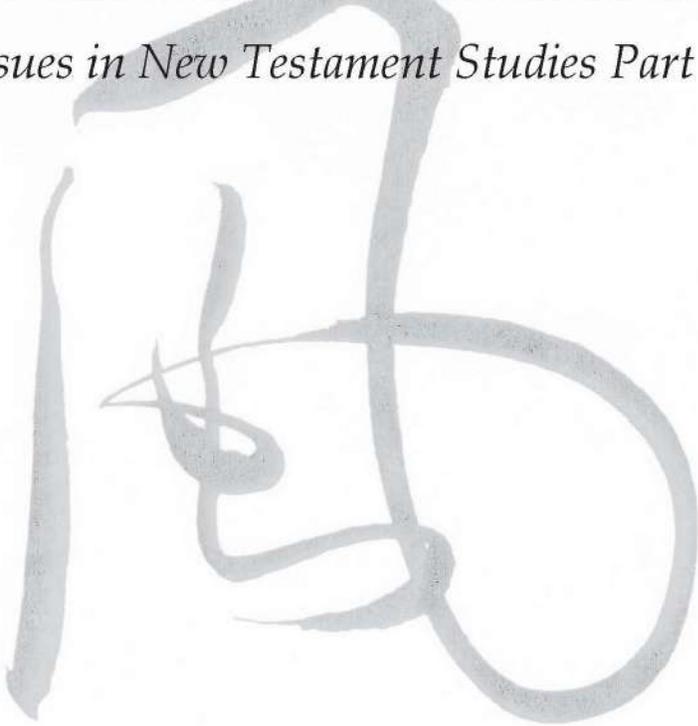


# Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies

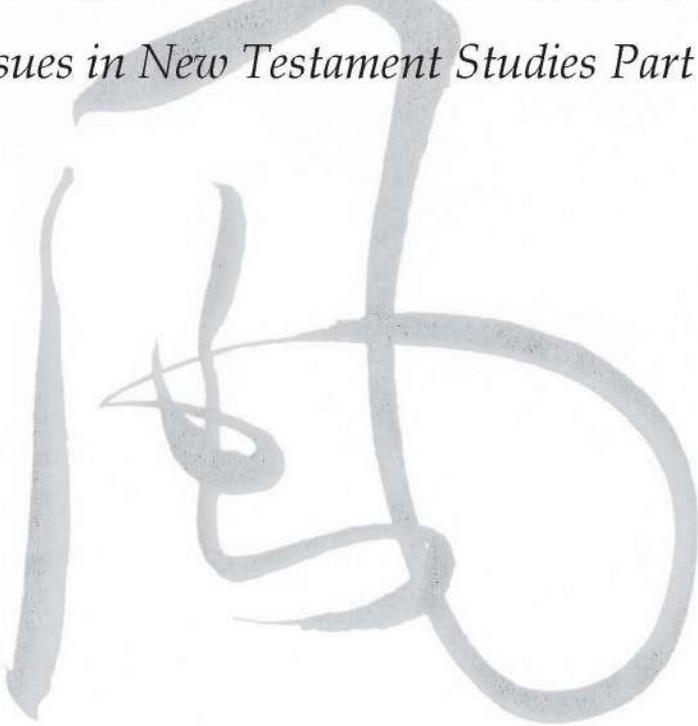
*Issues in New Testament Studies Part 1*



Volume 19, Number 2 (August 2016)

# Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies

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### **Issues in New Testament Studies Part I**

In this and the next issue, we wade into the crowded waters of New Testament Studies. In Part 1, we present the work of a veteran scholar, Dr. Donald Hagner, the George Eldon Ladd Professor Emeritus of New Testament at the School of Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. We also present the work of two newer scholars, Adrian Rosen, Ph.D (cand.) and Marlene Yap, MTh (cand.), who both teach here at APTS.

All articles were originally given as lectures at the 24th annual William W. Menzies Lectureship Series January 18-22, 2016, on the APTS campus in Baguio City, Philippines and have been edited for publication.

The five articles by Hagner deal with continuity and discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. Following the opening article that lays the groundwork for all of the lectures, he divides his material into four parts (1) Newness and Discontinuity in the Gospels, (2) Newness in the Pauline Corpus, (3) Pauline Corpus and Hebrews and (4) Catholic Epistles and the Apocalypse. As Hagner notes, the discussion on continuity and discontinuity of the two Testaments is not new. Throughout history, the pendulum “has swung back and forth to extremes in the history of NT scholarship, depending on the climate of the times.” He contends that much of the past discussion focuses on discontinuity, while more recently the pendulum has swung completely toward continuity. Here, with plenty of OT and NT references to both sides, he reflects a refreshing balance.

Adrian Rosen’s article takes a close look at the ascension and exaltation of Jesus in Lukan theology. His stated purpose is “to clarify the theological significance of the event most often designated as the ascension” of Christ, as detailed by Luke in Luke 24:51 and Acts 1:2, 9-11 and 22. Rosen, however, prefers the term assumption to ascension to describe the translation of Jesus into heaven as he feels it more comprehensively describes what happened. He points out that Luke

repeatedly alluded to the ascension of Elijah as a type of the assumption of Christ, suggesting that Luke was importing the same theological ramifications. One is compelled to agree with him that “the assumption provided a graphic and symbolic display of Jesus’ exaltation to God’s right hand.”

Marlene Yap’s article is a welcome contribution to a growing emphasis on shame/honor issues in biblical studies. Articles like this provide a necessary reflection on an issue that uncovers a cultural blind spot among most western scholars, whose writings tend to reflect the West’s guilt/innocence cultural orientation. In doing so, she tangentially reveals both the need and value of theological dialogue between the West and the Majority World, something that has always been a core value of the *AJPS*.

Yap contends that because the cultures of the NT were based on shame and honor, they should be understood and interpreted within that cultural framework. Here, she focuses on three of Jesus’ parables, The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), The Dishonest Manager (Luke 16:1-8) and The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). For Yap, the focus of the story of the Prodigal Son is really on the counter cultural attitudes of the father more than that of either of his sons. In the Dishonest Manager, she points out that the theme of the owner’s magnanimity is much stronger than that of the steward’s dishonesty. In doing so, she gives the clearest interpretation of this parable I have ever read. In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the theme of honor and shame is reflected in the sociological status of Abraham, the rich man and Lazarus. The unrepentant rich man talks to Abraham, since he is the father of all Jews, rather than lowering himself to speak to Lazarus. In doing so, he insults Abraham as well, since Lazarus is Abraham’s guest of honor in Paradise. In tying these articles together, Yap contends that the overall themes that unite these parables are God’s justice, grace and love. Her interpretation of these stories through the honor/shame cultural lens supports her conclusion well.

Allow me to say a word about the Asian/Western authorship makeup of this edition. Through the years, the *AJPS* has pursued a good balance between publishing the work of Asians and Westerners. For the previous two editions, all authors have been Asian. There are two reasons why this edition reflects a western dominance. One, as mentioned, the Hagner articles were presented as a unit at our

Lectureship, and the editorial team felt that it would be better to present them here in the same manner rather than dividing them up over two editions, which was our original intent. Second, we were intending to publish an article by another Asian author and put the Rosen article in the next edition, but had to switch them due to editing issues. For those who would prefer to see more Asian authors, thank you for understanding.

As always, you are welcome to contact me through [www.aps.edu](http://www.aps.edu). I'd be delighted to hear from you.

Thanks for reading,

Dave Johnson, D.Miss  
Managing Editor



**How “New” Is the New Testament?: Continuity and Discontinuity  
Between the Old Testament (Formative Judaism) and  
the New Testament (Early Christianity)**

**Introductory Lecture**

by Donald Hagner

The question of the relationship of the Old and New Testaments has been a much discussed issue in the church from the beginning. The NT frequently quotes the OT and even more frequently alludes to it; and the NT constantly stresses the fulfillment of the OT promises. These facts inevitably raise the challenging question of *continuity* and *discontinuity*—i.e., the extent to which the NT can be regarded as simply continuing or extending the OT,<sup>1</sup> and the extent to which the NT can be regarded as “breaking new ground” or taking us to a new reality that necessarily transcends the OT (although anticipated by it). A part of this question, and indeed a manifestation of it, is the important issue of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity.

Although *a priori* it would seem clear enough that somehow both continuity and discontinuity are true and must be affirmed, the pendulum nevertheless has swung back and forth to extremes in the history of NT scholarship, depending on the climate of the times. Through most of the history of the Church, it is hardly surprising that the emphasis has been on *discontinuity*. Already in the early 2nd century, we encounter strong anti-Judaism (theological disagreement,

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<sup>1</sup>I must here mention the new book by my Fuller Seminary colleague, OT scholar John Goldingay, titled “Do We Need the New Testament?: Letting the Old Testament Speak for Itself” (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015). I had nearly finished writing these lectures when I first encountered this book. While I appreciate Goldingay’s opposition to Marcionism and his desire to value the OT on its own terms, I think he seriously underestimates the newness of the NT and its importance. His answer to the question posed in his title would seem to be something like, “Yes but just barely.” He emphasizes continuity and downplays discontinuity. There are some good things and some important correctives to gain from reading his book; but in the main, I’m afraid I cannot recommend it.

which I distinguish from anti-Semitism) and, hence, stress on discontinuity plainly evident in the apostolic fathers Barnabas and Ignatius.

In the middle of the 2nd century, Marcion infamously posed the problem in the starkest terms by the rejection of the OT writings as Scripture and the differentiation of the God of the OT (the Demiurge) from the God of the NT. We gratefully note that the early Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, had the wisdom to resist Marcion and to affirm the OT as a vital part of its canon. Further to be mentioned in the 2nd century are Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* and the anti-Judaism of Melito's Paschal Homily, and in the 3rd century Tertullian. Particularly grievous is the *Adversus Judaeos* literature of the following centuries, represented by such fathers as Ambrose, Cyprian, Cyril of Alexandria, and especially John Chrysostom's homilies against the Jews.<sup>2</sup> Christian polemic against the Jews continued through the Middle Ages down to Martin Luther's venomous "On the Jews and Their Lies" and beyond.

As to be expected, there was corresponding polemic from the Jewish side (although nowhere nearly of the same volume as of the Christian polemic) also stressing discontinuity. First, we may mention the liturgical alteration known as the *Birkhat Ha-Minim* ("Blessing of the Heretics"). This Twelfth of the Eighteen Benedictions of the synagogue prayer service was introduced at Yavneh (Jamnia) near the end of the 1st century in order to keep Jewish converts to Christianity from attending the synagogue. In a somewhat later form it read: "For the apostates let there be no hope. And let the arrogant government be speedily uprooted in our days. Let the minim<sup>3</sup> (heretics) be destroyed in a moment. And let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be inscribed together with the righteous. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humblest the arrogant."<sup>4</sup>

More influential, however, was the scandalous *Toledoth Yeshu* ("Generations of Jesus" or "Life of Jesus"), written down before the 10th century but based on much earlier oral sources, including material from the Talmud and Midrashim. Although there is no standard version of the story, the basic plot runs like this:

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<sup>2</sup>For a survey and analysis, see L.M. McDonald, "Anti-Judaism in the Early Church Fathers," in *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith*, C.A. Evans and D.A. Hagner, eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 215-52.

<sup>3</sup>Although not perhaps later, apparently the word *nozerim* (Nazarenes) was included.

<sup>4</sup>This reading reflects that of a siddur manuscript found in the Cairo Geniza toward the end of the 19th century, but going back to a much earlier time.

Miriam, the mother of Yeshu, is seduced by one Joseph Pandira (alternatively, by a Roman soldier named Panthera). The illegitimate Yeshu, who fails to show respect to the Sages, steals the ineffable name of God from the Temple, by which he is able to work a variety of miracles, even the raising of the dead and proclaiming himself as the Son of God and Messiah of Israel. In reality, he was a sorcerer and deceiver. He was stoned and his body hung on a cabbage stalk, because no other tree would consent to bear his body. After his burial, a gardener took the body from the tomb and threw it into a ditch, leaving an empty tomb for the disciples to find.

For centuries on into the late Medieval Period and later, this was the only source of information about Jesus readily available to ordinary Jews. Looking at the big picture, it remains true, however, that the Jews were more content to ignore Christianity than the Christians were to ignore Judaism.

With the coming of the Enlightenment and the Emancipation of the Jews beginning in the late 18th century, the climate began to change, and now for the first time came the possibility of a more positive Jewish approach to Jesus. This new, open attitude (exhibited almost exclusively among Reform Jews and not among Orthodox Jews) gave rise in the 20th century to what would become known as the "Jewish Reclamation of Jesus."<sup>5</sup> These scholars emphasized the Jewishness of Jesus, attempting to show that Jesus could be fitted quite comfortably into the Jewish milieu of his day as a healer and prophet and even perhaps a (false) messianic claimant.

As for the material in the Gospels that did not fit their preconception of the Jewish Jesus, following in the steps of radical critical Protestant scholars, they suggested that the faith of the post-resurrection Church had been freely read into the Gospel narratives, creating at points a Jesus who did not correspond to historical truth. What is especially remarkable about the Jewish reclamation of Jesus, however, is that, with it, the pendulum swings away from discontinuity to emphasis on continuity, even if it necessitated the denial of the authenticity of much of the content of the Gospels.

Exactly because Jesus was so Jewish, it is not such a great surprise that Jews would be able to think of him as "belonging within the fold." With this "homecoming of Jesus," it was thought no longer possible for Jesus to be understood as the founder of Christianity. Rather, it was Paul who became regarded as mainly responsible for Christianity as we know it. Here again, however, Jewish scholars could appeal to

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<sup>5</sup>See D.A. Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus: An Analysis and Critique of the Modern Jewish Study of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984).

Protestant critical scholarship, which had already driven a wedge between Jesus and Paul, making the latter the true founder of Christianity.

In light of this emerging perspective, what is perhaps most surprising is the rise of a parallel movement that can be called the “Jewish Reclamation of Paul.”<sup>6</sup> Here again and startlingly, the pendulum has shifted from discontinuity to continuity. Given the hitherto common and seemingly self-evident understanding of Paul as having, in some sense, broken with Judaism (a view prevalent from Luther onwards until recent times), the emphasis was always on the discontinuity between Paul’s Christianity and Judaism.<sup>7</sup>

The newer emphasis on continuity has gained considerable momentum in recent decades through revisionist readings of Paul among Christian scholars<sup>8</sup> and, to some extent, through the influence of the so-called “New Perspectives on Paul.”<sup>9</sup> Starting with the conclusion (not really new, but earlier neglected) that Judaism is a religion of grace, not of works-righteousness (that is, a legalism wherein one earns acceptance with God through obedience to the Law), the argument is that Paul had no difficulty with the Law except for its establishment of identity markers that excluded the Gentiles from its scope. As Tom

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<sup>6</sup>An example may be seen in Pamela Eisenbaum’s *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009). In many ways parallel is Amy-Jill Levine’s book on Jesus, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2006). From my perspective, both books are themselves models of misunderstanding.

<sup>7</sup>See D.A. Hagner, “Paul’s Quarrel with Judaism,” in *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith*, C.A. Evans and D.A., Hagner, eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 128-150. See also idem, “Paul as a Jewish Believer in Jesus—According to His Letters, in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, O. Skarsaune and R. Hvalvik, eds. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 96-120. See also idem, “Paul in Modern Jewish Thought,” in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to Professor F.F. Bruce on his 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, D.A. Hagner and M.J. Harris, eds. (Exeter/Grand Rapids: Paternoster/Eerdmans, 1980), 143-165.

<sup>8</sup>E.g., K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); and W.S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity*. LNTS 322 (London: T&T Clark, 2006). For the perspective of a Jewish scholar, see especially the writings of M.D. Nanos: e.g., *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); *The Irony of Galatians: Paul’s Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002); “Paul and Judaism: Why Not Paul’s Judaism?” in *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle*, M.D. Given, ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010), 117-160.

<sup>9</sup>The definitive essays are now collected together in J.D.G. Dunn’s *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005; rev. ed. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2008).

Wright succinctly puts it, the issue for Paul is not grace but race.<sup>10</sup> This new view of Paul is, of course, largely possible only through the reinterpretation of much in Paul’s letters, especially in Galatians and Romans.<sup>11</sup>

These developments stressing the full continuity of early Christianity and Judaism are consonant with the emerging view that Christianity from the beginning was and remained a sect within Judaism and that there never was a “parting of the ways” between synagogue and church.<sup>12</sup> This extreme view is not shared by many, but an increasing number of scholars would place the parting no earlier than the 4th century.

It is clear that nowadays the pendulum is swinging completely to the side of full continuity between Judaism and Christianity on the part of both Jewish and Christian scholars. This development accords not only with the relativistic spirit of our age, but especially with the concerns of post-Holocaust Jewish Christian dialog.<sup>13</sup> The recent remarkable stress on continuity between Judaism and Christianity raises the questions of whether and to what degree Christianity is to be regarded as new at all and to what extent (if at all) this newness creates discontinuity.

### The Truth of Continuity and Discontinuity

I want to insist from the beginning that there is, without doubt, extensive and substantial continuity between Christianity and Judaism. There is hardly much need to document this or to review the vast discussion that supports this conclusion. Jesus and Paul are, of course, intensely Jewish, as indeed is the entire NT and so too the earliest

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<sup>10</sup>*The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 168.

<sup>11</sup>For critique of this perspective, see S. Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004); and S. Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 12.

<sup>12</sup>See A.H. Becker and A.Y. Reed (eds.), *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003; repr. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007). For a defense of gradual parting of the ways, underway almost from the beginning, see D.A. Hagner, “Another Look at Parting of the Ways” in *Earliest Christian History: History, Literature and Theology: Essays from the Tyndale Fellowship in Honor of Martin Hengel*, WUNT 2.320. M.F. Bird and J. Maston, eds. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 381–427.

<sup>13</sup>The impact of Jewish Christian dialog on the conclusions of NT scholarship is worth pondering. It has become more difficult than ever for scholars to say anything negative about Judaism for fear of being labeled anti-Semitic.

church and its theology. A church that is truly biblical cannot affirm Marcionism. What happens in Jesus and the coming of the Kingdom of God is part of the one great meta-narrative of the history of salvation. Christianity is the goal and culmination of the story of Israel. Herein lies the *continuity*. For this reason, the biblical word “fulfillment” is the perfect word to describe the situation. It captures *the unity of the realization together with its promise*. It reaches both ways—to the past and to the future.

Christianity is not *other* than Judaism; it is the *fulfillment* of Judaism. Even the word “anti-Judaism” is not really the most appropriate word to describe the NT’s attitude to Judaism (although it does express the disagreement that is there). The early church was at first entirely Jewish; and although it could not long remain a sect within Judaism, Christianity is to be understood as a *fulfilled Judaism* and could be described as a Judaism coming to its goal in the full inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God.

While all this is true, at the same time the extent of newness in the Gospels—and indeed the whole of the NT—is such that an unavoidable *discontinuity* with Judaism is caused. It is the eschatological/apocalyptic character of what the Gospels announce in the coming of Jesus<sup>14</sup> that marks the pivotal turning point in salvation history. Roy Harrisville’s conclusion remains valid:

That which is concealed and only intimated here [in Mt 13:52] is that the new which Jesus embodies is not merely the chronologically new, but above all, the *eschatologically* new. The element of continuity between new and old is indeed present, but it is a continuity which must not be allowed to deprive the new of its uniqueness (its contrast with the old), its finality, and its dynamic, i.e., its eschatological character.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>“Paradoxically, therefore, the greatest discontinuity is in the coming of Jesus. From one perspective he fulfilled the promises and hopes of the Old Testament, and yet from another he surpassed all expectations so that his coming inaugurated a new and final stage in the history of salvation.” D.L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: The Theological Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2010), 223-24.

<sup>15</sup>*The Concept of Newness in the New Testament*, 28, my italics. The concept of newness “with its attendant aspects of continuity, contrast, finality and the dynamic is central to the New Testament literature as a whole.” *Ibid.*, 108.

The extent of this newness makes it impossible to describe Christianity as merely a sect or a reform movement within Judaism.<sup>16</sup>

#### A Parenthesis on Vocabulary

**ESCHATOLOGY.** Noun: The study of last things. Adjective: [Gk.] *eschatos*, "last." Derived adjective/adverb: "eschatology," having to do with the end of the age. Derived noun: "eschaton," the last age. Note in NT studies: the oxymoron "realized eschatology," the experience of the future in the present and thus the tautology, "future eschatology."

**APOCALYPSE.** Noun: [Gk.] *apokalypsis*, "revelation," "unveiling," commonly a revelation of God, especially at the end of the age.

**APOCALYPTIC.** As an Adjective and a Noun: a dramatic, radical in-breaking of God into the historical process to transform it radically, particularly at the end of the age.

**PROPHECY.** Noun: [Gk.] *prophēteia*, forth-telling (the will or word of God), foretelling.

In contrast to apocalyptic, prophecy denotes what can take place in "ordinary" history—e.g., the restoration of the Davidic kingdom. Apocalyptic, on the other hand, requires the total transformation of the fallen world into the perfection of a new Garden of Eden existence.

Are there then two different expectations in the OT that we need to distinguish and keep separate—a prophetic one for national Israel and an apocalyptic one for an age of transcendent fulfillment amounting to a return to the perfection of Eden. Or can the latter somehow be understood to include the former? Or are those interpreters (e.g., Dispensationalists) correct who insist on a yet future *literal* fulfillment of the national promises to Israel in a putative millennium? Or can it be that the promises to Israel are of a more symbolic or spiritual nature, so that the reference to Israel's national hope amounts to a kind of "code language" that points proleptically to a full, universal realization of the eschatological promise of apocalyptic? It is furthermore important in this connection to remember that the transcendent expectations of apocalyptic naturally apply also (above all?) to Israel.

The situation we face is not dissimilar to the problem of the presence of both realized and future eschatology throughout much of the NT. The NT is, of course, very strong on the fulfillment that Christ has already brought in his first coming and his work on the cross. This

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<sup>16</sup>Cf. M.D. Hooker, *Continuity and Discontinuity: Early Christianity in Its Jewish Setting* (London: Epworth, 1986), 23.

is vital to the entire perspective of the NT. But for all of the positive things that can and should be said about the Church, it is not yet in a time of *fully* realized eschatology. To be sure, some eschatologically tinged phenomena are experienced in the Church, primarily through the mediation of the Holy Spirit. And these experiences are in continuity with the coming transformed age in its fullest manifestation.<sup>17</sup>

The question that begs an answer is this—Is the story of the Bible basically or fundamentally about Israel or about the Church? Obviously, of course, there is a sense in which the story is about *both* Israel *and* the Church. But whereas one can understand Israel as preparatory to the Church, the opposite makes little sense. The Church, including within it Jews and Gentiles, is a manifestation of the greater goal of the whole narrative. According to Ephesians 1:22-23 (NRSV), the Church “is [Christ’s] body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (cf. Col 1:18). Paul was called to preach Christ to the Gentiles,

to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the Church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph 3:8-11).

In light of a statement such as this (and others that could be mentioned), the conclusion of classic Dispensationalism that the Church is to be understood as a “parenthesis” in God’s purpose and plan seems altogether inappropriate. If there is a parenthesis in the outworking of God’s plan, it would have to be the Mosaic Law, which comes to an end with the coming of Christ (see e.g., Gal 3:23-25; Rom 7:4-6). Dispensationalism’s a priori bifurcation of Israel and the Church is an example of finding extreme discontinuity in Scripture, not to mention in the purpose of God.

It is basically this problematic of continuity and discontinuity that will occupy us in these lectures. We will explore what is actually presented as “new” in the NT and what things, therefore, are left behind. I have traced the theme of newness through the whole of the

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<sup>17</sup>Since the apocalyptic reality is not yet here, many of the biblical promises are often presently understood “spiritually”—i.e., maladies, such as blindness, lameness, darkness, and death, are taken as descriptive of our pre-conversion state. Turning to Christ we are delivered from our spiritual captivity, are brought from darkness into light, from blindness to sight, from death to life. These are examples of realized eschatology available to the Christian. But they hardly exhaust the realities to be experienced in the fully realized apocalyptic end time.

NT, although in my lectures, I will have time to look only at some of the most important material in the Gospels, Paul, Hebrews, the Catholic Epistles, and the Apocalypse.

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IMPACTING THE FUTURE OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC CHURCH

## Lecture One: Newness and Discontinuity in the Gospels

by Donald Hagner

### The Gospel According to Mark

The first word in Mark, the earliest of our Gospels, is “Beginning” (*archē*), namely, “The beginning of the good news (*euaggeliou*) of Jesus Christ (the Son of God).” (Mk 1:1)<sup>1</sup> The *good news* is the announcement of something dramatically new, the beginning of eschatological fulfillment—i.e., fulfillment of what the prophets had foretold and of what, therefore, the Israelites for generations had longed for.

Immediately after Mark’s first sentence comes a reference (1:2-4) to what Isaiah had prophesied (Isa 40:3, together with Mal 3:1). The messianic forerunner was about to appear on the stage of history, followed quickly by the Messiah who was about to set up his kingdom. While John would baptize with water, the Promised One would baptize with the Holy Spirit, the agent of eschatological newness (1:8). This good news was not ordinary or even special good news; nor was it new in the mere sense of something added or even something different in an ordinary succession of things. Rather, it referred to a turning point in the history of salvation, ushering in the era that would be the beginning of the realization of the end time.

The first words of Jesus recorded in Mark present the fundamental assertion of the good news of God—“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news” (1:14-15). The kingdom is not simply near but something that has begun already to dawn in and through the ministry of Jesus. Thus, the time of fulfillment “has come” (*peplērōtai*, perfect tense), namely the initiation of the long-awaited eschatological age, the apocalyptic age of which Isaiah had so frequently spoken (Isa 2:2-4; 25:6-9; 35:1-10; 42:1-13; 65:17-25).

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<sup>1</sup>All Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), unless otherwise noted.

In his incisive study of “newness” in the New Testament, Roy A. Harrisville concludes that *kainos* and *neos* (the two NT words for “new,”) are synonyms and that, “Both words connote a temporal as well as a qualitative signification.” He adds that, “This fact has led us to the eschatological aspect of the kerygma as the *locus* of the New Testament idea of newness.”<sup>2</sup> The basic newness contained in the Gospels derives from the central affirmation of the dawning of the eschatological era.

Clearly, the claim of the presence of the eschatological kingdom (i.e., God’s reign here and now) but short of the consummation entails a strong discontinuity with Judaism, just as today it constitutes a main area of disagreement between Jews and Christians. Jews understandably argue that the Messiah cannot have come because the world does not appear to have fundamentally changed. Whatever newness there may be in Christianity, it does not fully match the newness expected from the prophetic promises—at least not yet. And yet the whole of the NT depends on the fundamental affirmation that Scripture is fulfilled and the new promised age has come in Jesus.

It is obvious that the announcement of the good news about the coming of the kingdom is vitally connected with Christology (i.e., the person of Jesus). Already in the beginning of Mark, Jesus has been identified as “the Son of God” (1:1, if the texts of B, D, and W be allowed), and “my beloved Son” by the voice from heaven (1:11). Still in Chapter 1, a man with an unclean spirit in the synagogue of Capernaum cries out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God” (1:24). All who witnessed this and the exorcism that followed were amazed and asked, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him” (1:27).

In response to the question posed by Jesus, Peter expresses the disciples’ growing conviction that Jesus is the Messiah (*ho christos*; 8:29). A little later in the narrative, the transfigured Jesus, together with Moses and Elijah, appears to the inner circle of disciples, and again the words from heaven spoken at Jesus’ baptism are heard—“This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” (9:7). A few lines later in 9:13, Jesus states that Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah, “has come,” thereby identifying John the Baptist with Elijah and himself with the Messiah. Further in the narrative, Jesus asks questions that involve the drawing of the conclusion that the Messiah, the son of David, is also David’s Lord (Kyrios; 12:35-37). At his last meal with the disciples, this

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<sup>2</sup>*The Concept of Newness in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1960), 106.

Messiah, who is also *kyrios*, identifies the bread as “my body,” and the cup as containing “my blood of the covenant,<sup>3</sup> which is poured out for many” (14:22-24). The blood of Jesus, Messiah and Lord (NB: a dying Messiah), establishes the new covenant and with it the new era of salvation history.

The dramatic newness of the announced coming of the kingdom depends fully upon the presence of Jesus, the promised Messiah, the unique Son of God, among his people. That is why the new era is *an unprecedented turning point in salvation history*. With the coming of the Messiah, we have moved from promise and preparation to eschatological fulfillment.

Mark is not shy to draw certain dramatic consequences concerning discontinuity from the dawning of the kingdom and the presence of the messianic king. As long as the bridegroom is with the disciples, they cannot fast (2:19). He quotes the words of Jesus concerning the incompatibility of the new with the old—“No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; if he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but new wine is for fresh skins” (2:21-22). The new (i.e., all that Jesus brings) cannot simply be added to the old as but another in a succession of new things with no effect upon the old. The new is qualitatively different by its very nature.

From this passage, Morna Hooker concludes, “Both sayings show concern lest the old be lost; yet both point to the truth that something new and fresh cannot be contained within the limits of the old and indeed must inevitably destroy the old. So, for Mark, the new religion could not be contained within Judaism.”<sup>4</sup> She writes further:

The time for restoration was past, and the time to accept the new age had arrived. It is perhaps no accident that the symbolism of tearing a garment reappears in the scene in chapter 14 where Caiaphas tears his clothes, for at that moment the old forms of religion are, in Mark’s view, doomed. Similarly, the tearing of the temple veil in 15.38 signifies the end of the old and the birth of the new.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Some relatively inferior manuscripts insert the word “new” (*kainēs*) before “covenant” (*diathēkēs*) (so too in the Matthean parallel, 26:28). This is probably due to the influence of the parallel in Luke 22:20, which may, in turn, depend on 1 Corinthians 11:25. In any event, the word “new” is both assumed and appropriate.

<sup>4</sup>*The Gospel According to Mark*, BNTC (Hendrickson: Peabody, 1991), 100.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 100-101.

William Telford similarly concludes from the lesson of the “new patch” and “new wine” that “Judaism itself is shown to belong to the old order (Mk 2.21-2).”<sup>6</sup>

Immediately following the passage concerning the incompatibility of the new patch and the new wine with an old garment and old skins, Mark records two consecutive examples where Jesus challenges at least commonplace interpretations of the Sabbath commandment, if not the commandment itself. First, he allows his disciples to pluck (technically, harvest) grain on the Sabbath and then defends their actions (2:23-28), concluding with this statement—“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; so the son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (2:27-28). Second, in a synagogue on the Sabbath, he heals a man with a withered hand (3:1-6) then says to those ready to accuse him, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?” It is clear from the reaction of the Pharisees that what Jesus did in these two passages was more serious than simply a matter of a difference of interpretation. After he healed the man, the Pharisees, together with the Herodians, began to plot “how to destroy him” (3:6). Telford properly sums up the matter: “The evangelist portrays Jesus as condoning the breaking of the Sabbath (Mk 2.23ff.; 3.1-6).”<sup>7</sup>

Mark draws a further startlingly new conclusion from the statement of Jesus that it is not what goes into a person that defiles, but what comes out of the person (7:14-23). When the disciples expressed some confusion over what this meant, Jesus explains—“Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?” To which Mark adds the parenthetical comment—“Thus he declared all foods clean” (7:19). This comment makes explicit what is implicit in the words of Jesus. The consequences could hardly be more significant for the question of continuity and discontinuity. Mark’s editorial comment is no less canonically authoritative than other content in the Gospel. It may well be that we also have Pauline influence at work here.<sup>8</sup>

In an ironic twist, according to Mark 10:1-12 Jesus makes the law more stringent than the Pharisees did. His absolute prohibition of divorce, allowing no exception (as, for example, Matthew does), supersedes the allowance and regulation of divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. The Pharisees had put the question to him; and although their reaction to his answer is not recorded, they were surely unhappy at this

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<sup>6</sup>W.R. Telford, *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 126.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 125.

<sup>8</sup>Exploration of this possibility can be found in Telford, *ibid.*, 164-169.

“cancellation” of Moses’ teaching. The issue involves not simply a matter of disagreement concerning the interpretation of the law, but something more grievous from the Pharisees’ perspective. Jesus approaches Scripture with an astonishing authority.

The Gospel of Mark thus presents a considerable amount of material that points to the dramatic newness of what has come with the Christ and, hence, indicates a high degree of discontinuity. Telford points to Mark’s portrayal of the Jewish leaders as hard-hearted (e.g., 3:5) and hypocritical (7:6-7).

Whatever the nuances in individual passages, it has to be maintained that the Markan Jesus is shown repeatedly throughout the Gospel as being misunderstood or rejected by the various Jewish groups, and he, in turn, is pictured as one repudiating their authority or their doctrine. . . . Time and again, their doctrinal beliefs are shown to be in error.<sup>9</sup>

Mark shows how the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus. To again quote Telford: “In turn, Jesus is shown rejecting them, so appearing to the Markan reader as one who no longer has Jewish roots, as one no longer to be seen through Jewish eyes, as one no longer to be accorded a Jewish identity.”<sup>10</sup> This may be somewhat overstated, but it is not without truth.

### **The Gospel According to Matthew**

Given that Matthew takes up some 90% of Mark, it is not surprising to see that most of the material set forth in the preceding discussion is found, with minor differences, also in Matthew. His opening chapters, of course, contain unique material. The Gospel begins with a genealogy— “An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (1:1), thus announcing the dawning of the eschatological era. The Greek word translated “genealogy” here is actually *genesis*, thus perhaps an allusion to Genesis 2:4 (the Septuagint (LXX)). The mention of Abraham and David allude to the respective covenant promises made to Israel, allowing Matthew to structure salvation history into three sets of 14 generations, climaxing in the birth of the Messiah (1:17).

Matthew begins his Gospel with a narrative (wholly lacking in Mark) concerning “The birth of Jesus the Messiah” (1:18), who is given the name “Emmanuel,” which means “God is with us” (1:23, via the

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 125.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 157.

quotation from Isa 7:14). Throughout this Gospel there is an emphasis on the agency of the Holy Spirit, itself a mark of the promised age in the birth of Jesus (1:18, 20), the appearance of angels (1:20, 24; 2:13, 19), and the experience of dreams (1:20; 2:12, 13, 19, 22)—all common traits of apocalyptic.

By the time Jesus' ministry is reached in 4:17, we already have a stress on fulfillment of an apocalyptic character, that stress being more prominent in Matthew than in any other Gospel.<sup>11</sup> In particular, it is apocalyptic eschatology—i.e., the arrival of a unique fulfillment of the OT promises, including the anticipated transformation of the present world order—that Matthew presents. Jesus announces the gospel in 4:17 thusly, “Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” The disciples are sent out to proclaim the good news that “the kingdom of heaven has come near” (10:7). In 12:28, Jesus states that “if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come (*ephthasen*, an aorist verb) to you.” The era of the new covenant promised by the prophets has arrived. As in Mark, so too in Matthew, at the last supper, Jesus identifies the contents of the cup with the words, “This is my blood of the covenant,<sup>12</sup> which is poured out for many,” to which Matthew alone adds, “for the forgiveness of sins” (26:28), a clear allusion to Jeremiah's new covenant passage (Jer 31:34).

A constellation of apocalyptic events at the time of the death of Jesus indicates the end of the old age and the dawning of the new—namely, the tearing in two of the temple curtain, the earthquake, the splitting open of the tombs, and the resurrection of dead saints (27:51-52).<sup>13</sup>

As with all the Gospels, for Matthew the turning point of the ages in the dawning of the kingdom of God in history, is *dependent on Christology*. It is because Jesus is the prophesied Messiah that eschatology can be said to be inaugurated. Christology runs through the whole of Matthew like a rich vein of gold. Jesus is referred to as “Emmanuel” or “God with us” (1:23).

A high Christology is evident in the words of 10:32-33—“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will

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<sup>11</sup>See my “Apocalyptic Motifs in the Gospel of Matthew: Continuity and Discontinuity,” *HBT* 7 (1985), 53-82.

<sup>12</sup>As in the Markan parallel, some inferior manuscripts read *kainēs* (new) before *diathēkēs* (covenant) through the influence of Luke 22:20. “New” is clearly implied.

<sup>13</sup>In the essay referred to in note 11, I suggested that these events could well be called examples of a “realized” apocalyptic (p. 62)—i.e., apocalyptic events that have already occurred. If that is too much of an oxymoron, Matthew's apocalyptic is at least to be regarded as an “altered” apocalyptic (p. 69)—i.e., the occurrence of apocalyptic phenomena short of the consummation. The paradox here is not essentially different from that of realized and future eschatology, a paradox that pervades the NT.

acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven” (see too 10:37-40; cf. 16:24-25). Perhaps most striking is the Johannine-sounding statement in 11:25-27, where Jesus said:

I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father: and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Peter’s confession that Jesus is “the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (16:16) is a turning point in Matthew, as in Mark. In 16:18, Jesus says to Peter, “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church [*mou tēn ekklēsiān*], and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” From the beginning of the Gospel, Matthew has referred to Jesus as “Messiah” and as “Son of David” (e.g., 9:27; 12:23; 15:22). The Messiah is the Son of David, but he is also David’s Lord (21:41-46; so too the parallels in Mark and Luke). John the Baptist’s question from prison, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” (11:3) is answered by a brief summary of Jesus’ deeds corresponding to the prophetic expectations of the promised age to come (cf. the quotation of Isa 42:1-4 in 12:18-21).

It is clear that in Matthew we encounter the same emphasis on newness that is contained in Mark. If anything, the newness is intensified. The coming of the Messiah, the Son of the living God, into history puts us into a *new time frame*. It is a time of fulfillment, although paradoxically not the end of the story. It is the fulfillment of Israel’s hope for so many generations, as Jesus points out—“Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear. Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it” (13:16-17).

With the coming of Christ and the kingdom, we encounter something greater than Jonah or Solomon (12:41-42), something greater than even the temple itself (12:6). The Christological implications of all of this are enormous. Just as the Shekinah glory is present among two who study Torah, so Jesus promises, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (18:20). Again, after the Trinitarian statement in the baptismal formula (“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” [28:19]), the final

words of the Gospel state, “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (28:20).

The amount of newness in Matthew, not surprisingly, results in significant discontinuity. This is unmistakable despite Matthew’s desire to minimize it for the sake of his Jewish Christian readers. The Evangelist is keenly aware of both discontinuity and continuity. Not a few have seen 13:52 as his signature—“Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”<sup>14</sup> Taken in the most general way, the “new” refers to the announcement of the dawning of the kingdom in and through the presence of the Christ, whereas the “old” refers to what precedes, represented most proximately by Second Temple Judaism. Stephen Barton rightly observes that in 13:52, “The new has priority over the old. . . . But the conjunction is significant; the old retains its fundamental worth.”<sup>15</sup>

#### Matthew’s Continuing Conservatism

Matthew picks up from Mark the double parable concerning the incompatibility of a new patch and new garment and new wine with old wineskins (9:16-17). In so doing, he affirms the newness of the gospel and the resulting tension with the old. Nevertheless, when Matthew adds the final words, “and so both are preserved” (9:17), he reveals a concern for continuity with the old. Although the “skins” that are preserved are not precisely the old skins but *new* skins, the new skins are analogous to the old. This may well point to the fact that Jesus’ teaching, although new, also possesses a considerable degree of continuity with the old—in fact, transforming it but, at the same time, preserving its essence. (The same may be true of 5:17.)

It is clear that Matthew wants to stress continuity and minimize discontinuity. A perfect example of this can be seen in his redaction of the pericope concerning what defiles (Mk 7:1-23 in 15:1-20). Three redactional changes must be noted. First, Matthew slightly softens the Markan report of Jesus’ words, “There is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile” to “It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person.” Second and most notably, Matthew omits the Markan editorial insertion, “Thus he declared all foods clean” (Mk 7:19). Third,

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<sup>14</sup>*Kaina kai palaia*, lit. “new things and old things,” reversing the expected order and thus emphasizing the new things.

<sup>15</sup>“The Gospel of Matthew” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Gospels*, ed. S.C. Barton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 122.

Matthew rounds out the pericope by adding a reference back to its beginning subject with the words, “But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile” (15:20), thus turning the attention away from food to ritual purity. Nevertheless, the implication that Mark draws is a justifiable one, and Matthew’s redactional changes are unable to conceal the radicalism intrinsic to the pericope.

The most famous and important Matthean passage concerning the law, unique to the Gospel of Matthew, is found in 5:17-18—“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.” From an initial impression, this would seem to be as strong a statement of continuity with Judaism as possible. In fact, however, when 5:17-18 is seen in the context of the whole of Matthew, it is clear that the continuity has to be softened by aspects of discontinuity. One example of this in the “antitheses” (a misnomer for what actually amounts to a heightening of the demands of the Torah) is Jesus’ absolute prohibition of oaths (5:33-37). And while Jesus’ loyalty to the law is apparent in his instruction to the healed leper to “Go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them” (8:4), Jesus can also say to a scribe who wanted to follow him, but only after he buried his father, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead” (8:22; cf. Lk 9:60), thereby going against the law.<sup>16</sup>

Despite Matthew’s softening of the more radical parts of Mark, he cannot stifle the newness altogether. The radicalness of the statement that “It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person” goes against the dietary law, even without Mark’s editorial comment—“Thus he declared all foods clean.” As we have seen, Jesus does not hold to a strict interpretation of the Sabbath law, allowing his disciples to pluck grain on the Sabbath and healing a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath (12:1-14). Matthew’s inclusion of the Markan statement that the Pharisees “went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him” (12:14) shows that the Pharisees did not regard Jesus’ actions as of minor importance.

Matthew’s version of the discussion of divorce (19:1-12) again softens the radicalism of his Markan source by the addition of the words, “except for *porneia*,”—i.e., sexual immorality (19:9; see too 5:32). To be sure, Jesus still cancels out the teaching of Deuteronomy

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<sup>16</sup>Note the remark of Martin Hengel: “There is hardly one logion of Jesus which more sharply runs counter to law, piety and custom than does Mt 8.22.” *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, trans. James Greig (New York: Crossword, 1981), 14.

24:1-4, but his allowance of divorce on the ground of sexual immorality would have been acceptable to the Shammaites but not to the Hillelites.

There is something new here that causes a more fundamental difference and a degree of tension with the law. To be sure, the law is sustained in Matthew but with one all-important qualification—it is the law *as interpreted by Jesus*.<sup>17</sup> The teachings of Jesus take central place in the Gospel. The commission at the end of the Gospel calls the disciples to teach new believers to obey not the Torah, but “everything that *I* have commanded you” (28:20).<sup>18</sup> Graham Stanton rightly points out the importance of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew.<sup>19</sup> This newness results in considerable discontinuity with the past and constitutes one of the main causes of the “parting of the ways” between synagogue and church.<sup>20</sup>

There can be no doubt concerning the importance of newness for the Gospel of Matthew. But there can also be no doubt that the Evangelist intends to affirm continuity with the past. Barton expresses the tension beautifully—“The encounter between the old and new gives to Matthew its *dynamic* quality. In Matthew’s story of Jesus there is continuity with the past and discontinuity, profound indebtedness to the scriptures and traditions of Judaism, but also rupture and innovation. . . . God, in Matthew, is doing something new. The signs are manifold.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Arland Hultgren rightly states, “The will of God, [Matthew] contends, has been given in the Scriptures of Israel, as interpreted by Jesus, and in the teachings of Jesus himself, as interpreted by the scribe trained for the kingdom.” “Things New and Old at Matthew 13:52,” in *All Things New: Essays in Honor of Roy A. Harrisville*. A.J. Hultgren, D.H. Juel, and J.D. Kingsbury, eds. Word and World Supplement Series 1 (St. Paul: Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, 1992), 109-117, here 117.

<sup>18</sup>“Matthew’s strong emphasis on the importance of ‘hearing and obeying’ the words of Jesus encouraged many diverse Christian communities in the 2nd century to set this gospel alongside the law and the prophets as ‘Scripture,’ as a *new* set of authoritative traditions which in due course had to be distinguished from the ‘old.’” G.N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 383.

<sup>19</sup>“In some respects, however, the sayings of Jesus (and Matthew’s gospel as a whole) must *in practice* (though not in theory) have taken priority over the law and the prophets in the community life of the ‘new people.’” *Ibid.*, 383.

<sup>20</sup>Barton makes the same observation, saying “It is evident, then, that a parting of the ways is taking place” and it amounts to “a rebuke to Israel’s failed leadership.” “The Gospel of Matthew,” 131. Cf. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 113-191.

<sup>21</sup>“The Gospel of Matthew,” 121-22. So too Graham Stanton, “Above all, Matthew’s gospel provided the ‘new people’ with a story which was new, even though it had deep roots in Scripture.” *A Gospel for a New People*, 383.

### The Gospel According to Luke

The two remarkable opening chapters of Luke present us with some of the richest material in the NT concerning *continuity* with the OT and with the growing Jewish expectations and hopes of the Second Temple period. The early Christian community that exults in this perspective and that draws together these themes would seem, by all rights, to be recognized and appropriately designated as a sect within Judaism. Here in several magnificent poetic passages based on Scripture, we encounter the stock imagery of Israel's hope. At the same time, however, an unmistakable note of fulfillment is exclaimed.

Luke's two-volume narrative is introduced from the very beginning as an account of events "that have been fulfilled (*peplērophorēmenōn*) among us" (1:1). In the first narrative (1:5-25), the angel Gabriel is sent by God to announce good news (*euaggelisasthai*) to Zechariah about the birth of a son to him, a son who would become the forerunner of the Messiah, performing the work of the promised Elijah (in the quotation of Malachi 4:5-6). But it is in the respective responses of Mary and Zechariah that the extent of continuity becomes most evident. Mary rhapsodizes:

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever (1:46-55).

Virtually every line of Mary's *Magnificat* draws upon OT phraseology (directly or indirectly), describing or alluding to the fulfillment of messianic promises. The past tenses (aorist in the Greek) reflect the prophetic perfect tense of the Hebrew, wherein what still lies strictly in the future, because of its predetermined certainty, can be described as already having happened. From this point of view, salvation has already been accomplished and is conceived as completed action.

What is true of the *Magnificat* is true also of the *Benedictus* of Zechariah. Here again in the Greek we encounter aorist tenses, except for the future tenses in 1:76 and 1:78. Moreover, the whole is introduced with the formula that states, “Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this *prophecy* (*eprophēteusen legōn*):”

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace (1:68-79).

Here again we have “prophecy” given, for the most part, in past tenses. It is clear in the allusions to David and Abraham, together with the explicit mention of God’s “holy covenant,” that it is *the fulfillment of the hope of Israel* that is in view. The future tenses towards the end of the passage confirm the understanding of the aorist tenses as, in effect, prophetic perfect tenses, thus expressing confident anticipation of the action of a God faithful to his word.

The problem we confront has to do with the complex character of the future expectations articulated by the prophets. Much of this concerns what can be realized through normal processes in history—i.e., the sort of things promised in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, things such as becoming a great nation blessed by God; achieving a great name; living in a land of peace, security, and prosperity; a nation with descendants as multitudinous as the stars; victorious over all its enemies; and with a descendant of David ruling from a royal throne in a dynasty that would be established forever. All of this is realizable in history without any direct supernatural, divine intervention. The elements of this expectation have been designated as “prophecy,” or what can be described as an earthly, national theocracy

that would amount to the literal fulfillment of aspects of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants—in short, the restoration to Israel of a glory similar to what was enjoyed in the times of David and Solomon.

At the same time, however, growing largely out of a frustration at the lack of fulfillment in history, the prophets increasingly began to speak of a transcendent hope that could only be accomplished by a special divine in-breaking. God was going to do more than bring about a national-political kingdom in the land of Israel. He was going to radically transform the world we know—the cessation of war, the end of death, the end of sorrow or sighing, the end of all physical maladies and cries of distress; the wiping away of tears from all faces—in other words, there would be no more hurt or destruction in God’s new earth. On the positive side: the desert will blossom with rivers of water and there will be gladness, rejoicing at God’s salvation, everlasting joy, and a banquet for all people. To sum up, there will be the creation of “new heavens and a new earth” (Isa 65:17; 66:22).

Apocalyptic thus teaches a radical transformation of the age that can only be brought about by God’s direct intervention involving the end of the present age and the beginning of a new age. This is the essence of “apocalyptic” in contrast to “prophecy.” (Judgment is, of course, also a major theme of apocalyptic, but not directly relevant to our purposes here.) Thus, the writings of the OT prophets reveal an expectation that moves gradually from prophecy (or particularist, national, earthly fulfillment) to apocalyptic (or universal, transcendent fulfillment), with no clear demarcation between the two. As in the prophets, so too in the Lukan material, we encounter material of a mixed character—prophetic and apocalyptic.

In the remarkable narrative of Jesus’ sermon in the Nazareth synagogue service (Lk 4:16-30), much of it unique to Luke, Jesus reads apocalyptic material from Isaiah 61:1-2, which says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,<sup>22</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”<sup>23</sup> When he had rolled up the Isaiah scroll, he made an astounding statement—“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (4:21) This is an announcement of the fulfillment of the messianic age, not as something that will come (even imminently) but as something already present. The emphasis is clear: “today” [*sēmeron*,

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<sup>22</sup>This clause seems to be taken from Isaiah 58:6 (LXX).

<sup>23</sup>To be noted is the omission of the final phrase of the Isaiah 61 passage—“and the day of the vengeance of our God,” words that Jesus may have deliberately omitted because of his unusual view of the coming of the kingdom without bringing the day of judgment.

together with the perfect passive verb *peplērōtai*, “has been”= “stands fulfilled”] is the beginning of the last age.

Even stronger discontinuity is expressed in 16:16, which reads, “The law and the prophets were in effect until John came; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is proclaimed.” With the coming of John the Baptist and the dawning of the kingdom, a shift in eras has occurred. John is himself the pivotal figure in the shift from the old to the new, being both the last prophet of the old era and the first representative of the new era. It is affirmed that, in some sense, the law has come to an end. To prevent a possible misunderstanding, Luke follows this statement with that of 16:17—“But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one stroke of a letter in the law to be dropped.” For Luke (as for Matthew), the law is still valid and will continue to be observed in the kingdom, but only as mediated by the teaching of Jesus in the new reality of the kingdom.

Undoubtedly one of the most remarkable passages in Luke (and only in Luke) is found in 17:20-21—“Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered ‘The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed nor will they say “Look, here it is!” or “There it is!” For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.’” These words point yet again to the presence of the kingdom in the person of Jesus. Where he is, *there* is the kingdom.<sup>24</sup> Luke should not be taken to mean that there will not be a future coming of the kingdom with observable signs, as a look at the apocalyptic discourse of Luke 21 will confirm, but merely that one need not wait till then for experiencing the kingdom. Whereas the Pharisees thought only of a cataclysmic appearance of the kingdom, Jesus stresses that the eschatological kingdom is already dawning then and there in his own ministry. The Christological import of the passage could hardly be greater. The coming of the Son of man will be sudden but not immediate (contrary to the expectation of the Pharisees expressed in 19:11), as the verses that follow indicate (17:24-25).

At the last supper with his disciples, the words of Jesus regarding the cup indicate the transition to the promised new covenant in Jeremiah 22:20, which reads, “This cup that is poured out for you is the *new* covenant in my blood.”<sup>25</sup> With the death of Jesus a new eschatological era begins, the era of the new covenant in contrast to the era of the old covenant.

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<sup>24</sup>Although it is possible to translate the Greek *entos hymōn* as “within you,” NRSV (with RSV) correctly translates it as “among you.”

<sup>25</sup>Luke alone among the Synoptics has the secure text *kainē*, “new” modifying “covenant.” The probable influence of 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 on Luke’s text must also be kept in mind.

### Newness in the Gospel of John

The Gospel of John is infamous for its anti-Judaism. Yet at the same time, John is a very Jewish gospel. Here we find in sharpest profile the now-familiar tension between continuity and discontinuity. The latter comes clearly into focus in the Gospel's frequent and painful reference to the unbelief of the Jews. Another distinctive of the Gospel is its emphasis on realized eschatology rather than future eschatology. Closely related is the very high Christology of John, which, in fact, constitutes the essential dividing point between the Jews and the believers in Jesus. This, above all, increases the sense of discontinuity with the old. At the same time, underlying is a substratum of continuity that is fundamental to everything. John 4:22 puts it as concisely as possible—"salvation is from the Jews." As in the Synoptics, the good news of John's Gospel rests on the preparation and promise of the Jewish Scriptures. The gospel is the continuation and culmination of the story of Israel.

John is almost certainly the last of the Four Gospels to have been written, probably close to the end of the 1st century. The tension, not to say hostility, between the Jews and the Jewish believers in Jesus had undoubtedly increased as the century wore on, and probably the events of A.D. 66-70 made the ongoing "parting of the ways" more evident than ever. Jewish believers in Jesus were being forced out of the synagogues. The rabbis' work at Yavneh (Jamnia) in the late 80s reconstituting the Jewish faith under the new post-war conditions resulted in, among other things, a liturgical alteration to the main synagogue prayer (the *Tefillah* or *Amidah*) in the form of an addition to the Eighteen Benedictions, namely a benediction (in reality a curse) of the *minim*, the "heretics" (alternatively, the "Nazarenes"), with the effect of driving Christians out of the synagogues. This is probably reflected in the *aposynagōgos* references (9:22; 12:42; 16:2), where expulsion of Jewish believers in Jesus from the synagogue is caused by their faith in Jesus. This is strong evidence of discontinuity.

What we find in the later decades of the 1st century is a situation where Jews and Christians are like rival siblings, each on the way to finding and establishing their own identity over against the other. This understandably involves strongly stated polarities and heated emotions, as our survey will now underline.

## The Prologue (1:1-18)

Already in the opening verses some of the key motifs of the Gospel are expressed. The deity of the Son is highlighted from the start—"In the beginning was the *logos*, and the *logos* was with God, and the *logos* was God" (1:1). As the agency of creation, he brought into being all that exists, including life itself, and he was "the light of all people" and "the true light, which enlightens everyone" (1:4, 9). Yet despite the universality of these statements, "The world did not know him" (1:10) and shockingly "his own people did not accept him" (1:11). Already the unbelief of the Jews that will so dominate the Gospel comes to expression.

The climax of the prologue comes in the reference to the incarnation in 1:14, which reads, "And the *logos* became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." The author draws the appropriate conclusion that no one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son,<sup>26</sup> who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known<sup>27</sup> (1:18). This "modification of monotheism," as it is called (the Evangelist can hardly be considered a polytheist!), obviously is a very important example of discontinuity with Judaism.

Discontinuity, although not absolute, is also evident in the contrast drawn in 1:17, which reads, "The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." There is no denial here that Moses also brought grace and truth or that Jesus through his teaching upheld the goal of the law. It is rather a matter of emphasis or center of gravity.

## Chapter 8: Jesus and the Unbelieving Jews

Chapter 8 of the Gospel of John contains some of the most negative statements about the Jews in the whole of the NT. Speaking to the people in the treasury of the temple, Jesus makes another astounding statement—"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (8:12; cf. 1:4). A little further on, he says, "You know neither me nor my Father.

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<sup>26</sup>The earliest Greek papyrus manuscripts (P66 and P75), together with the great majuscules Aleph\* and B, have the remarkable reading *monogenēs theos* ("only God") rather than *monogenēs huios* ("only Son"), and this is probably to be preferred as the more difficult reading. This would then be one of the few places in the NT where Jesus is referred to explicitly as *theos*. See M.J. Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus*.

<sup>27</sup>The verb here is *exēgēsato*, "to disclose" or "expound." In effect, the Son has "exegeted" the Father.

If you knew me you would know my Father also” (8:19). After Jesus teaches them further, the Evangelist notes that, “As he was saying these things many believed in him” (8:30). To these believing Jews, Jesus says “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (8:31-32). The reference to freedom brings forth this response—“We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, ‘You will be made free?’” (8:33).

It is the appeal to being descendants of Abraham that initiates a blistering exchange. Jesus acknowledges the fact but then criticizes his listeners by saying, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing what Abraham did, but now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are indeed doing what your father does” (8:39-41). The Jews retorted with, “We are not illegitimate children; we have one Father, God himself” (8:41).

If that were so, responds Jesus, “You would love me, for I came from God. . . . Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot accept my word. You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth you do not believe me. . . . Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God” (8:42-47).

Of course, it is not literally true that the Jews are the children of the devil. The point being made by Jesus is that, in their rejection of him and their desire to do away with him, by analogy they are doing what the devil desires rather than what Abraham would have done (cf. 8:56). In that sense alone are they children of the devil. Still, it can hardly be denied that the association of the Jews with the devil in this way is exceedingly painful. And it should go without saying that it is utterly inexcusable for this text to be used as a justification for the persecution of Jews. Thus rather than continuity with Abraham we have here discontinuity.

But the confrontation escalates. The Jews accuse Jesus of being a Samaritan and having a demon (8:48). When Jesus says, “Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death” (8:51), the Jews respond, “Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and so did the prophets; yet you say ‘Whoever keeps my word will never taste

death.' Are you greater than our father Abraham who died? The prophets also died. Who do you claim to be?" (8:52-53).

That, of course, is the supreme question, and the question upon which the whole passage turns. Jesus responds that it is God who glorifies him, "He of whom you say 'He is our God', though you do not know him, but I know him" (8:54). At this point, Jesus makes this astonishing claim—"Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad" (8:54-56). "Then the Jews said to him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.' So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple" (8:57-59).

## Lecture Two: Newness in the Pauline Corpus

by Donald Hagner

### Galatians

The gospel that Paul defends so vigorously in Galatians involves a dramatic newness. It is a gospel, he insists, that came not through any human means, but “through a revelation (*apokalypseōs*) of Jesus Christ” (1:12).<sup>1</sup>

#### Paul’s Call and Conversion

Paul’s call and conversion to his new faith—and here I think we should feel free to refer to his ‘conversion’ as long as we don’t mean changing religions—involved a significant break with his past life. This is clear from his reference to “my earlier life in Judaism” (1:13), to which he adds that he had “advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age.”<sup>2</sup> He notes further that he was “far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors” (1:14), by which he means his observance of the Law of Moses as a Pharisee. He was zealous to the extent of persecuting and even trying to destroy “the church of God” (1:13)—note the independent identity of this new reality created by God.

The newness implied in this language is not to be underestimated; yet, at the same time, underlying the narrative is important continuity. For Paul goes on to describe his experience using the language of God’s call to the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah—“But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace [cf. Jer 1:5; Isa 49:1, 5], was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being” (1:15-16). As Jeremiah was appointed “a prophet to the nations”

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<sup>1</sup>All Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup>These two instances are the only references to “Judaism” (*Ioudaismos*) in the NT.

and Isaiah “a servant” to Jacob/Israel, in the same way, Paul was called to be an apostle to the Gentiles. While a new stage of the story has now been reached, it is by no means a totally new story, but rather one that provides the culmination of all that preceded.

### The Gospel to the Uncircumcised

Paul insists that, far from being dependent upon the apostles in Jerusalem for his gospel, it had been entrusted to him by God just as the gospel to the circumcised had been entrusted to Peter (2:7-8). The gospel to the circumcised and to the uncircumcised is the same gospel, stemming from the God of Israel in fulfillment of Old Testament promises. Perceiving the grace (*tēn charin*) that had been granted to Paul, the ‘pillar’ apostles (James, Peter, and John) gave “the right hand of fellowship” to Paul and Barnabas (2:9). More than simply a division of labor, this narrative points to the underlying unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ and, in turn, implies continuity with God’s purpose in the OT.

There is an important newness here, of course, in the proclamation of the gospel (the good news of salvation) to the Gentiles. This was anticipated as early as the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12:3, quoted by Paul in 3:8—“And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.’” But it is only with the coming of Christ—indeed, only after the resurrection and Pentecost—that the Gentiles become the direct subjects of God’s salvation and have the gospel preached to them. Here we have newness as well as continuity with the OT promises.

### Paul’s Polemic Against the Works of the Law

Possibly his earliest letter, Galatians contains Paul’s harshest criticism of the Law. This harshness, of course, is explained by the fact that certain Jewish believers in Jesus, commonly referred to as ‘Judaizers,’ had recently come to the churches of Galatia teaching that Gentile believers had to accept circumcision and complete obedience to the Law in order to be saved. This amounted to a complete undermining of the gospel preached by Paul in fulfillment of his divine commission.

His polemical rejection of the Law in Galatians (and later in Romans) presents perhaps the most radical discontinuity with Judaism in the Pauline corpus. The issue concerns not merely whether full obedience to the Law is to be required of Gentile converts, rather it concerns the Law itself and its role in salvation history vis-à-vis all of

humanity. To be sure, what initiates the discussion is the question concerning *justification* (i.e., how a person is reckoned or declared righteous). The Jews who have believed in Christ know, as clearly do the Gentiles, “that a man is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ”<sup>3</sup> (2:16). Paul continues redundantly (but deliberately for emphasis), “And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law” (2:16). The point could not be clearer—There is no justification “through the law,” for if that were possible then grace would be nullified and Christ would have “died for nothing” (2:21).

Paul goes so far as to say that to rely on works of the Law is to be “under a curse” (3:10). He repeats his main argument—“Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law; for ‘The one who is righteous through faith will live’”<sup>4</sup> (3:11).

### *The Parenthetical Purpose of the Law*

Paul regards the Law as only a parenthesis in God’s purpose, not its center. He further believes (as he will say a little later in Galatians) that the closing bracket in that parenthesis has occurred with the coming of Christ. The beginning bracket, he notes, came at Sinai some 430 years *after* the Abrahamic covenant (3:17; cf. Septuagint [LXX], Exod 12:40). Now, by means of a clever play on the word *diathēkē*, which can mean both “covenant” or “will,” he argues that, just as a human will cannot be tampered with (3:15), so God’s covenant with Abraham is immutable. The late-coming Sinai Law, therefore, “does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God” (3:17). Paul adds that the covenant with Abraham came not through the Law but through God’s promise (3:18).

What then was the purpose of the Law? asks Paul. The answer is that, “It was added because of transgressions,<sup>5</sup> until the offspring would come to whom the promise had been made” (3:19). Maximizing the singular form of *spermati* (LXX Gen 13:15; 17:8; 24:7), Paul concludes that the single “offspring” is Christ (3:16). The Law, then, may be

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<sup>3</sup>If taken as a subjective genitive, one could translate *pisteōs Iēsou Christou* “through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.”

<sup>4</sup>This translation of Habakkuk 2:4, given in the margin of the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), takes *ek pisteōs* as modifying *ho dikaios* and is to be preferred as more consistent with Paul’s argument here (as in Rom 1:17).

<sup>5</sup>The sense of “because (*charin*)” is vague. It may mean the Law was meant to curb transgressions, to define transgressions, or indeed to increase transgressions (cf. Rom 5:20).

described as *a temporary insertion*. (Note the word “until,” pointing to the closing bracket of the parenthesis).

### *Freedom from the Law*

There is little doubt that one of the greatest discontinuities between Judaism and Paul’s Christianity is to be found in his declaration concerning the end of the Law. The Law has accomplished its divinely limited purpose. Paul sees the matter clearly in terms of *before* and *after*. The turning point is the coming of “faith” (3:23, 25), meaning the coming of “Christ” (3:24), the beginning of the new age of the kingdom of God.

*Before* this turning point, the Law held sway over us. It “imprisoned and guarded” us (3:23); it was our “disciplinarian [*paidagōgos*]” (3:24, 25); we were “under the law” (4:5); although heirs, we were “minors,” “no better than slaves,” “under guardians and trustees” (4:1-3). But this dire situation was a temporary one. Hence, the repeated “until” in these passages (3:19, 23, 24) and the clauses “no longer [*ouketi*]” (3:25; 4:7), “until the date set by the father” (4:2), and “when the fullness of time had come” (4:4). The closing bracket of the temporary parenthesis of the Law has been drawn.

Paul expresses the great change of the *after* with exultation:

When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba Father!” So you are no longer a slave but a child, if a child then also an heir, through God (4:4-7).

He then thunders forth his conclusion—“For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (5:1).

The displacement of the Law is again in view in Paul’s revolutionary statement that, “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love” (5:6). The same point is made in 6:15, now with reference to the pivotal point of the turning of the ages and the arrival of eschatological fulfillment—“For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation (*kainē ktisis*) is

everything!”<sup>6</sup> Here the importance of newness in Paul’s perspective is unmistakable. It is this that explains his revolutionary view of the Law. A few lines after 5:6, he reiterates, “For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters” (5:13). Encouraging his readers to live by the Spirit, he says that, “If you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law” (5:16, 18).

### The Allegory of Hagar and Sarah

Paul illustrates the strong discontinuity between old and new by the allegorical contrast he draws between Hagar and Sarah. He explicitly addresses those in the Galatian churches who “desire to be subject to the law” (4:21) to “listen” to the Law. Each of the two women bore Abraham a son. The son of Hagar (the slave woman) was born “according to the flesh,” while the son of Sarah (the free woman) was born “through the promise” (4:23). Paul takes the women as illustrative of the two covenants. Hagar is identified with Mount Sinai “and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children” (4:25). Sarah, on the other hand, “corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she is free, and she is our mother” (4:26). The absolute contrast between slavery and freedom applies to believers’ relationship to the Law. Those who are Abraham’s descendants by faith are the children of Sarah and free from the Law, whereas the children of Hagar remain in slavery like their mother. The references to Jerusalem echo the contrast between old and new, between the earthly Jerusalem, which awaits its redemption, and the heavenly Jerusalem, which points to the new eschatological reality that has dawned with the coming of Christ.

### The Israel of God?

Galatians 6:16 contains a famous interpretive crux—“As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” It is unclear whether the blessing is upon one group or two groups. The uncertainty arises from the ambiguity of the word *kai* (‘and’), which can be either a simple copulative joining two groups or an exegetical *kai*, meaning something like ‘even’ (in other words, providing further description of the one group). In the former case, “those who follow this rule” would be the Church, and “the Israel of God” would be the Jewish people. In the latter case, Paul would be referring to a single group—i.e., the Church as the Israel of God. The

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<sup>6</sup>There is no Greek corresponding to NRSV’s “is everything;” but the statement implies the conclusion.

Revised Standard Version (RSV), in contrast to the NRSV, takes the verse this way, translating, “Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God,” leaving the *kai* untranslated.

So, is the Church being referred to here as “the Israel of God?” Although it is highly debatable, it seems slightly more probable to me that, given the emphasis on newness in Galatians and the strong discontinuity between old and new, the Church may be referred to here as the new or true Israel. Although in the immediately preceding context, Paul refers to circumcision and uncircumcision, which could suggest the two groups (Israel and the Church), his emphasis is on “a *new* creation,” which fits the reality of the Church exceptionally well (cf. 2 Cor 5:17).

## Romans

Because of the similarity of content between Galatians and Romans, we turn next to the latter. In many ways, Romans is Paul’s definitive statement of the gospel as he understood it. We will see that he frequently touches upon issues of continuity and discontinuity.

### Introduction: The Gospel of God

In his expanded salutation (1:1-7), Paul provides a beginning description of the gospel, probably employing early liturgical language. It is

... the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name (1:1-5).

The first note we encounter is one of strong continuity. Paul writes of God’s good news—namely, the fulfillment of what the prophets had promised in the Holy Scriptures. The gospel is about God’s Son, who, at one and the same time, is related to the old and the new. As for the old, he is a descendant of David “according to the flesh” (indeed, *the* “Son of David,” fulfilling 2 Sam 7:8-14a), bringing about the hope of Israel. As for the new, he is “declared to be Son of God with power

according to the Spirit<sup>7</sup> of holiness by resurrection from the dead.” The Holy Spirit and Jesus resurrection are specific and vivid markers of the new age of the Kingdom.

The bringing about of salvation, “the obedience of faith,” to the Gentiles also points to fulfillment, in this case of the Abrahamic covenant, according to which all the nations of the earth will be blessed (cf. Gal 3:8). Here we have newness that finds its basis in continuity with the promise of Israel’s Scriptures (beginning with Gen 12).

#### The Thematic Statement of 1:16-17

Paul again refers to the universality of the gospel, which he defines as “the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (1:16). As emerging with clarity in what Paul will write, faith is the determinative factor in salvation. Some may too quickly think that this view is discontinuous with the OT Scripture, but he does not think so. Indeed, he finds the dynamic of faith already articulated in the Scriptures. In the gospel, he says, “the righteousness of God<sup>8</sup> is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, ‘The one who is righteous through faith will live’” (1:17. quoting Hab 2:4).<sup>9</sup> The Pauline gospel is well known and involves a familiar polemic against the possibility of becoming righteous by works. Salvation is by faith.

#### The Law of Moses and the Human Predicament

One of the key elements in Romans leading to considerations of continuity and discontinuity is, of course, the Mosaic Law. Although Romans is known for its apparent negativity concerning the Law, the issue is not always that simple. Already in Chapter 2 we discover the complexity of the subject. Speaking of the coming day of eschatological judgment, Paul writes the following:

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<sup>7</sup>Since in the early manuscripts the Greek *PNEUMA* is all capitals, it is difficult to decide whether the reference here is to the spirit of Jesus (in parallel to the flesh of Jesus) or to the Holy Spirit, which is probably to be preferred.

<sup>8</sup>The righteousness of God (*dikaïosynē theou*) here is probably not to be understood abstractly but in the active sense of “God’s saving activity”—i.e., his covenant faithfulness as an expression of his righteousness.

<sup>9</sup>I give the NRSV marginal reading in place of its text, “The one who is righteous will live by faith.” The Greek is ambiguous since it is unclear from the syntax alone whether “by faith” (*ek pisteōs*) is meant to modify the noun “righteous” or the verb “will live.” Given one of the main arguments of Romans, it is more likely that the phrase modifies the noun—i.e., “one who is righteous by faith” will live, not “one who is righteous will live by faith” or “will live faithfully.”

For he will repay according to each one's deeds: to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality (2:6-11).

Then for good measure, he adds, "For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified" (2:13; cf. James 1:22-25). Furthermore, he faults the Jews for not obeying the laws of Moses (2:17-24). The viewpoint articulated here seems no different from the standard Jewish view on the subject.

How is one to reconcile these statements with the conclusion to which Paul is driving at the end of his indictment of all of humanity? — "Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For 'no human being will be justified in his sight' by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin" (3:19-20). The Law cannot produce righteousness in the believer; it brings only greater awareness of our sinfulness.

Are we to think of 2:6-11 as purely a hypothetical possibility? That is, *if* there were any who *could* live in obedience to the Law (which there aren't), they would be rewarded with eternal life. But that it is possible to obey the Law, at least to some extent, seems to be the case in the reference those Gentiles who do so "instinctively" in accordance with the Law "written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness" (2:14-16). Continues Paul, "So if those who are uncircumcised keep the requirements of the law, will not their uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?" (2:26).

On the issue of righteousness and the Law, remarkably Jews and Gentiles are in the same situation. Circumcision is the mark of covenant grace that distinguished the Jews as the people of God from the Gentiles. Paul relativizes the issue. "True circumcision" is not "something external and physical," but rather, it is "a matter of the heart—it is spiritual and not literal" (2:28-29). He presses the argument a little further so that it bears upon the identity and significance of being a Jew. In so doing, he reveals the tension between continuity and discontinuity. What is the advantage of being a Jew, of being circumcised? he asks (3:1). "Much in every way," he answers,

mentioning, in particular, being “entrusted with the oracles of God” (3:1-2). He then repeats the question in 3:9, “Are we any better off?” and this time answers, “No, not at all; for we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin.” He backs this up with the well-known catena of OT quotations (3:10-18), beginning with the statement, “There is no one who is righteous, not even one” (Eccl 7:20). The human predicament is universal. There is no possibility of attaining righteousness through obedience of the Law—neither for the Jew nor for the Gentile.

### God’s Answer: Justification by Grace Through Faith

Following the grim description of the human predicament in 1:18-3:20, Paul describes the divine remedy as follows:

But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ<sup>10</sup> for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith (3:21- 25).

The opening words, “but now,” signal the new era of salvation that begins with Christ.

The opening sentence in this passage provides echoes of both continuity and discontinuity. The “righteousness of God” (i.e., God’s saving action in Christ) is described as “apart from law.” Paul restates his point in 3:28—“For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.” The Law is neither necessary nor adequate for salvation. At the same time, however, God’s provision of salvation is attested “by the law and the prophets.” The Scriptures of Israel ultimately pointed in this direction.

“The righteousness of God” (the salvation he provides) is available “through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe” (3:22). The reality of universal sin means that there is only one way to righteousness—namely, being “justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith” (3:24-25).

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<sup>10</sup>NRSV takes the phrase *dia pisteōs Iēsou Christou* as an objective genitive. Another possibility is to take it as a subjective genitive, giving the translation “through the faith (faithfulness) of Jesus Christ.”

The only answer to universal sin is the free gift of God's grace. Justification (i.e., being *declared* righteous) is possible only through the redemptive work of Christ's sacrificial death. God "put forward" Christ as "a sacrifice of atonement." This last phrase translates the Greek word *hilastērion* as literally "cover" or "lid," referring to the lid covering the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies in the inner sanctuary of the temple. In view is the place of atonement—i.e., the lid upon which the High Priest sprinkled blood on the Day of Atonement to atone for the sins of the people. The place of atonement is a metonym for the atoning sacrifice itself; hence, most translations refer to the sacrifice. The place of atonement is no longer in the seclusion of the innermost part of the temple on one day of the year but in the once-for-all public sacrifice at Calvary (cf. Gal 3:1).

Faith is the single way to justification for both Jews and Gentiles. Having stressed that God is the God of Jews and Gentiles alike (3:29), Paul writes that God "will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith, and the uncircumcised through that same faith" (3:30). The way of salvation is the same for both. What about the Law then? It was the Law, after all, that was the pride of the Jews because it marked them off from the Gentiles. Paul is very aware of the radical character of the view he is articulating. Thus he asks, "Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law" (3:31). We will return to this subject momentarily.

#### How Does the "Pauline" Gospel Relate to the OT?

Paul was no doubt elated to be able to illustrate the gospel of justification by faith from OT examples. We have already noted his quotation of Habakkuk 2:4. In Romans 4, he turns to the examples of Abraham and David. In each case, the verb "reckon" (*logizomai*) is of key importance. The verb occurs no less than 11 times in the chapter and means "to count" or "to credit." Paul's key text is Genesis 15:6—"Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (4:3). Here the text of the LXX contains three of the most important words in Paul's vocabulary: believe (note that in Greek this verb [*pisteuō*] is the same root as the noun "faith" (*pistis*), thus "faithed" or "have faith in"), reckon, and righteousness. If Abraham was righteous because of his works, Paul adds, the language of deserving would be appropriate, not that of reckoning (4:4).

Paul turns to a second example, calling attention to the fact that "David speaks of the blessedness of those to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works" (4:6). Again, Paul has found a highly relevant text to support his argument as follows—"Blessed are those

whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the one against whom the Lord will not reckon sin” (Ps 32:1-2). Here the reckoning is negative—i.e., the non-reckoning of sin to the sinner, the obverse of the positive reckoning of righteousness. Sins are not put to the account of the sinner but are forgiven.

But does this reckoning of righteousness and non-reckoning of sin apply only to Jewish believers who are circumcised and thus to be considered as law-obedient, in contrast to the Gentiles? Just as he does in Galatians 3:17, Paul appeals to the temporal priority of the Abrahamic covenant—in this case, not priority to the giving of the Law at Sinai but priority to the circumcision of Abraham, which occurs some years after the declaration of Genesis 15:6. It was not until Abraham was ninety-nine years old that he was circumcised (Gen 17). As Paul observes, Abraham

. . . received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, and likewise the ancestor of the circumcised who are not only circumcised but who also follow the example of the faith that our ancestor Abraham had before he was circumcised (4:11-12).

Paul’s gospel of justification by faith apart from works of the Law is found in the Scriptures of Israel. This is a strong and basic element of continuity between the Old and New Testaments, between Judaism and Christianity. Thus, Paul writes—“The words, ‘it was reckoned to him,’ were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification” (4:23-25). At the same time, together with the continuity, the question lingers about the Law and its ongoing place in Pauline Christianity.

### The Law of Moses in the Epistle to the Romans

The subject of the Law in Romans is infamous for its complexity. We encounter both the positive and the negative, both continuity and discontinuity with the Scriptures and Israel. If, as we have seen, the Law is not the pathway to salvation, what role, if any, does it play in the Pauline gospel?

A brief look at the data will put us in position to appreciate the dilemma posed by the Law. It is Paul's negative statements that first come to mind. In our discussion of Galatians, we have already encountered the negative side in Paul's polemic against the Judaizers. We have also seen the disjunction between Law and gospel in Romans—righteousness coming as a gift apart from the Law (1:18; 3:28). Those who are justified are *sinner*s, as Paul indicated in this statement that must have shocked Jewish readers—"But to one who without works trusts him who justifies *the ungodly (ton asebe)*, such faith is reckoned as righteousness" (4:5) [author italics].

Paul was well aware of the implication of his views; and thus, as early as 3:31, after stating that both Jews and Gentiles are saved by faith (and not works), he adds the caveat, "Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law." Nevertheless, the polarity of promise and Law is important for Paul. The promise to Abraham, "that he would inherit the world"<sup>11</sup> did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith" (4:13; cf. Gal 3:17-22).

Continuing with the negative for the moment, we discover strong discontinuity concerning the Law in Romans 7. Just as a widow is discharged from the law concerning her husband, so "Now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit" (7:6). Paul continues with a pertinent question—"What then should we say? That the law is sin? By no means!" (7:7). Quite the contrary:

So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good. Did what is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. For we know that the law is spiritual (7:12-14).

Sin, personified by Paul, is the real problem, not the Law per se. Nevertheless, he does categorically state that Christians are "discharged from the law" and "not under the old written code." So, here as elsewhere, an underlying continuity is overlaid with clear discontinuity.

Perhaps the classic text on the Law in Romans is 10:4. Lamenting the Jewish rejection of his gospel, Paul writes, "For being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God and seeking to establish their

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<sup>11</sup>The Greek word here is *kosmos*, and not the expected *gē*, referring to the Promised Land.

own, they have not submitted to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the Law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (10:3-4). The word *telos* can mean 'end' in the sense of termination, but also can mean 'goal;' and it may well be that. Since both fit the context, both ideas are present here. This would allow us to see both continuity and discontinuity in the statement. As to discontinuity, the Law has come to an end as a (misguided or misunderstood) means of arriving at righteousness. It had only a temporary function to perform and was never to effect righteousness, but rather to heighten condemnation. As to continuity, in Christ the Law has arrived at its goal. The promises find their fulfillment in him; a new era has dawned, one in which major changes occur.

Paul began to read the Scriptures in new ways. In 10:5-6, he contrasts "the righteousness that comes from the law (*ek [tou] nomou*)"<sup>12</sup> with "the righteousness that comes from faith (*ek pisteōs*)." He then proceeds to reinterpret Deuteronomy 30:14 so that it refers not to the performance of the commandments ("The word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe"), but rather to his gospel—"That is the word of faith that we proclaim;" because "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved" (10:8-10).

In what sense is Paul's positive affirmation of the Law to be understood? It is clear from much in his letters that he has given up on the Law as the means of arriving at righteousness. In that regard, the Law is impotent and, being part of Scripture and God's gift to Israel, Paul continues to value it highly because it instructs in righteousness, even though it cannot produce righteousness. Therefore, what Paul is ultimately interested in is not the commandments per se, but paradoxically *the righteousness that is the goal of the Law*.

In short, there is a righteousness that comes from God that's available to all who believe (10:3-4), in contrast to righteousness resulting from obedience to the Law. Believers in Jesus are no longer under the Law or subject to it but, in fulfillment of the promised new covenant (Jer 31:33), have the Law written on their hearts. *A new path to righteousness is thus available by faith in Jesus.*

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<sup>12</sup>Paul quotes Moses (Lev 18:5) concerning the righteousness that comes from the Law, "The person who does these things will live by them" (10:5; cf. 2:13).

## Freedom from Law as the Paradoxical Means of Sanctification

Justification (i.e., being declared righteous by faith through grace) has seemed to some to provide no motivational basis for ethical living. Indeed, some at the beginning thought it was virtually an invitation to sin, an idea to which Paul reacted strongly. When he observes that where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more, he raises the question in the minds of his critics, “What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means!” (6:1). And again in 6:15, “What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!” On the contrary, for him, to be free from the Law is to be free to live righteously. “Sin will have no dominion over you,” he writes, “since you are not under law but under grace” (6:14). Paul puts it very succinctly: “You have died to the law through the body of Christ so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. . . . But now we are discharged from the Law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit” (7:4, 6).

The argument throughout Chapter 6 is that identification with Christ’s death means a dying to the Law and to sin. “Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (6:4). Christians are to consider themselves “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (6:11), no longer as slaves to sin (6:6, 12, 17) but “set free from sin” (6:18, 22).

The consequences of this argument are elaborated in Chapter 8. Paul begins with the declaration that, “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,” and then continues “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death” (8:2). The result of Christ’s work is that, “the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (8:4). We see, then, that despite Paul’s strong polemic against the Law, he believes that the Christian, in and through the power of the Holy Spirit, will live righteously and so fulfill the Law.

Here then is the paradox—the Christian is free from the Law in order to produce the righteousness of the Law. In keeping with Jeremiah’s promised new covenant (Jer 31:33), the Law is internalized and in agreement with Joel 2:28-29, which affirms that the new dynamic of the indwelling Holy Spirit is able to empower for righteous living. For Paul, righteous living is not optional; it is required. Again, as often seen, we have here a mixture of discontinuity as well as an

underlying continuity. Newness there is, but not an absolute newness; rather, it is newness built upon the past promises.

### The People of Israel

An important final subject for our interests is the place of Israel in the circumstances of the newly arrived kingdom of God. We have seen plenty in Romans that can raise the question of whether, given the fulfillment of the promises, Israel still has a role in God's purposes. In particular, the indictment of not only the Gentiles, but also the Jews in the opening chapters of Romans has the effect of demolishing the distinction between Jews and Gentiles (2:25-29; cf. Gal 3:28). "For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin" (3:9; cf. 3:19-20). Then too, the Law, the prize possession of Israel, has been voided. Importantly, there is only a single way of salvation for both Jews and Christians—the atoning work of Jesus on the cross (3:21-24). The Promised Land has all but disappeared, the promise to Abraham being greater—namely, the entire world (4:13).

Having served her primary role in the history of salvation, is Israel any longer significant in God's purposes? What about the promises to Israel as a nation? Are they nullified? And then there is the problem that Paul wrestles with in Chapters 9-11. What about the Jews' rejection of Paul's gospel? "I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means!" (11:1). "God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew" (11:2). God's faithfulness is seen in the remnant of Jewish believers in Jesus, chosen by grace (11:5). The majority of Jews have stumbled at the gospel, but not "so as to fall. . . . But through their stumbling salvation has come to the Gentiles" (11:11).

Beginning in 11:12, Paul starts on a new tack—"Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their defeat means riches for Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!" As we proceed, we encounter more optimistic language in 11:15—"If their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead!" Israel remains holy (11:16). The unbelieving Jews are like branches broken off from an olive tree (11:17-19). Gentile believers are like branches of a wild tree grafted, against nature, into a cultivated olive tree (11:17-24). Jews who do not persist in their unbelief in Jesus can be grafted back into the tree from which they were broken off. "And even those of Israel, if they do not persist in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again" (11:23).

The passage comes to its climax in 11:25-26 as follows—"I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved." This is how Paul finally resolves his dilemma—Israel remaining the special people of God. "As regards the gospel they are enemies of God for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (11:28-29).

In Chapter 15, Paul confirms that Christ came to show both God's faithfulness to Israel and His mercy to the Gentiles. "For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy" (15:8-9). This statement is followed by a series of four OT quotations that express hope for the Gentiles. Paul then also affirms his own calling to the Gentiles, referring to "the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (15:15-16; cf. 16:25-26).

Israel thus retains her privileged place, but it is modified both by the new circumstances brought about through the dawning of a new age (namely, the changes already noted), but also in particular by the incorporation of the Gentiles into the people of God with equal standing before Him. Preceding the doxological passage that ends Chapter 11, Paul again affirms the universality of his gospel—"For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all" (11:32; cf. 3:23-24).

### **Colossians**

The Christ Hymn of Colossians 1:15-20 contains a high Christology analogous to its sister hymn in Philippians 2:6-11. Christ is shown to be the head not only of the first creation, but also of the new creation, the Church:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the Church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in

him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell; and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

In the first stanza, Paul alludes to the incarnation. Christ is “the image (*eikōn*) of the invisible God.” As the agent of creation, he is the apex<sup>13</sup> of all that exists; he is “before all things” and the unifying principle of all reality. In the second stanza, as the risen one—indeed, as the beginning of the eschatological resurrection—he is the head of “the body” (i.e., “the church”) and “the beginning” (*archē*) of the community of the new era, the kingdom of God’s beloved Son (1:13). The result is that he holds “first place in everything.” “All the fullness of God” dwells in him, a point made again in 2:9—“In him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.” The Church exists only by means of the reconciliation accomplished by the atoning work of Christ, whereby peace was made “through the blood of the cross.” The created order and the redeemed order, old and new, both depend upon the person and work of Christ.

In 1:25-29, Paul refers to his commission to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles, “to make the word of God fully known.” This he further refers to as

... the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

Here, the newness of the universal gospel is described as a mystery only now revealed. At the center of Paul’s gospel is the mystery of Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3).

Gentile Christians, according to Paul, “have come to fullness” in Christ and in him “were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision” (2:11). There are, as usual in Paul, important implications for the Law.

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<sup>13</sup>The word *prōtotokos* is usually translated as “firstborn,” which would seem to make Christ the first created being. But given the high Christology of the passage and his agency in bringing the creation into existence, that translation is misleading. The idea is “holding prior rank” over all that exists, as for example in the use of the word in the LXX of Ps 89:27.

“When you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross” (2:13-14). The legal demands of the Law have been set aside (i.e., cancelled).

Paul then draws out some practical consequences. “Therefore, do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons or Sabbaths. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ” (2:16-17). So too the purity rules are no longer relevant for:

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations, “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch?” All these regulations refer to things that perish with use; they are simply human commands and teachings (2:20-22).

Paul refers to the Christian as having “stripped off the old self with its practices” and as being clothed “with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal,” he adds, “there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!” (3:9-11). Again, Paul stresses that in the new age brought by Christ, the old divisions between humanity are destroyed.

## Lecture Three: Pauline Corpus and Hebrews

by Donald Hagner

### 1 Corinthians

In 1 Corinthians, we find the same attitude toward the law that we encountered in Galatians and Romans. Paul quotes a motto he probably had taught the Corinthians but which they were abusing. He qualified it each time. “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are beneficial. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything” (6:12).<sup>1</sup> And “All things are lawful, but not all things are beneficial. All things are lawful, but not all things build up.” That this involves freedom from the law is especially evident from Chapters 7-9.

In Chapter 7, we see freedom from circumcision: “Was anyone at the time of his call circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything.” (7:18-19)

Some have regarded the last sentence as one of the strangest in the NT. How can Paul say that circumcision (an important commandment of the law) is of no consequence yet at the same time say that obeying the commandments of God is everything? We have already seen this judgment about circumcision in Galatians 5:6 and 6:15.<sup>2</sup> There the counterbalancing idea about what really only matters is “faith working through love” and “a new creation.” We are in a new situation where the specific commandments of the law are no longer binding. Here what matters is righteousness. We now have a new way to the righteousness that the law has as its goal and that can be manifested apart from the law.

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<sup>1</sup>All Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup>Here, as in Gal 6:15, there is no Greek equivalent to the words “is everything.” Something must be supplied to make the thought complete—perhaps something like “what *does* matter is obeying the (more weighty) commandments.” Some redefinition of righteousness seems also to be in view.

In Chapter 8, something similar is said about the food laws. The issue concerns not merely food, but food offered to idols. We discover here (as also in 10:14 and 12:2) Paul using the standard Jewish polemic against idol worship. In contrast to the “many gods and many lords” of the pagans, there is but one God, as the Jews confessed everyday in the Shema. Idols have no real existence. The first half of 8:6 was familiar territory to the Jews—“For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist.” The second half of the couplet, however, was another matter—“and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.” To name Jesus Christ as *Kyrios* (another title for God) and to put him alongside God as Creator in the same breath was to break new ground, moving into what has been termed *Christological Monotheism*. This high Christology, as we have previously noted, is part and parcel of the eschatological newness brought about by the dawning of the Kingdom in the person of Jesus.

Returning to the food question, Paul seems to extend the discussion beyond food offered to idols and to generalize in a way that makes one think of the food laws concerning clean and unclean foods—i.e., the dietary law (*kashrut*). Food will not bring us close to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat and no better off if we do” (8:8). With this may be compared Paul’s similar statements about circumcision (7:19; Gal 5:6; 6:15).

In Chapter 9, Paul articulates his position on the entirety of the Mosaic law:

For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings (9:19-23).

In these remarkable words, Paul unequivocally indicates his “freedom” from the commandments of Torah: “I myself am not under the law.” The complexity of Paul’s attitude to the law was dictated by the exigencies of the twofold mission of the Church, to Gentiles and

Jews. Paul was deliberately inconsistent “for the sake of the gospel.” His break with the law was clear, but that did not mean he didn’t live righteously, even though he was no longer under the law. Instead, a new standard of righteousness—the teaching of Jesus—now governed his life. It is not a matter of merely shifting from one set of commandments to another. The dawning of a new age brings with it a new dynamic, with the law internalized, being written on the heart and enabled by the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

It is worth noting that English translations often mislead by having Paul say that he is “*under* the law of Christ.” Paul, however, does not use *hypo ton nomon tou Christou*, but rather *ennomos Christou*. *Ennomos*, which occurs only here in the Greek NT, is difficult to translate but means something like “in accordance with the law (of Christ).” The difference may be subtle but is important, reflecting a new reality. The latest edition of Bauer’s lexicon, edited by F. W. Danker, suggests the following translation of the sentence—“I identified as one outside Mosaic jurisdiction with those outside it; not, of course, being outside God’s jurisdiction, but inside Christ’s” (BDAG 338a). The law for Paul remains a negative force. In the famous passage about death being “swallowed up in victory,” he summarizes it by saying, “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law” (15:56).

The newness of the gospel enables “new readings” of Scripture, as can be seen throughout the NT. The justification for these new readings is the conviction that the dawning of the Kingdom brings us to the (initial) fulfillment of the goal of the OT. Paul, therefore, writes, “Now these things occurred as examples for us” (10:6). And again, “These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come” (10:11).

In 10:32, Paul orders the Corinthians to “Give no offense to Jews or Greeks or to the church of God.” He thus makes the Church a separate entity, parallel to the Jews and Greeks. Already in the 50s AD, the Church is growing into its identity as the new people of God. The community of the Church, in effect, is a new society, a third race, in which Jews and Gentiles are no longer distinguished but form a single new fellowship. Paul expresses this new unity thusly, “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (12:13).

## 2 Corinthians

Emphasis on the newness of fulfillment is found also in 2 Corinthians. An interesting passage occurs toward the beginning of the letter—"For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not 'Yes and No'; but in him it is always 'Yes.' For in him every one of God's promises is a 'Yes.' For this reason it is through him that we say the 'Amen,' to the glory of God." (1:19-20) This is the continuity between promise and fulfillment.

Undoubtedly the most important passage in 2 Corinthians for our subject is Chapter 3. Here, more than anywhere else, Paul explicitly contrasts the new and the old, emphasizing the superiority of the new and, hence, discontinuity with the old. He begins by speaking of the Corinthian Christians as "his letter of recommendation—a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (3:3). The idea of writing with the Spirit of God on the tablet of the human heart reflects Jeremiah's new covenant promise where the law is internalized—"I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts" (Jer 31:33), in contrast to the law of Moses, which was written on "tablets of stone." Paul describes himself and his co-workers as "ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (3:6) The explicitly *new* covenant, promised in Jeremiah 31:31 and now in effect, is described as "of the Spirit," who gives life, in stark contrast to the letter of the law that kills.

Paul continues the contrast between the old and the new, focusing on the surpassing glory of the new. "Now if the ministry of death, chiseled in letters on stone tablets, came in glory so that the people of Israel could not gaze at Moses' face because of the glory of his face, a glory now set aside, how much more will the ministry of the Spirit come in glory?" (3:7-8).

Several points to be noted. The old is described as a "ministry of death;" the reference to letters chiseled on stone tablets is an obvious allusion to the law. Paul does not minimize the glory associated with the giving of the law and a glory shining from Moses' face, but he explicitly says it is "a glory now set aside." Indeed, it is surpassed by the new, the "ministry of the Spirit."

Continuing to draw a contrast between the old and new, Paul next refers to the dispensation of the law as a "ministry of condemnation," in contrast to the "ministry of justification," which abounds more in glory. Yet again, Paul calls attention to the transitory character of the old compared to the permanence of the new. "Indeed, what once had glory

has lost its glory because of the greater glory; for if what was set aside came through glory, much more has the permanent come in glory!" (3:10-11).

Drawing out the analogy even further, Paul turns to the veil Moses put over his face, taking the reason for the veil to be the desire to keep people from seeing the fading of the glory on Moses' face, "the end of the glory that was being set aside" (3:13). The discontinuity could hardly be more pronounced than here.

From Paul's viewpoint, just as the minds of the Jews were hardened in the time of Moses, so down to the present, "indeed, to this very day," a veil lies over the minds of the Jews when they read the Scriptures of the old covenant. "Only in Christ is it set aside" (3:14-15). He continues, "But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed" (3:16). The new era is the era of the Spirit, "and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (3:17). The exact sense of "freedom" here is not clear; but it must, in some sense, be freedom from the old, freedom from the dispensation of condemnation and death, from the law and its effects, and thus freedom to live in remarkable new ways. Christians "with unveiled faces" are enabled to see "the glory of the Lord, as though reflected in a mirror," and are thereby "transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (3:18; cf. 4:6).

The newness of the new era is very much in Paul's mind in 5:17, which says, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"<sup>3</sup> This motif of realized eschatology occurs again in 6:2, where he quotes Isaiah 49:8, with its reference to "a day of salvation" and then adds, "See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!"

## **Philippians**

The incarnation as described in the Christ Hymn of Philippians 2 is, of course, essential to the newness of the NT. Paul (or at least the hymn he borrows, if he did not compose it himself) here presents a three-stage Christology. The first stage is the existence of Christ "in the form of God" and equal to God (2:6). The second stage involves his humiliation, where he "emptied himself" and took human form, indeed, "the form of a slave," and "humbled himself" to the extent of dying on the cross, obedient to his Father (2:7-8). In the third stage, "God also

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<sup>3</sup>To be sure, NRSV here exaggerates the statement, which literally would be translated, "So that if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old things have passed away; see, new things have come." Only some inferior and late manuscripts have "everything" in the last clause of the sentence. But the basic point remains—with the coming of Christ, a dramatic change has occurred, moving us from the old to the new.

highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (2: 9-11).

Much in the hymn alludes to, or is in accord with, OT anticipation. The third stage particularly ascribes to the resurrected Jesus the worship accorded to YHWH in Isaiah 45:23 (identified as God in Isa 45:22). This material is, then, both continuous with the OT, being alluded to in the Scriptures, and discontinuous with the past, in its actual fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth.

As in Galatians and Romans, Paul argues against the Judaizers. Circumcision is fully spiritualized. “For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh” (3:3). Paul has all the Jewish credentials, including his accomplishments as a Pharisee (“as to righteousness under the law, blameless,” [3:6]) yet counts them of no more value than rubbish so that he might be found in Christ, “not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith” (3:8-9).

Here again is the familiar contrast between the old and the new, illustrated in Paul’s own life. The present fulfillment of realized eschatology by no means excludes a future eschatology, as can be seen from 3:20-21—“But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.” A few lines later Paul says, “The Lord is near” (4:5).

### **Ephesians**

Even if Ephesians is not by Paul (which is far from certain), it clearly reflects Pauline theology. In the grand scope of Chapter 1, we read—“With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (1:8-10). That plan has now reached a new level of fulfillment on the way to its final fulfillment. Paul prays that the Ephesians:

. . . May have the eyes of their hearts enlightened so that they would know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and

what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (1:18-23).

According to Ephesians, Christians have been made alive together with Christ, have been raised up with him, and are seated with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (2:5-6). Note the (prophetic) past tenses. This affirms a highly realized eschatology, short of the consummation.

Paul's gospel is clearly stated in 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast." The polemic against the law is implied here rather than expressed. It is articulated clearly in the last half of Chapter 2.

Before the coming of Christ, the Gentiles were in dire straits, ". . . being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (2:12). But now, "by the blood of Christ, the Gentiles have been brought near." The consequences of this new situation are spelled out in all clarity. Christ is our peace and has made Jews and Gentiles a single group:

In his flesh he has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom

you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God. (2:14-21)

All this is dramatically new. The commandments and ordinances of the law are abolished. The wall of hostility (an allusion to the wall in the temple dividing the court of the Jews from the court of the Gentiles) has been torn down. The differences between Jews and Gentiles have become insignificant. He “has made both groups into one,” “one new humanity in place of the two.”

This is “the mystery of Christ” (3:4), not known until it was revealed to the apostles and (NT) prophets—“That is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (3:6). All of this is the working out in history of God’s eternal purpose—“That through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (3:10-11). As Paul goes on to say, the Church, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, forms one body, one great unity—“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (4:4-6).

### **Hebrews**

Because so much of the Book of Hebrews is devoted to comparisons of the old and the new, it is exceptionally rich in both continuity and discontinuity. Again, as we have repeatedly seen in our survey, a strong and important continuity underlies—and indeed, sharpens—the discontinuities revealed in this book. The unknown author was a brilliant theologian, with a thorough grounding in the theology and Scriptures of the old covenant, as well as a rich grasp of Christian theology.

Already in the opening words, we see the juxtaposition of old and new and the superiority of the latter—“Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son.” From the outset, we see the definitive character of the new, which has come in the newly inaugurated eschatology of “these last days [*ep’ eschatou tōn hēmerōn toutōn*],” literally, “at the end of these days” (cf. 6:5). We have here not two stories, but one. And what has come in Christ is the fulfillment and climax of the first part of the story.

But who is this Son of God? This is not one son of God among others, but *the* Son of God (so rightly the margin of the NRSV);

namely, the one whom God appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs (1:2-3).

The remainder of the chapter strings together a series of seven OT quotations, six of which refer to the Son, one addressing the Son as God (1:8, a quotation from Ps 45:7), the last and climactic being Psalm 110:1: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." The coming of the Son, the accomplishment of atonement, and his ascension to the right hand of God amount to a dramatic manifestation of the newness of the present era.

In 2:2, the author agrees with the view that the law, "the message declared through angels," was valid. Still greater, however, is the salvation that has come "through the Lord," confirmed by God with "signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will" (2:3-4). The author asks, "How can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"

In a midrashic treatment of Psalm 8:5-7, our author comments, "But we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone" (2:9).

### Jesus and Moses

Our author proceeds to draw a parallel between Moses and Jesus. While both were faithful to God, Jesus (identified as "the apostle and high priest of our confession") "is worthy of more glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself" (3:1-3). Moses was faithful "as a servant, to testify to the things that would be spoken later;" Christ was faithful "as a son" (3:5-6).

Turning to the dangers of unbelief, the author reminds the readers of the Israelites who, under Moses' leadership, rebelled in the wilderness. (The account is found in Exod 17:1-7; cf. Num 14:20-35; 20:1-13). He quotes Psalm 95:7-11 in 3:7-11 and then quotes portions of this passage again in 3:15, 4:3, and 4:7. In 3:12-4:11, he proceeds to comment via an extensive midrash on the Psalm passage. The Psalmist took the story and applied it to his readers centuries later—"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, as on the day of testing in the wilderness," God saying to *that* generation,

“They will not enter my rest.” Just as the Psalmist applied the passage to his generation, so too the author of Hebrews contemporizes it for *his* readers, saying they must not allow their hearts to be hardened in unbelief. He makes the point from the Psalm passage that, “The promise of entering his rest is still open” (4:1), reiterated in 4:6.

Just in passing, he comments, “For indeed the good news came to us just as to them; but the message they heard did not benefit them, because it did not meet with faith in the hearers” (4:2).<sup>4</sup> The reference to the good news [*euēγγελισμενοι*] that came to us, and coming also to that generation, provides a strong underlying note of continuity between the past and present.

Since David, “much later,” renews the invitation to enter rest, the promise remains to be appropriated (4:7). If the Israelites had entered rest through Joshua,<sup>5</sup> “God would not speak later about another day.” Our author continues, “So then, a Sabbath rest still remains for the people of God” (4:8-9). Here he shifts from the word for Sabbath used thus far, *katapausis*, to *sabbatismos*, a special word emphasizing that this rest is of a different order—namely an eschatological rest of the same type as God’s own Sabbath-rest (cf. 4:10). Remarkably, the author writes, “For we who have believed enter that rest” (4:3).

#### Jesus and Melchizedek

Among the brilliant insights of our author, none is more impressive than his argument in Chapter 5 concerning Jesus as high priest of the order of Melchizedek (in the NT mentioned only in Hebrews). At the heart of the book’s argument is the work of Christ as high priest (already mentioned in 2:17; 3:1; and 4:14-15). A key obstacle to this argument is the simple fact that Jesus, born of the tribe of Judah (not the tribe of Levi), does not qualify to be a priest at all. The author is well aware of the problem, writing, “For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests” (7:14). Furthermore, “One does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was” (5:4).

The author continues, “So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest but was appointed by the one who said to him, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you’ [Ps 2:7]; as he says also

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<sup>4</sup>Following the RSV for the last clause, a translation which NRSV puts in the margin.

<sup>5</sup>In Greek, the names Joshua and Jesus are spelled exactly the same, *Iēsous*. The promised rest not reached through the first Jesus is entered through the agency of the second Jesus.

in another place, ‘You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek’ [Ps 110:4]” (5:5-6). The passage that explains the connection of these verses is Psalm 110:1 (one of the most frequently quoted OT texts in the NT), which says, “The Lord says to my lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.’” Although not quoted here, the verse is quoted in 1:13 and alluded to in 1:3, 8:1, and 10:12-13. This Jesus, the author concludes, “became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek” (5:9-10; cf. 6:20).

In 5:11 he interrupts the discussion of Melchizedek for a digression on the dangers to the readers of unbelief. In this intervening section, a discussion of the promise to Abraham leads to this statement that shows the author’s commitment to the continuity of God’s purposes—“When God desired to show even more clearly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it by an oath, so that through two unchangeable things in which it is impossible that God would prove false, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us” (6:17-18).

In Chapter 7, he resumes his discussion of Melchizedek in some detail. As a king and priest, Melchizedek is a type of Christ, not a pre-incarnation manifestation of Christ. The description of Melchizedek as being “without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life” refers most probably to the fact that his origins are unknown (cf. 7:6), as are the dates of his life and death. (Note well that he *resembles* the Son of God [cf. 7:15], not that he *is* the Son of God.) Our author then exclaims the greatness of Melchizedek (7:4), who blessed Abraham and received a tithe from him. Even Levi, “in the loins of his ancestor” Abraham, could be said to have paid a tithe to Melchizedek (7:10).

Beginning in Chapter 7 and continuing through Chapter 10, the author begins to speak of the discontinuities that are implicit in his argument. It is this material that makes Hebrews so important for our subject. Thus, regarding the importance of the Melchizedekan priesthood, he writes, “Now if perfection had been attainable through the levitical priesthood—for the people received the law under this priesthood—what further need would there have been to speak of another priest arising according to the order of Melchizedek, rather than one according to the order of Aaron?” (7:11). He then proceeds to draw the obvious conclusion—“For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well” (7:12). Along with the change of the old to the new, he begins to speak of the new as better than the old that it supersedes. “There is, on the one hand, the abrogation of an earlier commandment because it was weak and

ineffectual (for the law made nothing perfect); there is, on the other hand, the introduction of a better hope, through which we approach God” (7:18-19, cf. 12:18-24).

The author calls attention to the fact that Christ’s priesthood is eternal and is backed up by God’s oath:

This one became a priest with an oath; for others who became priests took their office without an oath, but this one became a priest with an oath, because of the one who said to him, “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, You are a priest forever”—accordingly Jesus has also become the guarantee of a better covenant (7:21-22).

The contrast between the old and the new is then emphasized—“Furthermore, the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever” (7:23-24). The superiority of the high priest Jesus applies also to his once-for-all sacrifice:

Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever (7:27-28).

Alongside this passage should be put 10:11, which says, “And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins.”

#### The New Covenant

One of the strongest notes of discontinuity in Hebrews and, indeed, in the whole of the NT is found in the discussion of the new covenant in Chapter 8. Our author begins with a contrast between the priests who perform their duties in an earthly sanctuary (a mere copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary), and Jesus, our high priest, who, seated at the right hand of God in the heavens, is “a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent that the Lord, and not any mortal, has set up” (8:1-2). The point is this—Jesus has now obtained a more excellent ministry and, to that degree, is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been

enacted through better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need to look for a second (8:6-7).

Thereupon, the author quotes the entirety of Jeremiah's passage concerning the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34, following the text of the Septuagint [LXX]), this Scripture being very important to him. A part of the passage is quoted again in 10:16-17 and is clearly alluded to in 9:15. It is ideal for his purpose, underlining both continuity and discontinuity at the same time, although, to be sure, the emphasis is on the latter.

The author reveals the tension in his introduction of the passage. Whereas, as we have seen, he clearly implies that the first covenant was not faultless, he introduces the quotation with these words—"God finds fault with *them* when he says . . ." (8:8). As with Paul (cf. Rom 7:11-12), so here too the problem is finally not so much in the law or covenant but in the sinfulness of the people.

Nevertheless, the old covenant (i.e., the Law of Moses) had come to its end, for after the Jeremiah quotation, the author adds this—"In speaking of 'a new covenant,' he has made the first one obsolete. And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear" (8:13). In other words, the coming of the new cancels out the old, which has served its (limited) purpose.

The Jeremiah passage provided our author with an important argument—namely, that the old covenant itself anticipated its limited "shelf-life" and spoke of a better covenant to come. This fact justifies the conclusion that the considerable discontinuity explored by the author rests upon a presupposed and real underlying continuity. The new, the better, has come, but it was nothing other than what the old pointed to and for which the old had prepared the way.

Further criticism of the law occurs in Chapter 10, where our author writes that. "The law has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true form of these realities," and so, "It can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who approach" (10:1). In 10:5-7, he makes Jesus the speaker of Psalm 40:7-9 and then comments on the passage as follows:

When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (10:8-10).

### Sacrifices and the Definitive Sacrifice

In Chapter 9, our author begins to compare and contrast the sacrifices of the old covenant and the sacrifice of Christ. In the old dispensation, “Gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper” By contrast, “When Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption” (9:11).

A few lines later, the author writes, “For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant” (9:15). He then repeats and elaborates the contrast in 9:23-26:

Thus, it was necessary for the sketches of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves need better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands (a mere copy of the true one), but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own; for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, Christ has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself.

The contrast between the old sacrifices and the new sacrifice continues in 10:11-18, with quoted material from Psalm 110:1:

And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God,” and since then has been waiting “until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet.” For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

This is followed immediately by repeated quotation of a portion of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31:33-35 and ending with, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more,” to which our

author appends this concluding comment—“Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin” (10:18).

A section of application to the readers follows this material; and in it the author refers to the accomplishment of Jesus, “a great priest over the house of God,” who opened “the new and living way” of access to God “through the curtain (that is, through his flesh)”<sup>6</sup> (10:19-21). Here we see the stress on the newness, both in means and effects, of what is accomplished in the work of Christ.

### The Faith of Our Ancestors

Chapter 11 is one of the best loved portions of the NT. Its praise of faith unites the testaments and provides a fundamental aspect of underlying continuity. At the same time, it is clear that the OT examples look beyond their own circumstances to what lies ahead, to the future realization of what is new and even eschatological in character.

The OT examples exhibit continuity with the present because they “still speak” through their faith (11:4), as in the case of Noah who, by his obedience, “became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith” (11:7). At the same time, however, there is discontinuity because of future expectations. Thus, Abraham looked beyond his own horizons; he “looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (11:10). Our author generalizes:

All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them (11:13-16).

At the end of his catalog of the faithful, the author makes this summarizing comment—“Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had

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<sup>6</sup>The curtain, identified as the “flesh” of Christ, is an allusion to the curtain that divided the Holy of Holies from the remainder of the sanctuary. The tearing of the curtain symbolizes the opening of direct access to God’s presence (cf. Mk 15:38), made possible by the crucifixion of Christ.

provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect" (11:39-40). The readers are reminded in 10:34 that "You yourselves possessed something better and more lasting."

The OT saints were people of faith in their own specific contexts; but they also knew that they were on the way to something else, something better. Here we have continuity and discontinuity together, the old and new together, the fulfillment of the former by the latter.

### Mount Sinai and Mount Zion

By means of a fascinating contrast, a climactic passage in Chapter 12 brings together some of the main themes of Hebrews. The old—Sinai—is contrasted with the new—Zion. The stress now is on discontinuity:

You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them. (For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned to death." Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear.") But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (12:18-24).

Our author describes the present status of the Christian in the language of realized eschatology. "You *have come* to Mount Zion," defined as "the heavenly Jerusalem," the city of eschatological joy and perfection. The contrast between the gloom and forbidding character of Mount Sinai with the bright, festal gathering of a vast number of angels could hardly be more stark. The key, of course, is that Jesus is "the mediator of a new covenant." The difference, together with a similar stress on discontinuity, has already been articulated in 7:18-19. The new covenant is better than the old (7:22; 8:6).

Encouraging the readers to persevere in their faith, the author tells them that God will shake earth and heaven in judgment and that "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with

reverence and awe; for indeed our God is a consuming fire” (12:28-29). The Kingdom that Christians presently receive is secure because it depends on the work of Christ.

Chapter 13 is more of an appendix containing various exhortations than a vital part of the book that furthers its argument. Nevertheless, a few themes from the preceding chapters do re-emerge. The author writes that, “It is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by regulations about food, which have not benefitted those who observe them” (13:9). This is similar to 9:10, although here “strange teachings,” rather than the Mosaic law, are in view.

Typological correspondence is in view in 13:11-13: “For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured.”

The priests bring the blood of animals into the sanctuary “as a sacrifice for sin;” by comparison and contrast, the high priest Jesus brings his own blood into the heavenly sanctuary to sanctify the people (9:11-12). As the bodies of the slain animals were burned outside the camp of Israel, so Jesus was crucified outside the city wall (cf. Jn 19:17, 20).

The author then adds an application to the readers to go to him outside the camp and suffer abuse as he did—i.e., to leave the camp of Israel and Judaism, and to endure the persecution that was coming their way (cf. 10:32-39; 12:3-11). Lastly, he adds that the readers’ home is not in the camp of Israel, nor indeed in this world, “For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come” (13:14).

The closing benediction of the book centers on Christ’s unique atoning work:

Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen (13:20-21).

Hebrews is an extremely rich book for our purposes, and equally problematic for those who would stress only continuity. It again and again emphasizes the inferiority of the old compared to the new. The stress is continually on the fact that the new is *better* than the old—a better covenant, better promises, a better sacrifice. In Jesus we are told

of a unique high priest of the order of a non-Levitical priest named Melchizedek, who offers his own blood in a once-for-all, fully sufficient sacrifice to secure an eternal redemption, as the ground of an eternal covenant.

The very content of the overall argument of Hebrews is such that it involves the realization and articulation of a discontinuity of the highest proportion and greatest intensity. No NT book surpasses it in this regard. Yet paradoxically, it too presupposes and rests upon a bedrock of continuity. What is accomplished in Christ and in the establishment of the new covenant is the fulfillment of the purposes of God from the beginning and throughout the history of Israel.

## Lecture Four: Catholic Epistles and Apocalypse

by Donald Hagner

### James

A great portion of the book of James contains various ethical exhortations that would be equally at home in both the OT and the NT. James amounts to a form of Christian wisdom literature. The addressees are “the twelve tribes in the Dispersion” (1:1)<sup>1</sup>, which sounds appropriate for Jewish Christian readers, of course; but it is not necessary to restrict the intended readership to Jews. Very possibly this address could reflect the view of the Church as the true Israel (cf. Mt 19:28; Rev 21:12-14), alluding to the fulfillment of the promises to Israel. To be noted in this connection is the address of 1 Peter, which is clearly a document written to Gentile Christians (cf. 2:9-10; 4:3-4)—“to the exiles of the Dispersion” (1:1).

There are a couple of references to the Law in James that represent a Christian view of the Law, paradoxically not unlike Paul’s. James writes:

For if any are hearers of the law and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they are like. But those who look into the perfect law, at the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing (1:23-25).

Again, in 2:12, he writes, “So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty” (cf. “the royal law,” 2:8). The “law of liberty” reflects a Christian view of the Law of Moses as mediated through the teaching of Jesus.

As for the famous difference between James and Paul on the subject of the Law and works, Paul would essentially agree with James

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<sup>1</sup>All Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), unless otherwise noted.

that faith without works is dead. To be sure, Genesis 15:6 is quoted to a different end, and Paul would not articulate the problem using the same language as James. In reality, however, James appears to be correcting a perversion of Paul's view of the Law, making an emphasis with which Paul would be in full accord. Whether James would have considered his view of the Law as being in tension with the place and role of Law in the OT, as Paul seems to have, is debatable.

### **1 Peter**

From the beginning of this epistle, the newness of what God has done in Christ is in clear view:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1:3-5).

The readers have not seen Christ, yet they love him, believe in him, “and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1:8-9).

We have in these opening passages a combination of realized and future eschatology. The new birth of salvation is already the possession of the Christian, and yet full salvation lies in the indeterminate future. The progress of salvation history involves a degree of discontinuity with the past:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours made careful search and inquiry, inquiring about the person or time that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated when it testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look (1:10-12).

The prophets realized that the time of fulfillment, the time of “grace” and “the subsequent glory,” would not be enjoyed by them but by those living in the future, to whom the “good news” would be brought “by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.” “The things that have now been announced to you” refer to the gospel that had been proclaimed to the readers. That gospel is so wondrous that it involves things into which even “angels long to look.”

The readers are encouraged to prepare themselves and to “set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed” (1:13). The grace of salvation is already theirs, yet the promises are not yet fully realized. There is more to come. The author continues by mentioning the ransom of the readers by the blood of Christ, in a sacrifice analogous to those of the temple— “like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.”:

You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God (1:18-21).

The atonement accomplished by Christ on the cross is definitive. This was the realization of God’s purpose from “before the foundation of the world,” but revealed now “at the end of the ages for your sake.” While the newness of this eschatological revelation is evident, there is also the usual underlying continuity wherein the readers are said to have “come to trust in God,” and have their faith and hope “set on God.” The new birth mentioned in 1:3 is elaborated in 1:23-25: “You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. For ‘All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord endures forever.’ That word is the good news that was announced to you.”

The new birth is mediated “through the living and enduring word of God.” The quotation drawn from Isaiah 40:7-8 affirms the imperishable character of God’s word. Then our author identifies that word with “the good news that was announced to you.”<sup>2</sup> The new birth

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. in a somewhat different context, Paul’s identification of God’s word in Deuteronomy 30:14 with the gospel—“that is, the word of faith that we proclaim” (Rom 10:8).

is part and parcel of the new age that dawns with the coming of Christ announced by the gospel.

One of the strongest expressions of discontinuity in the NT is found in Chapter 2. Here language hitherto reserved exclusively for Israel is now applied to the Church, consisting (largely) of Gentiles. The author cites three “stone Logia” (2:6-8) drawn from Isaiah 28:16 (a chosen and precious cornerstone), from Psalm 118:22 (the rejected head of the corner), and from Isaiah 8:14 (the stone of stumbling). The author invites the readers to come to Jesus like living stones to “be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood and to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (2:5). Then, in a most remarkable fashion, Peter applies Israel’s special OT titles to the Gentile church: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ‘Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy’” (2:9-10).

This application of titles is especially impressive since they are so closely tied to the identity of a particular group. That such titles could be applied to a Gentile group is nothing short of astonishing. And to make the point unmistakable, Peter employs language drawn from Hosea 1:6, 9 and 2:25. This material originally referred to God’s forgiveness of disobedient Israel, but it is now applied to those who were previously excluded from Israel’s election. Paul uses the same material from Hosea to justify the propriety of the Gentile mission in Romans 9:25-26.

This transfer of terminology makes it a natural conclusion that the Church is now regarded as the true Israel. The Church is the heir of the promises to Israel. This is clearly an element of very strong discontinuity, but it must not be taken to mean that Israel *qua* Israel has fallen out of God’s consideration altogether. If God’s purpose is finally accomplished through the Church, it does not mean that Israel cannot also be a part of the consummation at the end of the age. (Paul’s discussion in Romans 11 is the most complete word on the future of Israel, providing assurance that God will not utterly reject his people.)

A new means of salvation marks the new era—“For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit” (3:18). A reference to the days of Noah and the eight persons who “were saved through water” turns the thoughts of our author to baptism: “And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ who has gone into

heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him” (3:21-22). Baptism in the name of Christ means participation in the atoning work of Christ, and, hence, the enjoyment of eternal salvation.<sup>3</sup> This is new and an element of discontinuity between past and present.

### Jude and 2 Peter

The brief books of Jude and 2 Peter do not contain much that contributes to our specific interests in these lectures. One thing that does stand out, however, is the frequent use of OT examples that are applied directly to the readers. These have the effect of emphasizing continuity in God’s dealing with humanity, thus underlining the overarching unity of the Bible’s story.

Jude speaks of the necessity of contending for “the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints”—i.e., “the salvation we share” (3). In verse 5, Jude refers to the example of the deliverance of the Jews in the Exodus—“Now I desire to remind you, though you are fully informed, that the Lord, who once for all saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.” The application made to the readers presupposes the underlying continuity of the story of salvation. The position of the phrase, “once for all,” is textually uncertain, with some manuscripts having the words (i.e., *hapax*) modifying the participle ‘informed,’<sup>4</sup> others as modifying the participle ‘saved.’ “Once for all saved a people,” taken as supporting the election of Israel, heightens the continuity between old and new.

Jude is famous for its quotation of Enoch, one of the very few quotations of non-canonical material in the NT. According to Jude:

Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, “See the Lord is coming with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all, and to convict everyone of all the deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (14-15).

As is well known, the quoted material actually derives not from the seventh generation from Adam, but from a pseudepigraphic book known to scholars as 1Enoch (1:9), written sometime between the

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<sup>3</sup>1 Peter’s references to new birth and baptism have led scholars to the conclusion that it contains fragments of a baptismal liturgy.

<sup>4</sup>Thus the margin of the NRSV: “though you were once for all fully informed, that Jesus (or Joshua) who saved.”

beginning of the 2nd century BC and the end of the 1st Century AD. In the application of this material to his Christian readers, Jude stresses the continuity and accomplishment of God's purposes, even if the letter does not stretch all the way back to the Enoch of the book of Genesis (5:18).

Strong continuity with the old is affirmed in this interesting passage in 2 Peter 1:19-21:

So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your heart. First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scriptures is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

The ground for the statement in the first sentence is the voice from heaven that was heard on the Mount of Transfiguration, saying, "This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased" (1:17). This is regarded as a confirmation of the promises (cf. 1:4). Since the promises will surely come to pass, they must be attended to (like light in a dark place) until the day of fulfillment, "until the day dawns and the morning star rises"—language referring to the arrival of messianic fulfillment (see Num 24:17; Rev 22:16, "the bright morning star"). After all, prophesy does not find its origin in human action, but only its agency. The inspiring impetus behind biblical prophecy is the Holy Spirit. God speaks through the prophets. The author of 2 Peter knows himself and his readers to be living in the age promised by the prophets and in the fulfillment of that expectation.

Our author holds together the OT prophets and the NT apostles. "I am trying to arouse your sincere intention by reminding you that you should remember the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken through your apostles" (3:1-2). This is a strong and significant continuity that unites the two parallel founts of revelation in one encompassing narrative of salvation, presupposing its unity.

Clearly, there was a crisis in the community caused by the delay of the parousia. Scoffers were asking, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!" (3:4). Although the complaint ignores the aspects of realized eschatology that point to fulfillment, it does call attention to the continued delay of the consummation and the full dawning of the Eschaton. Contemporary Jews who look at the NT

lodge the same complaint and reject any notion that the kingdom has, in any sense, been already realized. This perspective reflects unmodified continuity with the past. Not for a moment, however, will our author agree with the claim that nothing has changed. Time is an elastic concept. “With the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come alike a thief” (3:8-10).

The author insists in full confidence that, “In accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home,” adding this admonition—“Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation” (3:14-15). If the expectation is continuous with that of the (orthodox) Jews, the presence of a degree of realized eschatology and the return of Christ as the key event of the future comprise a clear element of discontinuity.

### **The Apocalypse (Revelation)**

The “Apocalypse of Jesus Christ,” the opening words of the book and its *de facto* title, known otherwise as the Revelation to John, is essentially a book about fulfillment, and thus a book rich in themes of continuity and discontinuity. Indeed, the Apocalypse can be described as detailing the future outworking and fulfillment of the promises of the Scriptures of Israel, with all the discontinuity and newness intrinsic to that fulfillment, but also in terms of the broad underlying continuity that unites the totality of the old and the new. The old is referred to naturally, just as much of the language is naturally drawn from the OT. Much of this is true throughout Revelation, and here we provide only some vivid examples.

In the opening words to the seven churches, we encounter language similar to what we saw in 1 Peter 2:9. In an opening doxology, John writes, “To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1:5-6). Jewish and Gentile Christians are designated priests who serve God. This reflects the new reality of the Church and, hence, discontinuity.

The Christology of Revelation focuses on the divine identity of Jesus, ascribing to him titles and attributes of God, often overlapping with descriptions of God the Father. In accord with prophecies of the Synoptic Gospels, John writes: “Look! He is coming with the clouds;

every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen. ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (1:7-8).

This is followed by John’s vision of “one like the Son of Man” (1:12-20), in which this glorious visage says to him, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades” (1:17-18).

Each of the seven letters begins with a brief indication of the identity of the speaker, usually employing images or language drawn from the opening vision of Christ. The last of these reads, “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write, ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin [*archē*] of God’s creation’” (3:14). So too, each letter ends with a promise to those who are “conquerors.” These often correspond to eschatological realities described at the end of the book, as we can see from 21:7—“Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.” At the end of the letter to the church at Ephesus comes the promise, “To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God” (2:7; cf. 22:2, 14, 19). At the end of the letter to Laodicea, the one who conquers is promised “a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne” (3:21), which corresponds to 20:4.

A passage critical of the Jews occurs in the letters to the church at Smyrna and the church at Philadelphia. To Smyrna, “I know the slander on the part of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan” (2:9). And to Philadelphia, “I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but are lying—I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you” (3:9). A distinction is drawn here between true Jews and those who claim to be Jews. The latter, by their slanderous opposition to the Christians and rejection of the gospel, indicate that their allegiance is to Satan rather than to God. The parting of the ways between synagogue and church is obviously well underway at the end of the 1st century AD, at least in western Asia Minor.

In the letter to Pergamum, John employs the example of Balaam and Balak, who “put a stumbling block before the people of Israel” (2:14), and refers to “hidden manna” and “a white stone” (2:17)—perhaps allusions to admission to the messianic banquet (i.e., “the marriage supper of the Lamb,” 19:9; cf. Mt 8:11; 22:2; 25:10).

To those of the church of Thyatira who conquer and do the works of Jesus to the end, he says, “I will give my authority over the nations;

to rule them with an iron rod, as when clay pots are shattered—even as I also received authority from my Father. To the one who conquers I will also give the morning star” (2:26-28). The first words of this passage are clearly a quotation of Psalm 2:9 and indicate that the Thyatira Christians will participate in the messianic rule over the nations. A similar point, namely, a sharing in the messianic status, must be made in the reference to “the morning star” (cf. 22:16). Compare the words spoken to the conquerors of Sardis—“They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. If you conquer, you will be clothed like them in white robes” (3:4-5; cf. 6:11; 7:9, 13; 19:8; 22:14).

The church of Philadelphia is addressed with this opening statement—“These are the words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens” (3:7). This holy one is the Messiah, “the root and the descendant of David” (22:6). Here we have strong continuity in language, while, at the same time, discontinuity in terms of the identity of the Davidic descendant. Further substantial continuity is encountered in the closing words of this letter—“If you conquer, I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God; you will never go out of it. I will write on you the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem [21:2] that comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name” (3:12; 7:3). By means of highly metaphorical language, John identifies the one who conquers as securely a member of the eschatological community, a recipient of the heavenly Jerusalem and marked by the name of God and of the city and by Christ’s new name (for this, see 19:12).

The revelation proper begins in Chapter 4, with the vision of the heavenly worship of the one who sits upon the throne, to whom the “four living creatures” sing the Trisagion—“Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come” (4:8). Before this figure the twenty four elders cast their crowns, singing “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for your created all things, and by your will they exist and were created” (4:11).

Chapter 5 turns our attention to “a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered,” identified further as “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” (5:5-6), who alone is worthy to open the sealed scroll. The elders, with harps and bowls of incense, sing “a new song”—“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth” (5:9-10).

In Chapter 7, a great multitude, who had made their robes “white in the blood of the Lamb,” is portrayed before God’s throne:

For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (7:15-17).

The biblical imagery is unmistakable, but now it is applied to the dramatically new circumstances of apocalyptic fulfillment.

The narrative of the two witnesses in Chapter 11 is filled with OT allusions that we need not tabulate in detail here. Imagery drawn from Zechariah 4 (the two olive trees) and especially Daniel 7 (the 42 months, or 1,260 days [3½ years]) is immediately evident.

Chapter 12 describes a great portent in the attempt of a great red dragon, symbolizing the Devil or Satan (12:9), to destroy the messianic child, “who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron” (12:5). War breaks out in heaven, and the archangel Michael and his angels defeat the dragon (12:8). Then John hears “a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming, ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah’” (12:10).

Chapter 13 again draws imagery from Daniel 7 in its description of the first beast, rising from the sea, and the second beast, rising from the earth. They are the minions of the dragon and oppose the work of Christ. Their exact identity is debated, but they may represent the Antichrist and the false prophet, respectively (cf. 16:13). On Mount Zion, John sees the Lamb together with the 144,000 “who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads” and who alone are able to “sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders” (14:1-3; cf. 5:9). John next sees

... another angel flying in mid-heaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation and tribe and language and people. He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water” (14:6-7).

Two further angels speak of the coming judgment, to which John adds, “Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to their faith in Jesus”<sup>5</sup> (14:12). The reference to an “eternal gospel [*euaggelion aiōnion*]” obviously underlines continuity, as does the linking of the creator God with final judgment and the reference to keeping “the commandments of God” alongside the reference to faith in Jesus.

Chapter 15 presents John’s account of “another portent in heaven,” consisting of “seven angels with seven plagues” and a crowd of “those who had conquered the beast,” who “sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb” (15:3). The single song that follows bears no relationship to the Song of Moses of Exodus 15:1-18 or of Deuteronomy 31:30-32:43. The majority of commentators agree that only one song is in view, expressing sentiments of victory common to Moses and the Lamb—“Great and amazing are your deeds, Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, King of the nations! Lord, who will not fear and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you” (15:3-4). It is as though the victory of Moses in the Exodus is the same victory as that of the Lamb. It is the same omnipotent God, who is King over all and to whom worship is due, in both the OT and the NT. Here is strong continuity binding together the history of salvation.

It is particularly the final two chapters of the Apocalypse that bring together the themes and motifs of continuity/discontinuity. The end corresponds closely to the beginning; eschatology corresponds to protology. This fact alone demonstrates continuity. But since the end is the fulfillment of the beginning, it also involves the new in contrast with the old. Themes encountered in earlier chapters are occasionally repeated here, and we encounter a fair bit of repetition for emphasis.

In Chapter 21, John sees “a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.”<sup>6</sup> He continues:

And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying

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<sup>5</sup>Following the marginal reading of the NRSV. In the text NRSV (like RSV) translates “the faith of Jesus.” The difference is caused by a problem that has received much recent discussion in Pauline studies, namely whether *tēn pistin Iēsous* is to be understood as a subjective or objective genitive. Here, in my opinion, the objective sense is more convincing than the subjective—hence, “faith in Jesus.” Either interpretation supports the idea of continuity between present and past.

<sup>6</sup>The sea here symbolizes the domain of evil, and the sentence declares the end of evil.

“See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.” And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end” (21:1-6).

The end of the Apocalypse exults in the passing of the old with its imperfections and the coming of the new with its promised perfection. What is coming is comprehensively new—“See I am making all things new.” Key symbols for the new reality are the metaphors of “a new heaven and a new earth” and “the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven (cf. 3:12).” Now is the time for the fulfillment of the prophetic hope, as when Isaiah wrote:

For I am about to create new heaven and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy. . . . No more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it or the cry of distress. . . . They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain” (65:17-25; cf. 66:22-23).

Further agreement with the prophets can be seen in 21:6-7—“To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children” (21:6-7). A further reference to the new Jerusalem is found in 21:9-10, where the angel says to John, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem doing down out of heaven from God.” The description of the city that follows refers to the twelve gates in the surrounding walls, “and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites,” while on the city’s twelve foundations are inscribed “the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (21:12, 14). Here both dispensations are mentioned, providing a strong sense of continuity, but also newness involving discontinuity.

After the description of the new Jerusalem, John concludes with the following remark:

I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will enter it nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life (21:22-27).

While the temple reaches back to the OT and is thus obviously an element of continuity, the temple in the new Jerusalem is not a physical building but the very presence of “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb.” This newness constitutes a strong discontinuity. So too, the light of the new Jerusalem is “the glory of God” and its “lamp is the Lamb” (cf. 22:5). There is no night in the new Jerusalem; its gates will never be shut. “The glory and the honor of the nations” will be brought into the city. This is the language of apocalyptic and to be understood as metaphorical and symbolic, not literally. Here, as throughout the final chapters of the Apocalypse, we have the dramatic newness of the Eschaton, where the capability of language is often stretched to its limits.

Chapter 22 begins with the climactic final vision the angel gives to John, the vision of the river of life and the tree of life:

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river, is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there anymore. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever (22:1-5; cf. 2:7; 21:23).

Again, symbolic language portrays the experience of the end time. The throne is notably the throne of both God and the Lamb. This unusual indication of the divine identity of the Lamb, like much Christology in the NT, points both to significant continuity and

discontinuity. The river and the tree are symbols of eternal life for the participants in the consummation of God's purposes. The connections with the OT are striking. Ezekiel 47:1-12 tells of a vision of a river "flowing from below the threshold of the temple," a river whose water brings life to the Dead Sea, which is transformed into a fresh-water lake teeming with fish. On both banks of this river, furthermore, are fruit-bearing trees. "Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing" (Ezek 47:12).

Of the new Jerusalem it is said, "Nothing accursed will be found there any more" (Rev 22:3). Material in Revelation 21-22 is reminiscent of the apocalyptic statements in Isaiah 25:7-8: "And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken." It is, in short, the time of the promised perfection of which the prophets spoke. John continues in 22:3-5—"But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever" (22:3-5). In the new Jerusalem, they see the face of God directly and without mediation. This is the ultimate eschatological hope, involving a blessedness that cannot be exceeded. Where the presence of God is, there is no need for any other light.

John is next offered a confirmation of the authority and truth of what has been revealed to him. "And he said to me, 'These words are trustworthy and true, for the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.' See, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book" (22:6-7). The reference to the "spirits of the prophets" may be compared with 19:10, where the revealing angel says, "I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Whether the genitive is subjective (the testimony made by Jesus) or objective (the testimony concerning Jesus), we have here a strong continuity between past and present. John is rebuked for a second time when he falls down at the feet of his angel revealer to worship him. "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!" (22:8-9). "The spirit of prophecy" is the

same in OT and NT; and thus, those who proclaim Jesus are put alongside John as his comrades.

Among the closing words of the book, we call attention to 22:12-13: "See, I am coming soon, my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone's work. I am Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end;" also 22:16-17—"It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let everyone who hears say, "Come." And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift." Here again are a number of elements pointing to an obvious continuity with past revelation. And lastly, there is the renewed promise in 22:20-21—"The one who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen."

To summarize our findings for our theme in the Apocalypse, we must underline the reality of both continuity and discontinuity. The large fund of terminology, metaphors, and images drawn from the OT Scriptures is conspicuous. John and his readers were very familiar with these writings. Through the mediating agency of the revealing angel, John brilliantly weaves these things together to present a powerful theological platform for his prophecy of the end time. At the same time, many of the familiar items take on new significance, bringing about discontinuities caused by the inevitable newness that comes with fulfilled prophecy/apocalyptic. This does not so much involve a canceling out of the continuities, but rather their transposition to a new, higher key. While some in the history of the Church have wondered whether an Apocalypse was appropriate in the NT canon, and Revelation has been under-appreciated by many (not to mention subject to abuse by well-meaning interpreters), the book has much to offer and serves as a wonderful, climactic conclusion to the overarching metanarrative of salvation-history as the closing book of the biblical canon.

### Conclusion to Lecture Series

Continuity/discontinuity is a rich and complex subject. As we have seen, what we have here is not a matter of *either/or*, but a paradoxical *both/and*. So, in the end, is this simply a matter where the glass can be thought of as half empty or half full, depending on one's perspective? To an extent, this may be true; yet the discontinuity, by its very nature, finally remains more determinative. The eschatological/apocalyptic character of the NT announcement of the kingdom of God and the

coming of the Son of God (the promised Messiah) alters everything. NT apocalyptic depends upon a high Christology, and the death of Jesus implies a new soteriology too. Christianity is not finally containable within the framework of Judaism. Continuity, substantial though it is, must finally yield to the discontinuity caused by the dramatic newness of what the NT announces.

That the NT is the fulfillment of the OT and that the Church is the heir of the promises to Israel are both manifested throughout the NT. With the remnant of Jewish believers in the Church, the faithfulness of God to Israel is vindicated (cf. Rom 11:1-2), quite apart from any literal fulfillment at the national level. The Church, as it moves into the new age, is the ultimate goal of God's purpose—the newly constituted people of God, including both Jews and Gentiles, returning to the bliss and perfection of Eden.

What is the significance of this undeniable newness and discontinuity for Judaism and Christianity? Newness and discontinuity can be expressed in wrong ways and with tragic consequences. For that reason, the reality and significance of continuity must never be lost sight of. The Gentile Church, after all, is a relative latecomer into the family of faith, which it enters not by birthright, but by adoption. Following in the footsteps of the Jews, the Church enjoys a (new) covenant relationship with God. There is no room for haughtiness or feelings of superiority—for the Church does not support the root of the olive tree; but rather it is the root of the olive tree that supports the Church (Rom 11:18). The church, together with Israel, depends solely upon the grace of God. Clearly, there can be no possible excuse or justification for anti-Semitism. On the contrary, Christians must stand together with their Jewish brothers and sisters against every manifestation of anti-Semitism.

Paradoxically, it is *in the Church* that Israel fulfills her commission as God's chosen and, as God's servant, to be "a light to the nations, that salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Isa 49:6). According to the evangelist Luke, the devout Jew Simeon, upon encountering the holy family in the temple, says that the salvation now dawning with the birth of Jesus is meant by God to be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to thy people Israel" (Lk 2:32), thereby encompassing both realities of continuity and discontinuity.

How new is the NT? *Very new*, is my answer. And so, against the current trend in biblical scholarship to deny the newness of the NT in favor of reclaiming the totality for Judaism, I say, Let the NT be new!

## THE ASCENSION AND EXALTATION OF JESUS IN LUKAN THEOLOGY

by Adrian P. Rosen

### Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to clarify the theological significance of the event most often designated as the *ascension*, which Luke narrates in Luke 24:51 and Acts 1:2, 9-11, and 22.<sup>1</sup> This event is also sometimes referred to as the *assumption* of Jesus. The latter term, while utilized far less frequently in the literature, may well be a more apt designation for the event, at least for the purposes of the present study. First, the term *assumption* signifies “the taking up of a person into heaven,”<sup>2</sup> and thus well captures the idea conveyed by the passive verbal forms employed in the Lukan narrative to describe Jesus’ being taken up into heaven. Second, this term also provides a suitable alternative designation for the event delineated in the above cited passages vis-à-vis the passages that refer to Jesus’ exaltation on resurrection day in terms of ascension. While this point in regard to the need for clear terminological demarcation of these respective events, together with the theological ramifications of distinguishing between the events, will receive further elucidation in later sections of this essay, what needs clarified from the outset is my use of terminology throughout the foundational exegetical sections of the paper: for reasons that will become far more clear later in the essay, the event

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<sup>1</sup>The present study began as a paper written in 2013 for Martin W. Mittelstadt’s Ph.D. seminar on Luke-Acts at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, MO, USA. It was later revised and presented in January 2016 during an afternoon session at the 24<sup>th</sup> William W. Menzies Annual Lectureship Series at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio, Philippines. I gratefully acknowledge both the theologically stimulating interaction during the AGTS seminar on Luke-Acts, and the feedback received from Donald Hagner, Bob Menzies, Marlene Yap, and others after the paper was read at APTS, which proved to be of great assistance in identifying points in need of further revision in preparation for publication.

<sup>2</sup>*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “Assumption.” <http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/assumption> (accessed May 24, 2016).

described in Luke 24:51 and Acts 1 will *not* be designated as the *ascension* but rather as the *taking up* of Jesus or the somewhat-less-cumbersome *assumption*.<sup>3</sup>

Of special interest for the present enquiry is the question of what relationship these assumption narratives bear to the concept of Jesus' exaltation (Acts 2:33-35), or, his entrance into glory (Luke 24:26). The paper will first exegete relevant texts outside of the taking-up narratives, and then these narratives themselves. Finally, I will offer an analysis of the Lukan conceptualization of the assumption of Jesus.

### Assumption and Exaltation Outside of the Taking-Up Narratives

Aside from the Lukan assumption narratives found at Luke 24:51 and Acts 1:2-11, 22 there are several texts within Luke-Acts that significantly contribute to a Lukan theology of the taking up and/or exaltation of Jesus. This section will exegetically probe Luke 9:31, 51; 24:26; and Acts 2:33-35 in order to determine their significance in this connection.

#### Luke 9:31

Whether or not Luke 9:31 contains a reference to the "ascension" (i.e., the assumption or taking up of Jesus) remains a disputed matter. The question revolves around the meaning of τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ ἣν ἔμελλεν πληροῦν ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ ("his exodus, which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem"). The word ἔξοδος (lit., "a going out, departure") occurs just three times in the NT. In Hebrews 11:22 it signifies the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. At 2 Peter 1:15, Peter uses the word euphemistically in reference to his own impending death (cf. v. 14).<sup>4</sup> This latter usage also occurs in the LXX (cf. Wis. 3:2; 7:6).<sup>5</sup> Suggested interpretations of the significance of Luke's utilization of ἔξοδος include the following: (1) It simply refers to the death of Jesus.<sup>6</sup> (2) It

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<sup>3</sup>The exception to this will be when the views of others, who themselves use the term *ascension*, are being interacted with. In such cases, when the term is retained, I will place it within quotation marks.

<sup>4</sup>Interestingly, Peter's statement occurs in a context that alludes to the transfiguration (vv. 16-18). Cf. I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 384.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 384.

<sup>6</sup>Wilhelm Michaelis, "ἐξοδος, ἔξοδος, διέξοδος," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967 [hereafter abbreviated as *TDNT*]), 5:103-9, here at 107; J. Reiling and J. L. Swellengrebel, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Luke*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 382; Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary*

refers to the death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>7</sup> (3) It refers to the complex event of Jesus' departure to heaven in death, resurrection, and "ascension" (i.e., assumption).<sup>8</sup> (4) It points to the events surrounding Jesus' suffering, death, resurrection, and "ascension" (assumption) as part of a New Exodus in repetition of the Exodus accomplished under Moses.<sup>9</sup> (5) It has reference to the whole life of Jesus, from his coming or εἰσοδος to the conclusion of his life in Jerusalem (Acts 13:24-31).<sup>10</sup> As Bock notes, however, Luke's use of ἐμελλεν ("was about to") militates against this view.<sup>11</sup> It is difficult to imagine how Luke could say Jesus' ἔξοδος was *about to be* fulfilled in Jerusalem if he conceptualized the term as signifying the entirety of Jesus' life. Rather, his ἔξοδος is something that remains future—although now imminent—at this point in the narrative. (6) Bock posits the Exodus imagery "refers to the entire death-parousia career of Jesus."<sup>12</sup> But it seems

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*on the Gospel of Luke: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 283.

John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, Word Biblical Commentary 35B (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 500, believes "Jesus' exodus is his death as departure from this world in the context of his understanding that his journey to glory at God's right hand has its beginning in an ignoble death in Jerusalem." Leon Morris, *Luke*, rev. ed., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 188, interprets the term as a reference to Jesus' death, but he goes on to say, "The use of the word *exodus* for death is unusual and we should probably discern some exodus typology. The exodus had delivered Israel from bondage. Jesus by his 'exodus' would deliver his people from a far worse bondage" (ibid., 188-89).

<sup>7</sup>Mark C. Black, *Luke*, College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996), 194. Black affirms the inclusion of both death and resurrection as probable, but he is uncertain whether to include the "ascension" here as well.

<sup>8</sup>Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina 3 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 153; Alfred Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. Luke*, 5th ed., International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1922), 251; Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, New American Commentary 24 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 285; Herschel H. Hobbs, *An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), 164; Arthur A. Just, Jr., *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 426; Robert C. Tannehill, *Luke*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 161; David E. Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 394. John Bond, *The Gospel According to St. Luke*, Classic Commentaries on the Greek New Testament (London: Macmillan, 1890), 114, states the meaning is "departure from life" with the idea of "ascension" included.

<sup>9</sup>Jindřich Mánek, "The New Exodus in the Books of Luke," *Novum Testamentum* 2, no. 1 (1957): 8-23. G. H. P. Thompson, *The Gospel According to Luke in the Revised Standard Version, with Introduction and Commentary*, New Clarendon Bible (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 32, also postulates New Exodus imagery at Luke 9:31.

<sup>10</sup>See Marshall, *Luke*, 384; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 870.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

problematic for this view that one can hardly refer to the parousia as a “departure.” In conclusion, while the inclusion of the assumption within the idea of “departure” certainly seems possible here, the fact Luke nowhere else speaks of the taking up of Christ as part of a complex event (see below on Luke 9:51) may vitiate this interpretation somewhat. Tentatively, therefore, I. Howard Marshall is probably correct to conclude Jesus’ death, resurrection, and the saving significance of these are in view.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps, one should not rule out the inclusion of Jesus’ entrance into glory or ascension-exaltation (see below on Luke 24:26) as well.

### Luke 9:51

With regard to the subject of the present paper, Luke 9:51 presents three interrelated exegetical issues, which may be articulated in the form of questions. First, what does Luke mean by the phrase τῆς ἀναλήψεως αὐτοῦ? Second, why does Luke utilize the plural τὰς ἡμέρας rather than the singular τὴν ἡμέραν? Finally, what is the precise significance of the infinitival clause ἐν τῷ συμπληροῦσθαι τὰς ἡμέρας?

Scholars have proposed no less than seven interpretive options for the meaning of Jesus’ ἀνάληψις. A. W. Zwiep enumerates the following suggestions: (1) Jesus’ death; (2) Jesus’ passion, death, and resurrection; (3) Jesus’ departure from earth to heaven by way of his death, resurrection, and “ascension”; (4) same as the previous option with the journey to Jerusalem added; (5) Jesus’ “ascension”; (6) Jesus’ acceptance by the people; (7) Jesus’ pilgrimage.<sup>14</sup> The sixth and seventh options may be quickly eliminated because they do not comport with the wider Lukan context.<sup>15</sup> This leaves two broad categories: views that interpret the ἀνάληψις in terms of a complex event fulfilled over a period of time (views 2-4), and those that interpret it as a single, “more or less punctiliar action” (views 1 and 5).<sup>16</sup>

The noun ἀνάληψις is a NT *hapax legomenon*, which literally means “taking up, receiving.”<sup>17</sup> It also occurs in Ps. Sol. 4:18, where the meaning is removal from life, that is, “death.” BDAG states ἀνάληψις is usually understood to mean “*ascension* (into heaven).”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Marshall, *Luke*, 384-85.

<sup>14</sup>A. W. Zwiep, *The Ascension of the Messiah in Lukan Christology*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum LXXXVII (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1997), 82-83.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>Marshall, *Luke*, 405.

<sup>18</sup>W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, F. W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. F. W.

Fitzmyer prefers here the translation, “assumption.”<sup>19</sup> After surveying early usage of the noun, Zwiep observes, “There is no unambiguous pre-NT attestation of ἀνάληψις in the technical sense of ‘rapture.’”<sup>20</sup> Conversely, he finds post-NT utilization of the noun with the meaning “ascension” to be common, as a result of “canonical influence.”<sup>21</sup> The strongest indication that Luke intended to attach such meaning to the term here is found in his usage of the cognate verb ἀναλαμβάνω in reference to the assumption (Acts 1:2, 11, 22; cf. also Mark 16:19; 1 Tim. 3:16). Contra those who attempt to limit the referent of the noun here to death, Fitzmyer is no doubt correct to state “the Lukan references in Acts almost certainly give it a larger connotation. . . . The only question is whether one should restrict it merely to the ascension [i.e., the taking up] or understand it in the still broader sense of Jesus’ entire transit to the Father (via death, burial, and exaltation).”<sup>22</sup> Significantly, within the Lukan assumption narratives (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:2, 9-11, 22), Luke consistently conceptualizes the taking up as a simple, punctiliar event. In fact, he explicitly states the assumption occurred on a single day<sup>23</sup> (vv. 2, 22), and nowhere speaks of it as a complex event.<sup>24</sup> Consequent to Luke’s usage of the cognate verb and his consistent portrayal of the event described thereby, it seems most probable that ἀνάληψις simply refers to the assumption<sup>25</sup> rather than to a complex cluster of events,<sup>26</sup> or to the death of Jesus.

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Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000 [hereafter abbreviated as BDAG]), 67, s.v. “ἀνάληψις” (italics original).

<sup>19</sup>Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Anchor Bible 28 (Garden City, NY, 1981), 827-28.

<sup>20</sup>Zwiep, *Ascension of the Messiah*, 81.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 81 n. 3.

<sup>22</sup>Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 828 (brackets mine).

<sup>23</sup>Robert D. Kaylor, “The Ascension Motif in Luke-Acts, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Fourth Gospel” (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1964), 32, argues to the contrary but fails to convince.

<sup>24</sup>Zwiep, *Ascension of the Messiah*, 84.

<sup>25</sup>Also in support of viewing the term as a reference to the “ascension,” see J. G. Davies, *He Ascended into Heaven: A Study in the History of Doctrine* (New York: Association Press, 1958), 40. Davies leans heavily upon the connection between Luke 9:51 and 54, and the “underlying Elijah typology” in the passage (ibid.). See also Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 402-3; Geldenhuys, *Luke*, 291; William Hendricksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 557; Black, *Luke*, 200 n. 29; Thompson, *Luke*, 157.

<sup>26</sup>E.g., Mikeal C. Parsons, *The Departure of Jesus in Luke-Acts: The Ascension Narratives in Context*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 21 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield JSOT Press, 1987), 110, who includes death, resurrection, and “ascension.” Cf. also Kaylor, “Ascension Motif,” 31-32, who includes Jesus’ passion, death, resurrection, and “ascension.” Similarly, Johnson, *Luke*, 162, says the noun refers to “the whole sequence of events, climaxing in his ascension.” Cf. also Just, *Luke 9:51-*

The chief difficulty with this view appears to be the plural τὰς ἡμέρας. In fact, J. Kremer avers the ἀνάληψις includes Jesus' death, resurrection, "ascension," and exaltation, for "it is only with reference to them that the plural 'days' is appropriate."<sup>27</sup> The argument is overstated, however. Luke's utilization of the plural "days" must be considered together with the entire infinitival clause in which it occurs, namely, ἐν τῷ συμπληροῦσθαι τὰς ἡμέρας, and the clause's possible underlying OT expression.

The accusative τὰς ἡμέρας serves as the subject of the infinitive συμπληροῦσθαι,<sup>28</sup> which is passive because no agency is implied—the days simply "were being fulfilled."<sup>29</sup> The use of ἐν τῷ plus the infinitive here clearly expresses contemporaneous time.<sup>30</sup> In other words, it temporally specifies the point at which the action of the main clause occurred: it was "while"<sup>31</sup> the days of his ἀνάληψις were being filled up" that "he fixed his face to go to Jerusalem" (αὐτὸς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἐστήριξεν τοῦ πορεύεσθαι εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ).

Zwier registers two possible ways of reconciling the Lukan conception of the "ascension" as a single event transpiring on a single day (Acts 1:2, 22), on the one hand, and the clause presently under analysis, on the other. Firstly, he notes the plural "days" in OT idiom is sometimes utilized in reference to death, which, of course, occurs at a specific point in time rather than over a period of days (cf. Gen. 47:29; Deut. 31:14; 1 Kings 2:1). Thus, the plural τὰς ἡμέρας "does not necessarily imply that the ἀνάληψις took place over a longer period of time."<sup>32</sup> Secondly, and more convincingly,<sup>33</sup> he suggests the OT expression "the days . . . are/were fulfilled . . ." constitutes "the closer parallel to Lk 9:51," as opposed to "the days of . . . are/were

24:53, 426; Tannehill, *Luke*, 168. Morris, *Luke*, 195, goes so far as to include crucifixion, resurrection, "ascension," and session at the right hand of God.

<sup>27</sup>J. Kremer, "ἀνάληψις," in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 1:83-84, here at 84.

<sup>28</sup>Martin M. Culy, Mikeal C. Parsons, and Joshua J. Stigall, *Luke: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 333.

<sup>29</sup>See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 436: "The nature of some passive verbs is such that *no agency is to be implied* (e.g., συντελεσθεισῶν αὐτῶν [when (those days) were completed] in Luke 4:2" (italics and brackets original).

<sup>30</sup>Cf. Culy, Parsons, and Stigall, *Luke*, 333.

<sup>31</sup>According to Wallace, 595, "while" is the preferred translation when the present infinitive is used in such a construction, whereas "as" or "when" is preferable when the aorist occurs.

<sup>32</sup>Zwier, *Ascension of the Messiah*, 84 (italics original).

<sup>33</sup>It should be noted that this is Zwier's preferred explanation as well.

approaching.”<sup>34</sup> There are two ways of further qualifying such a construction. The first is to add either an adjective or a qualitative genitive. A Lukan example of this type is found at Luke 1:23: Καὶ ἐγένετο ὡς ἐπλήσθησαν αἱ ἡμέραι τῆς λειτουργίας αὐτοῦ, “and it happened when the days of his service were fulfilled” (cf. Esther 1:5; Isa. 60:20).<sup>35</sup> The second way to qualify this construction is to add the preposition ἅ plus the infinitive, or, in Greek, τοῦ plus a substantival infinitive, thus expressing the purpose for the period under consideration. Lukan examples include Luke 2:6 and 21: Ἐγένετο δὲ . . . ἐπλήσθησαν αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ τεκεῖν αὐτήν, “Now it happened . . . the days were fulfilled for her to give birth”; Καὶ ὅτε ἐπλήσθησαν ἡμέραι ὀκτῶ τοῦ περιτεμεῖν αὐτόν, “and when the eight days were fulfilled to circumcise him” (cf. Gen. 25:24).<sup>36</sup> While Luke 9:51 may appear at first glance to be an example of the first type of qualified construction, in which case τῆς ἀναλήψεως αὐτοῦ is a qualitative genitive that specifies the days as constituting his ἀνάληψις, Zwiep posits Luke has modified the second type. In this case, the only irregular feature of the clause is its use of a noun (τῆς ἀναλήψεως αὐτοῦ) where one would have expected an articular infinitive (τοῦ ἀναληφθῆναι αὐτόν).<sup>37</sup> The unexpected substitution of the noun for the more regular infinitival clause may have resulted from Luke’s desire to “strengthen the parallelising [*sic*] of v. 51 to v. 31,” by creating “a noun-allusion to both the biblical Moses (ἔξοδος) and the Elijah tradition (ἀνάληψις).”<sup>38</sup> This, of course, also resulted in the possible ambiguity of the verse as it is written. Zwiep concludes that this alteration to the expected idiom caused the syntax to become “hopelessly ambiguous.” He explains, “What [Luke] *says* is that ‘the days of the ἀνάληψις’ are being filled up (that is, strictly speaking from 9:51 onwards); what he *intends* to say (if our hypothesis is correct) is that the period leading up to the ascension is being (completely) filled up and that this period finds its completion in the ascension.”<sup>39</sup> Zwiep’s explication with regard to the underlying idiom and the possible reason for Luke’s unusual expression

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 84-85.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 85.

<sup>38</sup>Zwiep, *Ascension of the Messiah*, 85. On the Elijah typology, see also A. R. C. Leaney, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to Luke*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1966), 172. Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 828, notes, “The OT background to the ‘assumption’ of Jesus is to be seen in that of Enoch (Gen 5:24b) and Elijah (2 Kgs 2:11; 1 Macc 2:58; Sir 48:9). In the intertestamental literature there is also the *Assumption of Moses*.” This background will be further explored below under Acts 1:2-11, 22.

<sup>39</sup>Zwiep, *Ascension of the Messiah*, 85-86.

of it appears quite plausible; however, his statement that the syntax is “hopelessly ambiguous” seems unnecessary and overstated.

Conversely, Marshall finds the expression “perfectly possible,” and interprets the present infinitive with the plural “days” as indicative of “the completion of the period before the decisive event<sup>40</sup> takes place.”<sup>41</sup> Marshall translates the clause, “While the days leading to his ‘taking up’ were being fulfilled.”<sup>42</sup> Moreover, he states the verb συμπληρώω signifies the arrival of the time for fulfillment in the divine plan.<sup>43</sup> Thus, while Marshall gives far less attention to discussing the idiom utilized, he interprets the meaning of the clause similarly to Zwiep. Yet Marshall clearly has a higher estimation of the acceptability of the Lukan expression as it is written.

#### Luke 24:26

At Luke 24:26, one finds a significant clue to the Lukan conceptualization of the assumption narratives (i.e., Luke 24:51; Acts 1:2, 9-11, 22) and the relationship they bear to the idea of exaltation. In this verse, which consists of the reported speech of Jesus, the Lord asks a rhetorical question that anticipates an affirmative answer. He says, οὐχὶ ταῦτα ἔδει παθεῖν τὸν χριστόν, καὶ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ; The interrogative use of οὐχὶ indicates the expectation of an affirmative answer to the question.<sup>44</sup> The verb ἔδει (“it was necessary”)

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<sup>40</sup>Marshall, *Luke*, 405, states, “The primary reference here is probably to the death of Jesus, but it is hard to resist the impression that there is also an allusion to Jesus being ‘taken up’ or ‘taken back’ to God in the ascension, especially in view of the presence of Elijah typology in the context.” Marshall does not elucidate why he believes the death of Jesus is the primary referent. To the contrary, both Lukan usage of the cognate verb in reference to the assumption and the Elijah connection within the context favor the assumption as the sole referent of ἀνάληψις.

Similarly, David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 251-414, here at 315, state the phrase “the days of his being taken up” may refer to Christ’s death, “but the use of the verbal cognate *analambanō* (“take up”) in Acts 1:11, 22 points to the inclusion of the resurrection/ascension events in the expression.” It is better, however, to take the way Luke employs the cognate verb as indicative of the *identification* of the ἀνάληψις with the assumption event of Acts 1:11, 22, rather than indicative of its *inclusion* together with several other closely related events such as death and resurrection.

<sup>41</sup>Marshall, *Luke*, 405.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid. Similarly, Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 827, states, “the filling up of the days has to be understood of God’s plan beginning to move to a new stage of its realization.”

<sup>44</sup>Reiling and Swellengrebel, *Handbook on the Gospel of Luke*, 204. See also Culy, Parsons, and Stigall, *Luke*, 749: “The negativizer indicates that a positive answer is expected to this question.”

is indicative of divine necessity,<sup>45</sup> that is to say, it indicates the suffering of Christ and his entrance into glory constitute necessary aspects of salvation history.<sup>46</sup> The use of the imperfect tense probably indicates both suffering and entrance into glory are—from the perspective of this conversation on the Emmaus road—already accomplished.<sup>47</sup> In support of this conclusion, Luke 24:46 reports Jesus to have said, ἕδει παθεῖν τὸν χριστόν, καὶ ἀναστῆναι ἐκ νεκρῶν τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ (“it was necessary [for] the Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day”). So too, in Acts 17:3 Luke summarizes the Pauline kerygma using the words τὸν χριστόν ἕδει παθεῖν καὶ ἀναστῆναι ἐκ νεκρῶν (“it was necessary [for] the Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead”).<sup>48</sup> With the exception of slight word order variation,<sup>49</sup> the first part of the statement is identical in all three examples: “it was necessary [for] the Christ to suffer.” The difference occurs in the second part of the construction, where the infinitival phrase ἀναστῆναι ἐκ νεκρῶν occurs in place of εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ. The implication appears to be that resurrection and entrance into glory are so closely related that they may be used interchangeably in such kerygmatic formulae without any great change in meaning. This need not imply, however, that the two concepts are actually synonymous—only that they are very closely related (theologically and temporally) ideas.<sup>50</sup> In fact, Nolland argues Lukan usage of “glory” (see Luke 9:31-32; cf. also 9:26; 21:27; Acts 22:11) does not support the identification of resurrection as entrance into glory; the latter, he claims, “can only be the glory of exaltation to the right hand of God.”<sup>51</sup> Yet, contra Nolland,<sup>52</sup> the implication of the text seems to be that Jesus has already entered into his heavenly glory and appears to the disciples from heaven.

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<sup>45</sup>Reiling and Swellengrebel, *Handbook on the Gospel of Luke*, 754; Stein, *Luke*, 612.

<sup>46</sup>See Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 179-80, and idem, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Anchor Bible 28a (Garden City, NY, 1985), 1566.

<sup>47</sup>Stein, *Luke*, 612. Zwiep, *Ascension of the Messiah*, 152 n. 1, hesitates to lean too heavily on the imperfect tense here: “*Stricto sensu* only the (divine) necessity of the impending passion and vindication is described as a past event. The imperfect ἕδει does not automatically make the following verbs events of the past as well. That the passion is considered as a past event is clear from the context, but only by implication” (italics original).

<sup>48</sup>I am indebted to Zwiep, *Ascension of the Messiah*, 152, for the observation of the similarities between Luke 24:26, 46; and Acts 17:3.

<sup>49</sup>That is, the fronting of the accusative subject τὸν χριστόν at Acts 17:3.

<sup>50</sup>Cf. also 1 Pet. 1:21, which states God resurrected Jesus and gave him glory.

<sup>51</sup>John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, Word Biblical Commentary 35C (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 1204.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 1204-5.

Moreover, while both the infinitives (παθεῖν and εἰσελθεῖν) are syntactically dependent upon ἕδει, εἰσελθεῖν bears a distant sense. With regard to the meaning of the second infinitive, there are three possibilities: (1) it could bear a temporal sense: Christ suffered “before entering his glory;” (2) it could indicate purpose (final sense): he suffered “in order to enter his glory;” (3) it could indicate result (consecutive sense): he suffered “and so entered his glory.”<sup>53</sup> Most probably, result is the intended sense.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, the verse can be translated, “Was it not necessary [for] the Christ to suffer these things, and so to enter his glory?”

To sum up, Christ entered into his glory as a result of his suffering, and this entrance into glory had already occurred when Christ spoke to the disciples on the Emmaus road.<sup>55</sup> Fitzmyer concurs, stating:

Luke never depicts the resurrection of Jesus as if it were a mere resuscitation or return to natural, terrestrial existence (like the resuscitated son of the widow of Nain, 7:15; or Jairus’ daughter, 8:54-55). Rather he is aware that Christ has entered “his glory” (24:26). It is from ‘glory’ (the presence of the Father) that Jesus’ appearances to his disciples take place. From there he clearly appears to Saul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6; 22:6-10; 26:13-18); and the only real difference between that appearance and the others (to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, to the Eleven and others in Jerusalem, and the many instances referred to in Acts 1:3) is that it was postpentecostal.<sup>56</sup>

#### Acts 2:33-35

Acts 2:33-35 is one of the most important Lukan texts touching on the exaltation of Jesus. Consequently, determining the meaning of these verses is a vital step in correctly understanding the assumption narratives found in Luke 24:51 and Acts 1:2-11, 22.

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<sup>53</sup>Reiling and Swellengrebel, *Handbook on the Gospel of Luke*, 754.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup>In agreement with this, Pierre Benoit, *Jesus and the Gospel*, vol. 1, chap. 11 (209-53), “The Ascension,” trans. Benet Weatherhead (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 249 n. 2, explicates Luke 24:26 as meaning “that the Lord has already ‘entered into his glory’ by the time that he is speaking to the disciples, that is, that he ascended to his Father, immediately after the Resurrection.”

<sup>56</sup>Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 193-94. For an expanded delineation of Fitzmyer’s understanding, see also Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The Ascension of Christ and Pentecost,” *Theological Studies* 45, no. 3 (1984): 409-440, here at 422-23. Cf. also Zwiep, *Ascension of the Messiah*, 151-53.

In Acts 2:32, Peter's Pentecost speech references the resurrection of Jesus (cf. also vv. 24-31). Now, at verse 33, Peter introduces the exaltation of Christ with the inferential conjunction οὖν ("Therefore"). BDAG explicates the inferential use of οὖν as "denoting that what it introduces is the result of or an inference fr. what precedes."<sup>57</sup> Zwiep opines that if οὖν is assigned its full illative force here, then the exaltation of Christ (Τῆ δεξιᾷ . . . τοῦ θεοῦ ὑψωθείς,) is synonymous to his resurrection (Τοῦτον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἀνέστησεν ὁ θεός, v. 32).<sup>58</sup> In a similar direction, Marshall affirms, "The resurrection is to be understood as the exaltation of Jesus. It was not simply a revivification but an ascension to be with God. Peter regards this as self-evident."<sup>59</sup> To the contrary, Peter may have regarded the exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God as closely connected (both theologically and temporally) to, and a natural inference to be drawn from, the resurrection without necessarily equating the two events (cf. also 5:30-31, where the two are again mentioned together).<sup>60</sup> If the resurrection from the dead fulfilled Scripture (e.g., Ps. 16) and vindicated Jesus as the Messiah who was to come (vv. 24-32), it stands to reason God would also exalt him at his right hand in fulfillment of Scripture (vv. 33-35; Ps. 110:1)—in this way, his exaltation is an inference naturally drawn from the resurrection.<sup>61</sup> What is more, it is probably best to understand the resurrection as the first movement toward the ascension-exaltation, which closely followed it on the same day—in this way, too, Jesus' exaltation is a logical inference and in a real sense the result of the resurrection. Peter articulates ascending to heaven—not simply resurrection—as the means of attaining the exaltation of v.33 (cf. v. 34).

Some scholars identify the dative Τῆ δεξιᾷ as instrumental, thus meaning, Jesus was exalted "by" the right hand of God.<sup>62</sup> In favor of

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<sup>57</sup>BDAG, 736, s.v. "οὖν."

<sup>58</sup>Zwiep, *Ascension of the Messiah*, 155.

<sup>59</sup>I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 78. Similarly, W. Michaelis, "ὄραω . . . ," *TDNT*, 5:356, opines, "As may be seen from 5:30f., the τῆ δεξιᾷ οὖν τοῦ θεοῦ ὑψωθείς of Ac. 2:33 refers, not to the ascension, but to the resurrection mentioned in 2:32. As compared with the resurrection, the ascension is not a further alteration in the mode of existence of the risen Lord. We are thus to think of the appearances between Easter and the ascension . . . as appearances of the risen Lord from heaven."

<sup>60</sup>From a broader canonical perspective, the resurrection and ascension-exaltation simply cannot be collapsed into a single event; cf. John 20:17, which portrays Jesus as resurrected but not yet ascended.

<sup>61</sup>Somewhat similarly, in Acts 17:31 Paul points to the resurrection of Christ as divinely furnished proof that God has appointed Jesus as future Judge of all.

<sup>62</sup>E.g., Thomas Ethelbert Page, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Classic Commentaries on the Greek New Testament (London: Macmillan, 1897), 93; F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the*

this interpretation, the Septuagintal text of Psalm 117:16 (Eng. 118:16) reads, δεξιὰ κυρίου ὑψώσεν με δεξιὰ κυρίου ἐποίησεν δύναμιν (“The right hand of the Lord has lifted me up; the right hand of the Lord has worked powerfully”). The locative sense is preferable,<sup>63</sup> however, because the contextual focus (cf. vv. 34-35) is on Psalm 110:1 (LXX 109:1), not 118:16 (117:16 LXX). Since Psalm 110:1 is concerned with locale, not means, that is the meaning here as well.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, the verse points to Jesus’ exaltation “at” the right hand of God.

The action expressed by the aorist passive participle ὑψωθεὶς (“having been exalted”) is clearly temporally antecedent to the action expressed by the main verb ἐξέχεεν (“he poured out”). It would be a mistake, however, to identify the participle as simply temporal, as Schnabel does.<sup>65</sup> To be sure, Jesus poured out the Spirit “after he was exalted,” but there is more. The participle also expresses the *ground* of the act of outpouring the Spirit and, therefore, a causal nuance is also present. The concern of Peter’s argument at this point in his Pentecost sermon is to demonstrate that Jesus is the resurrected and exalted Messiah. At the present juncture, he argues that Jesus pours out the Spirit only because he was exalted and received the promise of the Spirit from the Father. The emphasis appears to fall upon the causal rather than the temporal element. Consequently, the participle should be regarded as causal.<sup>66</sup>

The genitive τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος (“of the Holy Spirit”), which modifies τὴν . . . ἐπαγγελίαν (“the promise”), is exegetical.<sup>67</sup> “the promise, that is, the Holy Spirit” (cf. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5). Like

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*Acts*, rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 66.

<sup>63</sup>Martin M. Culy, and Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2003), 42.

<sup>64</sup>Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 132. See also Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 259; David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 150 n. 72.

<sup>65</sup>Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 147. Culy and Parsons, *Acts*, 42, also identify the participle as temporal.

<sup>66</sup>Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 624, cautions against too quickly identifying a participle as temporal. He states a temporal element is almost always present, but this must be the *primary* element in order to identify the participle as temporal. Here, the causal element seems to be primary, and the temporal secondary.

<sup>67</sup>Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Sacra Pagina 5 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 52; Bock, *Acts*, 133; Schnabel, *Acts*, 148 n. 89; Culy and Parsons, *Acts*, 42.

ὑψωθείς, the participle λαβῶν is causal.<sup>68</sup> The idea is, “*Because* he was exalted to the right hand of God and *because* he received the promise, that is, the Spirit, he poured out” the gift of the Spirit. The prepositional phrase παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς simply states the Source from whom Jesus received the promised Spirit to bestow. As a result of Christ’s exaltation and his reception of the promise, ἐξέχεεν τοῦτο ὃ νῦν ὑμεῖς βλέπετε καὶ ἀκούετε (“he has poured out this that you now see and hear”).

In verses 34-35, Peter further explains his statement about Christ’s exaltation—the verse begins with the explanatory γὰρ (“For”). He explicates, Οὐ . . . Δαυὶδ ἀνέβη εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς (“[it was] not David<sup>69</sup> [who] ascended into the heavens”). Rather, David said (λέγει δὲ αὐτός), “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’” (Ἐἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου, Κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου, ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου). Hence, Christ’s exaltation to the right hand of God was inextricably linked to his ascending to heaven. It is interesting that the verb ἀνέβη is active, whereas the verbs Luke uses to describe the assumption of Jesus in Luke 24 and Acts 1 are consistently passive. I will return to this point below.

### **The Lukan Assumption Narratives**

#### **Luke 24:51**

At the conclusion of Luke (24:51), the author briefly describes Jesus’ being taken up with the words, διέστη ἀπ’ αὐτῶν,<sup>70</sup> καὶ ἀνεφέρετο εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν<sup>71</sup> (“he parted from them, and was being carried up into heaven”). The verb διέστημι is used only by Luke in the NT (cf. Luke 22:59; Acts 27:28). It is characteristically Lukan, moreover, to describe the departure of supernatural messengers or visitors (cf. Luke 1:38; 2:15; 9:33; 24:31; Acts 10:7; 12:10); this departure motif is commonplace in such visitation stories (e.g., Gen. 17:22; 35:13; Judg. 6:21; 13:20; Tob. 12:20-21; 2 Macc. 3:34).<sup>72</sup> Here, Luke proceeds to describe the manner of the resurrected Jesus’

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<sup>68</sup>Culy and Parsons, *Acts*, 42, again (as with ὑψωθείς) identify the participle as temporal.

<sup>69</sup>Bock, *Acts*, 134, suggests the word order indicates οὐ negates the noun Δαυὶδ rather than the verb ἀνέβη.

<sup>70</sup>The prepositional phrase, ἀπ’ αὐτῶν, here indicates separation. Cf. Culy, Parsons, and Stigall, *Luke*, 762.

<sup>71</sup>The prepositional phrase, εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, here bears a locative sense. Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup>Marshall, *Luke*, 909.

departure. The use of the imperfect ἀνεφέρετο here indicates the gradual nature of Jesus' departure as he "was being carried up,"<sup>73</sup> which dovetails nicely with the more detailed description found in Acts 1:9-10.<sup>74</sup> The entire statement (καὶ ἀνεφέρετο εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν) is omitted in some manuscripts.<sup>75</sup> But the external support for the clause is much stronger.<sup>76</sup> What is more, the removal of the words is much more readily explained than is their addition.<sup>77</sup> A scribe with harmonizing tendencies may have *intentionally* omitted the words in an attempt to remove a perceived contradiction vis-à-vis the forty days of Acts 1:3, 9-11.<sup>78</sup> Alternatively, a copyist may have *unintentionally* omitted the words due to homoeoarcton<sup>79</sup>—both v. 51b and v. 52a begin with KAIA.<sup>80</sup>

With regard to the perceived contradiction regarding the time of the assumption, Luke does not affirm at Luke 24:51 that Jesus' taking up occurred on Resurrection Day, though his compressed and abbreviated narration does leave the possibility for the reader to arrive at such a misconstrued chronology. Yet the author more fully and carefully details the chronological particulars in his second volume<sup>81</sup>—thus alleviating any possible misunderstanding on this point. This explanation gives a plausible defense of the non-contradictory nature of the Lukan assumption narratives.

What is intriguing on the literary level, however, is Luke's inclusion of both the promise of Spirit-empowered witness (vv. 47-49)

<sup>73</sup>I do not mean to imply that the imperfect tense-form alone indicates this, but rather that this *Aktionsart* is the clear pragmatic implicature of this particular imperfect verb as Luke here employs it. Cf. Constantine R. Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 21-23.

<sup>74</sup>Marshall, *Luke*, 909.

<sup>75</sup>Namely, κ\*<sup>a</sup>, D it<sup>a, b, d, e, ffz, j, l</sup> syr<sup>s</sup> geo<sup>1</sup> Augustine<sup>1/3</sup>.

<sup>76</sup>Namely, Ϝ<sup>75</sup> κ<sup>2</sup> A B C L W Δ Θ Ψ f<sup>1</sup> f<sup>2</sup> 28 33 157 180 205 565 579 597 700 892 1006 1010 1071 1241 1243 1292 1342 1424 1505 Bz.

<sup>77</sup>See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 162-63; Marshall, *Luke*, 909. Plummer, *St. Luke*, 565, disagrees, stating, "No motive for their omission, if they were in the original document, can be suggested. They look like a gloss on διέστη; but it is conceivable that Lk. himself (or Theophilus) may have added them in a second edition of the Gospel, in order to make it quite clear what διέστη ἂπ' αὐτῶν meant."

<sup>78</sup>Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1590.

<sup>79</sup>Alternatively, a copyist may have *unintentionally* omitted the words due to homoeoarcton, an error whereby a scribe omits words as a result of skipping from one phrase to another that begins similarly—here, both v. 51b and v. 52a begin with KAIA.

<sup>80</sup>Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 163; cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1590.

<sup>81</sup>With regard to Luke 24, Kaylor, "Ascension Motif," 27, states, "Luke had no intention to indicate the chronology of the events; if we are correct in assuming that he had in mind the sequel in Acts, it seems that his purpose at the close of the Gospel is to give a summary of the final appearance of Jesus to his disciples, while intending to give a more extended account at the beginning of Acts."

and the taking up of Jesus (vv. 50-51) in close succession. The same two elements are similarly juxtaposed in Acts 1:4-5, 8 (Spirit-empowered witness) and 9-11 (assumption). It seems Luke regarded the assumption as an event that was in some way closely related to the bestowal of Spirit empowerment. One could perhaps argue that the connection is found in that the assumption of Luke 24:51; Acts 1:2, 9-11, 22 constitutes the prerequisite exaltation that made possible the bestowal of the Spirit (cf. Acts 2:33). This remains unlikely, however, due to Luke's indication that Jesus "entered into his glory" on the day of his resurrection, not forty days later (cf. discussion on Luke 24:26), as well as his failure to indicate the assumption (Luke 24; Acts 1) as the point of Jesus' exaltation. It seems Acts 2:33 speaks of the same reality as Luke 24:26, rather than that described in 24:51 and Acts 1:9-11. A more plausible connection is found in the Elijah typology to be explored shortly.

Acts 1:2, 9-11, 22

A much fuller treatment of Jesus' being taken up into heaven is found in the assumption narrative that introduces the Book of Acts (1:2-11; cf. v. 22). Before introducing the assumption, Luke makes the intriguing statement in verse 1 that his first treatise (that is, the Gospel of Luke) detailed "all that Jesus began to do and to teach" (περὶ πάντων, . . . ὧν ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς ποιεῖν τε καὶ διδάσκειν.). F. F. Bruce notes the verb ἤρξατο ("began") is no mere "semitizing auxiliary," but rather "carries a certain emphasis."<sup>82</sup> In other words, Luke implies his second volume will recount what the exalted and departed Jesus *continued* to do and teach through his Spirit-empowered followers.<sup>83</sup> This, of course, implies a transference of the Spirit-empowered prophetic ministry from Jesus to his disciples.

Immediately subsequent to this significant statement, Luke introduces the taking-up motif in verse 2 with the aorist passive ἀνελήφθη ("he was taken up"). This is the first of three occurrences of the verb ἀναλαμβάνω in the present chapter, all in reference to Jesus' assumption (cf. vv. 11, 22). The verb, moreover, occurs in the passive voice in each instance (ἀνελήφθη in vv. 2 and 22; ὁ ἀναληφθεὶς in v. 11). In the present context, this utilization of the passive constitutes a clear example of the so-called divine passive, or, theological passive,<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Bruce, *Acts*, 30 n. 10.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>84</sup>On which see Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 437-38.

meaning the implication is that God took Jesus;<sup>85</sup> he did not actively ascend. Most probably, Luke employed the passive rather than explicitly stating God as the subject of the action in order not to detract from the strong focus upon Jesus and his assumption.<sup>86</sup> Also, while Luke does not here explicitly state that this “taking up” was εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν (“into heaven”), this is clearly assumed. It is clearly articulated in verse 11, and again assumed in verse 22.

What is more, when Luke chose to use the verb ἀνελήθη, he employed the same form of the same verb that the LXX utilizes in reference to Elijah’s translation in 2 Kings 2:11 (ἀνελήμφθη Ἡλίου . . . εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν).<sup>87</sup> In addition, verses 9-10 of this passage in 2 Kings use alternate forms of the same verb in the same connection (the aorist passive infinitive ἀναλημφθῆναί in v. 9; the present passive participle ἀναλαμβάνόμενον in v. 10). In extra-canonical literature, the form ἀνελήμφθη also occurs at 1 Maccabees 2:58 and Sirach 49:14 in reference to the assumptions of Elijah and Enoch,<sup>88</sup> respectively. The substantival participial form, ὁ ἀναλημφθεὶς, is used in reference to Elijah in Sirach 48:9. There can be little doubt that Luke very intentionally echoed the language of Elijah’s assumption.<sup>89</sup> The significance of this fact will be discussed more fully below. Elsewhere within the NT, ἀνελήθη refers to Jesus’ assumption in Mark 16:19,<sup>90</sup> and 1 Timothy 3:16, as it clearly does here.

P. A. van Stempvoort, conversely, concludes the “normal meaning” attached to both the noun ἀνάληψις and the cognate verb ἀναλαμβάνω in Luke’s time and “the first centuries” was “to die, to be

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<sup>85</sup>Cf. Schnabel, *Acts*, 71. Peterson, *Acts*, 114, notes the passive verb implies a “supernatural act of God.”

<sup>86</sup>Cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 436. One could argue the subject is easily perceived due to the assumed preunderstanding of the author and his audience, thus making the naming of God as subject superfluous (cf. *ibid.*, 435-36 for discussion of such usage of the passive). Wallace’s second category, that which stresses focus upon the subject as the reason for the author’s use of the passive voice, seems exegetically stronger here, however.

<sup>87</sup>Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 195-96; Schnabel, *Acts*, 71.

<sup>88</sup>The more usual verb for Enoch’s translation is μετατίθημι (cf. Gen. 5:24, LXX; Wis. 4:10 [see also 4:11, where ἀπάζω is used in the same connection]; Sir. 44:16. The author of Hebrews follows suit in 11:5, which employs both the verb μετατίθημι and the noun μετάθεσις.

<sup>89</sup>See Johnson, *Acts*, 24: “The use of the verb *analambanō* echoes the account of the ascension of Elijah in LXX 2 Kgs 2:9-11.” Conversely, Benoit, “Ascension,” 248-49, rejects any such allusion.

<sup>90</sup>On the authenticity of the so-called Long Ending, or Mark 16:9-20, see now Nicholas P. Lunn, *The Original Ending of Mark: A New Case for the Authenticity of Mark 16:9-20* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014).

taken up in the sense of to pass away, removal out of this world.”<sup>91</sup> Van Stempvoort argues Luke’s usage of the noun in Luke 9:51 tips the scales in favor of the “normal” meaning of the verb in Acts 1:2; and so, he interprets both verses as speaking of “the whole process of his passing away and being taken up in the wide sense.”<sup>92</sup> Several points militate against this interpretation, however. First, the Lukan text utilizes ἀναλαμβάνω not only in verse 2 but also in verses 11 and 22, and the latter verses plainly refer to the assumption. Van Stempvoort fails to explain why Luke would employ the same verb in the same context to convey such disparate meanings.<sup>93</sup> Second, Luke states the event spoken of in verse 2 occurred on a single day (ἄχρι ἧς ἡμέρας . . . ἀνελήθη, “until the day he was taken up”), and the reported speech of Peter in verse 22 makes a similar claim (ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ἧς ἀνελήθη ἀφ’ ἡμῶν, “until the day on which he was taken up from us”). This similarity of description further supports interpreting both verses as referring to the same event—the assumption. Third, van Stempvoort bases his interpretation of Acts 1:2 on a quite questionable understanding of Luke 9:51; his reading does not give due consideration to apparent allusions to Elijah’s assumption conveyed by both the noun ἀνάληψις and the verb ἀναλαμβάνω.

In verse 9, Luke introduces his narration of the assumption with the words Καὶ ταῦτα εἰπών. The aorist participle is plainly temporal,<sup>94</sup> thus, “And after he said these things.” By introducing the verse in this way, Luke closely links Jesus’ mission mandate (v. 8) with the assumption.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, the genitive absolute βλέπόντων αὐτῶν is also to be construed temporally.<sup>96</sup> The present participle here conveys that the apostles were watching as Jesus was taken up: “while they were watching.” Both temporal participial clauses modify the verb ἐπήρθη (“he was lifted up”), which, as noted above, is a divine passive.<sup>97</sup> Then,

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<sup>91</sup>P. A. van Stempvoort, “The Interpretation of the Ascension in Luke and Acts,” *New Testament Studies* 5, no. 1 (1958): 30-42, here at 32.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 33. Similarly, Kaylor, “Ascension Motif,” 31-32, unconvincingly argues the verb refers to Jesus’ passion, death, resurrection, and “ascension.” To the contrary, the context clearly specifies the taking up as that which is intended.

<sup>93</sup>Cf. Matthew Sleeman, *Geography and the Ascension Narrative in Acts*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 146 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 65.

<sup>94</sup>Cf. Culy and Parsons, *Acts*, 9.

<sup>95</sup>Peterson, *Acts*, 114.

<sup>96</sup>As is usually the case with the genitive absolute construction. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 655. See also Culy and Parsons, *Acts*, 9, who state, “While the events expressed by the aorist participle, εἰπών, precede the event of the main verb, the event expressed by the present participle is contemporaneous with the event of the main verb.”

<sup>97</sup>See also Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 210, who identifies the verb as a theological passive.

“a cloud took him up from their eyes” (καὶ νεφέλη ὑπέλαβεν αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν).

In addition to Luke’s usage of the verb ἀναλαμβάνω (cf. discussion above on v. 2), another literary allusion to the assumption of Elijah possibly occurs here. Luke states Jesus’ assumption occurred βλέπόντων αὐτῶν, that is, “while they were watching” (cf. v. 10: ὡς ἀτενίζοντες ἦσαν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν πορευομένου αὐτοῦ). While the emphasis placed upon “seeing” no doubt underscores the eyewitness testimony that constitutes such an indispensable part of their apostolic role as witnesses, there appears to be another implication here as well. Luke Timothy Johnson posits a literary allusion to Elijah’s departure.<sup>98</sup> In 2 Kings 2:9, Elisha requests a “double portion” of Elijah’s “spirit,” or, his prophetic anointing. While Elijah said this was a difficult request, he assured Elisha he would receive it *but only if he saw Elijah departing* (v. 10). He did see him as he was taken up, and he did receive the double portion of his prophetic anointing (vv. 11-15). Luke’s emphasis upon the disciples seeing Jesus as he is taken up, according to Johnson, “picks up this literary motif.”<sup>99</sup> The two messengers both confirm that the disciples have indeed seen Jesus’ assumption, and that they must return to Jerusalem to await their prophetic anointing with the Spirit rather than stand staring into the sky (v. 11).<sup>100</sup> The assumption thus indicates the transference of the prophetic mantle to the disciples,<sup>101</sup> although they do not receive the prophetic empowerment that actualizes this ministry for several more days.

In regard to the cloud mentioned by Luke, there has been some disagreement about the significance one should assign to it. Many scholars attach symbolic import to the cloud. For example, Marshall states the cloud is both the *vehicle* that “envelopes” and “transports” Jesus to heaven, and a *sign* of God’s heavenly glory (cf. Luke 9:34f.; Rev. 11:12).<sup>102</sup> Similarly, Bock, who notes the biblical and Jewish

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<sup>98</sup>Johnson, *Acts*, 31-32. Cf. Green, *Luke*, 403, who notices this connection when commenting on Luke 9:51. See also Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 713. On the transfer motif, see further Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), 20-21.

<sup>99</sup>Johnson, *Acts*, 31.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>101</sup>Cf. Keener, *Acts*, 1:713: “Jesus is passing on his prophetic ministry and empowerment to his disciples”; and 1:720: “the backdrop in the succession narrative of Elijah and Elisha indicates that, for Luke, Jesus is passing his mission to the church as exemplified in its leading representatives.”

<sup>102</sup>Marshall, *Acts*, 61.

precedents for the Lukan description of Jesus' "ascension," concludes the cloud acts not only as vehicle but also as sign of God's glory (Exod. 16:10; Ps. 104:3; Luke 9:34-35) or his presence (1 Thess. 4:17; 1 En. 39:3).<sup>103</sup> Larkin posits the cloud points to the Shekinah glory and, perhaps, the second coming.<sup>104</sup> So too, Fitzmyer avers the cloud is employed as "an apocalyptic stage prop" indicating "God's presence, power, or glory" (Exod. 16:10; 19:9; 24:15-18; Ezek. 10:3-4; Ps. 18:11; Dan. 7:13; Luke 9:34-35; 1 Thess. 4:17; Rev. 11:12).<sup>105</sup> Conversely, Schnabel flatly denies such symbolic implications:

The cloud is not simply an "apocalyptic stage prop," nor the "vehicle" that transported Jesus into heaven, nor a literary device borrowed from Old Testament passages about the presence of God. As Luke reports a historical event, the cloud should be interpreted as a natural phenomenon that signaled to the apostles that Jesus has just left them—not as he left them during the last forty days, only to appear again for further instruction and fellowship, but in a permanent fashion. This was Jesus' last appearance after the resurrection before his return sometime in the future (v. 11).<sup>106</sup>

Schnabel is surely correct to stress the historical nature of the assumption, as well as the note of permanence communicated by Jesus' dramatic departure. Contra Schnabel, however, it seems difficult to argue that the cloud does not convey any connotations of God's glory or presence.<sup>107</sup> In any case, Benoit is certainly correct to claim the cloud foreshadows Christ's eschatological coming (cf. v. 11).<sup>108</sup>

Verse 10 begins with *Καὶ ὡς ἀτενίζοντες ἦσαν* ("And as they were staring intently"), an imperfect periphrastic construction.<sup>109</sup> Wallace claims that in classical Greek this construction stressed aspectual force but such usage had waned by the Hellenistic period, especially within NT usage.<sup>110</sup> If this is correct, it is just possible Luke wished to stress internal aspectual force; yet it is perhaps more probable that he simply

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<sup>103</sup>Bock, *Acts*, 67.

<sup>104</sup>William J. Larkin, Jr., *Acts*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 43.

<sup>105</sup>Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 210.

<sup>106</sup>Schnabel, *Acts*, 80-81.

<sup>107</sup>Cf. also Bruce, *Acts*, 37-38.

<sup>108</sup>Benoit, "Ascension," 249.

<sup>109</sup>On which construction see Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 648. Peterson, *Acts*, 115 n. 52, also notes the imperfect periphrastic construction here.

<sup>110</sup>Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 647.

intended the equivalent of the imperfect tense.<sup>111</sup> The prepositional phrase εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν simply indicates the direction of their gaze. Additionally, Luke again (cf. v. 9) utilizes a temporal genitive absolute: πορευομένου αὐτοῦ<sup>112</sup> (“while he was going”).<sup>113</sup> The author fronts all of this temporal information (ὡς ἀπενίζοντες ἦσαν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν πορευομένου αὐτοῦ)—or, in other words, he moves it to a position before the main verb—and in this way creates a temporal frame of reference for what follows.<sup>114</sup>

Having thus established the scene, Luke uses the phrase καὶ ἰδοὺ (“and, behold”), a common example of an attention-getter,<sup>115</sup> to sharpen the focus upon the two new characters he is about to introduce into the story. He states, ἄνδρες δύο παρειστήκεισαν αὐτοῖς ἐν ἑσθῆτι λευκῇ (“two men in white clothing stood<sup>116</sup> beside them”). Some suggest the “two men” are to be identified as Moses and Elijah,<sup>117</sup> but this seems quite unlikely. It is more probable Luke simply meant to indicate the appearance of two angels.<sup>118</sup> The simple fact that the messengers appear in white garments, similar to the glorious appearance of Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration (Luke 9:30) and the two messengers at the tomb (24:4), is insufficient and quite tenuous grounds for identifying the three pairs.<sup>119</sup>

At verse 11, the angels ask (οἱ καὶ εἶπον), “Ἄνδρες Γαλιλαῖοι, τί ἐσθήκατε ἐμβλέποντες εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν; (“Men, Galileans, why<sup>120</sup> do you stand looking into heaven?”). The question constitutes a “mild rebuke,”<sup>121</sup> implying they should not be doing so. Just prior to his departure, Jesus gave them orders (v. 8), and they must engage the

<sup>111</sup>Culy and Parsons, *Acts*, 10, explain the imperfect periphrastic here as “analogous to a simple imperfect verb.”

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Cf. Peterson, *Acts*, 115 n. 52, who also notes the genitive absolute.

<sup>114</sup>For the identification of the temporal frame, see Steven E. Runge, *The Lexham Discourse Greek New Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), *ad loc.*

<sup>115</sup>Runge identifies ἰδοὺ as an attention-getter. See *ibid.*, *ad loc.* Culy and Parsons, *Acts*, 10, state ἰδοὺ “is used to seize the listener’s/reader’s attention and/or emphasize the following statement.”

<sup>116</sup>The pluperfect παρειστήκεισαν is equivalent in meaning to the imperfect. Cf. Peterson, *Acts*, 115 n. 53.

<sup>117</sup>E.g., Johnson, *Acts*, 31.

<sup>118</sup>Schnabel, *Acts*, 81; John B. Polhill, *Acts*, New American Commentary 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 87.

<sup>119</sup>As Johnson, *Acts*, 31, does.

<sup>120</sup>The interrogative particle τί functions as an adverb here, asking “why?” See Bock, *Acts*, 69. It also receives main clause emphasis. See Runge, *Discourse Greek New Testament*, *ad loc.*

<sup>121</sup>Bock, *Acts*, 69.

work committed to them rather than gaze idly into the sky, awaiting his return<sup>122</sup> or wishing for their Lord to remain with them.<sup>123</sup>

Next, the angels proceed to explicate the significance of what the apostles have just seen. Their explanation begins with the words οὗτος ὁ Ἰησοῦς (“this Jesus”), which are followed by the substantival participle ὁ ἀναληφθεὶς standing in apposition to ὁ Ἰησοῦς (thus, “the one who was taken”).<sup>124</sup> As in verse 2, the divine passive is again utilized. The participle, in turn, is modified by two prepositional phrases (ἀφ’ ὑμῶν [“from you”] and εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν [“into heaven”]). The latter phrase (εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν) occurs three times in the verse—in reference to the disciples’ gazing into heaven (ἐμβλέποντες εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν; cf. also v. 10: ἀτενίζοντες ἦσαν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν), and in reference both to where Jesus was taken (ὁ ἀναληφθεὶς . . . εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν) and to where he went (πορευόμενον εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν). In contrast, the phrase does not occur at verses 2 and 22; but, it is clearly assumed in both instances. The phrase also occurs in Luke 24:51, where it modifies the verb ἀνεφέρετο.

The entire statement ὁ ἀναληφθεὶς ἀφ’ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν is an example of overspecification.<sup>125</sup> There would have been no referential ambiguity regarding which Jesus was intended had the angels not further specified who the intended referent was. Thus, the words do not serve to disambiguate who the referent is, but rather serve the function of highlighting important thematic material.<sup>126</sup> In this case, Jesus is characterized as the one who was taken up into heaven, so as to cause him to be conceptualized in this manner, because the thematically related idea of his return from heaven is about to be explicated.

The angels explain, οὕτως ἐλεύσεται ὃν τρόπον ἐθεάσασθε αὐτὸν πορευόμενον εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν (Jesus “will come thus, in the manner in which<sup>127</sup> you saw him going into heaven”). That is, he will come visibly, in a cloud, even returning to the very spot from whence he departed (cf. Zech. 14:4). In contradistinction, however, the second

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<sup>122</sup>Ibid.

<sup>123</sup>Schnabel, *Acts*, 81.

<sup>124</sup>Bock, *Acts*, 70. Culy and Parsons, *Acts*, 11, identify the participle as attributive.

<sup>125</sup>Runge, *Discourse Greek New Testament*, ad loc.

<sup>126</sup>Steven E. Runge, *The Lexham Discourse Greek New Testament: Introduction* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2008), s.v. “Overspecification.” Runge explains overspecification as follows: “The description of individuals or ideas that is more specific than required to identify the intended referent. This extra information is often ‘thematically-loaded’, [sic] connected to the theme of the context in some way. The overspecification prompts the reader conceptualize [sic] the referent in a specific way.”

<sup>127</sup>With regard to οὕτως . . . ὃν τρόπον, Culy and Parsons, *Acts*, 11, note “The combination of the adverb and the relative expression makes the statement particularly emphatic.” They translate, “will come (back) in the very same manner . . .” (ibid., 1).

coming will not be a private matter, but rather visible to all (cf. Rev. 1:7).<sup>128</sup> Bock aptly remarks, “Taken up in a cloud, he will return in a cloud to render judgment (Dan. 7:9-14; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27; Rev. 1:7).”<sup>129</sup> As Bock further observes, the promise of Christ’s return expressed by the verb ἐλεύσεται is a classic example of the predictive use of the future tense.<sup>130</sup> Polhill refers to the statement of the angels as “a strong affirmation,” which he explains as, “not just a promise but a reality concretized and affirmed by the ascension they had just witnessed.”<sup>131</sup> Thus, Jesus’ being taken up into heaven serves as both an affirmation of and a powerful visible illustration of his second coming—from heaven, in the clouds, to the Mount of Olives. This explanation, of course, also tacitly communicates that the assumption of Jesus constitutes his final resurrection appearance to his disciples—they clearly are not to expect another appearance like those experienced during the forty days of verse 3.

The final reference to the taking up in Acts 1 occurs in verse 22, which—together with verse 21—states the criteria according to which a qualified apostolic replacement for Judas must be chosen. The candidate must be a man who witnessed Jesus’ earthly ministry and his resurrection appearances in their entirety (v. 21), “beginning from the baptism of John, until the day in which he was taken up from us” (ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τοῦ βαπτίσματος Ἰωάννου, ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ἧς ἀνελήφθη ἀφ’ ἡμῶν). As at verse 2, ἀνελήφθη occurs; the phrase ἀφ’ ἡμῶν, moreover, articulates the same idea as ἀφ’ ὑμῶν in verse 11. The assumption is regarded as occurring on a specific day (τῆς ἡμέρας ἧς ἀνελήφθη). Perhaps more significantly, the assumption is regarded as the *terminus ad quem* of the period regarded as essential for an apostolic witness of the resurrection to have observed. This is probably because the taking up of Jesus is thought of as the last of the resurrection appearances by which Christ convincingly proved his resurrection to his followers (cf. v. 3).

### **The Significance of the Assumption Narratives in Lukan Theology**

Luke Timothy Johnson posits, “Luke clearly understands [the “ascension”] to be Jesus’ enthronement as King, and therefore as

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<sup>128</sup>Peterson, *Acts*, 116.

<sup>129</sup>Bock, *Acts*, 70.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid.

<sup>131</sup>Polhill, *Acts*, 88.

Messiah.”<sup>132</sup> Such an explanation is not uncommon, but it remains questionable. As the present study has argued, Luke not only supports viewing Jesus’ entrance into his glory (that is, his exaltation) as occurring on Resurrection Day (Luke 24:26), but he also fails explicitly to make the connection between the final departure of Jesus and his exaltation.<sup>133</sup> Consequently, a more adequate evaluation of the theological significance of the event described in Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:2, 9-11, 22 is needed.

Before proceeding to proffer my own explanation of the significance of Jesus’ being taken up into heaven, I would like to return to the matter of terminology employed in this discussion. This study has suggested that the exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God, which includes the idea of Jesus’ actively “ascending”<sup>134</sup> to God (cf. Acts 2:33-35), occurred on the day of his resurrection (Luke 24:26<sup>135</sup>); and, moreover, that the event spoken of in Luke 9:51; 24:50-51; Acts 1:2, 9-11, 22 (cf. also Mark 16:19; 1 Tim. 3:16), which occurred some forty days later, was an event in which Luke could describe Jesus as playing a passive role as God took him up into heaven.<sup>136</sup> Due to

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<sup>132</sup>Johnson, *Acts*, 30. Similarly, Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers: A Study in Luke’s Charismatic Theology* (London: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 115, speaks of the time when “Jesus ascended into heaven (Acts 1.9-11) to receive his royal enthronement (Acts 2.32-35).” Cf. also *ibid.*, 114, which cites the same scriptures and refers to Jesus’ “victorious ascension and enthronement.” See also Keener, *Acts*, 1:720-21.

<sup>133</sup>Kaylor, “Ascension Motif,” 56, avers, “From the time of the ascension, Jesus has clearly entered a new mode of sovereignty; he has been taken into heaven (Acts 1:10f), he is exalted at the right hand of God as Lord and Christ (2:32-36).” He goes on to suggest, “By his method of narration, Luke emphatically maintains that Jesus is now Lord in heaven” (underlining original). Kaylor then concedes the point, however, that “in the narrative of the ascension Luke makes no explicit connection between the ascension and Lordship of Jesus” (*ibid.*). In light of this, Kaylor concludes the “ascension” narrative is not *primarily* meant to affirm Jesus’ lordship (*ibid.*, 57). One wonders how Kaylor can maintain that Luke “emphatically” affirms Jesus’ lordship and heavenly exaltation by way of his narration of the “ascension,” while admitting Luke does not explicitly make this connection.

<sup>134</sup>Note again the active voice verb ἀνέβη in Acts 2:34, which implies Jesus actively ascended.

<sup>135</sup>This is also strongly implied in John 20:17. First Peter 3:21-22 also comports well with the idea that Jesus’ resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God occurred in quick succession, though it does not require this reading (see also Rom. 8:34; but cf. also Heb. 1:3; 10:12, where no interval is implied between Jesus’ *death* and exaltation either).

<sup>136</sup>Note again the passive voice verbs used (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:2, 9-11, 22), which imply Jesus was taken up by God. Fitzmyer, “Ascension of Christ and Pentecost,” 417, notes the use of both active and passive verbs in relation to both the resurrection and the “ascension” of Christ; Fitzmyer concludes, “The apparently more primitive expressions of the ascension, as of the resurrection, were couched in the passive; with the gradual development of a higher Christology in the early Christian communities, the use of the active intransitive forms for both the resurrection and the ascension became more

Scripture's usage of both the verb ἀναβαίνω and the active voice in reference to the former event (Acts 2:34; also John 20:17), it is most properly referred to as Jesus' *ascension*, or, perhaps better, *ascension-exaltation*.<sup>137</sup> On the other hand, due to the consistency with which Scripture uses the passive voice—of the verbs ἀναφέρω (Luke 24:51) and ἀναλαμβάνω (Acts 1)—in depicting the latter event, it is perhaps more fitting to designate it the *assumption*, the *taking up*, or the like.<sup>138</sup> (There is, of course, also a degree of terminological overlap in that the verb πορεύομαι is utilized in the NT with respect to both the ascension-exaltation [1 Pet. 3:22] and the assumption [Acts 1:10, 11]; see also the Johannine usage, which employs this verb in reference to the complex cluster of events also called Jesus' glorification, that is, his death-resurrection-ascension [John 14:2, 3, 12, 28; 16:7, 28]). Thus, while the foregoing terms are generally used interchangeably within the secondary literature, this paper has employed *ascension* and *assumption* as distinct terms. A clear grasp of this distinction in terminology is needed in order to comprehend the theological significance of these events, as delineated below. But, again, the point of real importance is not terminological distinctions but rather the differentiation between two separate events with disparate theological significance, which have

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common." The present study suggests, rather, that Jesus is said to have actively ascended on Resurrection Day, and to have been passively taken up some forty days later. It is not a matter of historical development toward a higher Christology causing distinct articulations of the same doctrine, but rather distinct descriptions of two different events.

It should perhaps be emphasized at this point that my overall argument rests far more heavily on the evidence supporting Jesus' exaltation, that is, his entrance into glory (Luke 24:26; Acts 2:33-34) as having occurred on Resurrection Day, on the one hand, and the narrative of the taking up that describes an event transpiring some forty days later and that lacks any clear implication of exaltation occurring at that time, on the other hand. The above observations in regard to the lexemes used and the active or passive verbal forms chosen simply supplements the main line of the argument.

<sup>137</sup>The term *ascension-exaltation* has the added benefit of articulating the inextricable connection between Jesus' ascending to the Father and the Father's exalting him at his own right hand. In other words, Jesus' ascension culminated with the Father's exalting him at his own right hand.

<sup>138</sup>Conversely, Benoit, "Ascension," 250-51, agrees with the distinction in the two events adhered to here but nonetheless concludes, "In brief, it appears to be wholly legitimate, and in better agreement with the complex data of tradition, to distinguish two moments and two modes in the mystery of the Ascension: (1) a heavenly Exaltation, invisible but real, by which the risen Christ returned to his Father, on the day of his Resurrection; (2) a visible manifestation of this Exaltation which he condescended to give, and which accompanied his final departure, on the Mount of Olives. *It is fitting to reserve the proper term 'Ascension' for the latter and thus to respect the usage established in the Church, notably in her liturgy*" (italics added). In any case, the distinction between the two events and their distinctive theological significance, not the terminology used, is the important point, as Benoit agrees (ibid., 251).

all too often been conflated within theological discussions of the “ascension.”

Regarding the theological meaning of the assumption, several observations are in order. First of all, the event demarcates the *terminus ad quem* of the resurrection appearances. Alternatively stated, the assumption is indicative of the reality that the transitional period of resurrection appearances has now run its course.<sup>139</sup> In line with this interpretation, the Lukan narrative supports the idea that the resurrected Jesus appeared to the disciples *from heaven* throughout the forty-day transitional period.<sup>140</sup> In Acts 1:3, Luke states Jesus was “appearing” (ὀπτανόμενος) to the disciples during a forty-day period (δι’ ἡμερῶν τεσσαράκοντα). The next verse mentions Jesus’ “gathering [the disciples] together” (συναλιζόμενος). As Burge correctly observes, such language implies Jesus appeared (presumably from heaven) to the apostles in a “fleeting” and “occasional” manner, rather than dwelling

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<sup>139</sup>Fitzmyer, “Ascension of Christ and Pentecost,” 424, asserts, “his ‘ascension’ is nothing more than *the* appearance from glory in which Christ took his final leave from the community of his followers—his last visible leave-taking from the assembled followers” (italics his). See Bruce M. Metzger, *Historical and Literary Studies: Pagan, Jewish, and Christian* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 85-6; John F. Maile, “The Ascension in Luke-Acts,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 37 (1986), 57-58. Cf. also John A. T. Robinson, *Jesus and His Coming* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1979), 134-36, who cites P. Benoit, “L’Ascension,” *Revue Biblique* LVI (1949), 198-200. Robinson summarizes Benoit as follows: “the departure of Jesus from the disciple’s sight is not depicted by Luke as the real moment of his glorification” (134); instead, “the Lukan Ascension narrative” marks “the moment rather of adieu than of glorification” (136 n. 2). Gary M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 136, concurs: “Whenever Jesus appeared as the Resurrected One, he necessarily appeared from heaven. . . . Therefore it is best to view the ascension of Acts 1:9 as simply a dramatic terminus of the type of relation Jesus had been enjoying with the disciples after the resurrection.”

<sup>140</sup>Contra Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994, 2000), 616, who states unequivocally, “After Jesus’ resurrection, he was on *earth for forty days* (Acts 1:3)” (italics added). Fitzmyer, “Ascension of Christ and Pentecost,” 422, demurs, rightly asserting, “Jesus is never depicted in the NT inhabiting the earth for forty days or appearing to people as someone who has been ensconced behind an arras;” rather, “on the day of the resurrection itself Luke [in Luke 24:26] refers to Jesus as having entered ‘his glory,’ i.e., the glory (*doxa*) of the Father’s presence. The implication, then, is that the crucified and risen Christ appears to his disciples from glory, i.e., from the glorious presence of his heavenly Father, on whose right hand he has already been installed.” Offering further clarification, Peter Toon, *The Ascension of Our Lord* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson: 1984), 9-10, observes the forty-day interval of Acts 1:3 was “solidified in the ecclesiastical year in terms of the forty days from Easter to Ascension-Day,” and has “dominated the understanding of the Church for centuries” with regard to the temporal question of when Jesus ascended into heaven. “Therefore, it is commonly assumed that Jesus was raised from the dead early Easter Sunday and then spent forty days in and around Palestine before leaving this earth on what we now call Ascension-Day” (ibid., 10). Cf. Bruce, *Acts*, 37.

with them consistently for the duration of the period.<sup>141</sup> Metzger concurs, stating, “The post-resurrection accounts suggest that the risen Lord was not living at any one place in Jerusalem or Galilee. Instead they imply that he had passed into a mode of being out of which he ‘appeared’ . . . and into which he disappeared again.”<sup>142</sup> One wonders from whence Jesus “appeared” if not from heaven.

Second, the assumption served as a graphic illustration of the second coming of the Messiah (Acts 1:9-11).<sup>143</sup> He will return from heaven, in the clouds, and to the Mount of Olives, just as he departed.

Third, the assumption provided a graphic and symbolic display of Jesus’ exaltation to God’s right hand.<sup>144</sup> At this juncture, it is important to distinguish between the *ontological reality* of Jesus’ exaltation to the right hand of the Father, which occurred on the day of his resurrection, and the *outward demonstration* thereof, which occurred some forty days later. With regard to the respective value of the invisible ascent and exaltation of Jesus on Resurrection Day, on the one hand, and its visible display at the assumption, on the other, Benoit remarks that the latter is “the imperfect and inessential manifestation” of the former

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<sup>141</sup>Burge, *Anointed Community*, 136. So too, Toon, *Ascension of Our Lord*, 11-12, affirms Jesus ascended into heaven during the early morning of Resurrection Day, and then appeared to his disciples for brief periods of time throughout the subsequent forty days. This, he rightly affirms, “deals effectively with the problem of the whereabouts of Jesus in the forty days. He was in heaven, and from there, in a variety of ways and at different times, he localized himself in space and time in order to encounter his disciples.”

This, of course, comports well with the Johannine narrative, which can span as many as eight days between resurrection appearances (John 20:19 with v. 26); and the Pauline record, which also speaks in terms of fleeting and occasional appearances (1 Cor. 15:5-8). Burge, *op. cit.*, also mentions 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 in this connection.

<sup>142</sup>Metzger, *Historical and Literary Studies*, 83. Cf. Bruce, *Acts*, 37.

<sup>143</sup>Maile, “Ascension,” 58-59, refers to the event as the “certain pledge” of Christ’s parousia. Cf. also Benoit, “Ascension,” 249.

<sup>144</sup>Toon, *Ascension of Our Lord*, 11-12, 125; Maile, “Ascension,” 55-56. Cf. Metzger, *Historical and Literary Studies*, 86-87; A. M. Ramsey, “What Was the Ascension?” in D.E. Nineham et al., *Historicity and Chronology in the New Testament*, SPCK Theological Collections 6 (London: SPCK., 1965), 136. F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 3rd and enlarged ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 103, explains, “In the primitive preaching the resurrection and ascension of Jesus represent one continuous movement and together constitute his exaltation. It is not implied that his enthronement at God’s right hand . . . was deferred for 40 days after his triumph over death. The fortieth day was not the first occasion when he disappeared from his companions’ sight after his resurrection (cf. Lk. 24:31). Nor is it suggested that the intervals between his resurrection appearances were spent in some earth-bound state. These appearances, in which he condescended to his disciples’ temporal conditions of life, were visitations from the eternal order to which his ‘body of glory’ now belonged. What happened on the fortieth day was that this series of intermittent visitations came to an end, with a scene which brought home to the disciples the heavenly glory of their risen Lord.” Cf. also Bruce, *Acts*, 37-38.

event that was “granted to a few witnesses.”<sup>145</sup> He further argues that exaltation to the right hand of the Father “cannot be connected in any inevitable way with the illustration of it with which Christ in his mercy furnished the disciples. Here again, the spiritual fact could very well have preceded in time the exterior manifestation.”<sup>146</sup>

Fourth, and closely related to the first point, Luke’s literary description of the assumption seems to indicate he attached further theological importance to the event. As noted throughout this paper, Luke consistently uses language that alludes to Elijah’s assumption. He employs the verb ἀναλαμβάνω (Acts 1:2, 11, 22) and the cognate noun ἀνάληψις (Luke 9:51) in reference to the assumption—the same language utilized (but only in verbal form) in the LXX in reference to Elijah’s assumption. Together with the terminology used, the emphasis placed upon the disciples seeing Jesus’ departure (1:9-11) strengthens this Elijah typology. Apparently, Luke conceptualized the assumption of Jesus as bearing theological ramifications similar to those attached to the assumption of Elijah.<sup>147</sup> More specifically, Jesus’ assumption marks the moment of his final departure and the decisive end to his physical interactions with the disciples on the earth. As such, it points to transference with regard to the prophetic ministry that Jesus began and that the disciples must continue (cf. vv. 2, 8). The responsibility to carry out the prophetic ministry in the world is now theirs. The similarities with the transference of the prophetic mantle from Elijah to Elisha are obvious.<sup>148</sup> Yet an important distinction remains: Elisha received prophetic empowerment immediately when Elijah departed (cf. 2 Kings 2:14), whereas the disciples received the gift of the Spirit of prophecy on the day of Pentecost after a short interval of waiting in prayer. This gift of the witness-empowering Spirit constituted the church as prophetic community,<sup>149</sup> thus enabling them to fulfill the

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<sup>145</sup>Cf. Benoit, “Ascension,” 244-45, quote from 245.

<sup>146</sup>Benoit, “Ascension,” 246.

<sup>147</sup>Cf. Peterson, *Acts*, 113. My own explanation differs from his, however.

<sup>148</sup>Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers*, 47-48, traces within the Lukan narrative the motif of Jesus as the prophet like Elijah and Elisha; he believes this pattern climaxes in the “ascension” and subsequent transference of prophetic anointing for ministry: “Just as the Spirit, which had empowered Elijah, was transferred from him to his disciple, Elisha, when he ascended to heaven . . . , so the Spirit was similarly transferred to the disciples after Jesus ascended to heaven. Further, just as Elisha as heir and successor to Elijah performed the same kind of miracles that Elijah had earlier performed, so in Acts the disciples, as heirs and successors to Jesus’ prophet [*sic*] ministry, will perform the same kinds of miracles that Jesus had earlier performed” (ibid., 48).

<sup>149</sup>Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers*, 65-66: “on the day of Pentecost Jesus pours out the same Spirit, who had earlier anointed him and empowered his ministry, upon his disciples to baptize them and empower their ministry as his successors.

ministry handed on to them. So, then, Pentecost remains the constitutive event; nevertheless, the assumption points to the transference of the prophetic ministry from Jesus to the disciples, which was actualized on the day of Pentecost.

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In this way, just as Jesus was the Spirit-anointed prophet, so the disciples, as heirs and successors to his prophetic ministry, become a community of Spirit-baptized prophets, the prophethood of all believers.”

## THREE PARABLES OF JESUS THROUGH THE SHAME-HONOR LENS

by Marlene Yu Yap

### Introduction

A Muslim father kills his daughter for the sake of family honor when she marries outside the faith. A Japanese leader steps down in shame over the mistakes of his subordinates. They both live in shame-honor societies in which shame is generally to be avoided and despised while honor is to be upheld and sought.

According to Muller, approximately 70-75% of the world is basically shame-based in culture. That would include nearly all of North Africa, South America, the Middle East, and Asia. The Western nations including Northern Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand are primarily guilt-based. The primal cultures such as tribal Africa and some parts of Asia and South America are mostly fear-based.<sup>1</sup> As Mediterranean society is basically shame-based, the New Testament people, its authors and readers were also culturally shame-based. Reading the New Testament through the lens of the 1<sup>st</sup> century shame-based culture will increase our understanding of the message of Jesus' parables. It is my contention that since Mediterranean culture was based on a shame-honor system, then it is appropriate to view the Scriptures, specifically the parables of Jesus, in that light.

I will limit this research to three parables found in the Gospel of Luke: The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), The Dishonest Manager (Luke 16:1-8) and The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). These three parables are considered by some scholars to be a trilogy with a common theme of salvation and stewardship.<sup>2</sup> Bailey claims that

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<sup>1</sup>Roland Miller, "Summary of Honor and Shame," <http://kingschurchlondon.org/downloads/HonorandShame.pdf>. (Accessed January 12, 2015).

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008), 380.

these three parables are linked together to depict the wasteful use of resources. The prodigal son wastes his father's resources, the dishonest manager wastes his master's resources, and the rich man wastes his own resources. However, I believe that there are other overarching themes that unite these three parables. I contend that this trilogy centers on the common themes of justice, grace and love. Understanding these parables through the shame-honor lens will enable us to fully grasp and appreciate the meaning and essence of the teachings of Jesus. I will first give a brief background of the nature of shame-honor cultures. I will then discuss the three aforementioned parables in the light of this cultural lens.

### **Shame and Honor Culture**

Social anthropology focuses on different concepts of worldview in identifying cultures. Western culture is primarily guilt-based, which centers on right and wrong and is predominantly concerned with guilt and innocence.<sup>3</sup> Fear-based cultures deal with the need to appease the supernatural powers and to live in peace with these spirits.<sup>4</sup>

The concept of honor and shame is the key to understanding the social and cultural aspects of the Mediterranean world. According to Moxnes, honor is basically the public recognition of one's social standing. Shame is simply social insensitivity and results from the lack of concern for one's honor. The two types of honor are ascribed honor and acquired honor. Ascribed honor is inherited from the family at birth, depending on one's gender and rank. Acquired honor is conferred on the basis of virtuous deeds. It is obtained through social advancement and public accomplishments.<sup>5</sup> Social interaction, religious life, and group loyalties are affected by values of honor and shame. The identities of individuals depend on their belonging to and being accepted by their family. Their success depends on the favorable ties they have with the community.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to recognize that one's honor status affects the identity of a Mediterranean person in a society. One's honor is not limited to one's value in his or her own eyes, but ultimately depends on the recognition of and judgment from the people in the community.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Muller, "Summary of Honor and Shame," 1.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>5</sup>Halvor Moxnes, "Honor and Shame," In *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, edited by Richard Rohrbaugh (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1996), 19-40.

<sup>6</sup>Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 30.

<sup>7</sup>Moxnes, 20.

This is in contrast to guilt, which is basically an emotion experienced by an individual internally. A shameful act by an individual will result in a loss of honor for the family and be viewed with disdain and even hostility from the community.<sup>8</sup>

Bruce J. Malina discusses the dynamics of how honor and shame work.<sup>9</sup> In the Mediterranean world, all goods, including honor, are seen to exist in limited amounts. Individuals who want to improve their social position have to do it at the expense of others. One's claim to honor will be perceived as a threat to the honor of another; thus it needs to be challenged. Honor is attained through the social competition of challenge and response. The Gospels record a number of challenge-response dialogues mostly between Jesus on one side and Pharisees and scribes on the other. The three parables to be examined below are all responses of Jesus to the challenges of the Pharisees. The Pharisees, upon hearing the parables, recognized their defeat and loss of honor. Their disgrace caused an increase in honor for Jesus. This resulted in the increase of their hatred against him and their envy of him, which also explained their desire to have Jesus killed.

### **The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)**

Luke 15:11-32 is commonly referred to as "The Parable of the Prodigal Son" or "The Parable of the Lost Son." However, some posit that "The Parable of the Father's Love" or "The Parable of the Waiting Father" is a better title.<sup>10</sup> I prefer the title, "The Parable of the Gracious Father and His Two Lost Sons."<sup>11</sup> This is in line with the context and message of the parable as seen below.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son is part of a chapter that includes the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin. Luke 15 begins with narration that says that the tax collectors and sinners were coming to hear Jesus. Also, the Pharisees and the scribes were murmuring that Jesus received sinners and ate with them. In Mediterranean culture, meals were considered an important social event that affirmed the role and status of a person in the community.<sup>12</sup> It was important to preserve one's honor by eating with people of similar rank and social status.

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 21-22.

<sup>9</sup>Malina, *New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 95-100.

<sup>10</sup>Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 72.

<sup>11</sup>So also Snodgrass: The Parable of the Compassionate Father and His Two Lost Sons in Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 132.

<sup>12</sup>Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 367.

Thus, the Pharisees and the scribes considered Jesus' dining with sinners as scandalous and dishonorable. It was in this context that Jesus delivered three related parables as a challenge to their complaints. Although the first two parables are equally important, because of space limitations I will skip these and discuss the third one.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son can be divided into two sections, the first about what happened to the younger son and the second about the older son and his anger toward his younger brother and toward his father for throwing a party for him. There are arguments for viewing these two sections as either one or two parables. I will view it as one in order to better see the whole picture of what Jesus intends to portray. The shame-honor theme is also depicted in the latter half of the parable which makes the message even more significant.

At the beginning of the parable, the younger son asks for his share of the property that is going to be his inheritance (15:12). In both ancient as well as present times, inheritances are transferred to heirs only upon death.<sup>13</sup> In the original audience's worldview, this request would be quite shocking in that the son would be seen as desiring the father's death.<sup>14</sup> He is also seen as reneging on his obligation to care for him in his old age which is tantamount to breaking one of the most important commandments—that of honoring one's father and mother.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, the older son was expected to object to such requests and do his part in reconciling the brother to their father but he failed to do so.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, the father was expected to refuse the request, become angry and discipline the younger son for his actions.<sup>17</sup>

Instead, he reacted in love by granting the request. Consistent with the nature of the shame-based society, the actions of the younger son affected his relationship not only with his father and older brother, but the whole village community as well. This is in line with the view that honor is valued by the whole community.

The younger son then takes all his belongings, including his inheritance, and goes to a far country (15:13). The far country implies a place outside Palestine and a place populated by Gentiles.<sup>18</sup> He squandered all his property in "αἰσῶτω" living. Bauer translates the adverb αἰσῶτω' as wasteful and related to madness that knows no

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<sup>13</sup>Hultgren, 73.

<sup>14</sup>Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke*, combined ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983), 161.

<sup>15</sup>Hultgren, 73.

<sup>16</sup>Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*, 169.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>18</sup>Hultgren, 75.

bounds.<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to note that the older brother referred to the younger brother's wasteful living as spending his possessions on harlots (15:30), although the word ἀσώτω' does not necessarily imply it.<sup>20</sup>

The parable goes on to paint an even more shameful and degrading picture of the younger son. When he had spent everything, a famine occurred and he began to be in dire need. He resorted to a job of feeding pigs. He longed to eat the pig's feed but no one gave him anything (15:14-16). Some argue that he was not able to eat because a supervisor was standing over him.<sup>21</sup> But a more probable reason is that the pig's pods were a wild species that was bitter and without nourishment.<sup>22</sup> Thus, a person could not fill himself nor benefit from eating it. The 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish audience surely regarded the association with unclean animals such as pigs as downright detestable. One scholar, Jeremias, posits that the younger son abandoned the Jewish custom of keeping the Sabbath and any regular practice of his religion.<sup>23</sup> The next verse (15:17a) says "he came to himself" which may just refer to his "coming to his senses" rather than repentance.<sup>24</sup> He realized that his father's hired servants had more than enough to eat while he suffered in hunger (15:17b).

There are discussions as to what constituted the nature of hired servants. The 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish household typically had three kinds of servants: bondsmen, δουλούς who were slaves that were part of the family; slaves, παιδές who were subordinates of the bondsmen; and hired servants, μισθούς who were usually day laborers.<sup>25</sup> There are differences of opinion regarding the status of hired servants. Some say that the hired servants, though free, were considered lower in class than the other two types of servants. Others say that they were held in high esteem and were not in the least inferior to their employer.<sup>26</sup> Still, if they were free, it seems that the younger son opted to request a less painful condition and a better face-saving plan. He could pay his father back with the income he earned and still maintain his pride and honor.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Walter Bauer, "ἀσώτω'" in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (BADG) (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 148.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*, 172.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 173.

<sup>23</sup>Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), 129.

<sup>24</sup>Hultgren, 76.

<sup>25</sup>Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*, 176.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 176-77.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 177.

With regard to his relationship with his older brother, his plan meant he did not have to rely on his brother nor did it necessitate any reconciliation with him. His strained relationship with the village people, however, would still have to be faced.<sup>28</sup>

The younger son rehearsed his confession which included addressing his father and acknowledging his sin against heaven and his father (15:18). He also planned to say that he was no longer worthy to be called his son and that he should be treated as one of the hired servants (15:19). Knowing the 1<sup>st</sup> century worldview is helpful in determining what specific sin the son was referring to. Some may think he was referring to his profligate way of life in the far country. However, looking at the situation through the shame-based lens of 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish culture would lead one to conclude that his greatest sin was his dishonoring of his father by asking for his share of the inheritance.<sup>29</sup>

The father knew that the village would mock and possibly physically abuse his son upon his return.<sup>30</sup> So in his love and compassion, the father broke some rules to protect his son. It was considered undignified for an elderly man to run in public but the father did so. It brought dishonor to even expose one's legs, but the father ran not only to welcome his son, but to protect his son from hostile villagers.<sup>31</sup> A few scholars, such as Snodgrass, disagree with this.<sup>32</sup> The son must have been in awe to see his father's willingness to be disgraced in order to protect him. The father embraced and kissed the son to publicly show his acceptance of him.

As he had practiced, the son proceeded to say his lines but he did not continue with the last line asking to be treated as one of the hired servants. It could have been that he recognized his father's grace and love.<sup>33</sup> The father asked the servants to put the best robe on his son, a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet (15:22). This act signified that

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 178.

<sup>29</sup>Hultgren, 77.

<sup>30</sup>Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*, 181.

<sup>31</sup>Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*, 372.

<sup>32</sup>Snodgrass points out the mistake of Rohrbaugh and Bailey in misapplying cultural information. He emphasizes the danger of focusing too much on the cultural aspect and thus reading into the parable aspects that are not there. Ironically, throughout his discussions of the parables, he often alludes to cultural aspects of the 1<sup>st</sup> century in explaining his position, 132.

<sup>33</sup>Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*, 184.

the father accepted him as a son instead of a hired servant.<sup>34</sup> It also signified a removal of shame and a restoration of honor to the son.<sup>35</sup>

Another act of the father that bestowed honor to the son was the killing of the fattened calf (15:23). A fattened calf was kept for a special occasion and would feed over a hundred guests.<sup>36</sup> Since the meat would spoil quickly, it is most probable that the villagers were invited. It would be taken as an insult to kill a calf and not invite the community. It would also be a waste of resources because the family could not eat it all and the rest would go to waste.<sup>37</sup> The feast would also serve to reconcile the younger son to the whole community.<sup>38</sup> With such honor bestowed on him, his pride could have kept him from accepting such favor. He could have preferred being free and independent from his father or considered himself unfit to accept his father's sonship. However, grace triumphed and he chose to accept pure grace.<sup>39</sup> In parallel to the first two parables in Luke 15, where the shepherd and the woman rejoiced at finding what was lost, the father in this parable also declared his joy that his son was lost and now was found (15:24).

The elder son is depicted as working in the field, which implies that he was industrious and loyal (15:25).<sup>40</sup> As he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. He found out from a young boy the reason for the celebration (15:26). He further found out that his brother had returned and was received and restored (15:27). He became angry and refused to enter the house (15:28). It was customary for the older son to welcome guests, offer compliments, and make sure that the feast went well.<sup>41</sup> He was also expected to honor the guest, which meant, in this case, was his younger brother. He was to go in, embrace the brother and honor him.<sup>42</sup> If he wanted to complain to his father regarding this favorable treatment, he should have waited until all the guests left. However, the elder brother chose to shame his father by getting furious while the guests were still around.<sup>43</sup> His anger may also be due to the shame he felt because of the father's gift of a fatted calf for the worthless brother, while he was not even given a goat to celebrate.

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<sup>34</sup>Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*, 372.

<sup>35</sup>Hultgren, 75.

<sup>36</sup>Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*, 187.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup>Hultgren, 80.

<sup>41</sup>Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*, 194.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*

People would have expected the father to react to such an act of public insult with anger, but he does not do so. He could have chosen to totally ignore the elder son during the feast, or punish him, or show displeasure, but instead, he left his guests to go outside to plead with him (15:28). He risked humiliation and shame by doing so.<sup>44</sup> The elder son replied insolently in many ways. He did not address his father as “father” and referred to his younger brother as “this son of yours.” In contrast, the father addressed him as “son” and referred to his younger brother as his “brother.” The word “son” used here is τέκνον, which is more endearing and less neutral than the other Greek word for “son,” υἱός<sup>45</sup>

The father was trying to restore the broken father-son relationship with these words.<sup>46</sup> The elder son referred to himself as a slave and demonstrated the spirit and attitude of a slave and not a son.<sup>47</sup> The father however referred to him as the heir to all that he owned. The son argued that he had never disobeyed the father’s commands despite just having insulted him by refusing to join the party.<sup>48</sup> He claimed that he never had a goat to feast on with his friends while the younger brother was given the fattened calf. There is a hint of envy in this statement. Scholars suggest that his attitude was one of false humility and sarcasm, but it is more likely that he was accusing his father of playing favorites.<sup>49</sup>

The elder brother’s idea of joy was to have a goat to celebrate with his friends whereas the father, like the shepherd and the woman in the preceding two parables, considered finding what was lost to be the source of his joy. The elder brother attempted to insult the younger brother further by accusing him of devouring the father’s living with harlots (15:30). As mentioned earlier, the description of the younger brother’s loose and wasteful living made no mention of squandering his money on harlots (15:13).

Again, contrary to the expected reaction of one who had been greatly scorned and deeply humiliated, the father overlooked all the offenses and responded in grace and love by calling him “son” (15:31). This reminded the elder brother of his status as a son instead of a slave.<sup>50</sup> He reaffirmed the right of his son to the inheritance despite the return of the younger son (15:31). He pled with his son to rejoice at his brother’s return (15:32). In line with the shame-honor culture, the

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<sup>44</sup>Hultgren, 80.

<sup>45</sup>Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 390.

<sup>46</sup>Snodgrass, 140.

<sup>47</sup>Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*, 196.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 201.

father's speech is not to be taken as an apology or a defense for what he has done since a Mediterranean father never defended himself or apologized to a son.<sup>51</sup> Instead, his speech is to be taken as an extension of the grace and compassion which he showed by leaving his guests during the feast to plead with the elder son.<sup>52</sup> The parable ends without telling us how the older son responded.

Through the lens of shame and honor, we can appreciate more the depth of the drama being played out in this parable. The emotions felt and expressed by each character become more pronounced by recognizing the interplay of shame and honor through their actions and words. We know better how the original audience might have reacted upon hearing this parable. Jesus used this parable to reply to his critics regarding his fellowship with sinners. The Pharisees and the scribes might have seen themselves in the older son, in that they insulted Jesus and refused to extend forgiveness to sinners and include them in their circle much like the older son insulted his father and refused to extend forgiveness and acceptance to his brother. The Pharisees and the scribes who questioned Jesus sought to shame him; however, through the challenge-response dialogue that took place, Jesus successfully refuted their complaints. Thus, Jesus was honored while the Pharisees were disgraced.

In support of my contention that this is more a parable of two lost sons instead of one, the younger son is depicted as lost and is now found. Likewise, the older son is portrayed as lost but whether he is later found is unknown. Moreover, I included the gracious father in the title of this parable because he is actually the main character in the story. With regards to the key theological themes of this parable, the loving, compassionate and gracious characteristics of the father take precedence. He seems to be playing favorites, but he is fair and just. Likewise, God extends his love and grace to us even before we repent and even apart from repentance. The value and meaning of sonship is also shown in this parable. The celebration of joy by the community over one who responds to the grace of God through repentance is valued in this parable as well.

### **The Parable of the Dishonest Manager (Luke 16:1-8)**

Jesus told this parable to the disciples (16:1); however, in 16:14, it says that the Pharisees heard all these things. The Parable of the Dishonest Manager is probably the strangest and most baffling of all the parables of Jesus. In my life, I haven't heard even one sermon on

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 201.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

this parable. The parable praises a dishonest person which causes us to wonder if he is a model that we should emulate. However, by looking at the parable through the shame and honor paradigm, we can better understand its main thrust.

Before we look at shame and honor in this passage, it is necessary to establish the limits of the parable in order to come up with a proper interpretation. There are discussions on which verse the parable actually ends. Arland J. Hultgren made a summary of the various suggestions.<sup>53</sup> If it ends in 16:7, the word κύριος in 16:8a would refer to Jesus instead of the master of the estate as the one who commended the dishonest manager. However, it is more likely that the master, rather than Jesus, would be the one to commend the manager. Moreover, there would be no conclusion as to how the master of the dishonest manager reacted if Jesus was the master or lord referred to. Verse 16:9 is already an application of the parable, so it is no longer part of the story. Thus, it is most probable and logical that the parable ends with 16:8a, while Jesus made an observation on the parable in 16:8b.

There are two main characters in the parable, the master and the manager. The master was most likely the owner of a land estate as opposed to a bank money lender while the manager was authorized to carry out the business of the estate.<sup>54</sup> Some issues arise regarding these two figures. Some suggest that these two characters had been conniving together to defraud the debtors by considerably padding the amounts due. This may be the reason why the master commended the dishonesty of the manager. However, this does not explain why the master had to fire him in the first place. As with the father of the two sons in the previous parable, the master in this parable must be of noble character. Just as the father of the two lost sons was depicted as loving and gracious, the master in this parable is likewise shown as compassionate and merciful.<sup>55</sup>

Another issue concerns the possibility that the reduction of the debt is equivalent to the padded amount added by the manager at the beginning of the transaction. This is not possible because the master would know the contract amount when it was agreed upon in the beginning. The amount written on the contract would also be known by the public.<sup>56</sup>

The parable starts out with the master calling on a manager who had charges brought against him that he was wasting his goods (16:1).

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<sup>53</sup>Hultgren, 147-48.

<sup>54</sup>Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*, 93-4.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 89.

The opening question, “What is this I hear about you?” has a Semitic word order that is idiomatic and forceful.<sup>57</sup> This kind of question is used in confrontation and usually does not expect an answer.<sup>58</sup> It is not as shameful as a direct confrontation. The manager does not reply. This silence may mean admission on his part and replying to the master would possibly aggravate the situation and cause more shame.

The master then asked him to turn in the account books and simultaneously fired him (16:2). At this point, he still kept quiet. The audience would expect him to declare his innocence, to protest and defend himself even if he’s guilty, but he didn’t.<sup>59</sup> Instead, he began to plan for his future. Another thing he may have realized is that the master did not scold him nor jail him. Neither did he demand that he pay back what he dishonestly gained.<sup>60</sup> Jesus’ audience must have noticed not only the justice executed by the master on his employee leading to his firing, but also the mercy and generosity shown by the master.<sup>61</sup>

The manager’s assessment of himself reveals his shame-based worldview. He admitted his weakness in manual labor and his shame in having to beg (16:3). He made a decision that would sustain his future with a considerable amount of honor. He called his master’s debtors to come in one at a time. He had to appear to be acting on his master’s behalf; otherwise, the debtors would not agree. He might have also made it appear that he was the one who convinced the master in the first place to reduce the debt to their advantage.<sup>62</sup> He gained favor and honor in their eyes by reducing the amount due. He had to do this privately and quickly.

With these assumptions based on a Semitic cultural background, the reasons for this parable and its teachings will fall easily into place. By the time the master received the book of accounts, the village was already praising and honoring both the master and the manager. They were praising the master for his supposed generosity in reducing the debt and the manager for enabling this to occur. The master, upon knowing this, had a decision to make with at least two options.<sup>63</sup> If he opted to retract the reduced debt, the debtors would be angry and despise his stinginess and he would fall into dishonor.<sup>64</sup> If, however, he just kept silent, which he was more likely to do in this case, he would

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 96.

<sup>58</sup>Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 335.

<sup>59</sup>Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*, 97.

<sup>60</sup>Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 374.

<sup>61</sup>Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*, 98.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 99.

<sup>63</sup>Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 375.

<sup>64</sup>Hultgren, 152.

be highly honored as a generous man. He then commended the manager, not for being dishonest, but for being clever. Jesus then made a statement (16:8b) saying that the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than the people of the light.

A shame-based lens helps us understand the logic of how this parable plays out. Those who have a Western worldview, which is mainly guilt-based, may expect the master to adjudicate the guilt of the manager. However, the actions and reactions of the characters in the parable are in line with the shame-based culture of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. As with the previous parable, the key theological themes are the judgment and mercy of God.<sup>65</sup> God has to judge evil but also offers grace. The master is depicted as a just but gracious man. The manager recognizes this generosity and relies on this grace to secure his future. The manager is praised for his cleverness in knowing where his salvation lies and trusting on that grace to achieve his security.<sup>66</sup>

#### The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)

As with the other two parables discussed above, The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is found only in the Gospel of Luke. This parable has been misunderstood as advocating a reversal of roles in which if one is living a good life on earth, then they will live a bad life after death. Likewise, if one's condition is bad now, heaven awaits them.<sup>67</sup> This interpretation, however, is erroneous and goes against the teachings of Jesus and Scripture.

Jesus said that those who have not been faithful in handling worldly wealth should not expect anyone to trust them with true riches (16:11). He also said that those who had not been trustworthy with someone else's property should not expect anyone to give them property of their own (16:12). He further said that no servant can serve two masters; he either serves God or mammon (16:13). This teaching is then illustrated by Jesus in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The context of the parable relates to the stewardship of God-given resources (16:9-13). The overarching themes, however, are still the justice and grace of God. The interpretation of this parable is best seen through the shame-honor lens.

The parable starts with the description of the rich man who dressed himself in purple and fine linen everyday (16:19). Purple clothing signified extreme wealth and wearing it every day ensured that

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<sup>65</sup>Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes*, 107.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 379.

everyone knew about his wealth.<sup>68</sup> Feasting every day meant he did not observe the Sabbath and neither could his servants.<sup>69</sup> He indulged in self-honor and selfish pleasures without a thought for others.

Another character named Lazarus would lie down at the gate of the rich man. This is the only parable of Jesus in which a name is given to a character. Lazarus means “the one whom God helps.”<sup>70</sup> The verb ἐσβέβλητό which is the pluperfect of βάλλω implies that friends or family would have to carry him to the gate daily because he was too sick to walk.<sup>71</sup>

He desired to be fed with what fell off the rich man’s table (16:21). His body was full of sores and dogs came to lick the sores. This is a picture of extreme disgrace and shame: being sick, having to rely on friends to be carried, seeing the rich man in fine clothes and abundant provision, longing to be relieved from hunger, and feeling the utmost degradation of having dogs lick at his sores which may keep them from healing.

The succeeding events unfold through an interplay of honor and shame as well as a dramatic portrayal of honor reversal. Honor reversal refers to the process in which the one who is honored is disgraced, while the one who is shamed is eventually honored. Lazarus died and was carried into Abraham’s bosom, which signifies a place of honor (16:22). Although there is no internal evidence for this, some scholars suggest that the language used for “reclining in the bosom” signifies a feast that took place by reclining on a U-shaped couch called “triclinium” in a place of honor which is situated at Abraham’s right.<sup>72</sup> If this is so, it follows then that Lazarus was the guest of honor in this feast. The rich man also died, was buried, and was brought to Hades where he was tormented. The emotional tension that ensues continues to build up.

The rich man looked up and saw Lazarus with Abraham. The original audience might have noticed that he knew Lazarus by name after all. It follows that he was also aware that Lazarus had been at his gate and had suffered from sickness and hunger. Those hearing the

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 382.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Snodgrass, 424-25.

<sup>71</sup>I. Howard Marshall, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 635.; F. Hauck, “βάλλω” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume*, edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985), 92.

<sup>72</sup>Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 387.

parable would have expected the rich man to apologize to Lazarus.<sup>73</sup> However, he made three requests for his own benefit instead.

First, he called on Abraham to have mercy on him (16:24). In his pride, he considered it degrading to speak to men of lower status such as Lazarus. Instead, he addressed Abraham and called him “Father Abraham.” The rich man was banking, as a Jew, on his relationship to his patriarch. In Mediterranean culture, family was a priority and family members were expected to honor and watch out for each other.<sup>74</sup> His cry of “have mercy on me” was a typical phrase used by beggars.<sup>75</sup> Not only did he avoid speaking to Lazarus directly, but he even asked Abraham to send Lazarus to ease his comfort. Lazarus remained silent throughout the exchange.

Such a demonstration of pride amid suffering seems quite incredible but that is what Jesus wanted the original audience to notice. Abraham addressed the rich man as τέκνον (my dear boy) which is similar to the address of the loving father to his elder son in The Parable of the Prodigal Son discussed above. Abraham still acknowledged him as part of the family despite his insult to his guest of honor, Lazarus, which was also an insult to Abraham himself.<sup>76</sup> Abraham reminded him of the good things and the comfort he had on earth. He also reminded him of the pitiful condition of Lazarus then and his comfort in heaven now. Abraham further reminded him that it is impossible to pass from where the rich man was to where Abraham was. Why did Abraham have to say this? As suggested by Bailey, it could have been that Lazarus, in his kindness and compassion, was willing to cross over.<sup>77</sup>

The next request is even more incredulous. The rich man begged him to ask Lazarus to go warn his five brothers about Hades (16:27-28). Lazarus was not able to serve him with water in Hades, but how about sending him to warn his brothers?<sup>78</sup> Abraham replied that they had the law and the prophets (16:29). There was still no humbling and repentance on the rich man’s part. He was not used to having his requests denied, so he tried again. He refuted Abraham’s answer which defied Abraham’s honor status. He argued that if someone from the dead would warn them, they would repent. The logic behind his third request is very ironic. If someone, like himself, who was already suffering in hell did not repent, how much less would the ones who

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 389.

<sup>74</sup>Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 378.

<sup>75</sup>Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 388.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 390.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 392.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

were still enjoying life, even if they should see and hear someone from the dead?<sup>79</sup>

This parable is not meant to give a description of what heaven and hell look like, and neither is Hades a place where the good and the bad await judgment.<sup>80</sup> The description just provides necessary imagery while the main point of the parable is again the justice and mercy of God. The rich man is depicted as indifferent to the social conditions of his community. He prided himself on his wealth and luxury and overlooked the hardships of the poor. He exalted himself in honor but shamed the ones lower in class status. On the other hand, Lazarus, despite his suffering and humiliation, kept silent during the dialogue between Abraham and the rich man. He did not taunt, protest, or complain about the requests of the rich man. He acted in humility amid the subtle degradations of his person. Honor reversal occurs in this parable, where the one who was shamed on earth is now honored in heaven. God's justice condemns the rich man while His grace and love reward Lazarus.

### **Conclusion**

The New Testament was written in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and thus must be read through its cultural perspective. Mediterranean society is and was basically shame-based, so it is appropriate to view the Scriptures, including the parables of Jesus, through the lens of the shame-honor worldview. I discussed three parables found in the Gospel of Luke: The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), The Parable of the Dishonest Manager (Luke 16:1-8) and The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31).

By recognizing the interplay of shame and honor through the parables' plot and character, actions and words, we are able to grasp the underlying themes Jesus wants to convey. Although some claim that these three parables are linked together to depict the wasteful use of resources, the overarching themes that unite these parables are the themes of God's justice, grace and love. Understanding these parables through the shame-honor lens enabled us to fully grasp and appreciate the meaning and essence of the teachings of Jesus.

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid, 193.

<sup>80</sup>Hultgren, 113.

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*In Honor of*  
*John & Bea Carter*

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION  
in a  
CROSS-CULTURAL  
CONTEXT

Essays in Honor of  
*John and Bea Carter*

A. Kay Fountain  
Editor

The authors of these articles come from different streams within Pentecostalism, and from differing ethnic backgrounds. This is a fitting testimony to the influence that John and Bea have had in their ministry. They are truly global citizens, and have shown an ability to work not only cross-culturally, but also across the spectrum of Christian theological education.



**Aaron T. Friesen, *Norming the Abnormal: The Development and Function of the Doctrine of Initial Evidence in Classical Pentecostalism* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), paperback, xxi + 218 pp., ISBN: 978-1-62032-236-9, US\$ 35.00.**

In *Norming the Abnormal*, Aaron T. Friesen goes back to the basics and presents the North American Pentecostal Church with an analysis of one of its core doctrines: “initial evidence.” This doctrine, which has been foundational for many classical Pentecostals, maintains that speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*) is the “initial evidence” or sign of Spirit Baptism. Friesen knows firsthand the importance of this doctrine, both theologically and practically. He himself is a Pentecostal minister (he is a Foursquare pastor, but was with the Open Bible Churches at the time of writing). Originally, *Norming the Abnormal* formed Friesen’s doctoral work at the University of Wales under the supervision of Professor William K. Kay. The presentation of this work is in seven chapters with an appendix.

After a brief introduction, Friesen defines his terms, discusses the background literature, and outlines his methodology, which includes an empirical study of a few classical Pentecostal fellowships. The fellowships, all who represent “Finished Work” Pentecostalism (as opposed to Holiness or “Second Work” Pentecostalism), are the Assemblies of God, Open Bible, and the Foursquare Church. He classifies each according to their understanding of initial evidence: Assemblies of God as *Distinctive* (“those that have historically upheld the doctrine [of initial evidence] and continue to do so”), Open Bible as *Post-Distinctive* (“those that have historically upheld the doctrine [of initial evidence] but have recently softened their stance”), and the Foursquare Church as *Non-Distinctive* (“those that have never codified a rigid doctrine of initial evidence in their doctrinal statement”).

Next, Friesen traces the history of initial evidence in chapter two, specifically highlighting three early Pentecostal pioneers: Charles Parham, William Seymour, and Alexander Boddy. All three valued their experience with tongues, yet only one, Parham, articulated a doctrine similar to initial evidence. Based on his reading of Acts, Parham believed that tongues was always the evidence of Spirit Baptism. For Parham, speaking in tongues was pragmatic. He believed tongues would enable missionaries to communicate the gospel in foreign lands. For Seymour and Boddy, the effects of Spirit Baptism were much broader. Seymour, who initially was a proponent of Parham’s views, concentrated on Christian character and virtue. Boddy concentrated on love for God and a passion for the lost. Neither

Seymour nor Boddy denied a connection between tongues and Spirit Baptism; they simply placed less emphasis on tongues as evidence.

In chapter three, Friesen considers the influences behind the Assemblies of God, Open Bible, and the Foursquare's doctrine of Spirit Baptism. In addressing the Assemblies of God, he discusses the impact of William H. Durham on E. N. Bell, the fellowship's first general chairman. Durham, who was the champion of "finished work" sanctification, was an ardent supporter of initial evidence. Although Friesen notes correctly Durham's influence, he neglects other possible influences on the young Assemblies of God. For example, Mack Pinson, an original executive presbyter for the Assemblies of God, was an early associate of Bishop C. H. Mason of the Church of God in Christ. The connection between Mason and the Assemblies of God has long been documented. Mason, like Durham, was a strong supporter of initial evidence. In regards to the Open Bible and the Foursquare, Friesen discusses the influences behind their softer, more nuanced approach to initial evidence.

The fourth chapter is where it gets really interesting. Here, Friesen charts the development of initial evidence, and beliefs regarding *glossolalia* as a whole, from 1940 to present-day scholarship. Along the way, he notes such developments as the Charismatic Movement and ecumenical dialogue. The most interesting topic of Friesen's discussion is the development of tongues as a "prayer language." He notes: "This change in doctrine is important because it shifted the focus from tongues as evidence of Spirit Baptism to Spirit Baptism as the inauguration of a means to intimacy and closeness to God through a private prayer language . . ." (135). Friesen's treatment of this subject is helpful since much of the present discussion, at least inside the church, addresses the notion of tongues as prayer language. He ends this chapter by mentioning the importance of such modern Pentecostal scholars as Roger Stronstad, Robert Menzies, Franck Macchia, Simon Chan, and Amos Yong, among others.

This discussion of modern Pentecostal scholars leads into chapter five, where Friesen applies the four functional categories for examining doctrine detailed in the work Alistair McGrath, a non-Pentecostal, to evaluate how Spirit Baptism functions within Pentecostalism. The four categories, according to McGrath, are "demarkates groups socially, interprets narrative, interprets experience, and makes truth claims" (164). Friesen evaluates Spirit Baptism as it relates to McGrath's four categories in some detail, and ties it in nicely with the history of initial evidence already presented. This leads Friesen to challenge Pentecostals to broaden their theological discussion regarding initial

evidence, noting the shortfalls of solely defending the doctrine based on a reading of Acts.

Chapters six and seven present the results of the empirical study, where Friesen gathers survey data from more than 500 Pentecostal ministers. The ministers, each belonging to either the Assemblies of God (*Distinctive*), Open Bible (*Post-Distinctive*), or Foursquare (*Non-Distinctive*), were asked a series of questions regarding Pentecostal beliefs and practices. The conclusions of this survey are many and varied, but one thing sticks out: “Ministers with a rigid doctrinal stance [towards Spirit Baptism and initial evidence] were more likely to have recently experienced visible manifestations of the Spirit” (244). Friesen then concludes his work by providing a few ways forward for Pentecostals with regard to Spirit Baptism and initial evidence. The appendix includes technical data from the survey.

My one caveat for *Norming the Abnormal* is Friesen’s inclusion of only three classical Pentecostal fellowships in this study. Although he explains his reasons for excluding Holiness or “Second Work” Pentecostals (pp. 200-01), he does not mention why Oneness Pentecostals are excluded. The incorporation of other groups into this study, such as the Church of God in Christ, Church of God (Cleveland, TN), International Pentecostal Holiness Church and the Church of God of Prophecy would significantly alter the results of his analysis. Further, why Friesen does not include the Pentecostal Church of God, which is a “Finished-Work” Pentecostal fellowship, is a little confusing. The exclusion of these groups leaves only the Assemblies of God, which at times, feels as though they are the one lone holdout in regards to initial evidence, to represent the *Distinctive* category. However, if the above mentioned groups—all who utilize “initial evidence” language in their statements of faith—were to be included, the Assemblies of God would stand as one among many North American Pentecostal fellowships who maintain initial evidence.

With that said, I recommend this book gladly to all interested in Pentecostalism or the doctrines of Spirit Baptism and initial evidence. Although the content of *Norming the Abnormal* is specific to North American Pentecostalism, it does provide valuable historical insights and critique for the global movement. It is well-written and researched. I found it both informative and interesting. Any professor of Pentecostal doctrine or history should surely utilize *Norming the Abnormal* in the classroom.

Jordan Daniel May

**Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostalism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London, UK: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013. 205 pages. ISBN 978-0-567-15460-6.**

In this tightly written introduction to global Pentecostalism, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Regent University (Virginia Beach, Virginia, USA) Wolfgang Vondey argues for a poly-tension themed descriptive of Pentecostalism as a global Christian “movement” that significantly shapes and mirrors meta-transitional dynamics more broadly characteristic of 20th-21st century world Christianity and more broadly still— global human life. Vondey, who is also Director of Regent’s Center for Renewal Studies, frames this thesis against the backdrop of an important methodological dilemma impinging on current studies on Pentecostalism. This dilemma Vondey posits as the many conflicting and “perplexing” juxtapositions that observers may identify towards a variety of theological and phenomenological dynamics equally descriptive of global Pentecostalism (1-4, 8).

Therefore, with the goal of setting forth an introductory guide to “Pentecostalism as a whole” (2), Vondey structures this seven-chapter survey of world Pentecostalism via seven motifs. Vondey articulates each motif as a “tension” between two polarities, albeit together comprising a key descriptive that narrates the ongoing evolution of Pentecostalism as a global movement that mirrors transitions currently characterizing the evolving global landscape of Christianity altogether (2, 22, 157). Vondey’s chapter titles, therefore, aptly define the seven descriptives.

Chapter 1 (“Local roots and global pluralism”) examines the “tension between the local roots and global pluralism of Pentecostalism” (3, 10). Hence, Vondey argues that through the dialectic of “glocalization,” both realities (local and global) inform the inherent “mobility” that characterizes Pentecostalism ethos in both its local and global expressions (25-26). Chapter 2 (“Holistic spirituality and charismatic extremism”) examines the “tension between the Pentecostal emphasis on holistic spirituality and the excess display of charismatic manifestations” (3, 29-30, 46). Here, Vondey argues that the phenomena of charismatic excess unavoidably arises from Pentecostal holistic spirituality, given its worldview which precognitively perceives all aspects of life as experientially interfaced with spiritual presences, powers, and forces (43-47). Chapter 3 (“Ecumenical ethos and denominationalism”) examines the “tension between a divisive denominationalism and the ecumenical ethos of Pentecostalism” (3). Vondey thus delineates the diverse practices and

beliefs comprising Pentecostalism (66-68). He then examines the divisively sectarian character of local Pentecostals (57-59), which contrasts however with the early and ongoing Pentecostal visions towards ecumenical engagement and church unity (50).

Chapter 4 (“Orthodox doctrine and sectarianism”) examines tensions that arise from divisions within global Pentecostalism over matters of doctrine, which is particularly illustrated via the tension between orthodox trinitarian and Oneness Pentecostals (69-70). Vondey also examines the unique role of spiritual experience in Pentecostal theologizing and doctrinal confession (82-83), and argues this as an evitable factor towards increasing theological and doctrinal diversity in the future (86). Chapter 5 (“Social engagement and triumphalism”) examines tensions between two contrasting ways of fostering a commonly observed dynamic of Pentecostal experience, namely, “Pentecostal upward social mobility in socio-economic terms” (90). On one hand, he surveys a diversity of social activist expressions and approaches, along with diverse forms of political and socio-cultural engagement and consciousness (90, 93-96). Vondey compares and contrasts these manners of Pentecostal upward mobility, with varied kinds of triumphalistic teaching coupled with social passivism, such as illustrated in prosperity preaching (93, 97-103).

Chapter 6 (“Egalitarian practices and institutionalism”) examines the “tension between democratic egalitarian ideals and the divisive effects of institutionalism” (3). Hence, Vondey contrasts Pentecostal understandings of Pentecost as signifying the prophethood of all believers and empowerment of all believers as equals in the fellowship of Christ (115-119), with the historical realities of intuitionism, racial segregation, biased scholarship, and gender inequality within Pentecostalism (119-124). Finally, Chapter 7 (“Scholarship and anti-intellectualism”) examines the “tension between Pentecostalism scholarship and the prevalent anti intellectualism of the movement” (3). More specifically, Vondey examines the early and ongoing anti-intellectualism that still shapes much of Pentecostal pedagogy and negative grass-root perceptions towards formal theological reflection (134-141). Vondey then contrasts this variable with the recent emergence of genuine Pentecostal scholarship that is reflecting unique theological and disciplinary methods emerging from Pentecostal spirituality (143-148). Vondey moreover argues that arising from this development, Pentecostal scholarship is now set not only to significantly inform 21st century Christian theology, but also via its unique epistemological and hermeneutical premises—a vast array of scholarly explorations within the human and natural sciences (145-146, 148, 151-153).

I shall now review several integrative themes Vondey develops, which reflect agendas characteristic of his broader theological projects that are serving to popularize Regent's "renewal" scholarship perspective. Given my familiarity with some of Vondey's other published works, I find these themes coded in his concluding sentence, "To understand Pentecostalism, one has to look *beyond Pentecostalism*" (italics mine; 158). Vondey's conclusion signals a direct reference to his earlier and more comprehensive volume, *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda* (Eerdmans, 2010). I recommend a reading of both works, because the structural methodology and themes Vondey utilizes and pursues in this briefer work, are clearly appropriated from themes and arguments first developed in his *Beyond Pentecostalism* book.

One such theme is Vondey's thesis that the tensions of Pentecostalism are "symptomatic" of diverse "transitions" underway in 20th and 21st century Christianity that Pentecostalism significantly illustrates, given its existence and role as a global renewal "movement" within the Church Catholic and world Christianity (3, 8, 157). Hence, a correlating theme I must also note is Vondey's stress that we primarily classify Pentecostalism as a "movement" rather than as a church tradition within the Church Catholic (25, 50, 59-60, 65, 68, 155-157). Vondey premises this suggestion on early and ongoing Pentecostal self-referencing as a "movement" ecumenically aimed towards all church traditions (50-51). However, I feel Vondey would do better by more fully juxtaposing this observation to emerging understandings of Pentecostalism as a maturing theological *tradition*, comprising unique modes of theologizing and theological methodologies, which demark Pentecostal groups from other church traditions and even other renewal streams or "movements."

I feel that failure to recognize this development hinders Vondey's ecumenical intent, because it limits adequate appreciation towards diverse communal giftings and encounters with God, which the Spirit may mediate via the cultural-linguistic settings of other diverse church and theological traditions. In saying this, I would surmise that the spiritual renewing of the Church Catholic, even in the Pentecostal sense of "latter day outpourings," does not infer that the Spirit is transforming and leading all Christian traditions into "pentecostal type" experiences, worldview, hermeneutical paradigms, and theological perspectives. I believe that emerging Pentecostal pneumatologies that explicate comprehensive theologies of Spirit baptism beyond, yet comprising, the classical Pentecostal nuance on empowerment for service, substantiate this ecumenical approach to spiritual renewal, while conversely

stressing Pentecostalism as an emerging theological tradition. For these reasons, I think Vondey could strengthen his ecumenical aims by also articulating as another tension of Pentecostalism—the tension between Pentecostalism as a renewal movement within the Church Catholic and as a maturing Christian tradition in its own right.

As I earlier inferred, another broader agenda that Vondey pursues through this guide is to frame Pentecostalism from the perspective of Regent University's ongoing development and popularizing of "renewal studies" (151) and "renewal theology" (152). This agenda characterizes Vondey's concluding chapter, where he outlines an innovative scheme that classifies the "history of Pentecostal scholarship . . . into five periods of development, each focusing on the formation of a particular vocation" (141). Hence, focusing on the formation of "Pentecostal missionaries," missionary training schools characterized the first phase (141-142). The second phase can be associated with desires to root contemporary Pentecostalism in its early heritage, thus focusing on formation of "Pentecostal historians" (142-143). To respond to and engage non-Pentecostal scholarship, the third phase led to formation of "Pentecostal biblical scholarship" (143). Beginning in the early 1990's, the fourth phase led to formation of genuine "Pentecostal theologians," as Pentecostal scholars began approaching diverse theological loci from the basis of uniquely identified Pentecostal theological methods (143-144). Vondey then describes the current era as an expanding thrust of Pentecostal scholarship into the "human and natural sciences," now leading to formation of "Pentecostal scientists" (141-142, 144).

Vondey next distinguishes "Pentecostal studies" from "Renewal studies," which he theologically anchors not to "Pentecostalism but Pentecost," meaning the "renewing work of the Holy Spirit" (152). Reflecting themes that consistently characterize the theological works of other Regent voices (most notably Amos Yong), Vondey defines renewal studies as the task of bringing pneumatological reflection into multidisciplinary conversation with a vast spectrum of fields, such as science, technology, politics, economics, and religion (152). Hence, "renewal theology" explores "the renewing work of the Holy Spirit in all phenomena of life" (152).

I will now close with two observations concerning the relevancy of Vondey's guide, albeit primarily tied to his concluding chapter. First, I think Vondey's guide provides a helpful resource on Pentecostalism for three audiences. Besides readers of a non-Pentecostal background, grass-root Pentecostals will find Vondey's work highly stimulating, which for many will provide a concisely worded, fresh and perhaps evocative perspective on current trends and challenges that characterize

global Pentecostalism as a historically significant shaper of 21st century Christianity, and human life as well. Meanwhile, Pentecostal scholars would appreciate Vondey's work as a handy pedagogical resource that coherently schematises the poly-fold tensions characterizing global Pentecostalism.

A second observation concerns Vondey's thesis that Pentecostalism is shifting from its deeply entrenched anti-intellectualism and anti-theological scholarship into a major shaper of not only 21st century Christian theological scholarship, but of diverse disciplinary fields as well. On one hand, this thesis will certainly evoke affirming responses from many who are already familiar with current directions in Pentecostal scholarship. On the other hand, Vondey's work may evoke bewildered and perhaps negative reactions from many Classical Pentecostal readers who cannot imagine Pentecostalism as anything other than a eschatologically-propelled end-time, missionary movement for world evangelization. Perhaps in future works, Vondey may want to substantiate this thesis by framing it as another emerging tension within Pentecostalism. This is a tension we should historically frame within the formidable 21st century challenges that threaten our world. Namely, it is a tension between the eschatologically fostered passion that awakens historical consciousness within Pentecostals, and Pentecostalism's coming of age as a global epistemological resource for renewing human life *and* human civilization, and moreover—the flourishing of all creation.

Monte Lee Rice

**Kenneth Mtata, editor, *“You Have the Words of Eternal Life”:  
Transformative Readings of the Gospel of John from a Lutheran  
Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Lutheran University Press, 2012).  
168pp. \$15.00 paper.**

This volume consists of a number of essays originating from an international consultation held by the Lutheran World Federation (hereafter LWF) in 2011, which constituted the beginning of a hermeneutics project aimed at nurturing the “desire to ‘read’ shared sacred texts and contexts,” as Martin Junge explains in the preface (5). In all, ten authors have contributed as many chapters touching on questions related to contextual Lutheran hermeneutics in our contemporary world of rapidly changing, and often quite different, contexts in which faith communities seek to bring the text of Scripture to bear on the concerns arising from within these respective contexts.

In the first chapter, entitled “Introduction” (7-22), the editor, Kenneth Mtata, provides a helpful framework from which to approach the subsequent essays. Mtata points to the difficulty arising from the need to interpret “fixed biblical texts” in contemporary contexts that are, contrastively, “rapidly changing” (7). Two extremes, he says, tend to emanate from the dilemma caused by the locational and temporal distance that contemporary faith communities experience vis-à-vis the texts of Scripture—texts which they need to appropriate without misreading, while, at the same time, not misreading their own contemporary context. These two extremes are: 1) the assumption that biblical texts are to be literally interpreted and directly applied to life in the contemporary context; and 2) the conclusion that these texts cannot have a formative role to shape faith and life in our day consequent to their antiquity (7). LWF, Mtata avers, must maneuver “between these two extremes” (7). In approaching this hermeneutical task, the contributors take an explicitly confessional stance (7-8), resulting in a concern for three interpretive or hermeneutical “poles”: 1) the biblical text; 2) tradition, including ecumenical, Lutheran, and Reformation traditions; and 3) the diverse contemporary reading contexts (9). Mtata elucidates, “The aim is not to emphasize the variety of reading contexts, but to find shared reading practices, regulated by the common reading lens of the Lutheran and ecumenical traditions” (9).

While at relevant points in his essay Mtata introduces the various contributions of his colleagues presented in the chapters to follow, he nevertheless does not merely summarize their respective perspectives but weighs in personally on the various issues. In doing so, he makes some helpful contributions to the overall discussion, not the least of which is his discussion of potentially problematic features (Mtata refers

to these as “challenges”) of contextual hermeneutics, such as: 1) “its over-dependency on the political function of the law in which the Bible and theology become indistinguishable from any other secular discourse” (15) and the sinfulness of humankind is sometimes not adequately addressed (16); 2) a general lack of clarity with regard to what constitutes both context and effective context in the hermeneutical process (16); 3) the inclusion of the reading communities experiences along with Scripture and tradition in theological reflection. “The question remains whether this foregrounding of human experience does not weaken efforts toward objectivity” (17-18); 4) the endorsement of earthly political establishments in God’s name, and the concomitant tendency “to employ a hermeneutical key from social, economic or political theories with clear proposals and then use the biblical text or theological reflection to legitimate such theories” (18). Mtata observes such criticism of contextual theology often stems from a Western theological context, which has produced its own contextual theologians and, in fact, must come to grips with the reality that a contextual approach is not optional but the old content of faith must be received in new contexts (18). In any case, Mtata has highlighted some crucial concerns that deserve further reflective engagement and ought to be kept in mind as one reads the other essays in this volume.

In chapter 2, Hans-Peter Grosshans provides an outline of Lutheran hermeneutics. He proceeds by way of a historical survey that highlights hermeneutical developments from the early church, Luther, the Croatian Lutheran theologian, Matthias Flacius, and many others up through the modern period. Grosshans concludes the main concern of modern Lutheran hermeneutics is not the interpretation of biblical texts so as to attain “self-affirmation” or “self-reassurance” but rather “critically to listen to and hear what the biblical text has to tell us as the Word of God with respect to our lives in various contexts and situations we live in” (45). The results, however, will differ from one context to another; and this “plurality of contextual understandings” is theologically interpreted as indicative of “the vividness and concreteness” of God’s self-communication. “The Triune God is not an imperialistic emperor who has only one message for everybody in the world and wants everybody to live their lives in the same way” (45). These are theologically loaded statements that invite further reflection with regard to whether God does, in fact, communicate a diversity of messages in different contexts through the same scriptural texts. If the meaning and message of Scripture were univocal and unchanging, would this really imply God is an “imperialistic emperor”? Is it possible that God has one basic message and desires us all to live our lives in the same basic ways (in accordance with love for one’s

neighbor, with certain moral standards, etc.), even though the actual application of such principles will take on culturally appropriate forms?

Next, in chapter 3, Anni Hentschel discusses “Luther’s Relevance for Contemporary Hermeneutics.” Hentschel affirms the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer (51-54) and adheres to a reader-response methodology. She asserts the notion of a text having a single unchanging meaning is “a modern concept” adhered to neither by the authors of Scripture nor by Martin Luther (54). “In light of Gadamer’s central insight and modern reception theories, namely that the reader plays an essential part in producing the meaning of a text, the biblical text itself cannot be seen as complete and sufficient” (57). Rather, the text is external and, while necessary, it remains insufficient until the Holy Spirit inspires the reader’s reading process (57). Hentschel thus espouses a “reader oriented inspiration theory” (57 n37), and posits truth is not found in the words of Scripture but “is in God and when someone reads the Bible and God’s Spirit opens their eyes to the truth during the reading process, then faith can emerge and the reader comes into contact with the truth” (62-63). As I read this chapter, I could not help but wonder what Luther would have thought in regard to Hentschel’s appropriation of his writings in support of her reader-oriented approach. Moreover, does not Scripture itself claim the text, rather than the reader, is the proper locus of inspiration? (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16). Finally, some may wonder whether Hentschel would affirm her own essay is multivocal, or whether she would wish her reader to seek diligently to discern the univocal sense intended by the author who composed this essay.

Chapter 4 provides “An Introduction to the Gospel of John and Questions of Lutheran Hermeneutics,” by the well-known Johannine scholar, Craig R. Koester. This is followed by Sarah Hinlicky Wilson’s discussion of law and gospel (chapter 5), in which she delineates five common misreadings of law and gospel within the history of Lutheran interpretation (85), and seeks to show how John’s Gospel is “particularly resistant” to these misinterpretations and serves to reorient Lutherans “toward Luther’s original sense” in the law-gospel distinction (90-91).

In chapter 6, “Political Love: Why John’s Gospel is not as Barren for Contemporary Ethics as it Might Appear,” Bernd Wannewetsch argues, “There are powerful and specifically modern biases that trigger the suspicion that with John we cannot do the sort of ethics we think we should be doing today” (94). He attempts “a fresh reading” of John in which he discusses an ethics of belonging (97-100) and what is meant by sisterly and brotherly love, which he explicates in terms of theological specificity rather than a reductive narrowing of the love

command (102). He also seeks to develop the political implications of this love (102ff.).

In chapter 7, "Exploring Effective Context—Luther's Contextual Hermeneutics," Vitor Westhelle posits textual meaning "changes decisively depending on a series of factors: the author's setting, the circumstances under which a text is read, and also texts that are in- or excluded" (108). This assertion is open to question, for the author fails to differentiate between *meaning* and *interpretation*. As an example of the receiving context's impact upon meaning, he points to disparate readings of the Exodus narrative by, for example, liberation theologians in Latin America, over against black South Africans, Dravidians, Native Americans and Mexicans whose land had been taken by people often appealing to the same promises of a land they were to conquer in God's name (109). As an example of selective reading and its impact on meaning, Westhelle points to the childhood experience of Howard Thurman who recalls a preacher who relied solely on Pauline texts in preaching to black farm laborers as opposed to Thurman's mother who only read the Gospels to him (109). Such examples clearly demonstrate how the aforementioned factors affected the *interpretation*, *understanding*, and *use* of Scripture; but these are not necessarily the same as the *meaning* of Scripture. Westhelle draws on postcolonial theory (111-12) and Luther to develop the hermeneutical criteria of pertinence, innovation, and transfiguration (112-20).

In chapter 8, "Lutheran Hermeneutics and New Testament Studies: Some Political and Cultural Implications," Eve-Marie Becker opines Lutheran hermeneutics has great political ramifications, for example, in how the Pauline doctrine of justification is construed (125). The author believes Lutheran hermeneutics may potentially enrich and stimulate both theologization and cultural life (126).

In chapter 9, "Bible, Tradition and the Asian Context," Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon calls for contextual biblical interpreters who will interpret both Scripture and tradition in ways that are organically connected to communities where there are tremendous problems related to human rights violations, oppression of the poor, exclusion of women, violence of various kinds, destruction of the environment, and the like (137-38). Melanchthon wishes to discern how to give "equal importance" to Lutheran and Indian traditions, utilizing the "richness" of both in biblical interpretation and theologization (141-42). She asks, "How can one best address the complexities of the Bible, the Lutheran tradition and the Indian context without privileging any one in particular?" (143). She suggests a multifaith or multicultural hermeneutic in which one engages in "reading in juxtaposition," allowing for continuous production of meaning as new readers posit

their own interpretations of the texts under discussion, none of which represent the ultimate meaning of these religious texts (143). By way of example, Melanchthon reads John 4 in juxtaposition with the writings of Akkamahadevi, a twelfth-century *bhakta* from Karnataka, India (143-45). As a result, the Samaritan woman emerges as an exemplar of agency and autonomy, a courageous woman who protested “societal norms and expectations” by living with a man to whom she was not married (145). While some may find Melanchthon’s conclusions regarding John 4 more than a little eisegetical and perhaps exhibiting a rather troubling moral trajectory, I wish to address another area of concern, one which relates to this scholar’s overall methodology: If we were to follow Melanchthon’s example in her attempt to address the complexities of the Bible, her Lutheran tradition, and her Indian tradition “without privileging any one [of these] in particular,” would we not, then, have effectively neutralized the authoritative role of Scripture in relation to our traditional and cultural contexts? Furthermore, if none of these three sources (the Bible, one’s ecclesial tradition, and one’s cultural context/tradition) enjoys a privileged status in one’s theologizing, how will one adjudicate matters when these respective sources are found to be at odds with one another?

In chapter 10, Dennis T. Olson rounds off the discussion with his reflective and suggestive treatment of the role of tradition as it relates to Scripture. Rather than seeking definitively to answer the host of questions raised by this topic, Olson poses three sets of questions and proffers reflections germane to the issues so presented (151).

In conclusion, I recommend this volume for the consideration of those interested in hermeneutics and contextual theology. The format of the book is basically user-friendly and attractive, some pesky minor typographical errors notwithstanding. Ease of use, however, might have been facilitated by the inclusion of subject, author, and Scripture indices, none of which are found in this volume. With regard to various theological perspectives reflected in this volume, I have already registered a few concerns throughout this review. Nonetheless, the volume makes a serious contribution to ongoing discussions about hermeneutical methodology, especially in regard to contextual biblical interpretation, reader-response approaches, and how one’s traditional heritage and confessional stance should relate to hermeneutics. Many important questions that deserve continued scholarly engagement are brought to the surface in this collection of essays and, for this reason alone, it is well worth the read.

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