitional clauses in 12:31b "And I will show you a still more excellent way" and 14:1a "Pursue love…" have been added as editorial linkages. For this reason, they argue that 1 Corinthians 13 existed as a separate entity, maybe even as part of another epistle. The opinion is that an editor whom Héring[6] suggests may have been Sosthenes has wrongly inserted it in its current location. Titus[7] goes as far as to deny that Paul had any part in the composition of this chapter although he appears to be somewhat alone in that assertion. Conzelmann believes that the importance of treating this chapter as a separate and individual entity is such that to

2    See E L. Titus, "Did Paul Write 1 Corinthians 13?" *JBR 27* (1959), 299-302

3    J. Héring, *The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* ET (London: Epworth Press, 1962), 135.

4    Héring, *The First Epistle,* 134.

5     W. Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians,* 2nd edition (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971).

6     Héring, *The First Epistle,* 134.

7    Titus, "Did Paul Write 1 Corinthians 13? *JBR*, 299-302.

properly understand 1 Corinthians 13 "the passage must be expounded in the first instance on its own."[8] Héring[9] argues that chapter 13 quite obviously interrupts the discussion on spiritual gifts. Weiss[10] argued that the chapter has been inserted in the wrong place within the epistle viewing it as a polemic against Gnosticism. In this understanding it is believed that 1 Corinthians 13 would be better placed alongside chapter 8:1-13 where there is an appeal to those with knowledge to be sensitive to the reservations of those who are not as knowledgeable. Weiss argues for the link between chapters 13 and 8 on the grounds that; a) there is a similarity of views expressed in chapter 13:13 i.e. that love is not "puffed up" and chapter 8:1 where Paul writes "knowledge puffs up but love builds up"; b) the absence of *avga,ph* in the Greek is ἀγάπη in 12:1-30 and 14:1-40 and is an indication that the chapter has been displaced.

Titus[11] also suggests that the transition from chapter 12 to chapter 13 and from chapter 13 to chapter 14 has all the hallmarks of interpolation. It is to be noted that 12:31 reads: "Earnestly desire the higher gifts." But when one looks at 14:1 it becomes clear that the phrase translated "Earnestly desire" is again employed as if to continue the discussion on gifts at the precise point where it had been broken off, in chapter 12:31. This organising of the material is understood to be the work of a later editor who wanted to accommodate the insertion of the love passage. Titus suggests that this editor may have disagreed with the exaltation of prophecy and corrected it with his own view that love is the more superior way.

In response, it can be maintained that rather than being displaced the chapter is an integral part of Paul's argument in these chapters dealing with a proper understanding of spiritual gifts and is climactic in Paul's treatment of the difficulties being experienced by the Corinthians in their

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8   H. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians, Hermeneia,* E.T. (Lincoln: Fortress Press, 1975), 218.

9   Héring, *The First Epistle,* 134-135.

10   J. Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief,* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910), 309-16

11   Titus, "Did Paul Write 1 Corinthians 13?" *JBR*, 299-302.

relationships with each other. Contra to the view that the love chapter is displaced because the word ἀγάπη is not mentioned in chapters 12 and 14 Mitchell[12] makes that important point that since these two chapters (12 and 14) are concerned with the edification of the church through spiritual gifts then it is not unexpected that he should mention love within this context. Paul has already pointed to the importance of love in relation to this issue in chapter 8:1.[13] A further insight significant for the article is Mitchell's argument that although the word αγάπη is not used in chapter 12 or 14, Paul's description of love in chapter 13, such as it not seeking its own advantage, and not rejoicing in wickedness but co-rejoicing in the truth, echo parts of Paul's advice in these surrounding chapters.[14] Hurd[15] also has noted the similarity in interest between chapter 13 and those chapters at either side of it. So, one can see that chapter 13 takes up the themes of γνωσις, knowledge[16] γλωσσάι, tongues[17] and προφητέιαι, prophecies[18] which are central to the discussion in chapters 12 and 14. Although verses 4-7 do not mention the spiritual gifts discussed throughout chapters 12 and 14 they are far from detached from the situation at Corinth. Further, Garland's point should be noted that "virtually every behavioural problem at Corinth is mentioned in vv. 4-7."[19]

As for the change in style Spicq[20] reminds us of the tendency of many speakers to break off from the use of prose and to draw on the help of po-

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12  M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation, An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians*, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1991), 168-171, 270-279.

13  h` gnw/sij fusioi/( h` de. avga,ph oivkodomei/.

14  For example, see the concern the body should have for its members as mentioned in 12:26.

15  J. C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians*, (London, 1965), 189.

16  13:2, 8, 9, 12.

17  13:1, 8.

18  13:2, 8, 9.

19  D. E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003) p.607.

20  C. Spicq, *Agape in the New Testament*, (Origen: Wipf & Stock, 1965), Vol. *2,* 140.

etry or lyric to express themselves more adequately if they have the ability to compose this kind of material or if it is readily available. Those who are accustomed to public speaking know only too well how often this shift in style takes place. Therefore, it can be pointed out with Fee that although chapter 13 is undoubtedly a digression in the argument of 12 and 14, it is a digression that is fully relevant to the context.[21] Paul "employs a *digressio* which does not wander away from the main theme but amplifies or illustrates it."[22] This technique is used elsewhere in the letter. For example, in chapter 7 the apostle is dealing with questions surrounding marriage and celibacy when in verse 17-24 he abruptly turns to address the topics of circumcision and uncircumcision and slavery and freedom. However rather than being a filler or a discussion completely independent of the passages that precede and follow it these verses serve as the very hub of his discussion. It illustrates the point that no earthly status, such as one's racial background or social standing is incompatible with the Christian life. Slaves are no less accepted by God than those who are free. Both belong to Christ and their social status is largely insignificant. Whether a Christian is circumcised or uncircumcised, slave or free, married or single is inconsequential to God.[23] There is no perfect set of circumstances in which the will of God can be more ably fulfilled. Ferguson[24] has made the significant point that there is an emphasis on the role of love in the exercising of spiritual gifts not only here in Corinthians but in a number of other places throughout the New Testament. In 1 Peter 4:10-11 the readers are exhorted to use their gifts for the benefit of others which ob-

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21  G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 626.

22  Garland, *1 Corinthians* p.605.

23  For the purpose of the *digressio* see A. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* NIGTC (Grand Rapids: MI/Cambridge, UK/Carlisle: Eerdmans/ Paternoster, 2000), 545.

24   S. B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit: Contours of Christian Theology,* (Leicester, IVP, 1996), 209.

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viously puts the gifts firmly within a framework of love.[25] Although it is possible that chapter 13 and verses 4-7 in particular existed in some form prior to Paul's use of it, it does present itself as having been written with the immediate context in mind. Verses 1-3 and 8-13 only make sense within the context of the wider discussion on spiritual gifts and would be somewhat out of place within a self-contained unit. The first three statements of the chapter contain allusions to one or more of the spiritual gifts mentioned in the previous chapter. In the final section Paul returns to the gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge in order to show their subservience to love. The common interest of the first and last section of chapter 13 and the chapters at either side of it regarding those issues surrounding the exercising of spiritual gifts makes a very strong case for them being composed at the same time and raises reasonable doubt over them ever having existed apart from each other. Verses 4-7 is less obviously related to chapter 12 and 14 and so it is thought to be the section that most likely existed apart from the Corinthian epistle. However, even these verses reflect a choice of words that have the problems of Corinth in mind. So, it should be noted as Craig has commented, that "On a closer examination it is seen that almost every word in the chapter has been chosen with this particular situation at Corinth in mind."[26] We have noted already Garland's[27] claim that the behavioral problems at Corinth are summed up in vv. 4-7. Paul seems to say that the real problem is their lack of love, for love does behave the way they do."

Hitchcock's point that this chapter could only have been the product of careful and time-consuming composition and not something that would instantly come to mind during the actual dictation of a letter is a significant one. Again, Bruce[28] provides a very plausible answer to the apparent problem when he reminds us that the material may have been

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25  See Romans 12:3-8, 1 Peter 4:10-11 and Ephesians 4:16.

26  C. T. Craig, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians IB* 10 (New York, 1953), 165.

27  Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 607-608.

28  F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, NCBC (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott; Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1980), 124.

composed prior to writing and included because of its relevance to the situation with which he was dealing. So, it is possible that the material was formulated over a period of time as the apostle considered the problems of Corinth and how he might address them. It may well have been that while Paul thought about the difficulties in Corinth and the fact that they were largely due to an absence of love within the community that he began to formulate his thoughts and give expression to them in this poetic format meaning that when he actually came to write the letter, he had the material largely formulated and ready to dictate. It must also be remembered that the formulation of this was not beyond Paul nor uncommon to the Pauline epistles.[29]

So, 1 Corinthians 13 occupies an unmistakably important place between 12 and 14 and shows that love is the greatest means of mutual edification. Love is the one thing the Church in Corinth was neglecting and yet it was the one thing above all others they should have been pursuing and cultivating.  It is interesting that Fee[30] believes the chapter has been written to put the Corinthian "zeal for tongues in a broader ethical context that will ultimately disallow uninterrupted tongues in the assembly." That context is love for others and a concern for the building up of the church over against self-interest and self-promotion. Other scholars support this view. For example, Grosheide argues that the purpose of chapter 13 is to "assign *glossolalia* its rightful place."[31] Also, Thiselton believes Paul's purpose then in the use of this material is to counter "self-centred spirituality."[32]  "The reason for the gifts is the edification of the Church, which is precisely what love aims at, but uninterpreted tongues does not."[33]  Again, Dunn identifies with this point when he writes, "It is written in recognition that charismatic ministry and other important expres-

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29  See Ephesians 5:14, Philippians 2:5-11, Colossians 1:15-20, 1 Timothy 3:16.

30  Fee, *The First Epistle* , 627.

31   F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians,* NICNT, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1953), 303.

32  Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* p.1028.

33   Fee, *The First Epistle*, 572.

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sions of the Christian life and congregation could often be exercised in a selfish and uncaring manner."[34] Therefore, it can be maintained that the role of the chapter in this section of the letter seems very obvious and its position between chapters 12 and 13 is perfectly valid. "Love means concern for the community and is the check on the exercise of the gifts for personal gratification or the gratification of some rather than all."[35] So, for Spicq[36] it fits the context of the chapters around it precisely in that the concern of the apostle is one of edification. "Far from being a displaced hymn singing the praise of love as a virtue, chapter 13 is a call to a way of life that addresses real problems in the church."[37] This then is the intent of this article; to maintain the strength of the link between chapter 13 and the chapters before and after it. There is a strong connection between Paul's exaltation of love and the problems relating to the exercising of spiritual gifts as discussed in chapters 12 and 14. The place of chapter 13 should not be assessed as much from a literary perspective as to determine the theological connection between it and the gift chapters. Robertson and Plummer[38] argue that the list of things that love does and does not do is "aimed at the special faults of the Corinthians." Hurd suggests that omitting the negatives in each clause leaves us with a good description of the Corinthians' behavior. They are impatient and unkind, filled with jealousy, vainglory and puffed up. Such specific repetition of catchwords and phrases cannot be accidental: Paul intends to praise love by choosing acts that blame the Corinthians."[39] Further study of the con-

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34 J. D. G Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 596.

35 K. Stendahl, "Glossolalia and the Charismatic Movement" in *God's Christ and His people, Studies in Honour of Nils Alstrup Dahl,* edited by J. Jervell and W. A Meeks. (Oslo: Aarhus University Press, 1977) p.124.

36 Spicq, *Agapē*, Vol. 2, 140-141.

37 Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 608.

38 A. Robertson, A. Plummer, A *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians,* ICC, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1914), 292.

39 J. G. Sigountos, "The Genre of Corinthians 13" *NTS* 40, (1994), 257.

text of chapter 13 would involve looking at certain background details that shaped the outlook and behaviour of the Corinthians as well as Paul's understanding of love and its place in the life of a Christian. Also, the importance of looking at the connection between love chapter and the gift chapters at either side of it.[40]

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40 To add further argument concerning the position, note how Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians*, 112-113 can point out how much 1 Corinthians 13 has in common with the rest of the epistle. Again, M. Miguens, "1 Cor 13:8-13 Reconsidered *CBQ* 37 (1975), 80. points out it has ties to the letter as a whole as well as the immediate context of chapters 12-14. For a helpful treatment of 1 Corinthians proposing „Love" as the unifying theme see Corin Mihăilă, „The ABA" Structure of Paul's Argumentation in 1 Corinthians. Love as a Unifying Theme," Semănătorul (The Sower), Volume 4 Number 1, The Emanuel Journal of Ministry and Biblical Research, (Oradea: Tell Romania Publications), 77-113.

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# THE CONCEPT OF PROPITIATION IN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST

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ABSTRACT: The English word "propitiation" (Greek *hilastērion*) is not in common theological use today. Modern theology has generally become uneasy with it. The aversion to it is because the idea is associated with the sense of appeasing an angry deity brought in from pagan use and practice. This has resulted in the removal of the traditional translation "propitiation" with many modern English Bible translations preferring "expiation," or "atoning sacrifice," or some other general phrase. Thus, for example, while the New King James Version of Romans 3:25 is translated, "whom God set forth as a propitiation," and the English Standard Version, "whom God put forward as a propitiation," other modern translations are different. The New International Version is rather, "sacrifice of atonement;" Revised Standard Version has "an expiation by his blood;" Common English Bible, "place of sacrifice;" The Bible in Basic English, "the sign of his mercy." This article insists that we must not just reject the use of the word propitiation simply because it was wrongly understood in pagan quarters. It conveys something vital when we come to consider what God has done for us in Christ. Until recently, many understood by this word that the death of Christ has effected the removal of the wrath of God and made us the recipients of his mercy. The cross brought satisfaction to violated justice.

KEY WORDS: Propitiation, expiation, wrath of God, love of God, penal substitution.

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As far as the blessings that His death has brought to us, it is clear that the work of Christ for sinful man is so great that all the benefits of Christ's death cannot be conveyed in one single word or phrase. It takes many precious terms in order to fully present what the Lord has done for us. So, we have: Redemption, Propitiation, Remission, Reconciliation, Justification, Adoption and Sanctification. All these words convey something of the infinite value of Jesus' sacrifice. We need now to focus upon Propitiation. Consider:

**The Word.**

Note the use of the word "propitiation" in the ESV[2] in Romans 3:25, "Whom God put forward as a propitiation (*hilastērion*) by his blood" and in 1 John 2:2, "He is the propitiation for our sins," using *hilasmos*; 1 John 4:10, "He (God) sent his Son to be the propitiation (*hilasmon*) for our sins"; again in Hebrews 2:17 concerning our High Priest, He had to be "made like his brothers … to make propitiation (*hilaskesthai*) for the sins of the people."[3]

As we noted in the Abstract, the word propitiation is not in common theological use today, with other translations preferred. This unease is because its pagan use, i.e., the idea of appeasing an angry deity. But should we reject the whole idea of propitiation because of how it is understood outside of Christianity? It conveys something vital when we come to consider what God has done for us in Christ. Here we consider how the death of Christ has removed the wrath of God, bringing us rather, into peace with God, (Romans 5:1).

As far as modern theology's unhappiness with this traditional interpretation, part of this problem can be traced back to the classic statement

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2  All quotations in this article will be from the ESV, except where specified.

3  We also should note the related or cognate words in Luke 18:13, where the tax collector can cry to God for mercy with the words "be merciful" or "be propitiated, because of the sacrifice, to me a sinner," using *hilasthēti*; in Hebrews 8:12 God promises in the new covenant to be "merciful" *hileōs* toward their iniquities.

that is found in C.H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (1935). Here the Hebrew terminology for atonement and the Greek equivalent in the LXX are analysed. He argued that practically no trace of the idea propitiation or appeasement attaches to *hilastērion* and the related words as used in the LXX.

Dodd[4] pointed out that usually God is not the object of the verbs that describe the act of atonement. Linguistically it is not God who is appeased nor his wrath assuaged but sin is atoned for. Of Romans 3:25 he concluded, "the meaning conveyed (in accordance with the LXX usage which is constantly determinative for Paul) is that of expiation, not that of propitiation." Dodd's view was widely accepted at the time, reflected in the fact that the Revised Standard Version preferred to translate *hilastērion* as expiation rather than propitiation.

More recently Morris[5] has shown that in many, if not all, of the passages in which *hilastērion* or related words occur in the LXX the idea of God's wrath *is* present. Dodd in fact failed to pay sufficient attention to the context in which the words occurred. Morris acknowledged that it may well be that on occasions, the best word with which to render *hilastērion* is "forgive" or "purge" but that the particular forgiveness as a necessary feature involves the putting away of the divine wrath. Therefore, it is idle to maintain that the word should be excised of all idea of propitiation. We might also add Ladd's[6] comment, "If the verb in the Septuagint is infrequently used with God as its object, it is equally true that the verb is never followed by an accusative of sin in the canonical scriptures of the Old Testament."

Considering Paul's statement in Romans 3:25 about propitiation, we can maintain that the idea of God's wrath is clearly prominent in the

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4   C.H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935), 94.

5   L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), Ch. v and vi; see particularly p.155ff.

6   G.E. Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 430.

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preceding section, Romans 1:18; 2:5-8; 3:5. The main thrust of Paul's argument in 1:18-3:20 is to demonstrate the universality of sinfulness and guilt before God and therefore men and women are presented as deserving objects of God's holy wrath. As Morris[7] has claimed regarding the word propitiation, "Unless the present term means removal of wrath, he (Paul) has left them there, still under God's wrath." As Morris[8] also earlier stated, "There is a divine wrath against every form of sin (cf. Romans1:18), and forgiveness does not mean ignoring this wrath." So, however we look at Christ's saving work, we must not leave out seeing it as involving propitiation. It is true that the term is not a well-known or often used word today and therefore translators like to employ something better known. But we must not lose sight of what Paul wanted to convey by the term. However we translate, it is most important that we bring out the thought that what God did in Christ averted the divine wrath from sinners.[9]

The Greek word used in Romans 3:25, *hilastērion*, is used of the mercy seat in twenty-one instances of its twenty-seven occurrences in the LXX and in its only other occurrence in the New Testament, Hebrews 9:5. Some want it to be interpreted here in Romans in a similar way. But the definite article is not here and so Cranfield[10] prefers to translate the word as "propitiatory sacrifice." The idea of propitiation must be expressed. The word is important.

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7   L. Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1988), 180.

8   L. Morris, "1 John" in *The New Bible Commentary; Revised*, Eds. D Guthrie, J. A. Motyer, (Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), 1263.

9   In the Old Testament God's wrath against sin is referred to 585 times. God's wrath is also a very important reality in the New Testament e.g., John 3:36; Romans 1:18; 9:22; Ephesians 2:3; 5:6; Colossians 3:6-7.

10  C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* Vol 1, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 215. Note his discussion of *hilastērion* in 214-18.

## The source

Unlike all human wrath, God's wrath is perfectly righteous and therefore free from every trace of irrationality or vindictiveness. A second fact to remember is that in the process of averting His righteous wrath from man, *God Himself* is the one who takes the initiative. As we will shortly see, when we as sinners could do nothing to commend ourselves to God, but remained under His wrath, Paul explains in Romans 3:25 that He Himself sent His Son; He was "put forward as a propitiation."

Many scholars have difficulty with the idea of God propitiating Himself. Morris[11] admits the difficulty and acknowledges that there is certainly a paradox here; but it does account for the facts. God's wrath is directed towards sinners and the removal of that wrath is due to God Himself. The idea of man placating an angry deity is not how the cross should be viewed, since in this case God Himself provided the propitiation. Again, propitiation did not persuade God to start loving us. Rather, we can say that God in love has provided the propitiation.

Consider 1 John 4:8-10. Here we read "God is love." John does not write here, "God loves…" but "God is love" i.e., in His essence, in His being. Nor does he say that love is God. Rather, God is revealed in Scripture as a living, personal and active being who expresses Himself in dynamic and practical ways. We see this here. "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him," (4:9). Stott[12] pointed out, "While the origin of love is in the being of God, the manifestation of love is in the coming of Christ." John writes, "not that we have loved God but that he loved us." He is affirming that from us there was only independence, rebellion, a hostile attitude, while with Him there was love. This love led to Him sending His Son to be "the propitiation for our sins." Stott[13] observed,

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11  Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 180, n.127.

12  J. R. W. Stott, *The Epistles of John: An Introduction and Commentary*, Vol. 19 (Downers Grove, IL.: Inter-Varsity Press; Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), 162.

13  Stott, *The Epistles of John: An Introduction and Commentary*, 163.

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"God loves sinners who are unworthy of his love, and indeed subject to his wrath." John presents Jesus as the one who took that wrath and paid the price to deliver us. We should note that the fact that God was all-loving, (4:8,10) meant He *provided* the propitiation, while the fact that, as John earlier stated, He was all-holy, (1 John:1:5), necessitated it. Morris[14] comments, "It is one of the NT's resounding paradoxes that it is God's love that averts God's wrath from us, and that indeed it is precisely in the averting of this wrath that we see what real love is."

It has been suggested that propitiation supposedly represents the Son winning over the incensed Father to clemency and love. Not so. The love of God is the very fount from which this propitiation comes. Propitiation changed a loving God's treatment of us and relationship to us. The propitiation of the divine wrath is the provision of eternal love.

We recollect in 2 Corinthians 5:19 there is such a unity of purpose that "in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself." Moo[15] makes the point concerning the persons of God the Father and God the Son with regard to the process of redemption:

> it is a serious error to sever the two with respect to the will for redemption, as if the loving Christ had to take the initiative in placating the angry Father. God's love and wrath meet in the atonement, and neither can be denied or compromised if the full meaning of that event is to be properly appreciated. Our own justification before God rests on the solid reality that the fulfilling of God's justice in Christ was at the same time the fulfilling of this love for us.

Fundamentally connected to this concept of propitiation is that of penal substitution, the teaching which reveals that Jesus was punished or penalized in the place of sinners, becoming our substitute, thus satisfying the demands of God's justice. Or to put it another way, the doctrine of penal substitution states that God gave Himself in the person of His

14 Morris, "1 John" in *The New Bible Commentary Revised,* 1267.

15 D. J. Moo, *The Epistles to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Cambridge, UK, 1996), 55.

Son to suffer instead of us the death, punishment and curse due to sinners. But some scholars have gone so far as to characterize penal substitution as some sort of cosmic child abuse, accusing Biblical commentators of producing a caricature of God![16]

Among the many who have questioned this Biblical truth, Joel Green and Mark Baker[17] argue that "any atonement theology that assumes, against Paul, that in the cross God did something 'to' Jesus is...an affront to the Christian doctrine of the triune God." Gary Williams[18] however, can make the point that penal substitution relies on a careful grounding in Augustine's principle found in *De Trinitate*, I. iv. 7 that since the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are inseparable, so they work inseparably. He reminds us that in the Reformed conception of the covenant of redemption between the Persons of the Trinity they covenanted with each other in eternity to act together in all of their purposes. Williams also explains the argument against penal substitution claiming that there must be a

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16  E.g., Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 192; Brian D. McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In: Further Adventures of a New Kind of Christian* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 102-4; Colin Greene, "Is the Message of the Cross Good News for the Twentieth Century?" in *Atonement Today*, ed. by John Goldingay, (London: SPCK, 1995), 232. From a Feminist perspective, e.g., Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, "For God So Loved the World?" in Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique, eds. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, (New York: Pilgrim, 1989), 26-27. Chalke answers the outcry he created by accusing the penal substitution scholars of holding to some form of cosmic child abuse by replying, "Though the sheer bluntness of my imagery shocked some, I contend that, in truth, it represents nothing more than a stark unmasking of what I understand to be the violent, pre-Christian thinking behind the popular theory of penal substitutionary atonement…I believe it to be biblically, culturally and pastorally deficient and even dangerous," Chalke, "The Redemption of the Cross," 34-35.

17  Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 57.

18  Gary J. Williams "Penal Substitution: A Response to Recent Criticisms, 71-86 in *JETS* 50/1 (March 2007): 77.

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fundamental continuity between the way God acts and the way He commands us to act. He mentions Steve Chalke[19] who claims that this kind of continuity is disrupted by the penal substitutionary atonement because it depicts a God who Himself exacts punishment, yet at the same time commands His people not to do so.  This becomes a divine case of "do as I say, not as I do." But Williams[20] makes the point:

> that individuals must not take revenge precisely because God *is* going to do so: "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord'" (Rom 12:19, quoting Deuteronomy 32:35). From here Paul moves to argue in Rom 13:1–7 that God has given a limited remit to the governing authorities to implement this final justice in the present time by the power of the sword. Thus, Paul denies vengeance in the sphere of relationships between individual people, and at the same time ascribes it to God, who shares it in limited part with the ruling authorities. Where Chalke infers that God would never do what he tells us not to do, Paul argues exactly the opposite. God tells us not to do what he does precisely because he does it.

The problem specifically with these scholars is with the activity of the Father causing the Son to suffer. Williams[21] affirms that the difficulty here is that there is plain biblical testimony to the Father acting on the Son at the cross, in the suffering of the cross, and specifically in the penal suffering of the cross.  Isaiah 53, the suffering of the "Servant of the Lord," is understood in the New Testament as a description of the suffering of Christ, e.g., 1 Peter 2:21–24. He also  quotes the following English texts. Isaiah 53:6 says that "the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all," and v10 that "it pleased the LORD to bruise Him ..." In Mark 14:27 and Matthew 26:31 Jesus quotes Zechariah 13:7: "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written, 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the

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19   Steve Chalke, "Cross Purposes," 44-48, in *Christianity* (September 2004) 47.

20   Williams, "Penal Substitution: A Response to Recent Criticisms," 73.

21   Williams, "Penal Substitution: A Response to Recent Criticisms," 78.

sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." Williams explains, "Interestingly, the Hebrew and the LXX have a second person imperative here, addressed to Yahweh's sword: 'Awake, O sword . . . Strike.' But in the Gospels this is changed to the first person future…(*pataxō*) thus actually emphasising the personal involvement of Yahweh rather than the more impersonal image of the sword: 'I will strike.'"

Williams[22] sees the whole context of the suffering in Isaiah 52–53 as specifically penal. This emerges at the end of chapter 53 with the use of two expressions: "For he shall bear their iniquities," v11, and "yet he bore the sin of many," v12. The verb-noun combinations in these phrases are used widely in the Old Testament to describe bearing sin, guilt, and punishment, e.g., Genesis 4:13; Leviticus 5:17; Numbers 5:31; 14:34; Lamentations 5:7. Here, in Isaiah 53, it is evident from the connection with sin and the suffering of the Servant that they have a penal connotation. Likewise, in the New Testament we read that the Father "condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3) of His Son. There is therefore biblical testimony to the action of the Father toward the Son, specifically in laying iniquity on Him and condemning it in Him… Ultimately, the logical implication of the denial that one Person of the Trinity can act on another is the denial of the distinction between them, namely modalism.

In this discussion we can also make reference to *Pierced for our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* written by Steve Jeffery, Mike Ovey and Andrew Sach, which is an explanation and defense of the doctrine of penal substitution. They refer to John Goldingay, the OT scholar, who denies that the sacrificial system outlined in Leviticus was concerned with averting God's anger with regard to sin; in fact, he surprisingly claims that the question of propitiating God's wrath finds little place in Leviticus itself and the word anger hardly appears. To accept this view is surely to weaken seriously the biblical basis for penal substitution which NT scholars say is fulfilment of these OT sacrifices.

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22  Williams, "Penal Substitution: A Response to Recent Criticisms," 79.

It is true that the language of "atonement," so prominent throughout Leviticus, *by itself* does not imply the removal of God's wrath: although the underlying Hebrew verb *kipper* can refer to propitiation, several other meanings such as "forgive" and "cleanse" are possible depending on the context. But as the Banner of Truth article on this theme[23] points out:

> Goldingay has missed the point that Leviticus reveals the propitiatory significance of the OT sacrifices not by explaining their significance when they are performed correctly, but by describing what happens when they are misused. In Leviticus 10, Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu approached the Lord in an inappropriate way "they offered unauthorised fire before the Lord, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord" (vv. 1-2). A few verses later, it becomes clear that these deaths were a manifestation of God's wrath, as Moses warns Aaron and his stunned family about their conduct, lest something similar should happen again, "and *the Lord will be angry* with the whole community" (v. 6). The fiery deaths of Nadab and Abihu contrast markedly with the fire that "consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar" (Leviticus 9:24) during the successful sacrifice recorded a few moments earlier. Significantly, these events are referred to again in Leviticus 16:1, at the beginning of the instructions concerning the Day of Atonement. This deliberate allusion serves to juxtapose the danger of God's wrath with the prescription for atonement that follows: God's anger at sin must be overcome in order to draw near to him, and only by performing the sacrifices in the correct manner is this possible. Within this context, the propitiatory overtones of *kipper* (a word found sixteen times in Leviticus 16) are unmistakeable.

Richard Mayhue[24] outlines also Isaiah 53, as the *textus classicus*, where on no less than nine occasions the declaration of penal substitution appears. He quotes these English translations.

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23  See banneroftruth.org "Pierced for our Transgressions" accessed March 2020.

24  Richard Mayhue, "The Scriptural Necessity of Christ's Penal Substitution," TMSJ 20/2 (Fall, 2009): 139-148, 144.

1. v4  – "our griefs He...bore"
2. v4 – "our sorrows He carried"
3. v5 – "He was pierced...for our transgressions"
4. v5 – "He was crushed for our iniquities"
5. v5 – "by His scourging we are healed"
6. v6 – "caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him"
7. v8 – "He was cut off...for the transgression of my people"
8. v11 – "He will bear their iniquities"
9. v12 – "He Himself bore the sin of many"

Finally, note how William Barrack[25] has pointed out the fact that several Old Testament texts and passages reveal penal substitutionary sacrifices:

> The first is the Passover of Exodus 12 in which God graciously spared guilty Israelites through the deaths of animals substituted for the firstborn in each household. Another OT text to illustrate penal substitution is Leviticus 16, the institution of the Day of Atonement. The scapegoat symbolized the removal of Israel's sin to allow people to enter the presence of a holy God. The Day of

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25  W. D. Barrack, "Penal Substitution in the Old Testament," TMSJ 20/2 (Fall 2009) 149-169, 149. This particular edition of the Master's Journal has been focused on the same theme of penal substitution. All of the essays were first prepared and delivered as part of the 2009 Faculty Lecture Series in January-February. This first article presents an overview of the subject from the perspective of biblical revelation, lexical evidence, and theological necessity. The second article, "Penal Substitution in the Old Testament," explores the OT concept of "sacrifice" and interprets Exodus 12 (Passover), Leviticus 16 (Atonement), and Isaiah 53 (Substitutionary Saviour). The third, "Penal Substitution in the New Testament," carefully examines 1 Pet 1:2, 1:18-19, 2:24, and 3:18. The fourth article, "Penal Substitution in Church History" recounts the overwhelming evidence of belief in penal substitution throughout church history. The final article discusses the implications of penal substitution as a necessary element of true worship. In addition, see D.A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emergent Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 185-87 for a rebuttal of Chalk's position.

Atonement expiated the nation's sins, cleansed the sanctuary from sin's pollution, and removed sins from the community. Isaiah 52:13–53:12 is a third text to illustrate penal substitution. The suffering servant of the LORD in this section clearly anticipates the Messiah's coming substitutionary death as penalty for His people's sins. The OT sacrificial system clearly laid the basis for penal substitution in awaiting Israel's coming Messiah.

**The means.**

As far as propitiation is concerned, we can maintain that Jesus and His cross is at its heart. Focusing upon Romans 3:25-31 we find this fact emphasised:

In v25 Paul writes of Jesus Christ "whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood through faith …" But what is the significance of the word meaning "put forward"? It is used in 4 Macc. 8:12 of the display of Syrian instruments of torture, intended to intimidate faithful Jews. Consequently, the idea of a public act should not be ruled out. Christ is presented openly on the cross as the answer to man's sin and to the wrath of God.

Jesus is presented as "a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith." There should be a substitutional sense understood by this reference to blood; He gives His life for others, (cf. Leviticus 17:11). He is the sacrifice in our place. The reference to faith involves believing that his death was for us and that a response of faith is definitely required. In fact, the whole section affirms it, v26, 27, 28, 30, 31.

The "propitiatory sacrifice" provided "was to show God's righteousness …" Some suggest that the meaning here will be the same as Romans 1:17, 3:21, i.e., "righteous status." Paul was speaking about offering the gift to us of God's righteousness. But others as Morris,[26] suggest that it is more likely the word suggests "to demonstrate his justice." This appears in the context to be a better understanding, considering what follows i.e., "because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins," 3:25b.

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26   Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 182.

Note that "forbearance" has the idea of God patiently holding back his just wrath, which had a familiar use in Judaism.

The reference by Paul to how God passed over the sins that were previously committed, might give the impression that God did not care about sin. But this is not the case. God purposed from eternity that Christ should be the propitiation in order that the reality of God's righteousness (His justice), which would be called into question by His passing over sins committed up to this time, might be established. The fact was that only the cross could provide the answer for man's sin, as Paul now affirms. The death of His Son provided by God as the propitiation not only revealed His love, as we noted in 1 John 4:8-10, but demonstrated His righteousness or holiness.

The fact that God could "show his righteousness at the present time …" repeats the thought of 25b regarding His righteousness and adds "at the present time," - not just a moment in time, or the passage of time, but a time pregnant with significance i.e. the appointed time, in the purpose of God. This was the time when He might not just show that He is righteous, but in order that He might actually be righteous. The cross was essential to His being righteous. The purpose of Christ being the propitiation was to achieve a divine forgiveness which is worthy of God, consonant with His righteousness, not by condoning evil or implying that it is of little consequence, but by the fact that God's Son had to bear it, showing at the same time the fullness of God's hatred of it and its complete forgiveness – "so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus," (3:26).

So, in v26 God's righteousness is seen in giving a new standing through the cross to the person[27] who has faith in Jesus. He is just, but also acts justly in justifying because the price was paid, the throne of God was satisfied and the sinner can be accepted. Therefore, God is not show-

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27  The word is *anthrōpos* literally the "man" which ESV translates the "one" who has faith in Jesus. Here we have Jew or Gentile, without distinction of gender or race as Paul will now explain, (v29-30).

ing mercy at the expense of his righteousness; because Jesus became the "propitiation" it is something God can righteously do!

Paul affirms that all glorying or boasting, i.e., considering that one can establish a claim on God on the ground of one's works, has been ruled out. This statement about boasting being excluded is a conclusion that must be drawn from what has gone before - through what God has done in Christ. All that needed to be done for a sinner's deliverance from wrath and acceptance with God, has been done; we must trust Him, not anything we might consider that we could bring to God.  Our redemption is by pure grace and mercy, when all we deserved was wrath. Or as Paul says, not through "a law of works" but "by the law of faith," (3:27). Note that this "law of faith" is focusing upon the principle by which God operates in saving sinners. If it is by faith alone, then we had nothing to do with earning or meriting somehow a position of acceptance with God. It is all on the basis of someone else's works, Jesus' work.

The phrase in 3:28 "works of the law" makes the point that no one can boast acceptance through anything they can do. The next verse, v28, is included as a conclusion, in support of v27 and even of v24- 27 as a whole. Three times in the passage Paul underlines that the way of salvation is through faith or trust in Jesus, v22, v25 and v26. As Stephen Lawson[28] has pointed out:

> There is nothing good in their lives except what God has supplied, and that began with the gift of saving faith. God was at work in their life, imparting to them the faith to believe in Jesus Christ. Even the faith to believe was bestowed by God. It was not that God contributed the grace, and they contributed the faith. Even their ability to believe in Jesus Christ was a gift from God, "not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:9).

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28   Stephen J. Lawson in http://www.onepassionministries.org/tran-scripts/2017/10/19/three-great-implications-romans-327-31  Accessed March 2024.

Now in v28 he reaches the conclusion - we are justified by faith "alone" and "apart from works of the law." We should note that the word "alone" was added by Luther in the German translation to bring out the true sense. "Alone" is not in the original text, but the truth of it is obviously clear. Paul continued by saying "apart from works of the law," making the point that if justification is apart from the works of the law, it must be by faith alone.

This blessing is something which both Jews and Gentiles share. Jews are reminded that their belief in monotheism means that God is not the property of only one people, (3:29-30). Paul affirms that God's way of delivering men and women from His wrath applies equally to Jew and Gentile. There is only one way of recovery for ruined man, faith in Christ who has redeemed us through the cross. God has a heart for the world; God is not only the God of the Jews, but also the God of Gentiles. Paul in v30 states, "Since there is one God,"[29] a God "who will justify the circumcised by faith," referring to Jews who have been circumcised, then, "the uncircumcised through faith, a reference to non-Jews, which are the Gentiles or the rest of the world, they also are justified by faith alone in Christ alone.

If salvation is through faith, this does not mean that the law has no place. In 3:31 Paul claims that the law is recognized, not overthrown i.e., we "uphold the law." In Romans 3, "the law" is actually used in four different ways which should be distinguished. In v19, the law refers to the entire Old Testament i.e., "whatever the law says …" In v21, the reference will be to the first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch, because it is distinguished from the Prophets. Again, we saw that the law in v 27-28 is an operating principle. Finally, law is used to refer to the moral or ethical law, which is summarized in the Ten Commandments. That is how it is used in verses 20, 27, 28, and 31.

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29  This is a restatement of Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, the LORD is one." The point Paul is making is that because there is only one God over Jew and Gentile, there is only one way by which this one God is justifying sinners.

To continue, the *ceremonial* law was fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ and has passed away, Hebrews 10:1-14 makes clear that we are no longer bringing animal sacrifices to a priest to offer on our behalf on the Day of Atonement. That sacrificial system is over. When Christ had offered "for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God." The *civil* law was uniquely to govern Israel in the Promised Land. But the *moral* or *ethical* law of God is still in effect. This is the law which shows up our sinfulness, as we cannot keep it, and so are under the wrath of God, (Romans 3:19-20). Although condemned by the law, God's Son took our accountability and paid our debt. Therefore here, when Paul says, "we uphold the law," he is referring to the moral law. Its claims against us were upheld and met by Christ's death for us as the propitiation. Therefore, for believing sinners there is "no condemnation," (Romans 8:1).

To conclude, one way of looking at Christ's saving work is to see it as propitiation. The wrath of God which was justly against us is removed; this is through His blood and as we saw, by faith in Jesus alone. It is true that the term propitiation is not a well-known or often used word today and therefore translators like to employ something better known. But we must not lose sight of what Paul wanted to convey by the term. However we translate it is most important that we bring out the thought that what God did in Christ averted the divine wrath from sinners.

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# WHO INVENTED WHAT?
# EXPLORING THE ROLE OF THE NORTH WESTERN SEMITIC ALPHABET UPON THE FORMATION OF MODERN EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT: It is an accepted fact that, with some exceptions, the ancient Greek and Latin languages served as the basis for the formation of most of the Western (modern) languages. However, what remains less known is that the Greeks borrowed the alphabet letters from the North-Western Semitic alphabet of the 2nd millenium BCE. This alphabet was used by Phoenicians, Arameans, Hebrews and the Moabites beginning with the early second millenium and was borrowed by the early Greeks from Phoenician merchants in the later part of the second millenium and the beginning of the first millenium BCE.

In this article we will explore the issue of the revolutionary contribution that the North-Western semitic alphabet had upon the cultures of the Ancient Near East (including Egypt, Canaan, Mesopotamia and Siria).[2] The transition from a system that used hundreds of pictograms and signs (the cuneiform and hierogliphic alphabets) to an alphabet of only 22 linear letters marked one of the most important, yet neglected, innovations in ancient history. The purpose of our article is to draw on both ancient and contemporary scholarship in order to show how this revolution-

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ary alphabet influenced the Greek and Latin alphabets (and implicitly the languages themselves) and the impact that this event had upon the formation of the modern European languages.

KEY WORDS: Greek, Latin, North Western Semitic, alphabet, languages.

## Introduction

In order to understand better the impact that the North Western Semitic alphabet had upon the development of the modern European alphabets, one must define carefully the terms involved in this discussion. The word "alphabet" derives from a word-play on the first two letters of the Greek alphabet: *alpha* and *betha*. The word itself appeared as early as the Hellenistic times, even though the Greeks employed it early in the classical times.[3] In the view of Powell, the alphabet is

> "...a writing whose graphic elements represent the atoms of spoken language, so that, ideally, the approximate sound of the spoken word can be reconstructed solely by means of the sequence of graphic signs...The alphabet attempts to translate the aural, invisible elements of human speech into graphic, visible signs... The alphabet is a system that uses uni-consonantal signs, as opposed to other systems of writing that use bi-consonantal or tri-consonantal signs, pictograms or logograms."[4]

Now, what this definition attempts to say is that the alphabet is not a unique system of representing the sounds of the human language. It is but one of the systems. In other words, before the classic 22 (or 23) linear letters were accepted as the standard Greek, then the Latin and later the

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3   See B. Powell, *Writing: Theory and History of the Technology and Civilization* (Chicago, IL: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 155-56; *Homer and the Origin of the Greek Alphabet* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2-3, and H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968, 1990).

4   A. Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului* (*The Story of Writing*), Gafița Mihnea trad. (Bucuresti: Editura Art, 2009), 100-101.

"Romance" language alphabet (with the variations characteristic to the European language families), other systems of representing the sounds of the language had been available. We will describe these systems in the following pages. It is important, however, to state that the linear, 22 letter alphabet was a later rather than an early creation of the human mind.

## The Formation and Development of the Semitic Alphabet

In order to understand how the Latin alphabet reached its final form, one must be aware of the historical developments that took place in Asia Minor with more than two millennia before the Latin language settled on the version that resembles the actual form.

### The Earliest Writing Systems

Scholars have shown that the earliest attempts to write using signs that depicted syllables and other sounds can be traced to the Sumerians in the fourth millennium; more precisely, around 3300-3100 BCE.[5] However, most scholars agree that if one defines "writing" in the large sense of recording words by means of signs or pictograms, then writing must have come into existence much earlier, in the form of "proto-writing."[6]

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5    E. Lipinsky, *Semitic Languages. Outline of a Comparative Grammar* (Leuven: Peeters Publishing, 1997), 87-88;  Ellias Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 1994), 25; J. Huehnergard, "Languages (Summerian)," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, D.N. Freedman ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:155-170.

6    A. Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului,* 53. In connection to the earliest forms of record keeping, one may note the discovery of "clay tokens," that is, small clay objects used to "store and manipulate economic data;" thus D. Schmandt-Besserat, "Record Keeping Before Writing," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, R. Sasson ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendricksen Publishers, 1995), 4:2097-2106. The clay tokens came in different forms, but the most prevalent were triangles, ovoids, rectangles, cones, spheres, triangles and disks. Although scholars have not been able to determine the precise significance of the tokens, it is generally believed that they were used to keep records of grain, animals, and food stuffs and to help measure and estimate the transactions among people. In essence, "the tokens translated concrete information, such

The Sumerians lived in the city-state of Sumer, the Southern area of ancient Mesopotamia (South of modern Bagdad). The Sumerian scribes used the cuneiform (lit. "form of feather") signs in order to record and express in writing a "mixed system of word signs and syllabograms."[7] Initially, the Sumerians developed a system based on "pictograms," in which "signs were used to picture specific objects and thus call them to mind."[8] In fact, the first clay tablets that contain any system of writing – in this case "pictograms" written in linear style – date to 3300 BCE. and come from Sumer.[9] As one can observe in Table 1, in time the cuneiform signs replaced the pictograms, as the language became able to express concepts and actions by exclusively combining the signs.[10]

In this sense, one may not properly define the Sumerian system of writing as an *alphabet*, since it included both sings and syllabogrames. Unlike the Semitic "22 letters" alphabet, the Sumerian system employed up to 600 signs, out of which ca. 100-150 were syllabic signs. In addition, scholars have shown that the Sumerian language used quite a large number of "homophones," that is, "words that appear to have been pro-

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as numbers of animals and units of goods, into abstract symbols."

7   D.O. Edzard, "The Sumerian Language," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, R. Sasson ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendricksen Publishers, 1995), 4:2107-2116; Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului*, 62-63.

8   Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism*, 26-27. One will note that the "pictographic writing" is limited "in what it can represent," because one sign may refer "to several different things." As Robinson shows,

9   Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului*, 71. P. Michalowski, "Sumerian," in *The Ancient Languages of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Aksum*, R.D. Woodard ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 6-46, dates the earliest Sumerian clay tablets to 3200 BCE.

10  Thus H. Crawford, *Sumer and the Sumerians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 194-96. Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului*, 71, dates the finality of the transition from the "pictogram" to the "sign" around 2600 BCE, when the Sumerian language had been practically replaced by Akkadian. In this sense see also B. Powell, *Writing: Theory and History of the Technology and Civilization*, 75-76.

nounced alike."[11] One may easily imagine the difference between a linear alphabet with 22 letters and a system of writing that employed – in its developed stage – over 600 signs.

In the later part of the second millennium BCE, the Akkadian language became more prominent and in the course of time gradually replaced the Sumerian language. This process was hastened by the geographical spread of the Akkadian-speaking population into Sumer. The Akkadians came from the North-Western part of Mesopotamia and during the 3rd millennium BCE. the cultures of Sumer and Akkad underwent a process of mutual influence. The Akkadian language used a form of the cuneiform script, but it was different from Sumerian and much closer related to the other Semitic families from the Asia Minor. As a written and spoken language, Sumerian was replaced by Akkadian "by the end of the nineteen century," even though certain regions still used the language in commerce and diplomacy.[12] Scholars have shown that Sumerian continued to be used in parallel with the Akkadian language, even though it was restricted mainly to the sacred, ceremonial and diplomatic aspects of the Akkadian culture.

Nevertheless, from a historical point of view, scholars have argued that the Sumerians were the first people to make the transition from a pictogram to a script, even though this process may also be observed in

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11   As D.O. Edzard shows in "The Sumerian Language," 4:2108.

12   Edzard, "The Sumerian Language," 2109. Note also the argument of Huehnergard, "Languages (Sumerian)," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 4:164, who divides the history of the Sumerian language into three parts: *Old Sumerian* (3400-2100 BCE), *Neo-Sumerian* (2100-1900 BCE), and *Late Sumerian* (from 1900 BCE on). He too shows that by the 1900 Sumerian had been relegated as a strictly literary language, being replaced by Akkadian as a day to day spoken language. However, P. Michalowski, "Sumerian," 8, shows that after the "collapse of the Ur III state, Sumerian retained its status as an official language in the south, while in the north, Akkadian dialects began to take over in writing." Michalowski agrees, however, that by the middle of the 18th century BCE, Sumerian "was no longer used for administrative and accounting purposes."

the case of the Egyptian system of writing.[13] That is why we can state that the pictograms were not unique to the Sumerians. As early as the late fourth millennium, the Egyptians employed pictograms in the "hieroglyphic" ("holy letters/signs") system. Egyptian writing used signs that expressed both phonetic and semantic notions. In other words, a sign could refer to an *object* or an *action*, but it may also convey a certain *syllable* or *vowel*.[14] Because of this combination, the Egyptian hieroglyphic system combined both phonological and ideographic elements.[15]

It is also worth noticing that Egyptian writing did use a set of twenty-four alphabetic, "that is, consonantal signs," which covered "almost

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13  F.R. Steele, "Sumer," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*," G. Bromiley ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:653-62, lists three facts that establish the theory that the Sumerians invented the script. In the first place, "writing arose in Sumer after the Sumerians arrived." Second, "when the individual signs can be read syllabically the pronunciation of the syllable is the Sumerian word for the original picture. And third, "the language of the earliest inscriptions is Sumerian."

14  Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului*, 33; Lipinsky, *Semitic Languages. Outline of a Comparative Grammar*, 26-27; J.P. Allen, *Middle Egyptian*: *An Introduction in the Language and Culture of the Hieroglyphs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 25-27; J.P. Allen, "Languages (Egyptian)," The *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, D.N. Freedman ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:188-193; J.E. Hoch, *Middle Egyptian Grammar* (Mississauga, Ontario: Benben Publications, 1997), 16-17.

15  Thus A. Loprieno, "Ancient Egyptian and Other Afroasiatic Languages," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, R. Sasson ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendricksen Publishers, 1995), 4:2135-2150. For example, "a sitting man expresses the lexical sphere of 'man, mankind,' a scribe's kit indicates the semantic realm of 'writing.' "In order to clarify the exact sense of the idea the writer wanted to convey, the Egyptian language had to use additional signs, or "determinants." For this reason, a scribe who became proficient in the classical Egyptian language had to master and use ca. 700 signs and ca. 100 syllabic signs. Thus Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism*, 32. Even worse was the case of a scribe living in the Ptolemaic era (4th century BCE), when the number of signs "increased dramatically to many thousands;" thus Loprieno, "Ancient Egyptian and Other Afroasiatic Languages," 2138.

completely the inventory of consonantal and semi-consonantal pho-nemes of the Egyptian language."[16] As we will show later, this alphabetic system was successfully employed by the Canaanites in the second mil-lennium BCE, even though they did made a number of changes in the signs themselves. In the case of the Egyptian language, however, "this set of signs never developed into a genuine alphabetic system." In oth-er words, from its earliest to the latest stages, the hieroglyphic writing system never gave up to the pictograms or the signs that expressed ob-jects, not only consonants or vowels. As we already mentioned, by the Ptolemaic era (4th century BCE) the number of signs that an Egyptian scribe had to master amounted to several thousand. Finally, one must also take into account the relation between the Canaanite alphabet and the Ugaritic language. This aspect must be considered because the Ugaritic language, along with the Canaanite dialects, was part of the family of Semitic languages. Even more important, it devised an alpha-bet made up by approximately 30 signs.

The Ugaritic language flourished in the city-state of Ugarit (North-Western Syria), possibly in the first part of the 2nd millennium BCE, as the first inscriptions attest an elaborate form of the language around the 14th century BCE.[17] An interesting aspect of the language is that it used several scripts in the context of "international trade and diploma-cy."[18] However, unlike the Sumerian and Akkadian cuneiform languag-es which used "syllabic signs" and "syllabograms," the Ugaritic language

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16  A. Loprieno, "Ancient Egyptian and Other Afroasiatic Languages," 2139.

17  J. Healey, Peter C. Craigie, "Languages (Ugarit)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, N.D. Freedman ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:226-29; "Ugarit: A Second-Millenium Kingdom on the Mediterranean Coast," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, R. Sasson ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendricksen Publishers, 1995), 2:1255-1266.

18  J. Healey, Peter Craigie, "Languages (Ugarit)," 227, list here "alphabetic cuneiform (used especially for Ugaritic itself), syllabic cuneiform, and hieroglyphic." For the different types of the cuneiform script that was used in the ancient world see Powell, *Writing: Theory and History of the Technology of Civilization*, 76.

employed "alphabetic cuneiform signs."[19] This was a unique feature in the family of the "cuneiform" languages such as Sumerian and Akkadian. By combining "the graphic principles of syllabic cuneiform...with the principle of the consonantal alphabet," the Ugaritic language represented a mediatory link between the two systems.[20] Scholars have explained this phenomenon – unique among the languages of Asia Minor and former Mesopotamia – as an influence upon Ugaritic scribes via the culture of Byblos, an ancient Phoenician city in the second millennium BCE.[21] It is possible that the scribes at Ugaritic may have felt that the Akkadian cuneiform writing was too complicated. As Healey and Craigie show, there still remained several differences between the 22 (or 23) syllables, linear alphabet and the Ugaritic cuneiform alphabet. Among other factors, the Ugaritic script "employed 30 symbols," unlike the shorter Canaanite alphabet, which employed 22 letters. Although the symbols may be classified as "cuneiform," they did not resemble the Akkadian signs. For example, a Babylonian scribe would not have been able to read the Ugaritic script, even though both systems may be classified as "cuneiform."[22] Even though the Ugaritic script tradition "died out when the city was destroyed," it remains an important link and proof of the impact of the Canaanite simplified alphabet upon the other systems of writing in the Ancient Near East (see Table 3).[23]

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19  Thus Lipinsky, *Semitic Languages*, 86-87, and Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului*, 162, who notes that in the history of Ugaritic no less than ten different languages and five systems of writing were used.

20  Healey and Craigie, "Languages (Ugaritic)," 227.

21  Thus also R.S. Hess, "Language of the Pentateuch," *Dictionary of the Pentateuch*, D. Alexander ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 493. Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului*, 162, states that the reason for this phenomenon may have been economical, as Ugarit was an important trade center in which caravans from Siria, Mesopotamia and Anatolia would trade their cargo.

22  Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului*, 163.

23  Healey and Craigie, "Languages (Ugaritic," 227, and Lipinsky, *Semitic Languages*, 88.

## The Canaanite Alphabet

The reason we have analyzed almost exclusively the Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian and the Ugaritic systems of writing is because most likely they formed the foundation upon which the Canaanite Alphabet was developed. As we argued above, even though the Sumerian language lost its influence in the first part of the second millennium BCE, it was able to set in motion a process which was partly responsible for the creation of the linear Semitic alphabet. The Proto-Sinaitic alphabetic script may have been used as early as the 17th century BCE in the "western Sinai at the turquoise mines at Serabit el-Khadem," where workers "left graffiti inscribed on" older monuments such as the sphinx.[24] The site is located in Egypt, in the Southern part of the Sinai peninsula.

In 1906 the English archaeologist Sir William Flinders Petrie, along with his wife Hilda, discovered several artifacts, most notably, the statue of a small sphinx – containing a number of "awkward signs that seemed not to be real hieroglyphs."[25] Petrie extended the search inside the turquoise mines from the area and found a number inscriptions on stones, statues and on the wall of the mines that contained the earliest linear alphabet known to human kind. The signs were both pictograms (e.g., the symbol of the head of a bull for letter "A") and symbols, but their constant

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24   R.S. Hess, "Language of the Pentateuch," *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 491-97; L. McFall, "Hebrew Language," The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, G. Bromiley ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 2:657-663; P. Schmitz, "Languages (Hebrew)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, D.N. Freedman ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:204-206; B.K. Waltke, M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 7. For "the influence of the Canaanite/Phoenician script on "linear consonantal alphabet used for Aramaic" see S. Kaufman, "Languages (Aramaic)," The *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, D.N. Freedman ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:173-78.

25   Thus Orly Goldwasser, "How the Alphabet Was Born From the Hieroglyphs," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Mar/Apr 2010 (http://www.bib-arch.org/article. asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=36&Issue=2&ArticleID=6&UserID=0(accessed 3/24/2010)

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recurrence in a rather short space indicated that the language was much simpler than the hieroglyphic or the cuneiform systems.

Petrie was unable to decipher the inscriptions and the research came to a halt until 1916, when Egyptologist Sir Alan Gardiner reviewed the Serabit el-Khadem inscriptions and "noticed a group of four signs that was frequently repeated in these unusual inscriptions." Gardiner was able to transliterate and translate the expression into the phrase "*b-ʿ-l-t*, vocalized as *Baalat*, 'the Mistress' " (representing Hathor, the Egyptian goddess of fertility). Using a second inscription found on the statue of a sphinx, the researchers were able to add more knowledge to the decipherment of the linear alphabet.[26] They realized that the inscriptions contained an early form of the Canaanite linear alphabet of 22 (or 23) letters.[27] Using comparative research from Hebrew and Phoenician inscriptions and written texts, the researchers concluded that the 22 letters linear alphabet may have appeared sometimes around 1700's BCE.[28]

Several other discoveries in the area of Israel certified the usage of the Canaanite script as early as the 17th century BCE. One is a recently discovered inscription written "in early Canaanite script from Lachis, incised on an ivory comb (see image nr. 7).[29] The letters in the inscription are pictographic in character, and the text reads:

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26  Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului*, 160-161; B.S.J. Isserlin, "The Earliest Alphabetic Writing," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. III/1, J. Boardman ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 794-818, esp. 799.

27  For the debate on the theory that the alphabet may have initially contained 27 signs see Isserlin, "The Earliest Alphabetic Writing," 801-802.

28  Thus Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism*, 30-31; B.S.J. Isserlin, "The Earliest Alphabetic Writing," 799-800; S.G. Khalaf, http://phoenicia.org/alphabet.html#Charts; Lipinsky, *Semitic Languages*, 56-57. One may also note the discovery by John Darnell of the inscription of Wadi el-Hol, an even earlier form of the linear alphabet, for the most part containing only pictograms; thus

29  Daniel Vainstub, Madeleine Mumcuoglu, Michael G. Hasel, Katherine M. Hesler, Miriam Lavi, Rivka Rabinovich, Yuval Goren and Yosef Garfinkel, 2022. "A Canaanite's Wish to Eradicate Lice on an Inscribed Ivory Comb from

ytš ḥṭ ḏ lqml śʿ[r w]zqt

"May this tusk root out the lice of the hai[r and the] beard."

In the view of the authors, "for the first time we have an entire verbal sentence written in the dialect spoken by the Canaanite inhabitants of Lachish."[30] According to Vainstub et all, the syntax (volitive verb-subject-object) is common to that of "Canaano-Akkadian in el-Amarna letters," as well as later North West Semitic texts, including classic Biblical Hebrew.[31] Again, this text attests to the very early development, not only of the alphabetic script, but also of the North-Western Semitic languages, including Biblical Hebrew.

Another recent inscription that was deemed critical by ephigraphists and archaeologists alike is the Tel Lachish, so called "Missing Link", inscription. The text was written on a ceramic sherd and it only has two lines of text: ʿbd (first line) which could be a reference to a "servant" or a "slave," slave) and npt (second line), a word that could refer to "honey" or describe the proper name of the servant mentioned in the first line.[32] The inscription is significant because it has been dated around the 15th century BCE., and it is "currently the oldest securely dated alphabetic inscription from the Southern Levant."

The deciphering of the Serabit El-Kadhim inscriptions, corroborated with graffiti-letters scribbled on the walls of the Serabit turquoise mines, led scholars to believe that the pro-Canaanite writing was to a large extent influenced by the Egyptian language.[33] Adding to this equation the

Lachish." *Jerusalem Journal of Archaeology*, 2: 76–119.

https://doi.org/10.52486/01.00002.4; https://jjar.huji.ac.il

30  Ibid., 109.

31  Ibid., 107-108.

32  Felix Hoflmayer, Haggai Misgav, Lyndelle Webster, Katarina Streit, "Early Alphabetic Writing in the Ancient Near East: the 'Missing Link' from Tel Lachish." *Antiquity*, vol. 95, nr. 381 (June 2021), 705-19.

33  Thus Nadav Naaman, "Egyptian Centers and the Distribution of the Alphabet

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Tel-Lachish inscriptions, we may state the phenomenon of the early alphabetic writing in Southern Levant "should be considered a product Levantine-Egyptian interaction during the mid second millenium BC."[34] Evidently, the Egyptian scribal activity in those areas must have spurred the development of the early Canaanite alphabetic system. As we stated earlier, even though the 24-consonant system had already been in use by Egyptian scribes before the 17th century BCE., it never progressed to a working alphabetic system.[35] To a large extent, that feat belongs to the Canaanites.

As with the Sumerian script, the Semitic alphabet had to go through a process of formation which included using some of the pictograms that one finds in the early Sumerian and Egyptian languages.[36] However, unlike these two systems of writing, the Canaanite language used the pictograms in order to represent 22 consonants, three of which could be also used to mark the vowels (Table 4). Scholars are unanimous in the conclusion that the proto-Canaanite linear alphabet formed the basis on which the Phoenician, Hebrew, Edomite, Amonite, Edomite and Aramaic dialects flourished.[37] Likewise, there does not exist clear and definitive data that can track the development from the proto-Canaanite alphabet to the alphabetic writing that the Phoenicians, Hebrews and the other inhabi-

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in the Levant," *Journal of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University*, vol. 47 (2020), 1:25-94.

34  Holfmayer, "Early Alphabetic Writing in the Ancient Near East: the 'Missing Link' from Tel Lachish," 1ff.

35  See footnote 13.

36  Isserlin, "The Earliest Alphabetic Writing," 799-801. Powell, *Writing*, 164-66, argues that the Egyptian system of writing may have supplied the pictograms that were later adapted to form the Semitic linear alphabet.

37  J. Huehnergard, "Semitic Languages," *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, 4:2122-24; Schmitz, "Languages (Hebrew)," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, N.D. Freedman ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:203-206; Z. Harris, *A Grammar of the Phoenician Language* (New Haven, CN: American Oriental Society, 1936, 1990), 1-6.

tants of Asia Minor used at the end of the 2nd millennium BCE.[38] The earliest proof that attest to the alphabetic writing in ancient Israel dates from 12th to the 10th century BCE. (in the form of inscription made on tools, weapons and ceramics).[39] However, even in spite of the fragmentary evidence, scholars have had sufficient data to conclude that in the later part of the second millennium BCE, the Phoenician, Hebrew and Aramaic languages already had a working system of writing.[40] Inscriptions such as the Gezer Calendar (Israel), the Azarba'al inscription, the Ahiram Sarcophagus and the Yehimilk inscriptions (Phoenicia) attest to a well established writing system beginning with the 11th century B.C. One may plausibly argue that a transition from a "pictographic-sign-letter" alphabet to a "letter-only" alphabet had to have been made at least by the 13th century B.C. In other words, by the 13th century B.C., in certain parts of Asia Minor (Israel, Phoenicia), the pictograms had been discarded in favor of a "letter-only" alphabet.

We are now in a better position to understand the transition from the early pictographic, to the cuneiform and hieroglyphic, and finally to the linear alphabet, "letter only," systems of writing. The following table illustrates the division of the Ancient Semitic Languages in Mesopotamia and the Asia Minor.

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38  Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului*, 164.

39  Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului*, 161; Goldwasser, "How the Alphabet Was Born From the Hieroglyphs," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Mar/Apr 2010 (http://www.bib-arch.org/article.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=36&Issue=2&ArticleID=6&UserID=0(accessed 3/24/2010); Schmitz, "Languages (Hebrew)," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 4:205; Hess, "Language of the Pentateuch," 493; Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism*, 30-31.

40  See Lipinsky, *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics*, vol. 2 (Leuven: Peeters Publishing, 1994), 83-84, and C.H. Rollston, *Writing and Legacy in the World of Ancient Israel: Epigraphic Evidence* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature), 12ff.; Powell, *Writing: Theory and History of the Technology of Civilization*, 159-166.

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| Ancient Semitic Languages | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| North-Western Semitic dialects (ca. 1700 BCE) | | | | | Eastern Semitic dialects (ca. 2600 BCE) | |
| *Canaan-ite dialects* | *Phoe-nician* | *Ug-aritic* | *Amor-itic* | *Aramaic* | *Akkadian* *(Cuneiform script developed from the Sumerian)* | |
| Ammo-nite Edomite Hebraic Moabite | | | | | *Assyrian* | |

## The Greek, the Etruscan and the Latin Alphabets

The formation of the Greek alphabet included several historical stages. Scholars have usually referred to two main periods in the development of the alphabet: Mycenean period and the classical period.

### The Early Stage of the Linear B system

The Mycenaean age covered the period between the 19th through the 11th centuries BCE. The writing system in this period was characterized by a combination of pictograms, symbols and letters. In this sense, one may not properly refer to a "letter alphabet," since the total number of elements that the Greeks were using to write was in the hundreds and the elements themselves combined both symbols and images. Scholars have identified this system of writing as the Linear B syllabic script. In the Odyssey, Homer referred to the city of Knossos, a place where peo-

ple used a series different languages.[41] In the 1900's, archaeologist Arthur Evans found several inscriptions that contained a system of writing that had not been identified up to that point. Evans recognized, among other things, the presence of hieroglyphs, but also of other symbols and pictograms, two of which he named Linear A and Linear B.[42] Evans focused on the Linear B system and, using inscriptions found on the island of Cyprus, was able to decipher several of the signs.

The full unlocking of the Linear B script, however, took place in 1952 and it belonged to Michael Ventris, with the (independent) help of the American archaeologist Carl Blegen.[43] By the time of Blegen's discovery, Ventris had been able to "decode" a number of the Linear B symbols, and thus create syllabary that included sizable number of syllables. With the help of the syllabary, scholars were able to translate several of the texts that had been found up to that point. Even though Ventris was not entirely confident, he hypothesized that the language was very close to classical Greek. Obviously, the script was radically different and cumbersome, and the style pointed to a series of administrative lists of the palace. The texts were limited in number and they focused mainly on non-literary subjects. For this reason, a number of scholars concluded that Greek civilization in the Mycenaean period lacked the achievements of the classical age. Some reasoned that the cause had to be the lack of a writing system capable of expressing philosophical and poetical themes.

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41  Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului*, 109-114; W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 21. See also J.F. Strange, "Greece," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, G.W. Bromiley ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 2:557-67, for the suggestion that the linear A and B scripts were Semitic in origins.

42  The Linear A type has not been fully deciphered, partly because of the destruction of Minoan civilization in the 14th century, which led to the disappearance of this system of writing. See also R. Stroud, "The Art of Writing in Ancient Greece," in *The Origins of Writing*, W.M. Senner ed. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 103-120.

43  Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului*, 114-119.

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*The Phoenician Basis and the Formation of the Greek alphabet*
Herodotus, a 5ᵗʰ century Greek historian, stated that Cadmus and his Phoenicians brought the alphabet with them when they settled in Thebes.[44] Several inscriptions that can be dated to the 7ᵗʰ century were found in former Greek city states, on both sides of the Aegean Sea, which suggests that the alphabet may have spread "alongside sea-trade routes." One of the earliest inscriptions of the linear, 24 letter, Greek alphabet dates from the 8ᵗʰ century and it comes from a fully preserve vessel that has the words "whoever of the dancers now dances most gracefully."[45] The expression "phoinikeia grammata" (*the Phoenician letters*), used by the early Greek traditions in order to describe the borrowing of the alphabet from the Phoenicians, "shows clearly the direction in which the origin of this system should be sought." Clearly, the Greeks borrowed the alphabet from Phoenicia, or Phoenician settlers brought it to Greece. Now, we argued that the alphabet had been in use in Asia Minor beginning with the

44  Jeffery, "Greek Alphabet Writing," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. III/1, J. Boardman ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 819-823. Note also Powell, *Homer and the Origin of the Greek Alphabet*, 5-6, and the quotes from Kritias (ca. 460-403 BCE): "Phoenicians discovered word-guarding scratchings," and Nonnos (4.259-64): "But he [Kadmos]... made tools that echoed the tongue, mingling vowels ...and consonants,...all in a row of integrated harmony." Herodotus, who himself visited Phoenicia in the 5ᵗʰ century, mentions the alphabetic writings on the walls of the temple of Apollo Ismenios at Thebes, the city Kadmos founded. However, Powell argues that Herodotus assumed wrongly that Kadmus brought the alphabet from Phoenicia, since the rule of Kadmus may have belonged to the 16ᵗʰ century BCE, and Thebes itself has not yielded any data with Phoenician activity. The legendary implications aside, it is evident that early Greeks writers knew about the Phoenician origins of the Greek alphabet and sought to attach them to well known Phoenician rulers.

45  Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului*, 167. For other early inscriptions see L.H. Jeffery, "Greek Alphabetic Writing," 819ff., and Stroud, "The Art of Writing in Ancient Greece," 111ff.   For the dating of the various Greek dialects see H.B. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 1-4B. It is possible that the vessel may have been a prize for a dancing contest.

13th century BCE, in cultures like Israel, Phoenicia, Syria, Edom, and the like. It is at least conceivable that the alphabet may have been brought by, or borrowed from, any of these groups of people.[46] Most of these states had access to sea trade and we know from other sources that not only the Phoenicians, but other North-Western Semitic groups engaged in sea trade.[47]

Scholars have proposed various dates for the process of adopting the Phoenician alphabet. Gelb argued that the earliest data from the field of archaeology show a high level of variation in the letters of the alphabet. This phenomenon may suggest that "it is clearly impossible to speak of a single Greek alphabet in this early period."[48] Isserlin puts a date for the transfer around the 9th or 8th century, even though he allows for the (very probable) scenario of a "period of preliminary experimentation" that "may have preceded the final adaptation of the Semitic alphabet to the Greek needs."[49] Now, if the linear alphabet was in use in the 8th century, it is evidently possible that it must have been introduced after the 11th cen-

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46  For variations of this argument see the critique of Powell by P. Kyle McCarter in "Who Invented the Alphabet: A Different View," http://www.basarchive.org/sample/bswbBrowse.asp?PubID=BSAO& Volume =1&Issue=1&ArticleID=17. The disagreement revolves around the problem of the dissemination of the Phoenician alphabet in Greece, not on the original inventors of the alphabet.

47  Powell, *Homer and the Origin of the Greek Alphabet*, 12-15, points to archaeological data, including inscriptions, that attest the Phoenician presence in the islands of Euboea, Rhodes, Crete, Thera and Cyprus, as early as the 9th century BCE; similarly, Isserlin, "The Earliest Alphabetic Writing," 817.

48  *A Study of Writing*, 180. This variation may suggest that "the borrowing and adaptation of the Phoenician writing took place independently in the various areas of the Greek world." Isserlin, "The Earliest Alphabetic Writing," 816-818, argues that the process of borrowing first took place at an unofficial level, since the earliest Greek scripts do not resemble the "curved" Canaanite letters of the more official inscriptions.

49  Isserlin, "The Earliest Alphabetic Writing," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. III/1, J. Boardman ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 817.

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tury, when the Mycenaean civilization came to an end. Regardless of the time, we know for sure that the early Greeks adapted their alphabet from the model that was already in existence in Phoenicia.[50]

Nevertheless, the strongest argument for the Phoenician origins of the Greek alphabet is the striking resemblance between the letters of these two alphabets. As Table 5 shows, the letters of the Greek alphabet reflect (with minor variations) an "one on one" correspondence with the letters of the Phoenician alphabet. Scholars have focused on this aspect in order to determine the exact location from which the alphabet first arrived.[51] For the purpose of our argument, what counts is the fact that the Linear B script from the Mycenaean Age and the Greek letters from the 8th century BCE. onward are so different, that one cannot but conclude that a major revolution took place in Greece after the fall of the Mycenaean civilization.

Evidently, there exist differences between the two alphabets, on the level of the shape of letters and, especially, their number.[52] As one will note in the comparative table, the differences between the shapes of the letters are minor. If one finds differences among the alphabets of the North-Western Semitic cultures themselves, surely, he or she will expect a level of variation between the Phoenician and the Greek alphabet. More important is the addition of certain letters in the Greek alphabet.[53] The Greek alphabet adds the four letters *phi*, *psi*, *chi* and *omega* to "supplement the range of sounds covered by the Phoenician alphabet."[54] As one knows, the Hebrew and Phoenician alphabet does not include the vowels;

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50  J. Gelb, *A Study of Writing* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 176; Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului*, 167.

51  See especially Powell, *Homer and the Origin of the Greek Alphabet*, 8-12; Isserlin, "The Earliest Alphabetic Writing," 812-816.

52  J. Gelb, *A Study of Writing*, 180ff.; L.H. Jeffery, "Greek Alphabetic Writing," 830ff.

53  Thus Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului*, 166-167.

54  Stroud, "The Art of Writing in Ancient Greece," 113-114.

they are read, but for the most part they are not written in the text.[55] Kyle McCarter shows that

> "The Phoenician script was strictly consonantal. Vowels were not represented, and the reader was required to supply them from his or her knowledge of the language. This system worked reasonably well for Phoenician, since in that language there are no words that begin with vowels. But in Greek many words do begin with vowels. So when the Greeks adopted—and adapted—the Phoenician script, they needed to add new signs to represent vowels. The result was a significant advance in sophistication and precision—a giant step forward in the evolution of the alphabet."[56]

In the Phoenician and Hebrew culture, the omission of writing the vowels in the main text posed no problem for the native speakers. For the Greeks, however, the omission was a problem which they solved by adding the four vowels and by reshaping the consonants that the Semites used to indicate certain vowels. As Stroud has pointed out,

> "It is, however, in the use of the five signs representing consonants in the Semitic alphabet to render vowels in the Greek system that we see the clearest evidence of Greek innovation. This is more than borrowing. The spelling out in the Greek alphabet of the vowel sounds, which had remained without individual letters to designate them in the Phoenician, was a major step that has had a profound impact on most of the alphabetic systems of the Western world."[57]

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55   To identify certain vowels, the Hebrew language uses a number consonants as "helpers" in order to indicate when and how a certain vowel ought to be read. They are called "matres lectiones" (the mother of learning), because they help the reader pronounce correctly a certain vowel, and also preserve a certain reading of that respective word.

56   In http://www.basarchive.org/sample/bswbBrowse.asp?PubID=BSAO&Volume=1&Issue=1&ArticleID=17,

57   Stroud, "The Art of Writing in Ancient Greece," 113-114.

Perhaps we may understand better the innovation of the Greek alphabet now, if we compare it with the Sumerian, the Egyptian, the Akkadian and the Phoenician systems. As we noted, the cuneiform and hieroglyphic systems indicated the vowels and the syllables, but they did so using no less than several hundred pictograms and symbols. It was the Phoenician/Semitic approach that simplified the notion of the alphabet by reducing all letters to only 22 and hiding the vowels from the written form of the alphabet. Since the Greeks found it difficult – if not impossible – not to include the vowels, they added four more letters and "re-sounded" the Semitic consonants that could indicate the vowels as well. In doing so, the Greeks offered both a simpler and a more comprehensive and efficient mechanism than it ever existed before.

### The Formation of the Latin Alphabet

The Latin alphabet was borrowed from the Greeks during the time when the Etruscan civilization dominated Rome. From a chronological perspective, Rome was founded within the boundaries of the Etruscan empire and, until it broke free and finally subdued the Etruscans, Rome borrowed heavily from the Etruscan civilization. One of the cultural elements that Rome inherited from the Etruscans was the (modified) Greek alphabet. Ironically, only a few documents and inscriptions have survived that attest to the richness of the Etruscan culture. For the most part, the Romans assimilated and erased the Etruscan culture.

Scholars have shown that the Etruscans borrowed a version of the Greek alphabet from Greek inhabitants who had settled in Cumae, Southern Italy.[58] The settlers came from the Greek island of Euboea and had been using what scholars call today the Western Greek alphabet. Among other finds, archaeologists recovered several graffiti alphabets

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58  John Boardman, "The Islands," *The Cambridge Ancient History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 754-778; Rex Wallace, "The Latin Alphabet and Orthography," in *A Companion to the Latin Language*, J. Clackson ed. (Chicago, IL: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), Google Books. Web. 28.07.2011.; Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului*, 152-154.

from Etruscan graves that may have Euboean origins.[59] It is very likely that the alphabet spread to other parts of the Italian peninsula, inside the Etruscan kingdom, since by the 6th century BCE. was already in circulation in all direction from Etruria. However, with the fall of Etruria in the 3rd century BCE, Rome was able to complete the annexation of all the Etruscan territories to the Republic. The Latin alphabet was irreversibly influenced by Etruscan writing, which in turn had been shaped by the Greek alphabet.

One interesting phenomenon was the adaptation of the Greek alphabet to the Etruscan language. These changes included a different order (some of the) the letters and replacing Greek letters with Etruscan ones. For example, in very Old Latin inscriptions, the letter G (gamma in Greek) is replaced by C, as the Etruscan dialect did not make possible the voiced velar stop G. As Wallace pointed out, "it is almost never the case that the alphabet of one language is entirely suited to represent the sounds of another." For this reason, during the development of the Etruscan-Latin alphabet, not all the Greek letters were used in the everyday language of the people.[60] Some letters, like K, was gradually phased out from the every day usage and the alphabet. As Wallace has shown, even the morphology of the alphabet underwent certain changes, as the shape of the letters varied according to geographical regions and time chronology.[61] Scholars have also shown that not all letters of the Etruscan alphabet were compatible with the Old Latin alphabet itself, even though some of the Etruscan letters continued to appear in the Latin alphabet, in spite of their not being used in every day conversations.

Alongside with the conquest of new provinces, the Latin alphabet spread to other parts of the world, even the Greek language continued to

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59   Wallace, "The Latin Alphabet and Orthography," also refers to a mortuary flask discovered at Cumae, on which someone wrote several letters on the Western Greek alphabet.

60   Not Robinson, *Istoria Scrisului*, 154, 222.

61   Wallace, "The Latin Alphabet and Orthography."

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serve as the Lingua Franca of the Roman empire.[62] It was not uncommon in certain (far away) regions of the empire to use both Greek and Latin on important monuments. One must also take into consideration the wide circulation of Roman currency.[63] From a geographical perspective, the division of the Roman empire into the Western and Eastern kingdoms, and the subsequent impact of the Latin culture on Western Europe, brought irreversible changes to the alphabet of Romance languages. In time the Latin alphabet was stabilized, even though several changes were made even as late as the Medieval times. Note the following comparative chart, which includes the archaic form of the Republican period (3rd century BCE) and the current form of the alphabet:[64]

| Archaic | A | 8 | つ | D | ヨ | ∃ | ר | � | I | K | ﾌ | M | ⺇ | O | ? | ? | ? | ? | T | V | X |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Classical | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | V | X |
| Translit. | a | b | c | d | e | f | g | h | i | k | l | m | n | o | p | q | r | s | t | u | x |
| Phonetic | [a] | [b] | [k] | [d] | [e] | [f] | [g] | [h] | [i,y] | [k] | [l] | [m] | [n] | [o] | [p] | [kʷ] | [r] | [s] | [t] | [u,w] | [ks] |

## Conclusions

In this study we have shown that the linear alphabet was made possible through a process that used and simplified the complex systems of the Sumerian, Akkadian and Egyptian languages. We have stated that the Sumerians created a system that began with pictograms and evolved to several hundred signs (the cuneiform wedges). The same process occurred in Egypt, even though the Egyptian language never really gave up on pictograms. As the Akkadian population increased, it exerted a cultural influence over the Sumerian people and in time the Akkadian cuneiform system became the norm in the area. The "revolution" to the

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62  As Wallace shows, "during the height of the Roman imperium Latin was spoken and…written in Europe, southern Brittain, Northern Africa, the Balkan region as far south as Greece, and portions of the Middle East."

63  Thus K. Harl, *Coinage in the Roman Economy*: 300 BCE to CE 700 (Baltimore, MA: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 148.

64  http://www.ancientscripts.com/latin.html.

"linear alphabet" began sometime in the middle of the 2nd millennium, when the Semites from Canaan radically simplified the representation of the letters that had been used up to that point. From hundreds of pictograms and signs, the alphabet was trimmed to 22 (23) consonants. We have shown how this alphabet came to be used in Canaan, in the cultures of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Phoenician people.

We have also stated that the borrowing the Semitic alphabet by the Greeks was, in itself, another revolutionary event. Various scholars have argued that prior to the borrowing of the Phoenician Alphabet, the Greeks had almost no literary works preserved in a writing form. As we already mentioned, the few records of the Linear B inscriptions that survived from the Mycenaean Age dealt with administrative issues at the court. The Greeks had shared a rich oral tradition, and very likely the Homeric poems came to birth (in oral form only) during that time. As Stroud states, it was the borrowing of the Semitic alphabet that made possible the writing of the Homeric poems and the cultural revolution that followed afterwards:

> "Confirmation of the illiteracy of the Greeks at this time [before the borrowing of the Phoenician alphabet], has often been sought in our only available contemporary literature, the Homeric Epics. Allowing for the long period of gestation, the requirements of oral composition, and the unknown date at which these poems were first written down, it is nevertheless a striking fact that in over 27,000 verses of the Iliad and of the Odyssey there is only one brief and ambiguous reference to writing....Those responsible for the formation of the Greek alphabet have been credited with helping to lead their countrymen out of the dark ages into an exciting new era of expansion and discovery." [65]

We have also stated that, with several minor modifications, the alphabet that lies at the basis of the English language is, essentially, the Latin alphabet.[66] Today, one only has to think about the dominance of

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65  Thus Stroud, "The Art of Writing in Ancient Greece," 110,

66  Gelb, *A Study of Writing*, 198.

the Romance languages (Europe, Latin America) and the English language in the world today (Western Europe, Australia, North America/Canada) in order to estimate correctly the impact that the Latin alphabet had upon the world.

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# THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET: MINISTRY CHALLENGES IN LUKE 14

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ABSTRACT: The parables of Jesus encapsulate the theology of the Kingdom of God. Since Jesus used to teach many things in parables it is impossible to define a theology of ministry outside this framework that compresses a thorough understanding of this concept. There are several narratives as the sending of the twelve and the great commission mandate in the Gospels, however The Parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14, rooted in the Isaianic divine feast, is a parable that reflects not only a grace-based universal invitation but also some ministry challenges that arise with the refusal of such an offer.

KEY WORDS: Parables, kingdom community, Pharisees, banquet, challenges

## Introduction

Jesus' teaching is centered unquestionably on the coming of the Kingdom of God. This theological reality encapsulates all other subsequent concepts that are fundamental for understanding what the Kingdom of God entails and how to reach such a reality. The Kingdom of God in Jesus' teaching has a twofold dynamic: people approaching the kingdom (Mt. 4.17; 5.10; 6.33; 11.12; Mk. 12.34; etc.) and the kingdom approaching the people (Mt. 12.28; Lk. 10.9; 11.12, etc.). One feature that is prevalent in the ministry of Jesus that synchronizes the Old Testament prophetic passages and His theology of the Kingdom is the practice of open fellowship. Dunn noted that a remarkable character of the discipleship to

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which Jesus called is fundamental for the *open table-fellowship* kingdom community.[2] Indeed the openness of Jesus' table-fellowship, contrasting the table-fellowship of both Pharisees and Qumranites that were strictly defined and confined within the identity of the group, had an outward approach although in a programmatic sense it was directed to Israel.

Although the concept of the Kingdom of God has been largely debated among the scholars, the concept of the *banquet* as a feature of the coming Kingdom of God has been generally left untouched. Brand Pitre correctly noted that many scholars agree that Jesus drew on the ancient Jewish expectation of the messianic banquet to describe the Kingdom of God, however, there is a tendency to study the Jewish evidence for the messianic banquet in a rather brief approach.[3]

The parables of Jesus encapsulate the theology of the Kingdom of God. Since Jesus used to teach many things in parables it is impossible to define a theology of ministry outside this framework that compresses a thorough understanding of this concept. The Parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14 is noticeably connected to the Isaianic concept of divine feast that heralds a universal invitation of grace. The outcome and the challenges of this parable are surprising not only for those that have declined the invitation but also for those that are the least expected to enjoy such an event.

## 1 The Early Jewish Literature: Messianic Banquet

The idea of an eschatological banquet is prevalent in Jewish thinking, especially in the apocalyptic literature,[4] however, the Isaiahnic theme of the

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2    James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making, Volume 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 205.

3    Brant Pitre, "Jesus, the Messianic Banquet, and the Kingdom of God," *Letter & Spirit* 5 (2009): 145–66; Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

4    J. Priest, "A Note on the Messianic Banquet," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 222–23.

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Great Banquet represents the main literary and the historical context of this parable of Luke 14.

In line with the expectations regarding the participation to the Messianic banquet, the general thinking of first century society was that the key to participate to such an event was to live a righteous life in strict obedience to Torah, the only solution to be counted worthy to attend this eschatological event. However, to have a proper understanding of the development of this concept over the centuries it is important to highlight the nuances of interpretation as they gradually changed over time.

## Isaiah 25 and 55

In Isaiah 25.6, Isaiah saw a great banquet in which Yahweh is the host. God gives the banquet of royal food and old wine, symbolizing the great eschatological joy reserved for all the believers. On that Holy mountain all nations (*goyim*) will be invited. The coming of Messiah will eventually inaugurate the Kingdom of God with a great feast in which all will stay together, God will wipe away any tears in their eyes and invite all. This idea is reiterated in Isaiah 55.1 where all those who are thirsty, or poor, are invited to come to eat, drink and enjoy the event. The offer available at the Messianic banquet has a symbolic value: water, wine and milk. Water was indispensable for life, milk along with honey were considered delicacies of the country, and wine was a symbol of joy. The second part of this verse implies that there is a price that has to be paid for all the goods that are available at such a feast, however the universal invitation encapsulates the concept of grace in which all the blessings are offered without payment from the invitees.

The preceding literary context highlights the element of salvation (Is. 53) and the universal character of this salvation is expressed in missional terms (Is. 54). The much-debated messianic chapter of Is. 53 presents the Anointed Messiah, the Servant who suffers and brings redemption that is ultimately available for everyone (Is. 54.2). Furthermore, God is described as an inviting God that invites everyone to feast for free, thus

meeting the basic needs and recognizing that such needs can only be met by God.

However, the prevalent concern among the Jews was a thorough description of those that will take part in this Messianic banquet. The question therefore was who exactly will take their place in the Great Banquet of the Lord? This question has a broad variety of answers; therefore, it became vitally important to define what "*all peoples*" in Is. 25.6 entails. Does *all* include non-Jews? The general answer was that *all* means all the Jews. Furthermore, not all the Jews live according to God's will, so, given the fact that not all the Jews live righteous lives, only the true and faithful ones that live holy lives will benefit from such a momentous event. This kind of thinking and argumentation is seen in the later translation and interpretation of Isaiah 25.

## The Isaiah Targum

In *Targumim*, the Aramaic paraphrased translation and interpretation of the Bible, we can identify a slightly changed version of v.6. The Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible appeared in time after the Babylonian exile. After the return from the Babylonian captivity, the Jews no longer spoke Hebrew but Aramaic. Since they did not understand the Hebrew, they needed a new translation. This translation and interpretation in Aramaic help us understand how the message of Isaiah was gradually reinterpreted.

In the Isaiah Targum 25.6, the text reads as follows:

> On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast and a festival; *they think that it is of glory, but it will be to them, for shame, strokes from which they will not be rescued, strokes by which they will come to an end* [emphasis added].[5]

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5    Bruce D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus and Notes* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1987), 49.

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Commenting on this interpretation of the passage, Chilton noted that it is part of the national confidence that the LORD will make a festival of 'strokes' on Mount Zion for all peoples. especially their chief 'master' and 'king,' the Roman Emperor (vv. 6, 7).[6] This interpretation helps us understand that in time, the emphasis on the Isaiahnic banquet has undergone change from a universal tone to a peculiar Jewish prominence.

## 1 Enoch

Another writing that emphasizes even further this tendency of redefining the universal and inclusive Messianic Meal is the writing of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 62.1-16). Written about 300 BC, the latest part of the book, entitled *The Book of Parables* (ch. 37-71) is generally considered as a first century writing.

> 10. Nevertheless that Lord of Spirits will so press them [the kings and the mighty and all who possess the earth] That they shall hastily go forth from His presence, And their faces shall be filled with shame, And the darkness grow deeper on their faces. 11. And He will deliver them to the angels for punishment, To execute vengeance on them because they have oppressed His children and His elect 12. And they shall be a spectacle for the righteous and for His elect: They shall rejoice over them, Because the wrath of the Lord of Spirits resteth upon them, And His sword is drunk with their blood. 13. And the righteous and elect shall be saved on that day, And they shall never thenceforward see the face of the sinners and unrighteous.[7]

Commenting on this passage Pitre correctly emphasizes that the banquet has the same effect as in Isaiah: those who partake of it will no longer taste the fruit of Adam's sin: suffering and death, however he fails to mention the exclusivist nature of the message. While in Isaiah's messianic banquet, all are invited in *1 Enoch*, the Son of Man will remove the

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6    Chilton, 49.

7    Robert Henry Charles and R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 68.

Gentiles from His presence: they shall be a sight for the righteous, and his sword shall be drunken with their blood. After the destruction of the sinners, the righteous will stand and eat with the Son of Man forever.

## Qumran Community/The Essenes[8]

Interpreting Isaiah 40:3 emphasizing the wilderness as the place of preparing the way not as the place in which the voice cries, the Qumran community understood Isaiah 40 as a call to asceticism in the process of waiting for the Messianic times. That's why they decided to withdraw from the world and settled in the wilderness waiting a priestly (the Messiah of Aaron 1QS 9.11; lQSa 2.17-21) and a royal Messiah (a David like messianic figure Ez. 34.23; IQSa (lQ28b) 2.11-12). This theological understanding of the prophetic texts was emphasized by their waiting for the Messiah that will come to them and inaugurate the Grand Messianic Banquet (1QSa).[9]

For the Qumranic community, the Messianic Banquet excluded Gentiles, Samaritans, and even the Jews who do not keep the Law in a very strictly manner as they do. Everyone will sit at the table, each by rank, according to the Messianic Rule of the Congregation. Alongside Messiah of Israel there will sit before him the heads of the Thousands of Israel each according to his dignity (1QSa 2.20).

From the *qĕhal 'El*, "the assembly of God," (2:4) certain persons are excluded: those with "human impurities," such as those smitten in their flesh, paralyzed in

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8    The debate among the scholars to identify the Qumran community as the Essene community *per se*, or just a distinct group within the Essenes is far from reaching a consensus. References made by Josephus (*B.J.* 2.119-161; *A.J.* 18.18-22), Philo (*Prob.* 75-87; *Hypoth.*), and Pliny the Elder (*Nat. Hist.* 5.73) are the main reasons why Qumran community has been identified with the Essenes. See also Lester L. Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism: History and Religion of the Jews in the Time of Nehemiah, the Maccabees, Hillel, and Jesus* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 59–60.

9    See also Michael Newton, *The Concept of Purity at Qumran and in the Letters of Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 35.

feet or hands, the lame, blind, or deaf, the tottering aged, "because holy angels are [in] their [congre]gation" (2:5-9), and such angelic beings were not supposed to gaze on such deformities.[10]

Thus, the Qumranic community consider the eschatological banquet an event that is reserved only for few believers that live their lives in a worthy manner in line with their understanding of Scripture.

A similar idea is found in the Talmudic texts (*m. ʾAbot* 3.16–17; *b. Sanh*. 98a), most probably much later than the first century, nevertheless they are in line with the same idea of a messianic eschatological banquet in which the righteous ones will enjoy the heavenly food and drink.

Nevertheless, the gradual change in interpretive tone is evident. While in Isaiah's vision the description of a celestial banquet for all nations has a universal tone, in the Isaiah Targum the nations are invited but they are not willing to participate, hence the banquet will be a plague for them. In 1 Enoch the Gentiles are completely excluded from such an event without any chance, and eventually they are going to be killed. In the Qumranic passages, the Great eschatological banquet is reserves to the Jews but only the faithful ones.

The Parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14 reflects a retelling of this theme in line with the Isaiahnic message of grace for all the people. Over the years it is obvious that in Jewish thinking there was a tendency of restricting the participants in the final messianic banquet. Jesus' parable runs against this trend bringing new challenges to invite those that are generally considered to be outcasts and to exclude those that falsely consider themselves secured in the event.

## 2. The Messianic Invitation: Ministry Challenges
In Luke 14 Jesus went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, an event that takes place on a Sabbath day. In fact, the whole chapter gravi-

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10  Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Responses to 101 Questions on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 54, 82; F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1960), 43–44.

tates on the theme of dining at the table, forming an evident literary unit around this topic: dining at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees and the healing of the sick man (v.1-6); the parable of the guests (v.7-11); the exhortation regarding feast meals (v.12-14); the parable of the great banquet (v.15-24). As in the previous chapter in which a ruler of the synagogue was angry that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day (Lk. 13.14), chapter 14 reiterates the same theme of healing on a Sabbath day but links this theme with a discussion of a feast setting. Many of Jesus' miraculous acts took place on a Sabbath day, triggering a tension between the traditions related to keeping the Sabbath and Jesus' authority over this day.

As the feast takes place on a Sabbath day, the discussion becomes more elaborate and reflects the eschatological banquet that will take place in the Kingdom of God (v.15). Thus, God's final Sabbath, an eschatological messianic banquet, is marked by God's healing and invitation.

The parallel version of this parable is found in Matt. 22.1-10. This parable is also found in the non-canonical Gospel of Thomas 64 with a stronger emphasis on morality and an exhortation to the servants to go outside to the streets and bring those whom they meet, since businessmen and merchants will not enter the feast. As Crossan correctly noted, this may be a possible allusion to Zech. 14:21, but it serves primarily as a moral condemnation of the invited guests—but an externally appended one.[11]

As a response to the exhortation in Luke 14:15 "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!", in the light of this historical context, Jesus gives a parable to emphasize the universal and inclusive nature of the Messianic Banquet. The theme of discussion starts from the reality of those that were seeking the places of honour at the table, while inevitably, they were neglecting those that were socially insignificant. Who should we invite to the table (v.15-24)?

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11  John Dominic Crossan, "Parable and Example in the Teaching of Jesus," *Semeia* 1, no. 1 (1974): 296. See also Greg Forbes, *The God of Old: The Role of the Lukan Parables in the Purpose of Luke's Gospel*, JSNTSup 198 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 96.

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Given the fact that the man has a natural tendency to associate with those that are at the same social level, or with those that are on a higher social level, Jesus overturns this tendency and highlights that the correct approach to such an event is not to look to those that are able to return or reward such an association but on the contrary to those that are unable to repay (v.14). This theme of compensation has a theological motivation in which a good deed is compensated with the reward for such an act. However, Jesus corrects this tendency to look for a reward in a short term, overlooking a later but greater reward that eventually will take place on the kingdom of God, at the resurrection of the just v.14. This concept is present also in Lk. 6.20 where the poor are described as the ones that are the blessed recipients of the kingdom of God.

This idea of reclining at the table in the kingdom of God is prevalent in the first century Judaism and is found several times in the teaching of Jesus (*e.g.* Matt. 8.11; Lk 13.28; Lk. 16.22). In the parable of Lazarus, the idiomatic phrase eivj to.n ko,lpon VAbraa,m (Lk. 16.22) most probably reflects a feast setting in which Lazarus has the place of honour next to Abraham as the beloved disciple stood evn tw/| ko,lpw| tou/ VIhsou/ (Jn. 13.23). Commenting on the concept of a great feast, Morris correctly concluded that the expression is not common but the setting denotes felicity and reflects the special privilege that one would enjoy by leaning on the chest of the great patriarch since people reclined at festive meals leaning on the left arm with the head towards the table.[12]

Since Abraham was among the most important religious historical figures alongside Moses and David, his identity has eschatological overtones as a symbol of the people of faith that will enjoy the Messianic banquet at the end of days. The eschatological great banquet is presented especially by the prophet Isaiah and this theme stirred up a constant concern about the participants to this ultimate event. Thus, rooted in the Isaiahnic Great Banquet, there was a constant concern for about 600 years in which the rabbis debated to the smallest details the great feast in the coming

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12 Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 161, 276.

kingdom of God. Since the concept of the messianic age is prominent in Jewish thought, the extensive debates about the events prior and after the coming of Messiah is prevalent in Jewish writings.

### The Social Context (v.16-17)

When someone gave a banquet, the custom was to send an invitation with a prior confirmation of attendance. In a world without refrigerators this was extremely important since the preparation of the food depended on the number of confirmed participants. When the feast was ready, the host would send a servant to invite the guests. The invitation in v.17 e;rcesqe( o[ti h;dh e[toima, evstin indicates that this is in fact the final invitation that was preceded by a prior confirmation.[13] In light of this custom, the refusal would have even a greater impact and reflects a situation in which the negation is rather part of a conspiracy between the invitees. The expression avpo. mia/j pa,ntej serves as an idiomatic expression that emphasizes the unexpected corporate outcome in which *all as one* declined the invitation.

The shocking social element is that all those have confirmed their presence and where supposed to participate in the event. The first and second excuse are shallow, since no one buys something before testing first, especially when the value implied is so high (v.18-19). Five *pair* of oxen represents a fortune for a first century investment. The third excuse represents a similar response that functions as a façade to a deeper state of reality. It is unreasonable to think that the feast was planned while the community was involved in a wedding event. Even if the wedding took place prior to the banquet, according to the law for married people (Deut. 20.7; 24.5), the man that was newlywed was exempt from military service but not from social involvement.

Crossan considers that at the literal level the invited guests offer perfectly reasonable excuses, however the outcome of corporate refusal is an empty banquet. "The intention is to fill the banquet and not allow

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13   Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 313.

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the refusing guests to ruin the evening."[14] However, a thorough historical analysis of the excuses, helps us understand that the main issue is not the outcome of the event but the offence of the invitees.

Given the very arid climate in Palestine, the land is limited and expensive, therefore the first excuse (v.18), like the others are intended rather to be an insult than an excuse. The justification seems puerile, since it is unreasonable to think that no one buys a land without knowing the slightest details about the property that is going to be purchased (e.g. location, facilities, etc.), and after a long negotiation process. Moreover, the inspection of the land after the purchase is futile. The excuses that these invitees give are indeed emphatic and ridiculous since the reasons they give fit the straw man paradigm. The quality of the excuses helps us understand that the function of the excuses is not to justify their absence but to insult the guest.

In light of all of these, the unexpected refusals function as an insult rather than an excuse. The reaction of the master reflects his character that seeks to invite people to be part of his event not something that would solve his loneliness. The ministry of the servants is to invite people to an event that is intended to be an honour for the invitee, not a solution for the master's solitude. The unexpected final invitation reflects the character of the master not his desperation.

Following the concept of open table-fellowship, Crossan used anthropology and social history to reconstruct and describe Jesus. After a thorough study of the socio-political environment, he concluded that Jesus was a peasant Jewish Cynic whose focus was on 'open commensality' or shared egalitarianism[15] through common meals and magic (free healing).[16] Thus, Jesus' teaching is to be understood against the cross-cultural anthropology and conventional socio-political structures, as a social rev-

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14   Crossan, "Parable and Example in the Teaching of Jesus," 84.

15   John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 261–64.

16   Crossan, 341–44.

olutionary peasant figure "that negated alike and at once the hierarchical and patronal normalcies of Jewish religion and Roman power."[17]

Herzog correctly disagrees with Crossan and his egalitarian model of 'open commensality' because this model is unlikely to be found in the ancient world. The issue is not equality, but reciprocity, hospitality and mutuality since toll collectors and sinners offer Jesus table companionship in return for brokering God's forgiveness.[18] Crossan correctly considered that a Jesus who would let himself be crucified means that he is hardly posing a threat to the Roman Empire; however he ignores that Jesus does not fit the Cynic portrait[19] and his view on equality does not endorse social egalitarianism, it is rather ontological[20] than social.[21]

The surrounding general tendency in the first century society was to establish and maintain the boundaries that were very well established at the religious level by the purity laws, at the political level by the hierarchal segregation and at the social level by the social values of honour and shame. The theological message encapsuled in the parables of Jesus in general, and in the Parable of the Great Banquet in particular, transcends not only social realties, but also the religious and political milieu.

Thus, the ministry challenges that are found in the Parable of the Great Banquet are counterintuitive from a religious perspective, provocative from an ethnical standpoint, and revolutionary from a socio-political stance.

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17  Crossan, 422. Crossan summarized his scholarly ground-breaking controoversial work in the biographic study of Jesus. John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994).

18  William R. Herzog, *Jesus, Justice, and the Reign of God: A Ministry of Liberation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 222.

19  The disciples were asked not to use staff, bag or two tunics Lk. 9.3 vs. Cynics. It is noteworthy that there is no evidence that the Jesus of the Gospels ever referred to the Cynics.

20  See Jesus' relation to all the people (outcasts, sinners, tax-collectors, religious leaders, Samaritans, women, Roman representatives, etc.).

21  The exhortation to share the tunics or food (Lk. 3.11), is followed by an immplicit approval of social hierarchy based on correctitude (Lk. 3.12-13).

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## The Climax

The master is indeed insulted. The expectation to such a situation is the manifestation of anger. However, in line with the Isaiahnic Messianic Banquet, the emphasis is not on revenge but on grace. Although one would expect that ridiculous excuses to be followed by a description of the master's wrath, the strong emphasis on the demonstration of grace becomes an indicator that before the banquet the ministry should focus on invitation and not revenge. The Wedding Banquet of Matt. 22.1-10 has common affinities with the Lukan version of the Great Banquet, however in Matthew the focus is particularly on rejection.[22] The element of rejection is not excluded in Luke (v.24) but is not explained.

The master's invitation is universal: Go to the crossroads, there is still room! The mandate of going to the crossroads is a symbolic invitation of the Gentiles, those that are outside the community. Allison argued that the invitation to those from east and west, represents the ingathering of the Jewish exiles and the banquet is exclusivist in nature, and only the Jews are the partakers of the messianic banquet.[23] However, as Pitre disagrees with Allison,[24] it is important not to divorce this parable of Jesus from its pristine Isaiahnic source where all the nations are invited to the Messianic eschatological event.

Thus, the invitation is not limited to a particular social class or ethnicity or to those who do not have sufficient means. The only way that one will not take part in the feast of God is the refusal of the free invitation. The challenges of the ministry are to be seen not in the act of inviting

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22  Forbes, *The God of Old*, 94–95.

23  This idea of ingathering from east and west of Israel is found in Ps. 107.1-3; Is. 43.5; Zach. 8.7 and also in Bar. 4.37; Ps. Sol. 11.2, 1 En. 57.1; etc.  Dale C. Allison Jr., *The Jesus Tradition in Q* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1977), 176–91.

24  Pitre correctly argues that Jesus' description of the gathering of the multitude to dine in "the Kingdom" is a very biblical vision of the eschatological restoration of Israel *and* the Gentiles. Pitre, "Jesus, the Messianic Banquet, and the Kingdom of God," 142–43.

people to the great banquet but in the act of persisting with the invitation despite refusal.

The exhortation *Force them to enter*, is an indicator that grace is incredible and somehow irresistible. While historically speaking such a text has been the theological basis for inquisition type moments, in reality the parable communicates the manifestation of incredible grace. From a cultural point of view in Ancient Near East, when someone insisted on a certain matter this act indicates hospitality not dominion (e.g. Gen. 19.3; 24.55; Jud. 19.1-10; 1 Sam 28.23; 2 King. 5.16, etc.). This highlights the divine grace in which God does not want someone to be left out. The open invitation is programmatic in the Gospel. Berković correctly noted that Luke regularly places Abraham in a context in which there are also 'outsiders' of the then society. The individuals that are socially or religiously 'marked' are presented throughout the gospel: e.g. the Good Samaritan in Lk. 10, the ill and paralyzed woman in Lk. 13, the prodigal son (Lk 15), the widow and the unjust judge (Lk 18), the unpopular Zacchaeus (Lk. 19), and the generous widow (Lk. 21).[25]

This invitation reflects a twofold challenge of the ministry, addressing both the issue of divine sovereignty and the free will: first, there is a clear emphasis on the fact that no one participates in the feast without the divine invitation, and second, no one remains outside only on a deliberate act of refusal. The shocking element is twofold, not only that those that refuse God's invitation are expected to participate, but also those that are participating in the banquet are expected not to be invited.

## 3. Conclusion

The theological theme of the Messianic Banquet is prevalent in the teaching and ministry of Jesus.[26] In this parable the greatness of God is seen in

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25  Danijel Berković, "Jesus and Abraham: The Role and Place of Abraham in Jesus' Teaching," *Kairos* 7, no. 2 (2013): 115.

26  E.g. the descriptive reference of eating and drinking at Jesus' table and kingg dom (Lk. 22.28-30); the link between the Last Supper and the Eschatological Supper (Lk. 22.15-18 and par.); the eschatological discourse of Lk. 13.24-30;

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the invitation that is made for all. Given the fact that some have refused to participate to this event, giving excuses that function as an insult rather than explanations, the invitation is extended to those who are not worthy. Since participation is based on invitation only, this highlights the incredible nature of grace that is available to all.

This reflects a theology of mission in which the master's reaction to guests' refusal is to further extend his invitation of grace. Although the refusal is not without consequences (Lk. 14.24), the unexpected element is this openness to those that are generally left out from such an event. Thus, the ministry challenges that are found in the parable of Luke 14 is twofold reflecting not only that all those that insult the master by refusing participation will be left out but also that all those that are generally left out are unexpectedly and unbelievable invited. Contrasting the development of the concept of divine feast in the religious literature between Isaiah and the Gospel of Luke, Luke's version of the Great Banquet is perfectly synchronized with the Isaiahnic grace-based divine feast.

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the rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16.19-31); the miraculous feeding as a symbol of eschatological bounty (Lk. 9.10-17 and par.); etc.

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# THE FRUITS OF TRUE CONVERSION IN *JONATHAN EDWARDS'* «*RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS*»

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ABSTRACT: This presentation offers to examine some of the most wonderful truths discussed by Edwards in his treatise on *Religious Affections*. I will seek to establish the nature of true godliness and to explain what constitutes a true believer and how we can distinguish him from a hypocrite. The subject is a very practical one and requires to be treated from a very practical point of view. The stress was laid on the inclinations of the heart. The whole objective is to prove that a man's act must be the proper evidence of the state of the heart. In Edwards's terms this is called Christian practice and is evidenced by its fruits. After an analysis of the fruits of true conversion we conclude with Edwards that Christian practice 'is a great and distinguishing sign of true and saving grace'.[2]

From the general presentation of the fruits of true conversion I have moved to present a fruit that is absolutely essential to true spirituality: evangelical humiliation. Our interest is first to differentiate between legal humiliation, inappropriate for the true converted believer, and evangelical humiliation, absolutely necessary in the life of the truly converted believer. From there we proceed to discover how evangelical humiliation originates and then manifests itself in the life of the believer.

Our conclusion is in saying with Edwards that all Christian affections flow out to Christ from a pure and broken heart.

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2   *Religious Affections*, 320 (henceforth *RA)*. Reprinted in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Banner of Truth, 1974), 2 vols., Vol. 1, 234-343. This article focuses on Part 3, Section 12.

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KEY WORDS: affections, conversion, hypocrite, inclination of the heart, fruits, true spirituality, saving grace, evangelical humiliation.

## Introduction

In one of his discussion William K. B. Stoever explains that the *Treatise concerning Religious Affections*[3] (1746), produced in the controversial retrospect of the Great Awakening, was Edwards's 'fullest and most pointed statement about the nature and expression of true godliness'.[4] Someone else has labelled it 'a classic, a literary and a theological masterpiece', because it transcends generations and addresses numerous problems that overwhelm Christians and the church.[5]

Right from the outset of *Religious Affections* we see Edwards seeking to establish what is the nature of true religion[6]. He offers us the privilege of understanding what constitutes a true converted believer. For Edwards these are most important issues. These issues were not just the product of his imagination or of his desire for more inquiries into religion, but they were addressed in the midst of controversies and struggles with the opponents of revival. He knew that many others had wrestled with these problems and the attempts to answer them often tended to bring more confusion than clarity. Yet Edwards would not let these issues go, but directed his efforts to help us distinguish between a true believer and a hypocrite. In *Religious Affections* Edwards is interested to demonstrate how can we test in practice if someone is truly converted or not. He describes what are sure signs of genuine conversion and what are not.

3   Reprinted in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Banner of Truth, 1974), 2 vols., Vol. 1, pp. 234-343. This article focuses on Part 3, Section 12.

4   William K. B. Stoever, "The Godly Will's Discerning", in S. J. Stein (ed.), *Jonathan Edwards's Writings: Text, Context, Interpretation* (Indiana University Press, 1996), 85.

5   See Stephen J. Nichols*, Jonathan Edwards: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought* (P&R, 2001), 107.

6   *Religious Affections*, p. 234. See also Murray's comments in Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards* (Banner of Truth, 1987), 252.

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In his work on the theology of Jonathan Edwards Conrad Cherry explains how Edwards has continually reminded himself that faith is not only 'an exercise of the understanding' but also 'a falling in of the inclination, the choice, the affection'[7]. For Edwards it is vitally important to understand that religious faith is inseparable from one's active, practical life in the world, because to know the truth which God reveals to us through faith means to dare to live by it. Edwards shows that there is a correspondence between the state of man's heart and his outward behaviour. His whole objective in this section is to prove that a man's actions must be the proper evidence of the state of his heart. The understanding and the will must be outworked in the attitude of the whole person. This Edwards called Christian practice and it was considered to be the most important fruit of true conversion.

Edwards claimed Christian practice as the chief means through which one may be assured that he is a man of faith. Developing the same theme Cherry explains that practice, the performance of good works, exhibits the nature of faith before both man and God.[8] The same point is stressed by Edwards when he preaches on the subject of true humility, which we shall consider in the second part of this paper. He asserts: 'And this humility, as a virtue in men, implies a sense of their own comparative meanness, both as compared with God and as compared with their fellow-creatures.'[9]

In what follows we shall endeavour, first of all, to examine, in general, the fruits produced by true conversion and show how these fruits arise from 'new taste', secondly, to focus on one fruit of conversion, namely, evangelical humiliation and explain how this is different from legal humiliation, and thirdly, to give an idea about how this fruit should test converts from the Greek-orthodox church of Romania.

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7   Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* (Indiana University Press, 1990), 14.

8   See Cherry, 143-144.

9   Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits* (Banner of Truth, 2000), 131.

## A General Examination of the Fruit Produced by True Conversion

As Edwards progresses through *Religious Affections* he deals more precisely with the outward results of the inward changes. When we reach Section 12 in Part 3 we see how Edwards comes down to what he calls 'the chief of all the sign of grace': 'christian practice or a holy life'.[10]

Under this heading we do not purpose to discuss in detail all the signs discussed in the previous 11 sections of Part 3[11], but only to make some references to them and then give a brief summary of the material found in Section 7. Before proceeding further it is important to understand from where such signs of grace originate.

In Part 2[12] Edwards addresses the problem of hypocrisy and self-deception by pointing out that what we often take to be genuine affections do not in fact guarantee genuine religious affections. These are not produced by divine influences but are found in men themselves by the exercise of natural principles. He mentions in that part twelve signs and shows how they do not necessarily guarantee genuine religious affections, and we should be cautious about using them as certain evidence.

In Part 3 Edwards is determined to make clear that the cause and origin of truly gracious affections is in spiritual, supernatural and divine operations on the heart, as the Holy Spirit dwells in the saints and brings renewal in their life. He does this in his treatise of the first, the third and forth signs[13]. According to what he says, it becomes obvious that genuine religious affections would come only from the Holy Spirit whom the believers experience. Here is what Edwards says in Section 1 about the influence of the Spirit in the believer's life:

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10   *RA*, 314 and 320.

11   *RA*, 262-336

12   *RA*, 245-262. See also "Sinners in Zion Tenderly Warned: Why Hypocrites will be Surprised", in *Works*, Vol. 2, p. 205, where Edwards explains the severe consequence of hypocrisy.

13   *RA*, 264ff, 278ff, 281ff. See also, 316, 317.

…it is evident, that those gracious influences of the saints, and the effects of God's Spirit which they experience, are entirely above nature, and altogether of a different kind from any thing that men find in themselves by the exercise of natural principles. No improvement of those principles that are natural, no advancing or exalting of them to higher degree, and no kind of composition, will ever bring men to them; because they not only differ from what is natural, and from every thing that natural men experience, in degree and circumstances, but also in *kind*; and are of a nature vastly more excellent. And this is what I mean by *supernatural*, when I say, that *gracious affections are from those influences that are supernatural.*[14]

The natural inference is that those who do not have the Spirit of God are incapable of producing genuine religious affections because, following Paul in 1 Corinthians 2, they are natural and not spiritual.[15] When the Holy Spirit works in our life through His work of regeneration, we are given spiritual understanding and ability to see Scripture accurately. Edwards describes this as a whole new outlook not only on Scripture, but on God, the self, and the world. Furthermore, it is not just a new way of seeing, it is a new way of living or a new disposition. This is Edwards' notion of the new sense, which is not a sixth sense, but a 'new supernatural sense' or 'a new spiritual taste'.[16] When the Spirit works in their lives, the believers love the Word of God, because it is the pure word of truth, they love the saints, and heaven is lovely to them. To put it in Edwards' own words this new taste is described as:

This is in its whole nature diverse from any former kinds of sensation of the mind, as tasting is diverse from any of the other five senses, and something is perceived by a true saint in the exercise of this new sense of mind, in spiritual and divine things, as entirely different from any thing that is perceived in them by natural

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14  *RA*, 266.

15  See similar comments in Nichols, *op. cit.*, pp. 118, 119, and Stephen R. Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory: An Account of the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (T&T Clark, 2000), 176-177.

16  *RA*, 280.

men, as the sweet taste of honey is diverse from the ideas men get of honey by looking on it or feeling of it.[17]

So those who are so blessed by this work of the Spirit in their life see and respond to the world in a new way. They are able to grasp the surpassing beauty of the moral perfection of God, and of what He has done in the gospel story, and it is this that leads to the effective response that is the mark of true holiness.

As we progress through the rest of the affections we also see how beauty, symmetry and proportion are described to be the nature of truly gracious affections[18]. It must be mentioned at this point the difference that exists between true and false affections. The truly converted man sees that divine things are beautiful in themselves, rather than just seeing personal advantage in them. But a hypocrite who believes in the general truth of the Christian scheme may be zealous in religion for a time, but such zeal is merely a selfish attempt to gain personal advantage, rather than a heartfelt response to the overwhelming perfection of God.

We note that the remaining signs[19] describe the result of their presence in the life of the believer. Such quality as love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness and mercy are part of the true Christian nature. All these find their final fulfilment in the twelfth sign which essentially is an exposition of Christ's own words: 'By your fruits you will know them' (Matthew 7:16). In his comments on this final sign Nichols shows that Edwards 'reorients the previous signs of truly gracious affections to the notion of practice.'[20] In other words, in the last sign Edwards looks for the manifestation of the earlier eleven signs in person's life.

As Edwards proceeds to describe his last and chief sign he succinctly states it: 'Gracious and holy affections have their exercise and fruit

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17  Idem.

18  Second sign in *RA*, pp. 274-278, fifth sign in *RA*, pp. 288-294 , sixth sign in *RA*, 294-302, seventh sign in *RA*, pp. 302-303, and tenth sign in *RA*, 309-312.

19  Eighth, ninth, eleventh and twelfth signs in *RA*, 303-309; 312-320.

20  Nichols, *op. cit.*, 118.

in Christian practice'.[21] This leads him to show that the business of the Christian life is to be 'universally conformed to, and directed by Christian rules'[22]. But according to the view he holds, this imply three things (1) this practice is directed by Christian rules, (2) this practice receives priority in his life and is pursued with highest earnestness and diligence; and (3) he persists in it to the end of his life. At this point Edwards begins to discuss the doctrine of perseverance and the natural process of growth and fruit bearing that accompanies genuine conversion.

Like everywhere else everything Edwards says is now supported with biblical truth. Within the doctrine of perseverance universal obedience is the first topic to be discussed and supported with biblical example of people who have followed the Lord wholeheartedly. Edwards stipulates that all those who belong to God 'should part with their dearest iniquities… sins that most easily beset them, and to which they are most exposed by their natural inclinations, evil customs, or particular circumstances, as well as others'.[23] Edwards explains that this obedience must not be understood only in terms of 'negatives', or in universally avoiding wicked practices. The true converted person, says Edwards, must also be universal in the 'positives' of religion, because sins of omission are as much breaches of God's commands, as sins of commission (Matthew 25).

The next point in the discussion focuses upon the need to perform all Christian service with 'great earnestness and diligence'. He asserts that for a truly converted man the business of religion becomes the main business of his life. Edwards stresses not only the importance of doing good works, but also the need to be zealous of good works. From workers in God's vineyard Edwards moves to the analogy of 'good and faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ' and to that of runners in a race for the 'prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord'[24]. These are all Christian duties which must be undertaken in one way only: with earnestness and dili-

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21  *RA*, 314.

22  Idem.

23  *RA*, 315.

24  Idem.

gence. Only those who conform to this standard are proved to have the fruits of true conversion. They are people who pray always and watch in order to escape the awful things that are coming on the ungodly. Edwards beautifully summarises everything in the following words:

> The true faith by which persons rely on the righteousness of Christ and the work he has done for them, and truly feed and live upon him, is evermore accompanied with a spirit of earnestness in the Christian work and course.[25]

Edwards' next step in the development of this theme is to show that the truly converted Christian perseveres in obedience not only with earnestness and diligence, but also 'through all the various kinds of trials that he meets with, to the end of life'.[26] This is a doctrine abundantly taught in Scripture and to prove this he refers to various texts from the Bible. He does acknowledge that the saints may not always live saintly lives. In fact he writes:

> True saints may be guilty of some kinds and degrees of backsliding, may be foiled by particular temptations, and fall into sin, yea, great sins: but they can never fall away so as to grow weary of religion and the service of God, and habitually to dislike and neglect it, either on its own account, or on account of the difficulties that attend it; as is evident by Gal. vi. 9. Rom. ii. 7 Heb. x. 36. Isa. xliii. 22. Mal. i. 13. They can never backslide so as to continue no longer in a way of universal obedience; or so, that it shall cease to be their manner to observe all the rules of Christianity, and do all duties required, even the most difficult, and in the most difficult circumstances.[27]

A true saint cannot be guilty of such things. Edwards continues to explain that they who are truly converted are new men, new creatures; new, not only within, but without, they are sanctified throughout, in spirit,

25  Idem.

26  Idem.

27  Ibid., 316.

soul, and body. With respect to the hypocrite who falls away Edwards explains that he is visibly displaying that he was never risen with Christ. His hypocrisy is especially visible when his opinion of his being converted is the very cause of his failure. With regard to the hypocrites Edwards says:

> …whether their falling away be into their former sins, or into some new kind of wickedness, having the corruption of nature only turned into a new channel, instead of its being mortified.[28]

As Edwards continues to explain the difference between true and false conversion he draws attention to the lack of solidity, life and strength in the life of the hypocrite. He explains:

> False discoveries and affections do not go deep enough, to reach and govern the spring of men's actions and practice. The seed in the stony ground had not deepness of earth; the root did not go deep enough to bring forth fruit.[29]

But with regard to the truly converted man, Edwards has this to say: 'But gracious affections go to the very bottom of the heart, and take hold of the very inmost springs of life and activity. Herein chiefly appears the power of true godliness, viz. in its being effectual in practice.'[30] Thus he explains that the power of godliness is manifested first of all within the soul; within the place where the sensible, lively exercise of gracious affections take place. 'Yet', says Edwards, 'the principal evidence of this power is in those exercises of holy affections that are practical; conquering the will, the lusts, and corruptions of men, and carrying them on in the way of holiness, through all temptation, difficulty, and opposition.'[31] He then proceeds in this last sign to relate all of the previous signs to this great truth. Thus the reasons that explain why holy affections will cause men

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28 Idem.

29 Ibid., 317.

30 Idem.

31 Idem.

to be holy in their practice are: 'the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things, an embracement of religion for its own sake, the love for holiness, or moral excellency, divine teaching and leading of the Spirit of God which gives the soul a natural relish of the sweetness of that which is holy, spiritual knowledge, a thorough conviction of the reality and certainty of divine things, change of nature, a spirit of humility, Christlikeness, tenderness of spirit, a beautiful symmetry and proportion and spiritual hunger.'[32]

Edwards refers this way to the connection between this sign and the others signs and stresses again that 'true grace is not an inactive thing, there is nothing in heaven or earth of a more active nature, for it is life itself, the most active kind, even spiritual and divine life'.[33] He then adds: 'Regeneration, which is that work of God in which grace is infused, has a direct relation to practice, for it is the very end of it, with a view to which the whole work is wrought'.[34] As Edwards comes towards the conclusion of his treatise he explains that 'none but true Christians do live such an obedient life, so universally devoted to their duty, and given up to the business of a Christian, as has been explained. All unsanctified men are workers of iniquity'.[35] His closing remark about this final sigh is that Christian practice is 'the chief of all the signs of grace, both as an evidence of the sincerity of professors unto others, and also to their own conscience'.[36]

## A Particular Examination of Evangelical Humiliation

We come now to focus upon one individual sign, or one fruit of conversion, namely evangelical humiliation. In discussing evangelical humiliation, Holmes makes a distinction between 'evangelical humiliation' and

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32  Ibid., 317-318.

33  Ibid., 318.

34  Idem.

35  Ibid., 319.

36  Ibid., 320.

what he calls 'a purely natural humiliation'[37]. He shows that the first is a standard term in Puritan discussions of conversion.

Jonathan Edwards draws our attention as well to an important distinction. He wants us to understand that not everything which passes for humility in this world is the sort of humility that the Bible requires. Thus he distinguishes between 'legal humiliation' and 'evangelical humiliation', and explains that the former represents what men have while in 'a state of nature' and the latter being 'peculiar to true saints'.[38] He then proceeds to outline the characteristics of these two sorts of humiliation as well as indicating the difference between them.

*Legal Humiliation: the Causes and Manifestations of Legal Humiliation*
The legal humiliation originates, says Edwards, from the 'common' influence of the Spirit of God and assists our natural principles and especially our natural conscience. He maintains that this 'common' humility comes from an understanding of the religious things. The man possessing legal humility knows their natural properties and qualities and particularly the natural perfections of God, such as His greatness, terrible majesty and realises that he falls short of them. In order to realise better which are these natural perfections, Edwards alludes to the manifestations experienced by the congregation of Israel when the law was given at Mount Sinai.

Under this legal humiliation the sense of the awful greatness and natural perfections of God convince men that they are exceeding sinful and guilty, and exposed to the wrath of God. But Edwards points out that the people judged in the Day of Judgement will have similar feelings. They will feel sinful and guilty, knowing that they can do nothing to make themselves righteous. They will still be proud and unbroken. The problem for Edwards consists in the fact that these people do not see their own odiousness on account of sin; they do not see the hateful nature of sin. Their submission to God will be forced. They will have no desire to throw themselves before God in worship freely confessing and mourning

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37  Holmes, *op. cit*, 176.

38  *Religious Affections*, Sect. VI, 294.

their sins. According to Edwards in legal humiliation men do not have an answerable frame of heart, consisting in a disposition to humiliate themselves, and exalt God alone.

Edwards explains that such a disposition is given only in evangelical humiliation, and is given to the believer by overcoming the heart and changing its inclination through the discovery of God's holy beauty.

So, with respect to legal humiliation Edwards wants us to understand that it has in it no spiritual good, nothing of the nature of true virtue. Therefore we must move on to consider the true humiliation, called by Edwards evangelical humiliation.

*Evangelical Humiliation: the Importance of Evangelical Humiliation*
According to Edwards evangelical humiliation is absolutely essential to true spirituality. Without it there is no genuine spiritual life, regardless of the intensity of religious feeling. Edwards supports this argument with a host of text from both Old and New Testament.[39]

He takes and views Holy Scripture as 'our rule', in judging the nature of true religion, and judging of our own religious qualifications and state. Edwards then says: 'This is a great and most essential thing in true religion. The whole frame of the gospel, every thing appertaining to the new covenant, and all God's dispensations towards fallen man, are calculated to bring to pas this effect.'[40]

After dealing with the biblical texts brought to support the importance of evangelical humiliation, Edwards continues to say: 'It concerns us greatly to look at this humiliation, as one of the most essential things pertaining to true Christianity.'[41] Therefore our next interest is to look at the causes and manifestations of evangelical humiliation.

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39   Idem.

40   Idem.

41   Ibid., 295.

*The Causes and Manifestations of Evangelical Humiliation*

Edwards' question and ours as well, is what is true humility? Edwards would say that true humility is to know God as He is, in all the glory and beauty of His holy love. In one of his sermons Edwards gives the following definition: 'Humility may be defined to be a habit of mind and heart corresponding to our comparative unworthiness and vileness before God, or a sense of our own comparative meanness in his sight, with the disposition to a behaviour answerable thereto'.[42]

He explains that this evangelical humiliation is the work of the Holy Spirit and leads in time to a conviction of the hopelessness of our condition, and finally a looking to Christ for pardon and help.[43] When we thus get a glimpse of God's beauty and self-giving love in Christ, of the transcendent beauty of divine things in their moral qualities, we are overwhelmed by our own uncleanness and self-obsession.

Edwards explains that those affected by evangelical humiliation see their horrible condition as a result of sin. They distinguish the hateful nature of sin which troubles them in this life. Again it must be emphasized that this sense is given to them by a discovery of the beauty of God's holiness and moral perfection. In evangelical humiliation truly converted men have an answerable frame of heart, consisting in a disposition to abase themselves, and exalt God alone. In evangelical humiliation such a disposition is given to them by overcoming their heart and changing its inclination.

In evangelical humiliation men see the need for self-denial. The new state of their heart brings them to a disposition in which they are happy to humble themselves before God. This is how Edwards explains the essence of evangelical humiliation:

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42  *Charity and Its Fruits*, 130.

43  See also Edwards' discussion on the importance of the doctrine of Justification by faith alone for a detailed account of the importance to trust in Jesus for our right standing before God and not on ourselves. "Justification by Faith Alone", first published in 1734; reprinted in *Works,* Vol. I, 652-54.

The essence of evangelical humiliation consists in such humility as becomes a creature in itself exceeding sinful, under a dispensation grace; consisting in a mean esteem of himself, as in himself nothing, and altogether contemptible and odious; attended with a mortification of a disposition to exalt himself, and a free renunciation of his own glory.[44]

He then says:

This is a great and most essential thing in true religion. The whole frame of the gospel, every thing appertaining to the new covenant, and all God's dispensations towards fallen man, are calculated to bring to pass this effect. They that are destitute of this, have no true religion, whatever profession they make, and how high soever their religious affections may be.[45]

But Edwards moves his attention towards a more careful look at how humility acts. Once humility perceives God's realities as they are, it begins to practice what Edwards calls 'self-denial'.[46] According to Edwards, self-denial is the principal part of the great Christian duty. He continues to show that this duty consists in two things: (1) in a man's turning away from worldly interests and pleasures. This means that he wants to ignore or redirect his uncontrolled desires for greed, fame and power when he sees that fulfilling those desires will bring unhappiness in the long run. And (2) in denying his natural pride and self-esteemed, and he does this freely and from his own initiative. This is what the Christian does in evangelical humiliation. The second is described by Edwards to be the most difficult part of self-denial, because he thinks that natural man can come much nearer to the first than the second. It is much easier to abandon wealth, pleasures and common enjoyments of the world, but it is much more difficult to renounce your own dignity and righteousness. For Edwards this is impossible to practice unless the soul has seen the

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44  Idem.
45  Idem.
46  Ibid., 295.

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beauty of God's love and lives in response to that love. Edwards stresses that people never deny themselves for Christ, but only sell 'one lust to feed another'.[47]

Edwards explains that many hypocrites pretend to be humble and quite often there is nothing more important for them in their Christian behaviour. This is how Edwards describe their attitude:

> They endeavour to make a great show of humility in speech and behaviour; but they commonly make bungling work of it, though glorious work in their own eyes. They can not find out what a humble speech and behaviour is, or how to speak and act so that there may indeed be a savour of Christian humility in what they say and do: that sweet humble air and mien is beyond their art, being not led by the Spirit, or naturally guided to a behaviour becoming holy humility, by the vigour of a lowly spirit within them.[48]

McDermott observed as well that the unregenerate are often able to practice the first kind of self-denial, but are totally incapable of the second.[49] They can deny themselves the obvious sins of the flesh because they know that those sins will hurt them and ruin their reputations.

Edwards proceeds to make an application important to all true Christians. Making this application he discusses the problem of spiritual pride[50]. Firstly, Edwards refers to the man who trusts in his own experiences and makes his own righteousness from them. This man, explains Edwards, is proud of his own experiences and admires his own spiritual experiences and consider himself superior to others. Such spiritual pride

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47  Ibid., 295.

48  Idem. Edwards continues to describe the language of the hypocrite who pretends be humble.

49  Gerald R. McDermott, *Seeing God: Jonathan Edwards and Spiritual Discernment* (Vancouver, Canada: Regent College Publishing, 2000), 147.

50  *RA*, 296. Edwards' sermon: "The Spirit of Charity is an Humble Spirit is also relevant for the subject of humility and its causes and effects. Jonathan Edwards," *Charity and Its Fruits*, 128-156.

makes him think that he did well before God. Edwards then explains that he looks on these experiences with satisfaction and then thinks that God looks on them so too. And so unavoidably he imagines that God looks on his experiences as a merit in him.

Secondly, the spiritually pride man wishes to promote himself and he prides himself as much in God's eyes as he does in his own. There is something in him which makes him desire to let others know what he has accomplished or what he can teach them. Thus he is always in the position to demand to do things. Edwards describe this demanding attitude in the following way: 'It is natural for them to do the part of dictators and masters in matters of religion; and so implicitly affect to be called of men Rabbi.'[51] The truly humbled spirit, on the other had, is always ready to offer to help when help is needed. The one, says Edwards, 'whose heart is under the power of Christian humility is of a contrary disposition'. True humility is more impressed by others' gifts than by its own. Humble men do not assume they are teachers. They want to be taught. They are much more eager to hear and to receive instructions from others, that to demand and dictate. Edwards supports all his arguments with biblical texts, referring to Jeremiah 1:6: Exodus 3:11 and James 1:19 where people like Jeremiah and Moses stand as example of truly humble saints.

Finally, Edwards also refers to the spiritually man's speech and the manner of his conversations. This is what he says about this man: 'He may use humble terms, and speak of his experiences as of the great things God has done for him, and it may be calls upon others to glorify God for them.'[52] McDermott, describing the same attitude, makes the following assertion: 'When I am given a flattering introduction before a speech, a part of me winces at the attention, but another part of me secretly revels in it.'[53]

Edwards summarises everything he has said about spiritual pride with the following comments: 'The deceitfulness of the heart of man appears

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51  *RA*, 297.

52  *RA*, 296.

53  McDermott, *op. cit.*, 142.

in no one thing so much, as this of spiritual pride and self-righteous-
ness.'[54]

Having examined the subject of true and false humiliation we shall
move on to our next and final heading.

## The Application of Evangelical Humiliation to Converts from the Greek-Orthodox Church of Romania

Among other doctrinal issues which should be explained to all those
converted from the Greek-orthodox church of Romania, the issue refer-
ring to the difference between legal humiliation and evangelical humilia-
tion must be given significant emphasis. I am saying this because it is well
known that the Christian life in the Greek-orthodox church is very much
characterized by what Edwards calls legal humiliation. There is much
emphasis in this church on humility, which is reflected in many different
ways, contrary to Scripture, but the humility of this people is hypocritical
and it has in it no spiritual good, nothing of the nature of true virtue.

The Greek-orthodox church is in most of the cases only interested
in bringing people to a 'common' humility, but it does not do anything
to bring them to a real conviction of sin. People are not made to see the
hateful nature of sin.

Therefore, those converted from this church must be taught that it is
not enough to have some feelings of God's majesty and power. It is not
enough to know that God is righteous and that they are not. They need to
know that a truly humbled man comes before God with his pride broken,
with his sin exposed and confessed. He feels conviction of sin not simply
as a work of the natural conscience, but as a result of his understanding
and perception of the beauty of God's love. He mourns his sins not be-
cause he fears God's punishment, but because he knows he has dishon-
oured the One whose love is so great and beautiful. He throws himself at
God's feet in worship and submission not because he has to, but because
this is his delight.

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54   *RA*, 296.

One other important application for those converted from the Greek-orthodox church is with regard to what Edwards calls spiritual pride. The sin of spiritual pride is exceedingly obvious within these churches. When Edwards speaks about the man who trusts in his own experiences and makes his own righteousness from them you feel that he is speaking specifically to these people. Trusting in his own efforts to attain favour with God is the main characteristic of the Greek-orthodox believer. He goes to the church in order to perform deeds that will earn him merits before God. So the more he performs the more satisfied and proud he is. He thinks he is spiritual and therefore his pride is a spiritual one. Edwards explains that this man not only is proud of his own experiences, but he admires them too, he looks on them with satisfaction, and, while he does that, he thinks that God looks on them in the same way. Consequently his spiritual pride makes him think that he did well before God. This in turn leads to a desire to promote himself. There is something in him which makes him desire to let others know what he has accomplished or what he could teach others to accomplish. It is important to show here that his spirituality is only a matter of importance for the time he is in the church. He is never willing to renounce his sin when he is either in the church or outside the church. He likes to know he has served God in some way, but he wants to enjoy his lusts too.

When these people are converted they need to understand that true humility means trusting in Christ's righteousness and in what he has accomplished on their behalf. When they look at themselves they need to see themselves 'poor in spirit'[55], dependent on God's mercy and grace. The gospel's message is to cut off all glorying, not only before God, but also before men (Romans 4:1, 20). According to Edwards the true humble person, the one converted, in our case from the Greek-orthodox church, needs to learn to renounce all sins, great and little, and to refuse to comply with the demands of the world, because serving God and yet continuing to live in sin is inconsistent with true spirituality.

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55  Edwards explains in some details the meaning of 'poor in spirit', in *RA*, 301.

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## Final Remarks

I have endeavoured in this presentation to examine some of the most wonderful truths discussed by Edwards in his treatise on *Religious Affections*. My purpose was to seek to establish the nature of true godliness and to explain what constitutes a true believer and how we can distinguish him from a hypocrite. The subject is a very practical one and requires to be treated from a very practical point of view. Before we discussed Section 12 from Part 3 of the *Affections* we saw that the stress was laid on the inclinations of the heart. In Section 12 the whole objective is to prove that a man's act must be the proper evidence of the state of the heart. In Edwards' terms this is called Christian practice and is evidenced by its fruits. After an analysis of the fruits of true conversion we conclude with Edwards that Christian practice 'is a great and distinguishing sign of true and saving grace'.[56]

From the general presentation of the fruits of true conversion I have moved to present a fruit that is absolutely essential to true spirituality: evangelical humiliation. At that point we were interested, first to differentiate between legal humiliation, inappropriate for the true converted believer, and evangelical humiliation, absolutely necessary in the life of the truly converted believer. From there we proceeded to discover how evangelical humiliation originates and then manifests itself in the life of the believer.

We shall conclude saying with Edwards that all Christian affections flow out to Christ from a pure and broken heart. This is what he finally says about the truly humble believer: 'A truly Christian love, either to God or men, is a humble broken-hearted love. The desires of the saints, however, earnest, are humble desires: their hope is a humble hope; and their joy, even when it is unspeakable and full of glory, is an humble, broken-hearted joy, leaving the Christian more poor in spirit, more like a little child, and more disposed to an universal lowliness of behaviour'.[57]

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56  *RA*, 320.

57  *RA*, 302.

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