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GRAIN AND RAIN IN GENESIS 2:5, 6

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Genesis 2:5, 6 has been traditionally understood as a description of the original world by using a series of statements about a lack of vegetation, rain, and farmers in spite of a watering system. This study attempts to read the text as a chain of statements about the absence of arid land plants and irrigated grain fields typical of farming in the ancient world. In this understanding the verses prepare the scene for the paradisiacal conditions of the Garden of Eden.

Key Words: Vegetation, grain, rain, irrigation, farming, arid land, Garden of Eden

1. Introduction

Comparison of various English translations of Gen 2:4-6 indicate that these verses present difficulties to the translators. The KJV reads: "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground, but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground."

Other translations render the last part of v. 6 as follows: The NASB and others retain the watering "mist" of the KJV; *The Amplified Bible* mentions a "fog, vapor;" the NIV and other modern versions state that "streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground;" *The Message* writes that "the whole Earth was watered by underground springs," without any indication that those springs opened on the surface of the earth.

In spite of the diversity of suggestions about an unusual water cycle in the original earth (an unavoidable concern since the original earth featured rivers, vv. 10-12), the question arises: Why does v. 5 explain the absence of "every herb of the field" on the basis that "God had not caused it to rain upon the earth" if a mist, fog, vapor, up-welling streams,

underground currents or something other "watered the whole face of the ground" (v. 6). One could reason that plants will grow contentedly without rain while in the presence of any other means of watering. This explanatory clause, as translated by these versions, fails to explain the absence of vegetation presented in the first part of v. 5.

The treatment of this problem in the scholarly literature is rather sparse. Wenham takes note of the fact that source critics such as Gunkel, Schmidt and Westermann ascribe vv. 5 and 6 to different sources in an attempt to explain the contradiction between a barren wilderness produced by lack of rain and an abundant water supply. But, as Wenham points out, "this is to belittle the competence of the author of this chapter, who would not be expected to introduce an isolated sentence into his narrative that conflicts with the context."[1] He favors the solution of Castellino and Gispen, "without man to irrigate the land, the spring was useless."[2] This, again, implies a description of the original world as a barren wilderness. But it is difficult to see where this description would fit, whether in the initial state at the beginning of creation, as some scholars think,[3] or after this creation but before agriculture, as others who recognize that this passage presupposes the creation of Gen 1.[4] However, both positions present difficulties. If the passage refers to a state of the earth before the creation of Gen 1, an arid desert clashes with Gen 1:9, 10 where we find the lands emerging from under the waters. This clash can be avoided if one supposes that one of the sources conceived a desert and the other a submerged land, but then the observation of Wenham above applies. If, on the other hand, Gen 1 is presupposed, an arid earth clashes with Gen 1:11-13, where the earth is covered in green by the creative acts. As these observations show, there is room for additional exegetical proposals, especially when considering the continuity of Gen 1 and 2 and the unity of the narrative line, as this research does.

2. Cereal Grains

R. Younker has addressed some of the problems found in Gen 2:5, 6.[5] While not directly discussing the textual difficulties stated above, he may

1 G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Word Biblical Commentary 1; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 59.

2 Ibid.

3 Such as Gunkel, Driver, Zimmerli, and Schmidt cited in Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*.

4 Keil, Jacob, and Cassuto cited in Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*.

5 Randall W. Younker, "Are There Two Contradictory Accounts of Creation in Genesis 1 and 2?," in *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers* (ed. Gerhard Pfandl; Silver Springs, MA: Biblical Research Institute, 2010), 2:119-123.

have inadvertently led towards a possible answer. Younker states that Gen 2:5 mentions four things as absent in the original world, "(1) thorns; (2) agriculture; (3) cultivation/ irrigation; (4) rain."[6] Following U. Cassuto,[7] Younker shows that the "herd of the field" (עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה) refers to cereal grains such as wheat or barley that were used for bread-making and represented the very staff of life for the original readers of Genesis. However, in chap. 3:18, 19 these cereals appear as agricultural crops in connection with God's judgment on humanity because of sin. By pointing to the absence of grasses or cereals, our passage is setting the stage for the garden of Eden, where humans enjoyed instead "all kinds of trees . . . that were pleasing to the eye and good for food" (2:9).

One may note that in the ancient Near East grains were the basis of the economy of great civilizations such as Egypt, Mesopotamia and ancient Persia.[8] In regions where rain was scarce or non-existing, short-lived plants and grains were grown in large valleys by using the annual rise of the river waters. The grains might be directly sown on the damp ground once the first crest of the flood had passed but then needed to be supplemented by irrigation while the water level was still high (and accessible) for the next couple of months; this would suffice for plants bearing grain after three or four months. In this way, land could be used that otherwise would have featured thorny shrubs or scrub trees only. The close association of arid land plants with cereal grain in Gen 2:5 seems to indicate that the author had the situation of those river valleys of the ancient Near East in mind, and not rain-fed agriculture as it is known in other lands.

3. Lack of Rain

English translations have rendered the explanatory clause of the Hebrew in Gen 2:5b כִּי לֹא הִמְטִיר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל־הָאָרֶץ ("because the Lord God did not send rain upon the earth," literal translation) with a pluperfect: "the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth" (KJV) or "had not sent rain on the earth" (NIV). The use of the pluperfect might suggest that the lack of rain was a feature already present at the time of the creation of man. However, the pluperfect is not a feature of the Hebrew text, but inferred

6 Younker, 2:123.

7 Umberto Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis* (trans. I. Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 102.

8 See *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "The History of Technology – Irrigation," 1994 edition. Mesopotamia, Egypt and Persia are the oldest documented places of agricultural irrigation.

by translators. The perfect verb, appearing here in the Hebrew, may be translated as a simple past form: "because the Lord God did not send rain on the earth." As such, the verbal form is good for any time that can be related to the narrative.

What then is the relationship between the lack of rain and the grain plants or their absence in the original world? One may assume that the lack of rain makes for a lack of plants. However, the opposite may be true when taking into consideration the agricultural conditions of the ancient Near East as shown above: It is the cereal growth (as opposed to the presence of more valuable, longer living plants such as vines and/or fruit trees), and not its absence, that which would be naturally associated with the absence of rain. Thus, the English text may be read as if by moving the comma in the KJV: "and every herb of the field, before it grew because the LORD God did not cause it to rain upon the earth." In other words, the text would state "and every grain plant had not yet grown, [as it grows today] because the LORD God has not sent rain upon the earth."

As an alternative understanding, the text could specify particular kinds of grain plants. For, as Cassuto points out,[9] cereal plants would have existed also in the original world, but only as few and far-between specimens of the wild kind, not as extensive grain plantations of tame varieties (today called cultivars). If such was the intention of the Genesis author, the text might be rendered as "and no grain ([of the type] due to the Lord God not sending rain upon the earth) had yet grown." The point of the clause, then, would be that other kinds of cereal, the wild ones, might have been present.

By any of the latter two modes of interpretation, Gen 2:5 would be setting the stage for the Garden of Eden by contrasting it with later agricultural conditions. There would be in the original world no dry patches of land where only thorny shrubs grew, for the earth was then covered in greenery (Gen 1:12, 13); nor would irrigated grain fields be sprouting, which implies an adaptation to arid lands. Thus the mention of the Lord God not sending rain had nothing to do with a climatic condition of the original earth. The text would merely deny that irrigated fields motivated by a lack of rain were then in existence as later they would be. In other words, it would not affirm or deny a lack of rain in the original world; it would merely point out that grains grown on account of a lack of rain did not yet exist.

[9] Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis*, 121.

4. The Absent Farmer

Denying the existence of irrigated lands ties in with the absence of a man who would irrigate and cultivate the land: "and no grain grew (as it grows/of the kind that grows) because the Lord God did not send rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the earth" (2:5). The flow of this argument seems logical: The presence of a man would be required for fields cultivated in the absence of rain. This kind of man or farmer was not present, and therefore, in the original world there were no grain fields. In contrast, the opposite, or traditional understanding, which blames the absence of grain in the original world on the absence of rain and yet suggests that there was watering of the ground, would not connect logically with the absence of farming.

The Hebrew of Gen 2:6 may strengthen the argument for the absence of grains because of the absence of irrigated fields. According to the traditional understanding, v. 6 describes a bewildering world, which has rivers fed by mist, fog, vapor, up-welling streams or underground currents. In contrast, the present analysis shows that Gen 2:5, 6 does not describe any particular water cycle; instead, it establishes a logical connection of clauses. All clauses in v. 5 have been understood here as logically consecutive: In the original world there were no arid patches, so no thorny shrubs were present (v. 5a), nor were grain fields growing (as they do today) because God did not send rain on the earth (v. 5b), for at that time there was no man to till the earth (v. 5c). One would then expect for v. 6 to fall logically in place too by keeping the absence of a farmer in view when describing the water that wets the whole ground.

Indeed, one may ask who or what is the subject of the verb יַעֲלֶה related to the "going up" or "coming up" of whatever it was that "watered all the surface of the ground." The verb יַעֲלֶה may be recognized as either a *qal* stating that the subject of the verb "rose itself/went up" or a *hip'il* pointing out that the subject "caused something to rise/go up" in order to water the ground.

The traditional understanding, neglecting the mention of the absent farmer in v. 5b, holds that the mist or the water stream rose or went up. The alternative understanding, however, implies that the not yet existing farmer is the subject who would "till the earth" (v. 5c) by "causing streams to rise and water all the surface of the ground" (v. 6) precisely in circumstances when "the Lord God did not send rain upon the earth," and the ground needs to be irrigated with the help of the annual flood of rivers. The water stream, then, would not be the subject but the object of of יַעֲלֶה.

In this way the consecutive chain of ideas is complete. In the original world there were no extensive arid patches. Thus, no thorny shrubs were

present (v. 5a), nor were grain fields growing (as they do today where God did not send rain on the earth) (v. 5b). The reason is that then there was no man to till the earth (v. 5c) and to raise a stream to water the whole surface of the ground (v. 6).

5. The Absent Irrigation Canal

Note, however, that the text is not speaking of a man who actually tilled the fields and irrigated them in the original world. On the contrary, the text makes a point of the non-existence of such a man at that time, in spite of the presence of rivers. In contrast to this record of non-existence, the traditional understanding causes the text to speak of something that actually did water all the surface of the ground. If such were the case, one would expect the first verb of Gen 2:6 to be in the perfect, more or less equivalent to the indicative mood of European languages when expressing a simple past action (statement of fact). However, the text reads יַעֲלֶה, which is an imperfect, often having a subjunctive force in Hebrew (the "would" or "might" forms in English translation). In other words, by using the imperfect the text expresses the idea that "there was no man to till the earth (v. 5c) and who would raise a stream to water all the surface of the ground (v. 6)."

Tsumura has challenged this translation, found among other scholars in M. Dahood.[10] According to Tsumura, יַעֲלֶה may indeed be taken as a *hip'il*, but the water source mentioned in the text must be its subject and not the subject. Otherwise, he argues, the source would be mentioned after the verb, as יַעֲלֶה אֵד and not before, as it stands in the text, אֵד יַעַל. But as it is well known,[11] the word order regarding verb, object and subject is quite flexible in Hebrew. In the same Paradise story we can find examples of object-verb word order, even with the same tacit subject continuing from the previous clause, as e.g. Gen 3:18 ("thorns and thistles it [sc. the earth of 3:17] will produce you") just as it is proposed here (the man of Gen 2:5 is tacitly the subject of v. 6).

The last verb in v. 6, וְהִשְׁקָה is formed with a consecutive וְ, and the perfect הִשְׁקָה, a configuration semantically equivalent to an imperfect and therefore parallel to יַעֲלֶה. Thus, there was no man who would both raise a stream and water the entire surface of the field.

[10] David T. Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 96, 97.

[11] See E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, eds., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (2d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 456.

6. Terminological Connections

This study suggests that Gen 2:5, 6 contrasts the original world with later agricultural conditions of the ancient Near East, especially the regions where lack of rain requires the use of irrigation. The following terminological detail supports this perspective: As linguists have pointed out, the Hebrew term אֵד (v. 6) may correspond to the Akkadian *edu*. This seems convincing because Akkadian is a Semitic language (cognate to Hebrew), and it preserves endings that were lost in the Northwestern pronunciation of Semitic languages, notably the noun nominative ending *-u*. In other words, Northwest Semitic אֵד equals Northeast Semitic *edu*. The Northeast Semitic (Akkadian) *edu*, "refers to the annual inundation of Babylon by the Euphrates as well as to irrigation."[12]

Based upon the Akkadian *edu* as evidence for the Hebrew אֵד refering to irrigation, it may be suggested that v. 6 has the farmer of v. 5c in mind as the subject of the verb יַעֲלֶה rather than a natural process watering the surface of the ground. This evidence has been felt to be compelling enough to be recognized by the *Nueva Biblia Española*: "When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, there were no shrubs on the earth yet, nor did grass sprout in the field, because the Lord God had not sent rain to the earth, nor was there a man who would till the field and draw a spring from the earth in order to water the surface of the field."[13]

Note that this translation recognizes the subjunctive mood of the verb יַעֲלֶה in v. 6 ("would till . . . and draw")[14] while retaining the lack of rain as a feature of the original world rather than as a reference to later agriculture (v. 5). As a consequence, this version seems to deprive the Genesis conception of the original world of any water to recharge its rivers, whether atmospheric, subterranean or irrigational. The interpretation underlying this rendering has, in fact, motivated the

[12] R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), 2:17. The Sumerian term mentioned above was written through the cuneiform logograms A.DÉ.A (actual pronunciation unknown), and it may have been the source of the Semitic terms *edu* and *ed*. See also Wenham, *Gen 1-15*, 58 and the more detailed study in Tsumura, *Earth and Waters*, 93-116.

[13] My own retranslation; the original reads: "Cuando el Señor Dios hizo la tierra y el cielo, no había aún matorrales en la tierra, ni brotaba hierba en el campo, porque el Señor Dios no había enviado lluvia a la tierra, ni había hombre que cultivase el campo, y sacase un manantial de la tierra para regar la superficie del campo." See Gen 2:4b-6 in *Nueva Biblia Española*. This version has been adopted by the Spanish Episcopal Conference and is also used in Latin America.

[14] *Cultivase . . . sacase* (see previous footnote).

conception of the original world as an arid place.[15] Such an idea would make the rivers of Eden even more mysterious than the English versions quoted previously.

We have already reviewed evidence that the original world, covered in greenery, had no plants typical of arid lands; that the עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה of v. 5b is not just any weed of the field, but specifically cereal grain; that this kind of grain was expected to exist by the ancient reader in places where God did not send rain and so an אֵד or irrigation canal, was provided in its stead; and that such irrigation requires a farmer whose non-existence in the original world is recorded in v. 5c. When translating these verses, all this information can be put together in a simple, straightforward narrative without positing that the Genesis author conceived extraordinary water sources or cycles.

7. Summary and Conclusions

In synthesis, I suggest the following translation of Gen 2:5, 6:

> Now no thorny shrub had yet appeared on the earth, and no cereal plant, existing because the Lord God has not sent rain on the earth, was yet growing, and there was no man who would till the field, and raise from the earth an irrigation canal in order to water the whole surface of the field.

In conclusion, then, the text does not explain the lack of plants of the field in the original world on the basis of a lack of rain. Also, the text does not state what the rain situation in the original world was,[16] and thus should not be used for speculating about any kind of strange conceptions about a water cycle in the original world according to Genesis. On the contrary, the text refers to a lack of rain that happened later, a problem which would eventually cause human beings to plant grain in irrigated fields; but that circumstance did not yet exist in the original world, no farmer being present in order to irrigate a field through a canal.

Genesis 2:5, 6 then, suggest an earth that enjoyed paradisiacal conditions without plants typical of arid lands, such as thorny shrubs or

[15] See Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2:17. I myself entertained this idea in the past, but I think now that it is not correct after elucidating here the relationship of the lack of rain to grain (and not to the absence of grain).

[16] It is safe to assume that the author sees rains of such magnitude as those predicted in Gen 7:4 as being unknown so far. This realization may have later contributed to depict pre-flood peoples as incredulous about the announced universal flood (1 Pet 3:20).

irrigated grain fields. Such scenario, in turn, allows for the planting of Eden in the immediately following context (vv. 8, 9), as the original tree-garden home of human beings who, in spite of living by the rivers, were not irrigation farm workers but privileged guests.

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THE IDENTY OF THE CENTURION'S *PAIS* IN MATTHEW 8:5-13: A NARRATIVE APPROACH[1]

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In Matthean studies the identity of the centurion's παῖς, "servant, servant boy, child," who was suffering at home is not clear (Matt 8:5-13). This is due to the fact that from a lexical point of view παῖς could be translated as "boy" or as "servant." If it is interpreted as a boy, then the of the Gospel reader understands that the centurion probably was concerned about his son's health. On the other hand, if the centurion was worried because one of his servants or slaves was suffering, the reader may consider the centurion as a good master. This paper proposes to analyse the identity of the centurion's παῖς considering two approaches: the use of παῖς in the LXX and, the use of παῖς in the Gospel of Matthew by applying narrative critical techniques.

Key Words: Matthew 8, centurion, slave, son, narrative approach

1. Introduction

The Gospel of Matthew records that a centurion approached Jesus requesting healing for his παῖς who was "lying at home paralyzed" (Matt 8:5-13).[2] The semantics of the word παῖς allows for both translations "child/boy" and "servant,"[3] thus it seems unclear if the text refers to the centurion's child/son or his servant. While the majority of the

1 This paper was presented at the Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools conference, which was held in Wesley College, University Of Sydney, Australia. 3-6 July 2011.

2 Unless otherwise indicated, quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV).

3 Also, depending on its article or adjective attributes, the word παῖς can be translated as feminine or masculine (cf. Matt 26:69; Luke 8:51-54). See J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, ed., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (2 vols.; New York: United Bible Society, 1989), 1:110, 741.

English Bible versions render παῖς as "servant"[4] there are some that identify him as a "servant boy" or a "young man" thus retaining the meaning of servant.[5] Scholars have used different reasons for the meaning of "servant."[6] Some argue that the Matthew pericope is related to Luke 7:1-10, a text that narrates the healing of a centurion's δοῦλος, "servant," in Capernaum (Luke 7:2), thus, the παῖς in Matt 8 should also be translated as servant.[7] Others hold to the general use of παῖς as "servant" in the LXX.[8] The implication of translating παῖς as servant may involve that the story in Matt 8 is depicting the centurion as a good master who takes care of those who work for him.

Other scholars have preferred to translate παῖς as "child"[9] or "son."[10] The argument for this translation is partially based on redaction

4 E.g., NRSV, NIV, TNIV, NAB, NASB, NJB, ESV, ESVS, BBE, KJB, ASV, CEV, MESSAGE, REB, TEV.

5 While the *Amplified Bible* translates παῖς as "servant boy" (8:6, 8, 13), the *Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* renders it as "young man" (8:5, 13) and "servant" (8:8). See also the *Complete Jewish Bible*, which translates παῖς as "orderly."

6 Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 265; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 311-312; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 354; Brendan Byrne, *Lifting the Burden: Reading Matthew's Gospel in the Church Today* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004), 77, n. 2; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 192; and W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 2:21; D. A. Carson, *Matthew* (The Expositor's Bible Commentary 8; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 200-201; W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew* (Anchor Bible 26; New York: Doubleday, 1984), 93. See also Herbert W. Basser, *The Mind Behind the Gospels: A Commentary to Matthew 1-14* (Brighton, Mass.: Academic Studies, 2009), 212, who translates the word as "houseboy."

7 Grant Osborne, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series: New Testament 1; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 290; Robert H. Mounce, *Matthew* (New International Biblical Commentary 1; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 74; and France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 312.

8 Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 354.

9 G. Zuntz, "The 'Centurion' of Capernaum and his Authority (Matt 8:5-13)," *Journal of Theological Studies* 46 (1945), 188; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2001), 9-10.

10 Joaquin Gonzalez Echegaray, "Los esclavos en la Palestina del Tiempo de Jesus," *Salm* 56 (2009), 107-108; and H. F. D. Starks, "The Centurion's paiv{ß," *Journal of Theological Studies* 42 (1941), 179-180. Other Scholars, however, are more ambiguous in their position. See J. C. Fenton, *The Gospel of St. Matthew* (Harmondsworth:

assumptions identifying a parallelism between Matt 8:5-13 and John 4:43-54. The narrative in the Gospel of John tells of the healing of the son of a royal official in Cana (John 4:46-47).[11] Seen from this perspective and translating παῖς as "boy" may imply that the pericope either is describing the concern of a father for his sick son or, as Theodore Jennings and Tat-siong Benny Liew have recently proposed, a pederastic relationship between the centurion and his boy-lover.[12]

Following the mainstream of translations, I will argue that παῖς is best translated as "servant."[13] In my analysis, I propose to identify the centurion's παῖς from two perspectives. One implies to interpret the word παῖς in relation to its use in the LXX; the other considers a narrative critical approach to the use of παῖς in the Gospel of Matthew.[14]

Penguin Books, 1963), 124; and M. Eugene Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," in *New Interpreter's Bible* (12 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 8: 225.

11 Ralph P. Martin, "The Pericope of the Healing of the 'Centurion's' Servant/Son (Matt 8:5-13 Par. Luke 7:1-10): Some Exegetical Notes," in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd* (ed. Robert A. Guelich; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 15; Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew* (Word Bible Commentary; Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 33a:204; and Echegaray, "Los esclavos en la Palestina del Tiempo de Jesus," 118.

12 Theodore W. Jennings, and Tat-siong Benny Liew, "Mistaken Identities But Model Faith: Rereading the Centurion, the Chap, and the Christ in Matthew 8:5-13," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123 (2004), 467-494. Cf. Donald Mader, "The Entimos Pais of Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10," in *Homosexuality and Religion and Philosophy* (eds. Wayne R. Dynes and Stephen Donaldson; New York: Garland, 1992), 223-235. For a reply to this proposal see D. B. Saddington, "The Centurion in Matthew 8:5-13: Consideration of the Proposal of Theodore W Jennings, Jr., and Tat-Siong Benny Liew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125 (2006), 140-142.

13 I argue the same in my master's thesis in which I analysed Matt 8:5-13, among other pericopes, from a narrative perspective. See Carlos Olivares, "A Narrative Analysis of the Phrase "Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth" in the Gospel of Matthew" (M.Th. diss., University of Auckland, 2010), 28-30.

14 Narrative criticism approaches texts from a text-oriented perspective, analysing them synchronically. See Mark Allan Powell, *Chasing the Eastern Star: Adventures in Biblical Reader-Response Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001), 67; Petri Merenlahati and Raimo Hakola, "Reconceiving Narrative Criticism," in *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (ed. David M. Rhoads and Kari Syreeni; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2004), 18; Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Guides to Biblical Scholarship; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 7.

2. Παῖς as Boy in the Gospel of Matthew

The implied reader of the Gospel of Matthew[15] may note that παῖς clearly speaks of a boy in the sense of a boy child or a son in chaps. 2:16; 17:18; 21:15. In addition, these three texts will show that another word meaning "child" is used in parallel thus working synonymously to παῖς.

2.1 Παῖς in Matthew 2:16

In Matt 2:16 Herod gives orders to kill all the παῖδας in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or younger. The παιδίον of this story (2:13) is a diminutive of παῖς,[16] meaning "little or young child."[17] The

15 I suppose that the implied reader is an "informed" reader, which means that he or she is able to read and understand the Greek text and is familiar with the LXX. See Mark Allan Powell, "Expected and Unexpected Readings of Matthew: What the Reader Knows," *Asbury Theological Journal* 48 (1993), 31-51. Cf. Dale C. Allison, "Anticipating the Passion: The Literary Reach of Matthew 26:47-27:56," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 56 (1994), 703, who assumes that the informed readers (hearers) are those who (1) were familiar with the LXX and (2) heard and reheard Matthew. Cf. Warren Carter, "An Audience-Oriented Approach to Matthew's Parables," in *Matthew's Parables* (Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 30; Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1998), 11-12.

16 Louw & Nida, 1:109.

17 H. J. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1287. The term παιδίον normally describes a very young child up to seven years old [see W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 749; and Albrecht Oepke, "παιδίον," G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (trans. G. W. Bromiley; 10 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-76), 5:638. In the LXX, however, even though the word designates a new-born male child (Gen 17:12), it also describes a female old enough to get married (Tob 7:11), cf. T. Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Louvain: Peeters, 2009), 519. In the New Testament the term also makes reference to an infant just born (John 16:21), a child (cf. Matt 18:2; Mark 9:36) and a girl who is 12 years old (Mark 5:41-42; cf. 7:26, 30). According to Judith Gundry, the diminutive used to describe the 12 year-old girl "should be taken to indicate endearment rather than a small child." Judith M. Gundry, "Children in the Gospel of Mark," in *The Child in the* Bible (Marcia J. Bunge, ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 147. However, it seems that παιδίον means "child," without reference to its age, implying that in the context of Matt 2 "Jesus is no longer a baby at the time" the magi arrive. Barclay, Moon, Newman, and Philip C. Stine, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 39. In Matt 2, παιδίον is used to designate a male child, which the narrative identifies as Jesus (Matt 2:8-23).

noun παιδίον is also used to describe the "child Jesus" in Matthew's infancy narratives (2:8–9, 11, 13–14, 20–21).[18] In this context and from a narrative perspective, the reader understands that Herod orders to kill the παῖδας because he aims to destroy the παιδίον Jesus (2:13-16).

In addition, the meaning of παῖς in Matt 2:16 may also be explained in function of the narrative unit in which it is located (2:16-18), which is preceded and ended by a formula quotation (2:15, 18). Thus, the meaning of παῖς in Matt 2:16 may be defined by the formula quotation that follows the scene in which Herod orders to destroy the παῖδας (2:16). The narrator informs that the destruction of children is the fulfilment of Jer 31:15 about "Rachel weeping for her children [τέκνα]" (Matt 2:17-18).[19] Here, τέκνα may function as a synonym for παῖς, defining it as "child." In other words, the narrative itself may give the definition of παῖς as "child."

The same can be said about the word παιδίον used in the previous narrative unit (2:13-15). Table 1 shows that παιδίον is also defined in function of the formula quotation that follows the narrative, "out of Egypt I have called my son [τὸν υἱόν μου]" (2:15).

Narrative	Fulfillment quotation
"Get up, take the child [παιδίον]" (2:13a) "Herod is about to search for the child [παιδίον]" (2:13b) "Took the child [παιδίον]" (2:14)	"Out of Egypt I have called my son [τὸν υἱόν μου]" (2:15)
Herod orders to destroy the "children [παῖδας]" (2:16)	Rachel is weeping for her "children [τέκνα]" (2:18)

Table 1: Narrative and Fulfilment Quotations

[18] In the rest of the Gospel of Matthew, as Cabrido says, the term is used to describe "anonymous children who appear in highly symbolic episodes." John Aranda Cabrido, "A Typology for Discipleship: The Narrative Function of Paidion in Matthew's Story of Jesus," *Australian Biblical Review* 57 (2009), 48. Cf. Matt 11:16; 14:21; 15:38; 18:2-5; 19:13, 14.

[19] In the Gospel of Matthew the word τέκνον is commonly used to refer to children in relationship to their parents (See 2:18; 7:11; 10:21; 18:25; 19:29; 21:28; 22:24; 27:25). It is also employed to highlight a symbolic statement (3:9; 15:26; 23:37) or to express affection (9:2). Cf. G. Schneider, "τέκνον," in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (ed. H. Balz and G. Schneider; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990-93), 3:341.

2.2 Παῖς in Matthew 17:18

In Matt 17:18 Jesus heals a παῖς, "child/boy/son" from the presence of a demon.[20] The narrative unit in which this verse is located is Matt 17:14-18 telling of a man who had brought his υἱός, "his son," to be cured but Jesus' disciples were not able to perform the healing (17:14-16). Jesus' performance, however, is successful (17:17-18). The implied reader will notice that the narrative does not say that Jesus cured the man's υἱός, but the παῖς (17:18). Here, υἱός and παῖς function as synonyms defining παῖς as a boy or son (Table 2).[21]

Man's words	Narrator's words
"Lord, have mercy on my son [υἱόν]" (Matt 17:15)	"The child/boy/son [παῖς] was cured instantly" (Matt 17:18)

Table 2: Υἱός and παῖς in Matthew 17:14-18

2.3 Παῖς in Matthew 21:15

In Matt 21:15 the chief priests and the scribes are angry because an undefined number of παίδων, "children," are shouting in the temple "Hosanna to the Son of David." The narrative unit in which Matt 21:15 is found is Matt 21:14-16, which is preceded by a quotation from the LXX (21:14) and ends with a citation (21:16) identifying the παίδων. Because the chief priests and the scribes ask Jesus about what the children are crying out, Jesus replies to them by citing a verse from the Psalms in which the poet declares that "from the lips of children [νηπίων] and infants [θηλαζόντων] you have ordained praise" (Matt 21:16 NIV; cf. Ps 8:2 [cf. Ps 8:3 MT]). For the reader, the meaning of the word νήπιος

20 According to the narrative, the man says that his son is σεληνιάζομαι (17:15; cf. 4:24), which has been translated as "epileptic" (NRSV; TEV; ASV; AMP; CEV; ESV), "demented" (NJB), and "lunatic" (NAB; NASB). The implied author, however, informs that Jesus rebukes a δαιμόνιον, "demon," from the boy, healing him instantly (17:18).

21 Another example may be found in the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus asks: "Is there anyone among you who would hand his son [υἱός] a stone when he asked for bread?" (Matt 7:9 NJB). Then Jesus replies, "if you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children [τέκνοις], how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (7:11). Thus, υἱός and τέκνον would function as synonyms.

involves "a very young child," namely, an infant (cf. Matt 11:25).[22] It seems that it is in a parallel structure with θηλάζω,[23] a word that describes "a baby feeding at the breast" (cf. 24:19).[24] In this sense, the παῖδας who are shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David" may be understood in relation to the LXX' quotation, which identifies them as little children (Table 3).

Narrative	Quotation from the LXX
The children (παῖδας) crying out in the temple (Matt 21:15)	"Out of the mouths of children [νηπίω] and infants [θηλαζόντων] you have prepared praise for yourself" (Matt 21:16)

Table 3: Narrative and Quotation from the Hebrew Bible in Matthew 21:14-16

3. Παῖς as Servant in the Gospel of Matthew

A reading of Matt 12:18 and 14:12 shows that παῖς may be understood as "servant," which is based upon the text's close relation to the Septuagint (LXX).

3.1 Παῖς in Matthew 12:18

In Matt 12:18 the implied author makes reference to the messianic fulfilment of Isa 42:1-4, a text that speaks of God's chosen "servant" (Isa 42:1). The Hebrew word used by the MT is עַבְדִּי (Isa 42:1).[25] This word is then translated by the LXX as παῖς. Matthew 12:18 is placed into the narrative unit of vv. 15-21 describing the ministry of Jesus (Matt 12:15-16), which finds its fulfilment in the words "spoken by the prophet Isaiah" (12:17 NJB). Thus, the παῖς mentioned in this chapter refers to Jesus defining him as servant.

Another detail that the implied reader may notice is that the formula quotation contains the personal pronoun παῖς μου, "my servant" (Matt

[22] Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, 671. In classical Greek the word νήπιος was commonly used to describe children between one and ten years old. See Georg Bertram, "νήπιος," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 4:912.

[23] Newman and Stine, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew*, 648.

[24] Louw & Nida, 1:248.

[25] The term עַבְדִּי commonly means "slave" or "servant" in the MT. Cf. *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 774-775.

12:18; Is 42:1). The designation παῖς μου, always[26] refers to a servant in the LXX,[27] therefore, it seems that the reader may consider that the expression παῖς μου in itself may mean "my servant."

3.1 Παῖς in Matthew 12:18

In Matt 14:2, Herod the tetrarch tells his παισὶν that John Baptist had risen from the dead. The plural form of the word, linked to the fact that Herod is called tetrarch (14:1), may suggest that these παισὶν should be understood as servants and not sons. Also, the LXX usually uses παισὶν to refer to those who work for authorities.[28]

4. Παῖς as Servant in the Centurion's Story

Based upon this analysis, it seems that the immediate literary and intertextual context defines the understanding of παῖς in the Gospel of Matthew either as boy or servant. In the case of the centurion's story (Matt 8:5-13), it is highly probable that παῖς should be understood as servant.

The narrative unit of the centurion's story is situated after the miracle of a man with leprosy (8:1-4) and before the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (8:14-15). The centurion approaches Jesus requesting for the healing of his παῖς who was "lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress" (8:5-6). Although Jesus agrees to go with him, the centurion refuses and argues that just a word spoken by Jesus could heal his παῖς (8:7-8). The centurion explains that he is a man with authority, with soldiers under him, and with a δοῦλος, "servant," who obeys his orders (8:9). Then, after Jesus' words of praise regarding the faith of the centurion, the story ends saying that the παῖς "was healed in that very hour" (8:13; NIV).

[26] Cf. Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 354.

[27] See LXX: Gen 18:17; 33:14; Lev 25:55; Num 14:24; Josh 1:7; 1 Kgs 21:6; 1 Chr 17:4; 2 Chr 2:7; Job 1:8; Isa 20:3; 22:20; 37:35; 41:8–9; 42:1, 19; 44:1–2, 21; 45:4; 49:6; 52:13; Jer 26:28; 33:5; 42:15; 51:4. In these cases παῖς is always a translation of the Hebrew word עֶבֶד, which means "servant." See MT: Gen 33:14; Lev 25:55; Num 14:24; Josh 1:7; 1 Kgs 20:6; 1 Chr 17:4; 2 Chr 2:7; Job 1:8; Isa 20:3; 22:20; 37:35; 41:8–9; 42:1, 19; 44:1–2, 21; 45:4; 49:6; 52:13; Jer 46:28; 26:5; 35:15; 44:4. The only exception is Gen 18:17. This is because the MT does mention, as LXX does, the word עֶבֶד in this text

[28] See examples in LXX of παῖς as a "person of servile status" in Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, 520. The word παῖς is a translation of the same Hebrew noun עֶבֶד, namely, servant. Cf. LXX Gen 41:10, 37-38; 50:2; 1 Sam 18:22; 25:10; 28:7; 2 Sam 15:14; 1 Kgs 3:15; 21:12, 31 [20:12, 31; MT]; 2 Chr 2:14; 35:23; Neh 9:10. See also Jer 43:31 [36:31 MT], 44:2 [37:32 MT]).

In this narrative unit the only internal synonym provided by the narrative is the word δοῦλος, "slave" (8:9).[29] The reader notices that unlike the allusion to the soldiers, who are described as being under the centurion's authority, the δοῦλος is presented grammatically as a possession of the centurion, who calls him τῷ δούλῳ μου, "my slave." In addition, the soldiers are grammatically described in plural, while the δοῦλος is presented in singular. This same linguistic element is repeated when the centurion refers to his παῖς twice as ὁ παῖς μου (8:6, 8). Accordingly, this narrative detail would indicate that both words are synonyms, allowing the reader to establish that the centurion's παῖς is not only a servant but also specifically a slave (Table 4).[30]

Another element that suggests to the reader that παῖς could be understood as servant is again the grammatical way in which this is presented. As mentioned before, in the LXX the expression παῖς μου always means "my servant," which could allow the reader to interpret the phrase παῖς μου of the centurion's story in this same way.[31]

παῖς	δοῦλος
"Lord, my servant [παῖς μου] is lying at home paralyzed" (Matt 8:6; singular)	Soldiers (στρατιώτας) (Matt 8:9; plural)
"Speak the word, and my servant [παῖς μου] will be healed" (Matt 8:8; singular)	"to my servant [τῷ δούλῳ μου], "Do this," and he does it.' (Matt 8:9 NJB; singular)

Table 4: Παῖς μου and δούλῳ μου in Matthew 8:5-13

[29] Cf. Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Socio-Political and Religious Reading* (JSNTSup 204; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 584, no. 27, who holds that "the reference to 'slave' in v. 9 suggests servant."

[30] Cf. Robert Horton Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on his Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 142. Cf. Ivor Powell, *Matthew's Majestic Gospel: A Distinctively Different Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1986), 150, who suggests that παῖς refers to a "slave boy." Although this opinion is interesting, it is based on a parallel reading of Luke 7:1-10 (where the Gospel renders "slave"), not exclusively in Matthew's Gospel.

[31] Cf. Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 354.

5. Conclusion

It seems that the meaning of παῖς as servant in the centurion's story is based on narrative connections, which may also be presented in other pericopes in which the word παῖς appears. In addition, the reader of the narrative may have been influenced by the meaning provided by the LXX, which commonly defines παῖς as servant. In view of this and from a narrative perspective, the best translation of the noun παῖς in the centurion's story would be "servant," not "boy."

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Overcoming Barriers: Suffering, Rejection and Mission in Luke-Acts

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In a previous article, the parallel narratives of Saul and Ananias in Acts 9 and Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10, was explored to show how the church must struggle to overcome its own internal barriers in order to fulfill its mission as envisioned in Acts 1:8. This article builds on the findings of the past research and attempts to understand the role that suffering and rejection had in the mission of Jesus and those who faithfully took up the cross.

Key Words: Suffering, suffering servant, mission, rejection, Luke, Acts

1. The Son of Man Must Suffer

> And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer (δεῖ παθεῖν) many things and be rejected (ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι) by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed (ἀποκτανθῆναι) and on the third day be raised to life" (Luke 9:22).

It was with these direct and striking words that Jesus forewarns His disciples that their eminent journey to Jerusalem will not be met with the joyful acceptance of a coronation, but with the terrible rejection of a crucifixion.

The journey narrative from Galilee to Jerusalem is a well-known framework that occupies the central portion of Luke's gospel and is often referred to as "the way" (ὁδός; see 9:57, 18:35, 19:36 and 24:32). The journey narrative formally begins in chap. 9:51 with the fateful words, "As the time approached for him to be taken up (ἀναλήμψεως) to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem."[1] The narrative ends with

[1] According to Parsons "this 'taking up' refers to the entire complex of events that forms Jesus' transit to the Father: his passion, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension/exaltation." Mikeal C. Parsons, "Isaiah 53 in Acts 8: A Reply to Professor

Jesus' words to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus: "Did not the Christ have to suffer (δεῖ παθεῖν) these things and then enter his glory?" (Luke 24:26), words that echo chap. 9:22. Jesus reveals the all-important Scriptural foundation for what had just taken place at Jerusalem. "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).[2] The appearance of Moses and Elijah on the mountain of transfiguration at the beginning of the journey to Jerusalem now may be recognized within Jesus' scriptural revelation at the end of His pilgrimage.[3] Later on that same evening, Jesus repeats His instruction to the larger group of disciples gathered in the Upper Room and reminds the disciples that He has already told them *prior* to His death that these things would happen.[4] "This is what I told you while I was still with you: 'Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.' Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, 'This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day" (Luke 24:44-46).

Is there any evidence in Luke concerning which Old Testament Scriptures Jesus used in order to instruct the disciples about His impending fate? Table 1 contains a list of the direct Old Testament quotations in the book of Luke including the speaker/writer of the quote, and a brief content remark. The table shows that Luke has directly quoted the Old Testament seventeen times.

Four quotations refer to Jesus' early life, His birth (Luke 1:17; 2:23), His consecration at the Temple (2:24), and the coming of John the Baptist (3:4-6). Four quotations deal with the temptation in the wilderness (4:4, 8, 10, 12). Then follows Jesus' reference to Isa 61:1-2 and 58:6 in Luke 4:18-19, a section that is considered to be programmatic in Luke-Acts outlining the

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Morna Hooker" in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant*, (ed. William H. Bellinger Jr. and William R. Farmer; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1998), 88.

2 It should be noted that the dramatic events foretold in Luke 9:22 are further illuminated at the transfiguration where "two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure (ἔξοδον), which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:30, 31).

3 While the name Moses appears in both Scriptures, Elijah could be seen as standing as a representative of all the prophets in Luke 24:27. Peter seems to make the link between these two revelatory events when, talking of his own "departure" (ἔξοδον) in 2 Pet 1:15, where he closely binds together the glorious light he witnessed on the mountain with the "words of the prophets" which are like "a light shining in a dark place" (2 Pet 1:19).

4 It would seem logical here to survey the direct Old Testament quotations ascribed to Jesus in Luke as a primary source for this claim.

ministry of Jesus as a jubilee type of release ministry to those who are suffering.[5]

Speaker	Luke	OT	Content
Angel	Luke 1:17	Mal 4:5, 6	Elijah to turn the hearts.
Narrator	Luke 2:23	Exod 13:2	Consecrate the first-born.
Narrator	Luke 2:24	Lev 12:8	Offering of two young birds.
Narrator	Luke 3:4-6	Isa 40:3-5	Prepare the way of the Lord.
Jesus	Luke 4:4	Deut 8:3	Man does not live by bread alone.
Jesus	Luke 4:8	Deut 6:13	Worship only the Lord.
Jesus	Luke 4:10	Ps 91:11	Angels will guard your way.
Jesus	Luke 4:12	Deut 6:16	Do not put the Lord to the test.
Jesus	Luke 4:18, 19	Isa 61:1, 2	The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me.
Jesus	Luke 8:10	Isa 6:9-10	Speak in parables.
Lawyer	Luke 10:27	Deut 6:5 Lev 19:18	Love the Lord and neighbor.
Jesus	Luke 13:19	Ps 104:12	Birds nest in the branches.
Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Peter	Luke 20:17 Matt 21:42 Mark 12:10 Acts 4:11 1Pet 2:7	Ps 118:22	The stone the builders have rejected has become the capstone.
Jesus	Luke 20:37	Exod 3:6 Exod 3:15	Moses at the burning bush.
Jesus	Luke 20:42, 43	Ps 110:1	Sit at My right hand, enemies footstool.
Jesus	Luke 22:37	Isa 53:12	Numbered with the transgressors.
Jesus	Luke 23:46	Ps 31:5	I commit My spirit into Your hands.

Table 1: Direct Old Testament Quotations in Luke

5 For a major article on the subject see F. Neirynck, "Luke 4:16-30 and the Unity of Luke-Acts" in *The Unity of Luke-Acts* (ed. Verheden; Lueven-Louvain, Belgium: Lueven University Press, 1999). He states that "there are a number of good reasons to justify the choice of Lk 4:16-30, widely held to be programmatic for Luke-Acts" (p. 357). The major reason given by Neirynck is that a number of themes introduced in Luke 4:16-30 reappear a number of times throughout Acts.

Three further quotations follow, dealing with Jesus' specific use of parables (Luke 8:10), the well-known instruction to loving the neighbor (10:27), and the birds nesting in the branches of the mustard seed (Luke 13:19). Luke 20:17, quoting Ps 118:22 and speaking of the stone that the builders have rejected, seems to be an important verse within the concept of suffering. Then a reference to Moses at the burning bush addresses the question about resurrection (Luke 20:37) followed by a quote from David's enthronement Psalm (Ps 110:1) about his Lord who will sit down at "the right hand" of the Lord to rule the enemies (Luke 20:42-43). Luke 22:37 may be seen as a most important verse, for it is the only time that Jesus quotes from the Suffering Servant motif text of Isa 53:12. The last quotation reiterates Ps 31:5 as Jesus, in the moment of His death on the cross, commits Himself to His Father (Luke 23:46).

As the table above has shown, there is only one direct quotation in Luke where Jesus tells His disciples that His suffering and death is a fulfillment of the Scriptures: "It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment" (Luke 22:37).[6]

2. The Son of Man Must Be Rejected

In addition to the single text about Jesus' suffering taken from Isa 53, there is one other Scripture that Jesus quotes from the Psalms in direct relation to His death. When the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders[7] come and question His authority, Jesus asks them about John the Baptist's authority and tells the parable of the stewards who kill the heir of the vineyard (Luke 20:9-16). He then cites Ps 118:22, "Then what is the meaning of that which is written: 'The stone the builders rejected (ἀπεδοκίμασαν) has become the capstone'?" (Luke 20:17).[8] The irony of the verse suggests that the stone that had been rejected by the "builders" is ultimately been put in its rightful place by "the Lord" (Ps 118:23). Instead of gaining ownership of the vineyard, the wicked tenants themselves are rejected and the land is given "to others" (Luke 20:16). Although this parable stops short of proclaiming the resurrection of the son who had been killed by the tenants, Luke 9:22 specifically alludes to it

6 For a broad ranging discussion of the Suffering Servant motif see William H. Bellinger Jr. and William R. Farmer, eds., *Jesus and the Suffering Servant* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1998).

7 These are the same three authorities which Jesus first foretold would reject Him in Luke 9:22.

8 It is important to note here that the LXX uses the exact same word for rejection here.

through the use of a parallel structure shown below. Although the son is rejected by the builders, by wicked tenants, and ultimately by Jewish officials, Jesus predicts that He will be raised to life:

"The Son of Man
must suffer many things and
be rejected
by the elders, chief priests,
and teachers of the law, and
He
must be killed
and on the third day be raised to life."[9]

This rejection then acceptance of the Son of Man had already taken place at the very beginning of His ministry.[10] After being "accepted" by God through the Father's declaration at the baptism (Luke 3:22), Jesus proves his moral worth by withstanding three temptations in the wilderness (4:1-13).[11] Returning from the wilderness in the "power of the Spirit" (v. 14), Jesus enters the synagogue in Nazareth and declares, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me" (v. 18).

In an earlier article I argued that the prophetic time element carried over from Daniel 9:24-27, and the quotation of Isa 61:1-2; 58:6, all point to the theme of the Jubilee release (Lev 25:10) as a major component of the Messiah's mission.[12] Within that context, the kinsman-redeemer has the right to purchase those who had been enslaved. The arrogant question by Christ's kin, "Is not this *Joseph's* son" (Luke 4:22, emphasis mine) is meant to parley any conviction either of their own imprisonment or His right to redeem.

Jesus discerns the people's rebuke and declares, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown" (v. 24). Then, the story of rejection is powerfully linked to Israel's past in order to show that the people's

9 Except for the first verb which is an aorist active infinite, the rest of the verbs are in the aorist passive voice, thus alluding to the fact that Christ's resurrection and authority is given rather than taken.

10 It is important to realize here that although the Scriptural allusions to the rejection and death of the Messiah are few in the gospel of Luke, there are many places where this theme is taken up in the life and ministry of Jesus.

11 It is of interest to note here that the antonym of the word used for "rejection" in Luke 20:17 ἀπεδοκίμασαν is δοκίμος, which means "tested, approved, genuine, esteemed."

12 See James H. Park, "The Proclamation of Release in Luke 4:16-30," *Asia Adventist Seminary Studies* 7 (2004), 27-37.

unbelief is but a continuation of the sins of the fathers (cf., Acts 7:50-51). In the Nazareth pericope (Luke 4:16-30), Jesus brings up the stories of Elijah feeding the heathen widow and Elisha healing Namaan, the Syrian. Just as Elijah had been rejected by the idolatrous nation, so Jesus would be rejected by this generation.

Despite Jesus' rejection by His earthly kinsmen, the voice which had spoken acceptance of the Son at the baptism is heard again at the transfiguration before He begins the journey that will lead to His ultimate rejection at Jerusalem (Luke 9:28-26). The martyred John, who had stood by His side at the baptism is now replaced by Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration. These two seminal Old Testament figures are well able to identify, sympathize and encourage Jesus as He sets His face to go to Jerusalem.[13]

Thus far, the analysis has proven that Christ revealed to His disciples that He must suffer according to the Scriptures at the beginning and at the ending of the travel narrative. A survey of Luke's use of Old Testament quotations has pointed out the two main texts that mention Christ's suffering, Luke 22:37 (cf. Isa 53:12) and rejection, Luke 20:17 (cf. Ps 118:12). While it may be said that the direct evidence that Christ *must* suffer according to Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms is limited to only two texts, the thematic elements brought to view by His own words and deeds greatly add to the substance of the claim.

The theme of Christ's inevitable suffering includes the Nazareth pericope (Luke 4:16-30), the key verse in Luke 9:22 which predicts His suffering, rejection, death and resurrection, and the close ties between Himself and other persecuted figures like Moses, Elijah and John the Baptist. The next section will attempt to show how the themes of suffering and rejection are further expanded in the book of Acts through the lives of Peter, Stephen, Philip and Paul.

3. The Followers of the Way Must Suffer

In the prologue of the book of Acts, Luke points out to Theophilos that "after His [Christ's] suffering He showed Himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive" (Acts 1:3). Thus it is evident

[13] In the pivotal chapter 9, the names of John the Baptist, Elijah and "one of the prophets of long ago" (cf. Deut 18:18) are brought up two times. The first is in connection with Herod's perplexity after he had John killed (Luke 9:7, 8) and the disciples who respond to the question of Jesus of who the crowds say that He is (v. 19). Thus, Luke seeks to bind the lives and fates of these figures who share the same experience of being rejected by the earthly authorities, but confirmed by Divine mandate.

that Luke not only affirms the important theme of suffering/rejection and resurrection/acceptance that he carefully illuminated in his gospel, but wishes to carry it forth as a critical element in the life of the church, which would face similar opposition.

The Lukan theme of suffering and rejection not only would appear in the written document but would be part of the oral tradition of the gospel. In the prologue of the book of Luke, the gospel writer states that the apostles who had been with Jesus from the beginning were both "eyewitnesses and servants of the word." As eyewitnesses, the early disciples not only saw all that Jesus did, but were 'ear' witnesses to all that He said as well. Luke affirms this oral revelation by saying that Jesus not only "appeared" to the disciples but "spoke" about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).[14]

Table 2 lists the twenty-three direct quotations from the Old Testament, which Luke quoted in the book of Acts. In Peter's speech to the disciples regarding the replacement of Judas, he quotes from Ps 69:25 (Acts 1:20). In his sermon to his fellow Judeans at Pentecost he cites from Joel's promise regarding the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh (Acts 2:17-21; Joel 2:28-32). Then he cites Ps 16:8-11, which states that the Holy One would not see corruption, a verse that had not previously been given in the gospel of Luke. The enthronement verse (Ps 110:1), which had been quoted by Jesus in Luke 20:42 (cf. Matt 20:42), appears again in Acts 2:34, 35.

These Old Testament quotations show that Peter's sermon was in direct response to the perplexity felt by some concerning the gift of the Spirit ("What does this mean?" [Luke 2:12]), and the derision leveled by others ("They have had too much wine" [2:13]). In the midst of this confusion and mockery which would have prematurely led to the rejection of the work of the church, Peter stands up and gives a Christological explanation of the current events based on the Old Testament Scriptures.

After quoting Joel 2, Peter tells the Judean Jews that the manifestation of the Spirit is the result of the resurrection and enthronement of the very person they had rejected and put to death fifty days earlier. The Prophet, which they have rejected and killed, God has subsequently raised (Ps 16:8-11) and enthroned (Ps 110:1). Thus, Peter confirms the earlier paradigm given by Jesus in Luke 9:22 that He must suffer, be rejected and killed by the elders, but then would be raised to life. According to Peter,

[14] Could it be that during the post-resurrection period, when the Lord opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45) that the texts associated with His suffering and death were more fully given by Jesus and understood by the disciples?

this was "by God's set purpose and foreknowledge" (Acts 2:23) as clearly defined by the prophetic Scriptures and set forth by the life and teachings of Jesus.

In Acts 3, Peter is found speaking to the authorities in the Temple. He uses two verses from the Old Testament to illuminate the miracle that had just taken place with the crippled man: The first is found in the Messianic prophecy in Deut 18:15 where Moses tells Israel that a prophet will be raised up like himself and they must listen to him. Peter then adds that all who will not listen to this prophet will be completely cut off from the people (Acts 3:22, 23).[15] The second is in Acts 3:25, where Peter cites the promise given to Abraham (cf. Gen 22:18; 26:4), and reminds the authorities that they are heirs to this blessing and that God has sent His servant first to them so that they might turn from their wicked ways.

The next day, Peter and John are confronted by the authorities to account for the miracle of the crippled man. In their defense the apostles quote Ps 118:22, about the rejected corner stone, a key verse used by Jesus in Luke 20:17. This verse is mentioned by Jesus in all three synoptic gospels (Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17), and then again by Peter in 1 Pet 2:7.[16] After Peter and John are released, the church under inspiration of the Spirit, sings Ps 2:1, 2 recounting the vanity of the nations in trying to oppose the Anointed One (Acts 4:24-26).[17]

The next eight citations from the Old Testament come from the long polemic of Stephen, which occupies a most critical juncture in Luke-Acts.[18] The first two deal with the calling (Gen 12:1) of Abram and the revelation that his descendents would suffer four hundred years (Gen 15:13-14). Thus, Stephen points out that at the very beginning of the life of Israel, suffering was already a part of their divinely appointed history and

15 This verse is repeated again in Stephen's long polemic in Acts 7:37. After quoting the verse from Deuteronomy, Peter echoes what Christ had already said in Luke 24:26, 27, and 44: "Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days" (Acts 3:24).

16 As we have seen, this theme of rejection/exaltation is one of the central arguments set forth by Jesus and the church to explain His sufferings and consequent vindication.

17 Here again is a reference to how the prophets had foretold these events: "Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen" (Acts 4:27, 28).

18 "Recent literary criticism has demonstrated the pivotal juncture of Stephen's speech in (Acts 7) in illuminating the overarching plot of Luke's two volumes." David P Moessner, "'The Christ must Suffer': New Light on the Jesus–Peter, Stephen, Paul Parallels in Luke-Acts," *Novum Testamentum* 28 (1986), 227.

destiny (Acts 7:2-7). Then Stephen mentions Moses' twofold rejection by the people to be their ruler (7:27, 28, 35) as it is echoed in the life of Jesus, the ministry of the apostles, and Stephen's own impending martyrdom. The call of Moses at the burning bush (7:33, 34), the citing again of Deut 18:15 (already mentioned by Peter in chap 3:22), the making of the golden calf (Exod 32:1, 23; Amos 5:25-27), and finally the citation from Isa 66:1, 2 that heaven is God's throne and earth is His footstool (Acts 7:49), link the past redemptive history of Israel to the current Christ-event.[19] In his final appeal, Stephen links the rejection of Christ and His church with the past transgressions of the fathers: "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him" (Acts 7:51-52).[20]

Like the transfiguration before His death, the Son of Man is now shown after His death in glory, standing next to the Father in heaven. This standing next to the Father provides the divine vindication of His Son and those who have followed Him by faith into the heavenly sanctuary. Just as Jesus forgave His enemies (Luke 23:24) and committed Himself to the Father (Luke 23:46) at the time of His exodus (cf. Luke 9:31), Stephen follows in the footsteps of His Lord at the end of his journey (Acts 7:59-60).[21]

Following Stephen's vision and death, which "link him inseparably to Moses and the prophet like Moses,"[22] the Gentile mission begins in Samaria with Philip (Acts 8:5-8) followed by Peter and John who come to set the church's seal on the new mission field (Acts 8:14-17). Philip is directed to the eunuch from Ethiopia who is reading from Isa 53:7, 8 (Acts 8:32, 33). In an apparent echo of Luke 24:26, 27 where Jesus "begins" with Moses and all the prophets, "Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus." According to Parsons,

[19] Moessner states in "The Christ Must Suffer," 228: "The journey motif that pulsates throughout this rehearsal not only serves as a convenient scaffolding for the leading ideas; it is integral to the view of Israel's history that informs the entire presentation."

[20] Note the rejection/deliverer motif is also echoed in the life of Joseph, ibid., 229: "Though unrecognized by his brothers on their first visit this Joseph was *cast aside* by his own becomes exalted among them as their 'deliverer'." See comment about Moses also being "cast aside" on the same page.

[21] See Moessner, "The Christ Must Suffer," 234, for a discussion on how Stephen's death parallels the death of Jesus.

[22] Ibid., 233.

> Through the use of an intertextual echo, Phillip's preaching the good news, beginning with this Scripture (Acts 8:35), is given content by the precursor in Luke 24. Isaiah 53 is a part of those Scriptures that give testimony to the divine necessity of Christ's suffering for the redemption of Israel and for the sake of the repentance and the forgiveness of sins of the Gentiles.[23]

One of the chosen instruments to accomplish the mission to the nations was Saul, about whom the Lord says, "I will show him how much he must suffer (δεῖ παθεῖν) (cf. Luke 9:22) for my name" (Acts 9:16). Paul's dramatic conversion from persecuting those of "The Way" [24] to suffering with the crucified and risen Lord is immediately evident as the Jews in Damascus plan to kill him (9:23).

Some years later during his first missionary journey, Paul cites five out of the six Old Testament quotations in Acts attributed to him while defending his gospel in a synagogue at Pisidian Antioch. Much like Stephen's discourse, he rehearses the history of Israel, shows that Jesus was a descendant of David and though rejected by man, is the rightful heir of the Father (13:22, 33; cf. Heb 1:5, 5:5; 13:35).[25]

After the rejection of Paul, which mirrors the rejection of Jesus, Peter and Stephen, he grounds his mission to the Gentiles upon Isa 49:6 (see Acts 13:47).[26] The last time Paul quotes the Old Testament in Acts is to apologize for his rude remarks towards the high priest (Acts 23:5; cf. Exod 22:28).[27] Lastly, James quotes Amos 9:11, 12 to justify the incorporation of the Gentiles (Acts 15:16-17).

From a brief overview of Luke's use of the Old Testament in his two-volume work, Luke-Acts, some general observations may be made:

[23] Parsons, "Isaiah 53 in Acts 8," 106.

[24] Ibid., 88-89: "The way of Jesus becomes paradigmatic for Jesus' followers. . . . It is not surprising, then, that the favorite term for the Christian movement in Acts is simply the 'Way' (see 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4, 24:14, 22)."

[25] Paul again emphasizes here that the rejection of Jesus was a fulfillment of the prophets: "The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath" (13:27).

[26] Moessner, "The Christ Must Suffer," 224: "Peter Stephen, Paul must suffer rejection like their Messiah, because that is the very manner in which the fulfillment of the messianic history takes place within the promised plans of God."

[27] Ibid., 248: "Like the mountain revelation, so Paul is sent on a journey mission which will eventually take a decisive turn in the Temple as Paul journeys to Jerusalem." Cf. ibid., 250.

1. It appears that the revelation that Jesus gave to His disciples in Luke 9:22 unfolded within the context of the journey narrative concomitantly to their capacity to grasp the truth which had been foretold by Moses, the Psalms and all the prophets about the Lord's Anointed who "must suffer" and would be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law in Jerusalem.

2. The three key Old Testament texts quoted by Jesus in the gospel of Luke (20:17, 42, 43; 22:37), although few, provide a solid basis from which the early Church would reveal its life and the continuing saga of testimony, rejection, and expanding witness to those outside the covenant of faith. In addition to the rich thematic elements of the journey narrative and the three key texts, it must also be added the Nazareth pericope in Luke 4:16-32 and the post resurrection instruction of Jesus to his disciples in Luke 24.

3. Each of the three key texts in Luke are repeated in the book of Acts with additional textual and thematic references. All of these texts appear prior to the Jerusalem Council in the section of Acts 1-15 and are concentrated with Peter in Acts 2-4, Stephen's long polemic in Acts 7, in the story of Philip and the eunuch in Acts 7-8, and the defense of Paul before the synagogue in Acts 13. Table 2 summarizes this information.

Speaker	Acts	OT	Content
Peter	Acts 1:20	Ps 69:25	May another take Judas' place
Peter	Acts 2:17-21	Joel 2:28-32	Pouring out Spirit on all people.
Peter	Acts 2:25-28 Acts 13:35	Ps 16&8,11	Christ will not suffer corruption.
Peter Jesus Jesus	Acts 2:34, 35 Matt 22:44 Luke 20:42	Ps 110:1	Sit at right hand, enemies a footstool.
Peter Stephen	Acts 3:22, 23 Acts 7:37	Deut 18:18, 19	Raise up a prophet like Moses, you must listen to him.
Peter	Acts 3:25	Gen 22:18 Gen 26:4	Through your seed all the nations will be blessed.
Peter Jesus Jesus Jesus Peter	Acts 4:11 Matt 21:42 Mark 12:10 Luke 20:17 1 Pet 2:7	Ps 118:22	The stone the builders have rejected has become the capstone.
Church	Acts 4:25	Ps 2:1, 2	The nations rage against the Anointed One in vain.

Table 2: Direct Old Testament Quotations in Acts

Speaker	Acts	OT	Content
Stephen	Acts 7:3	Gen 12:1	Abram must leave his country.
Stephen	Acts 7:6, 7	Gen15:13, 14	Descendents will be slaves for 400 yrs.
Stephen Stephen	Acts 7:27, 28 Acts 7:35	Exod 2:13, 14	Who made you ruler over us?
Stephen	Acts 7:33, 34	Exod 3:5-10	Moses at the burning bush.
Stephen	Acts 7:33, 34	Exod 3:5-10	Moses at the burning bush.
Stephen Peter	Acts 7:37 Acts 3:22	Deut 18:15	Raise up a prophet like Moses, you must listen to him.
Stephen	Acts 7:40	Exod 32:1, 23	Making of the golden calf.
Stephen	Acts 7:42, 43	Amos 5:25-27	Israel worshipped false gods.
Stephen	Acts 7:49	Isa 66:1-2	Heaven is throne, earth footstool.
Narrator	Acts 8:32, 33	Isa 53:7-8	The Suffering Servant
Paul	Acts 13:22	1Sam 13:14	David is man after God's heart.
Paul	Acts 13:33 Heb. 1:5 Heb 5:5	Ps 2:7	You are my Son, this day I have become your Father.
Paul	Acts 13:35 Acts 2:25-28	Ps 16:10	The Holy One will not see decay.
Paul	Acts 13:47	Isa 49:6	Light to Gentiles to bring salvation.
James	Acts 15:16, 17	Amos 9:11, 12	Rebuild David's tent to include nations.
Paul	Acts 23:5	Exod 22:28	Must not speak evil about the ruler.

Table 2: Direct Old Testament Quotations in Acts—Continued

4. Reflections on Suffering, Rejection, and Mission

The health and wealth gospel, which was so fervently preached in the prosperous 80s and 90s, seems a far cry from the suffering Christ and His disciples went through for the sake of the gospel. Apparently, Paul faced the same cultural barriers in his day, because "a deity's approval meant earthly blessing, and inasmuch as the desire for health, wealth and status was the driving motive for participation in the Graeco-Roman civic

cults."[28] Therefore, "Paul's suffering posed an immense barrier to the gospel."[29] After all, how could a divinely ordained messenger be the depository of so much affliction?[30]

Hafemann has argued on the "theological origin, cause and purpose" of Paul's suffering within the framework of his mission.[31] Instead of being a sign of God's curse, the sufferings that Paul experienced placed him squarely in the line of the patriarchs and prophets that often had been subjected to the same rejection.[32] Instead of being a sign of God's disapproval, the sufferings that Paul endured were the very element that sealed his calling as an apostle.[33]

In the very first revelation of the gospel, the Lord God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Gen 3:15). In the very last episode of salvation history it is written,

[28] Scott Hafemann, "'Because of Weakness,' (Galations 4:13): The Role of Suffering in the Mission of Paul" in *Gospel to the Nations* (ed. Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson; Leicester, England: Apollos, Intervarsity Press:, 2000), 134-135.

[29] Ibid., 135.

[30] See 2 Cor 11:23-33 where Paul lists the many sufferings he had to endure as an apostle. In addition, the modern pluralistic mentality of 'I'm ok, you're ok,' where differences are downplayed and rejection is rare, makes it hard to fathom the words of Paul that, "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim 3:12).

[31] Hafemann, "Because of Weakness," 133. While it is not within the scope of this article to present Hafemann's many and excellent links between suffering and ministry, the following quotation shows the essence of his argument: "For Christ, this suffering was the centre of his calling as the messianic Son of God who was sent to atone for the sins of God's people. For Paul, it was the centre of his calling as an apostle, through whom the gospel of Christ was being mediated to the Gentiles" (135). See also his excellent doctoral dissertation presented in the book, Scott Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry in the Spirit: Paul's Defense of His Ministry in II Corinthians 2:14-3:3* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman's, 1990).

[32] In fact it would be of interest for further study to see if the notion of rejection and suffering might be one of the key theological elements in the historical recounting of Israel in the New Testament. As we have seen, it certainly was a main focal point of Stephen's long polemic in Acts 7, which ultimately led to his demise.

[33] Note what Paul says in 2 Cor 11:23 when contrasting his apostleship with the false teachers: "Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this). I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again." While he does spend one verse affirming his Jewish background (2 Cor 11:22), he spends eleven verses outlining his sufferings because it is these that give him standing in the sight of God as a true apostle (2 Cor 11:23-33).

"Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (Rev 12:17). It is clear from these two verses that those who attempt to faithfully spread the gospel will always be met with severe opposition.

Could it be that in our current studies, teaching, and practice of mission the aspect of suffering and rejection is too often left out of the theoretical and statistical frameworks which are often set forth as paradigms of success?[34] As the life of Paul and many others have demonstrated, both the personal spiritual existence and the mission of the church are permeated with internal and external barriers that often cause suffering. Those who follow Jesus on the Way will meet the same difficulties, the same enmity that He met.

Before I had the privilege of teaching pastors in graduate school, I spent twenty-five years 'in the trenches' serving the local church. From that real world experience I have encapsulated my own philosophy of church growth with the words, "God grows the church by growing people . . . and God grows people through suffering." If we are to grow we must "take root below and bear fruit above" (Isa 37:31). As Jesus Himself pointed out, the seed must first be buried in the ground and die if it is to reproduce life (John 12:24).

A deeper understanding of the role that suffering, spiritual death, faith and fruit have in the mission of the church will better prepare both the leaders and the laity to overcome the internal and external barriers which are often met as the church goes forth to make disciples of the nations until Jesus comes.

[34] For instance, it would be difficult to find the notion of suffering and rejection as a component of growth in the popular church growth tool set forth by Christian A. Schwarz in *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (Carol Stream: ChurchSmart Resources, 1998).

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THE CHRISTUS VICTOR MODEL OF ATONEMENT[1]

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The biblical theme and doctrine of atonement has been very important in Christian history. It has been explained from two major perspectives: the objective and subjective views. One of the objective views is the Christus Victor model which presents the atonement as a conflict between Christ and the powers of evil. However, this model has been misinterpreted, misunderstood, and overlooked through time especially after the period of the Church Fathers. This article aims to evaluate this model based on the biblical theology of atonement. It also seeks to briefly show its relevance for Christian life and theology.

Key Words: Atonement, model/theory, Christus Victor, victory, Jesus Christ, evil

1. Introduction

The atonement is one of the most central themes in biblical theology. It revolves around the significance and extent of the varied roles of Jesus Christ in His work for the salvation of humanity from sin. There have been a variety of theories proposed for the atonement and each one has its area of biblical emphasis.[2] Of these models, the Christus Victor model is

[1] I am grateful to Dr. Woodrow W. Whidden under whose permission, guidance, and support I was able to research and write this article.

[2] These theories include among others the Socinian exemplary theory, the Moral Influence theory, the Governmental model and the satisfaction theory. Some of these will be mentioned or briefly explained in the course of this study. Detailed explanation of these and other theories can be found in the following sources: Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 800-817; Augustine H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell, 1907), 728-744, 747-750; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 384-391; John Miley, *Systematic Theology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 2:113-124.

noteworthy. It is known as the classic model since it dominated the church's thinking on the atonement until the time of Anselm and Abelard.[3] Its emphasis is that the life and work of Christ on earth brought victory over evil and its demonic powers and this lead to the sinners' liberation from bondage of sin and Satan.[4] This model sees the atonement as a divine conflict and victory in which Christ fights and triumphs over the evil powers of the world that hold humankind in bondage and suffering. Christ's victory over these powers brings a new relation (reconciliation) between God and humanity.[5] It is also called the dramatic view because of its dualistic nature of conflict.[6]

However, there are certain aspects of this model that theologians have seen as illogical and unconvincing.[7] Consequently, this model has been dropped in favor of others. Hence the questions: Is the Christus Victor model of atonement biblically consistent? How does it work with other models of atonement to help us understand Christ's work of salvation? What is the significance of this model of atonement for Christian life and mission? This paper aims to provide a basic biblical theology for the Christus Victor model of atonement. First, it will provide a historical survey of the Christus Victor model of atonement through church history from the apostolic times to the times of post-Reformation. Second, there will be a biblical evaluation of the above-mentioned model and finally, a presentation of this model's significance for Christian life and mission.

3 Erickson, 810; Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Atonement* (trans. A.G. Herbert; New York, NY: Macmillan, 1969), 4.

4 Thomas N. Finger, *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 1:317-324.

5 Aulen, 4, 5; Richard Rice, "The Doctrine of Atonement in Contemporary Protestant Theology" in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Theological Studies* (ed. W Richard Lesher; Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1981), 480; Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ: Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1993), 161-162.

6 Aulen, 4; Erickson, 810.

7 These aspects will be discussed later in the study.

2. Historical Survey of the Christus Victor Model of Atonement

This section of the study will trace the Christus Victor model of atonement from the time of the Church Fathers to post-Reformation times.[8]

2.1 Early Church and Patristic Period

The Christus Victor model of atonement has been dominant throughout the early church period. It was the ruling idea of atonement for the first thousand years of Christian history.[9] The first patristic writer to give a clear and comprehensive doctrine of atonement and redemption was Irenaeus.[10] He held that the work of Christ is first and foremost a victory over the powers, which hold humanity in bondage, the evil powers of sin, death and the devil. This victory creates a new situation, bringing their rule to an end and setting human beings free from their dominion. He believed that the incarnation was the necessary preliminary work to the atoning work of Christ because it was through it that God entered our sinful world as a man to save humans from sin. He emphasized that the obedience of Jesus Christ to the Father was the means of His triumph.[11] This victory was recapitulated in every human in whom the Holy Spirit lives and works. In addition, Irenaeus believed that though the death of Christ is central to the atonement, it is not to be seen in isolation from Christ's life work as a whole. For Irenaeus, atonement is solely the work of God in which God is the reconciler and the reconciled.[12] This was because no other power apart from God could deliver humankind from sin. Therefore God in Christ was the effective agent in the work of

8 The historical survey in this study will have as its main source the classic work of Gustaf Aulen earlier quoted in the study. Consequently this section of the study will draw largely from it. However it should be noted that Aulen had his biases on the topic. Therefore this study admits that his thesis needs to be critiqued for a more balanced view of the topic. Robert Letham does this briefly in his work quoted earlier. Letham, 162, 163.

9 Aulen, 6; Miley, 106. It was also known as the ransom theory and it flourished in the patristic period and held its position until the 11th century A.D.

10 Aulen, 17.

11 Ibid., 29.

12 Ibid., 32, 33.

redemption.[13] This is the Christus Victor model of atonement according to Ireneaus.

The Eastern (Greek) Church Fathers, Origen, Athanasius, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem and Chrysostom, followed the classic view of the atonement, though they differed in thought and philosophy. They had a similar underlying agreement of the work of Christ and this showed that, despite the influence of philosophy, this model of atonement was deeply rooted in their teachings.[14]

On the side of the Western (Latin) Church Fathers, Ambrose, Augustine, Leo the Great, Cesarius of Arles, Faustus of Rhegium and Gregory the Great, the classic view also prospered especially through the works of Augustine (on Christ's incarnation) and Gregory the Great (in his profuse use of imagery from the classic view). However, some of the Western Fathers, such as Tertullian and Cyprian, began to lay the foundation for the satisfaction model of atonement. They only made tentative suggestions and not an all-out, open attack on the classic view. In that case, the classic view was dominant for both the Western and the Eastern Fathers.[15] While the Church Fathers agreed on the role of the incarnation and the divine love in the atonement,[16] there were a variety of responses on the aspect of Christ's dealings with the devil in His work of atonement.[17] This will be discussed in detail in the biblical evaluation of this study.

2.2 The Middle Ages

During this period, there was a major transition on the model of atonement, from the classic model to the satisfaction model. The foundation for the satisfaction model had been laid by Tertullian and Cyprian of the Western Church Fathers and later championed by Anselm of Canterbury.[18] The satisfaction model was based on the merit and satisfaction concept from Roman law applied by Tertullian to the practice

[13] Aulen, 33.

[14] Ibid., 38.

[15] Ibid., 39.

[16] Ibid., 41-47.

[17] Ibid., 48.

[18] Ibid., 81-84.

of penance.[19] Anselm held that the transgression of humanity required satisfaction made by humans to God. A human cannot make the necessary satisfaction because he/she is sinful. If a person cannot do it, then God must do it. However a human and not God must make the act of satisfaction. Therefore God became human.[20]

The strengths of the satisfaction model over the classic model include its rational and juridical character. Since it is based on the law and justice of God, it is moral, ethical and legalistic in nature and this appealed more to the church of the medieval times.[21]

In addition to the satisfaction model, Peter Abelard, a younger contemporary of Anselm, championed the exemplary model of atonement.[22] He attacked the classic and satisfaction models alike and emphasized that Christ was the great example to arouse responsive love for God in humans, which is the basis for reconciliation and forgiveness, the basis of atonement. It is on this basis that Abelard became the father of the subjective model of atonement.[23] However this model did not have great influence or gain much of a hearing during the Middle Ages, perhaps because this model does not place any special significance on Christ's death in an age where the passion of Christ was highly emphasized in theology and practice.[24]

These models, the satisfaction and exemplary models, began to dominate the church's view of the atonement in the medieval period and consequently, the classic model, as a whole, began to disappear. However parts of this model were still preserved in the hymns, art, Easter sequences, liturgy and poetry of the Middle Ages.[25]

2.3 Reformation and Post-Reformation Periods

It is interesting to note that though the classic model of atonement mostly disappeared in the time of the Middle Ages it reappeared on the stage of

19 Gerald O'Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 199.

20 Aulen, 86; O'Collins, 199, 200. This is fully explained in Anselm's classic work *Cur Deo Homo?*

21 Aulen, 87-92.

22 Ibid., 95.

23 Ibid., 95, 96.

24 Ibid., 96, 97.

25 Ibid., 98,99.

church history through the teachings and writings of Martin Luther with an even greater intensity.[26]

Though some theologians have regarded Luther as a proponent of the satisfaction view of atonement because of his use of the terms "merits," "satisfaction," and "sacrifice" a careful study of his writings shows otherwise.[27] Apart from the fact that Luther loved to use the imagery of the classic model with great force, the heart of his teaching was Christ's victory over the tyrants that hold humankind captive.[28] This is reflected in his catechisms, commentaries and even in his hymns.[29] He upheld the main pillars of the classic model: (1) Atonement is completely divine because the one power able to overcome the tyrants is the omnipotent God. Atonement is God reconciling and God reconciled;[30] (2) incarnation is central to the atonement because God came to dwell in humanity through Christ;[31] and (3) atonement is dualistic and dramatic since it involves a conflict between God and the powers of evil. In addition, Luther, who championed justification by faith during the Reformation, believed that justification through Christ is the same as Christ's victory over sin, death and the devil.[32] Indeed Luther had returned to the patristic view of atonement with greater intensity.[33]

However, Luther's successors did not uphold the classic model that he had strongly heralded. Melanchthon and some of Luther's contemporaries reverted back to the satisfaction model and this became the established Lutheran (Protestant) Orthodoxy.[34] It is interesting to note that though there is a similarity between Anselm's satisfaction model and that of the Protestant Orthodoxy their views on satisfaction differ. While Anselm stated that Christ's death provides satisfaction for humanity's atonement, the Protestant Orthodoxy saw the whole fulfillment of God's law throughout Christ's life as satisfaction.[35] Christ's life of perfect obedience

26 Aulen, 99, 100.

27 Ibid., 101, 102, 116.

28 Ibid., 103, 104.

29 Ibid., 104-106.

30 Ibid., 107.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 121, 122.

34 Ibid., 123, 124.

35 Ibid., 129.

must satisfy the law and His death must pay the penalty to satisfy the justice of God.[36] Therefore the retributive justice of God and the law are central factors to be satisfied for reconciling atonement of humanity in the view of Protestant Orthodoxy. While both Anselm and Protestant Orthodoxy accept the satisfaction model, atonement in Protestant Orthodoxy is a more developed theory of the Anselmic doctrine.[37]

After Melanchthon developed and established the atonement view in Protestant Orthodoxy, the classic model was completely suppressed in the realm of theology.[38] There was also further suppression of the classic model as a result of the subjective humanistic views of atonement, which arose in the period of the Enlightenment. These were in conflict with the Protestant Orthodox view of the atonement. Thus during the Enlightenment, the subjective views of the atonement gained ground. The basic assumption of these views was that God did not need atonement to be made. Sinful humans are the ones who need change. When a person repents, he/she changes God's attitude and He responds by giving him/her happiness and salvation.[39] The central idea of the subjective views is anthropocentric and moralistic.[40]

The nineteenth century brought with it continuous controversy between the subjective and the objective views of atonement.[41] In conclusion, the classic model of the atonement (Christus Victor) has since been lost in this controversy.

3. Evaluation of the Christus Victor Model of Atonement

3.1 Illogical Aspects

As stated earlier, the Church Fathers of the East and West agreed on the role of the incarnation and divine love in the atonement. However, in the aspect of Christ's work in relation to Satan, there is disagreement. The classic view of Christ's dealing with the devil has two controverted parts,

36 Aulen, 129, 130.

37 Ibid., 129.

38 Ibid., 132.

39 Ibid., 135.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

the ransom paid by Christ to the devil and the deception of the devil by Christ.

The aspect of the ransom paid by Christ to the devil was championed by Origen.[42] He held that Satan is now the governing power of the world and all humankind is enslaved to him because of sin.[43] To get humanity back to God, a ransom price had to be paid. Origen asks: "From whom were we bought? To whom was the ransom paid?"[44] According to him, it was obviously to the devil, the one whose servants humankind is. He named the price. He determined and accepted the ransom that Christ paid for humankind.[45] Gregory of Nazianzus rejects the idea of a transaction with the devil and dismisses the idea of a ransom altogether.[46] This continued to meet strong criticism, but the ransom theory became firmly established in the church.[47]

The second controverted aspect of the classic model, the deception of the devil by Christ's humanity, had Gregroy of Nyssa as its main proponent.[48] In direct relation to the ransom aspect, this view held that Christ was given to the devil as a ransom, but Christ's divinity was enveloped by human flesh. Hence Satan was deceived by God because Christ's deity was deliberately concealed from him so that he could accept Christ as a ransom.[49] Using the analogy of fishing, Gregory of Nyssa claims that the devil was the fish, Christ's humanity was the bait, but Christ's divinity was the hook.[50] Rufinus, Gregory the Great and even Augustine all likened the cross to a bait, a net or a trap, along the same lines as Gregory of Nyssa.[51] In addition, Gregory of Nyssa justified God's deception of the devil by claiming that the deception was just and right because it was motivated by love and it gave the devil back his fair due, a taste of his own medicine.[52] However, Gregory of Nazianzus, John of

42 Erickson, 810; O'Collins, 198, 199.

43 Ibid.

44 Erickson, 810, 811.

45 Aulen, 49; Erickson, 811.

46 Aulen, 50.

47 Ibid.

48 Erickson, 810, 811; O'Collins, 199.

49 Erickson, 811.

50 Aulen, 52; Erickson, 811; O'Collins, 199.

51 Aulen, 53; Erickson, 812.

52 Erickson, 811, 812.

Damascus and Athanasius found the whole idea of Christ who offered to the devil definitely repugnant.[53]

It is this aspect of the classic Christus Victor model, of Christ's dealing with the devil in the atonement, which has attracted so much criticism and rejection since it appears to be unconvincing and not worthy of serious consideration.[54] It is also because of this aspect that this model is called the ransom-to-Satan theory of the atonement.[55] As a result of this aspect of the classic theory, many have dismissed this model altogether as ethically intolerable.[56] This explains why it disappeared from the spotlight in the history of the atonement as stated earlier.

As seen in the historical overview, the Christus Victor model of atonement thrived from a period of time in church history. However, it began to fizzle away because of what could be called its illogical aspects propounded by Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. Was Jesus a ransom paid to the devil (as held by Origen) or does the Bible say otherwise? Did God deceive the devil by hiding Christ's divinity under His humanity (as held by Gregory of Nyssa)? This section will evaluate these aspects from the biblical perspective of the atonement.

3.2 Biblical Perspectives

To fully understand and appreciate the illogical aspects of the Christus Victor model of atonement mentioned above, there is a need to look at the biblical picture of one of the most primary models of atonement known as the penalty substitution-satisfaction model. This model stands out as the view of atonement with the highest biblical support. Its imagery can be seen from the Old Testament all through to the New. It begins with the symbolism of the Old Testament sacrificial system[57] where the life-blood of an innocent animal is offered as a sacrifice for sin as a substitute for the life of the sinner-offerer. This satisfied the just penalty for sin, which is death. Therefore the blood atones for the sinner and it is accepted as a substitute to satisfy the penalty for sin (Lev 1:3, 4).

It is important to mention here that all sacrifices offered in the Old Testament sacrificial system pointed to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (John 1:29). Directly related to this is the concept of substitution and

53 Erickson, 812, 813; O'Collins, 199.

54 Aulen, 47.

55 Miley, 106.

56 Aulen, 47.

57 Berkhof, 377.

sacrifice in Isaiah 53. The verses in this chapter clearly state the role of the Messiah as the Suffering Servant and Lamb of God. He was to be a substitute and a sacrifice by bearing the grieves, sorrows (v. 4), wounds, bruises, chastisement, stripes (v. 5), iniquity and transgression (vv. 6, 8) among others for the sinner, that is for His people. Just as the sins of the sinner were transferred symbolically to the sacrificial lamb, our sins were transferred to Jesus, as the text makes clear.[58] This vivid imagery can more naturally be understood in terms of just satisfaction of legal penalty through vicarious substitution.[59]

The Gospel narratives go along the same line in the penalty substitution-satisfaction theme. The Gospels make it clear that Jesus saw His life and death as a fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, especially of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 as the sacrificial Lamb of God (Matt 17:12; Mark. 8:21; Luke 22:37).[60] In addition, He saw His death as a ransom (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45) and Himself as a substitute (John 15:13).[61] It is important to note here that the work of Jesus Christ was the work of the Father, because Christ was sent by the Father (John 3:16,17; 6:38; 10:36).[62] His work was not independent of the Father.

The book of Hebrews is a biblical masterpiece that shows the antitypical fulfillment of the sacrificial system in the life, person and work of Jesus Christ. In this epistle, Christ is also presented as sacrifice (9:6-15; 10:5-18) and substitute (2:9; 9:28).[63] The epistles of Peter and John also agree with Hebrews that Christ is the substitute (1 Peter 2:24) and propitiation (1 John 2:2).[64]

The Pauline corpus agrees with the testimony of the Old Testament, the Gospels and the above epistles on the penalty-substitution-satisfaction model of atonement. A careful consideration of the epistles of Paul reveals some major basic points along this line. First, atonement is the work of love of both the Father and the Son (Rom 5:8; 8:3, 32; 2 Cor 5:14, 19).[65]

58 Erickson, 823; Berkhof, 377.

59 Woodrow Whidden, Class Syllabus (Notes)/Course Outline for Seminar in Christian Theology and Church History (Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, December, 2008), 36.

60 Erickson, 824.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid., 823, 824.

63 Ibid., 829-831.

64 Ibid., 830.

65 Ibid., 826.

They are not independent of each other. Second, the death of Christ was God's sacrifice offered to God for us (Rom 5:8; 8:32; Gal 3:13; Eph 5:2; 1 Thess 5:10).[66] Third, Christ's death is the satisfaction of God's wrath against sin (Rom 3:21-26).[67] God's wrath is His hatred for sin and His just activity to make a complete and final end of it and all that adheres to it, out of His divine love for His children.[68] His holiness and justice require that there be atonement if the condemned condition of sinners is to be overcome. The love of God provides that atonement.[69]

Numerous Pauline passages, which speak of God's wrath against sin, are evidence that Christ's death was not simply a covering and a cleansing from sin (expiation), but it was a necessary appeasement (propitiation) of a God who hates sin and is radically opposed to it (Rom 1:18; 2:5,8; 4:15; 5:9; 9:22; 12:19; 13:4-5; Eph 2:3; 5:6; Col 3:6; 1 Thess 1:10; 2:16; 5:9).[70]

The Bible is very clear that every sinful human can be forgiven and reconciled to God only because the just penalty of sin, which is death, has been paid and satisfied by the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This provision for atonement has been made by God Himself out of His love for sinful humanity. It is from this point that all other models of atonement, including the Christus Victor (ransom) model, will be understood and appreciated.[71] However, this brings us back to the question, "How can the penal-substitution-satisfaction model give a clearer understanding of the classic Christus Victor model especially as it relates to the two "illogical aspects" ransom and deception mentioned earlier?"

In regard to the ransom aspect, the Bible makes it clear that Jesus Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice and ransom to God (Eph 5:2) to meet

66 Erickson, 826

67 Ibid., 827.

68 Edward Heppenstall, "Subjective and Objective Aspects of the Atonement" in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Theological Studies* (ed. W. Richard Lesher; Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1981), 678, 679.

69 Erickson, 826; Finger, 346; Heppenstall, 681, 689.

70 Erickson, 828, 829.

71 Through the penalty substitution-satisfaction model, it is clear how the death of Christ shows that the law of God is righteous and that breaking it has serious consequences (the governmental model), how the death of Christ is a demonstration of His love to draw sinful humankind to salvation (moral influence model) and how this death is an example of how we should live(the exemplary model). Erickson, 836-838.

God's just requirements not those of Satan.[72] It is interesting to note that theologians have spoken of satisfaction for atonement in different ways, namely, satisfying the devil's demands, satisfying God's law, honor and justice, and satisfying the moral order of the world. However, though these formulations are true in different degrees, they place a limitation on God by representing Him as subordinate to these things, controlling His actions, being accountable to them and unable to free Himself from them. It is therefore, important to note that it is God Himself "in His inner Being who needs to be satisfied and not something external to Himself."[73] The law, honor, justice and the moral order should only be "seen as expressions of God's own character. Atonement is a 'necessity' because it 'arises from within God Himself.'"[74] This, therefore, supports the fact that Jesus' life as a ransom was given to satisfy God's inherent demands for justice against sin and not to meet the devil's demands.

This brings to fore the second illogical aspect of the Christus Victor model: Did God deceive the devil by covering Christ's divinity with humanity as taught by Gregory of Nyssa? Absolutely not! This goes against God's just and honest character. It will not be wrong to say that the devil was self-deceived but not intentionally tricked by God. He was deceived by either of two reasons: Either, he misunderstood the humble servant nature of Christ's messianic kingdom and reign which was evident in Christ's human nature. Therefore he was deceived by his wrong assumptions about the nature and power of the kingdom of God present in the life and ministry of Jesus;[75] or, "Satan was a victim of his own pride, for he thought that he could overcome and hold Christ, when in reality he had no such power. Because Jesus had never sinned, and therefore was not liable to death, he was not under Satan's control."[76]

The biblical evaluation of the Christus Victor (or classic) model of atonement reveals that certain aspects of it (as proposed by some Church Fathers) are not consistent with the biblical picture of atonement.[77] These aspects, which include Christ's death as a ransom paid to the devil and the deception of the devil by God, fall short of the biblical picture of the

72 Erickson, 839; Berkhof, 375.

73 John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1986), 123.

74 Ibid.

75 Finger, 333.

76 Erickson, 812. The quote is an explanation of Augustine's reaction to the 'deception of Satan' aspect of the classic model of atonement.

77 The classic view of the atonement was dismissed because of the incongruous nature of the theory in addition to its lack of biblical consistency. Berkhof, 385; Miley, 107.

atonement. When all the theories of atonement are viewed as an integrated whole, it provides a good basis to evaluate each one in the light of the whole biblical picture of atonement. Though the theories of atonement are generally divided into objective and subjective theories, each with its own biblical support and emphasis, each becomes more meaningful and helpful when it is viewed as complementary to others rather than in exclusion or opposition to the others.[78] Therefore "one theory is supplementing the others by filling out the fuller picture of what the death of Christ can accomplish in the redemption of estranged sinners."[79] The classic Christus Victor model is a case in point in this study. It is better understood and appreciated when seen in the light of other theories.

However, it is important to stress here again that though atonement can be seen as subjective, it is primarily objective.[80] While the subjective theories focus on the moral influence of Christ's death on sinful humanity, the objective theories emphasize Christ's death as the satisfaction of the demands of divine justice and mercy inherent in God's nature and character.[81] It can be logically said that the objective views provide the basis for the subjective views of atonement since they deal with the primary cause for the atonement, the sin problem. The penal substitution satisfaction and classic models of atonement are objective since they address the objective factors that explain the sin problem and God's solution to it. This objective basis provides a good foundation for the understanding of all the other models of the atonement especially the subjective ones. This shows that atonement can be better appreciated when all its theories or views are seen as a biblical whole.

4. Significance of The Christus Victor Model for Christian Life And Mission

Theology affects faith and practice. Therefore, how can the theology of this classic model of atonement help the Christian in life and mission?

78 Whidden, 31.

79 Ibid.

80 Berkhof, 373.

81 The objective view states that the atonement must first do justice to God and to the account God gives of Himself in relation to the sin problem. Heppenstall, 667; Whidden, 32.

Here are a few implications of the Christus Victor model of atonement for the Christian life and mission.

1. Christus Victor as a theological motif/theme throughout the Bible. More than just seen as another theory of atonement, the Christus Victor model of atonement is best seen as a motif or theme running through the Bible.[82] "The Christus Victor model can better handle the broad, rich diversity of the Biblical data on these themes. . . it is better able to allow the different emphases of Scripture to make their own witness and to point beyond all models to the unfathomable mystery of Christ's atonement itself."[83] Seeing this model from this perspective prevents theologians from limiting it to just a mere rational theory.

John R. W. Stott calls this model of atonement "the Conquest of Evil" and as mentioned above traces the key manifestations of this theme through biblical history. He presents it as follows: (1) The conquest predicted: the protoeuangelion; (2) the conquest begun: the incarnation; (3) the conquest achieved: the cross; (4) the conquest confirmed and announced: the resurrection; (5) the conquest extended: the mission of the church; and (6) the conquest consummated: the parousia.[84]

It is important to point out here that the above list focuses on the conflict between good and evil especially as it is prominent in the life, ministry and death of Jesus. However, the Great Controversy theme, which is the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan, covers and goes beyond the key events listed above. It begins from the war in heaven (Rev 12:7) and ends after the millennium (Rev 20:7-15; 21:3, 4). The Christus Victor model of atonement, when presented within the bigger picture of the Great Controversy theme, helps to show the great significance of the work of Christ in biblical history. Hence the Christus Victor motif can be better appreciated within the broad context of the Great Controversy theme which takes into consideration the whole biblical picture of salvation history from its beginning to its end. It can thus be said that the Christus Victor motif celebrates and points to the centrality of the cross in the larger picture of the Great Controversy, which runs through salvation history.

2. Christus Victor and spiritual warfare. In Christ's life and ministry, during the incarnation, it was evident that He was always in conflict with the enemy. His wilderness temptations (Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-11) and His struggle at Gethsemane and Judas' betrayal (John 13:27) are just a few examples of how Satan waged war against His soul. However Christ

82 Aulen, 157.

83 Finger, 348.

84 Stott, 227-251.

triumphed over the enemy as He healed sicknesses, cast out demons and delivered captives from the bondage of sin (Matt 4:23; Mark 1:24; Luke 10:17-20). Christ's victory over the devil is summarily illustrated in a riddle-like parable in which the stronger man overcomes the strong man, takes away his armor, divides his spoil and liberates his slaves (Mark 3:23-27; Luke 11:17-22). The strong man is the devil but the stronger man is Jesus Christ.[85]

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ were very significant in heaven's victory over sin, Satan, and death. At the cross, Jesus died without sin completely resisting all the devil's temptations to sin and obeying the Father's will (Phil 2:8). By so doing, He defeated Satan and the powers of evil stripping them of their arms, exhibiting them as powerless and showing them of as His captives (Col 2:15). In addition, the resurrection of Jesus announced and confirmed His victory on the cross. Because sin and Satan had no hold on Him, death could not hold Him back since it had already been defeated. This victory at the cross and resurrection led to Jesus' exaltation over all the principalities and powers and made them all subject to Him (Phil 2: 9-11; Eph 1:20-23; 1 Pet 3:22).

The victory of Jesus Christ is to be personally experienced in the life of the individual Christian. The victory He won in the flesh can be claimed, recapitulated and enjoyed by each Christian through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ overcame the devil and his works (1 John 3:8), which include the curse and condemnation of the law (Rom 8:1-3; Gal 3:13), sinful flesh (John 8:34, 36; Rom 6:6; 8:3), the world (John 16:33; Gal 6:14) and death (Heb 2:14, 15).

It is important to note that though Christ has defeated these powers, He has not destroyed them. Since they have not been completely destroyed, they still exist and remain a continual threat to the Christian. This makes the Christian life a struggle, a conflict, a "fight of faith"(1 Tim 6:12) which is described in the New Testament as striving (Luke 13:24), wrestling (Eph 6:10), pulling down (2 Cor 10:3, 4), enduring (Matt 24:13), pressing on (Phil 3:14), resisting (James 4:7; 1 Pet 5:9) and standing firm in the strength of the Lord (Eph 6:10, 11, 13, 14; 1 Pet 5:9). Thus every Christian continues in this warfare of faith against sin, carnal self and the world depending on divine power until the promised day of the blessed hope of Christ's second advent which will mark the beginning of the end of these evil powers. Until then, the Christian life is not only one of conflict but of victory just as Christ was victorious.

The victory of Jesus Christ is also to be extended through the life and mission of the church. As noted above, Christ extended the kingdom of God by casting out demons, healing the sick and preaching the gospel.

[85] Stott, 232.

The church is to carry on His ministry of victory by proclaiming liberty to the captives and setting free those who are oppressed by the evil powers (Isa 61:1, 2; Luke 4:18, 19). This is clearly seen in the book of Acts as the disciples continued this work (Acts 2:43; 5:12-16; 6:8; 8:12, 13, 34, 36-42; 14:8-10; 16:16-18; 19:11-20; 28:1-9). In addition, the church today is to present Jesus Christ as Christus Victor supreme over every spiritual rule and authority. Since He is victorious over the spiritual realm and particularly over the evil forces, He is the powerful protector against these forces and their powers. Thus Christians today are to exercise the power and authority of Jesus over demons and evil powers that oppress and hold captive human lives in the world when the need arises (Matt 28:18-20; Luke 10:18-20) just as the disciples did in the Acts of the Apostles.

3. Christus Victor as an eschatological perspective. Christ's victory over the evil powers at the cross will be complete with the beginning at the parousia. It has been noted above that though Christ has defeated the evil forces of sin at the cross, they have not yet been destroyed. The book of Revelation points to the time when all sinners, evil dominions, authorities and powers, death, Hades and the devil will be annihilated in the lake of fire (Rev 20:10, 14). This will be the completion and ultimate fulfillment of Christ's victory on the cross.

The book of Revelation presents a final end-time crisis in which the enemies of God persecute His people with economic boycott and the threat of death (Rev 13:15-17). The confederacy of evil, made up of the devil, the beasts, the kings and the people of the earth whose names are not in the book of Life, will gather to make war against God's saints and to annihilate them (Rev 12:17; 13:8; 17:2, 8). It is at this point that Jesus Christ appears as the divine warrior to deliver His people from this tribulation in the battle of Armageddon on the great day of the Lord (Rev 19:11-21; cf. 16:14, 16). This deliverance is the prelude to the complete destruction of all of God's enemies at the end of the millennium (20:1-10, 14, 15). Therefore the book of Revelation presents Jesus as Christus Victor – the conqueror of death and Hades (1:17, 18), of the devil and his agents which include the beasts, Babylon, the kings of the earth and their armies (13:17, 18; 15:2, 3; 17:14; 19:11- 21).

The most significant victory of Christ in the Apocalypse is His victory on the cross as the Lamb of God (5:5). This victory is the basis for the final victory of God and the church over all enemies.[86] "It is in His death that Christ overcomes His enemies, the world – not on a bloody eschatological battlefield. . . . For him [John] there is only one victory of Christ; it was

[86] Matthias Rissi, *The Future of the World: An Exegetical Study of Rev. 19:11-22:15* (Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series, no. 23; Bloomsbury Street, London: SCM Press, 1972), 8-10, 14-17, 26-27.

won in the past and resulted in the debilitation of all enemy powers, once and for all."[87] It was at the cross that the final eradication of evil was made certain and complete victory over sin was made sure.[88] The Apocalypse truly resounds with "the objective decisive victory of the Lamb over all the powers of darkness which He won when He shed His blood on the cross" – assuring all "that Christ has defeated Satan and will one day destroy him altogether."[89] Thus the Christus Victor model celebrates Christ's victory over the evil powers at the cross, which culminates in their destruction in the eschaton.

5. Summary and Conclusions

The Christus Victor model of atonement stands out as a classic and dramatic theory of atonement that defines Christ's death on the cross as victory over the evil forces that hold humanity captive and separate from God. This view of atonement was held and emphasized by the New Testament church, the early Church Fathers and by Martin Luther in the Reformation period. However, it was superseded by other theories of atonement such as the satisfaction, moral influence, and exemplary theories during the medieval and post-Reformation periods.

Though this model of atonement has some illogical aspects through its explanation by some Church Fathers, a biblical evaluation of this model reveals that it is biblically consistent as a theme or motif that runs through Scripture. This theory is fully appreciated when seen in light of objective and subjective theories alike. It is consistent with the Great Controversy theme that spans from the first war in heaven to the end of the millennium. The Christus Victor model of atonement celebrates the centrality of the cross in the Great Controversy theme.

In addition, the Christus Victor model of atonement points to the reality of Christ's victory on the cross over evil powers that are the real enemies of the world behind the scenes. This theory enables and empowers Christian believers to experience Christ's victory in their personal lives. They have victory over sin, self, the world and even demonic attacks in spiritual warfare all because of Christ's victory.

Finally the Christus Victor model of atonement presents the assurance that the evil powers that were defeated at the cross but are still a threat to

[87] Rissi, 9.

[88] Heppenstall, 688, 689; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1950), 503.

[89] Stott, 250, 251.

the Christian will be ultimately destroyed. Christ's victory on the cross determines the final fate of these powers of darkness and points to the time when they will be completely annihilated after the post-millennial final judgment. After their destruction, God and humankind will be perfectly and ultimately reconciled and the universe will be restored to total peace and harmony. This is the eschatology of atonement when God will dwell with redeemed humanity in the absence of sin and its effects (Rev 21:3, 4).[90] This final eschatological picture is made possible and sure only because of Christ's victory on the cross where He defeated the evil powers of darkness that alienated humanity from God. This assures us of the ultimate at-one-ment between God and humankind. This is the good news of the Christus Victor model of the atonement.

[90] Mario Veloso, "The Doctrine of the Sanctuary and the Atonement as Reflected in the Book of Revelation" in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Theological Studies* (ed. Arnold Wallenkampf; Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1981), 411.

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Christian and Pagan Ascent in New Testament Times

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Many scholars have often considered the concept of ascent in the New Testament to be closely related to and drawn from the models available in the Hellenistic world. This article argues for fundamental morphological differences between the concept of ascent in the New Testament and the pervasive and popular motif of ascent in the Graeco-Roman world. At the core of the differences lies a completely different anthropological understanding. Sources and influences other than the contemporary models must therefore be found. The article concludes by suggesting that the most appropriate antecedents of ascent in the New Testament should be sought in the Old Testament itself and mediated by Second Temple apocalyptic thought.

Key Words: ascent, resurrection, anthropology, afterlife, New Testament, paganism

1. Introduction

At both a popular and scholarly level, it has frequently been maintained that Christianity drew its core ideas from the popular beliefs of the day,[1] and this has been considered to also apply to the New Testament's concept of ascent. It is true that Christianity developed within a vigorous milieu of competing beliefs, and the notions of the ascent of the soul were pervasive. By Graeco-Roman times, a complex milieu of ascent traditions and myths appear to have coalesced to some extend so as to include some recurring themes.

Within the Hellenistic conception, ascent was understood to occur immediately after death, although it could also occur in a visionary sense

[1] Babylonian and Zoroastrian beliefs have been commonly postulated as the sources of the Christian idea of ascent. To engage with these hypotheses would be an extremely complicated and involved affair, and outside of the scope of this paper.

while the person was alive. Furthermore, it was the soul that ascended, and the body was left behind. As the soul ascended it did so through a number of superimposed heavens, and these heavens often had guardians who tested the soul at various levels. Typically the culmination of the ascent was some form of divinification or assimilation into divinity.

Against this background, this historical and comparative study will consider the concepts of ascent found in the New Testament. It will contrast these New Testament concepts with popular beliefs about ascent that prevailed in the Graeco-Roman world in New Testament times.[2] In doing so, this paper will argue that there are critical differences between these two conceptualisations.

2. The Pagan Concept of Ascent and the New Testament

There are five key aspects that may be seen as phenomenological features of the pagan concept of ascent that will be briefly considered here: (1) The focus on ascent; (2) ascent as return; (3) eschatological ascent versus immediate post-mortem ascent; (4) unimpeded ascent versus cosmological levels, gateways, gatekeepers and trials; and (5) the ascent of the body versus the ascent of the soul.

2.1 Focus on Ascent

In the Hellenistic world, the notion of ascent appears to have been an extremely pervasive one, and was both influenced and expressed by many cultures and traditions.[3] Segal makes the point that, "both Greek and Roman societies from Plato to Plutarch, from one end of the span of Hellenistic culture to the other, know of the journey to the heavens."[4] Accordingly, the idea of ascent to the heavens seems to have been felt in almost every aspect of society. A prime example was the manner in which the Romans formulated the idea of the apotheosis of the emperor, which was a key plank of the emperor cult from the time of the early empire.

[2] The paper considers pagan notions of ascent rather than the ascents found in the Jewish apocalyptic texts.

[3] John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2d ed.; Biblical Resources Series; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 34.

[4] Alan F. Segal, "Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen* Welt II (vol. 23; ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 1333–1394 1347.

However, Segal observes that, "if astral immortality was promulgated of the emperors, it was scarcely in less demand by the people."[5]

Within the Greek tradition, we are able to identify the ascent motif well before Plato. Culianu notes that, "[t]he forerunners of Plato were Greek medicine-men such as Abaris, Epimenides, Empedocles and Pythagoras. They were physicians (*iatros*) as well as seers (*mantis*), or, to use E.R. Dodd's formula, *iatromantes*. The account of their journeys through the realm of visions gave birth to the Greek apocalyptic genre."[6] It is noteworthy that the theme of the otherworldly journey is already found in Homer, *Odyssey*, Book 11.

Plato's tale about Er[7] in the tenth book of the *Republic*, tells of the journey of Er after his apparent death into the apparently superimposed heavens within the context of the many journeys of the soul to and from the heavens. This work was highly influential, and served as a model for Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*[8] and for aspects of Plutarch's works.[9] In the accounts of ascent referred to above and generally in the ancient world the glorious journeys of ascent are therefore described in an explicit and detailed manner.

However, this is not the case in the New Testament. In fact, the first important aspect to note with regard to ascent in the New Testament is

5 Segal, "Heavenly Ascent," 1349. Arguably the oldest known tradition incorporating this motif is found within the traditional Egyptian views of the afterlife, which at first applied to the Pharaoh and was then extended to include everyone who could afford to make the necessary preparations. The oldest and persistent Egyptian view of the afterlife explicitly involved a post-mortem ascent of the soul to assimilation with divinity and to a stellar afterlife. We know that Egyptian ideas were very influential in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Segal, "Heavenly Ascent," 1350, notes that, "Egypt was the source of one of the most potent ideas of immortality that entered Rome . . . the issues and liturgies of the Egyptian religion penetrated deep into Roman consciousness." In spite of this, the evidence does not allow us to identify precisely how influential they were, and what any lines of transmission may have been.

6 Ioan Petru Culianu, *Psychanodia I: A Survey of the Evidence Concerning the Ascension of the Soul and its Relevance* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983), 1.

7 Known as "The Myth of Er."

8 The *Somnium Scipionis* is found in *Cicero, On the Commonwealth and on the Laws* (Book 6.9–29; trans. James Zetzel; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 95–102.

9 See, for example *Plutarch's De sera numinis vindicta* 22-31 in *Moralia* VII.44. In *Between Heathenism and Christianity – Being a Translation of Seneca's De Providentia and Plutarch's De Sera Numinis Vindicta* (trans. C. W. Super; Chandra Chakravarti Press, 2007; repr. Fleming H. Revell, 1899). Also Plutarch, *De genio Socratis* 21-22 in *Plutarque, Le démon de Socrate* (ed. and trans. André Corlu; Études et Commentaires LXXIII; Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 1970).

that the New Testament does not emphasise the idea of ascent as much as one might expect.[10] While we can see in the New Testament that ascent is implied in various places, the notion of ascent is often not explicitly referred to and much less described. On the one hand, Harris notes the "relatively paucity" of references to the ascension of Jesus and that "nowhere does the New Testament use the customary Greek word for 'ascent' (*anabasis*)."[11] On the other hand, Farrow provides an impressive list of passages in the New Testament that touch on the ascension motif.[12] Furthermore, Farrow comments that, "[i]t is sometimes suggested that there is little of the ascension as an event with its own distinct significance to be found in the New Testament outside of Luke 24 and Acts 1. That is an entirely specious claim . . . "[13]

The reason why different scholars can come to such different opinions regarding ascension in the New Testament is because it is not the same as the concept of ascent that was prevalent in the broader Hellenistic world, which was reflected in many of the Jewish apocalyptic texts. Within this Hellenistic ascent topos, the focus was typically on the description and, often in great detail, on the ascent to heaven. This is what is essentially absent from the New Testament. The point may be illustrated by considering that if the story of the resurrection of Lazarus in John 11 had been part of a popular or even philosophical Graeco-Roman genre that focused on ascent, we would have had at least the equivalent of a couple of chapters describing the ascent of Lazarus into heaven in some detail. This would then have been followed by another couple of chapters describing his (disappointing, I dare say) recall back to earth, and his journey back to heaven.

Further, we can also observe that the ascents that are referred to in the New Testament appear to be substantially phenomologically different to the ascents of the Hellenistic topos. Salient differences between the New Testament notion of ascent and those of the broader Hellenistic stream include that instead of emphasising ascent as a return to humanity's original homeland, the New Testament essentially presents the notion of ascent as a one-way journey from this earth to heaven. Instead of an immediate ascent after death, the New Testament presents the notion of

[10] Indeed, ascent is not a significant feature of the Old Testament with the exception of the ascent to heaven of Elijah.

[11] Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 86.

[12] Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and the Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), "Appendix A: Biblical Resources," 275–280.

[13] Farrow, *Ascension*, 29.

an eschatological ascent following the resurrection. Furthermore, the entire typical cosmology of pagan ascent with its superimposed heavens, gateways, gatekeepers, trials, and passwords is missing from the New Testament. Finally, the New Testament nowhere mentions the ascent of the soul; it is rather the ascent of the body or the whole person, which is envisaged.

This is why Phil 2 may be viewed as a parody of the contemporary Hellenistic notions of ascent. Indeed, in Phil 2, there appear to be echoes of the imperial cult, and Christopher Bryan has noted that, "there are parallels between the exaltation of Christ as described in the Philippians hymn and the narrative sequence of imperial propaganda. . . . The Philippians would have seen these imperial parallels, and had been expected to see them."[14] Therefore, instead of the expected exaltation as a result of ascent, Paul here presents exaltation as a result of Christ's descent. N.T. Wright has developed this perspective and observes that for Paul, Christ is presented as "the reality of which Caesar is the parody."[15]

2.2 Ascent as Return

In the Hellenistic world, and as exemplified in the Myth of Er, the ascent of the soul was merely the return of the soul to its rightful and original home since the soul was originally from the heavens.[16] This view seems to have originated with the Orphics.[17] The Orphic mysteries appear to have first developed around the sixth century B.C. in the east, and they are still a "very complex, scholarly mystery"[18] so that conclusions about their doctrines can only be tentative. However, the essential Orphic doctrine, as Porter characterises it, appears to have been that "the divine soul should be free from the restrictions of the body, and that it was possible for the soul to progress through a series of individual lives, as well as various

[14] Christopher Bryan, *Render to Caesar: Jesus, the Early Church, and the Roman Superpower* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 87, citing Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (SNTSMS 110; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 145.

[15] Nicholas Thomas Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (London: SPCK, 2003), 228. See also Nicholas Thomas Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 131–142.

[16] Jan N. Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife* (The 1995 Read-Tuckwell Lectures at the University of Bristol; London: Routledge, 2002), 22, citing the Thessalian Gold Leaves, B9.

[17] Richmond Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962), citing P. Friedlaender, "Geschichtswende in Dedlicht," *Stud. Ital. Fil. Class.* 15 (1928), 89–120; 3, 280.

[18] Segal, *Life After Death*, 220.

forms of purgation in the underworld, until it could be free form this cycle of rebirth and return to its divine state."[19]

This view, common in antiquity, envisages many downward and upward journeys of the soul as it progresses through many cycles of reincarnation. This divine state appears to have been in the atmosphere or in the sky, for Aristotle tells us that the Orphics taught that the soul enters the body as one breathes.[20] This is, of course, presumably after the soul has undergone its necessary punishments and reincarnations. Croy observes that, "Orphism is credited with the saying, 'The body is the tomb of the soul,'"[21] with the corresponding notion that the divine soul was freed from the fetter of the body at death.

Lattimore comments that before Plato, "[a]lthough the notion of the soul returning to the sky started to become more influential" it "was not initially necessarily tied to the notion of a self-existent, rational soul."[22] According to Cicero, Plato considered that, "souls on leaving the body reach heaven as if going home" (*cum e corporibus excesserint, in caelum quasi in domivilium suum pervenire*) and he argued that "souls on leaving the body, whether they are 'airy' that is to say, consisting of breath, or fiery, are carried up on high" (*cum e corpore excesserint, sive illi sint animals, id est, spirabiles, sive ignei, sublime ferri*).[23] In Plato's *Timaeus*, we are told that the creator of the world "assigned each soul to a star" (τοῖς ἄστροις ἔνειμέν ἑκάστην πρὸς ἕκαστον)[24] and that, "[i]f a person lived a good life throughout the due course of his time, he would at the end return to his dwelling place in his companion star (οἴκησιν ἄστρου), to live a life of happiness that agreed with his character."[25]

Segal observes that, "[a]fter Plato, the Greek world took the notion that the isles of the blessed are in the sky seriously. If the soul is immortal, it

19 Stanley E. Porter, "Resurrection, the Greeks and the New Testament," in *Resurrection* (ed. Stanley E. Porter, Michael A. Hayes, and David. Tombs; Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 186; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 75.

20 Aristotle, *De anima*, 1.5.

21 N. Clayton Croy, "Hellenistic Philosophies and the Preaching of the Resurrection (Acts 17:18,32)," *Novum Testamentum* 39.1 (1997), 29.

22 Lattimore, *Themes*, 26–27.

23 Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* (I.11.24; I.17.40; ed. and trans. A. E. Douglas; Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1985), 34–35, 42–43.

24 *Plato, Timaeus*, 41e, in *Plato* (vol. IX, Loeb Classical Library; trans. Robert Gregg Bury; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), 90; Greek text in Plato, *Timaeus* (ed. Donald J. Zeyl; Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing Company, 2000), 29.

25 Plato, *Timaeus*, 42b, 29.

must return to the immortal realm."[26] The same pattern is evident in Middle Platonism. Indeed, Winston notes that, "[t]he central thrust and fundamental aim of Philo's biblical commentary is to trace the return of the human soul to its native homeland by means of the allegorical method of interpretation."[27]

Cicero, who embraced the notion of the post-mortem ascension of the soul, also believed that the sky was the true home of the soul. Furthermore, Porter identifies the central belief of Mithraism as apparently being based around the idea of the heavens as the true and original home of the human soul,[28] characterizing the core Mithraic belief as having,

> revolved around the journey of the soul. The soul was seen to be immortal, and endured a time of trial while it resided in an earthly body. The soul travelled from its home through several planetary levels to the human. The earthly life is seen as a chance to purge oneself of the earthly impurities through the knowledge gained through the mysteries. At death, a struggle takes place over the soul of the dead person, to see if good outweighs bad. Good souls re-ascend and this journey back to the realm of light is seen as an important stage in the course of the soul's travels.[29]

In the pagan tradition, it is therefore not surprizing that the soul ascends after death; it is after all returning to its own element. The New Testament, however, knows of no such original journey of the soul from heaven into the human body; it knows of no such native, original, heavenly home for the soul. Instead, the ascent into heaven as Paul envisions it is incredible, miraculous, and full of wonder (1 Cor 15:55-57), precisely because Paul describes the native home of natural humanity as being this earth because, "the first man is from the earth, earthy" (v. 47.) Note also: "As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy" (v. 48).

Therefore humanity "cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (v. 50), and it is for this reason that believers must "all be changed" (v. 51) at the last trumpet (v. 52). If believers consider themselves "exiles and strangers on the earth" (Heb 11:13), it is only because they can look forward by faith to "a country of their own" (v. 14), and this in turn is only because of the saving work of "Jesus, the author and perfector of faith" (Heb 12:2.) It is therefore only because of Christ's saving intervention that the followers of

[26] Segal, *Life After Death*, 234.

[27] David Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1985), 36.

[28] Porter, "Resurrection," 76–77.

[29] Ibid.

Christ consider the words of Paul to be true, when he wrote, "For our citizenship is in heaven [ἐν οὐρανοῖς], from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil 3:20).

Note how in this passage the believer awaits Christ's descent from heaven. It is only His eschatological (second) descent from heaven that makes possible the believer's own ascent. Furthermore, Christ's eschatological descent is only possible because of His first incarnational descent. Indeed, this is why instead of emphasizing ascent as the believer's hope, the New Testament emphasizes much more the descent of Jesus Christ as being the basis of the believer's hope. Christ comes down to save us. In this vein, it is significant that in one of the final images of God's restoration of His kingdom on this earth, it is the New Jerusalem that descends out of heaven, "coming down [καταβαίνουσαν] out of heaven from God" (Rev 21:2).

While it is true that the Son of Man originally descends from His home in heaven to this earth, this is not true for the rest of humanity. The celestial journey of the saved is essentially only a one-way, upward journey, and this journey is only possible because of the descent of the Son of Man. The pagan model of the soul's descent, and then ascent as a return to its original home is thus entirely foreign to the thinking of the New Testament as far as humanity is concerned.

2.3 Eschatological Or Post-Mortem Ascent

Here I would like to contrast the New Testament notion of eschatological ascent and its corollary eschatological resurrection with the corresponding idea of ascent immediately after death. It is important to remember, however, that although an eschatological bodily resurrection seems to have been a familiar belief at the time, it was by no means universally accepted within Judaism.[30] However, there does appear to have been a popular and likely majority belief that had developed within Judaism by the time of Christ, which was that at the last day there would be a bodily resurrection for the righteous.

In line with this tradition, the Gospels present Jesus as unwaveringly teaching a bodily resurrection at the end of the eschaton. As N.T. Wright notes, it is obvious that the entire gospel tradition belongs "with the Jewish view over against the pagan one; and, within the Jewish view, with the Pharisees (and others who agreed with them) over against the various other options."[31] Even so, there are still some scholars who

[30] Dag Øistein. Endsjo, "Immortal Bodies before Christ: Bodily Continuity in Ancient Greece and 1 Corinthians," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30.4 (2008), 418.

[31] Wright, *Resurrection*, 448.

maintain that the historical Jesus never spoke about a general resurrection of the dead, and in recent times Meier has argued for this view.[32] However, in John 6, Jesus is recorded as stating three times (vv. 39–40, 44) that the resurrection, of which He would be the agent, would occur "on the last day" (ἐσχάτῃ ημέρᾳ). We have further evidence that a resurrection of the just in the eschaton was accepted by those to whom Jesus spoke. For example, when Jesus says to Martha, "your brother will rise again" (John 11:23), He is apparently not telling Martha anything she does not already know, for she responds, "I know that he will rise again on the resurrection on the last day" (ἐσχάτῃ ημέρᾳ) (v. 24). Even though Jesus refers to the saints "rising,"[33] and Paul refers to the saints "rising" and "ascending" "in the air" (1 Thess 4:16–17), these references are only within the context of a general resurrection of the body at the end of time and not immediately after death.

Jesus accordingly referred to "the resurrection of the just" (ἀναστάσει τῶν δικαίων) (Luke 14:14) at which the blessed will be rewarded. In His reckoning, this would be part of a general resurrection of all, both the just and the wicked, that would occur at a future point in time, as is clear from John 5:28–29. Also within the teachings of Jesus, it is clear that the bodily resurrection and the reception of immortality are connected; both happen together. Accordingly, in John's Gospel, Jesus describes the Father as the One who "raises the dead and gives them life (ζῳοποιεῖ)" in the context of the "resurrection of life" (ἀνάστασιν ζωῆς) (vv. 21, 29).

It is, however, important to understand that within Judaism in the New Testament period, the evidence demonstrates that there is "no single doctrine about life after death, but several" including the idea of the immortal soul, and even reincarnation.[34] It is evident within the New Testament texts that there were other views of the afterlife current within the first-century Jewish milieu in which Jesus taught. All three synoptic gospels record the encounter of Jesus with the Sadducees "who say that there is no resurrection"[35] so that its authenticity can hardly be questioned.[36] Jesus' response to the Sadducees is clear and direct: "You

[32] See John P. Meier, "The Debate on the Resurrection of the Dead: An Incident from the Ministry of the Historical Jesus?," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 77 (2000), 15.

[33] For example, see John 5:28–30 and John 11:24.

[34] Hans C. C. Cavallin, *Life After Death: Paul's Argument for the Resurrection of the Dead in 1 Cor 15 – An Enquiry into the Jewish Background* (Sweden: Gleerup, 1974), 419.

[35] Mark 12:18–27; Matt 22:23–32; Luke 20:27–40.

[36] Meier, "Debate," 23; Bradley R. Trick, "Death, Covenants, and the Proof of Resurrection in Mark 12:18–27," *Novum Testamentum* 49.3 (2007), 233–234, 255.

are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt 22:29). Jesus then proceeds to prove the resurrection out of the Jewish Scriptures (vv. 31–32).

That there were other views of the afterlife in first century Jewish Palestinian society is also suggested by the fact that Jesus was able to tell the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31). Wright notes, however, that,"the parable of the rich man and Lazarus is to be treated precisely as a parable, not as a literal description of the afterlife and its possibilities. It is therefore inappropriate to use it as *prima facie* evidence for Jesus' own sketching (or Luke's portrait of Jesus's sketching) of a standard post-mortem scenario. It is rather, an adaptation of a well-known folk tale."[37]

Within the Gospels, the most prominent thematic use of the idea of ascent to heaven is found in the Gospel of John. Nicholson's study, relevantly titled *Death as Departure* demonstrates that, "the Fourth Evangelist works with a motif which speaks of the descent and ascent of Jesus. At the heart of this motif is a movement from 'above' to 'below' and then back 'above.'"[38] In this regard, one saying is particularly notable, which is recorded only in John's gospel: "And he said to him, Truly, truly, I say unto you, you will see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending [ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας] on the Son of man" (John 1:51). In this saying, Jesus is alluding to the ladder of Gen 28:12. The implication He is drawing is that to ascend to heaven is possible only through the Son of man.

Because of John's emphasis on the believer's union with Jesus,[39] the believer is also to participate in Jesus' ascension.[40] Regardless, while John elucidates this schema clearly, it is certainly within both a present spiritual setting as well as a future eschatological setting, rather than as an ascent of believers to heaven immediately after death. It is notable that Acts 2 specifically negates the proposition that saints ascend to God immediately after death, as is evident in Peter's proclamation of the resurrection on the day of Pentecost. Peter based his case on a premise to which he seems to have assumed that the large crowd of listeners would not object. He said, "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch

37 Wright, *Resurrection*, 438; See also Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 134.

38 Godrey C. Nicholson, *Death as Departure: The Johannine Descent-Ascent Schema* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1980), 161.

39 With regard to the union between Christ and believers, see John 15:4 and 17:20-23.

40 Nicholson's thesis does not explicitly make this particular point, yet it seems self-evident. In relation to the believers participating with Jesus on His journey, note John 13:36 and 14:2–3, although the language of ascent is not used in these texts.

David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day" (Acts 2:29 NIV). A little later, Peter specifically asserts that regardless, "David did not ascend to heaven" (v. 34). David had died but was not yet ascended to heaven. If we understand Peter's thinking to be aligned with that of Jesus and Paul, then the ascension was to occur at the second coming of Jesus.

This link between the ascent of Jesus with that of His followers is also made by Paul, as Reis has noted,[41] with specific reference to Phil 2:6–11. In this passage, it is notable that Jesus' exaltation is described with the Greek word ὑπερύψωσεν (v. 9), which clearly contains the idea of being "raised" up following His humiliation (ἐταπείνωσεν) and death (v. 8).[42] Reis holds that Paul, in general and in relation to the Christ Hymn, "on both an ethical and soteriological level, did make a connection between the story of Jesus and those who follow the gospel."[43]

With regard to the spectrum of beliefs regarding the afterlife, Paul "clearly belongs on the Jewish map rather than the pagan one, despite the efforts that scholars sometimes make to get him to change his mind. Within the Jewish spectrum, he belongs, with most Jews of his day, at the same place as the Pharisees."[44] In continuing this tradition,[45] the Pauline analysis is the product of a traditional Hebraic phenomenal approach.[46]

41 David M. Reis, "The Journey of the Soul: Its Expressions in Early Christianity" (Ph.D. diss.; Claremont Graduate University, 1999), 247–254.

42 Note Frederick William Danker, "ὑπερυψόω," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (3d ed.; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1034.

43 Reis, "Journey of the Soul," 249. It is worth noting, however, that Reis' analysis is done firmly within a dualistic context. In fact, the word soul is not used in this passage at all; Reis reads this into the text on the basis of comparative Hellenistic ascent narratives.

44 Wright, *Resurrection*, 372. See also Bruce Chilton, "Resurrection in the Gospels," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity: Death, Life-After-Death, Resurrection, and The World-to-Come in the Judaisms of Antiquity* (ed. A. J. Avery-Peck and J. Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 226.

45 Chilton, "Resurrection in the Gospels," 226.

46 Wright, *Resurrection*, 365; see also G. J. Warne, "The Soul in Philo and Paul" (M.A. diss.; University of Queensland, 1998), 238–239. There are scholars who attempt to seek evidence of a bi-partite anthropology, or at least evidence of a transition in the understanding of the nature of death and the afterlife in the writings of Paul, and in particular in texts such as 1 Cor 15:29; 2 Cor 5:1–7; 2 Cor 8:5–10. See for example James E. Patrick, "Living Rewards for Dead Apostles: 'Baptised for the Dead' in 1 Corinthians 15.29," *New Testament Studies* 52 (2009), 71; L. Roig Lanzilotta, "One Human Being, Three Early Christian Anthropologies: An Assessment of Acta Andreae's Tenor on the basis of Its Anthropological Views," *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007), 422; and Reis, "Journey of the Soul," 239. Note, however, the comments by

Paul unbendingly demands that his readers accept the resurrection of the body.[47] Lattimore correspondingly argues that to Paul any other kind of immortality other than a resurrection of the body in the context of an end-time general resurrection "was meaningless."[48]

The teaching of the New Testament regarding immortality is well illustrated in the epistles of Paul, since Paul's teaching aligns with that of Jesus. Paul teaches that immortality is theocentric, since it is God alone who possesses immortality (ὁ μόνος ἔχων ἀθανασίαν) (1 Tim 6:16), and that it is Christ Jesus who has "brought life and immortality . . . to light through the gospel" (φωτίσαντος δὲ ζωὴν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν) (2 Tim 1:10). We are therefore to seek immortality (Rom 2:7), which the righteous will "put on" at the resurrection. Of that day, Paul writes that when the trumpet sounds and the dead are raised (1 Cor 15:52), then, "this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality [τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀθανασίαν], then will come about the saying that is written, "death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor 15:53–54).

This then provides a framework within which Paul's eschatology must necessarily be interpreted. For example, the passage in 2 Cor 5:1–10 in which Paul discusses being "absent from the body" and being "at home with the Lord" must be understood in the context of the reception of immortality at the resurrection of the saints. Although this passage has been greatly misunderstood, the significant parallels between this passage and 1 Cor 15 should be noted, such as "being clothed" (ἐπενδύσασθαι) in 2 Cor 5:4, and putting on (ἐνδύσασθαι) immortality in 1 Cor 15:53; also, mortality being "swallowed up [καταποθῇ] by life" in 2 Cor 5:4, and death being "swallowed up [κατεπόθη] in victory" in 1 Cor 15:54. These parallels clearly indicate that what Paul longs for in 2 Cor 5 is to be fulfilled, not immediately upon his death in terms of an immediately realized personal eschatology, but rather at the eschatological and universal resurrection described by Paul in 1 Cor 15.[49]

Joseph Osei-Bonsu, "Does 2 Cor 5.1–10 Teach the Reception of the Resurrection Body at the Moment of Death?," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28 (1986): 81–101.

47 Claudia Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Doctrine, Community, and Self-Definition* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 55.

48 Lattimore, *Themes*, 310.

49 Further, see Osei-Bonsu, "Reception," 95; Wright, *Resurrection*, 365; and Donald Guthrie, "Transformation and the Parousia," *Vox Evangelica* 14 (1984), 50. For a contrary view see Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal: The Relation Between Resurrection*

For Paul, the resurrection occurs at the coming of Christ.[50] This is clear from 1 Thess 4:15-17, a passage which alludes to the teaching of Jesus recorded in Matt 24:31-31.[51] In 1 Thess 4:15–17 we also have the concept of rising to meet the Lord in the air. This continues the emphasis on the similarity between the resurrection and ascent of Jesus,[52] since at His own ascension to heaven after His resurrection Jesus is described as being "lifted up" (Acts 1:9) "into the sky" (εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν) (v. 10).

Paul understands that the resurrection of believers is still in the future (1 Cor 15:25–26) and is to occur in the eschaton. Paul then turns his attention in to responding to the specific question of the nature of the resurrection body, "But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?'" (v. 35). With regard to this question, Segal observes that it is apparent that although early Christianity "strongly favored resurrection over immortality of the soul at its inception" there were some who questioned whether "the resurrection body is material or spiritual."[53]

It is, however, striking that Paul responds after exclaiming "You fool!" to those who ask this question! (1 Cor 15:36). In Paul's response it is clear that it is certainly the "body" (σῶμα) that is resurrected; it is merely a question of "what kind of body." It is to be noted that Paul is not here teaching the concept of a spiritual resurrection of the soul, but rather that of the resurrection of the body. In that vein, the resurrection body may be a "heavenly" (ἐπουράνια) body (v. 40), and an "imperishable" (ἀφθαρσία) body (v. 42), and a "spiritual" (πνευματικόν) body (v. 44); however, it is a body nonetheless.

Segal rightly observes with regard to 1 Cor 15:41 that "*soma pneumatikon* is a complete contradiction in terms for anyone in a Platonic system, especially when contrasted with the psychic body just mentioned."[54] In relation to 1 Cor 15:35, Segal also notes that Paul is "outlining a notion of immortality which has nothing to do with an

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and Immortality in New Testament Teaching (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1983), 135; and *Clark-Soles, Death and the Afterlife*, 105–106.

50 Therefore immortality is received at the parousia. See Guthrie, "Transformation," 50.

51 See 1 Thess 4:15–17.

52 See also Rom 6:5.

53 Segal, *Life After Death*, 478.

54 Ibid., 429.

immortal soul directly; it is an offshoot of Jewish apocalypticism."[55] As Segal further observes, Paul certainly "distinguishes between the earthly body and the resurrection body. But, if so, he is likewise and I think primarily speaking out of his apocalyptic Judaism. He is entirely consistent with his Hebrew past . . . using Greek language to approximate the Hebrew concepts."[56] As McDonald has noted, "[t]he New Testament is not content with a disembodied immortality. It holds out the promise of 'new and glorious' bodies, after these present bodies have broken into dust."[57]

However, we may observe that within the New Testament text, there appear to be not one but two classes of journeys to heaven in which humans may participate. The first class of heavenly journey is that which we have been discussing, the ascent of the righteous at the eschaton. In the New Testament, this ascent is linked to resurrection, transformation, and immortality. The second class of heavenly journey is the visionary journey undertaken in life. In this class of journey, neither the texts themselves nor their context specifically or directly associate the heavenly travellers with an entrance into the afterlife or with immortality. Although the ascent at the eschaton is the privilege of all the righteous, the visionary journey is seemingly allowed only to a few. There are two examples of this visionary journey in the New Testament, one is Paul's journey to paradise and the other is John's vision of heaven in the Apocalypse.

With regard to Paul's visionary journey, it is striking that Paul does not understand how the ascent occurred. He writes, "whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body [ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος] I do not know, God knows" (1 Cor 12:2). Whatever may have been Paul's definition of being "in" or "out of the body,"[58] it clearly appears not to be aligned with Greek categories, since Paul's uncertainty suggests that for him "either mode of rapture was a possibility."[59] This was essentially inconceivable within the Hellenistic Greek view. Regardless, it is clear that the New Testament journey of ascent after death occurs in the context of an eschatological, bodily resurrection. This does not accord with the Greek and Hellenistic view of the immediate post-mortem ascent of the soul.

55 Alan F. Segal, "Paul's Thinking About Resurrection in its Jewish Context," *New Testament Studies* 44 (1998), 417.

56 Ibid., 418.

57 H. Dermot McDonald, "The Idea of Immortality," *Vox Evangelica* 7 (1971), 26.

58 Or of "spirit" for that matter.

59 Andrew T. Lincoln, "'Paul the Visionary': The Setting and Significance of the Rapture to Paradise in II Corinthians XII.1–10," *New Testament Studies* 25 (1979), 215.

2.4 Cosmology of Ascent

The aspect of ascent in the Hellenistic world and in the New Testament involves the cosmology of the ascent. An important role of Hellenistic visions of ascent was to explain the cosmology of the world and of the heavens. According to the Sumerians and Babylonians, ascent took place by passing through a series of seven stratified cosmic levels. Lambert explains that the evidence for the Sumerian view of the universe as consisting of cosmic levels is not necessarily explicit,

> but derives from the use of terms which were inherited by the Babylonians, from whom there is more direct evidence. The picture is clear from many textual allusions firmly dated to the second half of the third millennium BC; and while there is much less evidence for the first half of the same millennium, and it is much less well understood, there can be little doubt that this conception of the universe goes back in Mesopotamia to at least 3,000 BC. It continued virtually unchanged until the end of Babylonian civilisation.[60]

The very few cosmological accounts that the Babylonians left for us demonstrate that they had inherited a "doctrine of several superimposed heavens" from the Sumerians.[61] Arbel notes that, "[t]angible depictions of divine reality are evident in various mythological accounts of Mesopotamia. The realm of the high gods is illustrated as a tangible world situated up in the sky . . . this celestial realm is one of cosmic levels. Imagined as several superimposed heavenly layers of equal size and shape, the transcendent realm emerged as concrete."[62] The seven layers, or heavens, are evident in the Legend of Etana, which,describes this mythological figure crossing the gap between Heaven and Earth on the wings of an eagle . . . He ascends to Heaven, passes through the seven divine regions of the gods Anu, Enlil, Ea, Sin, Shamash, Adad, and Ishtar, and enters their seven heavenly gates:

> After they had [flown up to the heaven of Anu]
> [They passed] through the gates of A[nu, Enlil, and Ea].
> The eagle and [bowed down together]

60 Wilfred G. Lambert, "The Cosmology of Sumer and Babylon" in *Ancient Cosmologies* (ed. Carmen Blacker and Michael Loewe; London: Allen & Unwin, 1975), 42–64, 48–49.

61 Ibid., 58.

62 Vita Daphna Arbel, *Beholders of Divine Secrets: Mysticism and Myth in the Hekhalot and Merkavah Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 71.

> [They passed through the gates of Si[n Shamash, Adad, and Ishtar].
> The eagle and [bowed down together].[63]

As Lewy noted, the ascent through these heavens "itself constitutes the principal act of the Chaldaean mystery."[64] Similarly, in the Egyptian tradition, in the *Book of Going Forth By Day*, there were seven gateways whose keepers the deceased must satisfy with names and passwords in order to proceed.[65] The spells of the *Pyramid Texts* speak of the dangers and gateways through which the Pharaoh must pass in the afterlife. These included specific names and answer to questions that he needed to provide in order to pass in safety.[66]

Similar conceptual elements seem to be important in the Hellenistic narratives of ascent.[67] Dionysos and Xanthias face an entire system of doorways, guardians, and passwords in order to access the afterlife.[68] Edmonds describes how,

> [h]aving found the halls of Hades, Dionysos and Xanthias are confronted with the problem of getting past those who guard its doors, a problem that has many resonances in the mythic tradition. As early as Hesiod, dangerous guardians appear at the gates of the house of Hades . . . Dionysos tries to get past this obstacle of the gate of Hades by proclaiming his identity as Herakles. The declaration of

63 James V. Kinnier-Wilson, *The Legend of Etana: A New Edition* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1985),121; See also W. Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1988), 209; Lambert, "Cosmology," 56, 58.

64 Hans Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy, Mysticism Magic and Platonism in the later Roman Empire* (Le Caire, 184), quoted in Culianu, *Psychoanodia*, 13.

65 Erik Hornung, *The Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife* (trans. D. Lorton; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 11.

66 *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (trans. James P. Allen; Writings from the Ancient World 23; ed. Peter Der Manuelian; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005).

67 Hornung *Afterlife*, 5; See also Terence DuQuesne, *At the Court of Osiris: Book of the Dead Spell 194–A Rare Egyptian Judgment Spell Edited and Interpreted with Commentary* (Oxfordshire Communications in Egyptology IV, Da'th Scholarly Services; London: Darengo Publications, 1994), 46; Bojana Mojsov, *Osiris: Death and Afterlife of a God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 46.

68 Aristophanes, *The Frogs*, Scene 2, lines 460ff, in *Aristophanes: Frogs and Other Plays* (trans. David Barrett, rev. trans. Shomit Dutta; London: Penguin Books, 2007), 152ff. For Greek text, see *Aristophanes: Frogs* (ed. Kenneth Dover; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 142ff.

> identity is a familiar feature in the mystic tradition, and a special identity is often the solution to bypassing this obstacle.[69]

A similar cosmology and access system also appears to have been at the heart of the Mithraic mysteries. In his description of the Mithraic mysteries, Celsus also writes that in them "is a symbol of the two orbits in heaven, the one being that of the fixed stars and the other that assigned to the planets, and of the soul's passage through these. The symbol is this. There is a ladder with seven gates and at its top an eighth gate."[70] Culianu observes that,

> [t]he so-called 'Mithraic liturgy' is likely to be a description of the experience of the soul after death. A prayer is used by the soul to attain the doors of the heavenly fire, after which there is the aethereal world of the planetary gods. In front of these doors, it must introduce itself to the keeper and utter a magic formula: "I am also a star going together with you, rising, with its rays of light, from the depths: oxyoxerthouth." The journey goes on, with the aid of Helios, through other gates, beyond the Pole and the sphere of the fixed stars, to the Divinity.[71]

In the New Testament accounts of ascent, the typical Graeco-Roman cosmology and paraphernalia of ascent is absent. Paul's visionary journey in 2 Cor 12:1–4 may be cited as an interesting and unique case in point. Here, Paul refers to being caught up to the third heaven (ἁρπαγέντα τόν τοιοῦτον ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ) (v. 2). The concept of three heavens is unknown in contemporary pagan writings, although it is not unknown within Jewish apocalyptic texts.[72] On the other hand, John's visionary ascent recorded in Rev 4:1-2, is immediate and direct, and depicts a single or unitary heaven. Besides Paul's record (2 Cor 12:1–4), the New Testament does not know of what could be understood as superimposed heavens in. There are certainly no gateways, no guardians and no passwords in the New Testament conception of ascent.[73]

[69] Radcliffe Guest Edmonds III, "Descent to the Depths of Comedy: The *Frogs* of Aristophanes," in *Myths of the Underworld Journey: Plato, Aristophanes, and the 'Orphic' Gold Tablets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 147, 149.

[70] Origen, *Contra Celsum* (trans. Henry Chadwick; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 6, 22, 334.

[71] Culianu, *Psychanodia*, 13, quoting Albrecht Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie* (1922; repr. Darmstadt, 1966), 69–73.

[72] See the original version of the *Testament of Levi* 2.3; *Life of Adam and Eve*, ch. 8; and the *Apocalypse of Moses*.

[73] Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 237.

2.4 Ascent of the Body versus Ascent of the Soul

Ascent in the Hellenistic world occurred within the context of a dualistic understanding of anthropology. The New Testament, on the other hand, reflect the Hebrew monistic world-view.[74] Lanzilotta specifically comments on the New Testament use of the term ψυχή, since "it shows the total absence of the meaning that for us is the most evident, to wit 'soul.'"[75] The human being in the New Testament is a clear unity, and when an interior dimension is mentioned, this is neither conceived of as a separate element, nor is it more highly esteemed than the body, nor is it expected to survive the body after death.[76]

Clark-Soles notes that Paul "does not use the dichotomy between *sarx/soma* and *pneuma* to argue for immortality of the soul, as did the rabbis. This popular dichotomy is absent in Paul's technical discussion of *sarx*, *pneuma*, and *soma*."[77] Certainly, Paul's use of language in relation to concepts of body and soul appears to be quite unique. As far Paul's concept of soul is concerned, Segal observes that it was "quite limited"[78] when compared to that of the Hellenistic philosophers, and that it was "unschooled by Platonic ideas of the soul's immortality."[79] Certainly, Paul does not envisage the ψυχή as something that exists independently of the body after death.[80] The phrase 'immortality of the soul' does not occur in the New Testament. Instead, within the context of the resurrection, Paul uses the term ψυχή "to preserve the previous identity of those resurrected in their new perfected state."[81] Segal observes that this is "the predominant view of the New Testament."[82]

The writers of the New Testament present a traditional, Second-Temple, Jewish view of the afterlife. This does not imply that this was the only Jewish view of the afterlife, merely one which appears to have achieved the greatest currency. Harris comments that, "[w]ith its basically

74 Lanzilotta, "Anthropologies," 419.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

77 Clark-Soles, *Death*, 67.

78 Segal, *Life After Death*, 411.

79 Ibid.

80 Robert Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 448–449. See also Jaime Clark-Soles, *Death and the Afterlife in the New Testament* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 65.

81 Segal, "Paul's Thinking," 418.

82 Ibid.

monistic anthropology, the New Testament is unconcerned to identify one 'part' of the person that survives death to the exclusion of other 'parts.' The interchangeability of the terms 'spirit' and 'soul' to designate the departed Christian well illustrates the point."[83] Furthermore, as Clark-Soles highlights,

> The much-ignored fact is that neither the New Testament nor the early Christian writers ever used the term 'immortal soul' or 'immortal spirit.' The early Christians, like the rabbis, understood that union with God was union of the whole human, both soul and body. Christian tradition continued to assume this union until, in the third century CE, Platonic ideas of the soul's great superiority to the body promoted the idea of the survival of souls apart form bodies.[84]

Harris states, "[t]he concept of 'the immortality of the soul' ill accords with the tenor of New Testament teaching and therefore the expression deserves no place in Christian terminology."[85] Conversely, it is notable that in the New Testament, the belief in bodily resurrection was not an isolated tenet, but rather part of an integrated "constellation of beliefs."[86] This point was reinforced by Harris, who observed that, "[a]ny disjunction between resurrection and immortality does an injustice to the New Testament evidence. Indeed, it is in a conjunction of these two ideas that we find a most satisfactory summary of the New Testament view of the future destiny of believers. The ideas are inseparable, since it is only by means of a resurrection transformation that the believer gains immortality."[87] For this reason also, the understanding of immortality in the New Testament is inextricably linked to the notion of resurrection.

Ferguson observes that the notion of the immortality of the soul appears to be the result of reading the Greek philosophical tradition back into the text.[88] This is merely one of many scholars who have ultimately agreed with Oscar Cullmann, who concluded his famous 1955 Ingersoll lecture with the words, "[t]he answer to the question, 'Immortality of the soul or resurrection of the dead in the New Testament,' is unequivocal. The teaching of the philosophers Socrates and Plato can in no way be

[83] Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 140.

[84] Clark-Soles, *Death and the Afterlife*, 42.

[85] Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 237.

[86] Setzer, *Resurrection*, 1.

[87] Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 239.

[88] Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (3d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 555.

brought into consonance with that of the New Testament."[89] Fudge accordingly observes that as far as Christianity is concerned, "[i]t has been generally thought that the immortality of the soul was a necessary tool for Christian theology. Today, however, the doctrine is increasingly regarded as a post-apocalyptic innovation – not only unnecessary but positively harmful to proper biblical interpretation and understanding."[90]

The New Testament writers understood human immortality only within the context of the transformational resurrection of the body. Entry into heaven is simple, and stark in its simplicity. No magic is required, no incantations or secret passwords; it is simply a miraculous work of God. This is a fundamental difference between ascents in the New Testament and ascents in the pagan world.

Ultimately, it is the anthropological difference that lies at the heart of the distinctions between ascent in the New Testament and in the pagan world. First, there is the fact that ascent is not much emphasised in the New Testament; and, second, when it is mentioned, the biblical text does not speak of the ascent of the soul but of the ascent of the whole human being, glorified and perfected at the resurrection.

3. Conclusion

This paper has surveyed and contrasted the concepts of ascent found in the New Testament with those found in the contemporary literature of the pagan world. The New Testament does not emphasise ascent, as does the literature of the Hellenistic world. Instead of emphasising ascent as a return to humanity's original homeland, the New Testament presents the notion of ascent as a one-way journey from this earth to heaven. Instead of an immediate ascent after death, the New Testament presents the notion of an eschatological ascent following the resurrection. Furthermore, the cosmology of pagan ascent with its superimposed heavens, gateways, gatekeepers, trials, and passwords is missing from the New Testament. Finally, the New Testament nowhere mentions the ascent of the soul; it is rather the ascent of the whole person, which is envisaged. These differences allow the conclusion that the concept of ascent found in the New Testament is essentially different to that found in the Hellenistic traditions. As such the New Testament conceptualisation

[89] Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament* (Ingersoll Lecture, 1955; London: Epworth Press, 1958), 60.

[90] Edward William Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of Final Punishment* (Houston: Providential Press, 1982), 55–56.

of ascent appears not to belong to the mainstream Hellenistic traditions of ascent, but rather to be significantly influenced by other sources.

While some scholars,[91] have postulated the roots of the concept of post-mortem ascent as being found in such milieus as the Sumerian, Chaldean, and Babylonian cults, this research concludes that the New Testament understanding of ascent is grounded in the Old Testament,[92] albeit mediated by pre-70 AD Jewish apocalyptic thought.[93] In spite of the variegation in the apocalyptic texts with its Hellenistic influence,[94] the apocalyptic literature of the Second Temple period predominantly reflects an anthropology and eschatology[95] that is aligned with that of the Old Testament. The Old Testament and the Second Temple texts would therefore seem to provide more fruitful ground for further research than the attempt to classify the New Testament notions of ascent together with those of the broader Graeco-Roman world.

91 Wilhelm Bousset, "Die Himmelsreise der Seele," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 4 (1901): 136–169; Culianu, *Psychanodia*.

92 The persistent Old Testament notion of God as the One who "dwells on high" (Isa 33:5) and the ascent of Elijah to heaven (2 Kgs 2:11) suggest appropriate directions in the quest for the sources of ascent in the New Testament.

93 The notion of ascent is a key feature particularly in the Enochic literature, as in *1 Enoch* 37–71. See Birger A. Pearson, "Jewish Sources in Gnostic Literature," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (ed. Michael E. Stone; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 451.

94 Sang Meyng Lee, *The Cosmic Drama of Salvation: A Study of Paul's Undisputed Writings from Anthropological and Cosmological Perspectives* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2, Reihe 267; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 65.

95 Generally on this, see Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum, v. 93; Boston: Brill, 1998).

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THESIS AND DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

Theological Seminary, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies

"An Investigation of Ellen G. White's Views on the 'Baptism of the Holy Spirit' in the Context of American Revivalism and Evangelicalism in the Nineteenth Century"

Researcher: Lani T. Esteves, M.A. in Religion, 2010
Advisor: Aecio E. Cairus, Ph.D.

This study investigates Ellen G. White's views on the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." She used the terminology, "baptism of the Holy Spirit," numerous times in her writings. To date there has been no systematic study about her views on this subject. This terminology was a controversial topic in the second half of the nineteenth century. Both Wesleyans and non-Wesleyans discussed it. Prominent Protestant revivalists and theologians tried to establish theological formulations on this topic. A number of books were written by them tackling this issue.

Chapter 2 presents the historical and theological settings of the development of those views. EGW's contemporaries formulated, adopted and modified their understanding of the baptism of the Holy Spirit according to their respective theological backgrounds and orientations. As a result, there were five views that emerged and two of the most prominent ones are discussed in this chapter, namely, the Wesleyan-Holiness view and the Reformed-Keswick view.

Chapter 3 examines and discusses EGW's views on the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." As a Methodist-born child and a former devout member of the Methodist Episcopal Church she imbibed significant theological ideas. Her religious background influenced her theological understanding of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Her early views (1840s-1850s) on the baptism of the Holy Spirit were similar to the understanding of the American Methodists. "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" was related to instantaneous entire sanctification together with spiritual ecstasy.

However, the understanding of Ellen on this issue changed during the period of the 1860s-1915. God's revelations, fanaticism, wild ecstatic manifestations, and antinomianism led her to modify her former position on the concept of sanctification. She abandoned the idea of instantaneous

entire sanctification. Rather, she believed and taught that it is a continuous, gradual, progressive, and a life life experience. Still, she related it to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. She turned away from the idea that ecstatic manifestation were evidences of sanctification or "the baptism of the Holy Spirit."

Chapter 4 summarized the findings. She upheld that "baptism of the Holy Spirit" is not only for holy living or character transformation but was also very much needed for an effective gospel ministry. She believed that an abundant baptism of the Holy Spirit will be given to intensively preach the gospel worldwide (Loud Cry) and prepare God's people for the approaching spiritual crises just before earth closes its history. The study has observed both similarities and differences between her views and those of her contemporaries on the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

"Development of Local Church Conflict Management Program at East Central Korean Conference"

Researcher: Cho Chang Woong, D.Min., 2011
Advisor: Young Soo Chung, Ph.D.

One of the most urgent needs of the local Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kore is how to mange church conflict effectively. In fact, church conflict affects church growth directly or indeirectly. Thus, to find proper ways to resolve church conflict is much needed.

This study has three main purposes: (1) improving the level of conflict management, (2) supporting church leaders to develop a program in order to deal with conflict constructively, and (3) inventing a practical and directly related program for handling conflicts in ministerial field.

Before proceeding to the main parts, it first examines biblical, theological, and theoretical foundations of church conflict solution. The training program was conducted from May 1 to 31, 2009. It was presented in eight meetings. This study describes how the program was designed and how it was implemented in detail. The evaluation of the program was done mainly using questionnaires, interviews, and my own observations. Based on this evaluation, several practical suggestions have been given to local church in Korea.

The following are the core of those suggestions:

1. How we understand conflict influences how we approach conflict resolution.
2. Pastors have built up a concept of conflict ministry.

3. Pastors found out that although there is a conflict in the local church, the church can grow through it.
4. It would be better if we use the Bible more as the source of the lecture content.
5. I recommend to the local church to implement church conflict seminar in an abbreviated form from the content of this seminar.
6. Pastors certainly have to preach sermons related to the conflict solution.
7. I propose to regularly perform the conflict management seminar in the local church.
8. I propose to set up "reconciliation mediation committee" for the conflict resolution in the local church.

It ends with some suggestions for future studies on church conflict.

"Relevance of Undergraduate Theological Education to the Ministerial Practice of the North Philippine Union Conference Pastors"

Researcher: Julio Cordero Amurao, Ph.D. in Religion, 2010
Advisor: Bienvenido Mergal, Ph.D.

The role of theological education for the advancement of the message and the mission of the church is undeniable. The theological schools in North Philippine Union Conference face the question of how the training they provided relates with the actual practice of ministry. Thus, they confront the issue of relevance.

The data showed that NPUC workers, teachers, pastors, and administrators who graduated from three theological schools indicated that integrity is the topmost value among other important values such as professionalism, self-control, willingness to listen, gentleness, respectable, hospitable, and temperance that was highly emphasized in college and remain to be an important value to be possessed by ministerial graduates. In keeping with these values, they indicated that the most emphasized role in their training was preaching while they found that to be an administrator was the role being most often practiced in the field.

Overall, respondents perceived that most of the curricular subjects they took in their respective theological schools were important and they received adequate training in biblical studies, theology, and skill subjects. The same result was found in co-curricular subjects. However, when asked what aspects in their theological training are helpful or inadequate, they indicated skill training as most helpful to them in their training while

in college but they also indicated that it is the most deficient in terms of inadequate exposure to practical field education in their respective programs.

Respondents perceived that overall they are satisfied with their theological education while in college and also in their present ministerial practice. However, when asked as to the relevance and suitability of their theological training to what is practiced in the field, the respondents perceived that there is disparity of what they had learned in the school to what they actually practiced in the field.

The respondents also suggested for the improvement of the theological program being offered in NPUC theological schools. Among them were revisions of the curricula based on the perceived importance of subjects, extensive and comprehensive field education training, periodic orientation of the goals and objectives of the program, and a collaborative and intentional evaluation of the respective programs of each theological school.

The result of the study leads to the following recommendations: the school should design a program, both curricular and co-curricular aspects, on how to effectively integrate the spiritual formation of the graduate; the school should design an exit competency-based outcomes evaluation to ensure that all curricular offerings are targeting towards the competency needed by the graduates; and a regular evaluation of the program by those who are directly involved in the training, supervision, and practice of the ministry to bridge the gap between theories learned in the classroom to what is practiced in the field.

"The Role and Function of Ἄγγελος Αὐτου in the Book of Revelation: An Exegesis and Interpretation"

Researcher: Joses Lokavala Imona, Ph.D. in Religion, 2008
Advisor: Richard Sabuin, Ph.D.

This study sets out to address the issue of understanding the role and function of Ἄγγελος Αὐτοῦ, "his angel" in the book of Rev 1:1 and 22:6. Given its ambiguity and yet its placement in the opening verse to both the prologue (1:1) and epilogue (22:6) to the book, the task of exploring into the role and function of the usage was deemed necessary and important. The first chapter introduces the problem, intent and approach of the study as seen, especially, in light of the variant views to "his angel." Chapter 2 dealt with a lot of information on the subject of ἀλλἄγγελος, and its relations, role and functions, as observed in Jewish ancient writings, both

in the biblical and the extrabiblical works. The third chapter is divided into two sections: First, an overview into the occurrences and usages of the terminology in the book of Revelation, and second, an exegetical study on Rev 1:1 and 22:6. The final and fourth chapter concludes the study.

Overall, the study sees "his angel" as important, and understood in light of both its biblical and apocalyptic usage; its usage in the book of Revelation highlights upon John's pastoral and theological intents: a call to see Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of God's covenantal commitment, promise and providence, from Abraham, Moses and Israel and throughout the OT dispensation.

"The Significance of מִקְוֶה "Hope" and בְּרִית "Covenant" (Ezra 10:2-3) to the Covenantal Reform in Ezra-Nehemiah: A Literary and Grammatical Approach"

Researcher: Simon Bwambale, Ph.D. in Religion, 2011
Advisor: David R. Tasker, Ph.D.

This study attempts to provide a perspective that takes covenant renewal (Ezra 9-10) and covenantal obedience (Ezra 10:2-3) as foundational to interpreting Ezra-Nehemiah (EN). The study observes that both the critical approach that attempt to reconstruct the text and the traditional approach that endeavors to reorder history may not objectively discern the author's true message.

Some scholars advance an approach that is contrary to the above propositions. They observe that the author used narrational and chiastic designs to construct the EN text. This approach highlights Ezra 9-10 as both the climax of the discourse of the book of Ezra and the center of the macro chiasm of EN. This study agrees with this approach. However, the approach seems not to notice that the climactic and central position of the terms מִקְוֶה "hope" and בְּרִית "covenant" renders them (the terms) to be primary to the interpretation of the EN corpus.

This study observes that Ezra's calling might have endowed him with a *point of view* that informed his endeavor to record the postexilic events that were relevant to the rebuilding of the covenant community. In view of this, this study proposes that first, EN is a narrative of a community seeking to reorganize itself based on its identity as a covenant community. Second, the central section of the corpus (Ezra 9-10) is about a community undergoing a covenant renewal process focusing on

removing the obstacle (foreign women). Third, Ezra 10:2-3 is set as the hub of Ezra 9-10 and exhibits hope-inspired covenantal obedience which impacts the rest of the reform procedure (Ezra 10:4-17). Fourth, the terms מִקְוֶה and בְּרִית embedded in this central spot, are crucial to the interpretation of the book of Ezra and the EN corpus.

"The Concept of the 'Seal Of God' in The History of the Christian Thought"

Researcher: Rico T. Javien, Ph.D. in Religion, 2010
Advisor: Kyung Ho Song, Ph.D.

The theology of the "seal of God" is one of the distinctive beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This distinctive belief plays a very significant theological role in understanding Adventism in relation to the eschatological events. There are various concepts that were developed from the inception of the Adventist Church up to the present. There are a number of major views as well as less popular views regarding the seal of God. From 1844 to 1888, there were two mainstream concepts that emerged. The first view or the traditional view holds that the Sabbath or its observance constitute the seal of God. This was followed by another view that holds that personal knowledge of God and sanctification constitute the seal of God. The name of the Father and of the Lamb of God or God's name or character has also been considered as the seal of God. These tow views continued to be the dominant interpretations of the seal of God in Adventism up until 1957.

However, in 1957 and up to the present, the major views have been expanded as an indication of the progressive understanding of this biblical truth. Then, another new concept appeared, the two-seal concept. This view holds that there are two kinds of God's seal: the gospel seal and the apocalyptic seal. Both seals differ in its nature, function, timing, and agents.

There are also other views of the seal of God but less notable. Other views of the seal of God points to justification or righteousness by faith. Moreover, the idea of the image of God, the "pure gospel," and the "seal of life" have been pointed out as the seal of the living God.

"Power in Church Leadership: Training Modules for Local Church Leaders in South-Central Luzon Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists"

Researcher: Hermogenes C. Villanueva, D.Min, 2011
Advisor: Reuel U. Almocera, D.P.S.

Many people especially in the church regard power as evil. But they also realize that proper use of power is one of the most important elements for success in Christian leadership. But power could be misunderstood, misused, and abused. Hence, there is a need especially for local church leaders to identify the proper, biblical, and Christian way of leadership.

This project/study develops seminar materials which will provide the local church leaders in South-Central Luzon Conference the foundations for proper handling of power in their leadership. The first section of the study includes the exploration of concepts of power in Christian leadership from the scriptural perspective. The understanding of some unique Filipino values in the exercise of power in Christian leadership is also reviewed.

The second section contains the curriculum for two weekend seminars based on the findings from research reported in the previous section of the study. The seminar materials aim to emphasize the importance of power in Christian leadership. The seminar also aims to develop personal character traits in local church leaders for them to exercise power properly in their leadership.

"The Function of The Mosaic Water Drinking Ordeal of Numbers 5:11-31"

Researcher: Paluku Mwendambio, Ph.D. in Religion, 2010
Advisor: David R. Tasker, Ph.D.

Numbers 5:11-31 is a puzzling biblical passage due to various difficulties pertaining to its origin, composition, nature, and purpose. The current study deals with the last issue, that is, the purpose of the ordeal of Num 5:11-31. The study addresses the issue through the cognitive social function approach. Contrary to the fear, humiliation, abortion, and metaphorical views that assign the ordeal a negative role, this dissertation sides with the view assuming that it played a positive role in the Israelite community by protecting the accused woman.

The study expands this view by suggesting that the ordeal was a divine ritual that protected not only the suspected woman but the entire Israelite community. This stance is based on the analysis of the involvement of human and divine participants in the ordeal and the transfer of the case of the suspected woman from the human sphere to God's jurisdiction. It follows that the ordeal of Num 5:11-31 may have mainly functioned,

1. As a socio-community builder which aimed to enhance relationships among Israelites themselves and with God.
2. As an instrument of God's judgment which intended to maintain moral purity in Israelite society.

As such, the ritual communicated some important messages:

1. An accused person should be considered innocent until proven guilty.
2. No one should carry out justice for himself.
3. Sensitive issues such as suspicion about adultery need not to be resolved by violence; they should be referred to God for He is interested in the stability of the community and as the supreme arbiter He can penetrate secrets of human beings and fairly judge the course of their actions.

"Function of the *Kipper* Texts in the Ritual Context of Leviticus with Special Reference to Leviticus 17: A Text-Oriented Approach"

Researcher: Bong Gyeong Lim, Ph.D. in Religion, 2010
Advisor: David R. Tasker, Ph.D.

This study explores the semantic/pragmatic function of the *kipper* texts in the ritual context of Leviticus with special reference to Lev 17, primarily based upon text-oriented linguistic/literary analyses. This type of approach to the *kipper* texts in the HB is required not only in view of the scholarly awareness that it has been quite elusive to specifically establish the basic etymological meaning of the word *kipper* (piel form of rpk), but also the inveterate tendency in the study of the biblical ritual texts that commentators have interpreted the text depending upon their own theological preconceptions. A review of the current interpretative issues in the study of the *kipper* has revealed such a trend especially in Lev 17:11.

Under the theoretical presuppositions dealt with in the second chapter, that is, affirmation on the unity of Leviticus as one book in its final form in the HB, the present study analyzes forty-nine *kipper* texts in the same context of Leviticus without any endorsement of the disruption between Lev 1-16 and Lev 17-27. In addition, this presupposition is taken with the

expectancy that Lev 17, to which our *crux* of interpretation (Lev 17:11) belongs, may have a significant function in bridging between the two halves of Leviticus. In the first place, the third chapter analyzes the *kipper* texts of Lev 1-16 in the light of the ritual context in such a way that anticipated observations may give some clue to comprehending the function of the *kipper* in the context of Lev 17. It follows that the fourth chapter endeavors to trace linguistic, literary, and conceptual links of Lev 17 with Lev 1-16 to fill an apparent gap between the first and second halves of Leviticus, and then to suggest the semantic/pragmatic function of the *kipper* text in the context of Lev 17 in a way to contribute to supporting the unity of Leviticus as one book. In the final chapter, an enterprise is made to integrate and synthesize the results of the study on the *kipper* texts in Leviticus from the theological perspective, thus, providing some suggestive theological implications for the biblical atonement concept, in association with the witnesses of the NT writings. Though this section is not the main focus of the present study, it is expected that the NT may offer some interpretative support to the atonement concepts which may be denoted in the Levitical sacrificial system in the OT.

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CRITICAL BOOK REVIEWS

Hebrews, Christ and the Law: The Theology of the Mosaic Law in Hebrews 7:1-10:18, by Barry C. Joslin. Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008.

Biblical law is an issue always relevant to believers as it directly impacts the way we live our daily lives. Any study that aims to elucidate the importance of biblical law, therefore, hits a sensitive chord, at least for me. Joslin's book, *Hebrews, Christ and the Law*, is no exception. The work is an adaptation of Joslin's doctoral dissertation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. As such, the book is not for the faint hearted, it involves fairly detailed and specialized work and assumes a minimal acquaintance with biblical Greek on the part of the reader. Yet, his writing style is smooth and easy to follow making for an overall comfortable reading.

Joslin's study is divided into eight chapters. In chapter 1 he introduces the topic and overviews trends in the interpretation of law in Hebrews. In chapter 2 he explores law in non-biblical second temple Jewish literature. Chapter 3 is taken up with a discussion of the structure of Hebrews. Chapters 4 to 6 form the core of the study where Joslin interacts with the text and does exegesis on key verses. The study concludes with chapter 7 where he brings together the threads into a coherent conclusion.

Joslin can be highly commended for his love for biblical law. In a context of increasing theological antinomianism within Christian churches, Joslin not only tackles the topic of law, but does so from a

decidedly positive outlook. His passion reverberates throughout the study. Chapter 2 is a valuable contribution and outlines clearly the high esteem Jews had for biblical law around the time of Jesus. In his exegetical section he correctly notes that the levitical priesthood and sacrificial system have been done away but refuses the temptation to which many others have succumbed to see either in a negative light. The levitical priesthood including the sacrificial system was not bad; it was rather a good system that served as a shadow of the greater priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus. Its time was up and it was replaced by something better.

He also gives Jer 31:31-34, its proper place. This OT passage contains a promise that God would write His law on the heart of believers. Joslin correctly brushes aside notions that Hebrews follows allegorical, hellenistic, philonic, or other exegetical approaches and demonstrates that the writer is fully rooted in sound OT exegesis. He also argues successfully that the law of Jer 31:31-34 was the law that God gave through Moses. Contrary to many popular approaches Joslin highlights the importance of this law and its positive attributes. He argues that many of the laws we find in the Pentateuch are carried over into the new covenant. He calls the "carried over" laws, the Christologized law, and maintains that it is written on the heart of the believer.

Despite his passion and the merits of his work, this study falls short of satisfaction. Joslin has brought believers who "delight in the law of the Lord," to the spring but he has failed to serve refreshing water. The main problem lies with his conclusion. His assertion throughout is that the law is valid and good, but the law has been changed. Yet, he fails to define what aspects of the law have been changed. He only mentions two: the priestly sacrificial system and the food laws. The former is self-evident and no serious student of Hebrews or of the New Testament for that matter would question that. The later is not a conclusion that flows out of his study since nowhere does Joslin discuss the idea of clean and unclean foods in any depth or through exegetical analysis. Rather it appears as a statement out of the blue, and one that sounds tenuous given the importance Hebrews places on ritual purity (9:13,14,22,23; 10:2,22). Apart from the priestly sacrificial system and clean and unclean foods presumably there are other aspects of law that have changed, but he does not name them. He once hints that the Decalogue may have changed too (p. 175), yet, amazingly whatever this change involves is not discussed.

It is very unlikely that the writer of Hebrews, well conversant with the OT and writing to Jewish Christians who might have been tempted to revert to Judaism, as Joslin asserts, would announce something as foundational as the change of the law, without defining what the change involves. What would be the point? If something has changed but the nature of the change has not been defined, the reader will be left

wondering, bewildered and unsure of what to believe. Furthermore, by stating that something has changed but not defining what and how, Joslin leaves the readers make up their own mind as to which parts of OT law are valid and which have been abolished. By making the reader the final arbiter, Joslin ultimately undermines rather than establishes biblical law.

The weakness of his conclusion rests on at least two weak exegetical foundations. The first is his assumption that the word "law" is a reference to the whole Mosaic legal establishment, not to its individual components. He rejects the division into moral, ceremonial, and civil aspects, which has been foundational to Reformation theology. Yet in his chapter 2 that deals with the extra-biblical Jewish background, he admits that "law" can relate either to the whole Mosaic corpus, or to individual components. Furthermore, in chapter 4 he discusses Heb 7:12, the only text where any change in the law is intimated, and assumes that the whole Mosaic law is in view. But alas, regarding 7:11 and 7:16, the only two other verses where the word "law" appears in Heb 7, he asserts that law refers only to regulations concerning the levitical priesthood. So, his own exegesis of 7:11 and 16 undermines his assumption on 7:12, as well as the overall thesis of his book.

The second exegetical weakness is Joslin's treatment of the phrase *nomou metathesis*, often translated "change of law" (Heb 7:12). On its basis he speaks of a "transformation" of law. However, etymologically, *metathesis* is made up of the preposition *meta* ("with" or "by") and the noun *thesis* ("place or position"). Literally, the word means, "to relocate" or "change the position" of something, not to change its essence or make up. It is used consistently with this meaning both in the NT and outside it all the way to modern Greek. Hebrews 7:12 forms the hinge on which his whole thesis on the change of law depends, yet, surprisingly he fails to discuss the full gamut of meaning of the word and determine its importance in the specific context. He rather speaks of Christological transformation, Christologizing, or the whole law being affected with change, reading into the word *metathesis* concepts that are not there; he is using enticing theological terminology but essentially builds a theological straw man.

Hebrews is clear: one thing has changed. This one thing is the OT priesthood and sacrificial cultus which has been replaced by Jesus our one and only High Priest, and His sacrifice on the cross offered once and for all. On this I will wholeheartedly agree with Joslin. To speak of changes beyond this on the basis of Heb 7:1-10:18 means to read into the text something that is not there.

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Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can't Be Found in Colossians 2:16, by Ron Du Preez. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2008.

Ron du Preez is a South African scholar residing in the United States, who received two doctorates in the fields of ethics and missions and works on his third in the field of the New Testament. His book, *Judging the Sabbath* is divided into two parts. Part one addresses "educated lay persons and seminary-trained pastors" while part two is oriented "to the professional scholar of biblical studies and languages" (p. x). Each of these parts concludes with a review. At the very end, the reader finds four appendices that bring more depth into selected fields. Here can be found a comparison of different translations in regard to their rendering of the Greek words for Sabbath, linguistic markers (Hebrew and Greek) for the Sabbath, as well as a list of references and further notes.

Chapter one commences with a review of literature in regard to Col 2:16. The center of the discussion is the interpretation of what Paul meant with *sabbata. The* majority of scholarship is found to be interpreting *sabbata* as the seventh day, it is also understood that this passage is one of the hardest to understand in the NT. Du Preez concurs with F. F. Bruce's challenge, "the onus probandi lies on those who argue that weekly sabbath is not included in the reference" (p. 10).

Du Preez begins his research in the Old Testament, showing that the word *šabbāt* is used to designate the ceremonial as well as the 7th-day Sabbath. The difference is made clear by OT writers, using either particular linguistic markers or through the context. Thus, the he concludes, that the Old Testament perspective allows the Greek *sabbata* to be ceremonial.

The next step is taken into the LXX, which is introduced by a "pro-Sabbath" argument. This specific view argues for a strict and consistent rendering of *šabbāt šabbātôn* as well as a consistent usage of *sabbata.* Yet, Du Preez explains that the rendering of this Hebrew expression is not uniform. Leviticus 16:31, which translates *šabbāt šabbātôn* with *sabbata sabbatōn anapausis* (using three words), is one example.

Du Preez then analyzes the use of the term *sabbata* and *sabbatōn* in the New Testament. This is motivated by the argument that *sabbata* is never ceremonial. However, a closer look into the NT shows 69 occurrences of *sabbatōn* that are accompanied by linguistic and contextual markers in order to evidence either the seventh day or the week. The only one reference without these markers is to be found in Col 2:16 which makes it important to look closer at the immediate and broader context.

Chapter five addresses the argument of Ratzlaff, that the single word *šabbāt* is never used by itself to indicate anything else but the 7th-day Sabbath. Du Preez presents in his following discussion that the "free-

standing Hebrew word sabbat" is used for the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:32) and the sabbathical year (Lev 25:2,4,6). Furthermore, also the Day of Trumpets is called a *šabbātôn* and rendered by the Greek as a form of *sabbata*. Therefore, from a linguistic perspective, it is very possible to understand Col 21:6 similarly.

In the following chapter, Ron du Preez presents a broad review of 110 Bible commentaries, none of which really engage in an exegetical discourse when it comes to the vital terms of the calendar sequence. Discussing the argument of the calendar sequence, i.e., *heortē* (yearly feasts), *neomēnia* (beginning of the month), and *sabbata* (weekly holy day), and the OT parallels most often quoted, he sees some problems. Contrary to the Colossian text, the OT passages referred to focus not on the time, but rather on the sacrifices. Furthermore, they exhibit a different order and number than Paul used in Col 2:16. The author's conclusion is, that the proposed OT references could not have been the source for Paul.

Chapter seven follows the claim that the holydays (*heortē*) "include all the feast-sabbaths" (p. 71) wherefore *sabbata* specify the weekly Sabbaths. Du Preez's examination, however, demonstrates that the Hebrew word *ḥag*, a technical term that referred to the three great annual feasts, i.e., Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Harvest, was quite consistently rendered as *heortē* in the LXX and so used in the NT. Du Preez summarizes that, in order to cover all "annual as well as septennial occasions," Paul had to use both terms *heortē* (for the three great feasts) and *sabbata* (the three additional religious observances). Further discussion includes the Greek words *skia* and *sōma*. The meaning of these finds a wide agreement by scholars, namely, that we have the reality "of which the sacred observances were a prefigurement" of Christ (p. 84). This contextually ceremonial overtone, so Du Preez, makes it necessary for *sabbata* to be part of the cultic laws of ancient Israel.

Chapter ten examines Paul's use of the OT. While he foremost used the LXX as basis, there are texts that are obviously taken from the Hebrew. Du Preez, furthermore, attests that the passages most often cited to be the origin of Col 2:16 are in books not referenced by Paul. Thus, the author concludes, the most probable source for Paul is Hosea 2:11.

Chapter eleven looks at the linguistics of Hosea 2:11. Du Preez notes several similarities, such as the three main terms (all singular), the same sequence, the focus on time, etc. He continues with another close look at all three terms and concludes that Paul understood the prophecy of Hosea 2:11 to be directed to the time after Jesus' death at the cross. After having looked at the linguistics, the author turns to the literary structure of the book of Hosea. Hosea 2:11 presents an augmented parallelism with the new moons (as time measurement) in its center. The pilgrimage festivals and sabbaths complement each other. The suggested literary form of Hos

2:11 is thus: prologue - annual feasts - lunar feasts - annual/septennial feasts - epilogue.

The author finishes his discourse about the meaning of Col 2:16, with taking a final look at the literary structure of the letter to the Colossians. First of all, du Preez introduces us to three recognized chiasms, Col 1:15-20; 2:6-19; and 2:21. It is again pointed out that the consideration of the literary features of the text is vitally important to the correct understanding of the message. The repetitive use of Hebrew literary features in Colossians as well as the similarities in form and meaning with Hosea 2:11 substantiates the author's conclusion: Col 2:16 represents an augmented inverted parallelism, in which the Greek *sabbata* adds on and completes the three pilgrim festivals.

The book is written in a clear but not too scholarly way. Terms such as "augmented parallelism" are explained so that non-theologians will be able to follow the analysis and pace of the author. The enlarged spacing of the text (1.5 space) provides relaxed reading. However, the endnotes at the close of each chapter make the reading somewhat complicated because one has to keep going back and forth. One of the outstanding features of the book is the literature involved. The arguments are not only well-taken but profoundly supported. However, at some places the word of the author is rare and hidden by too many the quotations. The structure of the book shows educational interest. The many inserted tables bring much clarity in the matter and the reviews after each section serve as evaluation. However, at times, the repetitions seem to be too many. For instance, the concept of *heortē/ḥag* is being explained and repeated at too many places (pp. 72, 75-76, 93, 106-109, 120, 129, 146, etc.).

This book is one of the best resources on the issues of Col 2:16 and will, therefore, be of profit for everybody who is interested in the topic of Sabbath/Sunday. Though written by a Sabbatarian, it is held objective and based on the text, making the arguments relevant for everybody who holds to the Bible as the word of God. After having read this volume, one will not look at the text discussed as a strong fortress in favor of Sunday observance

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Hope Amidst Ruin: A Literary and Theological Analysis of Ezra, by A. Philip Brown II. Grenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2009.

Hope Amidst Ruin is a published version of the dissertation "A Literary and Theological Analysis of the Book of Ezra" researched by A. Philip Brown II in 2002. Brown uses a literary and theological approach to analyze the book of Ezra and concludes that it exposes the future and hope of the postexilic community amidst their "existential tension" (p.1). Unlike the preceding studies in Ezra that minimally touched the structure and theology mainly as introductory notes, Brown engages in an elaborate synthesis of the literary and theological components of the text of Ezra to derive its message. His literary engagement with Ezra resonates throughout the first half section of *Hope Amidst Ruin* as he tackles temporal ordering and point of view. His analytical credence features prominently as he develops the theology of Ezra in the second half of his work where he elaborates God's triumph over the external dark forces that seek to stifle His will. In addition, he exposes internal rebellion against God as a threat to the "people's holiness and as an obstruction to His fully reviving and restoring His people" (p. 220). The author advances a paradoxical proposition: Ezra is not a text for constructing a postexilic historiography; yet, as far as biblical history is concerned, the book of Ezra "forms the capstone of the Old Testament history, yielding the only coverage of the postexilic return from Cyrus to Artaxerxes I" (p. 3).

Hope Amidst Ruin is presented in eight chapters. Chapters 1-2 discuss how Ezra's narrative deviates from a historiographical orientation that it seemingly introduces in its opening verses. The text, rather, engages the reader in a narrational order that is at odds with chronology by displaying in 1:1-4:23 a time span from 538 B.C. to 445 B.C.—from Cyrus's decree to Nehemiah's return respectively. This time span embeds Darius's 521-486 B.C. reign (Ezra 4:24-6:22), Ahasuerus's reign (486-465 B.C., not in text), and Artaxerxes's reign (463-424 B.C., Ezra 7:1-4:44). Ezra's anachronous device marginalizes historical chronology to highlight "the narrative's theological motifs: opposition to God's people, hope for the future, the importance of obedience to the law, Yahweh's sovereign control of history, and His gracious goodness" (p. 43). Critics consider the book of Ezra as a chaotic text resulting from "scribal errors, redactors' blunders and confusion on the part of the Chronicler" (p. 49), a view that has yielded an attempt by some of these scholars to reconstruct the text. The traditional camp on its part accepts the conventional order of the text but aligns history with the text by transposing, skipping, or replacing kings. Brown discusses the textual structure that is characterized by analepses, prolepses and temporal proportioning designs that draw attention to the "narratives focal points." (p. 65).

Chapters 3 and 4 analyze the plot and point of view of the book of Ezra. The plot structure is a careful selection and rearrangement of events that radiate God's sovereignty and His bond with the people. The Ezra narrative is cast in three models of plot structures. Ezra 1-6 and 7-10, demonstrates the Aristotelian model that proposes a smooth plot movement from beginning, to middle and to end. Another Aristotelian model that proposes a protagonist's rise and fall is applied to exhibit Israel's fortunes in Ezra 1-6 and 7-10. Additionally, an analysis of the plots of Ezra 1-6 and 7-10 reveals their relevance to Freytag's "pyramidal model of conflict development and resolution" (p. 70) reflected in Cyrus's decree (Ezra1:1-4), the returnees' worship (Ezra 1:5-3:13), halting temple construction (Ezra 4:1-24), and the resumption and completion of temple construction (Ezra 5:1-6:12-22). Brown identifies in Ezra 7:27-7:15 a theological crux that elucidates the point of view that shapes the discourse of the book of Ezra. Point of view thus, determines what is elaborated, the narration vantage points and the choice of characters. Brown contends that,"[a]ny analysis suggesting narratorial concerns that are at odds with the point of view expressed by Ezra should be considered invalid" (p. 115).

In Chapters 5-7, Brown discusses Ezra's narrational portrait of God as sovereignty and holy. This portrait justifies how the returnees strive to fit in the mold of Israel's remnant by separating themselves from anything that impinges on their covenant relationship with God. The book of Ezra indicates that though comparatively insignificant, the new Israel was a demonstration of God's immanent involvement behind the scene to usher in total restoration. Ezra makes evident that God is faithful to His promise to restore Israel physically and spiritually. Brown continues that "the message of Ezra revolves around three focal points: God, returnees, and relationship between them (p. 146). This relationship explains holiness, a motif that reverberates in different facets in the book of Ezra: the establishment of legitimate priesthood (Ezra 2:58-63), rejection of syncretists (4:1-2), the admittance of only the "separatist" (p. 149) to the Passover celebration (Ezra 6:20-22), consecrating the stewards of the temple articles (Ezra 8:24, 28), and the separation of foreign women from the community (Ezra 9-10). He argues that the events in Ezra are connected to the past and to the future of Israel. While genealogy connected individuals to the past and to the unfolding present, Jerusalem connected them to the promises of land and to national continuity. More still, Cyrus' declaration, the returnees' zeal to restart worship, the guilt for their unfaithfulness are indicators of continuity. Furthermore, hope is the basis for the theology of Ezra. The hostile circumstances cannot stifle the divinely planned existence of Israel as a nation; rather the prerequisite nationhood lies in the people's holiness enabled by their relationship with the holy God.

Brown, in Chapter 8 of *Hope Amidst Ruin*, designs a "Reader's Guide to the Theological Message of Ezra . . ." (p. 201). The guide underscores that prophecy-stimulated hope is realized in events that culminate in the two phases of return and the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 1-7). The guide, further advances that hope is foundational to the quest for restoration of holiness in Ezra 10. In Ezra 1-6, hope is qualified by "the Returnees' conduct in their relationship with Yahweh" demonstrated in their determination to separate themselves from foreign women. He exposes how parallelism and antithesis underscore the theological issues in the book of Ezra.

Reading Brown's work, leaves no doubt that it is one of the single comprehensive literary and theological studies done on the book of Ezra. Brown's identification of the temporal ordering of the plot structure, the temporal proportioning that sets to prominence the God-human relationship in Chapters 7-8, and point of view that governs the description of the setting, scenes, and events in Ezra, makes this work a significant contribution to the study of Ezra and, generally, of the Old Testament. First, Brown's work includes convincing arguments for a systematic literary arrangement of the text that critical scholars condemn as disorganized and impossible to understand or reconstruct (L. W. Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, ICC, [1972], 3, 4, 23; R.W. Klein, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, NIB, 3. [1999], 665; Leslie, McFall, "Was Nehemiah Contemporary with Ezra?" *WTJ* 53 [1991]: 281). Second, this work attests against the traditional approach to smooth anomalies in the chronology of the text (L. L. Grabbe, "Josephus, and the Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration," *JBL* 106 [1987]: 233; Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, [2008], 500). Third, Brown analyzes the theological thrust in Ezra and perceives that the text contrasts "Yahweh's character and the Returnees' conduct" and displays the latter's endeavor to orient their life in line with the former. This proposition undoes the social-political approach that views Ezra's mission either as a bid to salvage land from the Persian control (H. R. Marbury, "The Strange Woman in the Persian Yehud," in *Approaching Yehud*, SBL [2007], 167-169) or as to maintain imperial order in the Trans-Euphrates (J. Blenkinsopp, "Mission of Udjahorresnet," *JBL* 106 (1987): 420-421). Brown's proposition further sways off the social anthropological approach that views the expulsion of women in Ezra 9-10 as a result of perceiving women as inherently polluting (H. C. Washington, "Israel's Holy Seed and the Foreign Women of Ezra-Nehemiah," *BI* 11 [2003]: 429; S. M. Olyan, "Purity Ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah," *JSJ* 35 [2004]: 4).

Hope Amidst Ruin is a valuable springboard first for those who seriously endeavor to pursue an exegetical study of the book of Ezra. Finally, its treatment of the theology of Ezra may inspire pastors to turn to

the book of Ezra and draw sermons that are relevant and inspiring for personal commitment.

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Lord, I Have a Question: Everything You Ever Wanted to Ask God But Were Afraid to Say Out Loud, by Dan Smith. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2004.

When this book was published, Dan Smith was a senior pastor at the La Sierra University Church in California. His wife, Hilda, and his two sons, Alex and Eric, have accompanied him in his service on mission trips around the world. While working as a missionary and pastor, he became aware of the need of his church members who kept asking questions about God in quietness. The author introduces basic questions related to God, particularly on the issues about the cross, evil, suffering, and eschatology. He admits that his answers are not the last words (9-18). He gives some anchor points that are clear on the topic and strengthen his arguments.

Smith speaks about the divine nature and attributes of God, which, according to the biblical text, cannot be changed, negotiated, or questioned by man (19-28). Smith explains that the tree in the garden of Eden was a loving warning of the natural consequences, and the cross and the fire (at the second death) are the natural consequences of sin (29-43). Smith describes briefly some models of atonement: satisfaction model, moral influence model, victory model, and the revelatory substitution model. According to Smith, the last theory, revelatory substitution, is the closest to the criteria of atonement and has accommodated the other theories of atonement (44-66). He analyzes the meaning of grace, hell, and the unchanging God. Here, Smith also discusses the term predestination, which comes from the understanding that God is variable. Smith affirms that God is constant and sin does change man, but does not change God. Grace is for everyone, everywhere, and every time (67-75). The author strongly affirms that God's grace is not a 'cheap grace.' He states that man's salvation is never based on good works (76-89).

Smith shows that God speaks to human beings through all of Scripture. Every figure in the Old Testament and New Testament, although imperfect, speaks meaningfully to those who need to hear the good news about Christ. All stories and events have been used to describe and clarify the work of Christ to save human beings (90-104). Smith

connects the heavenly judgment with the prophecies that lead to the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the year 1844. He talks about the judgment scenes when Christ moves from the holy to the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary. He pictures Christ as the Judge who is judging God's people and the wicked ones. The judgment of the living is determined by each individual. It does not include an arbitrary time set by God. The judgment is primarily about God and the issue is Christ. According to Smith, the judgment started from Christ's death until post-millennial judgment (105-126).

Next, Smith explores the issue of evil and suffering. He holds that God is love all the time and at the same time he is righteous in His acts and gives life. God is not the source of evil and suffering, but Satan is the source of all the bitter things in this life. God never uses force for humanity to choose Him. God allows suffering in a generic sense, not in a specific sense (127-141). About miracles and prayers, Smith describes those in chapter ten. Miracles do not happen all the time. But sometimes God uses unnatural means to teach humans to believe in His words. Miracles are the signs of what God wants to do for man spiritually. In other words, miracles for the sake of spiritual needs can happen every day, but the physical miracles will be repeated physically during the millennium. Prayer serves to change man; it does not change God. It builds man's relationship with God, and Christ is offering intercessory prayers in heaven for repentant sinners. Prayer is the way to receive God's wisdom in daily struggles of life (142-159).

In view of Smith's eschatological perspective, he believes that those who deny the cross deny Christ's mediatorial works and this will be the cause of their punishment, which is the second death. Further, Christ delays His coming in order to save people from the second death. The book of Revelation pictures the condition of the righteous and the wicked. This book reveals the wages of sin and the rewards of the obedience to God's law (160-196). Smith closes his book by challenging the reader to be faithful to God, like the 144,000 who follow the Lamb, and have no lie in their mouth (197-203).

Dan Smith tries to provide an answer to the question, "how can I understand God so I can enter the kingdom of heaven" or "how can I behave toward sufferings and remain a faithful Christian." Smith has provided many good arguments, however, there are some statements that need more clarification and explanation.

First, according to Smith, Christ did not need to come the first time in order to save man, if the people had followed the messages of the prophets (14). However, Christ came to this earth to "be with us." Christ came to live an obedient life, to be man's great example, and to be the redeemer of mankind.

Second, in Smith's "nonnegotiable anchor point" (chap. 2) he does not provide a balanced perspective of some points: (1) He discusses that God came to give life, not to take it away. He explores the loving act of God but does not give an explanation regarding human sufferings especially for those who believe in Christ. (2) Smith says, "we need not fear God" because perfect love drives out fear (1 John 4:18). However, he does not explain the apostle Paul's statement, "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." (3) Smith claims that "God is good news" for true Christians because everything about God is good news. However, he fails to describe that God is bad news for Satan and his followers. Christ is not only the Lamb, but He is also the Lion who overcomes Satan. (4) Smith emphasizes that Christians are Christ's friends and "we are not in a master/servant relationship. We're friends." However, Christ also asked His disciples to be His *doulos* (servant) and he called our "Father" God.

Third, Smith says, "God the Father is exactly like the Son" (p. 27), however, how far the 'exactness' goes and in what sense, Smith does not explain.

Fourth, Smith introduces a "let him go" theology (30-33). He believes God just 'let him (man) go' when he/they used their power of choice. So, when Adam chose to sin, God just let Adam go to sin. According to Smith, sin has natural consequences, similar to smoking which leads to cancer. He does not clarify more on what the sense or the meaning of the consequences are. Did Christ come only to bear natural consequences? What is the significance of Christ's resurrection if He bore only natural consequences?

In summary, Smith's book is a practical understanding of God and answers some of the curiosity about God (His divine attributes) and man (suffering and salvation). The reviewer recommends this book for a non-specialist audience, although there need to be more explanations, and for the student of theology for the sake of comparison of understandings about God, Christ, man, and the nature of sin.

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The American Church in Crisis: Groundbreaking Research Based on a National Database of over 200,000 Churches, by David T. Olson. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.

David T. Olson, director of the American Research Project and director of church planting for the Evangelical Covenant Church, presents

comprehensive research on the state of Christian denominations in the United States. The title of his book "The American Church in Crisis," is engaging. Based on a national database of over 200,000 churches, it attempts to give "a snapshot of American Christianity" (p. 20). The content involves a four-stage process of assessment of American Christian churches such as "observation," "evaluation," "introspection," and "action." The research comprises basically three main branches of Christian denominations in the US: Evangelical churches, Mainline Protestant churches, and the Roman Catholic Church. The first and most extensive part of the book, under "observation," deals with asking research questions and collecting data. It brings forth the main contribution of the book, the demographic and spiritual topography of Christianity in America.

The question, "How many people attend a Christian church any given weekend," tends to be controversial. Olson examines basic religious polling data of weekend church attendance and disapproves of both the Gallup Organization reports and the Barna Research Group, which reports that 40-43 percent of Americans attend church each week. The author does not share this optimistic picture of the American church and proposes a more modest figure of 17.5 percent. The reason for this discrepancy, according to Olson, is the overreporting or the so-called "halo effect," which simply means that Americans overreport socially desirable behavior and underreport undesirable behavior. Another reason is the use of the label "regular participant." The American Church Research Project (TACRP) defines it as "a person who attends church at least three out of three eight Sundays" (p. 29).

For the second question, the author inquires whether the church kept pace with the 68 million new births and the 23 million new immigrants who have arrived in the United States since 1990? Again, the answer is negative. Given the overall trajectory of the American church in light of national population growth, Olson concludes that, "in no single state did church attendance keep up with population growth" (p. 37). Among the reasons for the decline in attendance he mentions the congregations' aging and a shortage of new churches. However, evangelical churches have some advantage in growth due to the active church planting, large churches (compared to mainline denominations), and higher birthrates.

Chapter four investigates the church's regional landscape by mapping the three major branches of Christianity according to their largest weekend church attendance in each of 3,141 counties of the United States. The author considers the population shifts as a strong influential factor for the growth or decline potential of its churches. For instance, in the northeast, the Roman Catholic church is declining significantly while evangelical churches grow faster than in any other region of the nation.

This is due to the Anglo migration to the southern states and a sharp increase in Asian, Hispanic, and other immigrant populations.

Chapter five analyzes six external and internal demographic features significantly effecting church growth or decline as follows: (1) *affluence* of the community in which the church is located, (2) *education* attainment of the church's community, (3) *age* of the church, (4) *size* of the church, (5) *gender* makeup, and (6) the church *location*. The research has shown that these six factors influence a church's growth factor. The fact that younger churches and growing churches have a balanced male-female ratio, while the older and declining churches have more female attendees, is a good case in point.

In chapter six Olson observes each of eight denominational families in the US to see where they are clustered in America and whether they are growing or declining in attendance percentage. The competitive environment of American culture as well as the denomination's missional vision culminate in a historic reshuffling of different breeds of the American church.

The second part of the book falls under the rubric of "evaluation." Here, the author performs the deeper analysis to explain the observations of the first six chapters. The three chapters of this section evaluate the data through the lens of closed churches, established churches, and new churches. The reason why many churches are in decline, according to Olson, is poor church planting. The research reveals also that by far the highest closure rates come from new churches while historical Christian denominations in America demonstrate a lower rate at the same time. However, this happens mostly due to a strong denominational organization that simply does not let those churches close their doors. The fact is that the lower the closure rate, the more likely the denomination is declining; the higher is the closure rate, the more likely the denomination is growing (p.124).

Olson submits that church health has a great impact on its growth. He suggests a simple visual model of a three-legged stool that represents the four critical elements of a healthy church: *spirituality*-reinforcement of the message and mission of Jesus, *chemistry*-a healthy family system and an attractive group personality, and *strategy*-a fruitful ministry in harmony with God-directed goals (pp. 137-138). Above all is the leadership "seat" which provides balance, strength, and stability for the virtual construction.

One of the most important factors of denominational growth is church planting. Here are some persuasive reasons to start new churches: In the long range perspective, new churches play an important role in passing faith from generation to generation since each generation seems to need their own new type of churches. New churches lower the denomination

age profile. They are more easy to adapt to cultural and demographical changes than those established long ago. Now, the sobering fact of Olson's research is that every church with less than a one percent planting rate (that is less than one new church for every 100 established churches) is declining numerically in attendance (p. 146). The reality of church planting among Christian denominations in the United States is unfortunate. A net yearly gain of 300 new-planted churches in America is far from keeping up with population growth comparing to the needed 3,205. At the same time many newly established churches do not survive the first 10 years. For the strong church-planting system, Olson suggests four building blocks: parenting (planting a daughter church), a high-quality pastor, an effective launch process, and coaching and support systems (p.151).

In the "introspection" Olson looks at the cultural changes in American society, which demand a new approach to mission. In the post-Christian world the church must renew emphasis on the message and mission of Jesus that is, to switch the focus from institutional maintenance to the people's needs, from monoethnic to a multiethnic ministry context.

Olson attempts to look at the future; what will happen with the church if the situation remains static, and the population continues to grow at the same rate? The American population will grow from the present 296 million to 336 million by 2020 causing a significant percentage decline in church attendance. To change this bleak future the church must strive toward both health and growth and recognize that church planting is essential for its survival.

The last section, "action," provides a spiritual foundation for church mission. Focusing on Jesus in Scriptures, Olson explores Jesus' message and mission and how it should be reflected in the church's life. Olson finishes his book with an optimistic prognosis: the church will be restored by the spiritual and supernatural act of God.

In my opinion, the book "The American Church in Crisis" is commendable and should be seriously considered. First, it represents solid comprehensive research on both the national and local levels. Not only does it explore the data, it also investigates the reasons for the appearing crisis and proposes a way for the church to thrive. Second, the book is relevant to the mission challenges nowadays. It makes significant contribution in analyzing and understanding external factors affecting church growth such as demographics, age, gender, and location. Lastly, Olson gives valuable insights for church planting issues from his own experience. In addition, the book is well organized and easy-to-read. Multiple sidebars, charts, maps, and graphs help visualize complex research findings in a practical way.

Yet, the book might be more valuable if the author could delimit the scope of his research to the first three parts of the book or elaborate more extensively on the "action" section, which in my opinion is not sufficiently grounded on biblical and missional theology. Also, exploring the extensive sample of 200,000 churches as the target research population, one might expect equal representativeness of all Christian denominations in America; yet, some fairly large protestant churches were not included in the research such as the Seventh-day Adventist church or the Latter-day Saints (Mormons) as well as other non-denominational Christians. The book does not mention the methodology the American Church Research Project followed in choosing the target population. Finally, the definition of terms missing in the book would be highly appreciated.

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