

# Paul, John, and Apocalyptic Eschatology

Studies in Honour of  
Martinus C. de Boer

SUPPLEMENTS TO NOVUM TESTAMENTUM 149

EDITED BY

*Jan Krans*

*Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte*

*Peter-Ben Smit*

*Arie Zwiep*

BRILL

## Paul, John, and Apocalyptic Eschatology

# Supplements to Novum Testamentum

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Martinus C. de Boer

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## INTRODUCTION

Honouring Martinus (“Martin”) C. de Boer with a *Festschrift* draws attention to his scholarly work, his academic achievements, and with that to his main interests and his personality. As editors, currently all serving as colleagues of Martin de Boer at VU University Amsterdam, initiating and seeing this volume through press we have become more aware—and even more appreciative—of all of these aspects and it is with gratefulness that we offer this *Festschrift* to him, wishing him and his wife Paula an *otium cum dignitate*, in the sure hope that we have not yet seen the last of him nor of the fruits of his pen.

The contributions to this *Festschrift* can be divided into four categories: Pauline studies, with a focus on the background to Paul’s letters and their interpretation as such, Johannine studies, early Christian apocalypticism, and finally New Testament textual criticism. To the first three areas Martin de Boer has made major contributions himself—and continues to do so. Recently, he published a major commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians,<sup>1</sup> an even more substantial commentary on the Gospel of John for the acclaimed *International Critical Commentary* series is in preparation, and earlier he published monographs on Pauline apocalyptic eschatology<sup>2</sup> and the death of Jesus in the Gospel of John.<sup>3</sup> Present also are studies on the text of the New Testament, which indicate another side of de Boer’s work and ethos: his willingness to allow and encourage others, colleagues and especially his students and doctoral students, to develop specializations that supplement his own. In fact, his is the rare merit of having enabled a field of specialization of his predecessor to continue to flourish while having other interests and foci himself.

The essays collected in this volume, by internationally ranking New Testament scholars and colleagues from VU University Amsterdam, constitute a lively discussion with the work of de Boer and his major interests, Pauline studies, Johannine studies, and the study of early Christian apocalypticism. At the same time all essays make important and original

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<sup>1</sup> De Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> De Boer, *The Defeat of Death: Apocalyptic Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5* (JSNTSup 22; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> De Boer, *Johannine Perspectives on the Death of Jesus* (CBET 17; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996).

contributions in their own right, often engaging in direct or indirect discussion with one another as well. The willingness of so many senior New Testament scholars to contribute to this volume is an eloquent witness to the appreciation for de Boer's own work developed throughout a career that spans both sides of the Atlantic and to his service to the profession, making international cooperation and exchange possible for many, not in the last place as secretary of the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*, a position in which he made—and still makes—an important contribution to the development of his field.

The subsequent overview will give a first impression of the rich collection of essays, both honoring de Boer and furthering the field and interests to which he dedicated his scholarly career.

### 1. *Paul*

As may be expected in a *Festschrift* honoring someone who has dedicated much of his scholarly life to the study of the Apostle to the Gentiles, the section of this volume dedicated to Pauline studies in the broad sense of the word is particularly rich. The contributions consider important backgrounds to Paul's work, such as the words of Jesus, traditions about the Eucharist and the Last Supper, and Paul's understanding of equality in Christian communion, as well as significant theological questions, such as existence "under the law," the role of violence and peace, mysticism, and eschatology and resurrection. In this way, they bring together two significant scholarly interests of de Boer: the investigation of historical and literary backgrounds and context of Pauline texts, as well as their interpretation as literary artifacts of their own.

The first contribution to this *Festschrift* stems from Armand Puig i Tàrrach (Theological Faculty of Catalonia, Barcelona) and considers "The Use of the Story and the Words of Jesus in the Letters of Paul" (1–14). In studying the early reception and transmission of the Jesus tradition by Paul of Tarsus, Puig i Tàrrach argues that, although Paul uses words by Jesus sparingly—though still more often than the Acts of the Apostles and the pseudographical Pauline letters—he nevertheless does so when he deems that this is necessary. Furthermore, this essay argues that an overarching "story of Jesus," of which his heavenly pre-, his earthly pro-, and his post-resurrection meta-existence are integral parts, constitutes much of the backdrop to Paul's theologizing and his self-identification.

In the next essay, Bernard C. Lategan (Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study) offers “Some Remarks on the Origin and Function of Galatians 3:28” (15–29), thus engaging in a discussion with de Boer’s recent commentary and early studies on this letter of Paul and addressing one of the most influential passages from Pauline literature as such. Lategan argues specifically that the point of Gal 3:28 is not so much a social as a theological program. The three pairs listed in Gal 3:28, representing three kinds of (social) difference, are all resolved in Christ, primarily with regard to soteriology: none of the six characteristics makes a difference with regard to being heirs of Abraham and sons of God. Lategan concludes his essay with a theological consideration: reading Gal 3:28 against the background of Luther’s emphasis on *sola fide*, he maintains that the result of such a reading must be radical inclusivity.

“The Community Supper according to Paul and the Didache: Their Affinity and Historical Development” (30–47) is the title of the contribution by Henk Jan de Jonge (Leiden University), in which he considers early Christian meals as reflected by Paul and in the *Didache*, placing them in the context of the meals of Greco-Roman voluntary associations. De Jonge argues three main points: a) that the meals reflected in 1 Cor 10–14 and *Didache* 9:1–10:14 are both the same kind of meals and constituted a normal ritual practice in the first and second centuries CE; b) the interpretation of bread and wine as standing for Christ is early and successful, but nevertheless secondary and is “derived from the previous concept of the corporate unity between Jesus and his followers”; c) the “order of service” of early Christian meals (i.e. singing, reading, and homily) is indicative of “the historical continuity between the Christian gathering and the Greco-Roman group banquet followed by a symposium.”

Next, James D.G. Dunn (Durham University, UK) considers the expression “Under the Law” (48–60) as it occurs in Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Galatians, in an essay with the same title. Dunn surveys the use of the expression, which leads him to a number of conclusions. In particular, he shows that Paul uses the expression “under the law” to refer to the situation of Jews as such and in contexts in which the law of Israel has been mentioned. Paul, however, sought to separate the link between being an Israelite and being under the law, while he also saw the situation “under the law” as closely parallel to humankind’s situation “under the elemental forces of the world”, both situations from which the gospel and the Spirit brought liberation. As an alternative to being “under the law”, he offers the

possibility of being “under grace” and “led by the Spirit”, which is an existence in which the weakness of the flesh and the power of sin are overcome in a way that the law was unable to do.

In her essay “The Rhetoric of Violence and the God of Peace in Paul’s Letter to the Romans” (61–75) Beverly Roberts Gaventa (Princeton Theological Seminary) considers the language of violence as it occurs in Paul’s longest and arguably most influential letter, where the “God of peace” is said to “crush Satan” (Rom 16:20). In particular, Gaventa makes three points, namely a) that Paul engages in “ontological metaphor” when he speaks of a violent struggle between godly and anti-godly powers, thus moving beyond the choice between a “literal” or a “figurative” interpretation of such language; b) that Paul sees no place for the human perpetration of violent acts in all of this, but that this violence is strictly a matter between divine and anti-divine powers; c) that the God of peace (Rom 16:20) that is simultaneously violent by crushing Satan can be understood as a God that establishes peace, for which the removal of anti-godly powers is necessary.

Subsequently, Daniel Marguerat (University of Lausanne) studies another contested issue, the identity of Paul as a mystic, following in the footsteps of Albert Schweitzer, in his contribution “Paul the Mystic” (76–93). After giving a survey of the discussion and the theological issues at stake, Marguerat endeavors to survey important mystical or charismatic events in Paul’s life, and to argue his point, namely that Paul can indeed be called a mystic, but not in the sense of being a member of a spiritual elite. Rather, Paul’s mysticism is a democratized mysticism, accessible to all, and at the same time it is a heavily christocentric mysticism that focuses not so much on reaching God per se, but rather on (mystical) communion with Christ through participation in his suffering. Thus, Paul offers a radically transformed mysticism, but a mysticism nonetheless.

In the only German contribution to the *Festschrift*, Andreas Lindemann (Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal/Bethel) offers de Boer a comparative paper entitled “Auferstehung und Endgericht: Überlegungen zu den Paulusbriefen und zum Johannesevangelium” (“Resurrection and Final Judgment: Considerations about the Pauline Epistles and the Gospel of John”; 94–122), in which he addresses the question what significance the expectation of the final judgment has for Paul and John as theologians. Lindemann presents a thorough analysis of main traits of the eschatological

conceptions of both theologians and draws attention to significant similarities and differences, both with regard to their concepts of eschatology, the resurrection of the dead, and judgment as such and with regard to the rhetorical function that these concepts have when Paul and John address the communities to which and for which they write.

## 2. *John*

The section on Johannine studies considers two main topics that are both related to the rhetorical purposes and theology of the Gospel of John: the formation of the identity of the “Johannine community” and its ethos, and the role that the crucifixion/exaltation of Jesus plays in the Fourth Gospel, specifically in John 2, a chapter that points towards this event and in John 20, a chapter that points back to it.

The first of the essays on John is concerned with the audience, situation, and rhetorical purpose of the Gospel of John. Adele Reinhartz (University of Ottawa), in her “Forging a New Identity: Johannine Rhetoric and the Audience of the Fourth Gospel” (123–134), engages these issues by arguing that the Gospel of John is addressed to a group made up of Jewish, Samaritan, and Gentile believers in Christ that all needed to relinquish the boundary and identity markers of their previous groups in order to be forged together into one new community of Christ believers, while distancing themselves from those who are opposed to Christ, specifically the Ἰουδαῖοι. Creatively, Reinhartz sums up her argument in an “unknown and entirely fabricated” letter of the beloved disciple to his community, in the context of which she also points out that her position heightens awareness a) of the multi-ethnic (not just Jewish/Gentile) composition of the early Christian community; b) the positive task of John’s negative statements about those opposed to Christ, i.e. to foster a sense of community identity; c) the rhetorical purpose of Gospels, beyond being a repository of historical information about Jesus.

In his essay “‘Working the Works of God’: Identity and Behaviour in the Gospel of John” (135–150), Jan G. van der Watt (Radboud University Nijmegen/North-West University, Potchefstroom) proceeds to give an outline of the principle of the ethical outlook of the Gospel of John, a topic that has only recently regained a place on the agenda of Johannine scholarship. Like Reinhartz’ essay, this paper is concerned with the identity of the Johannine community. Here, van der Watt argues that the Gospel of John

receives a general Jewish value system, but at the same time proceeds to interpret this value system christologically, from the point of view of Jesus' words and actions. The core of this reinterpretation is the love that Jesus exemplified and lived out and which his disciples are now called upon to live out as well, guided and sustained by the Spirit: "What believers do should reflect what Jesus did, and under the guidance of the Spirit, these types of actions are concretized in new forms" (150).

Next, in his essay "Alternative Patronage in John 2:1–11?" (151–168), Peter-Ben Smit (VU University Amsterdam/Utrecht University/University of Pretoria) adds a new chapter to his study of John 2. Interacting with social-scientific approaches to John 2, Smit argues that it is likely to see Jesus as assuming patronage over the wedding in Cana, well in line with ancient notables, human and divine alike. A striking difference between Jesus and these other patrons is, however, that Jesus' public acquisition of honor—the point of patronage as such—somehow does not take place at the wedding, given that his role remains hidden and is only accessible to the reader and to the disciples. Smit gives as a reason for this the fact that in the Gospel of John the true glory of Christ is only revealed at his glorification, i.e. crucifixion, which provides a perspective on honor that is necessary for understanding Jesus' patronage in John 2:1–11 as well. The essay also argues that in the light of its thesis, references to a conflict between "Jews" and "Christians" or some sort of supersessionist theology are absent from John 2:1–11.

Christopher M. Tuckett (University of Oxford, UK) studies the penultimate chapter of the Gospel of John in an essay entitled "Seeing and Believing in John 20" (169–185) and the enigma that this chapter evokes: what does it add to the climax of the Gospel, the crucifixion as it is described in John 19? More specifically, Tuckett argues that "all the stories [in John 20] contain a remarkably consistent and powerful theme, pressing home the general point that genuine (i.e. from John's perspective) faith cannot be based on 'seeing' and tangible evidence" (171). By contrast, Tuckett argues, following the lead of Bultmann, John 20 points back to the crucifixion, to some extent relativizing the importance of seeing the risen Christ. In this way, Tuckett provides a way of reading John 20 in a coherent way and also gives a rationale for the inclusion of this chapter into the Gospel of John.

In this section's final contribution, Maarten J.J. Menken (Tilburg University) asks: "What Authority Does the Fourth Evangelist Claim for His

Book?" (186–202). According to Menken, the Beloved Disciple functions as the “perfect believer” in John 1–20, and actually “gives authority to John’s Gospel.” Menken analyzes the role of the Beloved Disciple as well as that of the Spirit in John, and approaches the gospel primarily from 20:30–31. Through study of the scriptural quotations at the beginning and end of John 1–20, this essay approaches its conclusion that the Fourth Gospel was in fact intended to have the same authority as Scripture did. Menken further underpins his argument by a look at 1 John 5:6–12, and concludes that the Gospel of John has indeed been written *as* Scripture.

### 3. *Apocalyptic Eschatology*

One of the major fields of interest in de Boer’s work has been early Jewish and early Christian apocalypticism. The third section of this volume presents three studies in early Christian apocalypticism, in which its Jewish context also plays an important role.

Adela Yarbro Collins (Yale Divinity School) considers “Paul’s Contribution to the Hope of the Early Church” (203–217) in an essay that both analyzes Pauline eschatology, i.e. his view of the world to come and the transition into it (judgment, transformation), a topic on which de Boer did substantial work himself, and its reception and transformation in later texts of the *corpus paulinum* in the very broad sense of the word (up to the fourth-century *Apocalypse of Paul*), as well as in the works of early Christian theologians such as Ignatius of Antioch and Origen (but excluding Gnostic texts). In this way, Yarbro Collins provides insights into the development of Pauline eschatological thought and how this was received and further developed by later Christian authors.

“Eight Kings on an Apocalyptic Animal Farm: Reflections on Revelation 17:9–11” (218–237) is the evocative title of the contribution of Arie W. Zwiep (VU University Amsterdam) that is concerned with the dating of the Revelation of John. Zwiep takes as his point of departure a trend for an early, “Neronian,” date for the last book of the New Testament canon in recent scholarship, quite across the board of New Testament studies. The essay that Zwiep offers here constitutes a challenge to this trend and argues for a date during the reign of Emperor Domitian (81–96). The basis for this argument is found in a detailed consideration of the eight kings that are mentioned in Rev 17:9–11 and that can be related to various Roman emperors, including a future *Nero redivivus*. In this way, in the best of apocalyptic



traditions, the Revelation of John offers both an interpretation of history, as well as an expectation of a crisis and the hope of its solution through divine intervention on behalf of the faithful.

Finally, Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte (VU University Amsterdam/University of Pretoria), de Boer's successor to the chair of New Testament studies at VU University Amsterdam, makes a comparison between the "messianic interregnum" as described in 1 Cor 15:24 and the one depicted in Rev 20:1–6 in a contribution entitled "How Antichrist Defeated Death: The Development of Christian Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Early Church" (238–255). Lietaert Peerbolte uses de Boer's analysis of two types of Jewish apocalypticism as a heuristic model for analyzing the different, though related scenarios of 1 Corinthians and Revelation, while extending the scope of his essay to include the reception of the idea of a messianic interregnum in the early Church. He argues that the two scenarios both originate in a Christ-oriented interpretation of two existing Jewish eschatological schemes, viz. that of the earthly reign of God's anointed king and that of the cosmic intervention of God in history. The combination of these two schemes has led to a new, Christian scenario. In later times, the thus formed idea of chiliasm has been read back into 1 Cor 15, but it reflects a separate track in early Christian eschatology.

#### 4. *Textual Criticism*

The fourth and final section of this volume is dedicated to a type of research that de Boer has actively fostered within the Department of Biblical Studies at VU University, even though it was not his own specialism: textual criticism. Two contributions are combined in a symbolic gesture. De Boer's predecessor, Tjitze Baarda, and his *promotus* Jan Krans represent two academic generations different from de Boer's own. They both take their own point of departure in offering their work to him as a token of friendship and appreciation. The way in which de Boer has stimulated work in textual criticism is typical of his view of scholarship: in the best possible situation, scholars operate in a team setting in which divergent specialisms strengthen each other.

Tjitze Baarda (VU University Amsterdam), the distinguished predecessor of de Boer, contributes a text-critical study of the longer and shorter readings of John 3:13: Καὶ οὐδεις ἀναβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, εἰ μὴ ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. In this essay, enti-

tled “John 3:13: ‘The Son of Man who is in Heaven’: A Plea for the Longer Text” (256–273), Baarda provides an extensive review of the extant witnesses in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Georgian, Coptic, and Armenian tradition. Subsequently, he shows that the longer version—notably not the reading preferred by the new NA<sup>28</sup>—has a very old pedigree, making it difficult to adjudicate upon the matter based on external criteria only. Upon turning to the internal criteria and considering various interpretative options for the long version, Baarda sets forth an original argument that seeks to interpret the Nicodemus pericope, specifically John 3:13, against the background of the early Jewish exegesis of Gen 28:12 (“Jacob’s ladder”). As this exegetical tradition can combine the earthly Jacob with the heavenly Israel, both existing simultaneously, Jesus’ earthly and heavenly existence in John 3:13 can also be linked. Thus, Baarda makes a plea for the longer reading of the text. Still, he also states the following: “I can easily sympathise with the early scribe or redactor who found it illogical that the one who spoke here was in heaven,—and consequently dropped the phrase” (273).

Jan Krans (VU University Amsterdam), a former doctoral student of de Boer and now his colleague as an assistant professor of New Testament and together with Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte responsible for a major NWO-funded project on New Testament conjectural emendation, offers a contribution entitled “Who coined the name ‘Ambrosiaster?’” (274–281). In this essay, Krans explores the origins of the attribution of an early (ca. 380 CE) and important Latin commentary on the Pauline epistles to an “Ambrosiaster” (i.e. a [poor] imitator of Ambrose of Milan). This attribution is very common in New Testament textual scholarship, while its origin is shrouded in mystery. Krans shows that a widely spread attribution of the coinage of the term “Ambrosiaster” to Erasmus of Rotterdam can no longer be sustained, while also an attribution to the Benedictine monks of the monastery of St. Maurus in an 1690 edition of Ambrose’s works is not tenable, given that the designation predates this Benedictine edition. Krans’ research makes a strong case for a new candidate for the coining of the designation “Ambrosiaster”: the Louvain biblical scholar Franciscus Lucas Brugensis in his 1580 work *Notationes in sacra biblia*. With this, the mystery of the origins of the designation “Ambrosiaster” may well be solved.—To this may be added that Krans shouldered a major part of the editorial work of this *Festschrift*, a token of appreciation that speaks volumes.

Editors and authors are convinced that the present volume shows how de Boer's research has fostered scholarship, both of students and peers, and has contributed to a further understanding of various areas in the study of the New Testament. They profoundly wish for him to be able to continue his important work for a long period after his retirement, in the company of course of his wife Paula. *Ad multos annos!*

*Amsterdam, 15 February 2013*

THE USE OF THE STORY AND THE WORDS OF JESUS  
IN THE LETTERS OF PAUL

Armand Puig i Tàrrach  
Theological Faculty of Catalonia (Barcelona)

This contribution<sup>1</sup> sets out to explain that the study of the material attributable to Jesus himself, detectable in the letters of Paul, does not provide enough on its own for Jesus to be found in the gospel of Paul. It is necessary to go a step further and consider the itinerary that the figure of Jesus has in the writings of Paul. This “story of Jesus,” which not only includes the earthly Jesus, but also the heavenly one, produces a wide-reaching and global view that characterizes Pauline theology and all Christian theology.

1. *The Story of Jesus*

1.1. *The Received Tradition and Development of Kerygma*

The life of Paul is not that of a sharpshooter, but that of an apostle who did not want to “run in vain” (Gal 2:2). He would have “run in vain” had he worked on the Gospel away from those “considered as pillars” (v. 9), the leaders of the community of Jerusalem (James, Peter and John). Moreover, in the communities founded by him in Macedonia and Asia, Paul engenders a feeling of debt towards the community of Jerusalem, and promotes a collection for the poor—a collection which will indirectly bring him lasting captivity. Thus, from the first moment after the episode of Damascus, the period that M. Hengel named “the unknown years,”<sup>2</sup> Paul, despite feeling profoundly the call to be an apostle (Rom 1:1), considered himself “the smallest of the apostles,” a persecutor of the Church of God (1 Cor 15:9), and recognized those who were apostles “before him” (Gal 1:17).

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<sup>1</sup> I dedicate this offering to Prof. Martin de Boer, a great scholar of the work of the Apostle Paul, in token of my acknowledgement and thanks.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997). See also Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission, Strategy, Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

It is precisely in this latter context that he states that his kerygma is the kerygma of the Christian community: “whether it is me or them (the other apostles), this is what we (all of us) preach (κηρύσσομεν)” (1 Cor 15:11). So there are not as many Gospels as there are apostles, but one Gospel, a unique kerygma, that is preached by all of them and, therefore, also by Paul. This Gospel is identified with the person of Jesus both dead and resurrected and with his earthly-heavenly itinerary. Paul knows this directly from a “revelation” (Gal 1:16) or, as he calls it in 1 Cor 15:8, from an “apparition” which he puts on a par with the previous occasions when the resurrected Jesus appeared, starting with Peter (1 Cor 15:5–7). This precedence that Peter has in relation to the appearances of the risen Christ is clearly the result of the choice of the same Jesus, and, most likely for this reason, it can be traced to Paul’s first stay in Jerusalem, which lasted only fifteen days, and was aimed at getting to “know (ιστορήσαι) Peter” (Gal 1:18).<sup>3</sup>

Another item to consider is the weight of tradition in Paul’s thought. It is clear that Pauline theology often manifests how much it owes to tradition, sometimes because Paul himself explicitly recognizes as much, and sometimes because part of the significant material that he includes in his letters has to be attributed to an earlier tradition. Texts such as 1 Cor 15:3 (“first of all I submit the teaching that I [also] have received”) or 11:23 (“the tradition that I have received and have conveyed to you”), relating, respectively, to the death-burial-resurrection appearances (confession of faith), and the story of the last supper (Eucharist), show the importance of the reception-transmission sequence in the formation of Paul’s thought and theology. As to pre-Pauline tradition, the study of the materials confirms that Paul assimilates, integrates, and re-elaborates at least four major lines of tradition, intertwined axes around the soteriological value of Jesus’ death and resurrection—what we may call the “soteriological” unit that characterizes his figure. We can therefore talk about baptis-

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<sup>3</sup> Few verb forms in the NT have used up more ink than the aorist infinitive *ιστορήσαι*. Paul’s visit has an obvious intent, is not in passing or casual. Whilst on the second visit to Jerusalem, fourteen years after the first, Paul looks to legitimize his own missionary choice in favour of the pagans or the uncircumcised (Gal 2:1–10). On the first visit, he seeks the testimony of Peter about Jesus dead and resurrected. Interestingly, 1 Cor 15:3–4 contains Paul’s fundamental text on the kerygma, described as “that which I also received” (*ὃ καὶ παρέλαβον*) (v. 3). Paul also “saw” (*εἶδον*) James, the brother of the Lord, who, with Peter, is the only other person mentioned in 1 Cor 15:7 as having been the subject of an appearance of the risen Jesus. It is difficult not to connect Paul’s visit to Jerusalem, described in Gal 1:18–19, with the list of appearances mentioned in 1 Cor 15:7, and even the kerygma formulated in 1 Cor 15:3–4.

mal traditions,<sup>4</sup> eucharistic traditions,<sup>5</sup> confession of faith traditions<sup>6</sup> and parenetic traditions.<sup>7</sup>

It seems clear, then, that during the three years spent in Nabatea (Arabia) and Damascus (Gal 1:17–24), and the two or three years he spent as a missionary in Antioch of Syria (Gal 1:21),<sup>8</sup> Paul had intimate contact with the two most powerful Christian communities outside Jerusalem. These contacts took place at a time when Paul was very active in announcing the Gospel (Gal 1:22–24), continuing until the moment he had to flee to Damascus due to the opposition of the city’s Jewish community (2 Cor 12:32–33). In Antioch Paul became a member of the lead group of prophet-teachers (Acts 13:1) in a community characterized by the presence of Jews and non-Jews, and, very soon afterwards, he agreed to form a missionary team with Barnabas, the leader of the first mission outside Antioch (13:2–3).

It is not possible to adequately assess the contribution made by the communities of Antioch and of Damascus to Paul’s thought and theology.<sup>9</sup> It would seem clear that the Christianity of Antioch had opted for a convinced universalism that went well beyond the religious and ethnic Jewish framework, and that this led to the emergence of a new identity, the Christian identity, distinct from the pagan and the Jewish precisely in that it was not identified specifically with either of the two, since it drew on people from both. The information of Acts 11:26—that the name “Christian” was first coined in Antioch—seems to correspond to these facts. Therefore, the Paul “of Antioch” explains, in part, the global figure of the Apostle, although not completely.

Indeed, Paul was a man marked by the call to be the “Apostle of the pagans” (Gal 2:7; Rom 2:5), therefore from the beginning—this is how Paul himself understands it, if we follow Gal 1:6—his call has a universal tone,

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<sup>4</sup> See Udo Schnelle, *Gerechtigkeit und Christusgegenwart. Vorpaulinische und paulinische Tauftheologie* (GTA 24; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983). According to this author, the texts that reflect these traditions are 1 Cor 1:30; 6:11; 2 Cor 1:21–22; Gal 3:26–28; Rom 3:25; 4:25; 6:3–4.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor 11:23–25; 16:22.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Thess 1:9–10; 1 Cor 8:6; 15:3–5(7); Rom 1:3–4; 10:9; Phil 2:6–11.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor 5:10–11; 6:9–10; 2 Cor 12:20–21; Gal 5:19–23; Rom 1:19–31; 13:13. This is the proposal of Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic 2005), 105.

<sup>8</sup> In the middle are the years spent in Tarsus (between three and six) (Gal 1:21). They were spent in missionary work, for some fruitless (Riesner) and for others successful (Hengel). Around the year 42 or 43 Paul arrived in Antioch, and became a member of that church as a missionary apostle.

<sup>9</sup> The correct evaluation must be somewhere between those who tend to argue for a pan-Antiochian concept (where Paul’s thought is Antiochian), and those who would “increase” the influence of Paul in the Church of Antioch (Paul is a brilliant thinker and almost completely self-taught).

not entirely, but certainly of his preference. Paul will quite often proclaim the Gospel to the Jews, but his vocation is primarily linked to the preaching of the Gospel to all peoples without exception.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, in his missionary strategy, Paul's praxis goes beyond Antioch. For example, when he arrived in Corinth, Paul promoted the formation of the community based upon a majority of heathens (although some notable Jewish leaders had also converted) and clashed with the fierce opposition of the city's Jews who charged him in the Court of the Roman Proconsul Gallio (Acts 18:12–17). Understanding Paul means understanding that his creativity and his theological innovations were possible due to the call he received, and to all that he had received from the tradition of Jesus, as it was lived by the contemporary Christian communities. There is, hence, no conflict between Paul's personal contribution and the contribution of the primitive community, just conjunction and deployment: the theology of Paul is also the theology of the Judeo-Hellenistic Christianity he had known and shared.<sup>11</sup>

Accordingly, Paul did not simply repeat; he had and maintained an interpretive context that came from the tradition to which he felt in debt. This, however, did not prevent him—on the contrary, it allowed him—to address a fundamental theme of his preaching and theology: the story of Jesus. The episode of Damascus meant for him the entering into the living dynamic of Christ's presence. Jesus had revealed himself to him personally as glorious, and Paul built his life from knowledge of a person who had made himself known to him, who had left a deep imprint in his heart. The theological option of the story of Jesus and its soteriological significance, forged through contact with community tradition, is the result of an event that had transformed Paul's heart, his religious parameters, and the orientation of his existence: his preoccupation with Jewish law had made way for his immersion in Christ. Paul's theology is not dissociated from his own life, particularly the Damascus episode.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In this sense, the dictum of Matt 23 can be applied in reference to Paul, the former Pharisee: "(You) go over land and sea to gain even one convert" (v. 15).

<sup>11</sup> Schnelle comments convincingly that Paul never distinguishes between general points of view, those of primitive Hellenistic Christianity, and his own personal position (*Apostle Paul*, 118).

<sup>12</sup> I tried to explain this in a recent article: "Pau l'apòstol, mestre i model de vida interior" (= The Apostle Paul, Teacher and Model of Interior Life), *Documents d'Església* 957 (2010): 146–58. This position regarding the episode of Damascus is fundamental with regard to the testimony of Paul himself (1 Cor 9:1; Gal 1:12–16; Phil 3:8–11) and of the book of the Acts of the Apostles (9:3–19; 22:6–16; 26:12–18). I do not mean to say that all Paul's theology emanates from the Damascus episode, but that knowledge of Christ and the call to be an apostle, central elements in Paul's theology, pass through this episode, as he himself affirms. Something very different is whether, as some propose, one must link the Damascus

It follows that the expression “story of Jesus,” when applied to Paul, finds itself in the final analysis embedded in the “bursting” of the person of Christ into the life of Paul, the persecutor of Christ Jesus. At the same time, this expression is unthinkable without the material left in Paul by the tradition of the primitive Christian community and the testimony received from those who, like Peter or James, had met the earthly Jesus. Paul is the architect of a reworking of this whole story, always in union with the many elements of which it is composed, and which acquired full meaning thanks to the episode of Damascus. Thus Paul affirms that, in Damascus, “he saw” (1 Cor 9:1) Christ, but did not know everything about Christ; on the contrary, according to Acts 9, he let him “see” him (v. 8) and he only recovers his “sight” (v. 18) thanks to Ananias, a disciple of the community. In Luke’s reinterpretation, then, it is the community that makes specific and develops that knowledge of Jesus. Paul has been allowed to see him, he has “appeared” to Paul, but Paul needed (1 Cor 15:8) the tradition of the community (v. 3) in order to be able to understand who this Jesus was,<sup>13</sup> and what his story was.

### 1.2. *The Story of Jesus According to Paul*

The story of Jesus is the story of Jesus the Savior, that is, the complete itinerary of his life, which includes both the earthly and the heavenly segments.<sup>14</sup> The point around which it pivots, the axis around which everything spins, is the Easter event. This event, applied to the figure of Jesus, interprets his earthly life and turns it to his heavenly life, both posterior (second coming) and anterior (pre-existence). Therefore, the path of the earthly Jesus, which culminates in death, is not dissociated from his path of glory. His cross and resurrection form a unity as a single event in human history, carried out as a salvific act of God in Jesus the Savior, and, through him, possessing a soteriological value that affects all human beings (Gal 1:3–4). It should be said, therefore, that the central point of the story of Jesus is his death and resurrection, the fundamental content of the kerygma (1 Thess 1:10; 1 Cor 15:3–5; Rom 1:3–4; Phil 2:6–11).

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experience to the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith. In this case one should be more cautious. The essential point is that Christ has become absolutely crucial in the life of the Apostle and that, therefore, the total adhesion to the law of Paul the Pharisee very clearly takes second place.

<sup>13</sup> It is interesting that Luke puts this question on Paul’s lips: “Who are you, Lord?” (Acts 9:5), which is followed by Jesus who identifies himself. The rest of the message says: “Go into the town, and there you will be told what you have to do” (v. 6). Consequently, the community will guide Paul during his first steps.

<sup>14</sup> See Schnelle, *Apostle Paul* (n. 7), 106 n. 15.



This story, in its earthly dimension, is presented as the itinerary of a Jew. A human being, therefore, “born of a woman, born subject to the law” (Gal 4:4), a “man” belonging to the people of Israel (Rom 9:4–5) and “Servant” to the same people (Rom 15:8). This man, of David’s line, that is to say messianic (Rom 1:3), had several brothers (1 Cor 9:5), including one called James (Gal 1:19).<sup>15</sup> He also had twelve disciples (1 Cor 15:5), one of whom was called Peter (Peter), and another called John (Gal 2:9).<sup>16</sup> He also had other followers, numbering at times more than five hundred (1 Cor 15:6). His disciples, invited to imitate their teacher (1 Cor 11:1), endured suffering and tribulations with him (1 Thess 1:6; 2:14). He was someone who had not distinguished himself from other men and, in fact, had been considered just one among them (Phil 2:7), although he had not experienced or committed sin (2 Cor 5:21). He was someone full of “sweetness and kindness” (2 Cor 10:1), who had lived in poverty (2 Cor 8:9) and who had shown his “endearing love” (Phil 1:8).<sup>17</sup> He lived without looking to be “at all compliant,” that is to say, he had not lived for himself but had accepted to be weighed down with insults (Rom 15:3). The night that he was to be delivered up for death and betrayed (παρεδίδετο) (1 Cor 11:23), he had supper with people very close to him and left them, as a memorial of the new alliance that he had incorporated—a memorial that had to be repeated—bread as his body and wine as his blood (1 Cor 11:23–25).

He went willingly to his death (1 Cor 11:23; Gal 1:4; 2:20; Phil 2:8). He was crucified “surrounded by weakness” (2 Cor 13:4) and sufferings (2 Cor 1:5; Phil 3:10). He died nailed to a cross (1 Cor 1:23; 2:2; Gal 3:1; Phil 2:8), a cursed

<sup>15</sup> It is interesting that Paul provides bibliographical information about James, the older brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3): his own title “the brother of the Lord” (Gal 1:19), the fact that the risen Jesus appeared to him (1 Cor 15:7), his status as a leader of the community of Jerusalem (Gal 2:9); that Paul interviewed him, at least once, in Jerusalem (Gal 1:19). Paul also knows of his defensive position on Christianity and circumcision (Gal 2:12).

<sup>16</sup> Galatians 2:9 does not say that John was one of the twelve. However, placed alongside Peter, he is intended to be one of the twelve disciples of Jesus.

<sup>17</sup> According to some authors, the lists of virtues that must characterize the Christian life (see particularly 1 Cor 13:4–7 and Gal 5:22–23) derive ultimately from the figure of Jesus as it has been reported by the early Christian tradition (Alexander J.M. Wedderburn, “Paul and Jesus,” in: *Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays* [ed. A.J.M. Wedderburn; London: Continuum, 2004], 180 n. 55). According to this, love without shade or shadow, expansive and omnipresent, Jesus himself, is at the base of the most prominent Christian virtues, as they are presented in the two aforementioned texts, to which one might wish to add 2 Cor 6:6–7. Note that all three texts put forward a positive character. However, there is another type of parenthesis, the contents of which are negative and that would have been in direct contact with community traditions not linked to the tradition of Jesus. I mean texts like 1 Cor 5:10–11; 6:9–10; 2 Cor 12:20–21; Gal 5:19–21; Rom 1:47–31; 13:13; which, significantly, have analogies with Mark 7:21–22.

instrument (Gal 3:13), and his body was marked by the “signs of the agony” (2 Cor 4:10; Gal 6:17). He was buried (1 Cor 15:4; Rom 6:4). He rose on the third day after his death (1 Cor 15:4; Rom 10:9). He appeared successively to Peter (1 Cor 15:5), “pillar” of the community of Jerusalem (Gal 1:18; 2:9), to the twelve disciples, the circle closest to him (1 Cor 15:5), to five hundred followers (1 Cor 15:6), to his brother James (1 Cor 15:7), the leader of the community of Jerusalem (Gal 2:9), to the group of the apostle-missionaries (1 Cor 15:7) and, later, to Paul himself (1 Cor 15:8).<sup>18</sup>

The story of Jesus in his strictly earthly dimension forms part of the itinerary of the pre-existing Christ, the pro-existing Christ, and the Christ of the Parousia. It is necessary then for us in continuation to take up again this itinerary. Paul ties in the earthly segment of Jesus’ story, which we have just described, with God’s design in relation to his Son.<sup>19</sup> In 1 Cor 8:6 we find the first reference to the story of Jesus, the source of the details relative to the pre-existence: Jesus Christ is the one “by whom everything exists and we exist.” Creation has one origin (God, the Father) and a mediator (the Lord Jesus Christ). The history of mankind is thus linked, from the very beginning, to the story of Jesus. The sending of the son, Jesus Christ, is the decisive step that directs towards salvation. “God sent his own son” (Rom 8:3): this is the assertion that places the story of Jesus within the history of created mankind. However, from the perspective of the Son, the formulation is different: “(Jesus Christ), whose state was divine, yet did not cling to his equality with God” (Phil 2:6). The consequence of this desire is that Jesus Christ “took nothing” (Phil 2:7), i.e. he became “like a sinful man” (*ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας*) (Rom 8:3): Jesus Christ took on the condition of “servant” (Phil 2:7), and servant of his own people “by reason of the faithfulness of God” (Rom 15:8). The metaphor of wealth-poverty, embedded in the earthly life of Jesus, explains “the generosity” of Christ, who wanted to become “poor,” live poorly, and demonstrate solidarity with sin and the shortcomings of the human condition; and do all of this “for you,” so that all would be enriched, saved (2 Cor 8:9). The paradox can be formulated then in terms of “sin”: God “made” Jesus Christ, who had not known sin, “to be sin” (*ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν*) “for us,” so that, thanks to him, we could become righteous before God (2 Cor 5:21). The pro-existence, the life offered and given to humanity, points to the entire story of Jesus, in particular to the cruel end of his earthly life.

<sup>18</sup> The facts that make up this earthly segment of the story of Jesus are not insignificant. It is true that many episodes of the historical Jesus are absent from the letters of Paul, but people can follow what we might call the “storyline” of Jesus’ life.

<sup>19</sup> Paul reads the story of Jesus as a whole under the category framework of “design of God”: soteriological concerns dominate Paul’s thinking.

From pre-existence follows pro-existence, the offering that Jesus made of his own life. This paradox returns to dominate Paul's formulation: the cross is a curse according to Paul's writing (Deut 21:23), and Christ's "curse" (κατάρα) has been made "for us," in order to free us from the curse's law where we incur it (Gal 3:13), and bring us blessings. The cross of Christ becomes redemptive as it becomes the "instrument of forgiveness" (Rom 3:25). This is the salvific design of God: He, the Father, did not feel pity for his own Son, He did not free him from death, but made of his death an instrument of salvation and life (Rom 8:32). The purpose of the offering of Jesus, his descent to death on the cross (Phil 2:8), is therefore the cancellation of "our sins" (Rom 4:25). The Scriptures demonstrate the soteriological value of Jesus' death, which is both an act of obedience of the Son (Phil 2:8), and an act of detachment by the Father (Rom 8:32). In fact, Scriptures are mentioned because they reflect the divine design behind the death of Jesus. Christ died, and his death was "by the will of God, our Father." There is, therefore, in the death of Jesus, a double willing, that of the Father and that of the Son, who both act "because of our sins" (1 Cor 15:3; Gal 1:4). That the cross should be salvific is a totally surprising design of God, one that Paul spoke of in terms of "scandal" and "absurd" (μωρία) (1 Cor 1:18). In spite of this, it reaffirmed the fact that only a crucified Messiah has the "power and wisdom of God" (vv. 23–24). The cross is the symbol of Jesus' death that is liberation.

Pro-existence leads to meta-existence. The death of Jesus is salvific, but it is so because over him has acted a salvific reality that made his resurrection from the dead certain. This resurrection was the work of the powerful Spirit of God (Rom 1:4); and because of this the Son was saved from death as the "first": he was the first to pass from death to life (1 Cor 15:20). God acts constantly in the story of Jesus. This action brings into special focus the fact of the death on the cross, which has to be understood as the result of the divine will and the will of the Son. The story of Jesus reaches its culmination in the moment when God resurrected Jesus and exalted him, giving him "the one name that is above all other names" (Phil 2:9). Jesus Christ, then, is "the Lord" (1 Cor 8:6; 12:5), and as such shares the same rank and condition as the Father, without substituting for or supplanting him. According to the habitual metaphor of Psalm 110:1, "He is at the right hand of God" (Rom 8:34). Therefore, in likeness of him (Rom 8:29), he receives the worship and the adoration of those who populate the three cosmic strata (heaven, earth, and underworld) (Phil 2:10–11).

As we ascertained in relation to pre-existence and pro-existence, the soteriological stamp equally marks Jesus' meta-existence. Thus, in Rom 4:25 it is affirmed that Jesus died so that our sins could be remitted (διὰ

τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν) and has risen so that we could be justified (διὰ τὴν δικαίωσιν ἡμῶν). Death and resurrection form a unique salvific event, so that cause and effect coincide (see also 1 Cor 15:17). He who died for others is now living for others. The mission of the Son is now to intercede “for us” (Rom 8:34), and he continues this saving intercession until the end of times. The meta-existence will continue as intercession until the day that Jesus comes to the earth, when “those who are of Christ” will be resurrected and join him who has been first (1 Cor 15:23). These will meet with the Lord Jesus Christ descended from heaven (1 Cor 15:47), and there they will also meet those who, at that time, are still alive: all of them will rise up towards heaven preceded by him (1 Thess 4:16–17). Then, everyone will be judged by God (Rom 3:19), and Jesus will continue to act as intercessor, and near him, those who are being judged (1 Thess 1:10). Therefore, the coming of Jesus (Parousia) is seen with hope, as it is from heaven that the Savior will come (Phil 3:20).

In sum, the story of Jesus unfolds in two segments (heavenly and earthly), which form a sequence of three periods: the pre-existence (heavenly), the pro-existence (earthly) and the meta-existence (heavenly). However, for Paul there is no separation or distinction between the heavenly Christ and the earthly Jesus, between the risen glorious Lord and the man Jesus, born of a woman and under the law.<sup>20</sup> The Christological unity appears in a singular manner in the formulation of the central event in the story of Jesus and of the kerygma: his death and resurrection. Paul often refers to Jesus as one who “has risen from amongst the dead,” that is, as he who died and has risen, the victor over death (1 Cor 15:57).

It is true that the resurrection of Jesus gives meaning to his death, but it is the kind of death that Jesus suffered—a death that was offered for life—that gives reason to the powerful act of God in favor of his son. In fact, the action of God is a constant in the story of Jesus, as is his design that set it in motion, from the creation of the world to its judgment. Paul, as was rightly stated by Bultmann, is the first Christian theologian, and therefore in him the story of Jesus is complete. Moreover, soteriological insight permeates this entire story. Mankind is born as a work of God the Father, and of the Lord, the Son, and at all times the wording “for us” signals the end goal of what is happening: the coming of Jesus, his death and resurrection, his heavenly enthronement and the hope of the Parousia. Paul has “laid down” the story of Jesus thanks to his letters, which concentrate on the kerygma (1 Cor 15:3–5)—which he considers common to the whole primitive com-

<sup>20</sup> Schnelle argues with conviction: “Within this Jesus-Christ-history, the earthly Jesus and risen Christ constitute a unity that cannot be dissolved” (*Apostle Paul*, 108).

munity (v. 11). Thus, we may say that the inner structure of Pauline theology is born out of this story. Paul's gospel is, in fact, the story of Jesus.

## 2. *The Words of Jesus in Paul's Letters*

There is a question which has become a *crux interpretum* in Pauline studies: what caused there to be such a paucity of references to the words of Jesus by Paul, whether in the form of citations or allusions? We should note here that in the theological development of Paul's letters the number of references to words probably spoken by Jesus, as determined in regard to the synoptic gospels, is approximately one per letter (seven references quoted below). It is also true that this average is no different from that of the Acts of the Apostles (with only one reference: Acts 20:35), and is higher than the average in the non-Pauline letters of the New Testament, where there are no references at all, only allusions. However, as has been shown, if there is one incontrovertible fact in the thinking of Paul it is the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ, clearly linked to the episode at Damascus. In addition, Paul had solid contacts with the communities of Damascus and Antioch which the Jesus tradition had quite clearly reached. His contact with Peter in Jerusalem (Gal 1:18) is also of significance. Therefore, both the central role of Jesus Christ in Paul's theology, and Paul's dependency on the primitive community—as demonstrated by the numerous pre-Pauline materials such as the hymn in Phil 2:6–11 that Paul includes in his letters—lead us to conclude that the references to the historical Jesus should be much more frequent than they are.

While the story of Jesus is a constant background to the Pauline letters in regard to their core Christological theme, the historical Jesus only appears in cases where, whether by quotation or allusion, there are important issues at stake.<sup>21</sup> The proof being that Paul puts these references as authoritative arguments within his own arguments, either alone (1 Cor 7:10–16), or in relation to arguments rooted in the Scriptures themselves (1 Cor 9:14). If we look at the topics covered, we find that these are by no means minor in nature:

(a) the love of the neighbor in its strictly theological dimensions as a summary of the law (Rom 13:8–10; Gal 5:14) and as something greater than faith (1 Cor 13:2);

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<sup>21</sup> It has often been proposed that Paul's references to the historical Jesus are secondary both in themselves and for their context, which is normally parenetic—that is to say where they appear. This affirmation needs to be revised.

(b) the love of the neighbor in its ethical aspect as a requirement that extends to the point of not having limits and includes love of the enemy (Rom 12:14–15; 1 Cor 4:11–13);

(c) the unacceptability of divorce as a rule of conduct for a Christian (1 Cor 7:10–11);

(d) the use of one's own money in order to ensure the support of the missionaries of the community (1 Cor 9:14);

(e) eschatological prophecy regarding the second coming of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead (1 Thess 4:15–16 or 17);

(f) the celebration of the liturgy of the Eucharist (1 Cor 11:23–25).

Considering these results, the first hypothesis would be that Paul had only received from the primitive community a limited number of the words uttered by Jesus—just a few. That the Apostle did not refer in general to the historical Jesus as he had almost no knowledge of what Christ had actually said. That Paul had not been an early disciple, and that no one had passed the words of Jesus on to him. However, this argument that Paul was ignorant of the facts and words of the historical Jesus would pose a problem regarding the nature of the subsequent accounts about Jesus, i.e. the Gospels. Recent studies have concluded that the earliest Christians manifested a remarkable interest in the “biography” of Jesus, through his actions and his words.<sup>22</sup> The tradition of Jesus is not a *constructum*, a fabric woven by people or groups, but one of a consistent thickness made up of materials that reveal Jesus through those accounts, the Gospels, that have been collected, structured, and delivered to later generations.<sup>23</sup>

So, if the interest in Jesus himself permeates the phenomenon of tradition—before, alongside, and following the Gospels—it would be strange that Paul, a significant individual whom the largest community, that of Antioch, had sent out as a missionary, remained unaware of that interest. Paul, who for some fifteen years or so had lived in various Christian communities before writing his first letter to the Thessalonians (Gal 1:18), must have received a substantial amount of information relating to the tradition of Jesus. Otherwise, knowledge of the Son who had been revealed in the episode of Damascus would not have been able to “grow” inside him.

<sup>22</sup> See Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (Biblical Resource Series; Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004); Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> Regarding the tradition of Jesus, see the article “Jesus Tradition” in my recent book: *Jesus: An Uncommon Journey. Studies on the Historical Jesus* (WUNT 2/288; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

A second hypothesis is that Paul did not need to refer to the facts and the words of Jesus because the recipients of his letters were already aware of them.<sup>24</sup> The life and teachings of Jesus formed part of the catechesis given to those who wished to adhere to faith in Jesus Christ. In this regard, Paul was the most knowledgeable individual with regard to tradition, and integrated this into his missionary preaching. The Apostle carried out a task involving much explanation and the transmission of the facts and words of Jesus, to the point where his letters were full of implicit references, and it was not necessary to repeat already known teachings and doctrine. However, this reasoning assumes that an important part of the Pauline mission was to relate the life and teachings of the historical Jesus. Everything suggests though that Paul was preaching the kerygma, and that the kerygma of Jesus' death and resurrection was also at the heart of the preaching of the other apostles and missionaries—being the object of the assent demanded of new believers (1 Cor 15:12–14). This is equally demonstrated in the discourses of the book of Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:22–36; 3:13–15; 4:10–12; 5:30–32; 10:34–43; 13:23–41), in which the proposed message is focused on the central event of Jesus' death and resurrection.

There is, however, room for a third hypothesis, according to which Paul was not ignorant of the tradition of Jesus and, knowing it, considered it important enough to introduce it into his letters, as can be seen by the information he had already passed on to recipients. However, having received sufficient information on the tradition of Jesus, Paul does not feel morally entitled to be placed within the chain of transmission of this tradition: Paul was never an eyewitness to the preaching of Jesus, he has come to know a resurrected and glorified Jesus, but not the earthly one. He feels an apostle just like the other apostles, as the Lord has appeared to him too just as he has to the others, but he knows that, unlike the other apostles and the Twelve, he has not been a direct witness of Jesus' earthly ministry. For this reason when he has the opportunity he goes up to Jerusalem to speak with Peter, *the* first of the Twelve, and with James, *the* brother of the Lord, the two most distinctive exponents of the Church of Jerusalem, and eyewitnesses to the death and resurrection of Jesus (Gal 1:18–19; 1 Cor 15:3–5; *Gos. Heb.* 28:10, 15).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Victor Furnish attributes this position to the “conservative interpreters.” See Victor P. Furnish, “The Jesus Paul-Debate: From Baur to Bultmann,” in *Paul and Jesus* (ed. Wedderburn), 17–50, here p. 45.

<sup>25</sup> Paul underlines emphatically that the story of his vocation and of the revelation he received from God, as well as his stay in Jerusalem where he went to meet Peter and James,

Indeed, Paul describes himself as being “born out of time” (ἔκτρωμα, lit. “aborted”; 1 Cor 15:8), and “the smallest of the apostles” (v. 9). These expressions point to the particular status of Paul: like the other Apostles, the Lord Jesus Christ has appeared to him, but, unlike them, he has appeared to him out of time, i.e. outside the time during which Jesus lived, died, and rose up, and appeared to his disciples and acquaintances. Paul finds himself outside this time, namely the time of eyewitness, the time during which the tradition of Jesus became crystallized. This tradition has arisen by virtue of those who, as expressed in Acts 1:21–22, were with Jesus and his disciples “all the time he lived among us, from the day that he was baptized by John until the day he was taken from us up into the heaven.” Paul clearly cannot count himself among these, and so he himself acknowledges that he was born “out of time.”<sup>26</sup> For this reason Paul believes his right is only to testify to the glorious Jesus, the one that has been revealed with a transfigured humanity but who carries on him the signs of the passion (2 Cor 4:10; Gal 6:17).<sup>27</sup> Therefore, in his letters, Paul focuses on the Jesus of the kerygma, resurrected from the dead, earthly and glorious, who redeems sins, is procurer of salvific righteousness and instrument of reconciliation and forgiveness. The “other” Jesus, the one spoken about and subject of eyewitness accounts, appears rarely and always in very precise contexts. What dominates in Paul is the story of Jesus, not the historical Jesus.

### *Conclusion*

The story of Jesus permeates Pauline theology, running through it and ultimately almost constituting it. Paul, therefore, does not renounce talking about Jesus; on the contrary, he makes it the center of his theological discourse. The global story of Jesus coincides with the Gospel of Paul, which

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were “true: God knows that I do not lie.” In this way the Apostle reveals the key to the truth of some of the facts that he considers fundamental (Gal 1:13–20). This quotation is preceded by a phrase that is extremely significant: “The gospel that I announced ... I received ... by a revelation of Jesus Christ.” Paul’s, then, is not an eyewitness account.

<sup>26</sup> As is habitual in the Pauline letters, the metaphors are a little clumsy. In the case of the metaphor of the abortion, it is important to remember that Paul was born not “before time” (as is often the case with abortions) but “past the time” (as is often the case with those that are born). Paul is a latecomer. For this reason he wrote: “Finally, after them all” (1 Cor 15:8). This “finally” indicates some five years after the appearances of Jesus to the others, to the eyewitnesses.

<sup>27</sup> It is interesting to note the traditional iconographical representation in Christian art of Jesus as judge of the living and the dead: Christ sitting on the throne in the splendour of his glory, showing his hands with the signs of his passion, as well as his side and feet. This is the Jesus that Paul “saw” (1 Cor 9:1).



Paul received by “a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal 1:12). In a certain way, although according to Gal 1:6 it is God who reveals Jesus, we could say that Jesus reveals himself, and that Pauline Christology is born out of this revelation. Jesus has revealed his own story, globally considered, that is to say his own condition as son of God (Gal 1:16): this is the summary of the revelation that Paul has received. Naturally, once this revelation had taken place, Paul had to “flesh it out” with the story of Jesus as explained by the early community (Phil 2:6–11 and 1 Cor 8:6 are two eminent examples). The end result is a mature and deep theological discourse in which Jesus is not a mere heavenly figure, on the sidelines of the world, a kind of revelatory gnostic figure, but a person who lives out his condition of servant and endures death on a cross. The essential core of the historical Jesus—his passion, death and resurrection—is clearly present in the thinking of Paul. In fact, the story of Jesus is not a mythical construction, but a great story that shows the pre-existence, the pro-existence and the meta-existence of Jesus.

On the other hand, Paul resorts to the words of Jesus that he knows from the tradition he has received when he believes it necessary. That is, when he thinks he has to use an argument from authority in order to reinforce his own argument, he uses direct or indirect references (quotations or allusions) to what Jesus said. This very rarely occurs. The Apostle rather makes use of the Scriptures, but does not leave aside the words of Jesus when he believes he needs them. In these cases the fact that Paul was not an eyewitness does not represent an impediment to their use in a moderate and responsible manner.

## SOME REMARKS ON THE ORIGIN AND FUNCTION OF GALATIANS 3:28

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In the course of the long history of the interpretation of Paul's Letter to the Galatians, the programmatic statement in 3:28 has always attracted considerable attention<sup>1</sup> and has been discussed in such diverse contexts as baptism, human sexuality, creation and equality.<sup>2</sup> In his new commentary on Galatians, Martinus de Boer devotes a separate excursus to this passage.<sup>3</sup> As a personal tribute to his contribution as New Testament scholar and to honor his invaluable service to the discipline as Secretary of the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* over many years, it is fitting to return briefly to this remarkable statement. I would like to do this in the spirit that characterizes the regular New Testament colloquia he conducts at the *Vrije Universiteit* in Amsterdam, namely that of critical and collegial conversation.

According to de Boer, Paul is citing a pre-Pauline baptismal formula in Gal 3:26–28. In doing so, de Boer follows a venerable tradition, in which parallels or assumed parallels from a wide variety of sources are collected as proof of the baptismal context of the passage: Firstly, parallels from Pauline (1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:11) and other Christian literature (Matt 23:8) including the Nag Hammadi Codices (NHC 1, 4.132), and secondly, parallels from the Old Testament, Judaism, Hellenistic mystery religions, diatribe literature and Gnosticism.<sup>4</sup>

As far as Gal 3:28 itself is concerned, de Boer advances strong arguments to support his view of a baptismal context: The verb βαπτίζω occurs in v. 27; the sudden change from the first-person plural (“we”) in vv. 23–25 to the second-person plural (“you”) in vv. 26–28; the identification of believers not as “sons of Abraham” (the topic of 3:7), but as “sons of God”; the

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Martin Meiser, *Galater* (NTP 9; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2007); John Riches, *Galatians through the Centuries* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> See especially the recent dissertation by Gesila N. Uzuoku, “The Unity of Male and Female in Christ. An Exegetical Study of Gal. 3:28c in Light of Paul's Theology of Promise” (D.Th. diss., Catholic University Louvain, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians. A Commentary* (The New Testament Library, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.), 245–7.

<sup>4</sup> See Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians. A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 184; Uzuoku, *Unity*, 6–28.

awkward juxtaposition of the phrases “through this faith” and “in Christ Jesus” causing a redundancy in thought; the fact that, of the three pairs in v. 28 (Jew/Greek, slave/free, man/woman), only the first is directly related to the issue of circumcision and the observance of the law by Gentile believers in Galatia; the use of the term “Greek” instead of “Gentile” in the first pair; and the near parallels in 1 Cor 12:13 and Col 3:9–11 where the same baptismal terminology is used.<sup>5</sup>

The cumulative effect of these reasons is impressive, but on closer examination the argument becomes more tenuous. There is little doubt that Paul closely associates the new status of the believer with baptism (as v. 27 makes clear), but the claim that he refers to an already existing and widely accepted liturgical formula is all but convincing. What is remarkable about the statement in Galatians is exactly the *lack* of any sacramental terminology or appeal to communal memory—in contrast to 1 Cor 11:23 where he makes explicit use of the liturgical introduction of the Eucharist: “For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread ...” As Betz<sup>6</sup> reminds us, Gal 3:26 is the only explicit reference to baptism in the entire letter and even in Paul’s argument the sacrament of baptism is never adduced except here. If the whole composition were lifted from the baptismal liturgy, the ritual of baptism would assume a quite distinctive role in Paul’s argument, for which there is no specific indication. The real importance lies in the connection between the Spirit and baptism.<sup>7</sup> The focus on the *ritual* of baptism may be a false trail that keeps us from discovering the full impact of Paul’s statement.

The change from the first person in verses 23–25 (“we”) to the second person plural in verses 26–28 (“you”) is also not a conclusive argument. In his letters, Paul alternates personal pronouns for a variety of reasons as part of a more complex rhetorical system. Among other rhetorical moves, the apostle uses personal pronouns as a strategic device to indicate either proximity or distance from the position that he considers to be the preferred state.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, in 1 Cor 11 Paul uses the first person to introduce the sacramental formula, so the change to the second person here in Gal 3:26 does not necessarily signal the beginning of a quotation from liturgy.

<sup>5</sup> De Boer, *Galatians*, 245.

<sup>6</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 181.

<sup>7</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 181.

<sup>8</sup> See Bernard C. Lategan, “Formulas in the Language of Paul. A Study of Prepositional Phrases in Galatians,” *Neot* 25 (1991): 75–87 for a more extensive discussion of Paul’s use of linguistic formulae.

One can also ask how significant the use of “sons of God” (v. 26) is in contrast to the “sons of Abraham” of Gal 3:7. De Boer himself concedes that Paul has prepared the way for this step by his analogy of the testament in 3:15–19, whereby God is compared to a testator who makes a promise of inheritance to his designated heirs.<sup>9</sup> It is precisely this “universalizing” tendency of the gospel that forms the core of Paul’s argument here—that is, the move from the interpretation of Abraham as father of a particular group to the insight that through him all believers become heirs and therefore sons of God. The move from “sons of Abraham” to “sons of God” does not signal a disruption, but the logical extension of Paul’s theological thinking. It is Christ as the “Son of God” (3:7) who makes the adoption of “sons” (Gal 4:4–6; Rom 8:3–4, 14–17, 29) possible through the gift of the Spirit.

As far as the “awkward juxtaposition” of the phrases “through this faith” and “in Christ Jesus” in v. 26 and the subsequent redundancy in thought is concerned, it is important to recognize that we are dealing here with a very concise statement. As Betz shows, it includes a number of theological formulae which must be related to their respective contexts.<sup>10</sup> Far from being merely repetitive, the two formulae state two important conditions for the adoption as sons, each related to a different theological constellation. The first has to do with faith as the only basis for inclusion that is equally valid for Jews and Gentiles, the second refers to the nature of the new community which consists of the incorporation into the body of Christ. The cryptic formulae which may create the impression of redundancy represent two different and extensive constellations of theological reflection.

De Boer correctly points out that only the first pair in 3:28 (Jew/Greek) is directly related to the issue of circumcision and the observance of the law by Gentile believers. But his contention that the addition of slave/free and man/woman comes from a baptismal formula needs further scrutiny. He concedes that the origin of the baptismal tradition is difficult to trace, but finds a clue in the formula “there is no male and female” because it deviates from the neither/nor structure of the first two pairs.<sup>11</sup> This formulation has a parallel in Gen 1:27: “And God made the human being, in the image of God he made him, male and female he made them.” According to de Boer the context is clearly that of creation and the parallel is the new identity of the baptized believers which is tantamount to a “new creation”—an apocalyptic motif that is also expressed in Gal 6:15.

<sup>9</sup> De Boer, *Galatians*, 245 note 366.

<sup>10</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 185.

<sup>11</sup> De Boer, *Galatians*, 246.

The problem with this interpretation is that in the original context of the Genesis story the emphasis is not on the elimination of the distinction between man and woman, but on their complimentary roles. It is indeed not a case of man *or* woman, but of man *and* woman. As suggested by the alternative creation story in Genesis, Adam lacks what the rest of creation already has, namely a “suitable helper” (Gen 2:18). The woman is able to fulfill her role as partner precisely because of her distinctiveness, that is, because she is *not* a man. This fact alone makes it unlikely that there is an intended reference in Gal 3:28 to the creation motif in the sense of the abolition of sexual differences. The same applies to the two other sayings in Mark to which de Boer draws our attention, namely the teaching rejecting divorce (Mark 10:6–8) and the teaching on the resurrection of the dead (Mark 12:25). In Mark 10 the emphasis is on the new social unity established by marriage in contrast to existing family ties, while in Mark 12 the point is the dysfunctionality of marriage in the dispensation beyond the resurrection. The focus of Gal 3:28 is neither marriage nor the resurrection, but the status of believers despite their social and gender differences.

Similarly, it is difficult to prove with any certainty that androgynous tendencies lie behind Gal 3:28, like the concept of an androgynous Christ-figure. Betz shows that the idea that the godhead is both male and female was indeed prominent in several older religious traditions in antiquity.<sup>12</sup> According to an ancient Orphic doctrine Zeus is both male and female, while the famous myth in Plato’s *Symposium* relates that in the beginning there were three kinds of human beings. In addition to male and female there was a “third sex” composed of and sharing equally in male and female. This myth was also known in Judaism, where speculative interpretations of especially Gen 1:27 led to the idea of primordial man as androgynous. In gnostic literature the myth of the androgynous *Anthropos* appears in several versions.<sup>13</sup>

Whatever Paul might have known of these tendencies, he neither refers to them nor does he make use of them in his explanation of the concept of unity. His idea of unity in Christ is one of inclusivity, not one that consists of the elimination of differences—sexual or otherwise. The believers remain “sons and daughters” of God (2 Cor 6:18), while the retention of difference between the various parts of the body is essential for the proper

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<sup>12</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 197.

<sup>13</sup> See Betz, *Galatians*, 199; Jacob S. Jervell, *Imago Dei: Gen 1, 26f im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis und in den paulinischen Briefen* (FRLANT 76, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1960); Peter Schwanz, *Imago Dei als christologisch-anthropologisches Problem in der Geschichte der Alten Kirche von Paulus bis Clemens von Alexandrien* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1970).

functioning of the whole (1 Cor 12). The link between Gal 3:28 and various pre-Pauline religious traditions therefore remains speculative at best.

However, the real problem with assuming a pre-Pauline baptismal formula as the background of 3:28 is not so much a matter of sources or chronology, but one of logic. On the one hand, commentators claim that Gal 3:28 makes a radical and original statement. On the other hand they insist that he is using a pre-Pauline formula. Betz asserts: "There can be no doubt that Paul's statements have social and political implications of even a revolutionary dimension."<sup>14</sup> Paul is indeed making an unusual pronouncement that was bound to have far-reaching consequences for later theological and social developments, as we shall argue below. *But if the essence of the statement is already contained in a pre-Pauline formula, what makes it so unusual?* Betz tries to solve the problem by arguing that what precedes Gal 3:28 is not Christian thinking, but very old ideals and hopes of the ancient world. These ideals include the abolition of religious and social distinctions between Jews and Greeks, slaves and freemen, men and women—ideals that have come true in the Christian community. But can one then still maintain that Paul "has lifted Gal 3:26–28, in part or as a whole, from a pre-Pauline liturgical context"?<sup>15</sup> De Boer runs into similar difficulties when he tries to interpret Paul's radical statements as originating from a baptismal formula but in the end has to concede: "Unfortunately, it is not possible to ascertain how the Galatians will interpret the 'neither slave nor free person' and the 'no male and female' parts of the formula or how they will apply it in their own lives as Christians ..., nor how precisely Paul wants them to do so."<sup>16</sup> It seems that one cannot have one's cake (Gal 3:28 as an already existing pre-Pauline formula) and eat it (claiming that Paul is making a radical new statement).

Another argument that is advanced in support of the pre-Pauline origin of 3:28 is the so-called "three sayings of gratitude" in Greek sources and the "three blessings" as part of the morning prayer in rabbinic literature.<sup>17</sup> Expressions of gratitude in various formats are ascribed to Thales of Socrates and to Plato for being born as a human being and not as an animal, as a man and not as a woman, and as a Greek and not as a barbarian.<sup>18</sup> In Rabbinic literature,<sup>19</sup> similar expressions are found, but here as part of the

<sup>14</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 190.

<sup>15</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 184.

<sup>16</sup> De Boer, *Galatians*, 247.

<sup>17</sup> See Uzukwu, *Unity*, 29–66 for an extensive overview of the discussion.

<sup>18</sup> See Uzukwu, *Unity*, 31.

<sup>19</sup> See for example *y. Ber.* 9.1, 63b.

morning prayer in which the male Jew thanks God that he was not made a gentile, a woman, or a slave.

It is exceedingly difficult to determine with any degree of certainty the interrelations between these various texts and traditions and possible degrees of dependency. The same applies to their alleged relationship with Gal 3:28. Several factors like date, sources, authorship and authenticity have to be taken into account, which will require an investigation on its own. Nonetheless, for the purpose of our present argument, some observations can be made. The first is that there is no convincing evidence of direct dependence between the statement in Gal 3:28 and other literary sources of the time. What was quite common in both religious and secular literature was the use of pairs of opposites.<sup>20</sup> Paul uses three such pairs here, but elsewhere he also writes about the contrast between flesh and spirit, light and darkness, above and below, honor and shame. Paul thus shares a common literary device, but the intention of his statement in 3:28 is exactly the opposite of the current view in both Greco-Roman and Jewish sources. Most revealing is that the Greek statements are expressions of *gratitude*, while the morning prayer in the rabbinic sources are described as *blessings*. These are stark reminders that these opposites express a deep-seated hierarchical and discriminatory ethos. It is a *blessing*—so men are to remind themselves on a daily basis—not to be a woman, a gentile, or an uneducated person. One rabbinic source explains the basis of the threefold “blessing”: Gentiles are excluded from religious duties since they “are as nothing before him [God],” women are inferior because “a woman is under no obligation to keep the commandments” and an uneducated person is to be pitied because “no uneducated person fears sin.”<sup>21</sup> This kind of derogatory language (which is certainly not limited to rabbinic sources of the time) reveals a mindset in which discrimination is deeply ingrained and constantly repeated. It forms the basis of countless similar statements in both religious and secular texts, across diverse cultures and spanning many centuries.

Paul cannot have been unaware of this ethos and therefore his statements in Gal 3:28 are indeed revolutionary. He does not condone the widespread attitude of ethnic, social and gender discrimination, but offers a fundamental critique of this attitude from the perspective of somebody who has discovered the life-changing implications of the new existence “in Christ.” How these implications were implemented by Paul himself and by later generations will be discussed further below.

<sup>20</sup> Uzukwu, *Unity*, 36, 50.

<sup>21</sup> A. Lukyn Williams, *Tractate Berakoth (Blessings): Mishna and Tosephta*. Translated from the Hebrew (London: SPCK 1921), 92–3.

The difficulties experienced by attempts to provide a convincing interpretation of Gal 3:28 in terms of pre-Pauline material compels us to consider alternative possibilities. The first step is to re-phrase the research question: What is the underlying *issue* Paul is addressing in this passage? This leads us back to the beginning of Galatians.

The letter starts with a forceful refutation of the critique that Paul has received from various quarters on his presentation of the gospel. Many commentators interpret the introductory section and especially Gal 1:6–9 as a spirited defense of his authority as apostle.<sup>22</sup> In view of the Corinthian correspondence, such a viewpoint is understandable. But interpreting Galatians in terms of apostolic authority is misleading. For one thing, ἀπόστολος only occurs in Gal 1:1, while all the attention is focused on εὐαγγέλιον as the main topic (1:6; 1:7 [2x]; 1:9; 1:11 [2x]). In the letter as a whole, ἀπόστολος and derivatives occur four times, εὐαγγέλιον and derivatives fourteen times. This is a clear indication that the main emphasis of Paul's argument lies elsewhere.

If we analyze the letter as a communicative whole,<sup>23</sup> it becomes clear that underlying the first two chapters of the letter is a pronounced tension between God and man. In the very first sentence this fundamental contrast which occurs in various forms throughout the letter, is expressed in double chiasmic form: ἀνθρώπων ... ἀνθρώπου / Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ... θεοῦ. An actantial analysis confirms this underlying tension that is only relieved in 2:20. The key passage in the first two chapters is Paul's statement in 1:11–12: "I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something man made up (κατὰ ἄνθρωπον). I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ." As Betz correctly points out, these verses represent a critical transition in Paul's argument. It provides "the whole basis on which Paul's gospel, as well as his own mission, and indeed his defense in the letter, rest."<sup>24</sup> The pivotal function of these verses reaches beyond the first two chapters and underpins much of the theological argumentation in the next two sections (Gal 3–4 and 5–6)—including the programmatic statement in 3:28.

<sup>22</sup> As early as Joseph B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Macmillan, 1865). See also John H. Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), and Karl Kertelge, "Apokalypsis Jesou Christou (Gal 1, 12)," in *Neues Testament und Kirche. Für Rudolf Schnackenburg* (ed. Joachim Gnilka; Freiburg: Herder, 1974), 266–81.

<sup>23</sup> See Bernard C. Latagan, "Is Paul Defending His Apostleship in Galatians? The Function of Galatians 1:11–12 and 2:19–20 in the Development of Paul's Argument," *NTS* 34 (1988): 411–30 for more details.

<sup>24</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 56.



But in what sense is the gospel “not according to man”? It is important to note that οὐ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον is in the first place a description of *quality*. It gives a cryptic but fundamental characterization of the *nature* of gospel as preached by Paul. This gospel does not conform to human criteria, does not take human considerations into account. It does not function in a human way, does not honor human preferences. This is what distinguishes from “the other gospel.” This should not be misunderstood as reflecting an anti-human attitude or a negative evaluation of human existence as such (see 2:20). But it does mean that the gospel implies an “Umwertung aller Werte,” a reversal of currently accepted norms. The same sentiment is expressed in many of the gospel parables, where the first will be last, the poor recognized rather than the rich, the last laborer in the vineyard paid the full wage, and the lost son who deserves rejection, is welcomed back. The cryptic formula οὐ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον is connected to a whole web of inter-related ideas that form the core of Paul’s theology.

Despite the qualifying force of κατὰ as an indication of quality or nature, Gal 1:11 is often associated with the *origin* of Paul’s gospel, and understood as expressing a negative attitude towards human tradition. The reason for this tendency is to be found in the following verse, where Paul explains his initial statement by saying: “I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.” But we should be careful to interpret this verse as referring to the origin of his message in order to demonstrate his independence from Jerusalem. The parenthesis of v. 12 continues the God-man contrast by describing the *way* in which the gospel was received—not in a normal human way, but in accordance with its true nature, that is, in a way which shuns customary procedures and expectations. If these verses are interpreted as referring to the origin of his message and consequently as a playing down of the apostle’s contacts with Jerusalem, then it becomes difficult to explain why Paul is seeking the approval of the apostles in Jerusalem for his brand of preaching—and his undeniable positive attitude towards the transmitted tradition (see 1 Cor 11:23).

The God/man contrast continues in different forms throughout the letter which provides important clues for the interpretation of 3:28. The scene is already set in the opening verse: Paul is an apostle neither sent by men nor commissioned by men, but by Christ and God the father. His apostleship and the way he received it is an illustration of the unusual and unexpected way God works, which is οὐ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον. This particular understanding of the nature of the gospel is rooted in Paul’s own biography. The ardent Jew and persecutor of the young Christian community was—

speaking *κατὰ ἄνθρωπον*—the most unlikely candidate to become a champion of the new movement (see 1:23). The double curse in 1:8–9 continues the theme. Some-one willing to cast a divine curse on his opponents is certainly not trying to curry favor with men, as the rhetorical questions in the following verse make clear. If he would still be trying to please men instead of God, he would not be a servant of Christ.

The counter-intuitive nature of the gospel, the unexpected ways in which Gods acts are not confined to Paul's personal biography. It also occurs repeated when he starts proclaiming the gospel. His first target is his fellow Jews, expecting them to accept the good news of the gospel as enthusiastically as himself. Sabbath and synagogue offer the obvious occasion and venue for his preaching. But his initial success soon evokes a jealous reaction from his compatriots (as reflected in the story of Acts 13) and he forthwith decides to dedicate himself to the Gentiles. Not only his own conversion, but also the way in which his mission unfolds illustrates the paradoxical nature of the gospel: Those for whom the message is intended in the first place (the Jews) reject it, while those who are not supposed to be included, embrace the gospel. The story of Sarah and Hagar (Gal 4:21–31) is another example of how God's way do no follow human expectations and human calculations. The spiritual motherhood of Sarah of all believers is not "according to man"—in contrast to her biological motherhood.<sup>25</sup>

The same *οὐ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον* theme provides the link between the "historical" (chapters 1–2), the "theological" (3–4) and the "ethical" (5–6) sections of the letter.<sup>26</sup> 1:19–20 explain the change in Paul's life in terms of the death of the old dispensation and the start of a new life. The description of the Son of God as the "one who gave himself up for me" serves as precursor for the theological section in 3–4, while the depiction of the Son of God "who loved me" prepares the ground for the paraenesis that follows in 5–6.<sup>27</sup>

The transition from historical context (1–2) to theological exposition (3–4) provides an important clue for the interpretation of 3:28. The new (and unexpected) turn of events that characterizes the expansion of the new movement forces Paul to rethink theological positions that he has always taken for granted. The inclusion of Gentiles in the community of believers caused tensions even before he started his mission. The response of the "circumcised believers" (Acts 11:1) when Peter heeds the call of centurion Cornelius is indicative of an emerging problem. When Paul himself began his work and achieved initial success, the same issue caused a vio-

<sup>25</sup> Uzukwu, *Unity*, 204–14.

<sup>26</sup> See Betz, *Galatians*, 121–22.

<sup>27</sup> See Lategan, *Apostleship*, 426–30.

lent reaction from “some Jews” (Acts 14:19). According to the story of Acts, the growing criticism of accepting uncircumcised Gentiles into the believing community was the direct cause of the council at Jerusalem (Acts 15).

The issue of circumcision is also at the heart of the dispute in Galatians (Gal 2:3), despite the fact that a clear understanding was reached on the matter with the other leaders in Jerusalem (Gal 2:7–9). For Paul the insistence on circumcision and keeping the law has reached the stage where it has become an “other gospel” (Gal 1:6). The crux of the matter is the *status* of Gentile believers. Do they qualify as full members of the community or are they to be treated as “second-class citizens” until such time as they submit to circumcision and adopt the Jewish way of life? His opponents have of course history and tradition on their side. Historically speaking salvation emanates from Jerusalem, the law and the prophets define all later developments, and the original promise was made to Abraham and his descendants. Is there a way around this formidable historical and theological argument? Paul decides to confront the issue at its source. What made Abraham acceptable in the eyes of God? Speaking again historically—if we observe carefully, Abraham was accepted by God as an uncircumcised believer, as somebody without the law. The latter was introduced only 430 years later (Gal 3:17). What made the difference was his faith, his unqualified trust in God. “He believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness” (Gal 3:6). Therefore, those who believe are children of Abraham (3:7) and those that have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith (3:9). The status of Gentile believers is that of children—even more so, of legal heirs (κληρονόμοι) of the promise to Abraham. There is *no* distinction in this respect between circumcised and uncircumcised believers. The Gentile members are on par with other members of the family of God. For Uzukwu<sup>28</sup> the key concept in Gal 3 is the *promise* given to Abraham—a promise which includes much more than the biological offspring of Abraham. She even speaks of a “theology of promise” in this regard. The promise is no doubt central to Paul’s thinking, but the point of his argument here is not the fact of the promise as such, but its *contents* and its *effect*, namely to confer on “outsiders” like the Gentiles the legal status of heirs—κατ’ ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι (3:29).

Through this exegetical *tour de force* Paul develops an alternative “symbolic universe.”<sup>29</sup> By means of a re-interpretation of the Abraham figure, an alternative understanding of the believing community is articulated.

<sup>28</sup> Uzukwu, *Unity*, 137–73.

<sup>29</sup> See Bernard C. Lategan, “The Argumentative Situation of Galatians,” *Neot* 26 (1992): 257–77.

In this case the *topos* of kinship is used to redefine the family of God. The occurrence of σπέρμα, κληρονόμος, υἱός, υιοθεσία, νήπιος, ἀββᾶ, πατήρ, and ἀδελφοί shows how widely this concept permeates Paul's thinking in Galatians. In place of the received understanding of the promise of God and the privileged position of the Jews as historical descendants of Abraham an alternative symbolic universe emerges which empowers Gentile believers to accept their equal status before God and to act accordingly.

The conclusion is inescapable: If all believers are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, if all who have been baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ (3:26–27), there can be no longer Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female (3:28). Verse 28 is the climax of a carefully constructed theological argument and not merely an afterthought lifted from an obscure baptismal formula. It is consistent with the precepts of an alternative symbolic universe and prepares the ground for the ethical implications for believers that will be elaborated in chapters 5 and 6.

However, if 3:28 is a conscious and seriously intended Pauline formulation, we have to explain why we find divergent views in other Pauline and Pauline-related literature. For example, the attitude towards women in the Corinthian correspondence and the advice give to slaves in the Pastoral Letters are hardly consistent with the lofty ideals expressed here. Betz even suggests a retraction of the Galatian position: While Paul admits the radical implications of his conclusion in Galatians, he has obviously changed his mind in 1 Corinthians and has dropped the whole matter in Romans.<sup>30</sup>

However, the apparent discrepancy may have a different cause. The gap between theory and practice, between ideal and concrete behavior, is not only a theological, but an universal ethical problem. A comparable secular example is the function of constitutions.<sup>31</sup> Constitutions are concentrated and multi-layered expressions of the values, dreams, and aspirations of the citizens of a specific state. They often carry the scars of the situation of their origin while at the same time serving as memorials of past struggles. But they also function as contracts with the future, explicating the rights and obligations that citizens take upon themselves. In this regard they function as a court of appeal, but also as compasses that will hopefully keep the state on the right course. Despite being often formulated in

<sup>30</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 200.

<sup>31</sup> See Lourens M. du Plessis, "The South African Constitution as Memory and Promise," *Stellenbosch Law Review* 11(3) (2000): 385–94; Wessel le Roux, "Bridges, Clearings and Labyrinths: The Architectural Framing of Post-Apartheid Constitutionalism," *South African Journal of Public Law* 19 (2004): 629–45; Bernard C. Lategan, "The Quality of Young Democracies from a Constitutional Perspective," in *Democracy under Scrutiny: Elites, Citizens, Cultures* (ed. Ursula van Beek; Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2010), 95–114.

idealistic language, these are serious principles intended to provide guidance in concrete situations when required.

The dialectic between theological principle and actual behavior is therefore not unusual. The successful internalization and implementation of principles and values are part of a dynamic process. As far as the practice of inclusivity is concerned, Paul's writings reflect different stages during his ministry.

The first inclusion—that of Jew and Gentile/Greek—was most widely practiced. According to Acts, it even pre-dates Paul's own preaching. When Peter responds to the call of the Roman centurion (Acts 10), the enthusiastic reception of the gospel message by Cornelius and his house changed Peter's attitude. He now realizes that God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right (Acts 10:34). The same is experienced by Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. It is the inclusion of Gentiles that leads to the council at Jerusalem where a formal agreement is reached that they "should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God" (Acts 15:19). However, this remained a controversial issue. Even Peter (according to Gal 2:11) yields to the pressure from the "circumcision group" and refrains from socializing with the Gentile believers in Antioch. Paul's public reprimand of Peter's double standards is an indication that at least as far as the actual integration of Gentile believers in the community of faith is concerned, Paul acted in accordance with his own precepts.

As far as the second inclusion (slave and free) is concerned, we find a different picture. The advice given to slaves in Eph 6 and Col 3 suggests that although slaves have been accepted as fellow-believers, slavery as institution has undergone little change within the Christian community. It is one of the lasting indictments the so-called Christian world has to face that the gospel for so long had so little impact on inhuman practices like slavery and other forms of discrimination. This pertains not only to the social stratification as such that has characterized human communities throughout history, but also to the treatment of slaves as being sub-human or as personal property. To mention just one example among countless others: At the end of *The Voyage of the 'Beagle'*, Darwin<sup>32</sup> reflects on the extensive inhuman treatment of slaves that he has experienced across Latin America in so-called Christian colonies—more than eighteen centuries after the letter to the Galatians was written. Similar conditions existed in many other Christian countries and communities. Although slavery and

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<sup>32</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Voyage of the 'Beagle'* (Everyman's Library; London: Dent & Sons, 1972, first published in 1839), 480–81.

the slave trade became officially illegal around the time of Darwin's travels, the practice continues in many ways till this day where human trafficking, sexual slavery and debt bondage still flourish.

To return to Paul's own position—his letters present an ambiguous picture as far as slavery is concerned. According to Betz the statement in 3:28 can be interpreted in two ways: As a declaration of the abolishment of the social institution of slavery or as a declaration of the irrelevancy of that institution that would include the possibility of its retention.<sup>33</sup> The overwhelming evidence in early and later Christianity is that the second option was the dominant interpretation. It is a well-know interpretative strategy to internalize or “spiritualize” theological principles in order to avoid their social impact. Many a segregated church has professed the unity of the church as a “spiritual” unity that leaves the reality of segregation and discrimination untouched. Likewise the pious assertion that “in the eyes of God” men and women are equal leaves the door open to continue discriminatory practices.

The possibility to shy away from the practical implications of theological insights can be kept in tact as long as these insights remain abstract and generic. Once confronted with a case in real life, the situation changes. The letter to Philemon is a case in point. The reality of Onesimus' conversion forces Paul to face the consequences of this change in status and to take painful measures to protect the former slave when he is sent back to his master.<sup>34</sup> On the one hand Paul seems to accept a continuing master-slave relationship between Onesimus and Philemon. On the other hand, the situation has irrevocably changed—through his conversion the former slave has become a son to Paul (Phlm 10). As Petersen has shown in his extensive analysis of the letter, a new symbolic universe came into being in which the roles of Paul, Philemon and Onesimus have fundamentally changed: Master and slave have been replaced by brother, son and father as part of a redefined understanding of the household of God.<sup>35</sup> The concrete application of these theological principles in the lives of real people cannot but have far-reaching social consequences and signaled the start of a movement whose momentum in the end proved to be unstoppable.

The interpretation of the third pair (male/female) in Gal 3:28 is the most challenging, because there is no evidence that Paul followed through his own statement in practice. On the contrary, when the position of women

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<sup>33</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 193.

<sup>34</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 195.

<sup>35</sup> Norman R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

is discussed in any detail (for example 1 Cor 7 and 11), Paul still assumes a clear difference in status between the sexes—although there is an indication that it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain this position. In 1 Cor 11–12 he runs into difficulties when he tries to explain who depends on whom—and then resort to an equalitarian way out: “Everything (that is, both man and female) comes from God.” The suggestion that Paul is advocating the abolition of sexes or that he is influenced by androgynous ideas does not fit with the logic of the passage in Galatians. The point is not the annulment of sexual (or cultural or social) differences, but the equal *status* that believers have as heirs of the promise, whatever their origin or social position might be.

When we follow the thrust of the argument in 3:26–29, it is important to note that the starting premise of v. 26 (all believers, irrespective who they are, are *sons of God* through faith) is repeated in different terms in the conclusion of v. 29: Those who belong to Christ (that is, those who believe) are *heirs of Abraham* according to the promise. *Sons of God* and *heirs of Abraham* are expressions of equal, undifferentiated and unqualified status that pertain to all believers. The three pairs of v. 28 are the further elaboration of what the status as sons and heirs entail. None of the differences listed here affects their standing as children of the Father and as heirs of Abraham.

Paul's position goes back to his discovery that it was faith alone (not circumcision or the law) that made Abraham righteous in the eyes of God. The inescapable conclusion is that this is true of all who believe in the same way—Jews, Greeks, slaves, freemen, men and women. Paul experienced the truth of the first pair in the realities of his mission to the Gentiles, of the second pair there are only the first glimpses that its significance is emerging, while of the third pair there is no evidence that Paul himself has grasped the full consequences of his statement. Of the theological validity of his insight in v. 28 he has no doubt—however, the full impact of his discovery and its far-reaching implications still had to emerge in the course of time.

What did have a powerful *Wirkungsgeschichte* in some later Christian traditions was the master symbol on which the three pairs are based in the first place. The three pairs of Gal 3:28 are premised on Paul's initial discovery that faith and faith alone was the basis for salvation. *Sola fide* became the famous slogan of the Reformation which Luther made a cornerstone of his theology<sup>36</sup>—eventually to be expanded by *sola gratia* (by

<sup>36</sup> See Markus Wriedt, “Luther's Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Luther* (ed. Donald K. McKim; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 88–94.

grace alone), *solo Christo* (only through Christ), *solī Deo gloria* (to the glory of God alone) and *sola Scriptura* (Scripture as sole authority).

But the radical nature of the *sola* formulations proved difficult to maintain—in Paul’s day, but also in the history of the church throughout the ages. The reason is not hard to find: The other side of the “faith alone” coin is radical inclusivity. If faith is the only requirement to enter the community of faith, then all who believe are included—without any additional qualification. Time and time again the severity of the *sola* was whittled down by a series of “plusses”: Faith yes, but also circumcision, also the law, also subscribing the right doctrine—and the list continues.

The starkness of the *sola* has been softened to maintain racial segregation (faith but of the same race), women from serving as elders and pastors (faith but being male) and keeping gays from having equal access (faith but being heterosexual).

And so Gal 3:28 continues to reverberate through the history of church and of society.



THE COMMUNITY SUPPER ACCORDING TO PAUL AND THE *DIDACHE*  
THEIR AFFINITY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

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The most obvious manifestation of the early Christian communities of the first and second centuries was their weekly meetings, which took the form of a communal supper followed by a social gathering. In sociological terms the Christian community operated as a voluntary association; the members of such clubs periodically met to enjoy a dinner followed by a social evening. This pattern of a communal meal followed by an after-supper session devoted to conversation, speeches and singing, was practised by countless societies in the Greco-Roman world, both pagan and Jewish. In adopting this practice Christians were not imitating a specifically Jewish custom. Rather, both Jews and Christians were following a generally current model that was neither peculiarly Jewish nor specifically pagan, but generally accepted throughout the Greco-Roman world. Nothing is so false as the contrast so frequently drawn between Hellenistic and Jewish. Hellenistic *includes* Jewish. Jews had their associations and their communal meals, just as non-Jews in the Roman empire had theirs.<sup>1</sup> By organising associations and sharing meals, Jews and Christians simply carried on a tradition that was part of general Greco-Roman culture.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From the first century BCE, for instance, an Egyptian papyrus has been preserved which mentions the decisions taken by a Jewish burial society. Another papyrus presents a list of the fees due by the members of a Jewish dining club in Apollinopolis Magna. See *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum* (ed. Victor A. Tcherikover; 3 vols; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957–1964), 1:252–5, nos 138–39. Further Jewish associations include the *θιασοί* of Jews, with their *σύνδειπνα*, in Parium on the Hellespont and in Rome (Josephus, *A.J.* 14.10.8.213–16); the synagogal community of Cyrenian and Alexandrian Jews in Jerusalem and the synagogue of Jews from Cilicia and Asia in the same city (Acts 6:9); the Jewish congregations in the diaspora, such as in Phocaea, Acmonia in Phrygia, Berenice (Benghazi), and elsewhere; see Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (rev. and ed. by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, Matthew Black; general editor Pamela Vermes; 4 vols; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973–1987), 2:426–9.

<sup>2</sup> Matthias Klinghardt, *Gemeinschaftsmahl und Mahlgemeinschaft. Soziologie und Liturgie frühchristlicher Mahlfeiern* (TANZ 13; Tübingen/Basel: Francke, 1996); Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); Valeriy A. Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering. Origin, Development and Content of the Christian Gathering in the First to Third Centuries* (VCSup 102; Leiden: Brill, 2010). In what follows I shall repeatedly make use of Alikin's work.

If one wishes to form a picture of the Christians of the first two centuries, one will not go far wrong by imagining them primarily as “dining clubs,” associations that met periodically at the home of one of their members, or some other premises, to share the main meal of the day, the *δειπνον* or evening meal, and then to enjoy each other’s company over wine, in the *συμπόσιον*.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to point out that it is a mistake to assume, as is often done, that the weekly meetings of the Christians were modelled on the Jewish gatherings in the synagogue on Saturday.<sup>4</sup> There are at least three reasons why the Christian dinners and symposia cannot be traced back to the synagogal meetings on the Sabbath.

In the first place, the meeting in the synagogue was not a meal, but a gathering at which the five books of Moses were read, explained and discussed. Both Philo and Josephus tell us that the participants then promptly returned to their homes to dine.<sup>5</sup> There, in their own homes, Jews enjoyed their Saturday evening meal in the company of their family, friends and acquaintances, and these dinners were followed by a symposium.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, in the synagogue only the books of Moses were read and discussed. In Christian communities, on the other hand, there were at first

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<sup>3</sup> For the social function of the symposium, see Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); Hal Tausig, *In the Beginning was the Meal: Social Experimentation and Early Christian Identity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Contra, among others, Harry Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 208. See also the conclusion reached by Gerard Rouwhorst, “Christlicher Gottesdienst und der Gottesdienst Israels: Forschungsgeschichte, historische Interaktionen, Theologie,” in *Gottesdienst der Kirche: Handbuch der Liturgiewissenschaft* (ed. Martin Klöckener, Angelus A. Häussling and Reinhard Messner, Part 2, vol. 2; Regensburg: Pustet), 493–572, esp. 571: “Die These der Verwurzelung der christlichen, besonders der frühchristlichen Liturgie in liturgischen Traditionen des biblischen und nachbiblischen Judentums ist zwar in Frage gestellt worden und muss gewiss im einzelnen weiterhin korrigiert und nuanciert werden, ist aber insgesamt eher bestätigt als widerlegt worden.”

<sup>5</sup> Philo, *Hypoth. apud Eusebius, Praep. ev.* 8.7.12–13. Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.210.

<sup>6</sup> For the special evening meal Jews had on Saturday, see Philo, *Contempl.* 36–37 (ἔσθίουσι ..., πίνουσι); Mark 1:21–31 (v. 31: “she served them”); John 12:2 (ἐποίησαν ... δείπνον); cf. v. 12 (with the comments of C. Kingsley Barrett, *The Gospel according to St John* [London: SPCK, 1978], 411); Persius, *Sat.* 5.182–84; Tertullian, *Apol.* 16.11: the Jews reserve the Saturday (*diem Saturni*) for eating, *victui*. Similarly, Tertullian, *Nat.* 1.13.4; *Didascalica* (ca. 230 CE) 5.20: the Jews prepare a meal on Friday in order to eat it on Saturday (*The Liturgical Portions of the Didascalica* [transl. Sebastian Brock; ed. Michael Vasey; Bramcote: Grove, 1982] 29). For the symposium of Jews on Saturday, see also Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 672 A: “The Jews themselves testify to a connection with Dionysius when they keep the Sabbath by inviting each other to drink and to enjoy wine.”

no readings;<sup>7</sup> later the letters of the apostles were read,<sup>8</sup> from the end of the first century the prophets of the Old Testament,<sup>9</sup> and in the second century the Gospels were added.<sup>10</sup> But so far as we know, the Law of Moses was never read in Christian meetings until the third century,<sup>11</sup> when in Caesarea passages from the Pentateuch were read in services in which Origen explained them. Conversely, Jews did not read the prophets in the synagogue until the third century; they have done so only since then (*m.Meg.* 4:2, 5), whereas Christians read the OT prophets in their gatherings from the end of the first century (1 Tim 4:13). There is a striking discontinuity between what was read at the synagogue and what was read in the assemblies of the Christian communities. The reason for this is that the Christian gathering on Sunday is not the continuation of the Jewish gathering on the Sabbath; it is the continuation of the periodical assembly of the Hellenistic voluntary association, at which the reading out of texts was a widespread custom.

One might object to this, that according to Luke 4:16–22 Jesus read from Isaiah in the synagogue. However, this passage is a Lukan redactional addition to Mark's account (Mark 6:1–6); there is no reason to assume that it is based on any tradition. In it, Jesus is represented as saying that the passage from Isaiah was fulfilled in him. The tendency to regard Jesus as the one in whom the words of the prophets were fulfilled had grown stronger in the course of the first century. Here Luke is taking the bold step of projecting this view back to Jesus himself, and therefore he has him read from Isaiah and say that the passage read was fulfilled in him. But Jewish sources of the first century never suggest that anything except the books of Moses was read in the synagogue on the Sabbath.

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<sup>7</sup> In 1 Cor 11:17–14:40, Paul's description of the early Christian communal supper followed by the social gathering, any reference to the reading out of texts is lacking. This may reflect a stage of the development of the Christian gathering prior to that represented by 1 Thess 5:27.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Thess 5:27; Col 4:16.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Tim 4:13. The passage cannot mean that the readings had to be taken from the Gospels; these were not available at the fictive time of writing. In so far as they were available at the real time of writing, they were not sufficiently widespread or authoritative to be read publicly in a Christian assembly. It is also hard to assume that the fictive Paul who is the author of this passage is recommending here his own letters for reading in church. However, OT prophets were read in church according to Justin, Irenaeus and *Canon Muratori*. The same may be meant in 1 Tim 4:13.

<sup>10</sup> Justin, *1 Apol.* 67:3.

<sup>11</sup> The reading of Exod 12 on Easter day according to Melito of Sardes, *Peri Pascha* 1.1–2 must be considered an exception, since the choice of this chapter was in fact occasioned by Melito's Quartodeciman celebration of Easter.

Thirdly, there was no singing at the synagogal assemblies on the Sabbath. Christians, on the other hand, sang during the symposia after their shared meal, from the beginning, as soon as we hear anything about them in roughly the year 55 (1 Cor 10–14).<sup>12</sup> In this they were not following the practice of the synagogues on the Sabbath, but that of the Greco-Roman symposium, the second part of the evening, which followed the meal, and during which both choral and solo songs were sung.<sup>13</sup>

The Christian communal meal or Eucharist (which is the same thing), therefore, does not go back to the study of the Scriptures in the synagogue on the Sabbath, but to the general Hellenistic tradition of associations and clubs to gather periodically for a communal supper and subsequent symposium. Starting from this observation, I wish to go into three topics that deserve a closer examination: (1) the relationship between the presentations of the Lord's Supper in Paul and of the Eucharist in the *Didache*; (2) the innovative changes in the interpretation of the pre-Pauline Eucharist and in the shape of the Eucharist from the first to the third centuries. I shall conclude by making some remarks on (3) the continuity between the Greco-Roman symposium and the assembly of the early Christian congregation.

### 1. *The Relationship between the Presentations of the Eucharist in Paul and in the Didache*

One of the most interesting, but also most acute problems of the earliest history of the Christian Eucharist is that the two oldest descriptions that we possess appear to differ widely. The two descriptions appear in Paul (1 Cor 10–14)<sup>14</sup> and in the second century work known as the *Didache*. Let us compare these two accounts.

In Paul, we find a distinction between the two parts of the evening programme: the meal (1 Cor 10:1–11:1; 11:17–34) and the after-dinner party (1 Cor 12:1–14:40). The passage 1 Cor 11:2–16, on the veil or headscarf women have to wear during the gathering, can be reckoned to belong to both parts of the evening. Prayers of thanks were said at the meal, separately over the bread and the wine, though the order remains uncertain. Paul empha-

<sup>12</sup> For singing, see 1 Cor 14:25, 26.

<sup>13</sup> This appears *inter alia* from Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 615 A-C, 643 B, 645 A.

<sup>14</sup> Within 1 Cor 10–14, the section 11:17–14:40 is a coherent, continuous discussion of the communal gathering. This appears from the use of *συνέρχασθαι* in 11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34; 14:23, 26. But the discussion of the gathering begins already in 10:1; consequently, chs. 10–14 form a literary unity.

sises that the bread and wine represent the body and blood of Christ, and that, by eating this bread and drinking this wine, the participants associate themselves closely with Christ's death and resurrection. In this imaginative experience of Christ's death and resurrection lies the true significance of the meal for those who share in it. By eating and drinking they share in Jesus' death and glorification. The meal thus gives them a preliminary experience, a foretaste, of their own salvation.

During the second part of the evening prayers were said, songs were sung and above all there was much discussion. Various speakers made their different contributions. Some attempted to convince the audience of certain ideas, to encourage them, or to exhort them to correct behaviour. Others sought rather to instruct and teach, while still others shared messages that they considered they had received as revelations.<sup>15</sup> That in turn provoked reactions from those who wanted to test the reliability of such revelations. In short, the oral interventions in the second part of the evening were many and various.

In the *Didache* we seem at first sight to see a different picture. It depicts the social evening as beginning with prayers of thanksgiving, first over the wine and then over the bread (9:1–4). These were followed by a full meal in the true sense (10:1), which ended with renewed prayers of thanks (10:2–6). The congregation thanked God not only for material food and drink, but also for spiritual food and drink: knowledge, faith, immortality, and eternal life. It is not stated in these prayers of thanks that the bread and wine stand for Christ's body and blood. The *Didache* therefore does not interpret them as representations of his body and blood, and consequently it does not see the meal as a way of becoming one with Christ. It does, however, regard eating and drinking them as an anticipated, proleptic participation in a future salvation, namely the coming kingdom of God. According to 9:2 the wine represents the vine of king David, God's servant; according to 9:3 the bread symbolizes the unity of the church gathered into God's kingdom. The *Didache* says nothing at all about the second part of the evening: the social gathering for the exchange of all manner of oral contributions, singing and prayer.

The differences between 1 Corinthians and the *Didache* appear so wide that it has often been doubted that they can refer to the same type of meal.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> On this sharing of "divine" information in the Christian gatherings at Corinth, see Martinus C. de Boer, *De apocalypticus Paulus* (Amsterdam: VU Boekhandel/Uitgeverij Amsterdam, 1998), 16–7. De Boer rightly points out that the revelations communicated during the gathering of Corinthian Christians had little to do with "visionary experiences"; rather they were prophetic messages.

<sup>16</sup> For a survey of the ways in which scholars have tried to explain the differences between 1 Cor 11–14 and *Did* 9–10, see Kurt Niederwimmer, *Die Didache* (KAV 1; Göttingen:

Many researchers have argued, and still do, that the *Didache* does not refer to the same “sacramental” meal as that described in 1 Corinthians. According to several scholars, the meal described in the *Didache* is not a representation of the ultimate salvation of the participants, but only a social charity meal<sup>17</sup> or ἀγάπη.<sup>18</sup>

However, the reason why the meal in the *Didache* is often distinguished from that in 1 Corinthians does not hold water. That reason is that in the *Didache* the meal is not said to have been instituted by Jesus, nor represented as a sharing in his death and resurrection.<sup>19</sup> In fact the words that the *Didache* says were spoken over the meal do not include the interpretative words “This is my body” and “This is my blood,” nor the words of institution, “Do this in memory of me.” And since both Catholic and Protestant exegetes nowadays are inclined to hear these words above all others in the celebration of the Eucharist, they are quick to conclude that the meal in the *Didache*, in which they are not uttered, cannot be the Lord’s Supper or Eucharist.

This is a misunderstanding. It may seem strange and surprising, but the interpretation words “This is my body,” etc. and the institution words, “Do this in memory of me,” are not pronounced at the meal in Corinth to which Paul refers, nor in the celebration of the Eucharist of which he offers his own ideal vision. The interpretation words appear only in Paul’s *interpretation* of the meal. He argues that the Corinthian Christians must conduct themselves more fittingly at the Eucharist, because, he says, according to

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Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 173–9; Gerard Rouwhorst, “Didache 9–10: A Litmus Test for the Research on Early Christian Liturgy,” in *Matthew and the Didache* (ed. Huub van de Sandt; Assen/Minneapolis: Van Gorcum/Fortress, 2005), 143–56, esp. 154–5.

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, Rudolf Knopf, *Lehre der zwölf Apostel* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1920): ἀγάπη. According to Hans Lietzmann, *Messe und Herrenmahl* (Bonn: Marcus & Weber, 1926), 232–33, *Did.* 9 presents eucharistic prayers, but *Did.* 10 the ritual of an ἀγάπη. Willy Rordorf and André Tuilier, *La doctrine des douze apôtres* (SC 248bis; Paris: Cerf, 1998), 40–1: “une agape.” Klaus Wengst, *Didache* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984), 43–57: “a non-sacramental communal meal”; Niederwimmer, *Didache*, 179: “nur ein Gemeindemahl,” “Gemeinschaftsmahl (‘Agape?’)”; Hans Conzelmann and Andreas Lindemann, *Arbeitsbuch zum Neuen Testament* (14th ed.; UTB 52; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 432: “ob das Abendmahl gemeint ist, ist unklar, ...” Similarly, Johannes Betz, “The Eucharist in the Didache,” in *The Didache in Modern Research* (ed. Jonathan A. Draper; AGAJU 37; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 244–75, esp. 251, 274–5. Klinghardt, *Gemeinschaftsmahl*, 491, is right in seeing the same meal in 1 Cor 10–14 and *Did.* 9–10, 14.

<sup>18</sup> In my view, the term ἀγάπη is just another designation of the Eucharist, which arose from the beginning of the second century. It occurs, for instance, in Jude 12; *Acta Perpetuae et Felicitatis* 17: “cum ... non cenam liberam sed agapem cenarent, ...”; and Tertullian, *Apol.* 39.16. Later a distinction was made between the Eucharist as a sacrament and the ἀγάπη as a charity meal.

<sup>19</sup> Thus, among others, explicitly Wengst, *Didache*, 43–57.

a certain older traditional interpretation, the bread and wine represent Jesus himself. He goes on to say that this view is one that Jesus himself called into existence on the last evening of his life. He then gives an account of the Last Supper, including the interpretation words and the institution words, but he relates it only to condemn the abuses of the Eucharist that had taken root at Corinth. Paul certainly does not say that the narrative of the Last Supper or the well-known words of interpretation and institution formed a regular part of the celebration of the Eucharist. Neither the Eucharist at Corinth, nor the ideal Eucharist as Paul envisioned it included the reading of an account of the Last Supper as part of the celebration. If it had been a permanent component of the celebration, that would in fact have prevented the abuses that had crept into the Lord's Supper at Corinth.

Many references survive to the form in which the Christians of the first centuries celebrated their communal meals. It is astonishing to find that the narrative of the Last Supper, with the passages in which Jesus says "This is my body, ..., this is my blood," and "Do this in memory of me," do not form part of the formula for the celebration of the Eucharist until about the middle of the third century. The earliest clear evidence seems to come from a letter of Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, who says that "in all our sacrifices, we mention his [Christ's] passion." In offering the chalice in his remembrance, "we do what the Lord through his example and teaching has taught us to do."<sup>20</sup>

One must realise clearly, therefore, that the Eucharist as Paul knew it did not as a rule include the reading of the narrative of the Last Supper, and that hence there was no occasion for an explicit interpretation of the significance of the bread and wine. One must also realise that there was no statement at the meal that Jesus himself had given instructions for the holding of the eucharistic meal. The conclusion follows naturally: in that case the meal in Corinth and that which Paul had in mind bear a stronger resemblance to the meal in the *Didache*.

Another point must be made. We hear nothing from the *Didache* about what happened after the meal, during the second part of the evening, but this silence cannot be taken to imply that no such after-dinner symposium took place. The reason why the author of the *Didache* said nothing about

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<sup>20</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 63.17.1–2. Ps.-Hippolytus, *Trad. ap.* 4 and 21, too, describe eucharistic ceremonies in which the institution story and the interpretation words occur, but these sections are probably later additions to the text, possibly as late as the fourth century. Chs. 25–28 give an older form of the Eucharist, in which the institution and interpretation words are still lacking. For the text of *Traditio apostolica*, see Hippolyte de Rome. *La Tradition apostolique* (ed. and trans. Bernard Botte; SC 11bis; Paris: Cerf, 1968).

the after-dinner gathering is clear: it was not his intention to describe the full programme of the evening; he merely wished to provide texts of prayers that ordinary members of these Christian groups could use to begin and end the group meal. These texts were needed, he says, when there was no preacher (προφήτης) present. If a preacher was present, he was free to formulate the prayers as he thought best (*Did.* 10:7). But for less practised lay readers, the *Didache* offers assistance in the form of model texts. The author introduces these examples as follows: “So far as the Eucharist is concerned, the prayers of thanks that must be spoken, you must formulate as follows ...” (9:1). And then follow the model texts to be spoken at the beginning and end of the meal. Clearly, the author’s only concern was to provide such models, for rituals have to be done well. He said nothing at all about the rest of the meeting, the social gathering that followed the meal. But that does not mean, of course, that there was no such social gathering, such as is mentioned by Paul and several other authors.<sup>21</sup> The differences between the meals described in Paul and in the *Didache* are thus much less great than they appear.

We could easily go further and point to the well-known agreements between Paul and the *Didache*. In the first place, in both Paul and the *Didache* separate prayers are spoken over the wine and the bread. Secondly, both Paul and the *Didache* attach special importance to the breaking of a single loaf of bread, from which all the participants eat, at the beginning of the meal. The original unity of the bread in both cases symbolises that the participants form, or wish to be united in, a single whole. In this interpre-

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<sup>21</sup> In Acts 20:11, the after-supper session goes on until sunrise. In Eph 5:18–19 the singing must also be part of the symposium following the Eucharist. Here it becomes clear that during the after-supper session, the wine could flow abundantly. Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2 (ca. 200 CE), discusses eucharistic meals held in the evening (which the participants called *agapai*, a designation these meals do not deserve according to Clement; 1.4.3) and followed by a session in which singing and music played an important part (4.43.1 and 3; 4.44.3–4). In Justin (ca. 150 CE) and Tertullian (ca. 200 CE), the reading of biblical texts and the sermon no longer follow the meal, but precede it, probably in order to give the catechumens the opportunity to attend the reading and the sermon and then to leave before the meal started, which was open only to baptised members of the congregation. It was practically impossible to invite the catechumens to come when the meal was over, since one could not know beforehand at what time the meal would be finished. Both in Justin, *1 Apol.* 67 and Tertullian, *Apol.* 39, the meal mentioned is still the traditional Eucharist in the form of a full supper held in the evening, not a simplified, symbolic, ritualized meal in the morning. In the case of Tertullian this appears from the fact that the meal is followed by a symposium during which the participants drank and sang; 39.18. Consequently, in Acts 20:7–12, Justin, *1 Apol.* 67 and Tertullian, *Apol.* 39, the gathering has the same tripartite structure: (a) a pre-supper session including an allocution, in Justin and Tertullian accompanied by a Scripture reading; (b) the meal; (c) the after-supper session or symposium.



tation of the single loaf of bread, which stands for the unity of the congregation or church, both Paul and the *Didache* are unquestionably following an older common Christian tradition. Finally, in both cases the meal is a true dinner, which the members of the community can enjoy, and not just a ritualized meal.

The conclusion is justified that the meal in the *Didache* and that to which Paul refers in 1 Corinthians resemble each other very closely. The prayer texts of the *Didache* were not known in that precise form to Paul or to the Corinthians,<sup>22</sup> but they were not meant to be regarded as immutable texts in the first place, formulae to be followed strictly without deviation. They were examples, which could be varied, just as recognised preachers (προφῆται) might vary the words with which they introduced the meal.

The prayers of thanks in the *Didache* would not have been known in that precise form at Corinth and to Paul, but one should remember that Paul tells us nothing whatsoever about the form or content of the prayers (except about the symbolism of the unity of the bread, of which we also hear in the *Didache*). The prayers of thanks in the *Didache* are thus at least compatible with what Paul has to say about offering thanks in prayer. And their order is the same as that which Paul states in 1 Cor 10:16, first over the wine and then over the bread.

My conclusion is that the meal which Paul describes in 1 Corinthians so closely resembled that in the *Didache* because they were one and the same.<sup>23</sup> Instead of disqualifying the Eucharist in the *Didache* as not having the same function, intention and form as the meal in 1 Corinthians, one must regard both meals as the same weekly ritual.<sup>24</sup> In the first and second centuries the Eucharist as described in the *Didache* was not exceptional or marginal but normal.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> It is clear that the text of these prayers reflects Jewish prayer tradition. However, this observation does not contradict the view that the Christian gathering originated as the Christian counterpart of the banquet of Greco-Roman voluntary associations; for Jewish associations, see n. 1 above.

<sup>23</sup> That *Did.* 9–10, 14 concerns a real Eucharist has also been argued by Rouwhorst, “*Didache* 9–10: A Litmus Test,” 154.

<sup>24</sup> It is true that Paul does not say explicitly that the Lord’s Supper took place on Sunday. But 1 Cor 16:2 is evidence that the Sunday was already considered a special day by the Corinthian Christians. The most plausible reason for this is that the Sunday was the day on which they came together as Christians for their weekly community meal and social party. For gatherings on Sunday, see *Did.* 14:1 and *Barn.* 15:9.

<sup>25</sup> On this point Gerard Rouwhorst and I have come to virtually the same conclusion; see Rouwhorst, “In blijdschap en in een geest van eenvoud,” *Eredienstvaardig* 22 (2006), no. 5:4–7, esp. 6–7.

## 2. *The Renewal in the Interpretation of the Pre-Pauline Eucharist*

The evening meal at Corinth and the Eucharist according to the *Didache* appear to go back, in their form and content, to one and the same old common tradition. But at the same time it is clear that new interpretations of the meal have come to the fore in Paul. In the first place, the bread and wine are said to stand for Jesus himself, in the interpretation words "This is ..., this is ..." Secondly, the interpretation is said to go back to Jesus himself, who is said to have instituted the celebration of the meal. Paul presents these two additional interpretations by using a narrative of the Last Supper to elucidate the practice of the Eucharist. This narrative contains both the interpretation words and the institution words.

It is beyond dispute that the interpretation of the bread and wine as standing for Christ and the belief that the Eucharist had been instituted by Christ himself, are both very old. Paul claims to know these interpretations from tradition, and this is confirmed by Mark, who shares them independently of Paul.<sup>26</sup> Yet the interpretation words and the institution words are secondary; the *Didache* does not include them, either in the text of the prayers or elsewhere, and there is no good reason why they should have been omitted from the tradition on which the *Didache* rests.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, we have numerous witnesses from the second and third centuries that describe celebrations of the Eucharist at which the bread and wine were not interpreted as Christ's body and blood, nor was the meal said to have been instituted by him. This applies to the description of the Eucharist in the second-century *Acta Johannis* 85–86, *ibidem* 109–110, the third-century *Acts of Thomas* 29, several third-century liturgies from Syria, such as the *Anaphora of Serapion* and the East Syrian *Anaphora of Addai and Mari*, and the Egyptian *Anaphora of Mark* in the early recension of Papyrus Strasbourg gr. 254.<sup>28</sup> The third-century *Traditio apostolica* also knows of various eucharistic liturgies in which food and drink are not interpreted as

<sup>26</sup> Mark 14:22–25. Mark does not have the institution words, but he certainly means to say that at the Last Supper Jesus laid the foundation of the community meal of the Church.

<sup>27</sup> Acts speaks repeatedly of the Eucharist, but never uses the institution or interpretation words in this connection. In this, Acts seems to follow the *Didache* type of Eucharist, although Luke in his Gospel does use the institution and interpretation words.

<sup>28</sup> See *The Apocryphal New Testament* (ed. J. Keith Elliott; Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 335; 336–7; 459. For the *Anaphora of Serapion*, see Lietzmann, *Messe und Herrenmahl*, 186–97, esp. 196. For the *Anaphora of Addai and Mari*, see William F. Macomber, "The Oldest Known Text of the Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari," *OCP* 31 (1966): 335–71. For the *Anaphora of Mark*, see Anton Hänggi and Irmgard Pahl, *Præx Eucharistica* (SpicFri 12; Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1968), 101–27.

Christ, and the meal is not regarded as having been instituted by him, for instance, in chs. 25–29; see also chs. 5 and 6.

We must therefore accept that although the meal as conceived in the *Didache* is the oldest stage of the Christian Eucharist that can be retrieved, and probably dates from the thirties of the first century, the interpretations which we know from Paul and Mark were added within one or two decades after it. These interpretations are: that the bread and wine stand for Jesus, and that the Eucharist was instituted by him. How did this renewal of the interpretation of the Eucharist, which is pre-Pauline in origin, come about?

To clarify the issue, we have to distinguish between the two renewals: on the one hand the interpretation of the food and drink as representing the person of Jesus, and on the other the idea that the meal had been willed and instituted by him. The two visions are not necessarily connected, and authors in the second and third centuries regularly mention the former without referring to the latter.<sup>29</sup>

How could Christians in the thirties and forties arrive at the idea that bread and wine stood for the person of Jesus, with whom they identified themselves by eating and drinking? No scholarly theory that can count on wide support has yet been put forward to explain this. I believe that what we can say is as follows.

The idea that Christians united themselves with their Lord certainly comprised more than their common meal. Some of them already believed in it outside the context of the meal. From a very early date followers of Jesus could often say of his death that “He died for us.” By this they meant that he had indeed died, but that God had honoured him, like every other martyr, by restoring him to life in heaven, and that they, as his followers, shared in his glorification. They regarded Jesus so much as one of themselves that his death was in a certain sense *their* death, but his vindication and rehabilitation by God was also in a sense their own rehabilitation and renewed life.<sup>30</sup> His followers therefore believed that Jesus’ death had resulted in their own justification and salvation, because they had shared during their earthly lives, not only in his passion and death, but in his rehabilitation by God and his renewed life.

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<sup>29</sup> This applies to passages in Ignatius, Justin, Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria, although the three last authors were acquainted with the institution words from the Gospels. Irenaeus uses both the interpretation and the institution words (though not yet in the eucharistic prayers), Acts uses neither, no more than the *Didache*.

<sup>30</sup> 1 Cor 12:26: “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it. If one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.”

For some Christians of the first generation, being a Christian meant being associated with Jesus in his death and exaltation.<sup>31</sup> And that association was no mere metaphor, not a manner of speaking but a manner of being, an ontological reality, which went by the name of “body.” Christians considered themselves members of the body of Christ. This body was no figure of speech but a reality. Because they were part of Christ’s body, they might not unite themselves with the body of a prostitute, says Paul.<sup>32</sup> And if some members of the community misbehave and do not conduct themselves as members of the body of Christ, they break away from the body and fall ill or die, Paul states.<sup>33</sup> The possibility of their ultimate salvation depended entirely on the concept of corporate unity between Christ and his followers, for without that unity the favour that God had shown to Jesus by rehabilitating and exalting him could not flow to Jesus’ followers.<sup>34</sup> In view of the widespread and very early dissemination of the saying “Christ died for us” among Christians,<sup>35</sup> many of them must have believed in their corporate unity with Jesus from an early date.

This corporate unity with Jesus extended beyond the Eucharist. It was not a great step, I suggest, for them to express this union with Jesus in the consumption of food and drink at their group meal. They saw this physical absorption of food and drink as a symbol of their union with Christ, which already existed in their minds. The consequence was that they came to interpret bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ.

I believe that the origin of this new interpretation of the Eucharist is confirmed by a detail in the formulae in Paul and Mark which underlie it. Paul says of the bread that it is Jesus’ body “for you” (ὕπερ ὑμῶν); Mark says of the wine that this blood was spilled “for many” (ὕπερ πολλῶν).<sup>36</sup> The phrases “for you” and “for many” are traces of the well-known older tradition that “he died *for us*.” The idea that Jesus died for others, in its turn underlain by the idea of the physical union of Jesus and his followers, clearly preceded the interpretation of bread and wine as standing for his person.

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<sup>31</sup> Daniel G. Powers, *Salvation through Participation: An Examination of the Believers’ Corporate Unity with Christ in Early Christian Soteriology* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001); Mattijs Ploeger, “Life–Death–Resurrection–Church. On the Coherence of Some Central Christian Notions,” *IKZ* (Bern) 96 (2006): 45–50.

<sup>32</sup> 1 Cor 6:15–18.

<sup>33</sup> 1 Cor 11:30.

<sup>34</sup> Rom 5:15.

<sup>35</sup> Henk Jan de Jonge, “The Original Setting of the Χριστός ἀπέθανεν ὑπέρ Formula,” in *The Thessalonian Correspondence* (ed. Raymond F. Collins; BETL 87; Leuven: University Press/Peeters 1990), 229–35; see esp. 235. The expression ἀποθνήσκα ὑπέρ derives from the tradition concerning the Hellenistic-Jewish martyr.

<sup>36</sup> 1 Cor 11:24; Mark 14:24.

This interpretation was then attributed to Jesus himself. At the same time reverence for Jesus led to the belief that he had instituted the group meal.<sup>37</sup> The words in which he was believed to have done so were “Do this ...,” better translated as “Continue to do this ... (ποιεῖτε τούτο ...).” It is these words which make Jesus the founder of the Church’s sacred meal, the Lord’s Supper. The two new views of the Eucharist, contained in (a) the interpretation words and (b) the words of institution, were included in the narrative that is generally known as the Last Supper. This narrative was handed down by Paul and Mark, independently of each other. It is thus old, but nevertheless secondary.

There has long been a certain degree of consensus about the origin of this narrative: it arose to explain the existence and meaning of the Church’s group meal.<sup>38</sup> It emerged and took shape in the Christian community in the context of the celebration of a weekly meal, to clarify what was done there. It is what we call an aetiology of the Church’s Eucharist, and it thus also arose as an aetiology, some time in the thirties or forties, possibly in Jerusalem.<sup>39</sup>

The creation of this aetiology must certainly not be understood as a form of deception, a dishonest attempt to trace back the institution of the Eucharist to an instruction of Jesus. The Christians to whom this aetiology owes its origin had already constructed a worldview which they could experience as meaningful, a symbolic universe in which Jesus’ death and resurrection also meant their own salvation. In this symbolic universe the real and concrete communion between Christ and themselves was a decisive element. It was only a step forward, although a creative step, when they began to see their world picture on a small scale in their communal meal. They saw it as a miniature, a scale model of their religious life as a whole. In the food they ate, they recognised their union with the dying and risen Christ. The meal came to symbolise for them the suffering and salvation that they shared with Christ; and, they now believed, this was

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<sup>37</sup> Much later, the institution of baptism, too, was attributed to Jesus: Matt 28:19.

<sup>38</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (4th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), 285: “eine Kultuslegende”; 286: “Kultlegende aus hellenistischen Kreisen.” Martin Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (3rd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1959), 210: “wir müssen damit rechnen, dass die Traditionsbildung von Anfang an unter eigentlich kultischem Interesse gestanden hat.” Conzelmann and Lindemann, *Arbeitsbuch zum Neuen Testament*, 501: “ganz bewusst als Kultlegende gestaltet”; Andreas Lindemann, *Der Erste Korintherbrief* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 258: “Vieles spricht für die Vermutung, dass der Wortlaut der Mahlüberlieferung seinen Ursprung in der griechischsprechenden Gemeinde (Jerusalems?) gehabt hat.”

<sup>39</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 63.1–2 (ca. 250 CE).

what he would have wished. The Last Supper narrative was a magnificent literary device to help them to underpin their vision of life, using a new and authoritative interpretation of their communal meal. This narrative was the expression of a continued attempt to make reality liveable and meaningful. It was to be successful. From the beginning of the second century references to the interpretation and institution words from the Last Supper narrative occur more and more often in interpretations of the Eucharist, for example in Ignatius, Justin, Cyprian, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian. From the third century, the Last Supper narrative was included in the protocol of celebrations of the Eucharist. The earliest witness of this incorporation of the institution narrative in the liturgy of the Eucharist is, as we have seen, Cyprian.<sup>40</sup> Further witnesses of the inclusion of the institution words and the interpretation words are the eucharistic prayers mentioned in the *Traditio apostolica* 4 and 21, but these chapters are probably not earlier than the fourth century. The older, mid-third century layer of the *Traditio apostolica* describes a eucharistic liturgy in which the institution words and the identification words are still absent (chs. 26–29).

From the last decades of the first century (Mark, Luke), the secondary interpretation of the Eucharist as instituted by Jesus won ground. From the third century this interpretation found expression in the adoption of the institution story in the liturgical text pronounced during the Eucharist. And although older forms of the Eucharist (without the institution narrative and the identification words) continued to exist in several liturgical traditions of the Church,<sup>41</sup> the new form (including the institution narrative and the identification words) was to become by far the more successful one in later centuries.

### 3. *Continuity between the Symposium and the Early Christian Gathering*

Let us return briefly to the first decades of the Church. The weekly gathering of the early Christians was the continuation in Christian circles of the Hellenistic social banquet which comprised two parts: a dinner followed by a symposium. This theory, launched fifteen years ago by the German

<sup>40</sup> Cyprian, *Ep.* 63.1–2 (ca. 250 CE).

<sup>41</sup> Reflected, for instance, in the *Didache*, several apocryphal Acts of the apostles, *Traditio apostolica* 26–29, the fifth *Mystagogic catechesis* of Cyril of Jerusalem, the *Anaphora of Addai and Mari*, and the oldest form of the Egyptian *Anaphora of Mark*. For bibliographical references, see n. 28 above.

researcher Matthias Klinghardt,<sup>42</sup> rapidly won support. It has now been accepted, to a great extent, by several experts on the subject.<sup>43</sup> Some scholars, however, have not yet given it sufficient credit, among them Wayne Meeks, who in his search for historical models that could explain the emergence of the early Christian gatherings, has left open too many different possibilities.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the new view on the origins of the Lord's Supper/Eucharist is still not sufficiently employed to clarify three phenomena that are permanent features of the Christian assemblies: singing, reading aloud of authoritative texts, and the address or sermon. That virtually all the elements of the Christian gathering can be traced back to the Hellenistic banquet and symposium must be considered a strong argument for confirming the correctness of the theory.<sup>45</sup> As soon as the Christian gathering becomes visible in historical sources, that is around the year 50,<sup>46</sup> it is evident that singing, reading aloud and speeches formed part of the after-dinner symposium.<sup>47</sup> All three were regular ingredients of the Greco-Roman symposium. We have very full information about the pattern that these events followed, among other sources an extensive and very entertaining work of Plutarch, the *Quaestiones conviviales* (Questions about the symposium), in nine books, which dates from about 100 CE.<sup>48</sup> Plutarch discusses in detail how best to organise an after-dinner symposium, how the choral and solo singing is to be performed,<sup>49</sup> what literature is best for reading aloud, what kind of speeches can be given, what subjects are most suitable, and how the speakers are to take turns to address the gathering.

<sup>42</sup> Klinghardt, *Gemeinschaftsmahl*.

<sup>43</sup> Among them, G. Rouwhorst, "Christlicher Gottesdienst und der Gottesdienst Israels," 557.

<sup>44</sup> Wayne Meeks, "Social and Ecclesial Life of the Earliest Christians," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 1, *Origins to Constantine* (ed. Frances M. Young and Margaret M. Mitchell; Cambridge: CUP, 2006), 145–73, see 167. Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching: A Search for the Origins of the Christian Homily* (VCSup 59; Leiden: Brill, 2001), too, remains reluctant to abandon the old paradigm of the continuity between synagogal assembly and early Christian gathering.

<sup>45</sup> This is not to deny that prayers before meals were a widespread Jewish tradition, nor that the text of the prayers mentioned in the *Didache* betrays Jewish prayer tradition.

<sup>46</sup> 1 Thess 5:27. This passage is the earliest attestation of the reading of apostolic letters in the early Christian gathering.

<sup>47</sup> We can be sure that in the first and second centuries Christians were unsparing in their use of wine in their gatherings. Apart from 1 Cor 11:21, see Eph 5:18 and Tertullian, *Apol.* 39.18.

<sup>48</sup> Plutarch does not deal especially with the symposia of associations, but he does deal with the festive banquets held in the company of friends and acquaintances, outside the domestic context of the family.

<sup>49</sup> For instance, Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 615 A-B, 622 A, 622 C, 643 B, 645 A, 711 D, 712 F, 713 B, 736 E-F, 743 C.

Plutarch says of the singing that it is useful because it can prevent disorder and irregularities among the participants.<sup>50</sup> We are reminded of the admonition in Eph 5:18, that participants in Christian gatherings must not become drunk and fall into scandalous behaviour, but must channel their enthusiasm into the singing of psalms, hymns and songs. Tertullian points out that after the meal the participants are invited to come forward one by one to sing a song. This can serve, he adds, as a test to see if they have not drunk too much.<sup>51</sup>

One character in Plutarch's *Quaestiones conviviales* considers the comic dramatist Menander particularly suitable for reading out at the symposium.<sup>52</sup> According to Lucian, however, Homer was read at the symposia on the Isles of the Blessed.<sup>53</sup> Aulus Gellius tells us that his teacher, the philosopher Calvenus Taurus, gave a weekly dinner for his students,<sup>54</sup> and that passages from Plato's *Symposium* were read at the symposium that followed the meal.<sup>55</sup> Plutarch mentions that at certain symposia in Rome Plato's dialogues were performed, with the roles divided between different speakers: "slaves are taught the most lively of these dramatic dialogues, so as to say them by rote" at dinner parties.<sup>56</sup> According to the "Cena Trimalchionis" in the *Satyricon* of Petronius, Trimalchio read his own will at his symposium;<sup>57</sup> but by then he was well and truly drunk.

Spoken addresses to the guests formed a regular part of every symposium. We hear from Plutarch that they too were useful in preventing the worst consequences of drunkenness,<sup>58</sup> especially complete loss of all mental control.<sup>59</sup> Recommended topics included history, current affairs and philosophy, but also subjects that incited the audience to piety, courage, philanthropy and charity.<sup>60</sup> Numerous examples of such addresses and sermons from symposia are known to us. We know that the priest of the fellowship of worshippers of Bacchus, the Iobacchoi, in second-century Athens, had to preach a sermon (θεολογία) at regular intervals at their af-

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<sup>50</sup> Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 614 F–615 B.

<sup>51</sup> Tertullian, *Apol.* 39.18.

<sup>52</sup> Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 712 B-D.

<sup>53</sup> Lucian, *Ver. hist.* 2.15.

<sup>54</sup> Aulus Gellius, *Noct. att.* 15.2.3: "In conviviis iuvenum, quae agitare Athenis hebdomadibus lunae sollempne nobis fuit." See also 7.13.2–3.

<sup>55</sup> Aulus Gellius, *Noct. att.* 17.20: "Symposium Platonis apud philosophum Taurum legebatur."

<sup>56</sup> Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 711 B-C.

<sup>57</sup> Petronius 71.4.

<sup>58</sup> Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 614 B.

<sup>59</sup> Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 660 C.

<sup>60</sup> Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 614 B.



ter-dinner symposia.<sup>61</sup> Other participants in the symposium of the Iobacchoi, however, were forbidden to launch into such an address, on penalty of 30 drachmas, except with the permission of the priest.<sup>62</sup> This is clear evidence that guests at the symposium were eager to make speeches. Eumolpus' address in the *Cena Trimalchionis* takes "the frivolity of women" as its theme.<sup>63</sup> Such addresses were intended to entertain the guests at the dinner and contribute to conversation and debate. Hence Plutarch calls them "homilies," ὁμιλίας.<sup>64</sup> It is no coincidence that the usual Greek technical term for a sermon in early Christian literature from the end of the first century is "homily."<sup>65</sup> In Acts 20:11 the verb ὁμιλεῖν is used to characterise the way in which Paul spoke to the symposium after dinner at Troas. Most probably this means "to give an address,"<sup>66</sup> and not "to converse (with those present)."<sup>67</sup> Thus the Christian term ὁμιλία appears to confirm that the early Christian gathering was a continuation of the periodical meetings of the Greco-Roman voluntary association, which comprised a δέιπνον and a συμπόσιον.<sup>68</sup>

It remains to summarise the above conclusions in three points:

1. First Corinthians 10–14 and *Did.* 9–10, 14 refer to one and the same type of eucharistic celebration, which very strongly resembles the Eucharist in the *Didache*. The meal described in the *Didache*, in the first and second centuries, was not exceptional or marginal but normal.

<sup>61</sup> *Inscriptiones Graecae* II 2 I, 1–2: *Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis anno posteriores* (ed. Johannes E. Kirchner; Berlin: Reimer, 1913), no. 1368, line 115.

<sup>62</sup> *Ib.*, lines 107–110.

<sup>63</sup> Petronius 110.6.

<sup>64</sup> Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 616 E, 743 B, 743 E. Elsewhere in Plutarch the allocutions delivered at the symposium are simply called λόγοι. At 743 B, Francis H. Sandbach, in Plutarch, *Moralia* (transl. Edward L. Minar, Sandbach, William C. Helmbold; LCL; Cambridge Mass./London, 1961) 9.267, rightly observes that ὁμιλία "covers not only what we call conversation (e.g. 629 F *supra*), but also continuous, but unrheterical, discourse such as a philosopher may address to a small audience."

<sup>65</sup> Discernable from Ign. *Pol.* 5:1 onward.

<sup>66</sup> Ernst Haenchen, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (KEK 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 561–62.

<sup>67</sup> In Acts 20:11, in contradistinction to Luke 24:14 and Acts 24:26, any mention of the persons with whom Paul conversed is lacking. The NRSV supplements the verb "he conversed" freely and generously with "with them," but the element "with them" has no counterpart in the Greek, which just reads ἐφ' ἱκανόν τε ὁμιλήσας, without an indirect object or any prepositional phrase: "after having spoken for a long time." Thus, correctly, Walter Bauer, *Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (6th ed.; Kurt and Barbara Aland; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1988), 1146 "predigen": "er predigte noch lange weiter."

<sup>68</sup> Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy to Preaching*, still derives the Christian homily primarily from the exposition of Scripture in the synagogue.

2. The interpretation of bread and wine as standing for Christ, and of the meal as being instituted by him is very early, but secondary; it went on to be very successful and permanently useful. The interpretation of the bread and wine derived from the previous concept of the corporate unity between Jesus and his followers. In eating and drinking bread and wine they saw that unity symbolised and experienced it.

3. The combination of singing, reading and homily in Christian gatherings, after the shared meal, confirms the historical continuity between the Christian gathering and the Greco-Roman group banquet followed by a symposium.

## “UNDER THE LAW”

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### *Introduction*

What does Paul mean or refer to when he speaks of people being “under the law” (ὑπὸ νόμον)?<sup>1</sup> He is the only one who uses the phrase in the New Testament; the phrase is, of course, to be distinguished from ὑπὸ νόμου, “by the law.” It is a phrase, then, which is distinctive of Paul’s theology, of his theological perspective on the law, and so presumably can tell us something about that perspective.

Paul uses the phrase eleven times, in a very interesting range of references:

Rom 6:14–15—Sin shall not exercise lordship (κυριεύσει) over you; for you are not under the law (ὑπὸ νόμον) but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law (ὑπὸ νόμον) but under grace?

1 Cor 9:20–21—And I became as a Jew to the Jews, in order that I might win Jews; to those under the law (ὑπὸ νόμον) as one under the law (ὡς ὑπὸ νόμον), not as being myself under the law (ὑπὸ νόμον), in order that I might win those under the law (ὑπὸ νόμον).

Gal 3:23–25—Before the coming of (this) faith we were held in custody under the law (ὑπὸ νόμον), confined till the faith which was to come should be revealed, so that the law might become our custodian to Christ, in order that we might be justified from faith. But with faith having come, we are no longer under the custodian (ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν).

Gal 4:4–5—When the fullness of the time came, God sent his son, born of woman, born under the law (ὑπὸ νόμον), in order that he might redeem those under the law (ὑπὸ νόμον), in order that we might receive the adoption.

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<sup>1</sup> My initial intention was to write a piece on Paul’s understanding of “Israel.” But then, just as I was beginning to turn my attention to the task, a copy of Martinus’s *Galatians* thumped through my letter-box—Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians* (New Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011)—and in glancing through it I was intrigued to note that “under the law” seems to be the most frequently cited Pauline phrase in the commentary. That sparked off a train of thought and inquiry which has resulted in this modest offering, with warmest congratulations and best wishes, to Martinus.

Gal 4:21—Tell me, you who want to be under the law (ὑπὸ νόμον), do you not listen to the law?

Gal 5:18—If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law (ὑπὸ νόμον).

A point of clarification is necessary at once. The absence of the definite article with νόμος does *not* mean that Paul was thinking of law in general, though this view has been put forward every so often.<sup>2</sup> By νόμος in all these contexts Paul was almost certainly thinking of the law, that is the Jewish law. It was as grammatically acceptable to refer to the law as νόμος as it was to refer to it as ὁ νόμος.<sup>3</sup> For a Greek-speaking Jew of the first century νόμος would naturally refer to the law of Moses, just as a Jew today would customarily refer to “Torah” rather than “the Torah.” The point is probably clearest in the sequence of references in Rom 2:12–27, where twelve of the references are anarthrous, and seven with the article, and where it is abundantly obvious that Paul had in mind throughout the Jewish law.<sup>4</sup> So it is entirely justified to translate ὑπὸ νόμον as “under the law,” the reference being to the Jewish law, the law of Moses. We will see how this is clearly borne out by most of the above references.

The more important question, and indeed the principal issue, however, is: What is the force of the ὑπό? Does it mean “under the power or control of,” “under the authority of,” “under obligation to,”<sup>5</sup> or “under the curse of the law” (Gal 3:13),<sup>6</sup> or “under the condemnation of the Law”?<sup>7</sup> Was it synonymous for Paul with being “under sin”?<sup>8</sup> And since νόμος refers to the Jewish law, does the phrase “under the law” refer to the status and condition of Jews, “under the law” being another aspect of being “within the law” (Rom 2:12), “having the law” (Rom 2:14); or does the phrase refer to the condition of the sinner as such without reference to ethnic identity?

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. n. 13 below.

<sup>3</sup> BDF §258; James H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Vol. 3 by Nigel Turner; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1963), 177.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Rom 2:14—“the Gentiles not having νόμος”; 2:17—“If you are called a ‘Jew’ and rely on νόμος”; 2:23—“you who boast in νόμος”; 2:25—“circumcision is of benefit if you practise νόμος.” See further Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of the Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), indicating the broad consensus on the point (33–4, with further bibliography).

<sup>5</sup> BDAG 1036; de Boer notes that Josephus used the phrase in a similar way (*Galatians* 241 n. 355, referring to Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.174); and Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas: Word, 1990), notes the parallel with the rabbinic expression, “the yoke of the Torah” (171).

<sup>6</sup> De Boer, *Galatians*, 210, 290.

<sup>7</sup> See n. 10 below.

<sup>8</sup> Frederick F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 181–2; de Boer, *Galatians*, 290, 355.

If indeed νόμος for Paul refers to the Jewish law, then it would seem likely that the reference was to the situation of Jews as such, as people of the law, and so “under the law.” But a clearer decision on this had better await an examination of the above texts themselves, Paul’s actual talk of being “under the law.”

### 1. *Romans 6:14–15*

Sin shall not exercise lordship over you; for you are not under the law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace?

In the sequence of Paul’s exposition, beginning a new section, as I believe, at 5:12,<sup>9</sup> sin is certainly personified and presented as a power (“Sin”), a power which brings about death (5:12–14) and has “reigned in death” (5:21). It enslaves those it has power over (6:20) and its wages are death (6:23). The result of the law coming in is that sin was “reckoned,” the sinner became guilty of law-breaking (5:14), but also, ironically, that sin (sinful deeds) increased (5:20–21). But Paul was confident that those to whom he was writing had died to (the power of) sin (6:2, 11) and were freed from and no longer enslaved to that power (6:6, 17–18, 22). To live out that freedom they no longer had to submit to that power in their lives as believers (6:12–13); they were in a different relationship—slaves of righteousness—and were to live out of *that* relationship (6:19).

In this context the contrast, “not under the law but under grace” (6:14–15), most obviously contrasts the recipients’ pre-Christian state with their Christian state—two alternative and contrasting power relationships. Grace now reigns where previously sin reigned (5:21); Paul can even pose the contrast as two different forms of slavery, though conscious of the less than satisfactory character of the imagery (6:16–19).<sup>10</sup> Sin exercised its power by bringing about trespass, law-breaking (5:12–21), by bringing about unrighteousness, uncleanness and lawlessness (6:13, 19), and by using the law to stir up sinful passions (7:5). Paul does not hesitate to express the effect

<sup>9</sup> “Paul’s Letter to Rome: Reason and Rationale,” in *Logos—Logik—Lyrik: Engagierte exegetische Studien zum biblischen Reden Gottes*: Klaus Haacker FS (ed. Volker A. Lehnert and Ulrich Rösen-Weinhold; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007), 185–200; also James D.G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), §33.3.

<sup>10</sup> Charles E.B. Cranfield, *Romans* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975, 1979), argues for the sense of “under God’s condemnation pronounced by the law” (1.320); similarly Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (ET Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 93. But the contrast is obviously between different ruling powers (Rom 5:21); see also Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 325–6.

of grace in similar terms—it also “reigns” (5:21); “righteousness,” similarly personified, brings about sanctification (6:19); alternatively expressed, the “free gift” (χάρισμα, the expression of χάρις, “grace”) of God is eternal life (6:23).

Why does Paul bring in the law to his set of contrasts in ch. 6? The primary contrast was between sin and grace. Does the introduction of the law at 6:14–15 not cause more confusion than clarity? The answer is probably twofold.

First, as a Jew Paul previously might well have regarded the law as God’s way of dealing with sin: both as providing means of atonement for sins committed (the sin-offering, the Day of Atonement);<sup>11</sup> and as an answer to or defence against the power of sin.<sup>12</sup> But now Paul had come to appreciate that the law actually played a part in sin’s exercise of its power: it made clear that sin was sin (law-breaking); but far more serious, it was being used by sin to multiply law-breaking (7:8–11). Here it should again be noted, Paul was clearly thinking of the law of Moses (5:14).<sup>13</sup> The thought, in other words, is primarily of the situation typified by Israel: the law had proved not only ineffective in countering the power of sin, it had also become an aide to the power of sin. So, “under the law” is Paul’s way of indicating an alternative to the gospel of grace, an alternative which was nowhere as effective as grace, but on the contrary made the human condition worse. Here “under the law” refers to the situation of Jews in particular, not because Jews were more enslaved to sin than others, but because the law deepened the plight in which they found themselves, in that the law reinforced sin’s

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<sup>11</sup> I continue to believe that it is this function of the law to which Paul refers in Gal 3:19: the law “was added for the sake of transgressions”; that is, not to provoke transgressions (e.g. J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* [AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997] 354–5), or to increase transgressions (as in Rom 5:20), but to provide a remedy for, a means of dealing with transgressions; so my minority view in *The Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC; London: Black, 1993), 188–90.

<sup>12</sup> It was presumably Paul’s awareness that his Jewish opponents would see his gospel as an invitation to sin (6:1) which led his thought to the law (6:14–15); cf. Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (3 vols.; EKK 6; Zürich: Benziger, 1978, 1980, 1982), 2:34; Eduard Lohse, *Der Brief an die Römer* (KEK 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 199.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Jewett, *Romans* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), follows Joel Marcus, “‘Under the law’: The Background of a Pauline Expression,” *CBQ* 63 (2001): 72–83, in arguing that the phrase “probably originated as a slogan coined by Judaizers in the Galatian crisis who followed an early rabbinic interpretation of Exod 19:17 and Deut 4:11 to the effect that the law was suspended in a threatening manner over their heads” (415). But Robert Jewett thinks that Paul was referring to all forms of law in the Greco-Roman world, on the ground that “law” here is anarthrous (411–2 and n. 230), ignoring the much broader consensus (see nn. 3–4 above); see also Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 387–90.

grip.<sup>14</sup> “Under the law” in Rom 6:14–15 summed up the plight of the most favoured nation (Israel), and was here equivalent to being “under sin” simply because sin made such effective use (that is, abuse) of Israel’s law.<sup>15</sup>

Second, however, Paul so emphasizes the negative role of the law in 5:12–7:6, that he cannot avoid the question, “Is the law itself sin?” (7:7). But he poses such a radical corollary simply to turn his denunciation of the law’s role into a *defence* of the law (7:7–8:4). The law itself was not to blame for the law-breaking of the sinner. It was *sin* which abused the law (7:8–13), and the weakness of the *flesh* which submitted to sin’s enticement and failed to meet the law’s demands (7:14–23; 8:3). So “under the law” should not be simply equated with “under sin.” The implication is rather of people sheltering under the law, on the assumption that the law would assist or protect them from the power of sin, only to find themselves even worse off since sin could so manipulate the law and since the flesh remained so weak before sin’s enticements.

In other words, Paul’s argument about and on behalf of the law suggests that he was not thinking of the law as itself a baleful power, another name for sin and unrighteousness. He was thinking of it rather as an alternative to grace to which no believer should think to turn, since it was so much in the thrall of sin’s power. He was most probably thinking particularly of the situation in which, with hindsight, he saw himself to have been in, in which he believed his fellow Jews now found themselves, and to which his gospel of grace was the only answer.

## 2. 1 Corinthians 9:20–21

And I became as a Jew to the Jews, in order that I might win Jews; to those under the law as one under the law, not as being myself under the law, in order that I might win those under the law.

It is at once clear that by “those under the law” Paul had in mind Jews as such. This is confirmed by the following sentence: “To those outside the law (ἄνομους) I became as one outside the law (ἄνομος).” In other words, he

<sup>14</sup> Schreiner rejects the exegesis of Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (ET Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 178, that the phrase here means “under the commands of the Mosaic law”: “not under the law does not mean that they are free from the moral commands contained in the Torah. It means that they are free from the power of sin” (*Romans*, 330). I doubt, however, whether Paul would have made such a clean distinction: it was precisely Israel’s obligation to obey the law, to put itself “under the law,” which, in the event, had resulted in its bondage to the law.

<sup>15</sup> See also my *Romans* (2 vols.; WBC 38; Dallas: Word, 1988), 1:339–40.

had in view two bodies of people—Jews and Gentiles, “those under the law” and “those outside the law.”<sup>16</sup> And he makes the distinction in order to explain his missionary tactics in relation to each: “in order that I might win Jews”; “in order that I might win those under the law”; “in order that I might win those outside the law.” The point for us here is that “under the law” was for Paul another way of saying “Jew”;<sup>17</sup> the phrase characterizes Jews as those whose distinguishing mark is their relation to the (Mosaic) law.

So, what does “under the law” signify here? It cannot be a simple equivalent of “Jew.” For Paul can say that he himself was not “under the law,” whereas he could not say “I am not a Jew.”<sup>18</sup> Being “under the law” was a condition characteristic and typical of being a Jew, but not precisely the same as being a Jew. More to the point, it was a condition which Paul had been able to step beyond or outside; even though himself a Jew, he could put himself “not under the law,” he could live and act as one who was not “under the law.”<sup>19</sup> The most obvious sense of the phrase, then, is as marking an obligation which was characteristic of Jews, but which could be set aside—“under obligation to keep the law.” “Under the power” of the law, or “under the curse” of the law do not make so much sense in this case. Jews were “under the law” in that, as Jews, as members of the people with whom God had made covenant, they were obligated to live as God had instructed through the law of Moses.<sup>20</sup> The law was as it were a banner under which Jews lived, a bracket which marked them out and marked them off from other nations.<sup>21</sup> “Under the law” was a phrase complementary to being

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<sup>16</sup> But note the very Jewish perspective: Paul does not describe the non-Jews here as “Greeks” or even “Gentiles,” but as “those outside the law,” a description which non-Jews would hardly use of themselves; cf. Andreas Lindemann, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (HNT 9/1; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 212; Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Pillar; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 425. The perspective similarly refers to Jews as “circumcision” and to Gentiles as “foreskin/uncircumcised.” The law and circumcision were/are so integral to Jewish self-definition.

<sup>17</sup> “The phrase τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον simply explicates the reference to the Jews” (Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000] 702).

<sup>18</sup> Paul never describes himself as a “Jew,” whereas he was quite ready to call himself an “Israelite” (Rom 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22) and a “Hebrew” (2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5). The only time he refers to himself as a “Jew” is in Gal 2:15. In contrast, in Acts Paul does describe himself as a Jew (Acts 21:39; 22:3). See further my “Who Did Paul Think He Was? A Study of Jewish Christian Identity,” *NTS* 45 (1999): 174–93.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Cor 10:23–30 illustrates how Paul lived out this principle.

<sup>20</sup> When referring to his contrasting obligation to Christ Paul avoids the domineering overtone of the “under,” and describes himself as ἐνωμος Χριστοῦ (“in-lawed to Christ,” “in accord with the law of Christ”).

<sup>21</sup> “The context suggests that when Paul says he is ‘not under the law’ (1 Cor 9:20) and ‘without law’ (9:21), he is specifically thinking of the law insofar as it creates a breach between Jews and Gentiles” (Schreiner, *Law*, 158).



“within the law,” and to the imagery of the law as a wall surrounding Israel and preventing it from being influenced or affected by other nations.<sup>22</sup> The only difference was that “under” implied a form of existence dominated by the law and by the obligations to obey the law.

So, “under the law,” though a characteristic description of Jews was not an inescapable power ruling over all Jews. Paul, himself a Jew, could remove himself from being “under the law” and act as one who was not “under the law.” At its simplest, then, the phrase “under the law” in 1 Cor 9:20 refers to a mode of conduct, a way of living which characterized Jews to such a degree that it could itself designate Jews or the condition and status of Jews, as defined by their obligation and commitment to live their lives as directed and determined by the law of Moses.<sup>23</sup> For a non-Jew, the close equivalent would be indicated by the verb *ιουδαϊζειν*, “to live like a Jew,” to live Jewishly.<sup>24</sup>

By thus distinguishing being a Jew from living “under the law,” Paul sought to establish his understanding of the gospel as not requiring Gentile believers to “live like a Jew,” or to become Jews/proselytes. That worked well for his non-Jewish converts. But the attempt to separate being a Jew from living “under the law” was not a policy which the bulk of his fellow Jews could accept. Living “under the law” was not synonymous with being a Jew for Paul. But it was for most of his compatriots. Hence the large-scale failure of Paul’s vision and of his ambition to build a church of Jews and Gentiles.<sup>25</sup>

### 3. *Galatians 3:23–25; 4:4–5*

Before the coming of (this) faith we were held in custody under the law, confined till the faith which was to come should be revealed, so that the law might become our custodian to Christ, in order that we might be justified from faith. But with faith having come, we are no longer under the custodian.

When the fullness of the time came, God sent his son, born of woman, born under the law, in order that he might redeem those under the law, in order that we might receive the adoption.

<sup>22</sup> As explicitly in *Let. Aris.* 139–42.

<sup>23</sup> See also Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (4 vols.; EKK 7; Zürich: Benziger, 1991, 1995, 1999, 2001), 2:340–2.

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* 473–4 and n. 255.

<sup>25</sup> See further C. Kingsley Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (BNTC; London: Black, 1968), 212–5. “That Paul did not view the Torah as “the way of salvation” is clear; but how did he see the *hōs hypo nomon* in the actual situation of a Hellenistic city?” (Lindemann, *Erste Korintherbrief*, 212).

One of the confusing features of this section of Galatians is that Paul switches between “us” and “you.”

Gal 3:1–5, 13–14—“... He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, is it by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ... Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law having become a curse on our behalf ... in order that to the Gentiles the blessing of Abraham might come in Christ Jesus, in order that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

Gal 3:23–29—“... But with faith having come, we are no longer under the custodian. For all of you are sons of God, through this faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, ... you all are one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise.”

He continues in the same terms into ch. 4.

Gal 4:1–7—Under-age heirs are no better off than slaves. “Thus also we, when we were children, were enslaved under the elemental forces of the world. But ... God sent his son, born of woman, ... in order that we might receive the adoption. And in that you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts ... Consequently you are no longer a slave, but a son ...”

The confusion presumably arises because Paul was trying to make the difficult case that Gentile believers were included among Abraham’s descendants (seed), by virtue of their being “in Christ Jesus” and having received the inheritance (the Spirit) promised to Abraham’s seed. So Paul was very conscious of the fact that he was speaking of the distinctively Jewish inheritance, the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham of both seed and that the Gentiles would be blessed in him (3:8). Consequently Paul addresses the Gentile recipients of his letter as “you” (as most explicitly in 1:6–9; 3:1–5). But it was central to Paul’s gospel as expounded in Galatians that these Gentiles who had come to faith in Christ had been given share in what had hitherto been a distinctively Jewish inheritance (Abraham’s seed; the promised Spirit). So it was constitutive of his gospel that this blessing was shared equally by Jews and Gentiles through their common faith, their being in Christ and the gift of the Spirit. Hence, we may infer, Paul’s switching back and forth from “you” to “we/us,” since he no doubt wanted those who heard his letter being read to them both to realize that Paul’s primary concern was for them, but also that they should appreciate that Jewish believers, like Paul himself, were sharing in the same blessing, on the same terms (3:14).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Dunn, *Galatians*, 176–7; see also Martyn, *Galatians*, 334–6.

Paul then had to use “we/us” in Gal 3–4, because of the characteristically Jewish terms of the blessing they had all received. Paul however pressed the sharedness of their (Jew and Gentile) experience even further.

He indicates that the plight of Gentile as well as Jew could be described equally in what would otherwise be regarded as distinctively Jewish terms. It was “all who rely on works of the law” who were “under a curse” (3:10); this characterized the plight of those “under the law,” Jews who lived according to the rubric of Leviticus 18:5 (Gal 3:12). But it was “us” who needed to be redeemed from the curse of the law (3:13).<sup>27</sup>

Again, he characterizes the function of the law given through Moses as holding Israel in custody, the law as a “custodian” (3:23–25). Whether Paul intended his imagery here to be positive (protective) or negative (punitive),<sup>28</sup> at least it is clear that he was referring primarily to Israel—the role of the law given through Moses with regard to the people (Israel) to whom the law was given (3:17, 19).<sup>29</sup> But again Paul identifies those experiencing the custodian role of the law as “us.” That could be because he saw the law as having a function towards Gentile believers as well, ushering them, παιδαγωγός-like (as well as Jews), into the presence of Christ (3:24). But an alternative explanation is plausible:

(1) In 4:1–7 Paul again makes clear that he was addressing his Galatian Gentile converts (“you”—4:6–7). But this time he poses the shared plight of Jew and Gentile in both Jewish and non-Jewish terms (“we/us”).

(2) In 4:1–7, the imagery initially is a continuation of the distinctively Jewish situation: as heirs of the promise given to Abraham, but still awaiting the inheritance, minors, and little better than slaves (4:1).<sup>30</sup>

(3) But then he switches imagery to the situation of being “under the elemental forces of the world” (4:3), which more naturally would be heard as a typically Jewish characterization of the plight of Gentiles.

The bridging thought is probably that the Jewish missionaries pressurizing the Galatian (Gentile) believers were as controlled by or subservient to the law as unbelieving Gentiles were controlled by or subservient to the

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<sup>27</sup> In what sense Gentiles were (or Gentile believers had been) under the curse of the law is not clear: possibly as those outside the law, Gentiles could obviously be regarded as “out-laws” (“Gentile sinners”—2:15); or possibly in that the identification of Abraham’s seed so closely with the law prevented the blessing of Abraham extending to Gentiles.

<sup>28</sup> Most regard the imagery as negative (see e.g. de Boer, *Galatians*, 240–1); but I continue to think that Paul intended it in a more positive sense (*Galatians*, 197–200), as the parallel of the “custodian” with the “guardians” and “stewards” of 4:2 suggests. See also the discussion in Longenecker, *Galatians*, 146–8.

<sup>29</sup> Longenecker, *Galatians*, 145.

<sup>30</sup> Longenecker, *Galatians*, 172.

elemental forces of the world. The law which had been given, one might say, to protect Israel, almost equivalent to Israel’s guardian angel,<sup>31</sup> had come to function more like one of the elemental forces which controlled the world.<sup>32</sup> This line of interpretation is probably confirmed by 4:8–10, where Paul characterizes the enticement to submit to the law (to “observe days and months and special times and years”—4:10) as a return to slavery to the “beggarly elemental forces” (4:8–9).

Whatever the finer and disputed points in the above exegesis, it is sufficiently clear that Paul was drawing on the distinctive history of Israel and using characteristically Jewish categories, blended in one degree or another with Jewish perception of the plight of Gentiles, to describe the blessing which the gospel had brought to the Galatians and the plight from which it had rescued them.

How, then, does “under the law” function in Paul’s exposition in Gal 3:1–4:10? In the case of 3:23–25, the most obvious answer is that, once again, it is a phrase drawn from Israel’s history. It is part of Paul’s answer to the question Paul himself had posed in 3:19—“Why then the law?” His answer: the law was given through Moses (3:20) to Israel. However its custodial function is perceived, negative or positive, it was exercised in relation to Israel.<sup>33</sup> It was Israel who was “under the law,” “under the custodian,” a limited and temporal function, according to Paul, until the coming of Christ. The imagery is of a situation under the power, under the control of the law.<sup>34</sup> The parallel phrase “under the elemental forces,” is primarily a description of the situation of humankind as a whole, but it is also adaptable to the situation of Jews generally (4:3), and of Gentile believers who were strongly attracted to a law-observant life, to putting themselves “under the law” (4:9–10).

With 4:4–5 the initial focus is once again on the situation of the Jew. Jesus was sent as a Jew, “born under the law.” Here again the phrase signifies not so much “under the power of the law,”<sup>35</sup> as “under obligation to observe

<sup>31</sup> Dunn, *Galatians*, 192, 197, 216.

<sup>32</sup> I am not sure that Paul intended to number the law among “the elemental forces”; but he did think that the way the law was regarded by the Jewish missionaries and the way it functioned with regard to Israel and would-be Gentile proselytes were very similar. As de Boer notes, the importance of strict calendrical observation of the Jewish festivals made the link more obvious (*Galatians*, 257).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. de Boer: “Paul may perhaps have Jews particularly in view, at least in the first instance, but if so he uses their situation ‘under the law’ to be representative of the situation of all humankind (cf. 3:10–14; 4:5)” (*Galatians*, 238; also 258–9).

<sup>34</sup> Martyn translates, “under the Law’s power” (*Galatians*, 362, 370–2).

<sup>35</sup> Did Paul think of God sending his Son to be “enslaved” by the law, as Martyn suggests (*Galatians*, 390)? De Boer’s “shared the human condition of enslavement ‘under the law’” (*Galatians*, 263) is better. Bruce insists, “under the law,” but not “under sin” (*Galatians*, 196).

the law,<sup>36</sup> that is, as a Jew. Paul expresses the same thought differently in Rom 15:8—“Christ became a servant of circumcision,” that is, one who was obligated to honour and obey the distinctive Jewish law. This was necessary, says Paul, “for the sake of God’s truth, to confirm the promises to the fathers,” that is, as an expression of God’s faithfulness<sup>37</sup> to his promises to the patriarchs and his covenant with Israel. So, “under the law” again typifies for Paul the status, life-setting and condition of Jews generally.

Paul continues that Jesus’ mission as a Jew was to “redeem those under the law.” Given the specifically Jewish context of the phrase as just used (Jesus “born under the law”) the phrase again must refer primarily to Jews. Paul affirms that God’s purpose in sending Jesus was to redeem Israel. But once again he glosses the point—it would be inaccurate to say that he corrects the point—by adding “in order that we might receive the adoption.” For Paul the redemption of Israel was never the exclusive reason for Jesus’ mission. As he subsequently emphasized in Romans, the saving purpose of God was for Jew first, but also Gentile.<sup>38</sup> And as in Gal 4:5 Paul immediately expands the redeeming mission of Jesus to include the believing (Gentile) “us,” so in Rom 15:8–12 Paul immediately adds: “... to confirm the promises to the fathers, and the Gentiles to give praise to God for his mercy ...” The status of being “under the law” retains its distinctively Jewish reference, but the gospel reaches beyond those “under the law.”

#### 4. *Galatians 4:21; 5:18*

Tell me, you who want to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?

If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Little more need be said about the remaining two “under the law” phrases. 4:21 clearly has in view Gentile believers who were very much attracted by the gospel as preached by the Jewish missionaries (also believers in Messiah Jesus), who evidently were trying to make good what they regarded as the shortfall of Paul’s gospel, by encouraging the Galatian believers to move beyond what the missionaries would regard as the status of “god-fearers” to become full proselytes.<sup>39</sup> The context and ambience is entirely

<sup>36</sup> Bruce, *Galatians*, 196.

<sup>37</sup> On “the truth of God” (Rom 15:8) as a Hebraism denoting God’s faithfulness, see my *Romans* on 3:4, 7 and 15:8; also “Faith, Faithfulness,” *NIDB* 2:408–9, 410–1.

<sup>38</sup> Rom 1:16; 2:9–10; 9:24; 10:12.

<sup>39</sup> This is probably the strategy indicated in Matt 23:15 (truly converting the half-converted), as illustrated by Josephus’ story of the conversion of king Izates of Adiabene (*Ant.* 20.38–46; see Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* 300 n. 248, 454 n. 166), and by Juvenal’s satiri-

Jewish: individuals as “under the law” and those who “listen to the law.” The most likely sense of the phrase itself (“under the law”) is “to live life as directed by the law, to live as a Jew,” with all the implications of becoming a full member of the covenant and the covenant people, by taking on the obligation “to do the whole law” (5:3).

In 5:18 the contrast is similar to that in Rom 6:14–15. In Romans it is grace which contrasts with obligation to do the law; the free gift of God liberates from what Paul had come to see as a slavery to rules and regulations. In Galatians the thought is rather of the inadequacy of the law as contrasted with the enabling power of the Spirit. The line of thought is similar to that in Rom 7:14–8:4: Paul links talk of the desires and failings of the flesh to the thought of being “under the law” (Gal 5:16–21), just as he defended the law in Rom 7 by explaining its weakness and inability to curb the desires of the flesh (8:3); and in both passages the resolution comes with the Spirit and by being led by the Spirit. In other words, Paul here sums up the contrasting alternatives: to follow the counsel of the other missionaries and put themselves “under (the direction of) the law;” with all the ineffectiveness of that option which Paul went on to expound in Rom 7; or to continue as they had begun, with the Spirit, and being led by the Spirit (Gal 3:3; 5:25; 6:8).<sup>40</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Paul uses the phrase “under the law” consistently with reference to the situation of Jews as such, as people of the law, and so “under the law.”

(1) Each time he introduced the phrase it is in a context where the law of Israel has been the preceding reference (Romans, Galatians), or is immediately in view (1 Corinthians), or where the law of Moses is the attraction which believing Jewish missionaries were dangling before Paul’s converts (Galatians).

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cal description of how the son of the God-fearing Roman father takes the logical next step of being circumcised and becoming a full proselyte (*Sat.* 14.96–106). On “godfearers” I may refer simply to *Beginning*, 560–3, with bibliography.

<sup>40</sup> “To put oneself thus ‘under the law’ was to look once again for an answer to ‘the desire of the flesh’ in a written code, an outward constraint; whereas in the age of fulfilment introduced by Christ, it was the circumcision of the heart, an effective inner force which was now available. To put oneself ‘under the law,’ in other words, was to look in the wrong direction for salvation. Worse still, to assume that only ‘under the law’ could salvation be found was to deny the reality of Gentile as Gentile having received the Spirit” (Dunn, *Galatians*, 301).

(2) Because the Mosaic law, the law of the covenant, so identified Israel, “under the law” was itself an identifying characteristic of being a Jew. Paul however sought to disentangle the two: one could be an Israelite (ethnic identity) without being “under the law.” To be “under the law” in its full extent was an option, not a binding necessity, for the Israel called by God and true to its calling.

(3) “Under the law” would have seemed a safe, protected position to find oneself for most of Paul’s fellow Jews, and so an attractive option to put before Paul’s Gentile converts. In contrast, Paul saw the situation “under the law” as closely parallel to humankind’s situation “under the elemental forces of the world,” both situations from which the gospel and the Spirit brought liberation.

(4) The gospel’s alternative to being “under the law” was being “under grace,” and being “led by the Spirit,” where the graciousness of the divine initiative always the most fundamental given, and where the enabling power of the Spirit overrode the weakness of the flesh and countered the power of sin in a way and to a degree never matched by the law.

## THE RHETORIC OF VIOLENCE AND THE GOD OF PEACE IN PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

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To readers familiar with the Pauline letters, the combative rhetoric of Galatians scarcely comes as a surprise. The letter barely opens before Paul offers, instead of the customary thanksgiving, a curse on anyone who preaches “another” gospel (1:6–9).<sup>1</sup> References to the violent act of crucifixion play a prominent role, whether the crucifixion is that of Christ (3:1, 13), of Paul himself “with” Christ (2:19), or of the whole of the cosmos (6:14). Paul accuses the “false brothers” of attempting to “enslave us” (2:4) and later depicts “us” as having been “enslaved” by the *στοιχεῖα* as well as by the Law (4:1–10). The Teachers continue to be enslaved and to enslave others within the slavery of Hagar.<sup>2</sup> And of course the castration wish of 5:12 offers an obvious instance of rhetorical violence. Martinus de Boer rightly characterizes this as a letter that “invades” and “shatters.”<sup>3</sup>

What may surprise, however, is the claim that a rhetoric of violence pervades Romans as well. The rhetoric of violence in Galatians reflects the polemical situation in which Paul writes. Finding that Christian-Jewish Teachers have arrived in the Galatian churches with the message that the coming of God's Messiah both confirms the Law of Moses and extends its requirements to Gentiles, Paul responds with a re-proclamation of the gos-

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<sup>1</sup> “Rhetoric of violence” refers to those elements in Paul's letters that depict or imply the use of physical force by one agent against another. On the problem of defining rhetoric, see Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric: The Quest for Effective Communication* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 3–11. It might be objected that the anathema of Gal 1:9 does not itself suggest violence since it does not necessarily involve physical damage, but it does announce the intensity of the perceived conflict and thus prepare the way for the violent rhetoric that follows. Its location at the beginning of the letter underscores its strident character.

<sup>2</sup> For the argument that the two mothers of Gal 4:21–31 represent two Gentile missions, see J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 431–66; “The Covenants of Hagar and Sarah: Two Covenants and Two Gentile Missions,” in *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 191–208; and see also the important discussion in Susan Eastman, *Recovering Paul's Mother Tongue: Language and Theology in Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 127–60.

<sup>3</sup> *Galatians: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 71. It is a pleasure to offer this essay in honor of a colleague from whose work I have learned a great deal and whose friendship is a genuine gift.



pel that is forceful, even heated.<sup>4</sup> When we turn to Romans, however, the context is different. On most reconstructions of the occasion and purpose of the letter, Paul is not engaged here in a polemic but is instead anticipating his upcoming journey to Jerusalem or preparing for the Spanish mission or seeking to unify a divided congregation (or divided congregations).<sup>5</sup> Indeed, on some readings, Romans represents not simply an interpretation of Galatians<sup>6</sup> but a change of mind, a deliberate attempt to revise and even recast his earlier epistolary outburst.<sup>7</sup> At the very least, the tone of Romans is different, because Paul has not yet been to Rome and must proceed with caution where there is little or no prior relationship to provide a context for his argument.

For these reasons, it may be surprising to suggest, as I shall do in the pages that follow, that Romans contains its own rhetoric of violence, indeed, that the theology of the letter cannot be rightly understood without it.

### 1. *Romans 16:17–20*

The most obvious instance of rhetorical violence in Romans occurs at the very end of the letter, at 16:20: “The God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet.” This statement alone might prompt a discussion of violence in Romans, were it not for the fact that a number of scholars have argued that 16:17–20 is a later interpolation.<sup>8</sup> Robert Jewett argues the case forcefully, as follows: (a) vv. 17–20 represent “an egregious break” between the greetings of vv. 1–16 and vv. 21–23; (b) vv. 17–20 directly contradict the preceding argument of the letter, particularly because this passage identifies some Christians to be avoided, while 14:1 instructs the Romans to

<sup>4</sup> For the use of “Teachers” rather than “Judaizers” or “opponents,” see Martyn, *Galatians*, 120–26; and for Galatians as re-proclamation, see *ibid.*, 22. De Boer prefers “preachers,” which has the advantage of underscoring a reading of Galatians itself as an apocalyptic sermon countering the work of the preachers (*Galatians*, 50–61).

<sup>5</sup> An instructive survey of the many proposals for the occasion and purpose of Romans appears in Richard N. Longenecker, *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul's Most Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 92–127.

<sup>6</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 30–33.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas H. Tobin, S.J., *Paul's Rhetoric in Its Contexts: The Argument of Romans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), see especially pp. 2, 5, 70–78, 98–102.

<sup>8</sup> e.g., Wolf-Henning Ollrog, “Die Abfassungsverhältnisse von Röm 16,” in *Kirche: Festschrift Günther Bornkamm zum 75 Geburtstag* (ed. Dieter Lührmann and Georg Strecker; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980), 221–44; Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (SP; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1996), 455–56; Leander E. Keck, *Romans* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 375–79; for further bibliography, see Robert Jewett, *Romans* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 986–88.

welcome one another despite their differences of conviction and practice; and (c) the vocabulary and rhetoric of vv. 17–20 are non-Pauline.<sup>9</sup> Jewett suggests that the interpolation was prompted by Paul's "ecumenical" language in v. 16 ("All the churches of Christ greet you"), and he attributes the interpolation to the circle that produced the Pastoral epistles.<sup>10</sup>

Jewett's argument is not without its problems, however. To be sure, vv. 17–20 do interrupt the greetings, but the discussion of false teachers may have been prompted by the reference to "all the churches of Christ" in v. 16. In addition, 14:1 is not a call to unquestioning acceptance of all practices and views, so the exhortation of 14:1 does not necessarily contradict the warning of 16:17–20. And, although there are several Pauline *hapax legomena* and expressions atypical for Paul, those alone do not overturn the fact that no manuscript of the letter omits these verses. The most cautious conclusion to be drawn is that 16:17–20 belongs in our reading of the letter, and our interpretation of the letter needs to take this passage into account.<sup>11</sup>

The claim that "the God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet," then, belongs with the letter as a whole. Indeed, I hope to show in what follows that this instance of rhetorical violence culminates an important thread that runs throughout the whole of the letter.

## 2. Catalogue of Violence

For the sake of clarity, the language of violence can be organized into three categories: there is language associated with warfare, with slavery, and with the state. These categories overlap, of course, since it is states that make war and often states that enslave, and that is certainly true of the Roman Empire. For the purpose of presentation, however, this way of proceeding may be helpful.

<sup>9</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 986–88. Jewett's argument regarding vocabulary draws heavily on Wolf-Henning Ollrog, "Abfassungsverhältnisse," 230.

<sup>10</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 988.

<sup>11</sup> So also, e.g., Charles E.B. Cranfield, *Romans* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 2:797–98; Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 928; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 745; Eduard Lohse, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2003), 41–12; Michael J. Thate, "Paul at the Ball: *Ecclesia Victor* and the Cosmic Defeat of Personified Evil in Romans 16:20," in *Paul's World* (Pauline Studies 4; ed. Stanley E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 151–60. One further problematic feature of Jewett's argument is his assumption that Paul equates the false teachers with Satan and imagines God (or the community) crushing them (*Romans*, 986), yet what Paul writes is that Satan will be crushed, not the false teachers; Satan may produce the false teaching but Satan is not to be *identified* with the false teachers themselves.

A. First, and perhaps most surprisingly, Romans includes language that belongs to the arena of warfare.<sup>12</sup> To begin with the most obvious example, in 6:13 and 6:19 Paul warns the Romans not to submit themselves to Sin as the ὄπλα of wrong but to present their “members” to God as “weapons” of rectification. Later, in 13:12, Paul admonishes, “Let us put away the works of darkness and clothe ourselves with the ‘weapons’ of light.” Elsewhere ὄπλον clearly refers to instruments of violence, as when Asclepiodotus, in his work on military tactics, refers to the command, “Stand to take arms (ὄπλα).”<sup>13</sup> In addition to identifying his audience as “weapons,” in 6:23 Paul writes that the ὀψώνιον which Sin pays out is death. Although ὀψώνιον can refer to wages paid in any arena, it often refers to the wages of soldiers. That is the case in 1 Cor 9:7: “Who serves in the military at his own expense?” (although not in 1 Cor 11:8; see also Luke 3:14; *Ep. Aris.* 22; 1 Esdr 4:56; 1 Macc 3:28; 14:32; Polybius, *Hist.* 4.60.2).<sup>14</sup>

As Paul carefully works out his argument about Sin’s invasion of the Law in Rom 7, he explains how Sin uses the Law to deceive and ensnare humanity; Sin takes the Law as an ἀφορμή (vv. 8, 11).<sup>15</sup> This term often carries the general sense of “opportunity” or “occasion” (as in Josephus, *War* 1.30) but it also appears as a military ground of operation, as in Polybius 3.69; Philo, *Flacc.* 47; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 6.25.3; Onasander, *The General* 42.15.

<sup>12</sup> For overviews of Paul’s use of military imagery, see Victor C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature* (NovTSup 16; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 157–64; Edgar M. Krentz, “Paul, Games, and the Military,” in J. Paul Sampley, *Paul in the Greco-Roman World* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 344–83. Attention has been paid to military imagery in 2 Cor 10 (Abraham J. Malherbe, “Antisthenes and Odysseus, and Paul at War,” *HTR* 76 [1983]: 143–73; Laurie Brink, “A General’s Exhortation to His Troops: Paul’s Military Rhetoric in 2 Cor 10:1–11,” *BZ* 49 [2005]: 191–201 and 50 [2006]: 74–89; Calvin J. Roetzel, “The Language of War [2 Cor. 10:1–11] and the Language of Weakness [2 Cor. 11:21b–13:10],” *BibInt* 17 [2009]: 77–99) and in Philippians (Edgar M. Krentz, “Military Language and Metaphors in Philippians,” in *Origins and Method: Towards a New Understanding of Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Honour of John C. Hurd* [ed. Bradley H. McLean; JSNTSup 86; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993], 105–27; Timothy C. Geoffrion, *The Rhetorical Purpose and the Political and Military Character of Philippians* [Lewiston, NY: Mellen Biblical Press, 1994]). Apart from passing remarks by commentators about individual words, however, I am not aware of extended discussions of military language in Romans.

<sup>13</sup> *Tactics* 12.11; and also 5.1; 12.10; Sophocles, *Antigone* 115; Onasander, *The General* 10.2; 12.1; 19.1; 42.20–21; Josephus, *Life* 6.99; *War* 1.98. The LXX overwhelmingly employs ὄπλον in a literal sense outside of the Psalms and Proverbs (e.g., 1 Kgs 17:7; 2 Chr 32:5; 1 Macc 6:2), and see also 2 Cor 6:7; 10:4.

<sup>14</sup> Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 408 takes the reference here to have military tones (Sin is “a commanding general paying a wage to its ‘soldiers’”). Jewett, *Romans*, 425 disagrees, but see Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 185; Ulrich Wilckens, *Die Briefe an die Römer Vol. 2* (EKKNT; Zurich: Benziger, 1980), 2:40.

<sup>15</sup> Note also Gal 5:13, where Paul warns that freedom can present ἀφορμή for the working of σάρξ.

Since Paul goes on to say that Sin “tried to kill me,” the violence of the language here is clear even apart from the connotation of ἀφορμή.

Because Sin has established its entry point, its military occupation, through the Law, Paul later writes in the same chapter that there is a battle within the person and that the Law as controlled by Sin is taking the person captive ἀντιστρατεύομαι (v. 23<sup>16</sup>) rendering the human a prisoner of war αἰχμαλωτίζω (7:23).<sup>17</sup> And in 15:30, he urges the Romans to pray on behalf of his upcoming journey to Jerusalem, asking that they “share in the struggle with me,” i.e., “fight in prayer on my side” (συναγωνίζομαι).<sup>18</sup>

In the extravagant rhetoric at the end of Rom 8, Paul lists a number of situations that face believers, some of which are clearly violent (as in persecution and the sword), and then he names the powers that produce them. The list is a daunting one, including death and life and angels and powers, yet Paul proclaims, “we are ‘supervictors’ through the one who loved us.”<sup>19</sup> Through God’s love, that is, “we” are the victors in a battle (see also 12:21; 2 Macc 3:5; Josephus, *War* 1.37, 91).

These instances are all fairly obvious, but two additional terms are relevant for this discussion, although their relationship to military conflict is less immediately obvious. In 1:24, 26, and 28, Paul writes, “God handed them over,” referring to God’s delivering up of humanity into the grasp of Sin. The same verb (παράδιδωμι) appears in 4:25 and 8:32 with reference to the “handing over” of God’s son to death. And in 8:32, Paul writes that God did not “spare” (φείδομαι) the son but “handed him over.” This language of “sparing” and “handing over” appears regularly in literature referring to surrender in military contexts (e.g., see παράδιδωμι in LXX Deut 2:24; Josh 2:14; Herodotus 1.45.1; 3.13.3; *Pausanias*, 1.2.1; φείδομαι in LXX Deut 7:16; 1 Sam 15:3; Josephus, *War* 1.352; 4.82; *Ant.* 14.480; 18.359). This is not simply “giving” as it is often taken to be in English translations, but to give up, to surrender, to another power.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See also, e.g., Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.8.26; Diodorus Siculus 22.15; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.240; BDAG, s.v.; LSJ, s.v.

<sup>17</sup> See also, e.g., Luke 21:24; 4 Kgs 24:14; 1 Macc 5:13; 10:3; Tob 1:10; *Let. Aris.* 122; Josephus, *Ant.* 10.153; Diodorus Siculus 13.24; 14.37.3; Plutarch, *Mor.* 233c; Epictetus 1.28.26; BDAG, s.v.; LSJ, s.v.

<sup>18</sup> See also, e.g., *Jos. Asen.* 23:3; *T. Ash.* 23:4; Thucydides 1.143; Demosthenes 18.20, 25; Onasander, *The General* 4.1; and the discussion in Krentz, “Military Language and Metaphors,” 123.

<sup>19</sup> The translation “supervictor” is that of Jewett, *Romans*, 531.

<sup>20</sup> For further argumentation in support of this paragraph, see Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 113–23, 194–200; *idem*, “Interpreting the Death of Jesus Apocalyptically: Reconsidering Romans 8:32, in *Jesus and Paul Reconnected: Fresh Pathways into an Old Debate* (ed. Todd D. Still; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 125–45.

Gathering this terminology together, we have: weapons, grounds of operation, battle, a mercenary's pay, surrender, prisoner of war, and victor. In any other context, we would recognize this as military language, and we would assume that it is associated with violence.

B. A second cluster of statements takes us into the world of slavery. Paul opens the letter by identifying himself as a δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, and the vocabulary of slavery recurs importantly in chapter 6, where Paul lays down a principle: “you are slaves of the one you obey, either Sin or Rectification” (6:16). He then contrasts the past, when “you” were slaves of Sin, with the present, in which “you are slaves of Rectification.” Later on he identifies this slavery to Sin as slavery to fear (8:15) and goes on to say that all creation continues to be enslaved to decay (8:21). When Paul writes about redemption ἀπολύτρωσις, as he does in 3:24 and 8:23, he is also using the language of the slave system, in which people could be redeemed (i.e., purchased) out of slavery.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, when Paul speaks of “freedom,” as he does in chapters 6 and 8, its opposite is called to mind. There is no discourse of freedom unless slavery (or some variation) is a possibility (and see also Gal 5:1).

These references to slavery, freedom, and redemption do not all carry the same argumentative tone, of course. Some are quite positive, as when Paul identifies believers as “slaving” to God (12:11; 14:18; cf. “be slaves of one another,” Gal 5:13) or speaks of himself as the slave of Christ Jesus. He surely intends these statements positively, as in the comparable Old Testament references to the servants of the Lord.<sup>22</sup> And the positive connotations of being God's slaves become explicit in 8:15 when Paul shifts to the language of adoption. There he explains what being a slave in God's household looks like; it looks like being adopted into the family, becoming an heir alongside the firstborn. Yet even in these very positive assertions, there is also a sense of compulsion. Paul and those who serve as God's slaves do so because they are compelled to do so; they do not volunteer for the Lord's service. This point is consistent with 1 Cor 9:16, where Paul writes, “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel,” and with Phil 3:12, where he reports that he was seized by God.

The several passages that speak of slavery to Sin need to be heard with the full range of power—violent power—that is associated with them. In

<sup>21</sup> The word is rare, but see *Ep. Aris.* 12:3; Josephus, *Ant.* 12:27; Philo, *Congr.* 110; Plutarch, *Pompey* 24.5; and the discussion in Douglas Campbell, *The Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans* 3.21–26 (JSNTSup 65; Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), 119.

<sup>22</sup> As argued by John Byron, in *Slavery Metaphors in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity: A Tradition-Historical and Exegetical Investigation* (WUNT 2/162; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). Byron seems to assume that Paul *either* draws the slavery language from his Greco-Roman context *or* from Jewish tradition, as if these are mutually exclusive options.

*Slavery and Social Death*, a wide-ranging study of slavery across cultures, Orlando Patterson argues that it is mistaken to define slavery primarily as a matter of law, and specifically as law concerning property. Instead, he contends that slavery is largely to be understood as “the permanent, violent domination of natively alienated and generally dishonored persons.”<sup>23</sup> Subsequent studies of slavery in Rome confirm this description. Keith Bradley documents the violence and fear to which slaves were subject (and note again Paul’s comment in Rom 8 that “you were enslaved to fear”).<sup>24</sup> Willem Jongman demonstrates that the city of Rome required a constant influx of slaves bodies, since ubiquitous disease and maltreatment meant that new supplies of slaves were always in need.<sup>25</sup> Jennifer Glancy’s research on slavery in early Christianity raises serious questions about whether Christian slaves and slave owners were in any way exempt from these patterns of violence and fear.<sup>26</sup> Slavery is inherently a violent business.<sup>27</sup>

We should not imagine that Paul’s first audience consisted of people who were somehow unaware of the violence of slavery. Peter Lampe’s meticulous work on the individuals Paul greets in Rom 16 shows that at least nine of the twenty-four individuals named are likely to have been of slave origin. Perhaps some of these individuals have been freed, but they nevertheless either had been slaves themselves or were the descendents of slaves.<sup>28</sup> And, even if that is not the case, slavery was ubiquitous in the first century, particularly in Rome itself.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1982). Patterson discusses violence *passim*; the quotation is on p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 113–37.

<sup>25</sup> “Slavery and the Growth of Rome. The Transformation of Italy in the Second and First Centuries BCE,” in *Rome the Cosmopolis* (ed. Catharine Edwards and Greg Woolf; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 100–122.

<sup>26</sup> *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). And see also J. Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 17–33.

<sup>27</sup> William Fitzgerald comments that “the slave, in slaveholder ideology, is the being that is beaten” (*Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 33). We need not confine our reading to historical studies to know the violence of slavery; see *The Slave Next Door: Human Trafficking and Slavery in America Today*, by Kevin Bales and Ron Soodalter, which chronicles the virtual enslavement that goes unnoticed in contemporary America (2nd ed.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 164–83.

<sup>29</sup> Jongman, “Slavery and the Growth of Rome.” On estimates of the slave population, see John Madden, “Slavery in the Roman Empire: Numbers and Origins,” *Classics Ireland* 3 (1996): 109–28.

C. Third, in addition to military language and that of slavery, Romans uses language drawn from the discourse of the state and governing powers. In 5:12–21, Paul contrasts the time of Adam with the new time inaugurated by Jesus Christ, and he does so with the language of “ruling” and “reigning.” Sin and Death are said to have ruled as kings (5:14, 17, 21). Sin even increased its power (5:20). Now, in the age inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Christ, Paul writes that Grace “superabounds” (5:20), Grace rules as a king (5:21).<sup>30</sup>

Strikingly, in 5:10, Paul declares that before Christ “we” were enemies of God, and he contrasts this with the current standing of “reconciliation.” Similarly, in 8:7, he writes that the mindset of the “flesh” (i.e., the mindset of humanity apart from Christ) is that of being God’s enemy,<sup>31</sup> and in 11:28 he characterizes part of Israel as presently “enemies” of the gospel. In his important study of Paul’s understanding of salvation, Cilliers Breytenbach has demonstrated that the language of reconciliation is drawn from the realm of diplomacy, or perhaps better, the failure of diplomacy.<sup>32</sup>

The suspicion that this language of reigning as a king, of enmity and reconciliation, carries connotations of violence seems borne out in 13:1–7. Without attempting here an explanation of that difficult passage, I simply note Paul’s warning that rulers “do not bear the sword in vain” (13:4). It seems likely that, in every place Paul and his contemporaries would know anything about, the rule of the state would have been established and maintained by violence.<sup>33</sup> Writing to the city of Rome itself, with its public depictions of military triumph, may underscore those violent associations, although it is important to remember that the audience of the

<sup>30</sup> Note also the “reign of God” in 14:17 and Gal 5:21.

<sup>31</sup> See also Gal 5:17 concerning the warfare between flesh and spirit.

<sup>32</sup> E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.* 3.9.2; 3.50.4; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.136. See the discussion in Cilliers Breytenbach, *Versöhnung: eine Studie zur paulinischen Soteriologie* (WMANT 60; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1989), 40–83; “Salvation of the Reconciled (With a Note on the Background of Paul’s Metaphor of Reconciliation),” in Breytenbach, *Grace, Reconciliation, Concord: The Death of Christ in Graeco-Roman Metaphors* (NovTSup 135; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 171–86.

<sup>33</sup> That is not to claim that Paul’s agenda is anti-empire, as has been argued by a number of scholars in recent years; see especially the collections edited by Richard A. Horsley (*Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* [Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997]; *Paul and Politics: Ekklēsia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation* [Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000]), *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* [Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2004]), and the penetrating critique of John Barclay, “Why the Roman Empire was Insignificant to Paul,” in his *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 363–87. The agents of violence Paul has in mind are of a different order, as should become clear below, although these agents make use of all human beings, not excluding officials of Rome.

letter is in Rome, but Paul himself is not there and he has not yet been there.

D. In addition to these three language clusters (warfare, slavery, state power), there are numerous brief and assorted references to destruction or violence that may be associated with one or more of these language arenas. Here I include at least: murder (1:29), temple-robbery (2:22), the shedding of blood (3:15), persecution (8:35), and the sword (8:35; 13:4).<sup>34</sup>

This “catalogue” prompts a number of questions. Much could be said about the literary and cultural traditions that influence Paul’s language. Certainly military images appear in a range of Greco-Roman philosophical literature, and slaves also figure prominently in the literary imagination.<sup>35</sup> It may also be that the Divine Warrior tradition is at work here. At least for the purposes of this paper, however, I want to set aside the question of influence in favor of the important questions of what work this language is doing, especially what it may reveal about Paul’s understanding of the world and God’s dealings with it.

### 3. *Cosmic Conflict in Romans*

A. Agents of violence. Who are the actors, the perpetrators, in this rhetoric of violence? In Galatians, many of the instances of violent rhetoric refer to human actions, such as the “false brothers” who want to “enslave us” (2:4) and the wish in 5:12 that the knife might slip. There is also human violence in Romans, especially early in the letter as Paul analyzes the human situation, where the violent language involves human beings who inflict violence on one another, as in murder (1:29) or shedding blood (3:15). In most instances in Romans, however, the violence Paul depicts is not carried out by human beings, but by other figures, agents who are larger-than-human-life.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Romans 5:6–8 may also be pertinent to this discussion, given the frequency with which references to “death on behalf of” occur in accounts of battle; see Jeffrey B. Gibson, “Paul’s ‘Dying Formula’: Prolegomena to an Understanding of Its Import and Significance,” in *Celebrating Romans: Template for Pauline Theology* (ed. Sheila E. McGinn; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 20–41.

<sup>35</sup> See especially Malherbe, “Antisthenes and Odysseus”; Brink, “A General’s Exhortation”; and William Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination*.

<sup>36</sup> As rightly noted by Pfitzner, who sees this as distinguishing Paul from the tradition of moral philosophy which focuses on the internal conflict of the individual (*The Agon Motif*, 163). The debate about the character of Paul’s references to Sin and Death in Rom 5–6 goes back at least to Martin Dibelius; see the helpful survey in David Southall, *Rediscovering Righteousness in Romans: Personified dikaiosynē within Metaphoric and Narratorial Settings* (WUNT 2/240; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 96–112. On Rom 5 in particular, see de Boer,



In chapters 5 and 6, Paul names them as Sin and Sin's true partner, Death. Chapter 6 depicts Sin as both the sovereign ruler over human beings and their enslaver. It is Sin that pays its soldiers with death. Again in 7, it is Sin that uses the Law as a ground of military operation, Sin that kills, Sin that takes God's law captive so that the "I" is driven to battle with the law. The end of chapter 8 introduces another host of characters who attempt to separate human beings from God, those over whom "we" conquer. Here Sin and Death are joined by "angels" and "rulers" and "things present" and "things to come" and "powers." And then, of course in 16:20, Satan is named as the enemy who must be crushed. In other words, we have here a host of larger-than-human powers, chief among whom are the powers of Sin and Death.<sup>37</sup>

That is not to say that God is merely an on-looker to this violence perpetrated by Sin and Death. God is said to have handed humanity over, but in the gospel event God carries out a rescue operation. God liberates, God becomes the new owner, Righteousness the new ruler. God in Jesus Christ participates in conflict with these powers, a conflict that will surely end in God's triumph.

B. Humanity's Role in the Conflict. What does this identification of the agents mean about humanity? Highlighting the cosmic character of the conflict, the fact that it involves God and anti-god powers, may give the impression that this is a conflict that goes on somewhere in the heavens, one that has little to do with the lives of actual human beings. But for Paul in Romans, the conflict has to do precisely with humanity, with its creation, its confinement, and its redemption.<sup>38</sup> It is Paul's understanding of the human situation that drives him to this cosmic explanation.

With an intensity unmatched in his other letters and perhaps unmatched in the rest of Scripture,<sup>39</sup> Rom 1–8 explores the problem of Sin in human life.<sup>40</sup> And everywhere he looks, Paul finds evidence of the enslaving power of Sin. Whether he is considering the flagrant rebellion of Gen-

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*The Defeat of Death: Apocalyptic Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5* (JSNTSup 22; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), especially pp. 141–80.

<sup>37</sup> Compare Gal 4:1–10, and the enslavement carried out by the *στοιχεῖα* and the *νόμος*. One of the striking differences between Galatians and Romans lies in the preoccupation of Romans with powers of Sin and Death. *Ἀμαρτία* and related terms occur only a few times in Galatians (1:4; 2:15, 17; 3:22); *θάνατος* occurs not at all in Galatians.

<sup>38</sup> Indeed with the whole of creation, as comes to expression in 8:19–23.

<sup>39</sup> Ezekiel may offer an exception.

<sup>40</sup> This feature of the letter seems to be neglected in the scholarly discussion of the letter in the last several decades, at least in North America. See the discussion in Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul*, 125–36, 198–200.

tile idolatry or the most ardent Jew who has been gifted with God's oracles, the conclusion is the same: "No one is righteous," he writes in Rom 3, "not even one." Humanity actually is under the control of Sin and its partner Death as their slaves, as citizens of territory occupied by these ruling powers, as weapons in their hands, and thus even as enemies of God.

That terrifying summary, of course, only marks the beginning of the story. In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has defeated Sin and Death. God has reclaimed humanity through what 5:21 calls the reign of Rectification (*δικαιοσύνη*).<sup>41</sup> And those who have been called to perceive this reclamation know what God has done. They have peace with God, they are reconciled. They walk in new life. They are no longer Sin's slaves but the slaves of Rectification (that is to say, of God). They are able to present themselves as God's weapons. By contrast with their former selves, who were unable to do the right even when they wanted to, they are now capable of being addressed with imperatives.<sup>42</sup>

Two things at least must be said about this new situation. First, it is nothing less than new life (5:17–18; cf. "new creation" in Gal 6:15 and 2 Cor 5:17–19). This new life renders Christians as Christ's brothers and sisters, as heirs alongside the Son. Second, however, the new life is only just beginning. Christians are no longer slaves of Sin and Death, but neither are they immune to its power. They will indeed sin but they are not ruled by Sin. What they have is the conviction (*πίστις*) that God will not leave them on their own. And the end of Rom 8 promises that they will never again be grasped out of God's power: "nothing can separate us ..."

Humanity continues to live on the battlefield, but now transformed human beings serve as God's agents, God's weapons. Here women and men live out their confidence in God, discerning the next stages in the conflict and endeavoring to do God's will. Here it is possible for Paul to say simultaneously that humanity serves as God's slaves and that human beings are free. Genuine freedom comes into being, the freedom to serve God with praise and thanksgiving and to be in genuine fellowship with one another (cf. Gal 5:1, 13).

Against this background, the otherwise surprising claim of 16:20 begins to sound quite intelligible. The promise that the God of peace will crush

<sup>41</sup> The translation "Rectification" is that of J. Louis Martyn, in *Galatians*, 249–50. I employ the upper-case as I regard "Rectification" here as shorthand for God and God's son, to whose power human beings have been restored. On the personification of "Rectification," see David Southall, *Rediscovering Righteousness in Romans*, 113–47.

<sup>42</sup> On the newly addressable moral agent in Paul, see J. Louis Martyn, "Epilogue: An Essay in Pauline Meta-Ethics," in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment* (ed. John M.G. Barclay and Simon Gathercole; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2008), 173–83.

Satan begins to sound less like a foreign element in the letter and more like the ending of chapter 8: since “nothing will separate us,” then God will destroy Satan, whose primary role is to resist God’s initiatives. 16:20 becomes a promise that God does not leave humanity to itself, that God will indeed bring peace. And it is important to see that Paul does not say that the false teachers will be crushed; indeed, if Satan is crushed, they are delivered from Satan’s grasp.<sup>43</sup>

#### 4. *Reflections on the Rhetoric of Violence*

A. It is entirely possible to agree with my argument to this point and to conclude that it is not important, that this is a trivial feature of the letter that has little or nothing to do with the substance of Paul’s argument. Perhaps the texts I have been lifting up are no more significant than when we say, “That point was on target,” or “We are waging a war on poverty.” That question is virtually impossible to answer, of course, since we have no access to the motives of authors removed from us by two millennia. Yet it is worth noticing that other Jews in Paul’s environment produced texts that anticipated eschatological battles (as at Qumran, most notably in the War Scroll) and assumed conflicts between God and anti-God powers (as in any number of apocalyptic texts). The Gospels themselves, with their stories of conflict between Jesus and demons, offer ample evidence of belief in powers in conflict with God (and see, e.g., 1 Cor 10:20). Given the evidence in Paul’s environment, it is entirely credible to argue that Paul conceived of actual powers aligned against God.

Especially in light of the problems often produced by literalistic readings of Scripture, it is tempting to downplay Paul’s language of anti-God powers. The language can be downplayed simply by overlooking it. It can also be downplayed by identifying the relevant passages as addressed to each individual’s internal struggles. This problem has parallels elsewhere in the study of other literary works. In a fascinating essay on Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, Stewart Sutherland contrasts two approaches to understanding this masterpiece. On one reading, the novel is largely a study of the psychological make-up of the murderer, Raskolnikov, and the driving question is the motive for his crime. A second reading does not deny the psychological puzzle that attaches to the central character but refers also to the “spiritual,” “cosmic,” “metaphysical,” and “ontological” di-

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<sup>43</sup> Here I am thinking also of Rom 11:32.

mensions of the story.<sup>44</sup> The questions asked on this reading are the much larger questions of God and human life, of sin and freedom. Sutherland's essay poses the question whether it is possible to do justice to a work like *Crime and Punishment* (or Paul's letter to the Romans) without references to the larger categories.

The question remains: does doing justice to these issues mean that we regard them as "real" powers? What is their ontological status? Here the discussion is stymied by entrenched usage of the language of "literal" and "figurative" or "symbolic."<sup>45</sup> Struggling with a similar question in his study of Christian conceptions of heaven, Jeffrey Burton Russell introduces the language of "metaphorical ontology," by which he means that "ultimately reality [is] expressed through metaphor rather than overtly."<sup>46</sup> Modifying his language slightly I would contend that, when Paul writes of Sin and Death entering and enslaving, and so forth, he is engaged in ontological metaphor. Death and Sin and Rectification are more than illustrative figures of speech or vivid personifications; they are attempts to grasp in language a reality that is beyond language, attempts to convey what Paul sees as the deep captivity of human beings, their inability to free themselves. As Paul sees it, this captivity is not only that of the individual or even of the corporate human community, it is cosmic in its size and extent.

B. In addition to the question whether Paul "means" this language is the troubling question of what the language "means"—i.e., what does it do? Does such violent language itself evoke violence? These are legitimate questions, as we know that language can make things happen.<sup>47</sup> Absent significant voices to the contrary, the child who repeatedly hears that she is stupid and lazy will likely grow up to believe that she is. The question,

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<sup>44</sup> "Language and Interpretation in *Crime and Punishment*," *Philosophy and Literature* 2 (1978): 223–36.

<sup>45</sup> See the illuminating comments of Jeffrey Burton Russell in *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 7–8.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*; see also his, "Science, Religion, Metaphor, and History," in *Science, Religion, and the Human Experience* (ed. James D. Proctor; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 111–28.

<sup>47</sup> The extent to which language makes things happen is hotly contested in our own time, of course, as was evident in the chaotic public discussion this past January surrounding the shootings in Arizona by Jared Loughner. In her Nobel Lecture, Toni Morrison announces, "Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge" (*The Nobel Lecture in Literature* [New York: Knopf, 1994], 16); and see also Judith Butler, however, who contests this assumption in *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1–41.

then, is whether the violent language in Paul's letters makes violence happen, whether it gives license to human violence.<sup>48</sup>

In my judgment, the answer offered in Romans is a robust μή γένοιτο.

In the first place, the language of weapons and slavery and ruling all assumes that human beings are agents of another, whether of God or of God's enemies. The generative conflict takes place between God and God's enemies, not among human beings. Conflict among human beings is symptomatic of their enslavement to anti-god powers. In addition, 12:17–21 serves as an important caution, as Paul specifically instructs believers to behave peacefully, even with those who wish to do them harm. Evil is to be addressed by God (quoting Prov 25:21). Twisting the sword of violent rhetoric into a ploughshare, Paul admonishes “conquering evil with good.” Here Paul draws on conventional Jewish wisdom, but this is something more than a reflexive use of convention. In every letter, Paul addresses small communities that are relatively new and certainly fragile. It would have been understandable had Paul reinforced the boundaries of these communities by stigmatizing those on the outside, and yet he seldom does that. Here, where he considers how to deal with those who resist the community, he does not advocate violence, not even the verbal violence of name-calling. He argues instead that God will handle evil, that it is not for human beings to take upon themselves.

One of the problems with some interpretations of 16:17–20 is the assumption that, when Paul writes that there are evil-doers and that God will soon crush Satan, he means that the faithful will somehow defeat these false teachers, yet that is exactly *not* what he says. It is God who crushes Satan, and the consequence of that crushing is that these evil teachers are released from Satan's grasp (as noted above).<sup>49</sup>

In quite a different way, Paul's rhetoric of violence does actually do something, or at least it may. It may create an understanding that human beings are not so much in their own control as we imagine. It may prompt empathy for others when we locate our own inability alongside theirs and also see our own salvation alongside theirs. Even though this letter is un-

<sup>48</sup> Regarding this question elsewhere in Paul, see Roetzel, “The Language of War,” and Peter Lampe, “Can Words Be Violent or Do They Only Sound That Way? Second Corinthians: Verbal Warfare from Afar as a Complement to a Placid Personal Presence,” in *Paul and Rhetoric* (ed. J. Paul Sampley and Peter Lampe; New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 223–39.

<sup>49</sup> So also Peter W. Macky, “Crushing Satan Underfoot (Romans 16:20): Paul's Last Battle Story as True Myth,” *Proceedings: Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies* 13 (1993): 121–33, 126. Macky further suggests that “your feet” refers, not simply to the Romans but to the whole Christian community, the body of Christ (thus drawing a connection to 1 Cor 15:23).

sually preoccupied with insisting on God's continued calling of Israel, Paul nevertheless insists that all human beings are in the same situation. An apt summary of my point appears in 11:32: God has confined all to disobedience so that God might have mercy on all. Just as Christians read the end of Rom 8 and 1 Cor 15 at funerals by way of proclaiming that Death does not have the final victory, Paul's rhetoric of violence could empower human confidence in the face of the anti-God powers.

C. A final question concerns the expression "God of peace" in 16:20: how it is possible to call God a God of peace, given what Paul writes throughout this letter? In view of Paul's analysis of the human situation, it seems he is driven to say that only when God crushes Satan and other anti-God powers can there be peace. Stated positively, peace looks much like 15:7–13, where Paul anticipates Jew and Gentile coming together in unified praise of God and God's Christ. What creation is intended to do is to praise and glorify God together, since for Paul praise is the fundamental act of the human being.<sup>50</sup> And it can only be carried out rightly when Satan is defeated.

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<sup>50</sup> See Gaventa, "From Toxic Speech to the Redemption of Doxology in Paul's Letter to the Romans," in *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays* (ed. J. Ross Wagner, C. Kevin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 392–408; and "For the Glory of God: Theology and Experience in Paul's Letter to the Romans," in *Between Experience and Interpretation: Engaging the Writings of the New Testament* (ed. Mary F. Foskett and O. Wesley Allen, Jr.; Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), 53–65.

## PAUL THE MYSTIC

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The first and second Christian generations experienced intense charismatic and mystic activity; that is patently obvious even though scholars have paid little attention to it.<sup>1</sup> Ecstatic manifestations were more common among the first Christian communities than speculative theology. Even if his historical heritage made him the emblem of argumentative thought, Paul of Tarsus was a mystic.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A first version of this essay was presented within the framework of the research program “La mystique théorétique et théurgique dans l’Antiquité gréco-romaine” (UMR 8167 et 8584) (Theoretical and theological mysticism in Greco-Roman Antiquity) of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris, in January 2011. It is in friendship and with pleasure that I dedicate it to Martinus C. de Boer, in gratitude for his work in Pauline literature and our enjoyable collaboration during many years within the Committee of the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*.

<sup>2</sup> Among studies devoted to Pauline mysticism: Agustí Borrell, “La mística paulina,” in *Biblia i mística* (ed. Armand Puig i Tàrrrech; Barcelona: Publicacions de l’Abadia de Montserrat/Associació Bíblica de Catalunya, 2011), 159–75; François Bovon, “The Knowledge and Experience of God According to the New Testament,” in *New Testament Traditions and Apocryphal Narratives* (ed. François Bovon; Princeton Theological Monograph Series 36, Allison Park: Pickwick, 1995), 105–117; Michel Bouttier, *En Christ. Etudes d’exégèse et de théologie pauliniennes* (EHPR 54; Paris: PUF, 1962); Frederick F. Bruce, “Was Paul a Mystic?,” *RTR* 34 (1975): 66–75; Joseph Huby, *Mystiques paulinienne et johannique* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1946); Ulrich Luz, “Paul as Mystic,” in *The Holy Spirit and Christian Origins. Essays in Honor of J.D.G. Dunn* (ed. Graham Stanton; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 131–43; Ulrich Luz, “Paulus als Charismatiker und Mystiker,” in Traugott Holtz, *Exegetische und theologische Studien. Ges. Aufsätze 2* (Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 34; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2010), 75–93; Hans-Christoph Meier, *Mystik bei Paulus. Zur Phänomenologie religiöser Erfahrung im Neuen Testament* (TANZ 26; Tübingen: Francke, 1998); Romano Penna, “Problemi e natura della mística paolina,” in *L’apostolo Paolo. Studi di esegesi e teologia*, (ed. Romano Penna; Cinisello: Paoline, 1991), 630–73; Walter Rebell, *Erfüllung und Erwartung. Erfahrungen mit dem Geist im Urchristentum* (München: Kaiser, 1991); Chantal Reynier, “Mystère et mystique chez saint Paul,” *Christus* 162 (1994): 205–213; Karl Hermann Schelkle, “Im Leib oder ausser des Leibes. Paulus als Mystiker,” in *The New Testament Age. Essays in Honor of B. Reicke* (ed. William C. Weinrich; Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), vol. 2, 435–65; Albert Schweitzer, *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1930; repr. UTB 1091; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1981), see for the French translation: *La mystique de l’apôtre Paul* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1962); Eduard Schweizer, “Die ‘Mystik’ des Sterbens und Auferstehens mit Christus bei Paulus,” in *Beiträge zur Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, (ed. Eduard Schweizer; Zurich: Zwingli, 1970), 183–203; Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 34–71; Samuel Vollenweider, *Horizonte neutestamentlicher Christologie. Studien zu Paulus und zur frühchristlichen Theologie* (WUNT 144; Tübingen: Mohr

This affirmation is not new but when it was first put forward in 1930 by Albert Schweitzer in his book *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (*Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus*), it caused a scandal. Schweitzer intervened in a debate launched before him by the history of religions school, where Adolf Deissmann and Wilhelm Bousset put forward the theme of mysticism.<sup>3</sup> Deissmann was led to it through his study of the formula ἐν Χριστῷ (“in Christ”), and Bousset through his investigation of the links between Hellenistic Christianity and the mystery religions. According to them, Pauline theology is a confluence of the Palestinian Judaism of Jesus, on one hand, and the mysticism of mystery religions, which Paul introduces into the Christian structure, on the other. Thus, Paul was a mystic. Moreover, for the history of religions school, Paul accomplished the Hellenization of Christianity by incorporating into the Jewish tradition of Jesus the mysticism of mystery-rituals with their sacramental acts, a mysticism that seems to be totally absent in the Jewish culture. And so, according to Deissmann and Bousset, the apostle to the Gentiles succeeded in revitalizing the old Jewish monotheism by marrying it with an exciting new religiosity.

Albert Schweitzer reconstructs history more radically.<sup>4</sup> From his point of view, Paul does not only orchestrate the interweaving of both traditional fields, one being mysticism. The apostle is not one who borrows, he is an alchemist: he transposes Jesus’ religion, which with him passes from apocalypticism to mysticism. Under the hammer of his theological formulas, the exhilaration of the end of time would be transmuted into ethics. Let me explain. Schweitzer’s interpretation of the historical Jesus is known: in the man of Nazareth he sees a prophet haunted by the hope of changing the course of history by hastening the coming of the Kingdom on earth.<sup>5</sup>

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Siebeck, 2002), 163–92, 215–35; Alfred Wikenhauser, *Die Christismystik des Apostels Paulus* (Freiburg: Herder, 1956); Guy Williams, *The Spirit World in the Letters of Paul the Apostle. A Critical Examination of the Role of Spiritual Beings in the Authentic Pauline Epistles* (FRLANT 231; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2009). For this contribution, I take up some elements already published under the title “La mystique de l’apôtre Paul” in *Paul de Tarse: congrès de l’ACFEB* (ed. Jacques Schlosser; Lectio divina 165; Paris: Cerf, 1996), 307–329.

<sup>3</sup> Gustav Adolf Deissmann, *Die neutestamentliche Formel “in Christo Jesu”* (Marburg, Elwert, 1892); see also *Paulus. Eine kultur- und religionsgeschichtliche Skizze* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1911; 2nd ed. 1925). Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos* (FRLANT 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1913; <sup>6</sup>1967).

<sup>4</sup> On Schweitzer’s interpretation of Paul, one may consult Maurice Goguel, “La mystique paulinienne d’après Albert Schweitzer,” in *Trois études sur la pensée religieuse du christianisme primitif*, Paris, Alcan, 1931, p. 111–36; Michel Bouttier, “La mystique de l’apôtre Paul. Rétrospective et prospective,” *RHPR* 56 (1976): 54–67; Erich Grässer, *Albert Schweitzer als Theologe* (BHTh 60; Tübingen: Mohr, 1979), 176–98.

<sup>5</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1906; repr. Siebenstern-Taschenbuch 77–80; Hamburg: Sieben-



But then, how did Christianity overcome the aporia which the death of the Master and the non-realization of his apocalyptic prophecies implied? Schweitzer answers: through mysticism. Mysticism would explain that tremendous “tour de force”<sup>6</sup> with which Paul reinterprets Jesus’s theology by internalising his hope: the Kingdom will not come about as an invasion of God into history; the Kingdom is born in the believer’s innermost self.

One can appreciate the continuity demonstrated by Albert Schweitzer: the new world expected by Jesus did not fade out like a dream at the Cross; the Resurrection, vector of the new world, introduced into this world a dynamic of life and death wherein the believer who lives ἐν Χριστῷ finds himself/herself swept away. I quote Schweitzer: “The fundamental idea of Pauline mysticism is this: ‘I am in Christ; in him I know myself as a human being lifted above this physical, sinful and fleeting world, a being who already belongs to the supernatural world; in him resurrection is assured for me; in him I am a child of God.’”<sup>7</sup> Then Paul’s stroke of genius would have been this conversion of Jesus’ apocalyptic scenario into a programme of mysticism belonging to Christ, which produces in the innermost self the redemption hoped for by the man of Nazareth.

Martinus C. de Boer described this transformation as follows:

For Paul, Schweitzer observes, the hour of the eschaton was not, as in Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, about to strike; it had already struck in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. [...] This view, however, contains inherent difficulties for Paul since, judging by external appearance, it was still the natural world-age. Paul resolves these difficulties with a stroke of genius, the notion of “the mystical doctrine of dying and rising again with Christ,” an “Eschatological mysticism,” whereby the relation of Christians to the natural world-age and the angelic powers that rule in it are completely altered.<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately, the thesis’ excesses are bound to lead to the shelving of the subject because of unanimous opposition to it: included are those who reject the consequential eschatology of the historical Jesus, and also those who are indignant (with good reason) finding the Pauline debate on justification by faith degraded to a lower rank, not to speak of the anathema pronounced by dialectical theology against the very idea of a New Testament mysticism, considered as the height of religious attempts to capture

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stern-Tachenbuch Verlag, 1966). On this topic, the reader is referred to the presentation of Erich Grässer, *Albert Schweitzer als Theologe*, 38–154.

<sup>6</sup> I borrow the formula from Bouttier, “Mystique,” 58.

<sup>7</sup> Schweitzer, *Mystique*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Martinus C. de Boer, *The Defeat of Death. Apocalyptic Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5* (JSNTSup 22; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 24.

God.<sup>9</sup> In short, the thesis raises an entire theological league against it. After the doctor of Lambaréné, the subject was to disappear from exegetical debates; only to reappear tardily and painfully.<sup>10</sup>

But it became clear, with Schweitzer, that the question of Pauline mysticism was not to know if the apostle had ecstasy experiences or not, or to ask oneself whether the apostle spoke of theological “mysteries” or not. The question is to know *how the apostle to the Gentiles interprets those spiritual experiences and how he relates them to his theological argumentation*. How does he conceive the believer’s condition in the tense present between the act of justification and the hope of eschatological release?

First of all (1), my aim is to unearth the footprints of religious experience left by Paul in his writings. I will (2) clear the way by proceeding to a definition of mysticism. This will allow me (3) to see how Paul’s religious experience and the interpretation he gives for it fit into the mystic tradition—while subverting it (this is the thesis I am defending here). I will conclude (4) by noting two particularities of Pauline mysticism, which is a mysticism of Christ and not of God.

### 1. *Mysticism in Pauline Literature*

Let us make an inventory of the ecstasy capabilities the apostle Paul presents us with.

First of all, the apostle speaks in tongues. That *glossolalia* phenomenon is not specific to Christianity since it preceded it, but it was particularly appealing in the first century churches; it is an inarticulate language, the origin of which is attributed to the invasion of the divine in the person who experiences it. Whereas Paul is rather reticent about the events of his personal life, it is astonishing to hear him say: “Thanks to God, I speak in tongues more than all of you” (1 Cor 14:18). In the Church of Corinth, glossolalia was obviously regarded as the manifestation par excellence of the

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<sup>9</sup> The reply to the verdict of Karl Barth (“Mystik ist esoterischer Atheismus,” *Die kirchliche Dogmatik 1: Die Lehre vom Wort Gottes; Prolegomena zur kirchlichen Dogmatik 2* [Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag Zollikon, 1945], 352; “Le mysticisme est un athéisme larvé, ésotérique,” *Dogmatique 1/2/2* [Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1954], 111) is given by Bultmann (“Gerade das, was die Mystik zur Mystik macht, kann man nicht übernehmen, ohne den Glauben preiszugeben,” *Theologische Enzyklopädie* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984], 129). Barth reacts against the self-centredness of the religious quest, while Bultmann perceives in the quest of the mystic a dismissal of human historicity. On the denial of mysticism postulated by dialectic theology, one may consult Jean-Louis Leuba, “Mystique et théologie dialectique protestante,” in *La mystique* (ed. Jean-Marie van Cangh; Relais-Etudes 5; Paris: Desclée, 1988), 157–88.

<sup>10</sup> See n. 2 above.

Spirit of God (1 Cor 14:37): it was the “language of angels,” which was sought after by the best charisma performers (1 Cor 13:1). And now, Paul not only places himself among the recipients of this supernatural gift, but he gives thanks for the fact that he excels in this ecstatic performance.

In the second place, Paul is a *charismatic healer*. In 2 Cor 12:12, he claims to be endowed with the “signs of the apostle,” by which we are to understand them, as he clarifies it right after, as “signs, wonders and acts of power” (σημεία, τέρατα, δυναμεις [12:12b]). In New Testament terminology, these terms commonly relate to charismatic acts of healing and exorcism. With the exception of τέρατα,<sup>11</sup> they describe the healing activity of Jesus in the Gospels.<sup>12</sup> The Acts of the Apostles abundantly testify that Paul practised charismatic healing: healing (Acts 13:9–11; 14:3; 28:3–9), exorcism (Acts 13:9–11; 19:11–13), and resuscitation of the dead (Acts 20:7–12). Even if the traditional image of the apostle to the nations has not retained this feature, and even if Paul himself remains discreet on the subject, there is no reason at all to cast doubt on his thaumaturgic capabilities. In fact, he refers to it in Rom 15:18–19, when he speaks of “what Christ has done for me to lead pagans to obedience by word and action, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the spirit of God (ἐν δυνάμει σημάτων και τεράτων, ἐν δυνάμει πνεύματος θεοῦ).”

The third aspect: Paul mentions an *ecstatic experience*. The second letter to the Corinthians tells of his being taken rapture to the third heaven, the traditional location of paradise in Jewish mysticism, where he receives a revelation that remains esoteric, for he is not authorised to transmit it (12:2–6). Even if the apostle is to problematise this revelation, he casts doubt neither on its value nor on its theological status. Furthermore, the plural he uses just before it (“I will come to *the visions and the revelations* of the Lord” [2 Cor 12:1]) indicates that this rapture to the third heaven may have been the most spectacular (12:7a), but not the only ecstatic experience, that happened to him.

The fourth aspect: the *vision*. I mean his meeting with the Risen One on the Damascus road, an event described stunningly by the author of Acts (Acts 9:1–19a; 22:3–16; 26:9–18); Paul refers to it as well. That event played a fundamental role in his apostolic vocation. He speaks of it as a “revelation” (ἀποκάλυψις [Gal 1:16]) or as a visionary experience (1 Cor 9:1; 15:7), the consequence being his mandate to evangelise the nations.

<sup>11</sup> Only John 4:48 applies it to the miracles of Jesus, but in a polemic sense.

<sup>12</sup> δύναιμις: Mark 5:30; 6:2, 5, 14; Matt 11:20, 21, 23; 13:54, 58; 14:2; Luke 4:36; 5:17; 6:19; 8:46; 10:13, 19; 19:37. σημάτων: Mark 8:11; Matt 12:38–39; Luke 11:6; 23:8; John 2:11, 18, 23; 3:2; 4:48, 54; 6:2, 14, 29, 30; 7:31; 9:16; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 20:30.

I now draw the conclusion of this inventory. Contrary to the image that tradition has retained of the apostle to the nations, Paul was not just a theologian of verb and rationality.<sup>13</sup> Just like several rabbis that the Talmud mentions as having charismatic gifts or heavenly raptures,<sup>14</sup> Paul was a man endowed with unusual ecstatic capabilities—we would say clearly above the average. He speaks the “language of angels,” he heals and exorcises, he is swept to heaven and owes his missionary vocation to a vision of the Risen One. His exceptional thinking powers go hand in hand with exceptional religious experiences. Yet can we, in view of all of this, speak of Paul as a mystic believer? At this stage, it is fitting to clarify what we mean by “mysticism.”<sup>15</sup>

## 2. *Defining Mysticism*

If mysticism is defined as an “immediate consciousness of the presence of the divine,”<sup>16</sup> then Paul was certainly a mystic. However, can we define this notion more precisely? The undertaking is notoriously difficult; mysticism is in fact the experimentation of a link with the absolute, an experimentation eminently subjective, to which an external observer has no access; thus, its objectivity remains unpredictable. In my opinion, the question is not to know whether Paul considered himself as a mystic, but whether his religious experience was consistent with the identity markers of what we commonly designate under the label of “mysticism.”

It seems to me that there are four of these markers,<sup>17</sup> and I will list them briefly.

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<sup>13</sup> On the scantily resourced history of research into Pauline mysticism, see Penna, “Problemi,” 630–38; Meier, *Mystik*, 3–18; further afield, on the spiritual world of Paul: Guy Williams, *The Spirit World in the Letters of Paul the Apostle*, p. 31–55.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *b. Hag.* 14b–15b.

<sup>15</sup> One could object that to speak of mysticism in Antiquity is anachronistic, to the extent where the term does not appear before the sixteenth century and that it does become a scientific concept only from the start of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, we can apply it retrospectively in a heuristic way and retrace the evolution of Christian mysticism with John Climacus, Bernard of Clairvaux, Mathild of Magdeburg, Meister Eckart, Gregory Palamas, Francis of Assisi, etc. See Louis Bouyer, *Histoire de la spiritualité chrétienne* I (Paris: Aubier, 1966), who sees in Augustine the father of Christian mysticism.

<sup>16</sup> Liselotte Richter, “Mystik I: Begriff und Wesen,” *RGG<sup>3</sup>* 4:1237–39, 1237: Mystik “ist ein Urphänomen, bei dem in unmittelbarer Intuition das Erleben Gottes stattfindet. Sie ist die direkte Bewusstwerdung der Gegenwart des Göttlichen und ein Urphänomen von grösster Intensität und lebendigster Innerlichkeit.”

<sup>17</sup> Marguerat, “Mystique,” 311–13; Meier, *Mystik*, 18–26; Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism* 1 (London: SCM Press, 1992), 69–74.

*Firstly*, in the wake of Thomas Aquinas, mysticism is qualified as *cognitio Dei affectiva seu experimentalis* (the affective or experimental knowledge of God).<sup>18</sup> This knowledge of the divine is neither intellectual nor speculative, but based on experience. Mysticism is an immediate experience of divine transcendence.

*Secondly*, the common aim of mystic quests (be they Jewish, Christian, Hindu or Sufi-Muslim) is to overcome the abyss that separates the human from the divine, the earthly from the eternal. The mystic is haunted by the desire to *make one what is separated*, that is, being in God while respecting the immeasurable distance that separates us from God's holiness. Be it *unio, communio* or *visio*, the mystic seeks union with the divine through contemplation.

*Thirdly*, I agree with Gershom Scholem<sup>19</sup> when he points out the permanent feature among the mystic paths in various religions: mysticism appears suddenly within a given religion as a deepening of its practices. Consequently, the mystic experience can be considered as a *secondary phenomenon of internalisation of religious conscience*.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, a mystic experience is of an individual rather than a collective nature.

*Fourthly*, to the extent to which mysticism is communication with a divine absolute, that experience cannot leave the individual unchanged. The subject is *regularly altered* in the mystic experience, be it the decentralisation of the "I," its transformation or its disintegration.

To sum up, I would reframe the question "Was Paul a mystic?" thusly: does the religious experience frequently vouched for in Pauline literature correspond to these four identifiers: 1) the experience dimension, 2) the immediacy of the link to the divine, 3) the individual internalisation of religious conscience and 4) the alteration of the "I"? I will probe the three ecstatic capabilities listed earlier by applying this reading model and also questioning the specific interpretation Paul offers of the phenomenon. I will not dwell on his ability to heal because it does not correspond to the four mystic identity markers.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 2.2, q 97, art. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Gershom Scholem, *Les grands courants de la mystique juive* (Paris: Payot 1973; repr. Paris: Payot & Rivages, 1994), 22.

<sup>20</sup> Michael von Brück lists four types of relation between mysticism and mother-religion: positive dependence, negative attachment, fundamental re-interpretation of faith or break-up of the traditional frame of reference (art. "Mystik," *RGG*<sup>4</sup> 4:1653).

<sup>21</sup> On this point, see Stefan Schreiber, *Paulus als Wundertäter. Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Apostelgeschichte und den authentischen Paulusbriefen* (BZNW 79; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996).

### 3. *Paul and the Mystic Experience*

#### 3.1. *The "Language of Angels"*

We begin with glossolalia. Corinthian Christians regarded it as the "language of angels," a label Paul refers to in 1 Cor 13:1 ("Even if I spoke the language of men *and that of angels ...*").<sup>22</sup> It is used during community worship (1 Cor 14) and, in view of its inarticulate nature, requires an interpretation in an understandable format (1 Cor 14:2). This type of inspired speech, which I have said pre-existed Christianity, is attested to in the Greco-Roman world as well as in Judaism. It is part of the definition of mysticism since: a) it is the immediate result of divine intervention and b) it affects certain individuals and changes their "I." Philo of Alexandria describes it as a phenomenon in which the human spirit, the νοῦς, withdraws before the divine spirit:

For the mind (νοῦς) in us is removed on the arrival of the divine spirit, but is again reintroduced when this spirit departs. For it is not allowed that mortal cohabit with immortal. That is the reason why the sunset of reasoning, accompanied by darkness, incites ecstasy and delirium coming from God. (*Her.* 265).<sup>23</sup>

There is no doubt that in Corinth, too, this divine delirium was seen as an ascent of the inspired individual into the heavenly spheres with the divine spirit disconnecting human rationality to take its place.

A similar disconnection of the human νοῦς is confirmed in a first intervention of Paul as he declares in fact that "the one who speaks in tongues does not speak to humans, but to God" and that "under the inspiration, he/she pronounces mysterious things" (1 Cor 14:2). The language of angels therefore necessitates interpretation. For "if your tongue does not speak intelligible words," Paul goes on, "how can we understand what you say? You'll talk to the wind!" (14:4, 9). That is why the apostle, without disparaging glossolalia, ranks it second to prophecy, which itself invests the νοῦς. Paul insists: "if I pray in tongues, I am inspired, but my intelligence [my νοῦς] is sterile" (14:14). Therefore, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to welcome glossolalia in their worship as long as it is interpreted and thus serves to edify everybody; otherwise, they should abstain from it. "I desire that you

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<sup>22</sup> Hans Conzelmann regards the formula γλώσσαι τῶν αγγέλων (1 Cor 13:1) as a realistic reference to an angelic language and to glossolalia; cf. 2 Cor 12:4 (*Der erste Brief an die Korinther* [KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1969], 262 note 27). Anthony C. Thiselton is more correct: Paul "escalates to a hypothesis considered at Corinth but not necessarily endorsed by Paul, that tongues is the angelic language of heaven" (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Eerdmans/Paternoster, 2000], 1033).

<sup>23</sup> My translation.

should all speak in tongues, but I prefer you to prophesize" (14:5). So the apostle concludes. "Thanks to God, I speak in tongues more than all of you but in an assembly, I prefer to say five intelligible words to instruct the others too, than ten thousand in tongues" (14:18–19).

The apostle's criticism consists in submitting glossolalia to a finality, which is the education of the assembly. However, the latter needs the mediation of the intellect, of the νοῦς, to produce speech that can be conveyed: "I will pray through the spirit, but I will also pray through the νοῦς" (14:15). Once again, inspiration which is at the origin of glossolalia is not disqualified in any way; but that ecstatic manifestation is subjected to an overall criterion, the benefit of the community, which deposes it from the pre-eminent status where the Corinthians had placed it. In other words: glossolalia does not retain its value *per se*.

Ernst Käsemann has proposed to go further.<sup>24</sup> In Rom 8:26–27a, Paul declares that "likewise, the Spirit also comes to the aid of our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we should; but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through inexpressible groanings (στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις), and He who examines the hearts knows what the Spirit's intention is." For the exegete of Tübingen, Paul's formulation is clearly anti-enthusiastic. The key to his reading is to be found in 2 Cor 12:4, the story of the Pauline ecstasy where the apostle hears inexpressible words (ἄρρητα ῥήματα) in heaven. Assimilating both formulas, Käsemann has defended the idea that in the situation recalled in Rom 8, that of the believer immersed in a world struck by evil and who no longer knows what he ought to pray, his prayer would be taken on by the Spirit and correspond to "inexpressible groanings." The reinterpretation of glossolalia against its Corinthian status would be enormous: whereas the Corinthian charismatics consider speaking in tongues as the proof of their elevation out of earthly contingencies, the apostle would describe it as the sign of their radical, human frailty, their ἀσθενεία (Rom 8:26). The divine Spirit descends into the depths of human distress, clutch the unformulated prayer and transmute it into an intercession before God (Rom 8:27).

Unfortunately, Käsemann's reading may be suspicious. It was swept aside by Charles Cranfield, followed by the majority of commentators.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *An die Römer* (HNT 8a; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 31974), 232–33. This reading had already been defended by Origen, *Commentary on Romans* 7,2–5, and by John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle to the Romans* (PG 60,533).

<sup>25</sup> Charles E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* 1 (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1975; republ. 1985), 422–24. A few exceptions: John A. Bertone, "The Experience of Glossolalia and the Spirit's Empathy: Romans 8:26 Revisited," *Pneuma* 25 (2003): 54–65; Luz ("Paulus"), 84).

The arguments are known: a) Rom 8 does not treat the prayer of charismatics but of all believers; b) Paul does not maintain that inexpressible prayers call for a translator; c) glossolalia is essentially praise and not intercession.<sup>26</sup> Yet in his firm resolve to decree that Käsemann's interpretation "must be firmly rejected,"<sup>27</sup> Cranfield has failed to notice that Käsemann was right on one point: alongside the language of angels, Paul attributes other words to the Spirit. The latter lifts up to God what is just inarticulate groanings, coming from human distress. Therefore, the Spirit metamorphoses the inarticulate groanings of suffering humans into intercession. Then thanks to the Spirit, the inceptive prayer of humans reaches God, for "He who examines the hearts knows what the Spirit's intention is" (Rom 8:27). We perceive here a movement that is no longer ascending but descending: the Spirit immerses himself into the abyssal depths of distress in the world.

We cannot speak of an anti-enthusiast theology as Käsemann would have it; nevertheless, we note a rider for Corinthian mysticism, which will appear more clearly in the following case: the ecstatic experience.

### 3.2. *Rapture to the Third Heaven*

The only ecstatic experience Paul relates in some detail is the heavenly rapture of 2 Cor 12:2–6.

I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows—was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me. (NRSV)

The Pauline narrative implements the model of heavenly ascensions used by apocalyptic visionaries: *1 En.* 39:3–8, 52:1–57:3, 71:1–17, *2 En.* 3–23, *2 Bar.* 2–17, *Apoc. Mos.* 37, *T. Levi* 2:5–8:9. After Johanan ben Zakkai, the mysticism of the Hekhalot was to multiply them ad infinitum.<sup>28</sup> The classic motifs of spiritual journeys can be detected in Paul's text.

<sup>26</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, 422–23. See also Eduard Lohse, *Der Brief an die Römer* (KEK 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2003), 250.

<sup>27</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, 422.

<sup>28</sup> Alan F. Segal, "Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment," *ANRW* 2.23.2, 1352–88.



- dissociation from the body (“whether in the body or out of the body I do not know” [12:2–3]);
- levels in heaven (“caught up to the third heaven” [12:2]);
- drawing back from the ecstatic I (“I know a person,” says Paul of himself when he describes the ascension).

Dissociation from the body and dissociation from the “I” correspond to the fourth marker of the mystic experience: alteration of the subject.

But it so happens that at the very moment he reaches the climax of the narrative, which traditionally offers the revelation of things seen and words heard, Paul sidesteps; he mentions “the unspeakable words (ἄρρητα ῥήματα), which man is not permitted to repeat” (12:4: NRSV “things that are not to be told”). The heavenly ascension paradoxically comes up against a ban on words. The critical distance taken by Paul with respect to this mystic experience is obvious when he concludes: “On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses” (12:5). The reality of the heavenly journey is not negated and Paul would be able to show it as a performance, probably the way his opponents in Corinth did. Now, not only is the peak of the ascent not transmissible, but Paul refuses to base his identity as a believer on that experience (οὐ καυχῆσομαι [12:5]). καυχᾶσθαι, as one knows, is not a moral category (to pride oneself), but an ontological category which forms the basis of the identity of believers (to base one’s life on).

The expected peak is only postponed; it appears in the second part of the autobiographical narrative, which creates a surprise (12:7b–9).

Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. (NRSV)

We are witness here to *a perfect counter-experience of the heavenly rapture!* It does not take place in heaven but on earth, not out of the body but in the pit of the apostle’s physical existence. The metaphor of the splinter in the flesh insinuates in fact a painful physical illness, but the precise character of it actually eludes us, though it must have been known to Paul’s correspondents. Now, to the threefold prayer to remove this splinter, to move the Satanic angel who torments his flesh away, God answers. But what an answer! According to the literary genre of heavenly capture, the reader expects the coming of divine power into humans such as it is known, for

example, in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, or the theme of delight at the coming of God in the convert “invested with power and instructed in the nature of the All.” Here, it is entirely the opposite. At its peak, ecstasy firmly registers the apostle in the flesh.

God’s answer is introduced with “he said to me” (v. 9), which can be related back to words received in prayer, but also to a meditation of Scriptures through which God is speaking:<sup>29</sup> “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” The request for granting (the prayer) results in a refusal. As Christophe Senft remarked, “the non-granting was not suffered and passively sustained; it was explained and justified”; and that explanation, which certainly does not conceal the non-granting, “allowed Paul to understand it and to overcome it.”<sup>30</sup> The answer does not have the value of an aphorism. The truth is not general, but particular. “Grace” (χάρις) here is the vocation to apostleship;<sup>31</sup> in this role and the given identity, the apostle is called on to experience grace as a power, this power “is fulfilled”—that is to say that it shows all its worth, that it attains its fullness—in weakness.

The thesis that controls the passage could then be repeated (v. 9b) but by adding the motivation it was still lacking. Paul would be glorified but in his weakness, “that the power of the Christ may stand firm with me.” The verb, rare (and unique in the NT), which Paul calls upon here has a long history in the Septuagint, where it refers to the gracious presence of God who pitches his tent (ἐπισκηνώω) among his own; in this image of God making his home among believers, it is a type of presence that is offered and not acquired.<sup>32</sup> In the form of grace, the power of Christ comes to inhabit the disarmed body of Paul. And so, the author draws the conclusion on the model of the maxim: “When I am weak, then I am strong.” That did the trick. Of course, it is a question of understanding: I am strong by the strength of Christ who comes in me, says Paul. But the apostle played a

<sup>29</sup> In Paul, the verb “to say” (λέγω) frequently introduces a Scripture quotation with the formula: “the Lord has said”: 2 Cor 4:6; 6:2, 16–18; Rom 9:15, 17, 25; 10:6, 8, 11; etc.

<sup>30</sup> Christophe Senft, *Le courage de prier. La prière dans le Nouveau Testament* (Aubonne: Editions du Moulin, 1983), 65–66.

<sup>31</sup> Pierre Bonnard strongly emphasizes the concrete apostolic turn given to χάρις in “Faiblesse et puissance” (“Faiblesse et puissance du chrétien selon saint Paul,” in: *Anamnesis* (Cahier RTP 3, Lausanne: Revue de théologie et de philosophie, 1980), 161–62. Hans Dieter Betz tackles 12:7–10 from the literary form of the healing narrative; in this text, he sees a “counter-miracle” and in God’s statement (v. 9) the equivalent, although inversed, of a healing oracle; from then on, grace (χάρις) can be understood by Paul in the sense of apostolic vocation and by his opponents in the sense of capacity to perform miracles (“Eine Christus-Aretologie bei Paulus [2 Kor 12.7–10],” *ZTK* 66 [1969], 288–305, above all 300).

<sup>32</sup> Wilhelm Michaelis, “σκήνη,” *TWNT* 7:370–75; but see also 388–89.

trick on his detractors by inverting the scene of demonstration of power; the true strength of apostleship is to be sought within the insults, the constraints, the persecutions and the deadlocks that punctuate the life of a servant of Jesus Christ.

Contrary to certain commentators maintaining that Paul is ironic to excess,<sup>33</sup> I feel there is no indication that the apostle launched a lawsuit against mystic ecstasy as such. On the contrary, everything suggests that he set the glorious Christology of Corinthian charismatics in crisis. If he hid the contents of the heavenly dialogue, if he decided not to reveal its intimacy to the Corinthians, it was not to ruin the importance of the event—why would he speak of it in that case? This silence helps reveal that the coming of God in him pointed to the frailty of his body, designated as the paradoxical place where the almighty divine manifests himself. In short, it was the broken body of the apostle that had to “speak,” and a thousand ecstasies could not cut him off. Paul puts forward a mysticism of divine inhabitation within the suffering body of the witness, instead of a mysticism that would organise the exodus of the subject outside his/her body. We realize that a mysticism of suffering is emerging here.

### 3.3. *Paul's Turn-Around: the Damascus Event*

Paul saw his life changed radically on the Damascus road. I will set aside the narrative reconstruction of the event that the author of Acts relates (Acts 9, 22, 26) in order to retain only the allusions by Paul himself.<sup>34</sup> They are rare. The man of Tarsus is not one to linger at length on his life experiences. His autobiographical confidences intervene only when a theological matter is at stake and never as an authoritative argument; it has just been shown in the case of the rapture to heaven.

How does the apostle give an account of that event? On two occasions, he speaks of it as a visionary experience: “Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” (1 Cor 9:1; cf. 15:7). The vision, not of Jesus, but of Jesus the Lord (that is to say the vision of Christ in his heavenly authority), is the founding event of his apostolic vocation. He speaks of it differently

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<sup>33</sup> The most outstanding defence of this reading comes from Hans Dieter Betz, *Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition* (BHTh 45; Tübingen: Mohr, 1972), 70–100. “2 Kor 12.2–4 ist die Parodie eines Himmelfahrtsberichtes” (p. 84).

<sup>34</sup> I think Luke devotes himself to a narrative reconstruction of Paul's turn-around event based on the diffusion of the Pauline legend the apostle had already lived through (1 Cor 15:9, Gal 1:13). On the Lucan narratives, see my book: *The First Christian Historian. Writing the “Acts of the Apostles”* (SNTSMS 121; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 179–204.

in Gal 1:15–16: “When He who set me apart from the womb of my mother and called me by his grace deemed it fit to *reveal* (ἀποκαλύψαι) *in me his Son* that I may announce him among the nations ...” (Gal 1:15b–16). The discovery of Jesus as Son—in the previous passage (1 Cor 9:1), the Christological title “Lord Jesus” is equal to that of Son—that discovery is qualified as a revelation, as an “apocalypse” (ἀποκάλυψις). There is another term to evoke the ecstatic vision. But above all, let us retain the significant link between the interiority of divine revelation (“in me”) and the vocation of the mission to the pagans: the event on the Damascus road was not the result of a quest of spirituality but the unexpected impetus given to a personal theological turning point.

Now, in the following chapter of the letter to the Galatians, Paul returns to the Damascus experience by interpreting it in a way that attracts our attention:

For I, through the law, am dead (ἀπέθανον) to the law in order that I may live for God. I am crucified along with (συνεσταύρωμαι) Christ; I live but it is not longer I, it is Christ who lives in me (Gal 2:19–20a).

Keiji Nishitani, Japanese specialist in Zen Buddhism, is reported to have asked questions about these verses: “Who speaks here? Paul? But Paul no longer lives. Who then is speaking?”<sup>35</sup> This quip, which is not really one, points out the depth of the mystic process which Paul echoes: the death of the “I,” the alteration of the subject, and even more, the change of the subject. Here, a dead person speaks of his own death and designates the new subject of his life. We cannot be closer to the heart of mystic experience. But we have to pay attention to the tenses used here. The aorist ἀπέθανον (“I am dead to the Law”) refers to a unique event in the past: in Damascus for Paul, the Law lost its function as the frame of reference for his relationship with God. On the other hand, the perfect (συνεσταύρωμαι) “I am crucified along with” evokes death the effects of which extend to the present: Christ is Paul’s new subject. From now on, Paul lives by him and through him. Paul’s life has become an area open to Christ and to the Spirit. The infinite distance that separates the human from the divine has been reduced.

Up to now, I have dealt with the subversion of the mystic experience. In the case of glossolalia, Paul sees the Spirit not drawing the believer up into heavenly spheres, but immersing himself in the concreteness and the depth of human misery to transmute his/her prayer. As to heavenly rapture, the contemplation of divine power reaches its peak, as we have seen,

<sup>35</sup> I owe this reference to Vollenweider, *Horizonte*, 215.

in consenting to frailty and precariousness. Can we equally speak of subversion in the Pauline interpretation of his vocation? Is the transformation of Paul's "I" not in accordance with the mystic tradition? Most certainly, but the surprise comes from elsewhere.

The surprise appears suddenly in the "I" of Paul. For this "I" has, within the context of Gal 2, a double rhetorical function: autobiographical and paradigmatic. The apostle mentions his conversion in Damascus (the autobiographical facet); but this reminder of the past occurs in a context where the author unfolds a soteriological thesis (Gal 2:15–21). The "I" of verses 18–20 is preceded by a cascade of "we" (2:15–17). In other words, death to the Law does not constitute the experience of Paul exclusively; it is more generally speaking the signature of the Christian being. It is not exhibited as an apostolic privilege but as the paradigm of the believer's condition. The reference in verse 20 to the "Christ who loved me and gave himself for me" confirms the ideal value of this "I," which obviously does not concern the man of Tarsus exclusively.<sup>36</sup> Paul makes use of his specific experience to apply this transfer of subject to all believers.

This observation leads us onto the path, which I call, with Ulrich Luz, the "democratization" of Pauline mysticism.<sup>37</sup> I come to this in this fourth and final part of my essay.

#### 4. *A Christic Mysticism*

The formula "it is no longer I who lives, it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20a) has already enabled us to understand that Pauline mysticism is not a mysticism of God, but a mysticism of Christ. That Christological dimension of mysticism in Paul has been widely recognised since Wikenhauser.<sup>38</sup> It merges with other formulas that abound under Paul's pen around the theme "being in Christ": "do you not understand that *Jesus Christ is in you?*"

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<sup>36</sup> That ambivalence of the "I" in Gal 2:15–21 is acknowledged as much by Frederick F. Bruce: "There may also be a note of personal experience in ἐγώ ... διὰ νόμου ... Paul continues to use the first person singular as he speaks for Jewish Christians in general, but the emphatic ἐγώ (while it perhaps anticipates the ἐγώ of v 20) suggests that he knew in a special way what is meant to die to law 'through law.'" (*The Epistle to the Galatians* [NIGTC; Exeter: Paternoster, 1982], 143), as by Hans Dieter Betz, for whom "The 'I' (ἐγώ) to which Paul refers is not so much the personal 'I,' but the paradigmatic 'I,' which had occurred already in v 18." (*Galatians* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 122). Both authors admit the ambivalence, but each insisting on one of the aspects: autobiographical or paradigmatic.

<sup>37</sup> Luz, "Paulus," 88–93: "Paulinische 'Mystik' ist demokratisch und kommunitär, nicht individualistisch und elitär" (89).

<sup>38</sup> Wikenhauser, *Christusmystik*.

(2 Cor 13:5); or again: “my little children, whom I bring forth in pain again until *Christ should be formed in you*” (Gal 4:19); cf. Rom 8:10, etc. This theme of Christ inhabiting believers is obviously linked to the concept of the Church as the body of Christ, each individual being a part of it (1 Cor 12:12–31). The metaphorical designation of the Church as body serves a salvation realism for Paul: salvation with believers going through an experience to the point where their being is transformed by it into the image of their Lord. Salvation in Pauline thought is none other than *the incorporation of a new identity*, the beginning of a process of personal transformation with “Christ in you” as the actor.

#### 4.1. *Democratisation of Mysticism*

At this point it seems right to me to speak of the “democratisation” of Pauline mysticism because the inhabitation formulas I have just mentioned are typical of the *communio mystica*, where the infinite distance between the divinity and the convert is reduced for the sake of a mysterious proximity. That is the quest for uniting with the divine—uniting which is not fusion, at any rate not in Paul—, which I have mentioned as the second feature in the definition of mysticism.

Now, Paul does not reserve these inhabitation formulas for the elite of the performing charismatics; rather they characterise the condition of each believer. Incorporation into the Church-body of Christ takes place in the ritual of baptism where the catechumen (as Paul puts it) “puts on Christ” (Gal 3:27), that is to say he/she takes on a new identity, a new personal being. Baptism is not only conceived as a ritual of adherence to a social group, or as the signature identifier of individual belief, but as the beginning of the process of personal transformation through the action of the divine Spirit in oneself.

In order to explain that metamorphosis of the being, Paul goes as far as to assimilate baptism to a path of death and resurrection: “Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive for God in Jesus Christ” (Rom 6:11). The new life “in Christ,” of course, has ethical consequences: the Christian is no longer under the control of the flesh, but of the Spirit (Rom 8:3–13). Remember that duality of flesh and Spirit in Paul’s letters has nothing to do with moral categories or with a contempt for sex; the flesh (σάρξ) in Judeo-Christian anthropology refers to the human being reduced to his/her own capabilities and exposed to its frailty; the Spirit is what comes to lead and inspire his/her action. That governance of the Spirit in the believer’s person does not abduct him/her from the world, but becomes a reality in the concrete behaviour of his/her life. It is embodied in the management of the human body (1

Cor 6:12–20), in the management of feelings and the setup of one's human relationships—in short, at the most pragmatic level of life in the world.

I insist once more: Paul does not use formulas that unquestionably strike a chord with mysticism in order to describe an individual piety performance nor a state-of-the-art ecstatic experience, but rather the basic path of every believer. Receiving the divine Spirit and becoming a bearer of Christ describes the condition of every Christian. In my opinion, we witness here a spectacular extension of the mystic experience to every individual believer.

#### 4.2. *Mysticism of the Passion*

Paul's mysticism of Christ has another facet with which I will conclude my essay: I am referring to communion with Christ in suffering. We have already touched on this when dealing with the heavenly rapture of 2 Cor 12 and its outcome: acquiescence to the splinter in the flesh. On that, I spoke of a mysticism of suffering, which has nothing to do with a doleful obsession. But what is this about?

In 2 Cor 12, God's refusal to his prayer requesting to be delivered from the satanic splinter led Paul to this revelation: weakness of the body is not the negation of divine power but, on the contrary, the manifestation of that power (2 Cor 12:9). In Corinth, Paul is confronted with a theological conflict with rival preachers whose mediocrity or absence of apostolic presence betrays the weak endowment of the Spirit; according to them, Paul could not reach the required charismatic quota (2 Cor 12:11–12). The man of Tarsus replies with a paradox: the mediocrity of his body is no indication of charismatic deficiency but, on the contrary, the most reliable seal of the authenticity of his ministry. What is fuelling this paradox? It stems from Paul's thoughts on the Cross.

Here, we are at the heart of Paul's theology: Jesus's death is the ultimate revelation of the face of God. God definitely lets himself be seen in the frailty of a body hanging on the wood (1 Cor 1:18–25). The Cross forcefully strikes anyone imagining an omnipotent God and it also reveals that from then on, God will show himself in the silence of a solitary death. That is why Paul claims for himself the authenticity of this message: the frail and despicable body of the apostle is the icon of the Crucified. His alleged mediocrity becomes the very guarantee of the authenticity of his Gospel, since his life is conform to the message he proclaims (1 Cor 2:1–5). It is not only his speech, but his life, which displays the Gospel of the crucified God. This is a tremendous rhetorical reversal, in that Paul makes of what he is reproached for, the comprehensive emblem of true apostleship!

That is why Paul was able to say that he bore in his body the “stigmata of Jesus” (Gal 6:17). His sufferings are the epiphany of the Crucified. But once more: no dolefulness in what he says because a life of suffering is neither an end in itself nor the secret desire of his apostleship; it is the inevitable consequence of his testimony. Here, suffering is not endowed with any redeeming virtue at all. However, it is the inescapable face of God’s power in the world. Day by day, he says, “we are delivered to death because of Jesus in order that Jesus’s life may also be revealed in our mortal existence. Thus, *death is at work in us, but life in you.*” (2 Cor 4:11–12). Paul sees his life fashioned on the image of the suffering Christ with the sole aim that his frailty become eloquent and a bearer of life. In this way, the apostle’s difficult life becomes the condition of a witness with its outcome manifesting itself within the life of the believers’ community.

### *Conclusion*

The interpretation of the apostle’s suffering existence has led us to what I consider to be the absolute culmination of Paul’s Christic mysticism, exactly the opposite of an evasive spirituality or the dismissal of life’s burdens. In fact, the mystic categories of the divine inhabiting the human body help us come to terms with the most intimate of bodily miseries; the paradoxical fruit of ecstasy was to accept the non-granting of a nevertheless legitimate prayer. The volte-face in the life of Paul of Tarsus, with its change in the subject of the believer’s being (from “me” to Christ), has become paradigmatic of the condition of each baptised Christian.

Was Paul a mystic? Most certainly yes, like Jesus and many other figures among the first Christians: Stephen the proto-martyr (Acts 6–7), Philip the Evangelist (Acts 8), John the visionary (the Book of Revelation), etc. But his originality consisted in interpreting the mystic experience on the basis of his theology of the Cross, which implies a radical incarnation of the divine. From that theological assault position, the quest of the mystic could not escape unscathed.

Paul the apostle validates mysticism. But he subverts it.



AUFERSTEHUNG UND ENDGERICHT  
ÜBERLEGUNGEN ZU DEN PAULUSBRIEFEN  
UND ZUM JOHANNESVANGELIUM

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Paulus und das Johannesevangelium (JohEv) bieten die am stärksten durchdachten theologischen Entwürfe innerhalb des Neuen Testaments.<sup>1</sup> In ihrer Eschatologie sprechen beide vom Endgericht, in dem über alle Menschen ein endgültiges Urteil gefällt werden wird. Für Paulus als Pharisäer war diese Vorstellung von vornherein Teil seines Denkens, für den Apostel Paulus verband sie sich mit der Erwartung der (baldigen) Parusie Christi. Auch das JohEv, das in einem jüdischen Kontext entstand, macht Aussagen zum Endgericht, ohne allerdings explizit von der Parusie zu sprechen. Welche Bedeutung besitzt die Erwartung des Endgerichts für das theologische Denken des Paulus und des JohEv? Wo gibt es Übereinstimmungen, wo widersprechen sie einander möglicherweise?<sup>2</sup> Diesen Fragen soll in dem vorliegenden, Martinus C. de Boer zugeordneten Aufsatz nachgegangen werden.<sup>3</sup>

### 1. Einleitung

Die traditionelle eschatologische Vorstellung erwartet jenseits des irdischen Lebens—sei es nach dem Tod des einzelnen Menschen, sei es am

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 4. Aufl. Tübingen 1961 spricht sogar nur im Blick auf Paulus und Johannes ausdrücklich von „Theologie“.

<sup>2</sup> Die Frage, ob im JohEv direkte Berührungen mit Paulus bzw. mit den Paulusbrieffen zu erkennen sind, wird hier ausgeklammert; wenn das JohEv in Ephesus entstanden sein sollte, wäre ein direkter Zusammenhang natürlich nicht auszuschließen, aber das soll hier nicht untersucht werden. Vgl. dazu die Hinweise bei Michael Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes. Kapitel 1–12*, RNT, Regensburg 2009, 75–76. (mit negativem Ergebnis).

<sup>3</sup> Es sei der persönliche Hinweis erlaubt, dass Martin de Boer und ich erstmals 1987 während einer Tagung in Dallas, Texas unmittelbare Gesprächspartner waren: Andreas Lindemann, „Paul in the Writings of the Apostolic Fathers“ / Martinus C. de Boer, „Comment: Which Paul?“, in: William S. Babcock (ed.), *Paul and the Legacies of Paul*, Dallas 1990, 25–45/45–54.

Ende aller Zeit, am „jüngsten Tage“<sup>4</sup>—die Auferstehung und das Gericht, in dem über ewiges Leben oder ewigen Tod des Menschen entschieden wird. Diese Erwartung kann verbunden sein mit dem Gedanken an ein ewiges Leben oder einen ewigen Tod.<sup>5</sup> Maßstab für das Gericht ist das Handeln des Menschen während seines irdischen Lebens, wobei die guten und die bösen Taten gegeneinander abgewogen werden.<sup>6</sup>

Im Alten Testament und in jüdischer Literatur zur Zeit des zweiten Tempels wird Gottes richtendes Handeln oft mit dem Begriff „Tag JHWHs“ bezeichnet; dieser „Tag“ war ursprünglich innergeschichtlich gedacht, erhielt dann aber zunehmend eschatologische bzw. apokalyptische Züge.<sup>7</sup> Das Gericht als endgültige Durchsetzung von Gottes Gerechtigkeit kann sich auf das Volk Israel oder auch auf „die Völker“ beziehen, vor allem aber auf den einzelnen Menschen.<sup>8</sup> Im Neuen Testament wird vom (kommanden) „Zorn(gericht) Gottes“ gesprochen (ὀργή), was nicht selten verbunden ist mit apokalyptischen Bildern und Begriffen.<sup>9</sup> Der Vollzug des Gerichts wird, wenn auch ohne Verwendung des Begriffs ὀργή, in dem Bild in Mt 25:31–46 geschildert: Der Menschensohn bzw. der König urteilt über πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, die vor seinem Gerichtsthron stehen, danach, ob sie „dem geringsten meiner Brüder“ Gutes getan oder aber verweigert haben;

<sup>4</sup> Die Rede vom „jüngsten Tag“ (ἡ ἐσχάτη ἡμέρα) ist im Neuen Testament lediglich im JohEv belegt, der Ausdruck „jüngstes (bzw. letztes) Gericht“ begegnet im NT gar nicht.

<sup>5</sup> Die in der Erzählung Lk 16:19–31 entwickelte Vorstellung bringt das sehr anschaulich zum Ausdruck.

<sup>6</sup> Diese Vorstellung ist im Alten Ägypten belegt und hat die jüdische und von da aus auch die christliche Eschatologie beeinflusst; vgl. dazu Elke Blumenthal, „Rechtfertigung‘ im Verständnis der Alten Ägypter“, in: Kristian Kühl/Gerhard Seher (Hg.), *Rom, Recht, Religion*, Politika 5, Tübingen 2011, 523–48.

<sup>7</sup> In den frühen Texten ist ein „Endgericht“ jenseits der Geschichte nicht im Blick. Zur späteren Zeit vgl. die Übersicht bei Paul Volz, *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter nach den Quellen der rabbinischen, apokalyptischen und apokryphen Literatur*, Tübingen 2. Aufl. 1934, 272–309 (§ 39 Das Gericht); ferner Roger D. Aus, Art. „Gericht Gottes II. Judentum“, TRE 12, Berlin 1984, 466–69. Ausführlich zur Sache Nicola Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn. Zur Gerichtserwartung im Neuen Testament auf ihrem alttestamentlichen und frühjüdischen Hintergrund*, WMANT 96, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2003, 84–154, ferner Christian Stettler, *Das letzte Gericht. Studien zur Endgerichtserwartung von den Schriftpropheten bis Jesus*, WUNT 2/299, Tübingen 2011, 129–84. Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 290 weist darauf hin, dass ein ausdrücklicher Zusammenhang zwischen dem „künftigen Tag“ und der endzeitlichen Totenaufstehung nur im slavHen und in der ApkMos belegt ist, also in vergleichsweise späten Texten (vgl. aaO., 102–3 zum slavHen und 134 zur ApkMos).

<sup>8</sup> Vgl. Gerold Necker, Art. „Gericht Gottes III. Antikes Judentum“, RGG<sup>4</sup> 3, Tübingen 2000, 734–35.

<sup>9</sup> Dazu Egon Brandenburger, „Gerichtskonzeptionen im Urchristentum und ihre Voraussetzungen. Eine Problemstudie“, in: ders., *Studien zu Geschichte und Theologie des Urchristentums*, SBA 15, Stuttgart 1993, 289–338, vor allem 306–338.

dabei läßt dieses Bild keinerlei Zwischentöne zu.<sup>10</sup> Auch das in der Johannesoffenbarung beschriebene Gericht ergeht entsprechend den Taten der Menschen, die in großen himmlischen Büchern verzeichnet sind (20:11–15).<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Die Erwartung des Endgerichts in der Theologie des Paulus

Paulus spricht außer im Galater- und im Philemonbrief in allen uns erhaltenen Briefen von der Hoffnung auf die Auferstehung der Toten;<sup>12</sup> gelegentlich verbindet sich damit die Erwartung des Endgerichts.

Im *Ersten Thessalonicherbrief*, dem vermutlich ältesten uns erhaltenen Paulusbrief,<sup>13</sup> werden die Adressaten an die Anfänge der missionarischen Arbeit in Thessalonich erinnert: Sie haben sich hingewandt zu Gott, weg von den εἰδωλα, um dem lebendigen und wahren Gott zu dienen (V. 9) und seinen von den Toten auferweckten Sohn vom Himmel her zu erwarten, „der uns rettet aus der kommenden ὀργή“ (V. 10). Die Aussagen in V. 9 erinnern an eine jüdische Predigt—„der lebendige und wahrhaftige Gott“, von dem Paulus spricht, ist der Gott Israels.<sup>14</sup> Was Paulus in V. 10 sagt zur Paru-

<sup>10</sup> Brandenburger, *Das Recht des Weltenrichters. Untersuchung zu Matthäus 25,31–46*, SBS 99, Stuttgart 1980. Ferner Blumenthal, „Rechtfertigung‘ im Verständnis der Alten Ägypter,“ 544: „Auch im Endgericht des Matthäusevangeliums (25,31–46) wird nach der Lebensführung gefragt, und zwar wie in spätägyptischen Gerichtsritualen nach getanen und unterlassenen Handlungen. Für die Zulassung zum Heil zählen die guten Taten, Unterlassung bedeutet hier aber nicht, das Schlechte vermieden, sondern das Gute nicht getan zu haben. Das genügt, um unwiderruflich verdammt zu werden.“

<sup>11</sup> Vgl. dazu Akira Satake, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, KEK 16, Göttingen 2008, 395–97.

<sup>12</sup> Beim Phm ist das Fehlen dieses Themas der Kürze und dem Anlaß des Briefes geschuldet, im Gal geht es vermutlich darauf zurück, dass die Konfliktsituation in Galatien offenbar nicht die Eschatologie betrifft. Immerhin spricht Paulus in 5:21 in paränetischem Kontext vom „Erben der βασιλεία θεοῦ“, und möglicherweise enthält die Wendung καὶνή κτίσις in 6:15 auch einen eschatologischen Akzent. Paulus erwartet die Auferstehung nicht als einen unmittelbar auf das jeweilige Sterben eines Menschen folgenden Vorgang. Zu der scheinbaren Ausnahme Phil 1:23 vgl. Brandenburger, Art. „Gericht Gottes III. Neues Testament,“ TRE 12, Berlin 1984, 475.

<sup>13</sup> Vgl. aber Marlene Crüsemann, *Die pseudepigraphen Briefe an die Gemeinde in Thessaloniki. Studien zu ihrer Abfassung und zur jüdisch-christlichen Sozialgeschichte*, BWANT 191, Stuttgart 2010. Sie kommt zu dem Ergebnis, 1 Thess sei „als pseudepigrapher Brief in erster Linie als ein Beweisstück für die Wichtigkeit und den apostolischen Ursprung, als Gründungsurkunde der Gemeinde in Thessaloniki gedacht“ (285). Zu den Konsequenzen für die Frage nach dem Gerichtsverständnis s.u.

<sup>14</sup> Zu alttestamentlichen und späteren jüdischen Belegen für die Wendung θεὸς ζῶν καὶ ἀληθινός vgl. Traugott Holtz, *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher*, EKK 13, Zürich und Neukirchen-Vluyn 1986, 58. Ausführlich Christiane Zimmermann, *Die Namen des Vaters. Studien zu ausgewählten neutestamentlichen Gottesbezeichnungen vor ihrem frühjüdischen und paganen Sprachhorizont*, AJEC 69, Leiden 2007, 385–410.

sieerwartung,<sup>15</sup> zu Jesu Auferweckung und zu seinem rettendem Handeln beim Endgericht ist dagegen spezifisch „christlich“,<sup>16</sup> aber die Rede von Gott und die Rede von Christus sind in der paulinischen Theologie nicht voneinander zu trennen.<sup>17</sup> Die Aussagen in 1 Thess 1:9–10 sind kein Referat oder gar Zitat der gemeindegründenden Missionspredigt, aber doch eine knappe Zusammenfassung des in Thessalonich verkündigten εὐαγγέλιον (1:5).<sup>18</sup>

Der Gerichtsgedanke ist in 1 Thess 1:10 als selbstverständlich gegeben vorausgesetzt und braucht nicht näher erläutert zu werden. Vermutlich war er den damaligen Hörern und jetzigen Briefadressaten von Paulus vermittelt worden, wenn auch wohl nicht nur mit der knappen Wendung ὁργὴ ἐρχομένη.<sup>19</sup> Der lukanische Paulus schließt seine an „Heiden“ gerichtete Areopagrede mit dem Hinweis auf das Endgericht und auf Christus als den von Gott zu diesem Gericht bestimmten Richter (Apg 17:30–31); diese Vorstellung ist offenbar Bestandteil gerade auch der an Nichtjuden gerichteten Verkündigung,<sup>20</sup> während sie jüdischen Hörern natürlich vertraut war.<sup>21</sup> Mit der Ansage des kommenden Gerichts verbindet sich nach 1:10 die Gewißheit, es werde „für uns“ (ἡμᾶς) eine Rettung bzw.

<sup>15</sup> Paulus vermeidet in 1:10 den sonst im 1 Thess häufig verwendeten Begriff παρουσία (2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23), der sich stets auf die endzeitliche Parusie Christi bezieht und niemals im Sinn der „Ankunft“ eines Menschen gebraucht ist.

<sup>16</sup> Der Begriff „Christen“ ist für die hier in Rede stehende Zeit möglicherweise anachronistisch; aber immerhin werden die Adressaten in 1 Thess 1:1 als ἐκκλησία ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ angesprochen, d.h. sie sind eine zumindest in ihrem Selbstverständnis identifizierbare Gruppe. Wann die in Apg 11:26 erwähnte Benennung der Jesusgläubigen als Χριστιανοί zu datieren ist, läßt sich kaum sagen; folgt man der Chronologie der Apg, dann müßte sie vergleichsweise sehr früh erfolgt sein.

<sup>17</sup> Paul-Gerhard Klumbies, *Die Rede von Gott bei Paulus in ihrem zeitgeschichtlichen Kontext*, FRLANT 150, Göttingen 1992, 147: 1 Thess 1:9b–10 erweist „die exklusiv christologische Begründung der paulinischen Rede von Gott bereits für die Anfangsphase des paulinischen Wirkens in Thessalonich ... Die Rede von Gott ist vom Evangelium von Jesus Christus nicht abzulösen, sondern bezieht von diesem erst ihren Inhalt.“

<sup>18</sup> Vgl. Brandenburger, „Gericht Gottes III,“ TRE 12, 476.

<sup>19</sup> Der Brief setzt eine überwiegend oder fast ausschließlich „heidenchristliche“ Gemeinde voraus, wie 1:9 und 2:14 zeigen; die Abkehr von den εἰδῶλα zeigt dabei, dass die Adressaten offenbar nicht zu den „Gottesfürchtigen“ gehörten, die ohnehin bei Paulus niemals erwähnt werden.

<sup>20</sup> Vgl. dazu Jochen Flebbe, „Israels Gott der Auferweckung. Zur Bedeutung und zum paulinischen Charakter der Rede von Gott in der Apostelgeschichte,“ in: Daniel Marguerat (Hg.), *Reception of Paulinism in Acts. Réception du Paulinisme dans les Actes des Apôtres*, BETL 229, Leuven 2009, 101–139, hier: 120–21, der auf eine Reihe von Übereinstimmungen zwischen Apg 17:16–33 und 1 Thess 1:8–9 hinweist.

<sup>21</sup> Vgl. Günter Haufe, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Thessalonicher*, THKNT 12/1, Leipzig 1999, 29.

einen Retter geben.<sup>22</sup> „Die knappe, formelhafte Redeweise betont freilich nur das Daß, nicht das Warum solcher Rettung“, wie Günter Haufe feststellt.<sup>23</sup>

Paulus spricht vom Gericht (ὄργη) nochmals in 2:16 am Ende des in 2:13 beginnenden Gedankengangs, der sich auf die kürzliche Verfolgungssituation in Thessalonich bezieht.<sup>24</sup> Umstritten ist die Auslegung der Aussage in 2:16, dass das Gericht „über sie“, d.h. die zuvor erwähnten Ἰουδαῖοι, endgültig gekommen sei (ἔφθασεν δὲ ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς ἡ ὄργη εἰς τέλος). Nach Traugott Holtz meint ὄργη hier ebenso wie in 1:10 „das Endgericht, das die Feinde Gottes vernichtend trifft“ und das „bereits über die christusfeindlichen Juden hereingebrochen“ ist.<sup>25</sup> Nach Torsten Jantsch ist ἔφθασεν nicht „ingressiv“ zu verstehen, sondern als „gnomischer“ Aorist, „der auch dauernd gültige Aussagen oder gegenwärtige Zustände ausdrücken kann“,<sup>26</sup> ὄργη sei hier „der unbedingte Strafzorn Gottes über diejenigen, die die Verkündigung des Evangeliums an die Heiden zu verhindern suchen“.<sup>27</sup>

Die Antwort auf die Frage, wie „grundsätzlich“ die Aussage in 2:16 gemeint ist, hängt vor allem davon ab, ob man den Text als interpoliert ansieht oder ob man Paulus für den Autor hält. Sollte eine Interpolation vorliegen oder sogar der ganze Brief aus nachpaulinischer Zeit stammen, so wären die Aussagen in 2:15–16 wohl als prinzipiell antijüdische Polemik

<sup>22</sup> Vgl. Holtz, *1 Thess*, 54–62, der freilich den Begriff ὄργη, nicht näher interpretiert.

<sup>23</sup> Haufe, *1 Thess*, 30.

<sup>24</sup> Die Frage, ob in 2:14–16 eine nachpaulinische Interpolation vorliegt, ist in der Exegese vielfach kontrovers diskutiert worden. Vgl. Torsten Jantsch, „Gott alles in allem“ (1Kor 15,28). *Studien zum Gottesverständnis des Paulus im 1. Thessalonicherbrief und in der korinthischen Korrespondenz*, WMANT 129, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2011, 125–29. Er zeigt, dass der Abschnitt 2:13–15a.b „eine in sich geschlossene Einheit“ ist, insofern die Aussagen in V. 15a.b „nicht als grundsätzliche Polemik gegen das jüdische Volk als solches“ gemeint sind, „sondern als Präzisierung des von V. 14 her angedeuteten Gedankens von der Leidensgemeinschaft“ (130–31). Die urteilenden Aussagen in 2:15c.16a „gelten, indem bzw. insofern ‚die‘ Juden die von Gott bestimmte endzeitliche Evangeliumsverkündigung an die Heiden, die zu deren Heil ergehen soll, zu verhindern trachten“ (131).

<sup>25</sup> Holtz, *1 Thess*, 108.

<sup>26</sup> Jantsch, „Gott alles in allem“, 133 unter Verweis auf BDR § 333,1b. Anders Haufe, *1 Thess*, 48: Der Aorist sei in ingressivem Sinn verstehen, „die Juden sind wegen ihres Widerstandes gegen den göttlichen Heilsplan bereits dem Zorngericht verfallen, auch wenn dieser Zustand äußerlich noch nicht erkennbar und ihnen selbst noch verborgen ist“.

<sup>27</sup> Jantsch, „Gott alles in allem“, 134. Die Präpositionalwendung εἰς τέλος bedeute „endgültig“, aber nicht „bis ans Ende“, was εἰς τὸ τέλος heißen müßte. Eduard Verhoef, *De Brieven aan de Tessalonicenzen*, Kampen 1998, 129: „In 1 Tess. 2:16 wil Paulus met deze laatste woorden het definitieve, totale karakter van Gods toorn aangeven. Met de vertaling ‚definitief‘ worden de verschillende nuances van εἰς τέλος nog het beste gehonoreerd.“

zu deuten.<sup>28</sup> Liest man den Text als von Paulus selber stammend, so sind die polemisch-aggressiven Formulierungen vermutlich zum einen der beschriebenen Situation in Judäa (V. 14–15) und zum anderen den Erfahrungen geschuldet, die Paulus im Zuge seiner „Heidenmission“ gemacht hat (V. 16a); die Aussage über die „definitive“ ὄργη ist dann jedenfalls nicht prinzipiell antijüdisch gemeint.<sup>29</sup> In 2:16 wird nicht vom „Endgericht“ gesprochen, sondern ähnlich wie in Röm 1:8 vom gegenwärtig ergehenden Gericht; der Text setzt aber nicht voraus, dass sich dieses Gericht womöglich an geschichtlichen Erfahrungen ablesen läßt.<sup>30</sup>

In 1 Thess 4:13–5:11 gibt Paulus eine eingehende Darstellung der christlichen Auferstehungshoffnung, um Christen in Thessalonich, die über Verstorbene trauern, zu trösten (4:18; 5:11). Aus dem Glauben an Jesu Tod und Auferstehung leitet Paulus die Erwartung ab, Gott werde διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ an den Verstorbenen ebenso handeln (ἄξει σὺν αὐτοῖς), ohne dass zwischen denen, die zum Zeitpunkt der Parusie des κύριος leben, und den Verstorbenen getrennt würde (V. 13–14).<sup>31</sup> Das dann in V. 15–17 folgende kurze „apokalyptische“ Szenario endet mit dem Hinweis, zuerst würden die Toten „in Christus auferstehen“<sup>32</sup> und dann würden die Lebenden, zu denen sich Paulus selber rechnet, zusammen mit den Auferstandenen entrückt werden εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἄερα. Paulus setzt diese Schilderung nicht fort, sondern fügt eine abschließende Verheißung an: καὶ οὕτως πάντοτε σὺν κυρίῳ ἐσόμεθα (V. 17b). Die Konsequenz (ὥστε, V. 18) lautet, die Adressaten sollten mit dem soeben Gesagten einander trösten. Es fehlt jeder Hinweis

<sup>28</sup> Nach Crisemann, *Die pseudepigraphen Briefe*, 49–67 liegt in 2:14–16 „ein dreifach antijüdischer Text“ vor, insofern hier zum einen Elemente des paganen Antijudaismus, ferner der Vorwurf „die Juden töteten Jesus“ sowie schließlich die Folie von „den Juden“ miteinander verbunden seien. Die Rede von den Gemeinden in Judäa suggeriere, dass es Juden überhaupt nur dort gebe; es sei, ganz anders als bei Paulus selber, „eine geografische Trennung zwischen jüdischen und nichtjüdischen Menschen“ vorausgesetzt (65).

<sup>29</sup> Haufe, *1 Thess*, 48: Der Text sei „keine dogmatische antijudaistische Theorie, sondern die nahezu verzweifelte Antwort Betroffener, die leidvolle Erfahrung theologisch einzuordnen versuchen“. Die Formulierung stamme nicht von Paulus selber, sondern sie „gehört zu seinem heidenchristlichen antiochenischen Erbe, das er freilich übernimmt und mit dem er und seine Mitarbeiter sich zur Zeit des Abfassung des 1 Thess identifizieren“. Michael Wolter, *Paulus. Ein Grundriss seiner Theologie*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2011, 417 stellt allerdings fest: „Gegenüber der affektiven Pauschalität des paulinischen Verdikts muss jedes Bemühen um eine rhetorische Rationalisierung zu kurz greifen. Wo es nichts zu beschönigen gibt, gibt es nichts zu beschönigen.“

<sup>30</sup> Haufe, *1 Thess*, 49.

<sup>31</sup> Die Ausführungen sind ganz auf „Trost“ abgestellt, nicht auf „Belehrung“.

<sup>32</sup> In der Wendung οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται ist ἐν Χριστῷ wohl auf das Verb zu beziehen, nicht auf οἱ νεκροί, denn Paulus bezieht ἐν Χριστῷ immer auf die Lebenden. Das muß freilich nicht bedeuten, dass nach 4:16 alle Toten „in Christus auferstehen“ werden; die 1. Pers. Plural in V. 17 spricht vielleicht sogar eher dagegen.

auf eine künftige Herrlichkeit; dass von einem kommenden Gericht nicht die Rede ist, entspricht dem in 1:10 Gesagten: Die Adressaten brauchen sich nicht auf die ὄργη einzustellen, denn sie wissen ja von ihrer „Rettung“.

In 5:1–11 spricht Paulus dann aber doch<sup>33</sup> vom Gerichtstag. Die überraschend kommende ἡμέρα κυρίου (5:2) wird als unentrinnbares Verderben diejenigen treffen, die sich gegenwärtig auf εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια verlassen (5:3);<sup>34</sup> die Adressaten aber sind als υἱοὶ φωτός und υἱοὶ ἡμέρας auf diesen Tag vorbereitet (5:4–6), was im Bild von der Waffenrüstung weiter ausgeführt wird (5:8). In 5:9–10 erläutert Paulus das mit dem Satz, Gott habe uns nicht bestimmt εἰς ὄργην, sondern zur Bewahrung des Heils durch Jesus Christus, womit der schon in 1:10 ausgesprochene Gedanke wieder aufgenommen wird: Das Gericht kommt, aber „wir“ sind durch Christus<sup>35</sup> diesem Gericht entnommen und wir werden leben ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ.<sup>36</sup>

Paulus sagt nichts zur zeitlichen und sachlichen Beziehung zwischen der Totenerstehung und der ὄργη, weder im Blick auf die Glaubenden, noch im Blick auf „die übrigen“ (vgl. 4:13). Deutlich ist aber in 4:17a und 5:3 die „Naherwartung“, ohne dass sie besonders betont wäre. Paulus wünscht, dass Gott die Adressaten „heiligt“ und sie bewahrt ἀμέμπτως ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, aber Paulus rechnet sicher nicht mit der Möglichkeit, sie könnten bei der Parusie womöglich doch der ὄργη verfallen.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Paulus schreibt (5:1), er brauche dieses Thema nicht zu erörtern, aber das ist Rhetorik, wie die Fortsetzung zeigt.

<sup>34</sup> Hier liegt sicher eine kritische Anspielung auf die Idee der *pax Romana* vor, auch wenn die Propagandaparole *pax et securitas* literarisch und inschriftlich zur Zeit des Abfassung des 1 Thess noch nicht belegt zu sein scheint; sie könnte gleichwohl schon in der frühen Prinzipatszeit aktuell gewesen sein. Vgl. Matthias Konradt, *Gericht und Gemeinde. Eine Studie zur Bedeutung und Funktion von Gerichtsaussagen im Rahmen der paulinischen Ekklesiologie und Ethik im 1 Thess und 1 Kor*, BZNW 117, Berlin 2003, 144: Hier artikuliere sich „die positive Sicht der Zeit bei den Nicht-Christen, in der für die christliche Krisis-erwartung kein Platz ist“. Es liege kein wörtliches Zitat vor, sondern „Paulus‘ eigene bündige Formulierung der Wirklichkeitsbeurteilung der Nicht-Christen“. „Daraus läßt sich freilich nicht folgern, daß Paulus hier eine—sozialkritische—Polemik gegen die Politik Roms intendiert“ (aaO., 146).

<sup>35</sup> Vgl. Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 164: Die Endgerichtserwartung gibt „den Bezugsrahmen für die Beschreibung des Gotteshandelns“ ab: „Gott hat der Gemeinde den Tod Jesu Christi zugute kommen lassen (τοῦ ἀποθανόντος περὶ ἡμῶν) und ihr damit das Unterpfand für die Rettung am ‚Tag des Herrn‘ bereits in die Hand gegeben“.

<sup>36</sup> 5:10 nimmt 4:17b auf, 5:11 bezieht sich auf 4:18.

<sup>37</sup> Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 213 Anm. 309 sieht in 1 Thess 3:13; 5:23 Belege dafür, dass „Gerichtsmotive“ auch in solchen Parusieaussagen enthalten sind, die den „Tag“ nicht erwähnen. Vgl. aber Konradt, *Gericht und Gemeinde*, 193: Die Christen sollen bei der Parusie untadelig vor Gott erscheinen, „aber mit keinem Wort ist gesagt, daß sie danach in irgendeiner Weise beurteilt würden“.

Im *Ersten Korintherbrief* verwendet Paulus den Begriff ὄργη nicht.<sup>38</sup> Ähnlich wie in 1 Thess 1:10 spricht er in 1 Kor 1:7 vom Warten auf die Parusie,<sup>39</sup> und dazu bringt er seine Gewißheit zum Ausdruck, Christus werde die Adressaten bewahren ἕως τέλους ἀνηγγελήτους ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1:8). Nach Nicola Wendebourg zeichnet Paulus auf diese Weise „das Kommende als Gerichtsgeschehen, in dessen Verlauf erst über die endzeitliche Rettung oder Strafe entschieden wird“; damit sage er, dass es „für eine endgültige Würdigung der Gemeinde gegenwärtig noch zu früh“ ist.<sup>40</sup> Aber mit der futurischen Formulierung βεβαιώσει bringt Paulus die Gewißheit der „Befestigung“ zum Ausdruck und rechnet wohl nicht mit einem noch unentschiedenen „Ende“.<sup>41</sup>

Im Zusammenhang seiner Kritik an den aktuellen innergemeindlichen Konflikten in Korinth spricht Paulus in 3:13 von der ἡμέρα,<sup>42</sup> die „im Feuer“ ans Licht bringen wird (δηλώσει), wessen ἔργον Bestand hat und wessen ἔργον verbrennen wird. Derjenige, dessen Werk im Feuer nicht „bleibt“, wird nicht nur keinen Lohn erhalten, sondern einen Verlust erleiden (ζημιωθήσεται, V. 14–15); er selber aber, als Person, wird gerettet werden (αὐτὸς δὲ σωθήσεται)—allerdings so, als wäre er selbst „durch das Feuer“ gegangen, in dem sein „Werk“ verbrannt ist (οὕτως δὲ ὡς διὰ πυρός).<sup>43</sup> Wer dagegen den „Tempel Gottes“, also die Gemeinde (V. 16), zerstört, der wird selber, als Person, von Gott zerstört, also im Endgericht vernichtet werden (V. 17).<sup>44</sup>

In 5:1–5 verurteilt Paulus die Passivität der Gemeinde angesichts der in V. 1 beschriebenen πορνεία. Wendebourg meint, Paulus nenne mit den Anweisungen in V. 3–5 einen Weg, „wie selbst ein Sünder, der sich durch sein Vergehen gewissermaßen wieder in den Status eines ‚Heiden‘ begeben hat, der endgültigen Vernichtung entrinnen kann“; er unterscheide dabei das

<sup>38</sup> Überhaupt ist das Wort ὄργη bei Paulus nur im 1 Thess und im Röm belegt (s.u.).

<sup>39</sup> In 1 Thess 1:10 schreibt er ἀναμένειν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, nach 1 Kor 1:7 sind die Adressaten ἀπεκδεχόμενοι τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν κτλ. Sachlich scheint es keine Differenz zu geben.

<sup>40</sup> Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 174. Paulus wolle damit den korinthischen Enthusiasmus dämpfen.

<sup>41</sup> Vgl. Andreas Lindemann, *Der Erste Korintherbrief*, HNT 9/1, Tübingen 2000, 32.

<sup>42</sup> Dass ἡμέρα explizit den *Gerichtstag* meinen kann, zeigt 4:3, wo der Ausdruck ἀνθρωπίνη ἡμέρα ein menschlich-irdisches Gericht bezeichnet. Vgl. Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 190.

<sup>43</sup> Wolter, *Paulus*, 223: „Auf Grund von V, 15c ist der ‚Schaden‘, den derjenige erleidet, dessen Gemeindeaufbauwerk ‚verbrennt‘, nicht eschatologischer Heilsverlust, sondern lediglich, dass er für sein ‚Werk‘ keinen ‚Lohn‘ (V. 14) bekommt.“ V. 15a spricht freilich ausdrücklich vom „Schaden“.

<sup>44</sup> Vgl. dazu Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 188.



*vorläufige* vom *endgültigen* Gericht.<sup>45</sup> Das ist insofern aber fraglich, als der betreffende Mann selber gar nicht in den Blick kommt; vielmehr soll die Gemeinde jetzt unverzüglich handeln und den Mann dem Satan übergeben εἰς ἄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός. Das ist kaum als vorübergehende „Exkommunikation“ zu deuten, aber natürlich auch nicht im Sinne einer Todesstrafe; ob die Wendung ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῆ ἔν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου bedeutet dass der „Geist“ des betreffenden Mannes im Gericht gerettet werden wird oder ob sich das absolut gebrauchte τὸ πνεῦμα auf den Geist der Gemeinde bezieht, der nur dann bewahrt bleibt, wenn sie sich von dem Unzuchtssünder trennt, läßt sich kaum sagen.<sup>46</sup>

In 1 Kor 15 reagiert Paulus auf die von „einigen“ in Korinth vertretene These, eine Auferstehung der Toten gebe es nicht. Die betreffenden korinthischen Christen meinten offenbar, der physische Tod gehe sie nichts an und deshalb sei von einer Auferstehung der *Toten* nicht zu reden; eben diesen Gedanken weist Paulus zurück, wie Martinus C. de Boer mit Recht feststellt: „Paul reports that some in Corinth were saying that ‚there is no resurrection of the dead‘. And it is against this claim, and thus for a resurrection of the dead, that Paul argues.“<sup>47</sup> Paulus verweist zuerst auf das von ihm in Korinth gepredigte εὐαγγέλιον, das von der Auferstehung des *gestorbenen und begrabenen* Christus spricht (V. 3b–5). Im Anschluß an die dann folgende Argumentation zugunsten der Auferstehungshoffnung (V. 12–22) schildert er in V. 23–28 das endzeitliche Geschehen: Gott unterwirft die Mächte (V. 24), während Christus herrschen muß (δεῖ), bis ihm Gott alle Feinde „unter seine Füße gelegt“ hat (V. 25).<sup>48</sup> Als letzter Feind wird der Tod

<sup>45</sup> Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 192.

<sup>46</sup> Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 193; Mit 5:4–5 wird, ähnlich wie in 3:17, eingeschärft, „daß die eschatologische Gabe kein Freibrief ist. Die Gerichtsperspektive hält fest, daß der Kyrios sich nicht spotten läßt.“ Nach Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*. 1. Teilband 1Kor 1,1–6,11, EKK 7/1, Zürich und Neukirchen-Vluyn 1991, 377 muß zuerst „der positive Skopus“ herausgestellt werden. „Es geht darum, daß am Ende, in welcher Weise auch immer, das πνεῦμα dem eschatologischen Verderben entzogen wird.“ Gerettet werde am Ende das „dem Sünder ‚von Gott geschenkte Ich‘, das ‚Teil des Gottesgeistes‘ ist“, schreibt Schrage aaO., 378 unter Verweis auf Eduard Schweizer. Der Hinweis auf 1 Kor 3:15 (αὐτός σωθήσεται) trifft freilich nicht recht, denn der Mann von 1 Kor 5 wird von Paulus deutlich negativer beurteilt als derjenige, dessen ἔργον keinen Bestand hat.

<sup>47</sup> De Boer, *The Defeat of Death. Apocalyptic Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5*, JSNTSup 22, Sheffield 1988, 105.

<sup>48</sup> Jantsch, „Gott alles in allem“, 277 meint, in V. 24–26 sei durchgängig Christus das Subjekt der Aussage; der Abschnitt handele „vom königlichen Herrschen des Sohnes, und dazu gehört nach antiker Herrschaftsideologie auch, Feinde unschädlich zu machen“. De Boer, *Defeat*, 135 betont, in 1 Kor 15 werde nicht deutlich „whether the destruction of the inimical powers takes place before or after the parousia or whether the apparent lapse of time between parousia and the end is of any theological significance“.

vernichtet (V. 26) entsprechend der christologisch verstandenen Aussage von Ps 8:7 (πάντα γὰρ ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ), und dann wird sich „der Sohn“ selber dem unterwerfen, der ihm alles unterworfen hat, damit Gott sei τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν (V. 28). Gegen das Leugnen des Sterbens betont Paulus also die Macht des Todes, die bis zuletzt ungebrochen bleibt, insofern dieser erst als ἔσχατος ἐχθρὸς vernichtet werden wird.<sup>49</sup>

So erweist sich der Gedankengang in 1 Kor 15:23–28 als Ansage einer heilvollen Zukunft: Gott ist nicht der Richter, sondern er wird nach dem Sieg über alle Feinde am Ende den Tod vernichten. Das entspricht V. 21, 22, wo gesagt ist, dass in Christus „alle lebendig gemacht werden“; würden einige (oder viele) endgültig im Tode bleiben, oder gäbe es ein Gericht und danach womöglich einen „zweiten Tod“ (Apk 20:6, 14; 21:8<sup>50</sup>), so behielte der Tod auch in der Endzeit seine Macht—und eben diesen Gedanken will Paulus offenbar ausschließen.<sup>51</sup> Gottes umfassendes Gottsein („alles in allem“) bedeutet nicht die Vernichtung alles dessen, was nicht Gott ist, sondern es bedeutet die Annahme aller „in“ Gott. Der innerhalb eschatologischer Argumentation für das Endgericht vorgesehene Platz bleibt in 1 Kor 15:23–28 ebenso wie zuvor in 1 Thess 4:13–18 unbesetzt.<sup>52</sup>

Nach der in V. 35–49 folgenden bildhaft-vergleichenden Argumentation zur Frage des „Wie“ der Auferstehung sagt Paulus den Adressaten (V. 50), dass σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα die βασιλεία θεοῦ nicht „erben können“; als μυστήριον folgt die Ansage der Auferstehung der Toten und der „Verwandlung“ aller (V. 51–52). Erst wenn das geschehen ist (V. 53b–54a), wird das Schriftwort Wirk-

<sup>49</sup> Vgl. de Boer, *Defeat*, 120–26. De Boer deutet πᾶσιν in V. 28 maskulin; es liege eine *inclusio* mit V. 22b vor. „The resurrection of the dead, all shall be made alive, God’s being all things among all people,—and the eschatological destruction of the last inimical cosmological power, death“ (126). Jantsch, „Gott alles in allem“, 290–91 schließt sich weitgehend de Boer an, betont aber, dass der Sohn zwar die βασιλεία Gott übertrage, „aber er ‚löst‘ sich in der βασιλεία des Vaters nicht in nichts auf“, sondern „er kehrt an seinen Platz zur Rechten des Vaters zurück“. Davon stehe zwar nichts im Text, „doch eine subordinatianische Deutung geht ebenso über das Gesagte hinaus“ (291).

<sup>50</sup> Die Aussage in Apk 21:4 (ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται) steht scheinbar in Spannung zu den Aussagen über den „zweiten Tod“; auch vom Kontext her liegt die Annahme nahe, dass an das Ende des Sterbens gedacht ist, nicht daran, dass der Tod als Macht zugrunde geht. Zum Verständnis des Todes als *Person* s. de Boer, *Defeat*, 90–91.

<sup>51</sup> De Boer, *Defeat*, 135 bietet einen Vergleich zwischen den Aussagen in 1 Kor 15:23–28 und in Apk 20. Die Ähnlichkeiten seien erheblich, „for Paul, however, the sequence of events is compressed (or, more probably, the sequence has been extraordinarily spread out in Revelation!)“.

<sup>52</sup> Allerdings finden sich im Gedankengang von 1 Kor 15 Warnungen, die nicht abstrakt von einem über „alle“ ergehenden Endgericht sprechen, sondern in denen unmittelbar die Adressaten angesprochen sind; vgl. V. 34: ἐκνήψατε δικαίως καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε, ἀγνωσίαν γὰρ θεοῦ τινες ἔχουσιν, πρὸς ἐντροπήν ὑμῖν λαλῶ.

lichkeit werden, das triumphal den Sieg über den Tod preist (V. 54b–55).<sup>53</sup> Die auf dieses Schriftzitat folgende Feststellung (V. 56: τὸ δὲ κέντρον τοῦ θανάτου ἢ ἁμαρτία, ἢ δὲ δύναμις τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ νόμος) wendet den Blick in die Gegenwart, indem sie auf die im νόμος sich manifestierende Macht der ἁμαρτία verweist; Paulus dankt dann Gott für den durch Christus (gegenwärtig) gegebenen Sieg (V. 57). Die Schlußwendung in V. 58 macht deutlich, dass der ganze vorangegangene Gedankengang letztlich nicht der apokalyptischen „Belehrung“ diene; vielmehr spricht Paulus den Adressaten die Gewißheit zu, dass sie allenthalben wachsen ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ τοῦ κυρίου und dass sie dabei wissen dürfen, dass „eure Mühe nicht vergeblich ist im Herrn“. Ähnlich wie im 1 Thess ist die Rede von der Auferstehung der Toten also auch im 1 Kor Teil der adressatenbezogenen Paränese.

Im *Zweiten Korintherbrief*<sup>54</sup> spricht Paulus schon in 1:14 von der ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου. Er blickt in 1:12–14 auf seine persönliche Beziehung zur korinthischen Gemeinde und schreibt abschließend, dass „wir euer Stolz sind“ (καύχημα ὑμῶν) und ebenso die korinthischen Christen „unser Stolz“ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ (1:14). Am Tag des Herrn, also beim Gericht, können beide, Paulus und die Gemeinde in Korinth, auf ihre gute Beziehung verweisen.<sup>55</sup>

Im Rahmen des Gedankengangs in 4:7–5:10, in dem sich Paulus zunächst eher indirekt dem Thema „Auferstehung“ zuwendet,<sup>56</sup> steht am Ende ein Aspekt, der in den früheren Aussagen zur Auferstehung der Toten gefehlt hatte: In 5:10 spricht Paulus vom Endgericht, wobei er das Bild vom „Richterstuhl“ (βῆμα) verwendet und auf Christus bezieht. Die Aussage in V. 9 („Wir sind bemüht, ihm [sc. Christus, vgl. V. 8] wohlgefällig zu sein“) wird in V. 10 erläutert: „Wir müssen nämlich (γάρ) alle offenbar werden vor dem Richterstuhl Christi, damit ein jeder erhalte entsprechend dem, was

<sup>53</sup> Paulus zitiert aus der „Jesaja-Apokalypse“ (Jes 25:8; vgl. dazu de Boer, *Defeat*, 42–47) und aus Hos 13:14 (dazu de Boer, *Defeat*, 127–28), teilweise nach LXX. Vgl. dazu Dieter-Alex Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums. Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus*, BHTh 69, Tübingen 1986, 168–70.

<sup>54</sup> Der vorliegende 2 Kor ist m.E. das Ergebnis einer redaktionellen Zusammenstellung mehrerer Paulusbriefe; diese literarkritische Problematik kann aber im Blick auf die hier zu untersuchenden Texte außer Betracht bleiben.

<sup>55</sup> Das berührt sich mit dem zuvor in 1 Kor 1:8 Gesagten. Dass die Beziehungen tatsächlich keineswegs ungetrübt sind, geht aus 2 Kor 1:15–2:11 hervor, aber auch schon aus der vorsichtigen Bemerkung in 2 Kor 1:14a (καθὼς καὶ ἐπέγρωτε ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ μέρους). Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 182 betont, dass hier „erstmalig auch auf das Ergehen des einzelnen an jenem Tage reflektiert wird“.

<sup>56</sup> Vgl. zur Textabgrenzung und zur Auslegung Bernd Kuschnerus, *Die Gemeinde als Briefe Christi. Die kommunikative Funktion der Metapher bei Paulus am Beispiel von 2 Kor 2–5*, FRLANT 197, Göttingen 2002, 235–304.

er getan hat im leiblichen Leben—sei es Gutes, sei es Böses.“ Die betonte Wendung πάντες ἡμεῖς unterstreicht die Universalität des Gerichts,<sup>57</sup> dem auch die Glieder der Gemeinde und nicht einmal der Apostel entnommen sind. Das Gericht wird sich allein nach dem Maßstab des irdischen Handelns vollziehen, als „Gegengabe“ (κομίζειν) für das, was er oder sie διὰ τοῦ σώματος getan hat.<sup>58</sup> Paulus spricht dann aber weder von der Gabe des (ewigen) Lebens noch von einer womöglich endgültigen Verdammnis; es kommt ihm offenbar nicht auf eine *Vorstellung* vom Endgericht an, sondern er macht die Adressaten auf die eschatologische Perspektive des gegenwärtigen guten oder bösen Handelns aufmerksam (... ἃ ἔπραξεν, εἴτε ἀγαθὸν εἴτε φαῦλον). Im Unterschied zu 1 Kor 15:58 wird aber nicht aus der Zukunftsansage die Konsequenz für die Gegenwart abgeleitet, sondern es wird umgekehrt das gegenwärtige Tun in den Horizont des Gerichts gerückt.

Nachdem er von Christus als dem Richter gesprochen hat, ruft Paulus in 5:14–21 die heilschaffende Perspektive des Christusgeschehens in Erinnerung: Dieser Christus ist „für alle gestorben“ (V. 14–15), und das wird in V. 18–20 weiter expliziert unter dem Aspekt der Versöhnung (καταλλαγή). Beim Bild des βῆμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ denkt Paulus also nicht an einen „blind“ die Taten der Menschen wägenden Richter, sondern Voraussetzung für dieses Bild ist der Glaube an Christus als den *Versöhner*. Dazu zitiert Paulus in 6:2 das Heilswort aus Jes 49:8, das von Gottes Hilfe für seinen „Knecht“ am „Tag der Rettung“ spricht.<sup>59</sup> Diesen biblischen Text, der von der Vergangenheit spricht, deutet Paulus als eine Verheißung; aber dann betont er durch das zweifache ἰδοὺ νῦν, dass der angekündigte καιρὸς εὐπρόσδεκτος und also die ἡμέρα σωτηρίας bereits Gegenwart ist.<sup>60</sup> Das Syntagma ἡμέρα σωτηρίας enthält vermutlich eine Assoziation zur ἡμέρα κυρίου, aber entscheidend ist jetzt, dass durch das Stichwort σωτηρία das „Urteil“ bereits mitgeteilt und vollzogen ist.

Im *Galaterbrief* fehlen eschatologische Aussagen nahezu ganz; aber in 5:10 gibt Paulus den Adressaten einen auf die antipaulinischen Aktiven in Galatien zielenden warnenden Hinweis auf das bevorstehen-

<sup>57</sup> Thomas Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*. Teilband 1: 2Kor 1,1–7,4, EKK 8/1, Neukirchen-Vluyn und Ostfildern 2010, 304 Anm 779.

<sup>58</sup> Bultmann, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, KEK Sonderband, Göttingen 1976, 145–46.

<sup>59</sup> Jes 49:8 LXX: καιρὸν δεκτὸν ἐπήκουσά σου καὶ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ σωτηρίας [hebr. Text: עָמַרְתָּ יְיָ בְּיָמַי עֲבוֹרָתִי]. Zum Zitat vgl. Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge*, 261–63.

<sup>60</sup> Nach Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 197 ist nicht gemeint, „daß der gegenwärtige Rettungstag den künftigen Tag ‚ersetzt‘“, denn das Stichwort καιρὸς erweise den Tag der Rettung „als ‚zur Entscheidung fordernde Heilszeit‘“ (aaO. 196 im Zitat von Christian Wolff; Hervorhebung von N. Wendebourg).

de Gericht: ὁ δὲ παράσσων ὑμᾶς βασιτάσει τὸ κρίμα, ὅστις ἐὰν ᾗ.<sup>61</sup> Wenn im Anschluß an den „Lasterkatalog“ (5:19–21) gesagt wird, dass οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες die Gottesherrschaft nicht erben werden, ist natürlich das Gericht vorausgesetzt; eine entsprechende Gegenaussage folgt im Zusammenhang mit V. 22–23 nicht, weil Paulus die Erfüllung der endzeitlichen Hoffnung für die Glaubenden voraussetzt.<sup>62</sup> Auch das in Gal 6:7–9 Gesagte zielt auf das endzeitliche Gericht; Paulus schreibt hier ganz aus der Perspektive des Individuums, auch wenn einleitend die Warnung in V. 7 (μὴ πλανᾶσθε) und am Ende die Aufforderung in V. 9 (τὸ δὲ καλὸν ποιῶντες μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν, κairῶ γὰρ ἰδίῳ θερίσομεν μὴ ἐκλυόμενοι) pluralisch formuliert sind.

Im *Philippenerbrief* spricht Paulus von seiner Hoffnung, nach dem Tode σὺν Χριστῷ zu sein (1:23); der dabei anklingende Sterbewunsch wird aber sogleich korrigiert (1:24–26). Der Gedanke an die allgemeine Auferstehung der Toten und an ein jenseitig-zukünftiges Gericht klingt nicht einmal an; aber das ist kein Indiz für eine gegenüber den anderen Aussagen veränderte systematische Position,<sup>63</sup> sondern Paulus spricht von seiner Hoffnung angesichts der gegenwärtigen lebensbedrohlichen Situation.<sup>64</sup> Am „Tag Christi“, also am Gerichtstag, wird sich herausstellen, ob er „vergeblich gelaufen“ war (2:16), aber bei dieser Aussage scheint ein mögliches Scheitern und also eine „Verurteilung“ gar nicht im Blick zu sein.<sup>65</sup>

Im *Brief nach Rom* spricht Paulus in 4:17 formelhaft und in 8:11 stärker inhaltlich von der Auferstehung der Toten; ausführlich kommt das Thema in 6:1–11 zur Sprache.<sup>66</sup> Der Gerichtsgedanke klingt in V. 11 insofern an, als der Hinweis auf die immer noch drohende Macht der ἀμαρτία die Adressa-

<sup>61</sup> Vgl. François Vouga, *An die Galater*, HNT 10, Tübingen 1998, 125.

<sup>62</sup> S. dazu den Exkurs bei Vouga, *An die Galater*, 142–43.

<sup>63</sup> Das würde selbst dann gelten, wenn Phil ein „später“ Brief wäre. Aber Phil ist vermutlich in Ephesus verfaßt worden, vielleicht zwischen 1 Kor (vgl. 15:32) und 2 Kor 1:8, vielleicht im Zusammenhang der in Apg 19:23–40 geschilderten Situation (vgl. dazu Röm 16:4a). Im übrigen setzt Paulus die „Naherwartung“ voraus, wie Phil 3:20–21 zeigt.

<sup>64</sup> De Boer, *Defeat*, 187: „In this text we hear the voice of the suffering apostle (Phil 1.14) whom we may allow the undialectical understanding of physical demise as a transition to ‘being with Christ’ ... we may note two things: (1) the motif of being with Christ upon physical death is not argued as a matter of principle as is the resurrection of the dead in 1 Corinthians 15, and (2) the ‘being with Christ’ is a matter of faith and not an anthropological assertion.“

<sup>65</sup> Auch in 3:14 (κατὰ σκοπὸν διώκω εἰς τὸ βραβεῖον τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) erwägt Paulus offensichtlich nicht, dass er den Siegespreis womöglich nicht erlangen wird.

<sup>66</sup> Vgl. Christiane Zimmermann, „Leben aus dem Tod. Ein Spezifikum in der Gottesrede des Römerbriefs,“ in: Udo Schnelle (ed.), *The Letter to the Romans*, BETL 226, Leuven 2009, 503–520.

ten mahnt, ihren durch die Taufe bestätigten neuen Status gegenüber der Sünde nicht zu gefährden.<sup>67</sup>

Anders als in den früheren Briefen<sup>68</sup> macht Paulus vergleichsweise häufig die ὀργή Gottes zum Thema.<sup>69</sup> In 1:18 bezeichnet ὀργή das gegenwärtig sich vollziehende und wahrnehmbare (ἀποκαλύπτεται ... ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ) Urteil Gottes ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἀσέβειαν καὶ ἀδικίαν ἀνθρώπων—die Aussage markiert den Gegensatz zur Offenbarung der Gerechtigkeit Gottes im εὐαγγέλιον (1:16–17). Die ὀργή θεοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ergeht über jene Menschen, die die Wahrheit durch Ungerechtigkeit unterdrücken und sich weigern, Gott zu erkennen—oder, wie es in V. 21 präziser heißt: „Obwohl sie Gott erkannten, haben sie ihm nicht die Ehre gegeben, die Gott gebührt; und sie haben ihm nicht Dank gesagt, sondern sie verfielen mit ihren Gedanken dem Nichtigen, und ihr unverständiges Herz verfinsterte sich.“ Zwar wird zunächst nicht gesagt, dass diese ὀργή unmittelbar in das Endgericht führt, doch die Aussage in 1:32 über den Tod ist sicherlich eschatologisch im Sinne des „endgültigen“ Todes zu verstehen.<sup>70</sup>

In 2:1–2 folgert Paulus, dass „unentschuldig“ ist, „der du ungerechtereise andere richtest“.<sup>71</sup> Dieser Mensch werde dem κρίμα Gottes keinesfalls entkommen, wie in V. 3 in einer rhetorischen Frage konstatiert wird, und dabei zeigt die wiederum als Frage formulierte Aussage in V. 4, dass es nicht um Belehrung über den Vollzug des zukünftigen Gerichts geht, sondern um die Konsequenzen, die aus der Gerichtserwartung gegenwärtig zu ziehen sind. Dann folgt die Drohung, dass Starrsinn und fehlende Bußbereitschaft zur ὀργή führen ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ θεοῦ (V. 5). Das ist verbunden mit der weiteren Drohung (V. 6–8), Gott werde einem jeden vergelten entsprechend seinen Werken (ἀποδώσει ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ): Die einen empfangen die ζῶη

<sup>67</sup> Nach Eduard Lohse, *Der Brief an die Römer*, KEK IV, Göttingen 2003, 193 will Paulus sagen, „daß der befreiende und verpflichtende Herrschaftswechsel endgültig stattgefunden hat. Der Bruch mit der Sünde ist darum ein für allemal geschehen und kann auch nicht im geringsten relativiert werden.“ Aber der ganze Gedankengang in 6:1–11 setzt doch eine grundsätzlich vorhandene Bedrohung durch die Macht der ἀμαρτία voraus.

<sup>68</sup> Röm ist der zeitlich letzte der uns erhaltenen Paulusbrieve.

<sup>69</sup> Dass ὀργή auch im vordergründig-rechtlichen Sinn verwendet werden kann, zeigen die Aussagen in Röm 13:4, 5; ὀργή ist dort die „Antwort“ der ἐξουσία auf das Fehlverhalten der „Untertanen“ bzw. Bürger. Vgl. auch κρίμα in 13:2.

<sup>70</sup> Vgl. Dieter Zeller, *Der Brief an die Römer*, RNT, Regensburg 1985, 60: Angesichts der aufgezählten Verfehlungen kann es sich keinesfalls um die Todesstrafe handeln; „Tod“ muß also einen endzeitlichen Sinn haben: Er bedeutet das endgültige Scheitern im Gericht Gottes.“

<sup>71</sup> Paulus formuliert in 2:1, 3–5 in der Anredeform im Sing. („Du“), in V. 2 fügt er einen erläuternden „Kommentar“ in der 1. Pers. Plural ein (οἴδαμεν).

αἰώνιος, die anderen Gottes ὀργή και θυμός. Die von Paulus ausgesprochene Warnung betrifft Juden und „Griechen“ gleichermaßen, da es bei Gott keine προσωποληψία gibt (2:9–11). Die Gerichtsankündigung ist weder als Belehrung über das Endgericht gemeint noch ist sie Teil einer speziell adressatenbezogenen Paränese;<sup>72</sup> offenbar soll sie die Leser generell zur Selbstprüfung auffordern.<sup>73</sup>

In 2:12–13 spricht Paulus explizit vom Endgericht, das nach dem Maßstab des νόμος ergehen wird. Nach V. 14–15 beweisen die ἔθνη, die den νόμος nicht haben, dass ihnen τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου ins Herz geschrieben ist, was ihnen durch ihr Gewissen bestätigt werde. In V. 16 folgt die zeitliche Näherbestimmung ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὅτε κρίνει ὁ θεὸς τὰ κρυπτά τῶν ἀνθρώπων κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου διὰ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. Das bedeutet offenbar, dass sich das in V. 15 über die συνειδήσις der ἔθνη Gesagte erst am Gerichtstag zeigen wird. Aber meint Paulus das? V. 15 spricht doch von der Gegenwart,<sup>74</sup> und man sieht nicht, dass Paulus dies in V. 16 korrigieren will.<sup>75</sup> So liegt die Annahme nahe, 2:16 als nachträgliche Interpolation zu verstehen, mit der in der Tat der vorangegangene Gedanke korrigiert oder zumindest deutlich modifiziert werden soll.<sup>76</sup>

In 3:5–6 spricht Paulus vom kommenden gerechten Gericht Gottes über den κόσμος. Bei der Wendung in 4:15 (ὁ γὰρ νόμος ὀργὴν κατεργάζεται) muß man fragen, ob das gegenwärtige oder aber das endzeitliche Richten Got-

<sup>72</sup> Paulus dürfte über aktuelle Probleme in Rom nicht informiert sein, und aus Röm 2 lassen sich auch keine entsprechenden Indizien ableiten.

<sup>73</sup> Zeller, *Römerbrief*, 68 betont m.R., dass „der jeweilige Ort“ zu beachten ist, wo Paulus vom Gericht spricht. Röm 2 ordnet er so ein: „Die Missionspredigt oder die apologetische Reflexion (wie hier) bereitet Noch-nicht-Christen auf das allein Rettung bringende Evangelium vor.“ Aber die Adressaten des Röm sind ganz gewiß bereits Christen.

<sup>74</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *An die Römer*, HNT 8a, Tübingen 41980, 63 hält es für möglich, dass ἐνδείκνυται in V. 15 „futurischen Sinn“ hat. Aber für diese Annahme gibt es keinen Grund.

<sup>75</sup> Käsemann ebd. meint, V. 15 beziehe sich auf die ἔθνη, die „mit ihrer Existenz im Widerspruch ... auf einen Gerichtstag“ deuten, von dem dann V. 16 spricht. Aber in V. 14–15 wird gesagt, dass diejenigen, die den νόμος nicht haben, gleichwohl φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου tun. Ihr Gewissen signalisiert also nicht eine „Existenz im Widerspruch“, sondern es zeigt ihr Wissen über den ihnen von Gott gestellten Anspruch. Bultmann, „Glossen im Römerbrief,“ in: ders., *Exegetica. Aufsätze zur Erforschung des Neuen Testaments*, Tübingen 1967, 278–84, hier: 283 fragt zu Recht: „Welchen Sinn soll es denn haben, von einem jedermann sichtbaren Phänomen der Gegenwart zu sagen, daß es sich am Tage des Gerichtes offenbaren werde?!“

<sup>76</sup> Dafür spricht auch die Wendung κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου, die nochmals in 16:25 begegnet; 2:16 ist vermutlich ebenso wie der Nachtrag 16:25–27 sekundär (mit Bultmann ebd., der freilich auch 2:1 für interpoliert hält, was m.E. nicht der Fall ist). Anders Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 205–6. Der „Hinweis auf den eschatologischen Gerichtstag“ sei „sprachlich schroff“ angefügt, gleichwohl unverzichtbar.

tes gemeint ist oder ob beides hier eine Einheit bildet.<sup>77</sup> In 5:9 heißt es, ähnlich wie in 1 Thess 1:10, dass die Gerechtfertigten durch Christus gerettet werden ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς; in V. 10 wird, ähnlich wie in 1 Thess 4:13–14 und in 1 Kor 15, der direkte Zusammenhang zwischen der Auferweckung Jesu und der Hoffnung auf unsere Auferstehung deutlich gemacht (... σωθησόμεθα ἐν τῇ ζῳῇ αὐτοῦ). Die Verwendung der 1. Pers. Plural („wir“) zeigt, dass der auf das Christusgeschehen bezogene Glaube vorausgesetzt ist.

Im Rahmen der das konkrete Verhalten in der Gemeinde betreffenden Aussagen in Röm 12 warnt Paulus in V. 19 die Adressaten davor, sich selber Recht zu verschaffen; die Aufforderung, dies dem Gericht (Gottes) zu überlassen (δοῦτε τόπον τῇ ὀργῇ) wird mit dem Schriftwort Dtn 32:35 begründet: ἐμοὶ ἐκδίκησις, ἐγὼ ἀνταποδώσω, λέγει κύριος. Verweist Paulus damit auf das endzeitliche Gericht, oder hat er auch die Möglichkeit im Blick, Gott werde—wie und wann auch immer—bereits geschichtlich als Rächer handeln? In dem von Paulus aus dem Mose-Lied Dtn 32 zitierten Text ist jedenfalls nicht an göttliche Vergeltung in einem eschatologischen Endgericht gedacht, sondern an den bevorstehenden Sieg Gottes über die Feinde Israels (vgl. V. 36).<sup>78</sup>

In der in 13:11–12 sehr viel zurückhaltender als in den früheren Briefen formulierten „Naherwartungsaussage“<sup>79</sup> spricht Paulus ähnlich wie in 1 Thess 5:1 vom καιρός und von der zeitlichen Nähe der endzeitlichen σωτηρία; in der metaphorischen Wendung ἡ νύξ προέκοψεν, ἡ δὲ ἡμέρα ἤγγικεν bezieht sich der Begriff ἡ ἡμέρα vermutlich auf den „Tag des Herrn“, doch zielt der Satz nicht auf die (eschatologische) Zukunft, sondern darauf, dass die Christen, die Adressaten ebenso wie der Autor, für die unmittelbare Gegenwart Konsequenzen ziehen sollen (ἀποθώμεθα οὖν τὰ ἔργα τοῦ σκότους, ἐνδυσώμεθα δὲ τὰ ὄπλα τοῦ φωτός).<sup>80</sup> V. 13 bestätigt das: Die Wendung ὡς ἐν

<sup>77</sup> Vgl. Gustav Stählin, Art. ὀργή, *TWNT* 5, Stuttgart 1954, 433: Wenn Paulus vom Gericht spricht, so ist „neben dem eschatologischen Moment meist ein gegenwärtiges festzustellen ... und umgekehrt fehlt da, wo von einem gegenwärtigen Zorngeschehen die Rede ist ..., der eschatologische Gesichtspunkt nicht völlig“.

<sup>78</sup> Zur Verwendung desselben Zitats in Hebr 10:30 vgl. Erich Gräßer, *An die Hebräer*. 3. Teilband Hebr 10,19–13,25, EKK 17/3, Zürich und Neukirchen-Vluyn 1997, 51; die „Nähe des Tages“ sei im Hebr keineswegs betont. Zum Textcharakter s. Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge*, 77–78, 270.

<sup>79</sup> Schon allein die Tatsache, dass Paulus von Korinth zunächst nach Jerusalem und dann über Rom nach Spanien zu reisen beabsichtigt, spricht gegen eine allzu strikte Naherwartungsvorstellung des Apostels.

<sup>80</sup> Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 170 sieht beim Stichwort „Rettung“ „die Dimension des Gerichts unausgesprochen im Hintergrund“, es liege „die Assoziation eschatologischer Strafe ausgesprochen nahe“. Vgl. aber Lohse, *Röm*, 364: Diese Naherwartungsaussage „gründet in der Gewißheit, daß das eschatologische Geschehen schon angehoben und heilende Rettung bereits in das Leben der Glaubenden eingegriffen hat (8:24)“.



ἡμέρα εὐσχημόνως περιπατήσωμεν nimmt nicht den „Gerichtstag“ vorweg, sondern bringt das dem „Licht“ entsprechende Verhalten als Gegensatz zur Existenz in der „Finsternis“ zum Ausdruck.<sup>81</sup>

Im Zusammenhang seiner Mahnungen zur Rücksichtnahme auf den „Bruder“ hinsichtlich religiös begründeter Speise- und „Tag“-Vorschriften verwendet Paulus in 14:10 das schon in 2 Kor 5:10 gebrauchte Bild vom „Richterstuhl“: Das κρῖνειν über den „Bruder“ ist inakzeptabel, und dann folgt geradezu drohend der Hinweis, dass „wir alle“ künftig vor den Richterstuhl Gottes gestellt werden. Das wird in 14:11 durch das auch in Phil 2:10–11 verwendete Zitat von Jes 45:23 erläutert, und dann heißt es (V. 12), jeder werde „für sich selbst Gott Rechenschaft geben“ müssen.<sup>82</sup> Zweifellos beziehen sich die Aussagen auf das Endgericht, aber sie stehen im Kontext der Paränese—die Adressaten in Rom sollen gegenwärtig wissen, dass sie sich für ihr gegenwärtiges Verhalten gegenüber dem „Bruder“ im Endgericht werden verantworten müssen.<sup>83</sup> Die Frage, *wer* in diesem Endgericht das βῆμα einnimmt—Christus (so 2 Kor 5:10) oder Gott (Röm 14:10)<sup>84</sup>—ist für Paulus offensichtlich ohne wirkliche Bedeutung.<sup>85</sup>

### 3. Das Endgericht im Johannesevangelium

Als charakteristisch für die Eschatologie des JohEv gilt die Betonung der Gegenwart des Heils, oft als „präsentische“ Eschatologie bezeichnet.<sup>86</sup> Da-

<sup>81</sup> Vgl. Lohse, *Röm*, 366: Gemeint ist, „daß die Christen als Leute des Tages so zu wandeln haben, wie es sich schickt“. Die Feststellung: „In der hellenistisch-römischen Welt war die Meinung weit verbreitet, im Dunkel der Nacht sei erlaubt, was immer gefällt, da ja auch Ausschweifungen und Laster von der Hülle des Dunkels bedeckt würden“ wird durch die im Neuen Wettstein (II/1, 207–210) genannten Texte freilich so nicht gedeckt (zu Lohse ebd. Anm 15).

<sup>82</sup> Ob das Dativobjekt τῷ θεῷ zu lesen ist oder nicht, läßt sich nach dem Handschriftenbefund kaum entscheiden.

<sup>83</sup> Paulus fällt über das Verhalten ein eindeutiges Urteil: Die „Schwachen“, auf die Rücksicht zu nehmen ist, sind sachlich im Unrecht, aber ihr Schutz ist in der hier zur Diskussion stehenden Frage wichtiger als die Bestätigung des „richtigen“ Verhaltens.

<sup>84</sup> Zahlreiche Handschriften lesen in 14:10 entsprechend 2 Kor 5:10 τῷ βῆματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ, aber das ist sicher sekundäre Korrektur.

<sup>85</sup> Lohse, *Röm*, 375: „Wo Christus als der Weltenrichter genannt wird, ist stets vorausgesetzt, daß Gott ihm Würde und Vollmacht verliehen hat, so daß er in dessen Auftrag handelt.“

<sup>86</sup> Vgl. Werner Zager, Art. „Gericht Gottes IV. Neues Testament,“ RGG<sup>4</sup> 3, Tübingen 2000, 736: „Mit seiner präsentischen Eschatologie nimmt das Joh-Ev. eine Sonderstellung im NT ein: Wer an Jesus als den in die Welt gesandten präexistenten Logos glaubt, kommt nicht ins G[ericht], sondern hat bereits das ewige Leben; wer hingegen nicht glaubt, ist schon gerichtet“. Vgl. aber Jürgen Becker, *Johanneisches Christentum. Seine Geschichte und Theologie im Überblick*, Tübingen 2004, 164: Das Gericht ist für den Evangelisten „ein die

bei spricht das JohEv vergleichsweise häufig vom Gericht, meist bezeichnet mit Begriffen der Wortgruppe  $\kappa\rho\iota\nu$ -, sowie von der Auferstehung und vom ewigen Leben. Die eschatologischen Aussagen im JohEv sind in besonderer Weise mit dem umstrittenen Problem der Entstehungsgeschichte des Buches verbunden: Ist das JohEv ein literarisch einheitliches Werk, in dem sich Quellen und/oder unterschiedliche „Schichten“ nicht erkennen lassen,<sup>87</sup> oder sprechen die erkennbaren literarischen Spannungen für die Annahme mehrerer Bearbeitungen? Diese Frage wird bei der Auslegung der für unser Thema relevanten Texte zu bedenken sein.<sup>88</sup>

In 3:15 sagt Jesus, die Erhöhung des Menschensohnes<sup>89</sup> habe zum Ziel, dass  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma \delta \acute{\omicron} \pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omega}$  „ewiges Leben hat“ ( $\acute{\epsilon}\chi\chi\eta \zeta\omega\eta\nu \alpha\iota\acute{\omega}\nu\iota\omicron\nu$ ); er wiederholt diese Aussage in 3:16 mit Hinweis auf Gottes Handeln und sagt dann in 3:17, Gott habe seinen Sohn nicht „in die Welt gesandt“, damit er sie richte ( $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha \kappa\rho\iota\nu\eta \tau\acute{\omicron}\nu \kappa\acute{\omicron}\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$ ), sondern damit der  $\kappa\acute{\omicron}\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$  durch ihn gerettet werde.<sup>90</sup>  $\kappa\rho\iota\nu\epsilon\iota\nu$  bezieht sich hier nicht auf das Endgericht, sondern auf

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Welt umspannendes Geschehen. Es betrifft die Menschheit insgesamt und den Herrscher dieser Welt“, aber vor allem auch jeden einzelnen Menschen, insofern „jeder sich in unvertretbarer Individualität im Endgericht verantworten muss“ (unter Verweis auf Röm 14:10–12 und 2 Kor 5:10). „Auch geht die Eschatologie des Evangelisten keinesfalls im Präsentischen auf.“

<sup>87</sup> So etwa die Position von Hartwig Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, HNT 6, Tübingen 2005, 4, der das „Werk von Joh 1:1 bis 21:25 (!) als einen kohärenten und hoch poetischen literarischen und auktorialen Text“ interpretiert (Hervorhebungen im Orig.).

<sup>88</sup> Zur Diskussion vgl. Josef Hainz, „Zur Krisis kam ich in die Welt“ (Joh 9,39). Zur Eschatologie im Johannesevangelium,“ in: Hans-Joachim Klauck (Hg.), *Weltgericht und Weltvollendung. Zukunftsbilder im Neuen Testament*, QD 150, Freiburg 1994, 149–63. Martinus C. de Boer, *Johannine Perspectives on the Death of Jesus*, CBET 17, Kampen 1996, 47 betont m.R., dass das JohEv in seiner Endgestalt auszulegen ist: „The finished document indeed is both the starting-point and the ending-point of all exegetical efforts.“ De Boer kommt aufgrund seiner Textanalyse zu dem Ergebnis „that the Gospel of John has gone through at least four distinct (or ‚major‘) editions, each one composed by the Johannine School (or an individual member thereof)“, wobei der Redaktor auf jeder Ebene als „Evangelist“ bezeichnet werden dürfe (79). Nach Jean Zumstein, *Kreative Erinnerung. Relecture und Auslegung im Johannesevangelium*, Zürich 1999, 192–93 ist das JohEv „nicht das Werk einer einzigen Hand“; spätere Redaktion sieht er vor allem in 6:15–59, und „in bezug auf die Konzeption der Eschatologie zeigen sich in 5:21–24.25–29 unüberwindbare Spannungen“. Vgl. Theobald, *JohEv*, 70: „Der Nachtragscharakter einiger Passagen ist unübersehbar“; dazu rechnet er als „Glossen, kurze Nachträge oder Einschübe“ 5:28–29; 6:39b.40a.c.44c sowie 12:44–50. Theobald betont m.R.: „Bei einer Scheidung zwischen Evangelist und sekundärer Redaktion geht es nicht darum, das Original von verfälschenden Übermalungen zu befreien“, denn das JohEv ist uns nicht anders überliefert „als in seiner redaktionell ergänzten Form“ (74).

<sup>89</sup> Dazu de Boer, *Johannine Perspectives on the Death of Jesus*, 166; zur Forschungsdiskussion vgl. ders., „Johannine History and Johannine Theology. The Death of Jesus as the Exaltation and the Glorification of the Son of Man,“ in: Gilbert Van Belle (ed.), *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, BETL 200, Leuven 2007, 293–326

<sup>90</sup> Vgl. 8:15–16; 12:47–48.

die Gegenwart; das wird durch den Hinweis auf die gegenwärtige *κρίσις* erläutert (V. 19.20), und dem entspricht auch die Gegenaussage in V. 21.

In 5:21 spricht Jesus von Gottes (ὁ πατήρ) auferweckendem Handeln und vom entsprechenden Handeln des Sohnes;<sup>91</sup> er erläutert das mit dem Hinweis (V. 22–23), dass Gott (ὁ πατήρ) niemanden richtet, sondern dass er τὴν κρίσιν πᾶσαν um der τιμῆ willen dem Sohn übergeben hat.<sup>92</sup> Darauf folgt ein Amen-Wort (V. 24): Der Glaubende *hat* bereits das ewige Leben und kommt nicht ins Gericht,<sup>93</sup> sondern er ist hinübergegangen ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν.<sup>94</sup> Die dann folgende Aussage in V. 25 („Die Toten werden die Stimme des Gottessohnes hören und sie werden leben“) bezieht sich offenbar auf einen erst in der Zukunft liegenden Vorgang;<sup>95</sup> und wenn in V. 27 gesagt

<sup>91</sup> Von Gott (ὁ πατήρ) wird gesagt: ἐγείρει τοὺς νεκροὺς καὶ ζῶσποιεῖ, vom Sohn wird gesagt: οὕτως καὶ ὁ υἱὸς οὗς θέλει ζῶσποιεῖ.

<sup>92</sup> Vgl. dazu Jörg Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie*. Band III *Die eschatologische Verkündigung in den johanneischen Texten*, WUNT 117, Tübingen 2000, 363: Hier zeigt sich für den Evangelisten vor allem „die göttliche Würde des Sohnes, der die Werke des Vaters tut und dessen Wirksamkeit damit Gottes eigenes Werk ist“. Anders Daniel R. Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God. An Exploration into the Johannine Understanding of God*, BZNW 121, Berlin 2004, 66: „One should understand that the Evangelist here demonstrates in the light of God's self-emptying the oneness of the Father and the Son, although consciously maintaining the Son's subordination.“

<sup>93</sup> Nach Frey, *Eschatologie* III, 374 will der Evangelist nicht „eine entmythologisierende Polemik gegen die urchristliche Vorstellung von einem noch ausstehenden Gerichtsgeschehen formulieren“, sondern es werde gesagt, „daß die Glaubenden dem κρίνεσθαι bzw. der κρίσις, präzise verstanden als der eschatologischen Verwerfung, entnommen sind, während das eschatologische Todesurteil über den Nicht-Glaubenden schon jetzt festliegt (Joh 3,18b)“. „Die theoretische Frage, ob ‚es noch ein Gericht gibt‘ ... wird hier nicht aufgeworfen.“ Ähnlich schon Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, KEK II, Göttingen 1964, 111–12. (von dem sich Frey absetzen möchte): „Das Gericht ist also keine besondere Veranstaltung, die zum Kommen und Gehen des Sohnes noch hinzukommt; es ist nicht ein dramatisches kosmisches Ereignis, das noch aussteht und auf das man noch warten muß ...; wie es hinfort nur noch Gläubige und Ungläubige gibt, so auch nur noch Gerettete und Verlorene, nur solche, die das Leben haben, und solche, die im Tode sind“.

<sup>94</sup> Frey, *Eschatologie* III, 374–75 verweist auf die perfektische Wendung μεταβέβηκεν: „Wer an Jesus glaubt und von ihm das Leben empfangen hat, der ist nicht nur dem eschatologischen Todesurteil, sondern auch schon jetzt dem Machtbereich des Todes entnommen und definitiv in den Machtbereich des Lebens versetzt. Der Glaube an Christus ist damit als Rettung aus dem Todesverderben und als Auferweckungsgeschehen bezeichnet.“ Bultmann würde dies vermutlich als „entmythologisierende“ Redeweise bezeichnen.

<sup>95</sup> Der Sinn der schon in 4:23 begegnenden Wendung ἔρχεται ... καὶ νῦν ἐστὶν ist schwer zu erfassen. Vgl. J. Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie*. Band II. *Das johanneische Zeitverständnis*, WUNT 110, Tübingen 1998, 282: „Nach johanneischer Auffassung ist der wahre Gottesdienst [4:23] ebenso wie die geistliche Totenerweckung allein durch Christus und in seiner Gegenwart möglich“; er spricht von einer „temporallogischen Spannung“, die nicht „in eine einfache, undialektische Aussage“ aufzulösen sei (283). Frey, *Eschatologie* III, 380: Die Rede von der gegenwärtigen Belebung Toter bedeute nicht, „daß damit für eine noch zukünftige Auferweckung der Toten, wie sie von der Gemeinde erwartet wurde, kein Platz

wird, dass „der Vater“ dem „Sohn“ die Vollmacht gegeben hat, „Gericht zu halten, weil er der Menschensohn ist“, dann klingt darin die auf das Danielbuch zurückgehende Vorstellung an, der „Menschensohn“ werde endzeitlich richterliche Funktion ausüben.<sup>96</sup> Jesu Worte in V. 28–29 machen klar, dass die Verstorbenen (οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις) die Stimme des Richters hören und nach ihren Werken gerichtet werden—entweder εἰς ἀνάστασιν ζωῆς oder εἰς ἀνάστασιν κρίσεως. Hier ist die Auferstehung also anders als zuvor in Joh 5:24 nicht mit dem Heilsereignis identisch, sondern ein noch zu erwartendes Geschehen.<sup>97</sup> Jesus sagt dazu in V. 30, er selber verfüge gar nicht über diesen Vorgang, sondern er tue das, was dem Willen Gottes entspricht.<sup>98</sup>

Jesus sagt in 9:39 in der Erzählung von der Heilung des Blindgeborenen, er sei in die Welt gekommen εἰς κρίμα, damit die Nicht-sehenden sehen, die Sehenden aber blind werden; hier meint κρίμα nicht das (vorweggenommene) Endgericht, sondern die gegenwärtig sich vollziehende Scheidung bzw. Unterscheidung zwischen den Menschen.<sup>99</sup> In 12:31 dagegen meint κρίσις das endzeitliche Gericht, das gegenwärtig vorweggenommen wird: Mit der Ankündigung νῦν κρίσις ἐστὶν τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, νῦν ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ἐκβληθήσεται ἔξω ist die *jetzt* wirksame Vernichtung des ἄρχων ausgesagt.<sup>100</sup>

In der Ankündigung des Parakleten in 16:8 sagt Jesus, dieser werde den κόσμος „überführen“ (ἐλέγξει), und zwar περὶ ἁμαρτίας καὶ περὶ δικαιοσύνης

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mehr‘ sei“. J. Becker, den Frey hier zitiert, sieht in 5:25 einen vom Evangelisten durch die Zeitangabe „jetzt“ uminterpretierten „apokalyptische[n] Verheißungssatz urchristlicher Prophetie“, demzufolge sich das erwartete Geschehen „mit der Sendung des gekommenen Sohnes jetzt vollzieht“, und deshalb seien die futurischen Angaben in V. 28–29 nicht dem Evangelisten, sondern der „Redaktion“ zuzuweisen (J. Becker, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes. Kapitel 1–10*, ÖTK 4/1, Gütersloh und Würzburg<sup>3</sup>1991, 285).

<sup>96</sup> Nach de Boer, *Johannine Perspectives*, 103 „the Son of Man saying in 5:27b seems to be later expansion of the original discourse“.

<sup>97</sup> Thyen, *JohEv*, 317–18 hält V. 28–29 nicht nur für „unentbehrlich“, sondern die Aussage sei „theologisch insofern *notwendig* als die Sendung des Sohnes ihren Grund ja in der Liebe Gottes zum κόσμος und ihr Ziel darin besteht, daß der κόσμος durch ihn gerettet werde“. Mit dem Ausdruck „alle in den Gräbern“ sei „die gesamte geschaffene Welt“, nicht nur die Menschenwelt gemeint. Ist dieser Aspekt wirklich in 5:29 enthalten? Vgl. Ferdinand Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*. Band I. *Die Vielfalt des Neuen Testaments*, Tübingen 2002, 714, der auf die Unvereinbarkeit der Aussagen in 5:28–29 mit dem in 5:24–27 Gesagten verweist.

<sup>98</sup> Vgl. dazu Sadananda, *Johannine Exegesis*, 77–79.

<sup>99</sup> Vgl. Christian Welck, *Erzählte Zeichen. Die Wundergeschichten des Johannesevangeliums literarisch untersucht. Mit einem Ausblick auf Joh 21*, WUNT 2/69, Tübingen 1994, 182: Jesus umschreibt sein Wirken „als ein paradoxes Ereignis“, insofern „er *zum Heil* gekommen ist, eben damit aber auch zum *Unheil* dort, wo der Glaube ausbleibt“.

<sup>100</sup> De Boer, *Johannine Perspectives*, 154: „Here, of course, judgment (κρίσις) means condemnation, the condemnation of ‚the ruler of this world‘.“ Nach Frey, *Eschatologie* III, 188–89 bezieht sich 12:31 auf Jesu Kreuzigung.

καὶ περὶ κρίσεως. Das wird in V. 9–11 expliziert, wobei es ad vocem κρίσις heißt, dass der Herrscher dieser Welt bereits „gerichtet ist“ (ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου κέκριται). Diese im Perfekt formulierte Aussage ist insofern ungewöhnlich, als sie das „Endgericht“ als bereits gegenwärtig vollzogen vorwegnimmt.<sup>101</sup>

Nur in 3:36 verwendet das JohEv zur Bezeichnung des Gerichts das Wort ὀργή. Gerade hier zeigt sich die „präsentische“ Eschatologie: Der an „den Sohn“ Glaubende *hat* gegenwärtig und dauerhaft „ewiges Leben“, wer ihm den Gehorsam verweigert (ὁ δὲ ἀπειθῶν τῷ υἱῷ), wird das (ewige) Leben nicht sehen (οὐκ ὄψεται ζωὴν), sondern Gottes ὀργή *bleibt* auf ihm.<sup>102</sup> Der Ungehorsam gegenüber dem Sohn ist für sich genommen bereits Zeichen der ὀργή Gottes; diese ὀργή wird dementsprechend nicht beseitigt, sondern sie wird bleiben.<sup>103</sup>

Im JohEv wird, ungeachtet der „präsentischen“ Eschatologie, auch von der Auferstehung der Toten ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ (6:39–40, 44, 54; 11:23–24) gesprochen. Dieser „letzte Tag“ markiert „einen klar definierten Punkt—den Endpunkt—auf der Zeitlinie der Geschichte“,<sup>104</sup> aber er ist niemals mit dem Gerichtsgedanken verbunden, d.h. die künftige Auferstehung ist offenbar durchweg als Heilstat für den Menschen verstanden.

Das im Neuen Testament nur im JohEv belegte Syntagma ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ begegnet erstmals in 6:39b als Ergänzung zu den vorangegangenen Aussagen in 6:37–39a: Der aus dem Himmel gesandte Christus wird nichts „verlieren“, sondern er wird es „aufrichten am letzten Tag“ (... καὶ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸ ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ). Gleich darauf sagt Jesus in V. 40a anknüpfend an V. 38–39a: Wer den Sohn sieht und an ihn glaubt, „hat ewiges Leben“ (ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον), und dann folgt in V. 40b in nahezu wörtlicher Wiederholung

<sup>101</sup> Frey, *Eschatologie* III, 183–90 sieht eine enge Beziehung zu 12:31 (s. die vorige Anm.). Wenn Jünger Verfolgung erleiden werden, „wird nun in der Verkündigung durch den Parakleten die wahre, eschatologisch gültige Rechtslage aufgezeigt: daß der ‚Herrscher der Welt‘ schon abgeurteilt ist“ (184).

<sup>102</sup> Das Verb μένειν ist sonst, außer in 9:41, durchweg mit der Heilszusage konnotiert.

<sup>103</sup> Nach dem jetzigen Kontext spricht in 3:31–36 ebenso wie in 3:27–30 Johannes der Täufer. Frey, *Eschatologie* III, 305 verweist zu ὀργή auf die Täuferrede in Lk 3:7/Mt 3:7 Q (ὀργή μέλλουσα); es zeige sich „die johanneische Umformung der Tradition“, insofern die ὀργή nicht kommt, sondern schon da ist. Nach Becker, *JohEv* I, 187 zeigt sich in 3:35–36 „eine alte, urchristlich verhaftete Erhöhungschristologie, die einen Blick in ein altes Stadium joh Theologie gestattet ...“, jetzt aber von der KR [Kirchliche Redaktion] der Sendung Christi untergeordnet ist“. Nach Bultmann, *JohEv*, 116 gehörten 3:31–36 ursprünglich hinter 3:21. Richtig ist jedenfalls, dass 3:31–36 eher als Selbstaussagen Jesu denn als Aussagen des Täufers über Jesus zu verstehen sind.

<sup>104</sup> Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 291. Diese Aussagen haben „zu der Frage geführt, wie sich präsentische und futurische Vorstellungen im vierten Evangelium zueinander verhalten“ (aaO., 293).

von V. 39b: *καὶ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν ἐγὼ ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ*. Die Aussagen über die gegenwärtige *ζωὴ αἰώνιος* und über die endzeitliche Auferstehung stehen in Spannung zueinander.<sup>105</sup> Wenig später wird in 6:44b der Satz *κἀγὼ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ* zum dritten Mal ausgesprochen; jetzt ergänzt er die Aussage, niemand könne zu Christus („zu mir“) kommen, den nicht „der Vater, der mich gesandt hat, zieht“ (V. 44a), ohne dass ein sachlicher Zusammenhang zwischen beiden Aussagen zu erkennen ist. Im Rahmen der „eucharistischen Rede“ (6:51c–58) sagt Jesus demjenigen, der sein Fleisch isst und sein Blut trinkt, ähnlich wie in V. 40a „ewiges Leben“ zu (*ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον*, V. 54a); darauf folgt in V. 54b erneut der Nachsatz *κἀγὼ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ*. In allen vier Fällen sind die voranstehenden Zusagen Jesu vollständig, so dass der jeweilige Nachsatz lediglich als Ergänzung, eher sogar als Korrektur wirkt, was vor allem in 6:40 deutlich ist. Nicola Wendebourg meint, dass „die futurischen Aussagen innerhalb des Evangeliums sachlich ein Randphänomen darstellen“; die *ἡμέρα*-Aussagen in Joh 6 seien „im Vergleich zu der im Kontext fest verankerten Auffassung von der Gegenwart des ewigen Lebens in Christus inhaltlich kaum mit dem Text vermittelt“;<sup>106</sup> die „stereotypen Aussagen“ seien „sprachlich und inhaltlich kaum im Text verankert und deshalb theologisch nur von geringem Gewicht“.<sup>107</sup> Hartwig Thyen dagegen hält die Wendung *ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν κτλ.*, „die kunstvoll wie ein Refrain ... wiederkehrt, für unentbehrlich“.<sup>108</sup> Sind diese Aussagen als „sekundär“ anzusehen? Nach Wendebourg reichen die Beobachtungen jedenfalls „nicht aus, um eine literarkritische Aussonderung der Hinweise auf eine sichere Grundlage zu stellen“.<sup>109</sup>

Von der Auferstehung „am letzten Tage“ spricht Martha in Joh 11 bei ihrer Begegnung mit Jesus nach dem Tode des Lazarus.<sup>110</sup> Als Jesus mit mehrtägiger Verzögerung nach Bethanien kommt (V. 17–18), sagt Martha zu ihm, dass ihr Bruder nicht gestorben wäre, wenn Jesus rechtzeitig gekommen wäre; sie wisse aber, dass Jesus von Gott erhalten werde, worum er ihn bittet (V. 21–22).<sup>111</sup> Auf Jesu (*ἀναστήσεται ὁ ἀδελφός σου*, V. 23) reagiert Martha

<sup>105</sup> Frey, *Eschatologie* II, 237 meint, dass der Hinweis auf die *ζωὴ αἰώνιος* „den Hinweis auf die Auferweckung sachlich vorbereitet“; aber eher wäre dann die entgegengesetzte Abfolge der Aussagen zu erwarten.

<sup>106</sup> Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 293–94.

<sup>107</sup> Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 305.

<sup>108</sup> Thyen, *JohEv*, 355.

<sup>109</sup> Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 305.

<sup>110</sup> Zur Auslegung des Dialogs zwischen Martha und Jesus vgl. Welck, *Erzählte Zeichen*, 214–18.

<sup>111</sup> Welck, *Erzählte Zeichen*, 214 meint, mit ihrer Aussage in V. 22 signalisiere Martha, dass sie Jesus „als einen bei Gott in besonderer Gnade stehenden *Gesundbeter*“ ansieht; Jesu Antwort in V. 23 korrigiere dieses Mißverständnis, aber Martha höre nur „einen tröstlich

mit den Worten (V. 24): οἶδα ὅτι ἀναστήσεται ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ. Falls die Aussagen über die ἐσχάτη ἡμέρα in Joh 6 literarisch „sekundär“ sein sollten, liegt in 11:24 der früheste Beleg für diesen Ausdruck vor; hier ist die Aussage jedenfalls für den Erzählgang unverzichtbar.<sup>112</sup> Martha spricht im Unterschied zu den Aussagen in Joh 6 (... ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν κτλ.) nicht von Jesu Wirken, sondern von einem unabhängig von Jesus geschehenden „objektiv“ erwarteten Ereignis (ἀναστήσεται).<sup>113</sup> Darauf wirkt Jesu Antwort (V. 25.26a) in doppelter Weise wie eine Korrektur: Jesus sagt zunächst ein 8:12 entsprechendes Ich-bin-Wort (11:25: ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωὴ· ὁ πιστευῶν εἰς ἐμὲ κἂν ἀποθάνῃ ζήσεται), und dann folgt (V. 26a) eine dies sogar noch zuspitzende Wiederholung: καὶ πᾶς ὁ ζῶν καὶ πιστευῶν εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ μὴ ἀποθάνῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. Die betont präsentische Selbstaussage Jesu (ἐγὼ εἰμι κτλ.) lenkt den Akzent weg von der ἐσχάτη ἡμέρα in die Gegenwart,<sup>114</sup> und dementsprechend ist die Wendung ζήσεται als ein logisches Futur zu verstehen—das zukünftige Leben hat bereits in der Gegenwart begonnen.<sup>115</sup> Das wird in V. 26a unterstrichen: Der Glaubende hat den Tod bereits endgültig überwunden.<sup>116</sup> Die abschließende Frage Jesu: πιστεύεις τοῦτο; wird von Martha beantwortet mit dem Bekenntnis zu Jesus als dem χριστός, der als Sohn Gottes in die Welt kommt. Die anschließend erzählte Auferweckung des Lazarus ist die Bestätigung des zuvor von Jesus Gesagten.<sup>117</sup>

In 12:46 sagt Jesus in Anknüpfung an 8:12, dass er als Licht in die Welt gekommen ist. Wer seine Worte hört und nicht annimmt, wird nicht von

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gemeinten Hinweis auf die *in ferner Zukunft* zu erwartende Totenaufweckung“ (V. 24), und dies korrigiere Jesus mit seinem Ich-bin-Wort in V. 25.

<sup>112</sup> Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 291.

<sup>113</sup> Welck, *Erzählte Zeichen*, 217 spricht von „Marthas ‚Normaleschatologie‘“.

<sup>114</sup> Nach Frey, *Eschatologie* II, 237 liegt „die Intention der Korrektur des Credo der Martha nicht etwa in der Ablehnung des eschatologischen Futurum, sondern vielmehr in der christologischen Konzentration“. Muß das eine Alternative sein?

<sup>115</sup> Nach Hainz, „Zur Krisis kam ich in die Welt“, 155 verstößt die Erweiterung in 11:25d.26a „gegen das übliche Schema der Ich-bin-Worte“ und bringt einen dem Evangelium „fremden“ Zukunftsaspekt ein. Freilich sei auch die Deutung als „logisches Futur“ möglich.

<sup>116</sup> Bultmann, *JohEv*, 307: Das Ich-bin-Wort bringt zum Ausdruck, „daß die ζωὴ ein eschatologisches Phänomen ist, d.h. daß sie nur in der ἀνάστασις zugänglich wird. Jesu ‚ich bin das Leben‘ beschreibt nicht seine metaphysische Wesenheit, sondern seine Gabe für den, der zum Glauben kommt und damit ‚aufersteht‘.“

<sup>117</sup> Vgl. J. Becker, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes. Kapitel 11–21*, ÖTK4/2, Gütersloh und Würzburg, 31991, 425: Das nach Becker aus der Semeia-Quelle übernommene Wunder der Auferweckung kann „dem Glaubenden nichts über 11:25–26 hinaus Neues für sein Todesverständnis sagen“. „Das nachgestellte Wunder zeigt nur Jesu Macht über den Tod für einen einmaligen Fall von Wiederbelebung auf Zeit. In dieser Beschränktheit hat es wohl für E [sc. für den Evangelisten] illustrativen Charakter.“

ihm gerichtet werden (V. 47a), denn er ist „gekommen“, um den κόσμος zu retten (V. 47b). In V. 48 sagt Jesus dann aber: ὁ ἀθετῶν ἐμέ καὶ μὴ λαμβάνων τὰ ῥήματα μου ἔχει τὸν κρίνοντα αὐτόν· ὁ λόγος ὃν ἐλάλησα ἐκεῖνος κρίνει αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ. „Als Begründung für das eschatologische Geschick wird das Verhalten gegenüber Jesus und seinen Worten genannt“, stellt Nicola Wendebourg fest; im Kontext der vorangegangenen Aussagen (V. 37–43) komme „Rettung und Vernichtung als den Folgen der Sendung Jesu für den Menschen hier gleiches Gewicht zu“. Der Hinweis auf die ἐσχάτη ἡμέρα sei möglicherweise im Sinne eines „eschatologischen Vorbehalts“ zu deuten, doch da dieser Hinweis „sachlich in keiner Weise mit dem Text vermittelt“ ist, könnte er auch „ohne inhaltliche Konsequenzen fortfallen“.<sup>118</sup>

In 14:20 spricht Jesus in der Abschiedsrede von „jenem Tag“, an dem die Jünger erkennen werden ὅτι ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μου καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν. Ist die Zeitangabe ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ eschatologisch gemeint, geradezu im Sinne der ἡμέρα ἐσχάτη? Nach Wendebourg bezieht sich die Aussage nicht auf die Parusie, sondern auf die mit Ostern beginnende Zeit, da sie von der Sendung des παράκλητος her zu verstehen sei.<sup>119</sup>

Die Frage, ob es sich bei der viermal gebrauchten Wendung καὶ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸ(ν) ἐγὼ ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ in Joh 6 um spätere Hinzufügungen handelt, läßt sich von 11:21–26 und von 12:48 her mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit beantworten: In 11:24 ist der von Martha gesprochene Satz über die Auferstehung ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ für die Erzählung unentbehrlich; zugleich aber wird von V. 25–26 her deutlich, dass Marthas Aussage den Sinn der Rede von der Auferweckung verfehlt und deshalb korrigiert wird. Dagegen nehmen die von vornherein auf Christi Wirken bezogenen Aussagen in 6:39b.40b.44b.54b und vermutlich auch 12:48 zwar den Gedanken der „Auferstehung am letzten Tage“ auf; aber sie stellen diesen Gedanken nicht in einen unmittelbaren Zusammenhang mit dem Kontext, und das spricht für die Vermutung, dass sie als Ergänzungen anzusehen sind.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 294.295. M.E. spricht diese Beobachtung wieder für die Annahme, dass der Hinweis auf den „letzten Tag“ einer nachträglichen Bearbeitungsschicht des JohEv zuzuweisen ist.

<sup>119</sup> Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 297. Biblischer Tradition entspreche die Aussage insofern, als „sich die für ‚jenen Tag‘ verheißene Erkenntnis nicht auf ‚Gott an sich‘ richtet, sondern auf Gott als den, der zum Menschen in Beziehung steht“; in die Einheit von Vater und Sohn „sollen ‚an jenem Tag‘ die Glaubenden hineingenommen werden“ (298.299).

<sup>120</sup> M.E. geht auch die „eucharistische Rede“ Joh 6:51c–58 auf diese Textschicht zurück; auch hier begegnet in V. 54 die erwähnte eschatologische Wendung. Vgl. de Boer, *Johannine Perspectives*, 104; Joh 6:51c–56(58) „is widely and with good reason regarded as (for the most part) a secondary expansion or elaboration of the Bread of Life discourse“. Zumstein, *Kreative Erinnerung*, 25 betont, dass diese Glossen „von der Exegese nicht theologisch disqualifiziert oder ignoriert werden“ dürfen. „Sie widerspiegeln auf ihre Weise die kontinuier-



Einen Bezug zum „Tag des Herrn“ sieht Nicola Wendebourg in 8:56, nun freilich bezogen auf die Gegenwart. Jesu Rede von Abrahams Freude über „meinen Tag“ schein „zunächst nur die traditionelle Erwartung eines endzeitlichen *Freudentages* aufzunehmen“, doch klinge darüber hinaus das „weitaus bedeutsamere Thema der Krisis an: Die bedingte Verheißung in V. 51 impliziert, daß sich am ‚Tag Jesu‘ eine eschatologische Scheidung vollzieht.“ Es sei aber nicht textgemäß, nur die Botschaft vom rettenden Handeln Gottes bzw. Christi zu hören—schon deshalb, weil das JohEv ganz „von dualistischem Denken geprägt ist“.<sup>121</sup> Im Zentrum von Joh 8 stehen Jesu harte Aussagen über „die Juden“, und wenn diese Worte mit der in 8:56 erwähnten ἡμέρα zusammen fallen, dann „gewinnen auch seine Äußerungen über ‚die Juden‘ die Qualität endgültiger Gerichtsurteile“.<sup>122</sup>

### *Ergebnis*

„Gericht ist bei Paulus kaum ausgeführtes Thema“, schreibt Wolfgang Beilner, und er betont, die paulinischen Aussagen zum Gericht könnten „als traditionell (jüdisch, christlich) bezeichnet werden. Eine besondere Funktionalität dieser Aussagen läßt sich kaum feststellen.“<sup>123</sup> Aber die Interpretation der Texte läßt doch ein differenzierteres Ergebnis erkennen.<sup>124</sup> Richtig ist natürlich, dass die paulinischen Aussagen zum endzeitlichen Gottesgericht sich eng berühren mit den aus apokalyptischer Tradition stammenden Vorstellungen; aber sie unterscheiden sich auch signifikant von ihnen: Die Vorstellung eines Gerichts, das die Menschen aufgrund ihrer bösen Taten zur ewigen Verdammnis führt, Menschen, die Gutes getan haben, aber zur ζωῆ αἰώνιος, sieht Paulus offenbar als unzulänglich, vielleicht sogar als falsch an—jedenfalls verwendet er sie nicht. Mit dem Bild vom βῆμα (2 Kor 5:10; Röm 14:10), vor dem über die Handlungen der Menschen geurteilt werden wird, spricht Paulus die dem Glauben unmittelbar

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liche Arbeit der joh Schule.“ Bultmann, *JohEv*, 162 meint, der auf die „kirchliche Redaktion“ zurückgehende „refrainartige“ Satz habe in 6:54 „seinen organischen Platz“, an den anderen Stellen störe er den Gedanken; „seine Anfügung ist der Versuch der Redaktion, die ganze Rede unter die Anschauung von V. 51b–58 zu stellen“.

<sup>121</sup> Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 288–89.

<sup>122</sup> Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 290. Sie stellt freilich auch fest, dass die ἡμέρα-Hinweise im JohEv „vor allem dem Zuspruch dienen“ und infolgedessen „die Gerichtsdimension des Tages kaum entfaltet“ wird (aaO., 306).

<sup>123</sup> Wolfgang Beilner, „Weltgericht und Weltvollendung bei Paulus,“ in: H.-J. Klauck (Hg.), *Weltgericht und Weltvollendung. Zukunftsbilder im Neuen Testament*, QD 150, Freiburg 1994, 84–105, hier: 95.97.

<sup>124</sup> Vgl. die knappe Übersicht bei F. Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*. Band II. *Die Einheit des Neuen Testaments*, Tübingen 2002, 785–86.

innewohnende Überzeugung aus, dass die Menschen für ihr Leben und Tun Gott gegenüber Rechenschaft ablegen müssen; die Gerichtsaussagen haben insofern vor allem die Funktion, die Glaubenden vor Selbstsicherheit zu warnen und sie daran zu erinnern, dass sich der Mensch vor Gott verantworten muß.

In den breiten Ausführungen zur Auferstehungshoffnung in 1 Kor 15 wird in V. 23–28 die endgültige Unterwerfung der gottfeindlichen Mächte und am Ende (V. 54–55) die Vernichtung des Todes verheißen; diese Aussagen sind nicht mit der Vorstellung eines Endgerichts verbunden, aber Paulus spricht hier das Wissen aus, dass das Böse vor Gott keinen Bestand haben wird. So ist das gegenwärtig begonnene Heil, die Rechtfertigung des Sünders durch den Glauben an das Christusgeschehen, nicht nur gegenwärtig wirksam, sondern es hat zugleich ein Ziel. Diese Hoffnung übersteigt alles Vorstellbare; aber gerade die von Paulus verwendeten unterschiedlichen Bilder zeigen, dass sich menschliches Reden irdisch-welthafter Vorstellungen bedienen muß; so werden einerseits die „Vorstellungen“ transparent und weisen über sich hinaus, andererseits aber bleibt gerade so ihr metaphorischer Charakter erkennbar.

In 1 Thess 1:10 spricht Paulus von der Bewahrung vor dem Endgericht. Die Aussage in Joh 5:24, der Glaubende komme nicht ins Gericht, berührt sich mit dieser Aussage des Paulus, ja, sie geht sogar darüber hinaus: Für die Glaubenden bedeuten das Hören auf die Stimme Jesu und der Glaube an ihn schon jetzt das Geschenk des ewigen Lebens, ohne dass ein Gericht erwartet wird. Die Ankündigung der Parusie, der Auferstehung der Toten und der Entrückung in 1 Thess 4:16–17 und die Rede vom βῆμα in 2 Kor 5:10; Röm 14:10 berühren sich eng mit Joh 5:24–29, auch wenn Paulus Auferstehung und Gericht nur in 2 Kor 5:10 direkt miteinander verbindet.

Sowohl bei Paulus wie auch im JohEv sind neben den auf die „Endzeit“ bezogenen futurischen Aussagen Aspekte einer „präsentischen“ Eschatologie erkennbar. Das JohEv hat einerseits eine sehr ausgeprägte Vorstellung von der Gegenwart des Gerichts, es verbindet diese Gegenwart aber mit der expliziten Erwartung des eschatologischen Endes. Anders als bei Paulus haben die Glaubenden keine *Zukunftshoffnung*,<sup>125</sup> sie sind vielmehr der Gegenwart des bis in alle Zukunft reichenden Heils gewiß. Das ewige Leben ist bereits Gegenwart, die Glaubenden sind dem Gericht entnommen, und sie wissen, dass der κόσμος, der Jesu Botschaft verwirft, bereits gerichtet ist. Es gibt nur insofern noch „Zukunft“, als die Verstorbenen aufgrund ihrer Taten gerichtet werden (5:29), während die Glaubenden davon nicht betroffen sind.

<sup>125</sup> Es fällt auf, dass im JohEv das Substantiv ἐλπὶς gar nicht belegt ist und das Verb ἐλπίζειν nur in 5:45, ganz offensichtlich in kritischem Sinn.

Wo Paulus vom gegenwärtigen Gericht (ὁργή) spricht (Röm 1:18–32), da fehlt die Verbindung mit der Totenauferstehung, und es fehlt der Gedanke, das gegenwärtige Gericht werde in das Endgericht hineinführen. Paulus will offenbar nicht einen Lehrtopos *de novissimis* vortragen, sondern es geht ihm um die jeweilige Gegenwartsbedeutung: Die Erwartung des Endgerichts verweist auf die Verantwortlichkeit des Menschen für sein Handeln gegenüber Gott, die Auferstehungserwartung zielt auf die Gewißheit der Zukunftshoffnung der Glaubenden.

Möglicherweise lassen sich die Unterschiede zwischen den Gerichtsvorstellungen bei Paulus und im JohEv mit den unterschiedlichen Entstehungsverhältnissen der Texte erklären. Die Differenzen könnten aber auch mit den unterschiedlichen Textgattungen zusammenhängen: Paulus wendet sich brieflich unmittelbar an Gemeinden, denen er Trost oder auch „Warnung“ zuspricht und die daraus für ihre Lebenspraxis Konsequenzen ziehen sollen. Das JohEv dagegen wendet sich als Erzähltext nur implizit an seine Leser: Jesus spricht auf der Ebene der erzählten Welt von der Gegenwart und von der Zukunft, ohne dass explizit darüber reflektiert wird, inwieweit auf der Ebene der Adressaten des JohEv diese Zukunft bereits eingetroffen ist.<sup>126</sup> Die ἐσχάτη ἡμέρα in 11:20 ist natürlich noch nicht Gegenwart; die literarisch vermutlich sekundären Verweise auf Jesu Auferweckungshandeln „am jüngsten Tage“ dienen offenbar dazu, diesen Aspekt zu unterstreichen. Nach Nicola Wendebourg beziehen sich die ἡμέρα-Hinweise „nicht auf die Gemeinde-Welt-Konstellation, sondern auf die Binnenwelt der Gemeinde. Hier haben sie Trostfunktion, und entsprechend zeichnen sie die ἡμέρα als Heilsereignis“. Dagegen repräsentiere der gegenwärtig erfahrbare Tag (11:25) „eine Gegenwelt zu den Erfahrungen von Tod ... und Verlassenheit“.<sup>127</sup> Analoges gilt für die Aussagen des Paulus zur Auferstehung; sie zielen auf Trost (1 Thess 4:18) und vermitteln die Gewißheit, dass ὁ κόπος ὑμῶν οὐκ ἔστιν κενὸς ἐν κυρίῳ (1 Kor 15:58). Und die Aussage, dass „wir alle“ vor dem βῆμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ offenbar werden müssen (2 Kor 5:10), ist keine Drohung, sondern hier nennt Paulus nach dem zuvor in 4:7–5:9 Gesagten das Ziel der gegenwärtigen Hoffnung.

Das Verhältnis zwischen den paulinischen und den johanneischen Aussagen zur Gerichtserwartung läßt sich möglicherweise am besten im Blick

<sup>126</sup> Vgl. die wichtigen Überlegungen bei Frey, *Eschatologie* III, 46–52 zur direkten Leserrede in den Briefen und zur indirekten Kommunikation im Evangelium. Frey bezieht sich zwar auf das Verhältnis zwischen dem JohEv und den Johannesbriefen, aber die Gattungsdifferenz gilt natürlich auch im Blick auf die Paulusbriefe. Vgl. auch Thyen, *JohEv*, 4.

<sup>127</sup> Wendebourg, *Der Tag des Herrn*, 306.

auf die Rede von der ζωή αἰώνιος erfassen: Wenn das JohEv vom „ewigen Leben“ spricht,<sup>128</sup> bezieht es sich auf die Gegenwart; zwar ruft Jesus in 6:27 „die Juden“<sup>129</sup> dazu auf, sich zu mühen um τὴν βρώσιν τὴν μένουσαν εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, aber es geht dabei gerade darum, dass diese ζωή nicht erst in der endzeitlichen Zukunft beginnt, sondern gegenwärtig in der Begegnung mit Jesus (V. 29).<sup>130</sup> Auch in 12:25 steht die ζωή αἰώνιος nicht etwa aus, sondern sie ist Gegenwart (vgl. 12:50). Am deutlichsten wird das in 17:2: Jesus wird den Seinen „ewiges Leben geben“, aber dieses besteht gerade darin, dass sie Gott und Jesus Christus als seinen Gesandten erkennen, also Gläubende sind.<sup>131</sup>

Paulus spricht vom ewigen Leben in Gal 6:8 sowie in Röm 2:7; 5:21 und 6:22–23.<sup>132</sup> Nach Gal 6:8 wird der, der nicht auf die σάρξ, sondern auf das πνεῦμα „sät“, ewiges Leben ernten (θερίσει ζωὴν αἰώνιον); diese ζωή steht selbstverständlich noch aus. In Röm 2:7 verheißt Paulus nach der Gerichtsankündigung (V. 6) denen, die nach dem ἔργον ἀγαθόν streben, ewiges Leben als Lohn; die ζωή αἰώνιος hat also noch nicht begonnen. In 5:21 schreibt Paulus, die χάρις werde herrschen durch die Gerechtigkeit εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον durch Christus; und noch deutlicher ist dieser Akzent in 6:21–23: Das Ende (τὸ τέλος) dessen, was Menschen als Sklaven der Sünde empfangen können, ist der Tod (V. 21), die von der Sünde befreiten, Gott dienenden Menschen empfangen Heiligung, und das Ende (τὸ τέλος) ist das „ewige Leben“ (V. 22). Die Sünde zahlt Sold (τὰ ὀψώνια), die Gnadengabe, die von Gott geschenkt wird (τὸ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ) ist ζωή αἰώνιος in Christus. Die οἰκοδομή, die wir nach 2 Kor 5:1 nach dem Abbruch unserer irdischen Wohnstatt ha-

<sup>128</sup> Vgl. dazu Frey, *Eschatologie* III, 261–70.

<sup>129</sup> Die pauschale Formulierung οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι wird zumal in neuerer deutscher Exegese oft sehr kritisch gewertet. Vgl. aber die wichtigen Bemerkungen von de Boer, *Johannine Perspectives*, 57: „The Pharisaic authorities of the late first century, following the destruction of the Temple by the Romans, quite understandably sought to define what it is to be a Jew under new and threatening circumstances. Being a disciple of Jesus was evidently no longer one of the ways in which a Jew could be a Jew. The Gospel's sarcastic references to the Jewish authorities behind the decree of expulsion as ‚the Jews‘ is in the first instance an ironic acknowledgment of their claim to be arbiters of Jewish identity, a claim the Gospel rejects. For the Gospel, of course, there is the deep and tragic irony that it is actually ‚the Jews‘ who forfeited their Jewish identity and heritage, because they have rejected the Johannine proclamation of Jesus as the promised Jewish Messiah.“

<sup>130</sup> Derselbe Aspekt wird in 10:28 deutlich.

<sup>131</sup> Frey, *Eschatologie* III, 270: „Hat die ζωή αἰώνιος eine in die Zukunft reichende, postmortale Dimension, so liegt doch an all diesen Stellen der *Beginn* der ζωή nicht erst in der Zukunft, sondern *bereits* in der Gegenwart der Nachfolge (12:25), des Zum-Glauben-Kommens (4:36) und der Teilhabe am Lebensbrot (6:27; vgl. 6:32).“

<sup>132</sup> Das Bild von der οἰκία ἀχειροποίητος αἰώνιος in 2 Kor 5:1 weist natürlich in dieselbe Richtung.

ben werden, ist die nicht mit Händen gemachte „ewige“ *οὐρανία* im Himmel, und auch hier ist klar, dass wir jener Ewigkeit gewiß sind, sie aber noch nicht *haben*.

FORGING A NEW IDENTITY  
JOHANNINE RHETORIC AND THE AUDIENCE OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

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Any student in an introductory New Testament course can tell you that Paul's letters address specific situations that have arisen in his churches and intend to persuade his audience to take action, such as ignoring the so-called circumcision party that is making inroads in Galatia or overcoming the factionalism that is creating conflict in Corinth.<sup>1</sup> That same first year New Testament student can tell you that the Gospels are another matter altogether. While they may envision specific communities as their most immediate audience, the Gospels aim above all to tell the story of Jesus' life and death in ways that convey their authors' theological perspectives and are meaningful to audiences that postdate Jesus' death by some forty to sixty years.

Yet one may ask whether the differences in intent between the Pauline epistles and the New Testament gospels are truly as sharp as we tend to believe, particularly with regard to the Gospel of John. To be sure, the Gospel of John is by no means an epistle but rather a chronological narrative that begins in the beginning and ends with Jesus' resurrection appearances. At the same time, the Gospel exhibits a number of features that suggest that the evangelist, like Paul, is addressing a concrete situation within a particular community that he knows very well, and that he wishes to move his audience along from their current position or behavior to one that in his view is better aligned with his view of how people should live in the period between Christ's resurrection and the eschaton. In other words, the Gospel of John, no less than the letters of Paul, is a rhetorical document that is intended not only to narrate a story but to convince a specific audience of a particular position, and, even more than that, to have a transformative impact on their communal life.

The most obvious evidence of the Gospel's rhetorical purpose is the conclusion of Chapter 20, generally taken to be the statement of purpose

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<sup>1</sup> This assumption also of course underlies Martinus de Boer's own important work on Paul. See, for example, Martinus C. de Boer, "Paul's Use and Interpretation of a Justification Tradition in Galatians 2.15–21," *JST* 28 (2005): 189–216.

of the Gospel as a whole: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name” (20:30–31).<sup>2</sup> From this passage emerge a number of important points. First, the Gospel of John is not an accidental writing that grew like topsy but a document intentionally composed as a book to be read to or by others. Second, the use of the second person plural suggests that these others are not imaginary readers but a real group, whether large or small, that exists outside the narrative world. Third, the book was written with a specific purpose: “in order that you may believe [or come to believe].”<sup>3</sup> Believing, however, is not a goal in and of itself, but the ticket to eternal life. A life without faith in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God is no life at all. From the perspective of these verses, then, the Gospel is a rhetorical document in that it envisions a concrete audience that it hopes to engage in a profound existential transformation: the escape from darkness and death to light and life (8:52).

If the Fourth Gospel were a solely spiritual gospel, as many from Clement of Alexandria onwards have believed, it would be enough to say that its purpose is indeed to encourage faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God and assure believers of life in his name.<sup>4</sup> But from a historical-critical perspective, this conclusion is far from satisfying. Surely something more concrete is intended, and something more specific is at stake. In the absence of any external evidence for the composition and situation of the Johannine audience, there is only one way to get a purchase on these historical questions, and that is to make a crucial yet unverifiable assumption: at the same time as it tells a story of Jesus, the Gospel of John also reflects and addresses, however dimly and obliquely, its intended audience and their historical situation. Only by making this assumption is it possible to even ask the three fundamental historical questions that allow us to consider the rhetorical purpose that the Gospel writer may have had in mind: Who is the intended audience, the “you” to whom the last few verses of chapter 20 are addressed? What situation is the Gospel trying to address? And, most important, in what transformative process is the Gospel trying to engage its audience?

<sup>2</sup> All English translations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

<sup>3</sup> Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 267–69.

<sup>4</sup> Clement’s reference to Gospel as a spiritual document is cited by Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.7. For detailed discussion, see Marianne Meye, “The ‘Spiritual Gospel’: How John the Theologian Writes History,” in *John, Jesus, and History* (ed. Felix Just, Tom Thatcher, and Paul N. Anderson; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 103–7.

Until the mid to late decades of the last century, these issues were framed in the context of the evangelizing mission of the early church and centered on the question of whether the Gospel was addressed to outsiders or insiders, a question signaled by the textual variant in 20:31.<sup>5</sup> If to outsiders, then the Gospel's intent was to transform non-believers into believers. If to insiders, the intent was to strengthen and deepen their faith.

By the latter part of the twentieth century, however, most scholars had ruled against a missionary intent for the Gospel and in favor of the view that the Gospel was written for a specific group of believers, the so-called Johannine school or community.<sup>6</sup> The task at hand was therefore to define these insiders—the “you,” for whom the book was written—in a more precise way. The solutions proposed covered a broad range of perspectives, from Richard Bauckham's very broad definition of John's audience as “all Christians everywhere,” to Daniel Boyarin's small and select community of Israelites who were the direct descendants of those who had remained in Judea after the destruction of the first Temple.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the wide range of views proposed, however, the consensus in the field was, and still is, that “you” are a community of Jewish Christ-confessors who had suffered a traumatic expulsion from the synagogue. If so, the hostility expressed in the Gospel reflects an inner-Jewish theological conflict of the late first century rather than a conflict between Jews and Christians or proto-Christians. In this model, the concrete situation that the Gospel was trying to address was a trauma suffered by the community: its expulsion from the Jewish community, on account of its confession of Jesus as the Christ, and its rhetorical purpose to strengthen their faith and resolve in the face of persecution, and to deepen their conviction that eternal life will be enjoyed by those who persevere.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In some circles the debate still continues. See Donald A. Carson, “The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel: John 20:31 Reconsidered,” *JBL* 106 (1987): 639–51; idem, “Syntactical and Text-Critical Observations on John 20:30–31: One More Round on the Purpose of the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 124 (2005): 693–714; Joseph S. King, “Has D.A. Carson Been Fair to C.H. Dodd?” *JSNT* 17 (1983): 97–102.

<sup>6</sup> See R. Alan Culpepper, *The Johannine School: An Evaluation of the Johannine-School Hypothesis Based on an Investigation of the Nature of Ancient Schools* (SBLDS 26; Missoula, MO: Scholars Press, 1975).

<sup>7</sup> See Richard Bauckham, “For Whom were the Gospels Written?” in: idem, *The Gospels for all Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 9–48; Daniel Boyarin, “The *Ioudaioi* in John and the Prehistory of ‘Judaism,’” in *Pauline Conversations in Context: Essays in Honor of Calvin J. Roetzel* (ed. Janice Capel et al.; JSNTSup 221; London, New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 216–39.

<sup>8</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (NTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003).



This essay proposes an alternative to this construction of the audience, situation, and rhetorical purpose of the Gospel. The hypothesis is as follows: the audience, the “you” to which the Gospel is addressed, is not a Jewish group of Christ-confessors but a community, whether large or small, that included Samaritan and Gentile participants alongside Jewish believers in Christ who themselves had made the move from their groups of origin to this new community. The history of this group cannot be discerned from the sources at our disposal, but it is reasonable to assume that at least part of their experience included the overcoming of the ethnic and other boundaries that existed in their groups of origin.

That the Johannine group included Samaritans and Gentiles as well as Jewish Christ-confessors has been suggested by others, most notably by Raymond E. Brown. In his 1979 book, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, Brown traced the “life, loves, and hates of an individual church in New Testament times” from their formation under the leadership of the Beloved Disciple, growth through the last decades of the first century, subsequent schism around year 100, and finally dissolution and absorption of its factions into other groups in the second century. Brown argued that the story of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman and her compatriots in John 4 reflected Samaritan members of the Johannine community, and the pull Jesus exerted on some Gentiles suggested that the community also included Gentile adherents.<sup>9</sup>

Brown’s hypothesis places the Fourth Gospel into the history of the nascent church, and the growing tension between those groups that would eventually be labeled orthodox and those that would be dismissed as heterodox. This story is quite different from the narrative embedded in the inner-Jewish rift hypothesis, which situates the Gospel into the history of the parting of the ways, the process by which Christianity eventually became a set of belief systems and institutions that were separate from those of Judaism.

Indeed, although Brown’s story includes an expulsion from the synagogue, perhaps under the influence of the community’s Samaritan members, his inclusive hypothesis and the inner-Jewish hypothesis are in fact mutually exclusive. If the conflict that is central to the Gospel of John reflects an inner-Jewish rift at the time of the Gospel’s final redaction, then the “you” of the Gospel’s conclusion cannot have included Gentiles or Samaritans, unless they had previously converted to Judaism, in which case they would no longer be Gentiles and Samaritans. But if the Gospel narrative as a whole reflects the historical situation of the Johannine com-

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<sup>9</sup> Raymond Edward Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (London: G. Chapman, 1979).

munity, then the Samaritan woman and her compatriots in chapter 4, as well as the Gentiles who approach Philip and Andrew in chapter 12 must represent real Samaritans and Gentiles who aligned themselves with the Jesus-followers. If this is the case, however, the Gospel cannot reflect an inner-Jewish conflict but rather a conflict between a community of Christ-believers that was no longer entirely Jewish and a community of Jews who were emphatically not Christ-believers.

There is no way to resolve this logical conundrum. The consensus position that the “you” are Jewish Christ-confessors has the advantage of disarming the readings of the Gospel that see its hostile comments about Jews and Judaism as anti-Jewish. If both sides in the conflict are Jewish, then the Gospel cannot be anti-Jewish. Brown’s position, on the other, has the advantage of consistency: including Samaritans and even Gentiles in the Gospel’s audience reflects an even-handed application of the methodological principle that the Gospel reflects the history and demography of the community even as it tells the story of the Christ and Son of God who “became flesh and tabernacled among us” (John 1:14) some six decades earlier. (As an admittedly extreme skeptic with regard to the possibility of truly reading history, whether of Jesus or of the Johannine community, into or out of the Fourth Gospel, I would prefer simply to walk away from this problem and plead agnosticism. But if the choice is between apologetics and consistency, I will side with Brown).

But identifying the “you” to whom the Gospel is addressed is only part of the task. The other, as noted above, is to consider the historical situation that the evangelist may have been addressing, and the transformative impact that the book or its author hoped or intended to have on the audience. If we assume, for the sake of argument, that the Johannine audience included not only Jewish Christ-confessors but Samaritan and Gentile ones as well, we might tell a very different story. This story would begin in the late 80s of the first century. Somewhere in the Roman Diaspora, perhaps Ephesus, there was a group of people (whether large or small is hard to say) who believed that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God and nurtured their belief with stories about the miracle signs that demonstrated his divine origins and his God-given powers. Most of these people were Jewish in origin, but some were Samaritans, and a handful were Gentiles. Despite their shared belief in Jesus, their ability to be a close-knit group was somewhat hindered by their upbringing, and in particular by the rather rigid boundaries between their groups of origins. Those who were Jewish believed that they and their ancestors had long enjoyed an exclusive covenantal relationship with God to which Samaritans and Gentiles did

not have access. The Samaritan members also believed in the one God, but they had their own distinctive texts, sacred sites and ritual practices. The Gentile participants did not feel constrained to believe in only one God, but in practice gravitated towards the mystery cults dedicated to the worship of or union with an individual divine figure and perhaps also towards Judaism itself and its monotheistic beliefs and practices.

The leader of this motley crew, let us call him the Beloved Disciple, searched his soul for a way to overcome the boundaries that still existed within his community. Knowing the special role that his stories of Jesus' signs already had among the community, and believing that it was the will of Jesus, or of the Paraclete—the spirit of truth (14:17; 15:26)—that his community pull together, he enhanced the signs stories with discourses that not only articulated his own understanding of Jesus' identity and significance for the world, but also gave expression to the importance of unity in the community. In other words, he turned a narrative of Jesus' life and deeds into a rhetorical masterpiece designed to persuade his audience to overcome their differences and live as one community.

Persuading this group to forge a harmonious communal identity required a number of complicated moves. An important step was to encourage them to alienate themselves from their groups of origin. Samaritans needed to acknowledge that “the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem” (John 4:21); the Gentiles needed to accept that God was one, and that Jesus was a part of God's unity (10:30).<sup>10</sup>

Most important, however, was that all members—members of Jewish origin certainly, but also Samaritans and Gentiles—distance themselves from “the Jews.” The tenets, beliefs, and practices of the new group had their origins in Judaism, and, like Jews, they held the Jewish scriptures to be divinely revealed and authoritative. Salvation was from the Jews, as Jesus told the Samaritan woman (4:22), but covenant with God was no longer the special privilege of the Jews. Indeed, the community forged through faith in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God replaced Jews in their covenantal relationship with God. Although οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι may have believed that they were children of Abraham and of God, Jesus insists that they have relinquished their right to these markers of identification by refusing to believe that he is the Messiah and the Son of God (John 8:39–47).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 356–60.

<sup>11</sup> For discussion, see Adele Reinhartz, “John 8:31–59 from a Jewish Perspective,” in *Remembering for the Future 2000: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocides* (ed. John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell-Meynard; London: Palgrave, 2001), 2:787–97.

The distance between the audience and οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (“the Jews”) is produced in the first instance through plot and characterization.<sup>12</sup> The Gospel portrays οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι as the enemies of Jesus and his followers: they persecute Jesus (5:16), try to stone him (10:31) and seek his death (5:18; 7:1); they are similarly hostile to his followers, whom they throw out of the synagogue (9:22; 12:42; 16:2). The Gospel almost never refers to Jesus and his followers as Ἰουδαῖοι, even though it is obvious that οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι are Jesus’ people (1:11) and that the basic structures of his life are the same as those of other Ἰουδαῖοι. Only the Samaritan woman calls Jesus a Ἰουδαῖος, when she marvels that he, in contrast to all the others, will accept a drink of water from a Samaritan woman (4:9).

A second literary technique is the rhetoric of binary opposition.<sup>13</sup> This technique is most obvious in the Gospel’s use of contrasting metaphors—light/dark, life/death, above/below, from God/not from God—and opposing activities—believing/disbelieving, accepting/rejecting, doing good/doing evil, loving/hating. The positive element of each pair is associated with Jesus, the negative element with those who oppose Jesus, that is, the Ἰουδαῖοι.

More than all of these, however it is the exclusion or expulsion passages that reinforce the Gospel’s contention that faith in Jesus as the Christ and affiliation with οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι are mutually exclusive options. In 9:22, the parents of the man born blind express fear of “the Jews” (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι)—though of course they themselves are Jews—because, as the narrator explains, “the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue” (John 9:22). In 12:42, the narrator comments that many kept their faith a secret “for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue” (John 12:42), and in 16:2 Jesus warns the disciples that “they will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour

<sup>12</sup> Much has been written about the translation of this term. See Malcolm F. Lowe, “Who were the ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΙ,” *NovT* 18 (1976): 101–30; Urban C. Von Wahlde, “The Johannine ‘Jews’: A Critical Survey,” *NTS* 28 (1982): 33–60; idem, “‘The Jews’ in the Gospel of John: Fifteen Years of Research (1983–1998),” *ETL* 76 (2000): 30–55; Janis E. Leibig, “John and ‘the Jews’: Theological Antisemitism in the Fourth Gospel,” *JES* 20 (1983): 209–234; Steve Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,” *JSJ* 38 (2007): 457–512; Daniel R. Schwartz, “‘Judean’ or ‘Jew’? How Should We Translate *Ioudaios* in Josephus?,” in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World = Jüdische Identität in der griechisch-römischen Welt* (ed. Jörg Frey, Daniel R. Schwartz, and Stephanie Gripenotrog; Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 71; Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007), 3–27; Adele Reinhartz, “‘Jews’ and Jews in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel: Papers of the Leuven Colloquium, 2000* (ed. Reimund Bieringer et al.; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2001), 341–56.

<sup>13</sup> Adele Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 25 and *passim*.

is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God" (John 16:2).

These passages are the cornerstones of the expulsion theory, according to which the Johannine believers suffered a traumatic expulsion from the synagogue on account of their faith. It may be argued, however, that these verses do not recount an event in the life of the Johannine community but rather constitute an admonition to the community to keep its distance from the synagogue lest they suffer expulsion or worse, and lends credence to this warning by recounting how such exclusion had already occurred in the time of Jesus. In this reading, the expulsion passages are not a key to the history of the Johannine community but a tribute to the rhetorical skills of the gospel writer and the effect that he was trying to produce.

In addition to persuading the audience to distance themselves from their communities of origin and especially from οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, the Gospel also had to emphasize that Jesus intended them to overcome their differences and the barriers between their groups of origin in order to forge a new communal identity. This point is stressed in the short *παροιμία* of the shepherd and the sheep, in which Jesus declares that "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd (John 10:16). It is also a main topic in Jesus' prayer in John 17, in which Jesus petitions God: "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. ... The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:20–23).

The same point is emphasized through the so-called love commandments. Like Paul, the Fourth Evangelist used the term "love," *ἀγάπη*, to describe the behavior that should characterize the relationships within the community. In John 13, Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment, "that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." It is love that marks them as disciples (John 13:34–35). The love commandment is so important that Jesus reiterates it two chapters later: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (John 15:9–12). As John Meier notes, the love being commanded here is not a warm fuzzy feeling directed at the world in general; rather, it is the allegiance that characterizes the small group of disciples or followers towards one another, and in

solidarity against an unwelcoming world.<sup>14</sup> The emphasis is not: “As I have *loved* you: but “As I have loved *you*,” that is, those who believe. It is those who believe who love one another, love Jesus and God, and, in turn, are loved by Jesus and God.

There is a spiritual reward for the hard work of setting aside old differences and creating a new unified community characterized by love for one another. The ultimate reward, of course, is eternal life or “life in his name” (20:31) but in the short term, that is, in the immediate aftermath of Jesus’ death, the reward is the Paraclete, who substitutes, or perhaps is the conduit for, Jesus’ continued presence in the community. The Paraclete will stay forever, or at least until Jesus returns and takes his own back with him to his Father’s house. In the meantime, the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, will teach them, remind them of what Jesus has said to them, and prove the world wrong about sin, righteousness and judgment.<sup>15</sup>

Being a harmonious community united in faith will transform believers from children of the flesh to children of God. This is articulated in the very first chapter of the Gospel, as follows: “He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God” (1:10–13). The communal nature of this transformation is signaled by the use of the first person plural in the very next verses: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth ... From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace” (John 1:14–16).

In the alternate story being told in these pages, the audience read John 20:30–31 as follows: Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you all—whether Jews, Samaritans, or Gentiles by the flesh—may become children of God, by joining together harmoniously in a community that holds Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of God. It is only through your participation in that harmonious community that you will have life in his name, now and for eternity.”

Of course, this story is a construct and a highly speculative one at that. If there is one fact we can state with complete assurance it is that the Gos-

<sup>14</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Vol. 4: Law and Love*, (ABRL; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 559–60.

<sup>15</sup> For thorough discussion of the role of the Paraclete, see George Johnston, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

pel narrative admits of several different and, to some extent, contradictory hypotheses of its audience's demographic and of the Gospel's rhetorical goals. How much simpler and more straightforward it would have been had the evangelist written an epistle rather than yet another Gospel, a prequel, perhaps, to the three short letters attributed to John within the Christian canon. Since he did not, I have done my best to write such a letter on his behalf. Here, then, is the Beloved Disciple's (hypothetical) Epistle to the Johannine Community:

The Beloved Disciple, who reclined next to Jesus at the last supper (13:25), witnessed his crucifixion, and testified to the truth (19:35), to the children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God (1:13). Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 1:7).

I give thanks to my God always for you, for you have been born again, or perhaps from above. You have kept God's word, and know in truth that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, who has sent by God to save the world by granting eternal life to all who believe.

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters: Let there be no divisions among you, but be united in the same mind and the same purpose. Now, I admit that quarrels among you have not yet been reported to me, by Chloe's people or anyone else for that matter (1 Cor 1:10–11). Nevertheless, we all know that whereas variety is the spice of life, birds of a feather flock together.<sup>12</sup> What I mean is that each of you says, "I worship on Mount Zion," or "I worship on Mount Gerizim," or "I need signs and wonders in order to believe" (1 Cor 1:12, John 4:20; 4:48), or that Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans (John 4:9). But now is the time to let go of the beliefs and practices of your ancestors, and join together as one people. For there is no longer Jew, nor Samaritan, nor Greek (Gal 3:28), for all of you know that Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through him (John 14:6).

Now, it is true that you were born into different nations, with different beliefs and practices. But through faith in Jesus you have become completely one, just as Jesus and God are one (John 17:20–23). Jesus the good shepherd has led the sheep out from one sheepfold but he has other sheep that do not belong to this fold whom he has also brought out. So there will be one flock, one shepherd (John 10:16). He died not only for the Jewish nation but to gather into one the dispersed children of God (John 11:51–52).

But beware, my little children, of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι! They have the devil as their father, and, like their father, they are liars and murderers. The hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God (John 16:2); in the meantime, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι will throw you out of the synagogue if you dare to show yourselves on the premises. Separate yourselves from them at all costs! For even those of you who were born to οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι are no longer of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι. The Ἰουδαῖοι have no love of God in them; because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God,

they are condemned to eternal death. They have loved darkness instead of light, they do evil and hate the light (John 3:18–20 NRSV). You, on the other hand, will bask in the light of eternal life.

But eternal life is by no means a solitary, individual reward. There is no eternal life apart from this community. It is true that in God's house there are many rooms, and that Jesus has gone ahead to prepare a place for you. But note that he said "you" in the plural, not in the singular (John 14:2–3). You, his beloved community, will relocate to God's house, when the time comes. In the meantime, God and Jesus have sent you the spirit of truth, the Paraclete. Only this community, not οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, not the Samaritans and not the Gentiles, will receive the spirit. The Paraclete will teach you everything, and keep the memory of Jesus's teachings alive in you (John 16:7–13).

In the meantime, my brothers and sisters, abide together in Jesus as he abides in you. Most important, love one another (John 15:4–13). Read the signs I have written in my Gospel, that you may together live out your belief that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31 NRSV).

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen (Rom 11:36 NRSV).

Sincerely yours, The Beloved Disciple, Ephesus, July 31, 88 CE.

Aside from this unknown and entirely fabricated epistle, many elements of the story I have told here will be familiar to those who occupy themselves in whole or in part with this Gospel. It is not news, for example, that the Gospel's so-called anti-language serves to create community solidarity, or that Jesus claimed to fulfill the messianic beliefs of the Samaritans.<sup>16</sup> It is therefore legitimate to ask: What does this rhetorical perspective contribute to our understanding of the Gospel? I would suggest the following: we need to consider that despite the seemingly individualistic language of this Gospel, the evangelist may presume a strongly communal aspect to salvation or eternal life. It is not possible to maintain belief in the "right" sorts of things in the "right" sorts of ways apart from others who do the same.

Second, it is interesting and potentially fruitful to remember that the communities of believers did not always divide neatly into Gentile Christian groups and Jewish Christian groups, as some of the Pauline letters and parts of Acts might imply. It is not only our own, postmodern, era that must deal with the tension between unity and diversity in the multiple and overlapping communities to which many of us belong.

Third, from a rhetorical perspective, one can suggest that the Gospel's negative portraits of Jews and Judaism are not so much reflections of or responses to Jewish persecution as tactical statements designed to create

<sup>16</sup> The term is used extensively in Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).



a positive identity as Johannine believers by fostering alienation from Judaism. A rhetorical perspective does not entirely neutralize these hostile statements, but it does provide an alternative to viewing the Jews as vicious persecutors and Johannine believers as passive victims.

Finally, a rhetorical perspective allows us to view the Gospel as a dynamic text that sets out to accomplish something, to transform its audience and create a community. Whether the story I have told has any relationship to history or not, at the very least it can remind us that the Gospels were not intended as repositories of information, about Jesus or about the communities that formed in his name, but as dynamic narratives that attempted to convince late first century audiences that their lives—their eternal lives—depended profoundly and entirely upon the life and death, the words and deeds of a first-century Galilean.

“WORKING THE WORKS OF GOD”  
IDENTITY AND BEHAVIOUR IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN\*

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1. *Introduction*

Ethics was a rather neglected field of research in the Gospel of John and judgments about the presence of ethics<sup>1</sup> in the Gospel were often negative.<sup>2</sup> One reason might be that the analytical categories for identifying ethical material are often limited to paraenesis, laws, virtue and vice lists; all of which are categories directly related to prescribing specific deeds. If

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\* This article is dedicated to Prof. Martin de Boer for his valuable contribution to New Testament scholarship.

<sup>1</sup> Michael Wolter, *Paulus* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2011), 310, defines ethics as “eine theoretische Reflection ..., die über Begründung und Eigenart eines aus der menschlichen Existenz in der Welt sich ergebendes Sollen nachdenkt.” This definition includes both deeds and the motivation of the deeds. This does not imply that everything that we know of as theology becomes ethics, but that theology has ethical implications. The term “moral” is used in a more restricted sense to refer to good deeds in particular.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Theobald, *Herrenworte im Johannesevangelium* (HBS 34; Freiburg i. Br.: Herder 2002), 565, for instance, remarks: “Ein *ethisches* Interesse an der Gestaltung der Lebensbereiche der Gemeinde wird im Buch nirgends greifbar.” Heinz-Dietrich Wendland, *Ethik des Neuen Testaments* (GNT 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 109, is under the impression of “einer gewaltigen Reduktion ethischer Fragen und Aussagen” in this Gospel, while Wolfgang Schrage, *Ethik des Neuen Testaments* (GNT 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 302, notes that the difference between John’s Gospel and the rest of the New Testament lies in the basic absence of “konkreter Weisungen oder ausführlicher paränetischer Abschnitte.” Wayne A. Meeks, “The Ethics of the Fourth Evangelist,” in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In honor of D. Moody Smith* (ed. R. Alan Culpepper, and C. Clifton Black; Louisville: Westminster John Knox 1996), 317–26, 317–19, is of the opinion that one should and could not speak of ethics in John’s Gospel. See further Birger Gerhardsson, *The Ethos of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Wipf & Stock, 1981). Recently publications by Udo Schnelle, “Johanneische Ethik,” in *Eschatologie und Ethik im frühen Christentum: Festschrift für Günter Haufe* (ed. Christfried Böttrich; Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang 2006), 309–27; Jan G. van der Watt, “Ethics and Ethos in the Gospel according to John,” *ZNW* 97 (2006): 147–76, Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), drew some attention to this neglected field of research. A volume on the ethics of John (to be published by Mohr Siebeck, edited by van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann), based on a conference held at the Radboud University Nijmegen in May 2010 contains several articles on different ethical issues and will also contribute to the stimulation of the debate.

such prescription of concrete deeds lacks, ethics is often considered to be absent. The situation changed somewhat lately because of the expansion of analytical categories that are used to identify ethically related material. This led to the use of terms like “implicit ethics,” looking at diverse aspects of the text like the language, social dimensions, and so on to isolate ethically relevant material.<sup>3</sup> The basic approach is that not only clear remarks about good or bad behaviour, like in virtue and vice lists, paraenesis, commands, etc. are considered when dealing with the text from an ethical perspective. Approaches like careful text analysis, paying close attention to the ethical material that might be present through the use of particular literary and rhetorical features, the implication of imagery used, values embedded in the narratives by way of the action lines of characters, etc. are utilized in the process of ethical description (for closer descriptions, see the sources mentioned above). Underlying this approach is of course also a text theory about the multi-valence of textual meaning. A text may have a primary meaning focusing on Christology, but on a secondary level it may also communicate ethical values, even if they are embedded in Christology.

This brings us to a definition of ethics. Within the above framework ethics is regarded as the meta-textual reflection of the content and reasons for moral action; thus, building a theory of moral behaviour includes not only concrete deeds that are required for good behaviour (for which the term ‘morals’ is used), but also the reasons and motivation behind such deeds. Why should a person behave in a particular way?<sup>4</sup> Thus the enquiry covers a wider area than simply the respective deeds.

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<sup>3</sup> The theoretical arguments are explained in, for instance, Ruben Zimmermann's article, “Jenseits von Indikativ und Imperativ. Entwurf einer “impliziten Ethik” des Paulus am Beispiel des 1. Korintherbriefes,” *TLZ* 132 (2007): 259–84; Jan van der Watt, “Ethics through the Power of Language: Some Exploration in the Gospel according to John,” in: *Moral Language in the New Testament* (ed. Zimmermann and van der Watt with Susanne Luther; WUNT 2/296; Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen 2010), 139–67; idem, “Ethics and Ethos”; Friedrich-Wilhelm Horn and Zimmermann, eds., *Jenseits von Indikativ und Imperativ* (WUNT 238; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009); Michael Wolter, *Theologie und Ethos im frühen Christentum* (WUNT 236; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009); Schnelle, “Johanneische Ethik”; Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*.

<sup>4</sup> An analytical description will be made of the way in which ethical material is presented in the Gospel. This is not the full picture and the material should not be used a-historically. All the relevant documents had their origin in particular historical situations which must be taken into account in the final analysis. The material described here should be interpreted against the historical background of the origin of these documents. Applying or not applying ethical material to present day situations again requires a specific hermeneutical procedure. Due to space and time restrictions these aspects cannot receive attention here.

2. *The Basis of Ethics in John*

Where does John<sup>5</sup> start when conceptualizing ethical behaviour? An indication is given in John 6:28 where the people ask Jesus what they should do to ‘work the works of God’ (ἐργαζώμεθα τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ<sup>6</sup>), an expression echoing the ethical question of the rich young man (so called in Matthew) in the Synoptics (Mark 10:17 par.). The answer in the Synoptics focuses on the requirements of the Law. In John 6:29 the focus of the answer shifts from the Law to faith in Jesus as Jesus’ subsequent reaction indicates. The essential *work* (singular) that is required is *faith in Jesus*,<sup>7</sup> making faith in Jesus the first and most crucial ethical action in the Johannine ethical framework. This hint to what ethics in John is all about, is confirmed by the Johannine view of what sin is. The essence of sin is not accepting Jesus as the one who is sent, also placing ethical responsibility on the act of accepting Jesus.

It should be noted that faith normally does not belong to the semantic field of “moral behaviour.”<sup>8</sup> By directly linking faith to moral behaviour John semantically broadens the semantic reference of the concept of faith. A functional overlap occurs between ethical action and faith emphasizing the link between the new identity of a person and his or her behaviour (cf. the rest of ch. 6, where eating [believing] the bread leads to a life of following Jesus). This new identity, expressed in an intimate relationship with Jesus, determines a person’s thoughts and deeds accordingly.<sup>9</sup> The new life indeed initiates an intimate relationship with God.

<sup>5</sup> “John” can refer to both the author or the Gospel, depending on the context, without implying anything about authorship.

<sup>6</sup> See also John 9:4 where a similar expression is used, referring to the work of the one who sent Jesus. Jesus immediately carries on to heal the blind man who then comes to faith (John 9:35–38).

<sup>7</sup> Van der Watt, *“Thou Shalt ... Do the Will of God: Does the New Testament Have Anything to Say for Today?”* (Nijmegen: Radboud University Nijmegen 2010), 27–9. For a detailed analysis of faith in the Gospel see idem, “Salvation in the Gospel according to John,” in *Salvation in the New Testament. Perspectives on Soteriology* (ed. van der Watt; NovTSup 121; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 101–31, here 119–22.

<sup>8</sup> I thank Michael Wolter for pointing this out to me. In this Gospel the word πιστεύω is used in different ways—its meaning is contextually determined. The “full story” of what faith involves is not told in each case, but is gradually developed through this Gospel, with the full description in the narrative of the blind man in chapter 9. The different contexts provide different aspects or building blocks of the total picture of what salvific faith implies. The context should help a person to determine what is intended in each case where the word is used.

<sup>9</sup> The fact that the origin and mission of Jesus is so often emphasized as the content of faith (12:44; 16:27, 30; 16:6, 8) should be seen in the context of the conflict as was explained earlier. Faith the really accept the identity of Jesus results in eliminating the ignorance of people who do not see in him the Revealer of God.

### 3. *Johannine Ethics as Relational Ethics*

Since faith as a relational concept translates into a basic ethical action in John, the dynamics of ethics is firmly embedded in a *relationship* between Jesus and the ethical agent. How should this particular relationship be envisaged in John, since different types of relationships may lead to different ethical expectations? For instance, a covenantal relationship obliges a person to adhere to the (lawful) requirements of the agreement as a motivation for any actions. A master-slave relationship expects certain behaviour from both master and slave. What exactly John then has in mind when speaking of the relationship between the Father, Son and believers will assist us in determining the nature of the ethical expectations resulting from this relationship. John uses a variety of concepts like filial imagery, the concepts of friendship, kingship, discipleship, and expressions such as ‘staying or remaining in’ (*Immanenzformeln*),<sup>10</sup> to highlight the different aspects of the qualitative nature of the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the disciples from which behaviour is motivated and determined. Let us now turn our attention to a few of these concepts in order to determine the nature of the envisaged relationship between the Father, Son, and believers.

a) The well-developed *filial language* and imagery<sup>11</sup> in the Gospel have strong ethical undertones. It is, for instance, stated by Jesus in 8:38–39, 41 that a child behaves like his father, in other words, a child of God will indeed act like a child of God. Why is it that John simply assumes this filial maxim as accepted truth on the basis of which he then develops his ethical arguments in Chapter 8, characterizing his opponents as children of the devil (8:44)? Starting from these types of socially based and accepted filial assumptions ethics is firmly grounded in the tradition and ethos<sup>12</sup> of ancient Mediterranean cultures. Ethical structures familiar to the first readers are thus cognitively activated, for instance, that the father (*pater familias*) is the source of

<sup>10</sup> Klaus Scholtissek, *In ihm sein und bleiben: die Sprache der Immanenz in den johanneischen Schriften* (Freiburg i.B.: Herder, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> See Jan G. van der Watt, *Family of the King. Dynamics of Metaphor in the Gospel according to John* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 161–393.

<sup>12</sup> The term *ethos*, as understood here, draws attention to two important elements—a fixed pattern (*canon*) of behaviour within a community, which is based on the shared knowledge of the particular group (Wolter, *Theologie*, 128–36), and the interrelatedness between behaviour and identity, which provides the rationale for why people act as they do. According to Leander E. Keck, “On the Ethos of Early Christians,” *JAAR* 42 (1974): 435–52, here 490, it expresses in the “life-style of a group or society.” Cf. also Thomas Schmeller, “Neutestamentliches Gruppenethos,” in *Der neue Mensch in Christus: hellenistische Anthropologie und Ethik im Neuen Testament* (ed. Johannes Beutler; QD 190; Freiburg i.B.: Herder, 2001), 120–34.

ethical directives and expectations and a child should behave according to his will.<sup>13</sup> John applies these accepted social conventions figuratively to the family of God in order to clarify certain aspects of the relationship between God and humans, *inter alia* providing ethical analogies explaining why a believer should act according to God's will or should follow the example of Jesus. Thus the social dynamics of an ancient family serves as a matrix within which ethics could and must be understood. It serves as a heuristic mechanism,<sup>14</sup> analogically explaining the ethical dynamics in John, i.e. what the ethical orientation is about, what the source of ethics is, how and why a child should live out his or her identity, why children of God should be loyal and obedient and what such obedience means, etc.

b) *Friendship* is also used by the Johannine Jesus to explain the intimate relationship between the Father, Son and disciples by highlighting certain qualities of this relationship. Friendship within the Greco-Roman world<sup>15</sup> was a central social category with a particular set of expectations. It formed a key topic for discussion by numerous ancient authors.<sup>16</sup> John

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<sup>13</sup> Reasons for a child to do what his father does are multiple. It is socially motivated. Aristotle (*Eth. nic.* 8.11.2–3) argues that the parent bestows many benefits on the child which implies that they should receive honour and service. Parents indeed love their children as part of themselves while children love their parents as the source of their being and their superiors on the basis of their birth, upbringing and education (*Eth. nic.* 8.12.1,5). Because parents cared for their children and gave them what they needed, the children were obliged to return these gestures by being responsive and obedient and thus honouring their parents concretely by acting according to their will (so Josephus, *Ant.* 4.260–64; 289. see also Philo, *Spec.* 2.243; *Decal.* 118; *Deus* 3.17–18; Cicero, *Off.* 1.17). Epictetus gives a penetrating description of the duties of a “son” in Book 2.10.7 of the discourses reported by Arrian: Absolute help, respect, protection etc. are required. As Merrill T. Gilbertson, *The Way it was in Bible Times* (Augsburg: Minnesota, 1959), 44 formulated it: “The principal duties of the children in this home were obedience and reverence.” A child should behave like his father, showing their gratitude through their obedience. It is religiously motivated—god gave the child to the parent which makes the parent god's agent, and therefore honouring the parent was regarded as part of the religious duty of a child. “For parents are the servants of God for the task of begetting children, and he who dishonours the servant dishonours also the Lord” (Philo, *Decal.* 120). Karl Christ, *The Romans: An Introduction to Their History and Civilisation* (London: Hogarth, 1984), 10 elaborates further: “For its children the duty of religiously sanctioned obligations towards the parents corresponded to that of the relations between men and gods. And this duty was designated by the same word, *pietas*.”

<sup>14</sup> Van der Watt, *Family*, 161–393; idem, *Ethics and Ethos*, 147–76; idem, *Thou shalt*, 43–50.

<sup>15</sup> The ideas of friendship in the Greek and Roman worlds are closely connected and can be discussed together. There are minor distinctions, which become evident if one reads Aristotle and Cicero together (the one addressed to a more general audience and the other to a more elite audience). The basic lines are nevertheless interwoven. So Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John*. Vol. 1 and 2 (Peabody: Hendrikson, 2003), 1006.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Plato (*Lysis*); Aristotle (*Eth. nic.*, especially books 8–9; *Eth. eud.* 7.1234b–1246a); Dio Chrysostom (*Third Discourse on Kingship* 99–100); Cicero (*Amic.*); Seneca (*Lucil.* 3); Plutarch (*Many Friends, Mor.* 93A–97B) and others. See also David Konstan, “Friendship, Frank-

activates this social category, for instance, *via* a maxim in 15:13 stating that love leads to the willingness to lay down one's life for (ὕπερ) one's friend. This relates to and is motivated by the willingness to give everything for the other up to the point of giving your life, i.e. to share everything, including loyalty, unity, service, etc.<sup>17</sup> Jesus sets the example: By laying down his life in friendship and love, Jesus realizes "the highest that can be found in the ethical field as ideal behaviour"<sup>18</sup> implying that the disciples are also expected to lay down their lives, if they are truly friends. The maxim applies to them as it applies to Jesus.<sup>19</sup>

c) The *Immanenzformeln* used in the Gospel, that is, that the disciples should remain/be in Jesus (or the Father) and *vice versa*, is another pregnant way of expressing the intimate relationship between Jesus and the believers, of course with definite ethical implications. The imagery of the vine and branches in John 15:1–8 is a pertinent example where the "remaining" of the disciples in Jesus and *vice versa* is a prerequisite for bearing fruit—a direct reference to their required positive ethical behaviour which can only be attained in this intimate relation with Jesus (John 15:9–17). Christology determines ethics. This abiding in the Father and Son implies an interrelatedness where the disciple is submerged in the thought and action mould of the Father and Son, abiding in their love, obediently doing what they have done (John 15:9–10).

In summary: to do the work of God is to believe in Jesus, which results in an intimate relationship between the Father, the Son, and believers. The true nature and characteristics of this relationship is developed through

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ness and Flattery," in *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech: Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World* (ed. John T. Fitzgerald; Leiden: Brill 1996) 7–19; Gustav Stählin "φιλία κτλ," *TDNT* 9:147–71, here 152.

<sup>17</sup> Plato (*Lysis* 207c) remarks: "And, you know, friends are said to have everything in common ..." See further Plato, *Ep.* 6 where the union between friends is highly praised—friends are welded and bound together in a state of friendship and fellowship. In *Republic* 5, Plato places the right hand of fellowship within the context of close and honourable relationships. Similar Jewish views are found, for instance, in the story of David and Jonathan. In 1 Sam 18:1 it we read: 'the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.' (See also 1 Sam 18:3; 20:17; Deut 13:6.) A friend should only strive for what is best for your friend and should always be willing to help (see Ps 15:3; see also Sir 22:25). Stählin, "φιλία," 152 quotes the following as evidence: "Eur. *Or.*, 735; *Andr.*, 376 f. and Plat. *Lys.*, 207c; *Phaedr.*, 279c; *Leg.*, V, 739c; *Resp.*, V, 449c; IV, 424a by way of Aristot. *Eth. Nic.*, IX, 11, p. 1159b, 31 f.; *Eth. Eud.*, VII, 2, p. 1237b, 32 f.; 1238a, 16; *Pol.*, II, 5, p. 1263a, 30 to the later period, Diog. L., VI, 37 and 72; Philo *Vit. Mos.*, I, 156; Muson. *Fr.*, 13 (p. 67)."

<sup>18</sup> Sjeff van Tilborg, *Imaginative Love in John* (Biblical Interpretation Series 2; Leiden: Brill, 1993), 154.

<sup>19</sup> The same pattern is found in 12:24 where a maxim about a grain of wheat forms the basis of explaining the ethical implications.

different concepts (i.e. childhood, friendship, “remaining in ...”), expressing the intimacy of this relationship in different ways. In analogy with the description of these intimate types of relationships, John develops his ethical arguments, i.e. being as obedient as a child to a father, as loyal and willing to serve as a friend, being as dependent on Jesus as a branch is on the vine, etc. In other words, in reflecting on the ethics of John one should constantly ask: how would a person have acted who found himself in these kinds of relationships?

#### 4. *Mediation of the Ethical Contents*

It is one thing to say that ethics is defined through relationships, but quite another to say what the contents of ethics are and how these contents are in turn mediated to the ethical agents. How is ethical information conveyed within the above described intimate relationship?

Knowledge of God and his will is mediated through Jesus Christ (John 1:1, 8), embedding ethics in Christology. Jesus serves as the point where God’s revelation (also regarding ethics) and human perception intersect. John describes this mediation of ethical information in a variety of ways. Three primary and interrelated ways of expressing Jesus’ ethical role are: Jesus’ *example*, the *teaching* by and of Jesus to his disciples and Jesus’ *commandments*. Obviously, these aspects should not be seen in isolation from the broader Christological framework, but is indeed integrally part of it, with Jesus as the Agent of God who came to reveal the Father and bring eternal life, thus constituting the people of God within this world.

i) By washing their feet, Jesus gave a practical and concrete *example* to his disciples (13:15): “For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.” This was not the only example Jesus gave. His words and behaviour in general served as examples to his disciples.<sup>20</sup> This idea is echoed in 14:12: “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do.” Thus a standard is set by the Son which the believer is obliged to follow. The ethical agents should orientate themselves towards the qualitative identity of Jesus as well as towards his deeds. For instance,

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<sup>20</sup> This is not strange, since the multiple surveys of characters in John illustrated the typological nature of these characters. They reflect a certain pattern of behaviour. In the case of Jesus he is also presenting a type—he represents the truth and light (John 14:6) and should therefore be followed. Characterization in John is a popular research theme with accompanying differences of opinion; cf. Cornelis Bennema, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), 2–21, for a good overview of some of the most important views.



Jesus died to bear fruit; his disciples should follow likewise (John 12:24–26). In short, Jesus, both in his identity as person as well as through his loving deeds, serves as an ethical example for what a believer ought to be and do.

These exemplary statements in the Gospel obviously assume that the recipients knew how Jesus behaved, or else these statements would make little sense. It must be assumed that these ethical references to Jesus are most probably related to the Jesus tradition as it is *inter alia* preserved in the Gospel. The ethos of the Johannine group was expressed through such knowledge. In this way Jesus is and remains the true way to the Father (14:6), who makes the Father known (1:18).

ii) But how are the believers equipped with this revelatory knowledge? In his Gospel John uses the imagery of *education* (in a broad sense of conveying information) that goes hand in hand with Jesus, the teacher, giving commandments. In the ethical argument with his opponents in John 8 the Johannine Jesus notes that his education by the Father forms the basis of his behaviour (8:28): “... I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught (ἐδιδάξεν) me.” This reference most probably echoes 5:19–21 where Jesus argues that he was educated<sup>21</sup> by the Father which serves as basis of his ability to do what he does.<sup>22</sup>

The disciples are likewise taught by Jesus: he is their *didaskalos*<sup>23</sup> (1:38; 3:2; 11:28; 13:13–14; 20:16), the one who teaches them through his example,

<sup>21</sup> The author of John's Gospel most probably had Jewish education in mind when he used this imagery, including, for instance, moral education, and vocational training (1 Sam 16:11; 2 Kgs 4:18; Prov 1:8; 6:20; 23:22; 31:26; Deut 6:6–25; see also *t. Qidd.* 1.11b; Philo, *Leg.* 2.90; *Post.* 181).

<sup>22</sup> Traditions that were transmitted from fathers to their children in other words, education were highly regarded as something to protect, desire, and to passionately obey (1 Macc 1:54–58; 2:15–28; 4:36–43; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.3.1 §72). Josephus (*Ag. Ap.* 2.204) describes the sobriety with which parents should educate their children in the laws and traditions: “It also commands us to bring those children up in learning and to exercise them in the laws, and make them acquainted with the acts of their predecessors, in order to their imitation of them ...” (see also *Ant.* 1.2.3, 68–69; *b. Qidd.* 82ab). Philo (*Spec.* 2.236; cf. Eph 6:4; see also other opinions like Tacitus, *Dial.* 28–29; Syriac Menander 2.20; Martial, *Epigrams* 11.39; Seneca the Younger, *Clem.* 3.38.2) remarked that no father would give his child instruction foreign to virtue. In Jewish contexts education was centered around the teaching of the law of the Lord (Ps 119:1; Gen 18:19; Deut 30:16; Prov 2:6). See also Jan G. van der Watt, “Der Meisterschüler Gottes (Von der Lehre des Sohnes)—Joh 5,19–23,” in *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu* (ed. Ruben Zimmermann; Gütersloher: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007), 745–54; C. Kingsley Barrett, *The Gospel according to St John* (London: SPCK, 1978), 259.

<sup>23</sup> The term διδάσκαλος is used at least six times of Jesus in the Gospel (1:38; 3:2; 11:28; 13:13, 14; 20:16). It is also used once by Jesus for Nicodemus (3:10). In all the cases (except in 13:13–14) people refer to Jesus as teacher: Martha in 11:28; Maria in 20:16; Nicodemus in 3:2 and two of his prospective disciples in 1:38. In 13:13–14 Jesus remarks that his disciples call him teacher and he agrees. This he uses to develop his argument that they should follow his example.

his words and deeds as we have previously seen. Even though Jesus departed, the educational process still continues. He is still with them through the presence of the Spirit-Paraclete (14:15–26) as well as in his words/commandments (14:23–24), as it is now embodied in the tradition and ethos of the Johannine group.

Let us turn to the ethical role of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit guides and educates believers in what Jesus did: "the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things (ἐκεῖνος ὑμᾶς διδάξει πάντα) and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (14:26). The Spirit-Paraclete serves as facilitator of the message of Jesus and is thus the teacher by extension. The ethics of John have this pertinent pneumatic side, which functions in tandem with the confines of the message of and about Jesus (cf. also 20:22–23). This link between the (traditional) teachings of Jesus and the work of the Spirit expresses an important ethical insight and tension: ethics is bound to the past, i.e. the message of Jesus, but is kept alive and applicable in the Johannine group through the guidance of the Spirit. Moral decisions are facilitated by the Spirit in line with the teachings of Jesus. What believers do should reflect what Jesus did, and all of this under the guidance of the Spirit, concretizing this type of action in new forms. Concrete detailed actions are not spelled out when it comes to John reminding his readers of what they know, but part of their ethos was to act like Jesus acted and to love and serve one another because they are part of God's people. This has more to do with embeddedness within as social frame typified by a living tradition and less to do with an objective abstract set of fixed rules of what is right and wrong.

iii) The *commandments*<sup>24</sup> (ἐντολή) of Jesus also serve as ethical indicators. An analysis of the use of the word (commandment) in the Gospel shows that the variety of commandments of Jesus are all related to different aspects of love (see, for instance, 13:34; 14:15, 21; 15:12), requiring obedience. As was mentioned earlier, the prime example of Jesus' love is giving his life for his followers and friends (10:17–18 in context; 12:23–24; 15:9–14). The ethical significance of Jesus' death is expressed in at least two distin-

<sup>24</sup> The word ἐντολή refers to an action (verbal, written or otherwise) with (supposedly) authority behind it requiring a person to do something. It may be used in a spectrum of meanings covering very authoritative commands equal to laws (so for the Old Testament law—Luke 23:56; Heb 7:18), the total of legal ordinances (Matt 5:19; 19:17; Mark 10:19; Luke 1:6) to ordinary requests and could be translated with mandate, command, order, ordinance, injunction, instruction, and the like. Everybody with presumed authority could give a command, from God, the king to ordinary people (11:57) (see BDAG, *ad loc.*; Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon* [New York: UBS, 1988], *ad loc.*) The context is therefore determinative in establishing the use and function of the word.

guishable images, both related to ethics, namely, a friend laying down his life (15:13), a seed dying to bear fruit (12:24–26). This seems to form the core of Jesus' ethical commandments. Like him believers should also be willing to lay down their lives.<sup>25</sup> Love implies a life-sacrificing act, serving the Father, the Son, and believers: "Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also" (12:25–26).

In 15:13 love is also expressed in terms of laying down your life for a *friend*. As was mentioned before, laying down your life for somebody is the apex of what could be done for others. Giving one's life is the ultimate gift, inclusive of all else you can give. It means total sacrifice, implying that everything lesser than this great sacrifice will also be given; there is no need to tell a person not to harm or deceive or steal since this is per definition included in the requirement of laying down one's life. Implicit in this remark is the willingness to do *everything* else that could benefit the group. It is an inclusive expression denoting total dedication and loyalty to the interests of a person's friends. This should also be expressed in helping service to the group (12:26). This prescription is thus open-ended and relies upon the ability of the moral agent to act in line with this command under the guidance of the Spirit (15:12–14). Indeed, a characteristic of Johannine ethics is the consistent focus on the well-being of the group. The group should be protected, sustained, helped, and expanded. This also seems to be a fixed assumption in the ethical thinking of John.

As an additional note: Love also includes those outside the group—if a child should behave like his father, then believers who claim their God is their Father should have the attitude of God towards the world—God loves them so much that by giving his Son he also offers them the possibility of salvation (3:16). Part of the commandments of Jesus that determines the ethos of the disciples was to be sent to this world as Jesus was sent, with the message of salvation (17:18; 20:21).

In summary: determining which actions to take includes what would serve the honour of God and God's will (15:7), what would reflect the belief in, and consequently the behaviour of Jesus, what would benefit and serve fellow-believers and indeed other people, preserving the identity and existence of the in-group and maintaining the relationship with God. Obviously the gist of what should be done is not determined by individual

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<sup>25</sup> Wolter, *Paulus*, 104, note 17, refers to Plato, *Symp.* 179b; Aristoteles, *Eth. nic.* 1169a 19–20; *Vita Philonidis* 22; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2,7,3 where the relationship between friendship, love and death is described.

rules forbidding things, but all actions are allowed that serve the honour and will of God according to the example and commandments of Jesus, sustaining the faith relationship with the Father and Son through the guidance of the Spirit. Such actions are characterized as self-giving love. They create life through service within the group and also lead to mission outside of the group.

It should be noted that within such a relationship the two aspects of feeling obliged to do something and ‘growing’ in your ethical sensitivity were both essentially part of the ethical dynamics<sup>26</sup> flowing from and being inspired by the relationship itself.

Having said that love implies service, a problem with Johannine ethics is still that concrete examples of love lack, apart from washing feet. Are there any other indications of what was expected of the Johannine believers on a concrete level according to the Gospel?

Perhaps there is another avenue to explore. The Gospel of John is a narrative with characters acting. Actions are embedded in, and are expressions of, moral value systems, which reflect the underlying value system suggested and accepted in this narrative.<sup>27</sup> By tracing the action lines the values expressed may be described, pointing to the expected behaviour. Two lines will be explored: a) action lines representing deviant behaviour and b) action lines that are regarded as positive moral behaviour.

a) In determining the ethical dynamics of a document deviating behaviour serves as an important clue, since it concretely reflects conflicting value systems. Deviating behaviour indicates trespassing of real or imagined criteria for behaviour. By tracing the action lines in the narrative it becomes evident which ethical aspects are disputed and which value systems are adhered to.

According to the narrative the Jewish opponents experienced Jesus’ behaviour as deviating as far as two related issues are concerned, namely, in relation to the Sabbath (on which he healed—5:18; 7:19–24) and in relation to his claims that were interpreted by Jesus’ opponents as him declaring himself as God (5:18; 10:33).<sup>28</sup> They felt he misled people. There does not

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<sup>26</sup> I thank Bill Loader for especially emphasizing this.

<sup>27</sup> The overlap between the value system in the narrative and the real intended audience should and could not automatically be assumed—that would be referential fallacy. However, if the ethos of the original intended audience is assumed to be encoded in these documents (i.e. they address real people in a serious and authentic way) then it can be assumed that the value systems should show some overlap in order to communicate effectively.

<sup>28</sup> The reference to the officer hitting Jesus in the face because of the way he answered the high priest (18:22–23) may be an ironic reference to the status of Jesus, which is not

seem to be any other indication of deviant behaviour that Jesus is blamed for, especially not on a moral level regarding ordinary every day issues.

The narrated Jesus, on the other hand, felt that the essence of the deviant behaviour of the opponents lies in the fact that they do not believe in, accept or honour him as the one who is sent from God (1:9–11; 3:17–20; 5:44). Instead they hate him and his disciples (7:7; 15:18, 25). The reason is *inter alia* that they are more concerned about their own honour and interests<sup>29</sup> than that of God (which Jesus represents—12:43).<sup>30</sup> This causes the opponents' to behave in a *morally* deviant manner: they are murderers, because they want to kill Jesus, they are liars, because they deny their own situation (9:41) and do not acknowledge who Jesus is. Consequently they hatefully vilify him and call him a blasphemer.<sup>31</sup> They are also thieves, because they want to steal and kill the sheep that belong to the fold (10:7–10, 20; 16:2).<sup>32</sup>

The major difference between the two views above is evident on a *moral* level. The negative attitude of the opponents towards Jesus results in immoral behaviour—they kill, lie, deceive and steal, characteristics of their father, the devil.

The important ethical point here is the influence of a particular perspective and orientation in forming ethical judgments. Depending on the position taken, the same action may be regarded as execution or murder, truth or lie. The system of values used, or perspective taken, is central in determining and judging the ethical nature of the actions. We will return to this.

It is remarkable that there is basically no reference to deviant behaviour relating to ordinary everyday matters, especially in the case of Jesus and his disciples. In the Gospel narrative Jesus and his disciples live ordinary lives, such as going to feasts, living with families, eating, buying, moving

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realized by the officer. Jesus consequently asks the officer which words were not good. No answer is given, to indicate the ironic nature of the officer's behaviour.

<sup>29</sup> Self-interest results in deviant behaviour from the perspective of Jesus. In 12:25 it is stated: 'He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.' It is in the believer's interest not to engage in this kind of self-interest but to find themselves in relation to the Father, Son and other believers.

<sup>30</sup> The behaviour of Diotrephes in 3 John also reflect conflict of authority—he does not acknowledge the authority of the elder, exercise his authority over others in an effort to establish his own position, which deviates from the interests of the group—3 John 9 states: "Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge my authority."

<sup>31</sup> For a detailed treatment of vilification in the Gospel see Jan G. van der Watt and Kobus Kok, "Geweld in die Evangelie van liefde: Die perspektief in die Evangelie van Johannes op geweld teen Jesus en sy dissipels," *HvTSt* 64 (2008): 1793–812.

<sup>32</sup> Typically Judas is also a thief (12:6) apart from the fact that he is a traitor.

amongst the crowds etc., yes they live their everyday lives without indication of moral deviancy (except that some ironically blamed Jesus for misleading the people). I could find no evidence of a clash with their surrounding communities on a moral level, which could lead to the conclusion that they have an alternative set of ethics that served as an anti-ethical system to that of their environment. They seem to have ‘melted into’ their environment in this regard. There is an uncritical stance of silence in the Gospel towards their moral behaviour within their surroundings.

How can this absence of broader moral sensitivity be explained? The problem is that argumentation based on silence is questionable. It can only remain speculation. But speculation is also not without value, since it poses possibilities that can be explored further. It might be that the silence about specific and particular moral behaviour is because of the situation addressed by these documents and their point of view. Only the problem of the acceptance of Jesus and his disciples is addressed. Another option, however, is that there were indeed no real problems on a moral level and that the believers behaved according to generally accepted standards of the day within the communities within which they lived. The possibility that the Johannine group behaved in tandem with the general expectations of the community in which they lived should be taken as a real possibility.<sup>33</sup>

The question is now: do we have any further evidence in the Gospel that could help us in determining the possible moral behaviour of the Johannine believers?

b) Moral decisions are inherently part of behaviour in everyday situations. To what extent do such values become evident in the Gospel narrative, and what are they?

Surveying the action lines within the context of the narrative of John's Gospel it becomes evident that the full scope of moral situations envisaged by the Decalogue<sup>34</sup> is indeed present and addressed.<sup>35</sup> In the Gospel the

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<sup>33</sup> See Wolter, *Paulus*, 361, 321 on Paul's view on the relationship between believers and the morals of the world they lived in.

<sup>34</sup> It must be noted that the Decalogue is not mentioned explicitly in the Gospel, neither are the situations in this Gospel where moral issues are addressed explicitly or directly linked to the Decalogue νόμος should not be equated with the Decalogue in this Gospel). This does not exclude the possibility of the presence, at least implicitly, of ideas related to or associated with the Decalogue. I am not suggesting that the author specifically had the Decalogue as Decalogue in mind. Some of the values that emerged were common to ancient Mediterranean societies, whether they were Jewish or not, such as the prohibition of murder, many familial matters, or false witness. These are not necessarily Jewish, neither are they unique to the Decalogue. Obviously there are values like not stealing or killing that were shared by the Mediterranean society as a whole, irrespective of social orientation (Jew, non-Jew, or Christian). However, there are also distinctive values related to the Sab-

Johannine group is essentially portrayed as a predominantly Jewish group that lives within a Jewish setting.<sup>36</sup> Their basic value system initially must have corresponded with that of the Jews; socially it should be expected that they would have continued within that frame of values, except where there was a conflict of interests, which, as we have already seen focused on ritual and theological issues rather than on moral issues.<sup>37</sup>

Judging by the prevalent action lines the Jewish law and tradition seem to be the moral bedrock of the value system in the Gospel. The underlying value system in this Gospel could plausibly be linked to the Jewish moral tradition.<sup>38</sup> As far as the Jewish value system is concerned there is no evident contradiction in the Gospel. This value system is commonly accepted.

Even though the relevance of the law and Scriptures are acknowledged by both, there is an important but crucial difference in their treatment of the law and Scriptures, which lies in the difference in interpreting these documents, as was mentioned earlier.

How should the function of the Scriptures and Law be envisaged in the Gospel? There is insufficient time to survey the function of the law in the Gospel in any detail here.<sup>39</sup> At this point it will suffice to note that Jesus does not reject the law and Scriptures as being without any meaning or

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bath, or honouring the only true God of Israel in specific ways, that are not typical of non-Jewish communities that determine action lines in the Gospel. The fact that the problems related to Jesus focus on these issues points to in the direction of a ritual-religious and not a moral quarrel. The context of the narrative is Jewish, the opponents are Jewish, and in virtually all cases where there are discussions about particular issues they are presented within the juristic framework of the Law of Moses. Within this context one cannot deny that the frame of reference is predominantly that of the Jewish law and tradition.

<sup>35</sup> The tenth commandment is not explicitly dealt with in the Gospel. See van der Watt, *Ethics and Ethos*, 147–76 for a more detailed description. For the honour and worship of one God see 2:13–17; 4:23–24; 10:33; 17:3; Sabbath see 5:9; 7:22–24; 9:14; Family relations are assumed as basic imagery, i.e. honouring your father, listening to him etc.; Murder see 5:18; 7:19 and 8:44; 11:53; Stealing see 12:6; Marriage see 4:16–18; 7:53–8:11; Lies/deception see 8:44.

<sup>36</sup> Jesus and his disciples were Jews who went to the temple, celebrated their feasts, discussed religious issues with Jewish crowds and leadership, etc.

<sup>37</sup> It might be argued that the Gospel was only written later when the groups severed, but the evidence from the Gospel indicates a strong relation to their Jewish ancestry with Jesus as the King of the Jews.

<sup>38</sup> See Peter J. Tomson, *“If this be from heaven ...”: Jesus and the New Testament Authors in Their Relationship to Judaism* (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 2001), 86–101 on the role of the law in Jewish societies. The influence of the law should not be limited to prescribing behaviour; it also outlined social identity both internally and externally.

<sup>39</sup> See however the excellent survey of William R.G. Loader, *Jesus' Attitude Towards the Law* (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 432–91 as well as the monograph of Severino Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel: The Torah and the Gospel, Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity according to John* (NovTSup 42; Leiden: Brill, 1975).

influence;<sup>40</sup> to the contrary. They witness to the truth, to Jesus. The main difference between him and his opponents lies in Jesus' evaluation, and consequently his interpretation, of the law and Scriptures. The law and Scriptures indeed witness to him, thus turning Jesus into the focal point of the law and Scriptures—something the Jews did not acknowledge (5:39–40, 46–47). As a result, Jesus also takes on the position of judge and re-interpreter of both (5:22). The message of the law is measured against him. Right judgment (5:30; 7:24) should be made in the light of, and on the basis of, the functional and revelatory presence of Jesus, since he received the authority to judge from God, the Father (5:27). The judgment of Jesus is what ratifies and qualifies other judgements as valid and true (8:16) since his judgements are in line with the judgment of the Father, the original giver of the law (5:22–23; 8:16).<sup>41</sup> On this basis Jesus did not challenge the authority of the law as such, but the way the Jews interpreted the law, i.e. the way their interpretation of the law was distorted by them in not relating it to Jesus. In his discussion with the Jews about the Sabbath he warns them not to judge by appearances (μὴ κρίνετε κατ' ὄψιν), but to judge with right judgment (7:24). In another instance he accuses them of judging by human standards, according to the flesh (8:15), because they misjudged Jesus and therefore lack true judgment. This becomes evident in their actions of hatred, murder and lies. Jesus' judgments are true, implying that true judgments should be made from his perspective. For example, the Jews want to kill him, seeing it from their perspective as an execution. From the perspective of Jesus it is viewed as an act of murder. The same commandment is interpreted in two different ways from two different perspectives with two different results. Deciding which is true or false is indeed a matter of perspective, Christological perspective.

### 5. Conclusion

The structure of the ethical dynamics of John may be summarized as follows:

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<sup>40</sup> Allen Verhey, *The Great Reversal: Ethics and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1984), 142 aptly remarks, “The law of Moses apparently still stands ... John never discards or discredits the law ... the refusal to come to Jesus is a refusal to ... keep the law ... The law still stands.” Loader, *Jesus' Attitude*, 461–75, 483–91 emphasizes the important witnessing character of the law and Scriptures.

<sup>41</sup> The relationship between lawgiver and judgment frames this remark. The lawgiver (normally the king in secular situations and in religious situations the [G]od) is judge exactly because he is lawgiver. He is the giver and protector of the law, knows what it means, and can therefore judge whether it is trespassed or not.



God is the source of all ethics, and his ethical will is mediated through Christ, implying that ethical behaviour is Christologically modelled. This process begins with faith in Jesus that leads to an intimate relationship between the Father, Son and believers and thus a new identity in unity with God, which is described in terms of concepts like childhood, friendship and *κοινωνία*. Through these concepts the intimate relationship on the basis of which ethics unfolds is developed and described—the essence of ethics in John is thus relational, in other words, actions are motivated by, and are performed on the basis of these specific intimate relationships. The ethical agent should constantly ask what his or her behavior should be like to give authentic expression to these relationships of childhood or friendship.

Ethical behaviour is indeed Christologically modelled. Christ is the true example, and serves as such, of ethical behaviour to his disciples. He did so through his words and deeds, educating them in the right ways and guiding them through his commandments. These examples are preserved in the Gospel and tradition of the Johannine group forming part of the ethos of the group. The primary example Jesus gave is love, which is an all-inclusive concept—it requires a person to lay down his life for his friends or group as an ultimate illustration of this love. Inclusive in this love is the willingness to give everything up to the point of one's own life for others. Love aims at creating life, both spiritually and earthly, by helping others in need. The Spirit assists moral agents by guiding and educating them in the words and behaviour of Jesus, facilitating moral decisions according to the teachings of Jesus. An important ethical insight and tension is evident: ethics is bound to the past, i.e. the message of Jesus, but is kept alive and applicable through the guidance of the Spirit. Moral decisions are facilitated by the Spirit in line with the teachings of Jesus. What believers do should reflect what Jesus did, and under the guidance of the Spirit, these types of actions are concretized in new forms.

In their everyday lives Jesus and his followers seemed to have shared the Jewish moral value system and otherwise blended into the community where they lived according to generally accepted expectations. No ethical system in opposition to the generally accepted norms is developed. However, there is clearly a difference in the interpretation of these values between Jesus and his followers in relation to the Jews of the time. The Scriptures now witnessed concerning Jesus. The value system of the Scriptures is interpreted through the lens of Jesus. Moral behaviour is determined in the light of what Jesus stands for and represents. Wherever conflict arose as to what line of actions should be taken, loyalty to Christ was primary and determinative.

## ALTERNATIVE PATRONAGE IN JOHN 2:1–11\*

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### 1. *Introduction*

Within John, the importance of John 2:1–11 is hard to overestimate,<sup>1</sup> as the pericope constitutes the beginning of the famous signs that Jesus performs as recorded in the Fourth Gospel as part of its process of christological identification,<sup>2</sup> culminating in Jesus' death and resurrection, the final fulfillment of Jesus' statement in John 1:50–51.<sup>3</sup> The road towards this finale is the road of Jesus' earthly revelation as the Christ, i.e. that of his heavenly δόξα through and in the earthly σάρξ.<sup>4</sup>

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\* Writing this essay in honor of Martin de Boer also gave me opportunity to reflect on his academic leadership, which, no doubt due to a Christian inspiration and a reticent personality, did and does indeed reflect qualities that I think are there in John's portrayal of Jesus as patron as well.—I am grateful to Mr. Philip Whittaker, Haarlem, for proofreading this study.

<sup>1</sup> See Udo Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (THKNT 4; Leipzig: Evangelischer Verlagsanstalt, 1998), 95; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium* 1 (HTKNT 4.1; Freiburg: Herder, 1979), 328–29; Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (SP 4; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 66.

<sup>2</sup> So, here: Raymond F. Collins, "Cana (Jn 2:1–12)—the First of His Signs or the Key to his Signs," in: idem: *These Things Have Been Written* (Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs 2; Leuven: Peeters, 1990), 158–82, 182; see also Christian Welck, *Erzählte Zeichen* (WUNT 2/69; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 134, noting that ἀρχή means both origin and beginning, and using the word "prototype" to describe the function of the miracle in Cana. See also Birger Olsson, *Structure and Meaning in the Fourth Gospel* (ConBNT 6; Lund: Gleerup, 1976), 67–68.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998), 69. This, rather than John 13:1–30, is the goal of Jesus' self-revelation. Different: Michèle Morgen, "Le festin des noces de Cana (Jn 2, 1–11) et le repas d'adieu (Jn 13, 1–30)," in *Nourriture et Repas dans les milieux juifs et chrétiens de l'antiquité* (ed. Michel Quesnel, Yves-Marie Blanchard and Claude Tassin; LD 178; FS Charles Perrot; Paris: Cerf, 1999), 139–54.

<sup>4</sup> So e.g. Schnackenburg, *Johannesevangelium*, 340. It is, however, with Jörg Frey, *Die johanneische Eschatologie* 3 (WUNT 117; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 230, in a sense still a sarkic, mediated, vision, as may be suggested by John 17:24, probably differentiating between the earthly mediated glory of Jesus and the heavenly, unmediated *beata visio*, as it occurs in John 1:18 as well, see also 1 John 3:2.

However, despite its widely acknowledged importance, the kind of point that John 2:1–11, the wedding in Cana,<sup>5</sup> seeks to make remains a debated issue. This essay argues that a plausible interpretation of the entire pericope can be found when it is interpreted with the background of (divine) patronage in the Greco-Roman world, taking into account the miraculous provision of wine, the large quantity of it, and its quality. Jesus appears in this way as a superior patron, superior to human ones as well as a true representative of the patron of all. In doing so, this study specifically seeks to further the interpretation offered by Collins<sup>6</sup> and is in line with approaches to the Gospel of John in the tradition of social-scientific exegesis, such as Neyrey's recent commentary that pays ample attention to questions of honor and patronage.<sup>7</sup> In arguing this point, the essay also seeks to show that an interpretation of John 2:1–11 in terms of (a potentially anti-Jewish) statement on the relationship between "Christianity" and "Judaism" is highly implausible.<sup>8</sup>

In order to do all this, first the interpretation of John 2:1–11 along the lines of the relationship between "Christianity" and "Judaism" is considered, which paves the way for a consideration of an interpretation of the events in John 2:1–10 on the basis of John 2:11, subsequently, questions of patronage and the provision of wine are considered, and finally an interpretation of John 2:1–11 on this basis is offered.

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<sup>5</sup> Given the prevailing uncertainty regarding the place of composition and intended readership of Gospel of John, which, often, is located in Asia Minor, though with a background in Palestine and Syria, this essay will not focus on the wedding in Cana as placed in a purely early Jewish setting, but rather in one that is characterized by aspects of the social dynamics of the Greco-Roman world at large, despite the disadvantages that are inherent to such a generalization.

<sup>6</sup> See Matthew S. Collins, "The Question of *Doxa*: A Socioliterary Reading of the Wedding at Cana," *BTB* 25 (1995): 100–109.

<sup>7</sup> See Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John in Cultural and Rhetorical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), *passim*, and esp. 454–76.

<sup>8</sup> At the same time, given the focus of this study, the intertextuality of John 2:1–11 with various OT/LXX texts and traditions will not be explored in any depth in this study, given that it seeks to tease out some aspects of the intertextuality of this pericope with its cultural setting. See e.g. for an exegesis that does much more justice to this aspect of John 2:1–11: Hartwig Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium* (HNT 6; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 150–63, as well and especially: Edmund Little, *Echoes of the Old Testament in The Wine of Cana in Galilee (John 2:1–11) and The Multiplication of the Loaves and Fish (John 6:1–15). Towards an Appreciation* (CRB 41; Paris: Gabalda, 1998). It also seems implausible that John 2:1–11 must be regarded as the "Bildhälfte eines Gleichnisses," as Folker Siegert, *Das Evangelium des Johannes in seiner ursprünglichen Gestalt: Wiederherstellung und Kommentar* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 247, states. See for his further tradition-historical considerations: 247–51. Siegert gives a helpful overview of echoes of the "Old Testament" on 253–55.

## 2. “Christianity” vs. “Judaism” in John 2:1–11?

Various, it has been argued that the change of water into wine in John 2:1–11, as it is noted in v. 9, while the change itself goes unrecorded, is both an important, if not the central point of John 2:1–11.<sup>9</sup> Nearly just as often, this change is associated with the way in which the Fourth Gospel conceptualizes the relationship between “Christianity” and “Judaism.”<sup>10</sup>

The reason for doing so is the remark about the λίθιναι ὑδρῖαι ἕξ κατὰ τὸν καθαρισμὸν τῶν Ἰουδαίων as it occurs in John 2:6. This remark has given rise to a long tradition of interpretation that associates the shift from water to wine with a shift from “Judaism” to “Christianity,”<sup>11</sup> that indeed has many proponents today as well. Jones, for example, stated not too long ago that the water that was intended for the “*merely ritual* purification of the Jews”<sup>12</sup> is changed into the “*truly* purifying blood of Jesus.”<sup>13</sup> The latter is then taken to be symbolized by the wine (and shed in John 19:34). Less drastically, the change from water to wine can also be seen as a symbol of Jesus’ surpassing of the old order.<sup>14</sup> Other variations on this theme occur as well. However, they are not convincing for two reasons mainly.

<sup>9</sup> This would also be suggested by John 4:46, but, when following the flow of the Fourth Gospel, a reader would not be aware of this statement in John 2:1–11 yet.

<sup>10</sup> See for an overview: Klaus Wengst, *Das Johannesevangelium* (Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 4.1; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000), 98, 101–2. Why a history of religions approach leads to an exegetical stance relieving the Evangelist of his responsibility for a text (and is exegetically inadequate), as Wengst claims, is unclear to me. See also recently Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John* (London: Continuum 2005), 127: “The number six may well then represent the imperfection or insufficiency of the old order of Judaism.” See also Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 492, entitling his treatment of the pericope “Relationship versus Ritual Purification (2:1–11).” For a general study of this topic, see: Martinus C. de Boer, “The Depiction of ‘the Jews’ in John’s Gospel: Matters of Behavior and Identity,” in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Reimund Bieringer, Didier Pollefeyt and Frederique Vandecasteele-Vanneuille; Louisville: John Knox, 2001), 141–57.

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. Augustine of Hippo, *Tract. Joh. Ev.* 9.9., albeit without any obvious anti-Jewish intention.

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. Larry Paul Jones, *The Symbol of Water in the Gospel of John* (JSNTSup 145; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 59–60, 63–65.

<sup>13</sup> So recently e.g. Thomas Popp, *Grammatik des Geistes: Literarische Kunst und theologische Konzeption in Johannes 3 und 6* (Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 3; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 89. Further: C. Kingsley Barrett, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (KEK Sonderband; trans. Hans Bald; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 215; Little, *Echoes*, 38, 45–47.

<sup>14</sup> So e.g. Schnelle, *Johannes*, 95.

First, it seems to be preferable not to read too much into the apparent emphasis on the *Jewish* character of the six<sup>15</sup> stone vessels<sup>16</sup> in John 2:6, as it is part of John's style to refer to anything Jewish as explicitly Jewish without necessarily characterizing it negatively.<sup>17</sup> As neither "Jewishness" nor purification are of central importance in John 2:1–11, the note that these large stone vessels belong to Jewish rites, should be taken as explanatory.<sup>18</sup> The same might be true for the note as a whole: its function is simply to explain why the vessels are there.

Second, the possibility that the "Jewish character" of the water in these vessels has a polemic meaning, or even a meaning that is of central importance to the meaning of the narrative, is finally excluded by the master of ceremony's "objective"<sup>19</sup> comparison in John 2:10: he compares good wine with wine of a lesser quality, not water with wine, which would have been more in line with a polemic against Jewish rites of purification.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, should an allegorical line of interpretation be taken, at most an *increase* in the quality of God's presence is in view in John 2:1–11, not an abrupt shift

<sup>15</sup> With e.g. Barrett, *Johannes*, 215, any symbolism is to be regarded as unlikely.

<sup>16</sup> On the archaeological background, see extensively Roland Deines, *Jüdische Steingefäße und pharisäische Frömmigkeit* (WUNT 2/52; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), esp. 39–165.

<sup>17</sup> When surveying the occurrence of τῶν Ἰουδαίων in John, it is clear that most references are informative at most, see John 2:6, 13; 3:1; 4:22; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 11:19, 45, 55; 18:33; 19:20, 21, 42, a negative connotation exists in: John 7:13; 12:9; 18:12, 39; 19:3, 38. Jewish rites of purification are mentioned in John 7:22; 11:55; 18:28; 19:40, without a clear negative connotation. See Schnackenburg, *Johannesevangelium*, 336–37, 342–43. So, against Dwight Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John* (NTL; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 25: "it is a coincidence that the vessels are Jewish."

<sup>18</sup> See along these lines also the considerations of Schnackenburg, *Johannesevangelium*, 336–37, 341–43. Different e.g. Keener, *John*, 492–516, entitling his section on John 2:1–11 as "True Purification," see esp. 509–513, further: Jones, *Symbol*, 62–65; Deines, *Steingefäße*, 251–75; Morgen, "Festin," 142–43, 145–46; John P. Meier, *Jesus. A Marginal Jew* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:945; Olsson, *Structure*, 47–53; Barrett, *John*, 215. Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 107, uses the expression "water of the law."

<sup>19</sup> So e.g. Ridderbos, *John*, 108; Schnelle, *Johannes*, 60; Michael Labahn, *Jesus als Lebensspender: Untersuchungen zu einer Geschichte der johanneischen Tradition anhand ihrer Wundergeschichten* (BZNW 98; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 163; Welck, *Zeichen*, 312. See for the ascertaining of a miracle: 1 Kgs 17:15–16; 2 Kgs 4:6; Mark 2:12; 5:15; 6:41–43; 8:8; Luke 5:6–7; John 6:13.

<sup>20</sup> Contra Deines, *Steingefäße*, 251–75, in other texts from John (11:55; 13:1–11; 15:3) purification might indeed be in view, but this is not the case in John 2:6, where only the vessels are mentioned. Labahn, *Jesus*, 163–65, is not convincing either: the words of the ἀρχιτεράλιος may indeed hint at the qualitative difference between the time of the "old covenant" and the "new covenant" in line with John 1:17, but he does only so in relationship to the wine he tasted earlier.

that would be analogous to a shift from water to wine.<sup>21</sup> In addition, there is very little, if anything, which reminds of Jesus' blood being shed.<sup>22</sup> What might be there, however, is a christological pointer in John 2:9, where the master of ceremony's ignorance as to the provenance of the wine might provoke an analogous question as to the provenance of Jesus.<sup>23</sup>

These observations strongly suggest that neither Jewishness nor Jesus' blood is in view in John 2:1–11.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the main interest of the story will have to be sought elsewhere than in a polemic against Jewish ritual practice or religious quality. To this question, we will now turn.

### 3. *Towards an Interpretation of the Miraculous Wine in John 2:1–11*

The starting point for the interpretation of John 2:1–11 as it will be taken here is provided in a fairly direct way by the Gospel of John itself. In John 2:11, the following auctorial comment is made: Ταύτην ἐποίησεν ἀρχὴν τῶν σημείων ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ ἐφανέρωσεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ. As an auctorial comment, it guides the interpretation of the miracle story by linking it to the further "signs" of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel that all do what he does already with the first one: to reveal the glory of Jesus (and God), and to its effect, the ensuing faith of the disciples. For this reason, it should be taken as the key to the interpretation of this narrative,<sup>25</sup> rather than questions of religious iden-

<sup>21</sup> Should John 2:1–11 be read in relation to John 1:17, then also the relationship between the two parts of this verse should be seen in terms of a development or increase, not in terms of a (grammatically not clearly warranted) contrast. The use of language of "replacement" (e.g. Collins, "Question," 105) is (dangerously) misleading.

<sup>22</sup> With the possible exception of John 2:4b, not mentioning blood, however.

<sup>23</sup> See Labahn, *Jesus*, 163; Welck, *Zeichen*, 138–39; Judith McKinlay, *Gendering Wisdom the Host: Biblical Invitations to Eat and Drink* (JSOTSup 216; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 996), 185; Collins, "Question," 106; Moloney, *John*, 72. See further in John: 1:48; 3:8; 4:11; 6:5; 7:27–28; 8:14; 9:29–30; 19:9. In John 2:1–11 not so much "Johannine misunderstandings" occur, as Collins, "Question," 100, has it, but much rather "Johannine ignorance."

<sup>24</sup> Contra the recent argument by Keener, *John*, 492–93, suggesting that other occurrences of texts concerning water (John 3:5; 7:37–39), allow for an interpretation in terms of "true" and "false" purification. Similarly: Labahn, *Jesus*, 164.

<sup>25</sup> With e.g. Collins, "Question," 101.—While it may be argued plausibly that John 2:11 is an editorial addition to or comment on the preceding narrative (see e.g. Peter-Ben Smit, *Food and Fellowship in the Kingdom: Studies in the Eschatological Meal and Scenes of Nutritional Abundance in the New Testament* [WUNT 2/234; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], 265), it was still added for a reason and might be assumed to provide a key to John 2:1–10 that at least made sense in the eyes of the editor.—While Neyrey, *John*, argues that Jesus is to be understood as the broker of the Father's glory in the Fourth Gospel (for which a very strong case can be made indeed), this overarching dynamic, important though it is for a full picture of the concept of honor in its full theological significance in the Gospel of John, will

tity, or even the change of water into wine as such, or the possible associations evoked by a wedding as such. However, the question remains what the miracle itself has to contribute to the content of the, somewhat formal, statement that through it Jesus' glory is revealed. This will be approached by considering both the question of glory and honor in its Greco-Roman setting, while also relating this to the provision of wine at a notable public occasion such as a wedding.

### 3.1. *The Provision of Food and Drink, Honor and Patronage*

The provision of foodstuffs in general as well as at particular (festive) occasions was, throughout the Greco-Roman world, a task generally fulfilled by patrons or benefactors vis-à-vis either a small group of specific clients, which may be termed "semi-public," or, for example upon taking upon oneself a public office, the population of a city or town at large, which may be termed "public" sponsorship. "Private" generosity, even though it occurred, did not play a role of importance in the "economy of honor," given that "honor" was something that only existed in public, not in private.<sup>26</sup> Various accounts, such as inscriptions and other literary evidence, witness to this. Wine often played a role of significance at such occasions of the sponsorship of public or semi-public celebrations and/or the distribution of foodstuffs and drink for free, or at a (much) lower price than was common, for example in times of scarcity.<sup>27</sup> That wine occurs in such contexts is hardly surprising, given its role as a staple on the diet of large parts of Greco-Roman society, even if the water with which it was commonly mixed outranked it in terms of availability and commonness.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, wine was also an item that indicated the extent of the generosity of a

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not be discussed here. Jesus' glory, though certainly derivative of the Father's, is presented as his own in John 2:11, is the point of departure here—such an analysis is will possible, given that also in the dynamic of patronage in the Greco-Roman world, such patronage too place on different levels.

<sup>26</sup> See e.g. the account of Ritva H. Williams, "The Mother of Jesus at Cana: A Social-Science Interpretation of John 2:1–12," *CBQ* 59 (1997): 679–92, 682–84. For a consideration of honor in Roman society, see esp. Jon E. Lendon, "Roman Honor," in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World* (ed. Michael Peachin; Oxford: Oxford University, 2011), 377–403. With regard to meals and celebrations, see Soham Al-Suadi, *Essen als Christgläubige* (TANZ 55; Tübingen: Francke, 2011), 36.

<sup>27</sup> See e.g. the documentation provided by Bill Salier, "Jesus, the Emperor, and the Gospel according to John," in *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John* (ed. John Lierman; WUNT 2/219; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 284–301, 291–92, as well as *The Economy of the Roman Empire* (ed. Richard Duncan-Jones; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1982), 263–64, 279.

<sup>28</sup> See e.g. Duncan-Jones (ed.), *Economy*, 146.

patron.<sup>29</sup> The fact of its provision as such, the quantity, and, especially, the quality of the wine provided (as well as the quality of the wine provided to various groups at a public banquet or the like) could play a role of significance when it came to evaluating the quality of someone's patronage and sponsorship, with repercussions for the reputation and social standing of this patron, i.e. of his (or her) honor.

Patronage of clients, including the sponsorship of festivities and the provision of subsidized foodstuffs, as well as many other kinds of sponsorship, such as of public works, played a role of high importance at various levels of the Greco-Roman world, specifically of the Roman Empire.<sup>30</sup> Both the Emperor,<sup>31</sup> Roman officials such as consuls and senators,<sup>32</sup> provincial officials such as governors,<sup>33</sup> down to the level of more local figures of social and political importance exercised patronage to socially lower-ranking persons and institutions, while in turn often being clients, formally or factually, to higher-ranking individuals themselves. As noted, patronage often had the form of providing resources, not in the last place foodstuffs.<sup>34</sup> In

<sup>29</sup> See e.g. Greg Woolf, "Patronage: Social Patronage," in: *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece & Rome* 1 (Oxford: Oxford University, 2010), 181–83, esp. 181; Clara A. Barton, *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1993), 110, as well as Duncan Cloud, "The Patron-Client Relationship: Emblem and Reality in Juvenal's First Book," in: *Patronage* (ed. Wallace-Hadrill), 205–218, 210.

<sup>30</sup> See e.g. the overviews provided by Richard P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1982), 7–39; Frederick W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis: Clayton, 1982), Kathryn Lomas and Tim Cornell, "Introduction: Patronage and Benefaction in Ancient Italy," in *"Bread and Circuses": Euergetism and Municipal Patronage in Roman Italy* (ed. idem; London: Routledge, 2003); Woolf, "Patronage"; Brenda Longfellow, *Roman Imperialism and Civic Patronage: Form, Meaning and Ideology in Monumental Fountain Complexes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010), esp. 5–9; Ramsay MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations. 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven: Yale University, 1974); John Nicols, "The Civic Religion and Civic Patronage," in *The Impact of Imperial Rome on Religions, Ritual and Religious Life in the Roman Empire* (ed. Lukas de Blois, Peter Funke and Johannes Hahn; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 36–50; Koenraad Verboven, "Friendship among Romans," in: *Handbook* (ed. Peachin), 404–421. For Asia Minor, of some relevance for the Fourth Gospel, see e.g. the recent study of Arjen Zuiderveld, *Politics of Munificence: Citizens, Elites and Benefactors in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2009). On patronage and Jewish social relations in the Greco-Roman world, see e.g. Seth Schwarz, "Ancient Jewish Social Relations" in: *Handbook* (ed. Peachin) 551–66. For the New Testament see e.g. David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2000), 23–93.

<sup>31</sup> See e.g. the treatment of Saller, *Patronage*, 41–78, as well as, with a focus on Italy, John R. Patterson, "The Emperor and the Cities of Italy," in *"Bread"* (ed. Lomas and Cornell), 89–104.

<sup>32</sup> See e.g. the discussion of Saller, *Patronage*, 119–43.

<sup>33</sup> See e.g. the analysis of Saller, *Patronage*, 145–94 (North Africa).

<sup>34</sup> See e.g. Peter Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 58–63.



fact, the various levels of patronage and clientship can be imagined as a hierarchically structured set of relationships of dependence. This structure of relationships was also closely bound up with ruler ideologies, in which the ruler (e.g. king, emperor) was conceptualized as the supreme benefactor of his people and generally closely associated with deities (or a deity) as source of such benefaction.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, deities could also well be described and factually understood as patrons of a special kind, often with specializations regarding patronage and sponsorship. Various examples may be adduced for this, but for the purposes of the present paper, it is the example of Dionysus/Bacchus as the patron of viticulture and wine-maker, as well as the provider of wine at a variety of unexpected instances, some of which involving water (though none clearly involves the explicit change of water into wine). Simultaneously, within these hierarchically structured relationships, heavy competition between (want-to-be) patrons, both between those located on the same tier of what may be termed a “pyramid of patronage,” as well as between those on neighboring tiers, was also part of the system.<sup>36</sup> While social mobility was limited in the Greco-Roman empire, it did exist, and, even without much mobility, one’s honor, whether human or divine, was always under attack and needed to be defended and (at least) safeguarded in the public sphere, or, quite literally, the marketplace.<sup>37</sup>

### 3.2. *Wine and Weddings*

Wine and weddings were very closely related in antiquity, notably Jewish antiquity, given wine’s association with celebrations, and weddings being, in many ways, the summit of celebrations within the (extended) family.<sup>38</sup> Weddings were equally costly affairs, sometimes even forcing families into debt,<sup>39</sup> involving the union of two families rather than of only the couple itself. Hence, a wedding was a high-profile social event revolving around the fusing (of the honor/social standing) of two families, an occasion

<sup>35</sup> See e.g. Smit, *Food*, 14–18, see also Nathan MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2008), 134–218.

<sup>36</sup> On patronage and competition between patrons in the Empire, see e.g. David Braund, “Function and Dysfunction: Personal Patronage in Roman Imperialism,” and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, “Patronage in Roman Society: From Republic to Empire,” both in *Patronage in Ancient Society* (ed. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill; London: Routledge, 1989), 63–88, 137–52, as well as Claire Holleran, “The Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Rome and Italy,” in *Bread* (ed. Lomas and Cornell), 46–60, esp. 49.52. For Asia Minor, see also Zuiderveld, *Politics*, who repeatedly emphasizes the amount of competition that was inherent to the system of patronage.

<sup>37</sup> See e.g. the treatment of deSilva, *Honor*, 95–156, 157–256.

<sup>38</sup> See e.g. Smit, *Food*, 39–41.

<sup>39</sup> See e.g. Keener, *John*, 502–3. See also Williams, “Mother,” 684.

therefore, at which the marrying couple is extraordinarily vulnerable with respect to nutritional resources: these should be amply available, though they are prone to run out at the same time, which would mean a considerable loss of face for the families involved.<sup>40</sup> This applies also to wine, closely connected as it is with weddings and (their) joyfulness.<sup>41</sup> That the wedding in Cana is indeed a high-end affair may be indicated by the presence of servants, a master of ceremony, and the six large vessels.<sup>42</sup>

For the interpretation of John 2:1–11, this has as a consequence that the starting point of the events, after the setting of the scene in vv. 1–2, i.e. Jesus' mother's address of her son in v. 3, based on the circumstance that the wine was running out, receives a fresh kind of relevance for the subsequent events. The situation of need that has arisen is one that is acutely sensitive<sup>43</sup> and for those responsible for the wedding, not in the last place the (unnamed) couple, and notably the groom, much is at stake in terms of social status and "honor."<sup>44</sup> Consequently, Jesus appears as the one who saves the situation and provides the necessary resources for everything to run its due course. This has consequences for the way in which Jesus is depicted in John 2:1–11, as will be considered next.

#### 4. *Jesus at the Wedding in Cana: Patronage with a Difference?*

Based on the above observations as well as on some discussions in recent scholarship, it is reasonable to read John 2:1–11 in the context of the social dynamics of patronage of the Greco-Roman world. Specifically, the following reasons can be listed for this.<sup>45</sup>

First, Jesus' activity in John 2:1–11 includes the provision of a large quantity of wine of superior quality, free of charge to a celebrating group of people.

<sup>40</sup> See with respect to John 2:1–11 e.g.: Williams, "Mother," 682–84; Collins, "Question"; Malina and Rohrbaugh, *John*, 65–72; Keener, *John*, 502–3; Ulrich Wilckens, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (NTD 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 56.

<sup>41</sup> With this emphasis: Schnackenburg, *Johannesevangelium*, 332; Jürgen Becker, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (ÖTBK 4.1; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1991), 1:129; Wilckens, *Johannes*, 55. See also Wengst, *Johannesevangelium*, 100; Lincoln, *John*, 127.

<sup>42</sup> See e.g. Collins, "Question," 105.

<sup>43</sup> In this respect, it is fitting that all the action seems to take place behind the scenes; the only audience that is not also involved in the preparation and testing of the additional wine are the disciples in the "Chorschluss" in v. 11.

<sup>44</sup> See e.g. Collins, "Question," 103–4. Should the mother of Jesus have been associated somewhat closely with the families involved in the wedding, also her social standing might have been at stake.

<sup>45</sup> See e.g. Salier, "Jesus," 291–92.

Second, the provision of food and wine (free of charge) at a wedding was certainly an act of patronage, as the bridegroom's and master of ceremony's roles may indicate as well, therefore Jesus' intervention places him in the role of patron or sponsor of the wedding.<sup>46</sup>

Third, Jesus is appealed to, at least implicitly, namely by his mother,<sup>47</sup> to intervene in a situation characterized by imminent scarcity, which suits accounts of public generosity in other situations well. This constitutes a challenge to his honor and he is required to act.<sup>48</sup>

Fourth, Jesus intervenes immediately in a situation in which an imminent threat to someone's public status, i.e. honor, existed, i.e. on the typical "playing field" of a patron.

Fifth, Jesus' revelation of his honor or glory, i.e. δόξα, is mentioned explicitly in John 2:11—apparently Jesus' provision of free drink led to an increase in his status.<sup>49</sup>

Sixth, in line with the revelation of his δόξα, Jesus establishes (more firmly) a group of clients around him, sc. his disciples, who trust him and will follow him.<sup>50</sup>

These considerations may be developed further when the question is asked how Jesus, the patron (or "benefactor") is positioned in what may be surmised as the pyramid of patronage of the Greco-Roman world. To begin with, Jesus stands out as a person of significant resources or affluence. Although he is not explicitly compared to any specific human patron, a comparison is made between the wine that has been provided through Jesus' agency and the wine provided by the groom, who may well be imagined as the actual patron of the wedding. At the very least, the master of ceremony makes him responsible for the provision of wine at the wedding, especially its order of serving. For the reader of the Gospel of John, a comparison may suggest itself in this way between Jesus as patron of the wedding and the groom, whose Jewish identity does not matter at all in this respect, with

<sup>46</sup> As Little, *Echoes*, 43, has it: Jesus solves a "famine." See also e.g. Lincoln, *John*, 130.

<sup>47</sup> See e. g. the cautious considerations of John F. McHugh, *John 1-4* (ed. Graham N. Stanton; ICC; London: T&T Clark, 2009), 179-80.

<sup>48</sup> See e.g. Williams, "Mother," 685-88, Neyrey, *John*, 71-72.

<sup>49</sup> While δόξα is clearly a theological concept in the Fourth Gospel, associated with Jesus' sharing in the Father's glory the notion also occurs in a more social sense, as Collins, "Question," 106, demonstrates with reference to John 5:1-9, 40-41; 7:14-24; 8:48-50; 12:43.

<sup>50</sup> See e.g. Neyrey, *John*, xi, 83. For considerations about patronage and discipleship see e.g.: Jonathan Marshall, *Jesus, Patrons, and Benefactors: Roman Palestine and the Gospel of Luke* (WUNT 2/259; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), and Zeba A. Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion: Patronage, Loyalty, and Conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004).

obvious consequences for the standing of both in the eye of the reader.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, Jesus provides wine in a highly unusual way and a large quantity of superior quality wine at that. Should this remind the ancient reader of Bacchus/Dionysius, which is a distinct possibility that may claim quite some plausibility for itself,<sup>52</sup> then Jesus stands in direct competition to this deity, exercising the kind of patronage that would properly pertain to this deity.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, such provision of wine also places Jesus in the tradition of the deity of the “Old Testament,” who also acted as the provider of an abundance of foodstuffs and drink.<sup>54</sup> These two options should probably not be played out against one another, since, even though it goes too far to see a conscious polemic against Dionysus/Bacchus, throughout the whole of John (in spite of John 15:1)<sup>55</sup> the possibility of a connection with this ubiquitous deity and his cult should be taken into consideration when exploring the significance of the enormous amount of wine produced by Jesus in John 2:1–11.<sup>56</sup> The most obvious *tertium comparationis*

<sup>51</sup> To some extent this agrees with Matand Bulembat’s argument that Jesus appears as the true groom at this wedding; still, the agreement in role between Jesus and the groom, or Jesus’ identity as groom, has more to do with his acting as the wedding’s actual patron than with him marrying anyone or anything. See: Jean-Bosco Matand Bulembat, “Head-Waiter and Bridegroom of the Wedding at Cana: Structure and Meaning of John 2.1–12,” *JSNT* 30 (2007): 55–73.—Unlike Malina and Rohrbaugh, John, 69, seem to argue, Jesus’ “usurpation” of the role of the host does not turn the story into a sacramental one—Jesus’ patronage remains hidden!—Jesus’ actions, commanding the servants, for example, also place him in a position of authority, well befitting the patron of a feast, see Wengst, *Johannesevangelium*, 101.

<sup>52</sup> See esp. the well-documented argument of Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (London: Continuum, 42004), 292–332, as well as, more recently, Wilfried Eisele, “Jesus und Dionysos: Göttliche Konkurrenz bei der Hochzeit zu Kana,” *ZNW* 100 (2009): 1–28, contributing significant numismatic and epigraphic evidence.

<sup>53</sup> For this reason, reading John 2:1–11 from the perspective of patronage and “Dionysian theology” are not two, but one and the same approach, properly speaking. Different: Salier, “Jesus,” 291–92. Salier weakens his own thesis by referring to emperors, i.e. the most potent patrons that the Roman Empire knew, presenting themselves as representations of precisely Dionysius.

<sup>54</sup> See e.g. Smit, *Food*, 54–58. On the basis of what Labahn, *Jesus*, 162, calls the “Kommunikationseinheit” with God his father, this can be formulated as follows: as the divine “monarch” is the ultimate provider of food and drink for his people, the earthly “monarch” who does this as well is logically associated with the heavenly one (does John 1:49 echo?). See Little, *Echoes*, 43–44.

<sup>55</sup> See however, the recent proposal of Peter Wick, “Jesus gegen Dionysios? Ein Beitrag zur Kontextualisierung des Johannesevangeliums,” *Bib* 85 (2004): 179–98. The only really clear parallel is John 2:1–11.

<sup>56</sup> See e.g. Walter Lütgehetmann, *Die Hochzeit von Kana (Joh 2,1–11): Zu Ursprung und Deutung einer Wundererzählung im Rahmen johanneischer Redaktionsgeschichte* (BU 20; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1990), 261–82, providing an overview of the state of research in this respect. The most formidable attempt to do deny a connection between Bacchic the-

between both deities is that both reveal themselves by providing wine while appearing as guests in human form.<sup>57</sup> This perspective also bypasses the question about suitable literary parallels showing Dionysus *changing* water into wine, as demanding;<sup>58</sup> demanding such a close parallel might go too far.<sup>59</sup> With this, however, the issue cannot be concluded, but has to be pursued further, asking how John uses this Dionysiac theological vocabulary and what his possible aim could be in doing so.

The suggestion that the early Christian community for all practical purposes adopted a Dionysian myth and only exchanged the actors remains unverifiable.<sup>60</sup> Instead, it seems to be more promising, to do away with the wedge which has been driven between the two deities Dionysus and YHWH,<sup>61</sup> as the latter had more than one Dionysian trait, witnessed to abundantly by both Jewish and non-Jewish sources.<sup>62</sup> This need not surprise in view of the syncretistic character of Dionysus whose cult was so widely spread throughout the Roman Empire and existed in various synergies with the cults of local deities.<sup>63</sup> For example, when discussing the iden-

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ology and John 2:1–11 is: Heinz Noetzel, *Christus und Dionysos: Bemerkungen zum religionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund von Johannes 2,1–11* (Berlin: Evangelischer Verlagsanstalt, 1960), but his proposal received due criticism afterwards, see e.g. Eta Linnemann, "Die Hochzeit zu Kana und Dionysos," *NTS* 20 (1974): 408–418.

<sup>57</sup> See e.g. Achillius Tatius, *Leuc. Clit.* 2.2:1–2.3:1.

<sup>58</sup> See Ingo Broer, "Noch einmal: Zur religionsgeschichtlichen "Ableitung" von Jo 2,1–11," *SNTUA* 8 (1983): 103–123; Ingo Broer "Das Weinwunder zu Kana (Joh 2,1–11) und die Weinwunder in der Antike," in *Das Urchristentum in seiner literarischen Geschichte* (ed. Ulrich Mell and Ulrich B. Müller; BZNW 100; FS Jürgen Becker; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 291–308. See further the parallels in Schnelle, *Johannes*, 87–131, which are also discussed by Labahn, *Jesus*, 146–60. The evidence includes Diodorus Siculus, *Bib. Hist.* 3.66:2; Ovid, *Metam.* 13.650–55; Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 2.231, 31.16; Pausanias, *Descr.* 6.26:2; Horace, *Carm.* 2.19:9–12; Silius Italicus, *Pun.* 7.186–90; Nonnus, *Dion.* 16.252–54.

<sup>59</sup> See also Eisele, "Jesus," 25.

<sup>60</sup> See Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (KEK 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 83. See also Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921), 62.

<sup>61</sup> See further: Albert Henrichs, "Changing Dionysiac Identities," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* (ed. Ben F. Meyer and Ed P. Sanders; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 3:137–60.

<sup>62</sup> See e.g. Morton Smith, "On the Wine God in Palestine," in: idem, *The Cult of Yahweh* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1227–37; Fritz Graf, "Dionysios," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 253–59, agrees, referring to Greco-Roman authors who more or less identify YHWH with Dionysus, or point towards the Dionysiac character of some festivals; see as well 2 Macc 14:33; 3 Macc 2:29; Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.* 4.6 (612 D), Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5; Claudius Iolaus, *FGH* 788 Fr 4.

<sup>63</sup> Including the Palestine and Syria, see, Smith, "Wine," 230–31.

tity of the god of the Jews both Plutarch (*Mor.* 671C–672C) and Tacitus (*Hist.* 5:5) mention the hypothesis that he is none other than Dionysus, though they disagree, of course, with regard to the evaluation of this idea.<sup>64</sup> That there was indeed a basis for such a comparison and/or identification is indicated by, for example, numismatic evidence.<sup>65</sup> In addition, the Maccabean introduction of the festival of Hanukkah—in the context of a polemic around the cult of Dionysus<sup>66</sup>—somewhat paradoxically also features elements of precisely this cult.<sup>67</sup> Of interest is also the reference by Valerius Maximus (*Fact.* 1.3:2) to Dionysus—Sabazius (Sabaoth?) worshipping Jews in Rome; an *interpretatio graeca* of YHWH in terms of Dionysus was apparently also possible.<sup>68</sup> Finally, also early Jewish apocalyptic texts can be identified that use motifs that have close Dionysian counterparts.<sup>69</sup>—With regard to these latter texts, the possible eschatological connotations that a utopian abundance of wine might have has come into view. John 2:1–11, it seems, is certainly open to such associations, especially as they further Jesus’ identification as the Messiah.<sup>70</sup> This also applies to the wedding in terms of an occasion associated with joy.<sup>71</sup> Neither of which is probably the pivot of the story, however. What seems to be of even less importance, in spite of John 3:29 and the rich field of associations that comes with it, is the wedding as a relational event in the line of OT/HB and early Jewish apocalypticism: no one gets married explicitly at Cana—certainly not Jesus.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Later, Macrobius, *Saturn.* 1.18.11 and John Lydus, *De Mens.* 4.53 still mention this possibility. See Smith, “Wine,” 231.

<sup>65</sup> E.g. the “Yehud”-coin, referred to by Smith, “Wine,” 231. Younger coins are those minted under Antigonus Mattathias (40–37 BCE) with ivy wreath and grapes on them. Even more abundant is the symbolism of vine leaves and grape clusters on coins minted during the first and second Jewish revolt/war in 66–73 and 132–35 CE, see still: Edwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols of the Greco-Roman period* 3 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), nos. 677–99.

<sup>66</sup> See 1 Macc 1:47, 2 Macc 6:7.

<sup>67</sup> See 1 Macc 10:7. See esp. the procession with thyrsi, and in general Smith, “Wine,” 232.

<sup>68</sup> Of importance is also Philo, *Leg.* 3:82, who uses the opposition water-wine, with clear Dionysiac overtones to characterize the work of Melchisedek, whereby the latter functions in this text as the divine λόγος. See Barrett, *Johannes*, 212.

<sup>69</sup> In the first place there is the blessing in Gen 49:10–12, which can be interpreted messianically (see Deines, *Steingefäße*, 275–77), and also 1 En. 10:19, 2 Bar. 29:5, *Sib. Or.* 2:316–18, and especially the Papias-fragment preserved by Irenaeus of Lyon (*Haer.* 5:33.3–4).

<sup>70</sup> See Smit, *Food*, 68–270, with this emphasis also e.g. Wengst, *Johannesevangelium*, 103.

<sup>71</sup> See Smit, *Food*, 270–74.

<sup>72</sup> See Smit, *Food*, 270–74.—Siegert, *Johannes*, 251, argues that the wedding in John 2:1–11 also implies sexuality “und zwar ganz unbefangen.” This seems to be beside the point, given that the celebration, not the wedding as something relational is at the heart of John 2:1–11. The introduction of a “hidden Misdrash” as a hermeneutical device on page 254 fails to convince as well.

So far, so good, Jesus' actions and their depiction in John 2:1–11 show many traits that may well be understood with the background of the dynamic of the system of patronage of both human and divine patrons current in Greco-Roman society and probably familiar to the readership of the Fourth Gospel.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, there is an aspect of the narrative that does not square at all with common types of patronage in the first century Mediterranean world: Jesus' generosity and sponsorship take place behind the scenes and are not made public in any way.<sup>74</sup> Neither the dialogue between Jesus and his mother (vv. 3–4),<sup>75</sup> nor the interaction between Jesus and the servants (vv. 7–8), nor the dialogue with the master of ceremony and the groom (vv. 9–10) takes place before any other audience but the servants, who have already been part of the action. Those benefitting from Jesus' sponsorship, the groom (and his wife) and wedding's guests, will never know that it was Jesus', not the groom's generosity, as it would seem to all, including the master of ceremony, that gave them a good time with quality wine.<sup>76</sup> Even the disciples, who come to faith in Jesus on the basis of this σημεῖον, are not part of the audience explicitly, and the reader is left to guess how they know of Jesus' actions to begin with,<sup>77</sup> although the readership itself certainly is aware of what happened—and that may well be an intended effect of the story.<sup>78</sup> This aspect of Jesus' patronage of the wedding in Cana constitutes an important and even fatal difference for a comparison with contemporary patrons, be they human or divine: honor that was not acknowledged publicly simply did not exist, given that public acknowledgement of honor was inherent to it. Thus, Jesus would have failed utterly as a patron (a tension also acknowledged in John 7:4). Still,

<sup>73</sup> See also e.g. the summing up of Collins, "Question," 106: "[Jesus'] provision of wine in such a public setting could have resulted in an enhancement of [his] social standing. He would be greatly honored for his benefaction and would receive praise, or glory, from all in attendance. Ironically, however, it is the groom who receives such glory from the steward and Jesus does not gain in public honor or standing through his action."

<sup>74</sup> See e.g. Williams, "Mother," 690.

<sup>75</sup> There is something to be said for the argument of Matand Bulembat, "Head-Waiter," that Mary acts in a way that would agree with the role of the head-waiter at the wedding; whether John's Mariological aims go as far as he argues, remains to be seen, however.

<sup>76</sup> With this emphasis: Williams, "Mother," 690, 692. See also Collins, "Question," 105–6. Collins also argues that the groom is attributed public honor explicitly by the groom, noting that the verb φωνέω is used in v. 9 in order to describe the master of ceremony's action vis-à-vis the groom; however, the speech-act of which the content is given in v. 10 uses λέγω again; therefore it is much more plausible that the master of ceremony first (publicly and loudly) called the groom towards him and then spoke to him (in a normal, private tone of voice).

<sup>77</sup> See e.g. Lincoln, *John*, 131. Also Keener, *John*, 514–15, recognizes the hiddenness of it all, but does not elaborate it clearly.

<sup>78</sup> See e.g. Wengst, *Johannesevangelium*, 102.

John 2:11, claiming that Jesus *did* reveal his honor/δόξα makes it necessary to attempt to integrate the hiddenness of Jesus' actions and his factual patronage of the wedding in Cana and that he was successful in gaining the trust and confidence of a band of clients,<sup>79</sup> i.e. his disciples, who had been called before, but had not yet given an indication of their trust in Jesus,<sup>80</sup> but now do so after "beholding his glory."<sup>81</sup>

The solution to this apparent tension may well be found in the interrelation of cross and glory/honor (i.e. δόξα) in John, as it has been acknowledged by a long line of scholarship. While the reference to δόξα in John 2:11 provides one semantic connection with this interrelationship, Jesus' remark that "my time/hour has not come" in v. 4,<sup>82</sup> constitutes a further strong link, which may also apply to the reference to the third day in v. 1,<sup>83</sup> although this is hard to ascertain.<sup>84</sup> The revelation of Jesus' glory/honor is in the Fourth Gospel intimately connected to Jesus' humiliation and humility. It might be argued that Jesus embodies patronage in John 2:1–11 in a way that reinterprets the acquisition of honor in terms of what Heinrich Schlier called "pro-existence," leaving the reaping of public status and hon-

<sup>79</sup> With Becker, *Johannes*, 133, the intention of John is to narrate the "Festigung der Jüngerschaft." See for the conceptualization of disciples as clients e.g. Neyrey, *John*, 82–83, 393, 45, 472–75.

<sup>80</sup> So indeed e.g. Wilckens, *Johannes*, 55; Welck, *Zeichen*, 133.

<sup>81</sup> With this emphasis: Collins, "Question," 106.

<sup>82</sup> See Wilckens, *Johannes*, 56; Schnelle, *Johannes*, 95; Collins, "Question," 104. Different: Schnackenburg, *Johannesevangelium*, 335; Becker, *Johannes*, 132. John 2:4 hardly refers to the price Jesus pays for this miracle, see however Keener, *John*, 579. See also Welck, *Zeichen*, 136, and Lincoln, *John*, 127–28, 135; see John 4:34; 12:27; 17:4; 19:30. McHugh, *John*, 182–84, offers insightful comments, arguing for a translation of John 2:4 as "What relationship is there, woman, between you and me, now that my hour is approaching?," which would also suit the story's conclusion well, given that hour and glory can be more easily related to each other than when one insists on a translation that the hour had *not* come yet. John 2:1–11 acquires a proleptic function with regard to Jesus' exaltation and glorification, which suits the somewhat hidden revelation of his glory in John 2 well.

<sup>83</sup> This remark has given rise to various interpretations, see e.g. Siegert, *Johannes*, 247; McHugh, *John*, 113, for a recent proposal of finding a first "week" of Jesus' activities in John 1–2.

<sup>84</sup> Wengst, *Johannesevangelium*, 99, 101, regards both connections as plausible. See also the brief but significant discussion between Jürgen Becker and Wengst, summarized by the latter (*o.c.*, 101n73): "Becker wendet dagegen ein: 'Vom Kontext her würde kein Leser darauf kommen' (Komm. 1, 128). Das gilt aber nur für diejenigen, die das Evangelium erstmals lesen und mit der Lektüre gerade hier angelangt sind. Es dürfte aber vornherein für die wiederholte in der versammelten Gemeinde konzipiert sein. Vom Gesamtkontext ist genau das Gegenteil richtig: Jede Leserin und jeder Leser muss hier den Bezug auf Passion und Tod Jesu erkennen."—Lincoln, *John*, 126, rightly points out that in the Fourth Gospel there are no references to the resurrection involving language of "the third day." See also the scepticism of Keener, *John*, 497–98, and McHugh, *John*, 176–77.



or to others and, by consequence, locating the acquisition of true honor in a different sphere. In other words, by his provision of wine, Jesus reveals his “honor” in a hidden way by saving the honor of the newlywed couple and their families.<sup>85</sup> The public revelation of Jesus’ δόξα/honor is only to come at the cross,<sup>86</sup> at the moment at which Jesus’ hour has indeed come.<sup>87</sup> The Fourth Gospel, to be sure, does depict this “hour” of Jesus and his glorification in a manner that does indeed justice to the public character of someone’s honor/glory, namely by describing both Jesus’ trial and execution as high-profile and highly visible events, including an ironic debate about the “titulus” at the cross, which states who Jesus is, ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων.<sup>88</sup> This public honor of Jesus, however, is at the same time his humiliation and the gift of the spirit that he gives is a gift that is just as hidden from the public eye (but not that of the reader) as his patronage of the wedding in Cana.

This interpretation of Jesus’ patronage agrees well with other instances in the Fourth Gospel that involve behavior on the part of Jesus that can be related profitably to the social dynamic of patronage.<sup>89</sup> Some examples include the following. The most obvious example of Jesus acting as “patron” or benefactor can be found in John 6,<sup>90</sup> in the narrative of the other “gift miracle” in John, to follow Theißen’s classification (though Siegert’s proposal to classify it as a “soziales Wunder” is probably to be preferred for John 2:1–11).<sup>91</sup> Here, the provision of food for a multitude can well be interpreted—and has been interpreted—along the lines of (divine) patronage and provision of foodstuffs. Here, also Jesus’ refusal to accept public honor,

<sup>85</sup> So also Collins, “Question,” 105–6; Keener, *John*, 515.

<sup>86</sup> See John 12:16, 23, 28; 13:31–32; 17:1. See Labahn, *Jesus* 165. This interpretation also agrees well with Martin C. de Boer, “Johannine History and Johannine Theology: The Death of Jesus as the Exaltation and the Glorification of the Son of Man,” in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Gilbert Van Belle; BETL 200; Louvain: Peeters, 2007), 293–26, esp. 314–20; see also idem, *Johannine Perspectives on the Death of Jesus* (CBET 17; Kampen: Pharos, 1996), 176–203, esp. 184 (with reference to John 2:4).

<sup>87</sup> In this regard, it may be correct as Frey, *Eschatologie*, 427 suggests, that the reference to the hour corrects a *theologia gloriae* that understands this *gloria* in a way not intended by the Fourth Gospel.

<sup>88</sup> On which see also: Peter-Ben Smit, “A Note on the Structure of Jesus’ Trial in the Gospel of John,” *RB* 115 (2008): 383–95.

<sup>89</sup> See for a treatment of John with much attention for the dynamics of patronage: Neyrey, *John*, esp. 454–76.

<sup>90</sup> See e.g. Salier, “Jesus,” 294–95.

<sup>91</sup> See Gerd Theißen, *Urchristliche Wundergeschichten* (SNT 8; Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 1974), 11, similarly: Becker, *Johannes*, 126. Lütgehetmann’s arguments against this classification (*Hochzeit*, 123–33) cannot convince as the differences between John 2:1–11 and other gift miracles are not as grand that the story should be discussed in a category of its own. See Siegert, *Johannes*, 250.

i.e. his proclamation as king (John 6:15), is of importance and provides a parallel with the absence of a public declaration of honor and status in John 2:1–11. A further example may be found in John 13:1–17, Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet at the Last Supper. Even though it is Jesus who is the host and patron of this meal, it is he himself who takes upon him the humble (and humiliating) task of washing the disciples' dirty feet. Furthermore, in John 15:13, Jesus' remark about friendship and one's giving of one's life for one's friends, as can be seen to be enacted throughout the Johannine passion narrative, with its climax in Jesus' giving up of his spirit in 19:30, can also be interpreted as an expression of the ultimate provision of a patron for his clients. These and other texts give one the impression that while the Fourth Gospel does claim honor and glory for Jesus—even God's honor and glory—the understanding of this concept is notably different from that in the world around the Gospel.

### *Concluding Considerations*

Based on the above, the following may be argued.

First, by interpreting, with others, the revelation of Jesus' glory in John 2:1–11 against the background of the social dynamics of patronage and euergetism, the Fourth Gospel can be related more tightly to an important part of the social dynamics of the Greco-Roman world.

Second, at the same time, by relating John 2:1–11 and Jesus' revelation of his glory in the sign that is narrated in vv. 1–10 to this dynamic of patronage and the competition for honor, it could also be observed how Jesus both does and does not play according to the rules of the appertaining game. While Jesus responds to the challenge put to him by his mother in John 2:3–4 and does so adequately by the standards of the competition for honor and status by acting as the sponsor of the wedding festivities, however, he does so in a hidden way, hence missing out on any public attribution of honor in Cana. This notwithstanding, in John 2:11, Jesus *is* claimed to have revealed his glory, as a benefactor superior to humans, or at least to whoever was responsible for the patronage of the wedding in Cana, while at the same time the characteristics of John 2:1–11 give rise to suspect that Jesus is set up here in competition to the patron deity of wine, Dionysus. It is apparently this kind of revelation of (this kind of) honor that leads to the faith of Jesus' client-disciples in him (and an analogous reaction is certainly to be provoked in the reader; see e.g. John 20:31). This is fitting, given that the notion of *πίστις*, and even more, of *fides*, could be used well to describe the attitude of clients vis-à-vis their patrons.

Third, a consideration of this obvious contradiction between the claim that John 2:11 makes and Jesus' behavior in the preceding verses, read in the light of the dynamics of patronage and competition for honor, leads to a consideration of the honor of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel at large. Taking into account that Jesus' glorification is at the same time his execution, or at least looks like it (for the Fourth Gospel it is Jesus' self-giving), this leads to the conclusion that Jesus' glory in the Fourth Gospel, while being the sort of glory that is indeed God's, both follows some of the rules pertaining to the competition for honor in the Greco-Roman world, but runs at the same time against the grain of a conventional Greco-Roman understanding of honor, specifically because it includes notions such as servanthood, and self-giving. It seems that it is the Fourth Gospel's somewhat controversial claim that it is this sort of honor that is Jesus' and God's.

## SEEING AND BELIEVING IN JOHN 20

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John 20 is perhaps one of the most enigmatic chapters of the whole gospel, which in turn is not a text as a whole renowned for being free from enigma! It has a number of “open spaces,” as we shall see, where one can fill the “gaps” in the individual stories in different ways with resulting different interpretations of the pericopes where they occur, as well as of the overall story of the gospel as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

The very existence of the chapter in the gospel can be seen as somewhat strange and perhaps unexpected. There is no direct evidence that the chapter is not to be taken as an integral part of the gospel.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the chapter has been seen as somewhat anomalous in some ways within the gospel, and its presence may provide something of an “anticlimax.” For so much of what precedes in the gospel has pointed forward to *the cross* as the climax of the narrative, in both literary and “theological” terms. A primary theme of the gospel is the revelation which Jesus brings of his own and/or the Father’s “glory.” But the moment of glorification is identified in so much of John’s gospel with the cross. The glorification of Jesus is

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<sup>1</sup> The chapter as a whole, and the individual pericopes in it, have been analysed countless times in the history of scholarship. The footnotes here make no pretence of being comprehensive in their coverage. Further, a number of the views espoused here make no claims to originality. The essay is offered here, with some hesitation, to someone who is a far greater Johannine scholar than I can ever claim to be, but who has also been a great colleague and friend over many years; he has in the past quietly corrected my strange views, invariably with a gentle smile: the present essay may provoke a similar reaction!

<sup>2</sup> Hence unlike e.g. the story in 7:53–8:11, where there is strong manuscript evidence that the pericope is a later addition to the rest of the gospel and not part of the “original” text; also ch. 21, where there is no manuscript evidence for a text of John lacking the chapter, but where a number of linguistic features (in the vocabulary used), as well as the fact that 20:30–31 reads very much as if it is the ending of a whole text (and hence the re-start of the narrative at 21:1 seems rather strange in “literary” terms), suggest that ch. 21 is an “appendix” to the gospel added secondarily by a later editor/redactor. For discussion, see the commentaries at the various points, e.g. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 700–706; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII–XXI* (AB 29A; New York: Doubleday, 1970), 1077–1082; C. Kingsley Barrett, *The Gospel according to St John* (2nd edn; London: SPCK, 1977), 479–80; Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1977), 618; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to St John* (London: Continuum, 2005), 508–9.

his “exaltation,” and the “lifting up” of Jesus in glory is identified with his being “lifted up” physically in the punishment of crucifixion. This is made explicit in 12:32–33: Jesus talks in v. 32 about his being “lifted up,” language that has been used earlier in the narrative but unexplained (cf. 3:14; 8:28); but this is now immediately clarified in v. 33 by the narrator explaining that this was “to indicate what kind of a *death* he was to die.” Jesus’ glorification is thus identified with the cross. So when the Johannine Jesus cries out in 19:30 “it is finished” (τετέλεσται), it is almost universally agreed that this is a cry of victory and completion: the work which Jesus has come to earth to accomplish is now completed.<sup>3</sup> The work of revealing the true nature of God, of revealing his own true nature, and of revealing that nature as one of love that leads right up to the point of laying down one’s life for others in the act of supreme love, is now completed—in the death of Jesus on the cross.

All this then raises the question of what significance, in terms of the “literary” structure of the story as well as the underlying “theology,” ch. 20 might have. Is not everything already said and the (“theological”) story line already complete with the great cry of affirmation in 19:30 and the death of Jesus on the cross? What else is, or indeed can be, added by the presence of ch. 20? Is this chapter just a sop to the tradition (which included stories of the empty tomb and/or resurrection appearances)? At the very least, it would seem that the resurrection appearance (or non-appearance) stories which occur in ch. 20 are not meant to provide the theological climax of the gospel’s story. They are not then meant to provide the triumphant conclusion to the story and the “proof” that the theological claims made earlier are indeed valid and true.<sup>4</sup> In fact they seem rather to provide a corrective to such a view, as we shall see.

<sup>3</sup> The comment of Lincoln, *John*, 478, is typical: “In keeping with the evangelist’s presentation of Jesus’ death as his glorification ... Jesus’ last word is not the cry of abandonment but the cry of achievement, signifying the completion of his work.” More generally Lindars, “The Passion of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel,” *Essays on John* (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 67–86; also J. Terence Forestell, *The Word of the Cross: Salvation as Revelation in the Fourth Gospel* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1974), e.g. on pp. 18–19; Dwight M. Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 115–22. For discussion of alternative interpretations of the “glorification” theme (e.g. by Loader, Brown), see Martinus C. de Boer, *Johannine Perspectives on the Death of Jesus* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996), 186–89; more fully in de Boer, “Johannine History and Johannine Theology: The Death of Jesus as the Exaltation and Glorification of the Son of Man,” in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Gilbert Van Belle; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 293–326, esp. 314–20.

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament. Volume Two* (London: SCM, 1955), 56: Jesus’ resurrection “cannot be an event of special significance”; the appearances, like the miracles earlier in the narrative, “are not indispensable; in fact there ought to be no need of them, but they were granted as a concession to man’s weakness”; also his *Gospel of*

The chapter divides into four, separable, units or pericopes: 1. the story of Peter and the Beloved Disciple coming to the empty tomb (vv. 1–10); 2. the encounter of Mary Magdalene with the risen Jesus (vv. 11–18); 3. the story of the risen Jesus meeting with the disciples (without Thomas) in the upper room (vv. 19–23); and 4. the story of the encounter between the risen Jesus and Thomas (vv. 24–29). Though the stories are clearly interlinked in real ways,<sup>5</sup> they are also fairly readily separable for the present purposes and can be treated individually here. However, the argument of this essay will be that all the stories contain a remarkably consistent and powerful theme, pressing home the general point that genuine (i.e. from John's perspective) faith cannot be based on "seeing" and tangible evidence.<sup>6</sup>

### 1. *The Encounter Between the Risen Jesus and Thomas (John 20:24–29)*

The story of the Jesus and Thomas presents many well-known problems and issues. In particular, there is considerable debate about whether the figure of Thomas is presented here positively or negatively. Is Thomas presented positively as the paradigm of believing faith, articulating the most

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*John*, 634–35: the Easter stories add nothing new to what has already been said, and Jesus achieves there no more than what has already been achieved by his word earlier in his ministry: they show Jesus' victory over the world but this has already been accomplished earlier (cf. 16:22). The stories then function as "signs." Similar is Christopher F. Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1970), 116: "Strictly speaking, there is no place in the Fourth Gospel for resurrection stories, since the ascent or exaltation has already taken place"; see also John A. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 485 (writing about the views of Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus* [London: SCM, 1968], who argues that the passion narrative as a whole is something of a "post-script" [p. 7] to the rest of the gospel): "a similar case, to my mind even more persuasive, can be made for the superfluousness of the resurrection stories in chapter 20"; Robert Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 187 (citing Evans as above, and adding "we can concur"), 193 ("the resurrection as such is in a way redundant"); Harold W. Attridge, "From Discord Rises Meaning. Resurrection Motifs in the Fourth Gospel," in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (ed. Craig R. Koester and Reimund Bieringer; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 2–19: "The cross is certainly a focal point of the text ... So why continue with resurrection appearance accounts?" (p. 2); "The very existence of the chapters [20, 21] is something of an anomaly" (p. 15).

<sup>5</sup> E.g. the story of Peter and the Beloved Disciple is intercalated between the two parts of the overall story about Mary Magdalene; and the Thomas story clearly links up with the account of the appearance of the risen Jesus to the other disciples.

<sup>6</sup> The unity of the main message from (nearly) all the stories in the chapter, and the importance of the theme of "faith" here, is also stressed by Lindars, *John*, 595: the chapter's main aim "is to explain more clearly the nature of the act of faith by which the life of Christ may be appropriated ... Various traditions are retold in such a way as to present one theme to the reader." However, the particular slant on the nature of the "faith" as John understands it is developed slightly differently here compared with Lindars' presentation.

profound confession about Jesus' identity which is said by any human being in the story? Or is he a negative example, demanding tangible proof of the presence of Jesus which is not normally accessible?<sup>7</sup>

One of the intriguing "gaps" in the story concerns Thomas' response to Jesus' invitation in v. 27. Earlier, Thomas is reported as saying that unless he actually has physical contact with the risen Jesus, he will not believe (v. 25: "unless I see the mark of the nails ... and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe"). When the risen Jesus appears to Thomas, he invites him to do precisely what Thomas had said earlier was essential for him to "believe": "put your finger here and see my hands; reach out your hand and put it in my side." But whether Thomas actually does what Jesus invites him to do is not explicitly stated. The immediate sequel to Jesus' invitation is Thomas' famous christological confession "my Lord and my God" (v. 28). Is the reader meant to assume that Thomas realises that his earlier demand is unnecessary and/or inappropriate, that he does not (need to) reach out his hand and touch Jesus, and that he makes his christological confession almost *despite* his earlier demand?<sup>8</sup> Or is the reader meant to assume that Thomas does indeed do what Jesus has "invited" (or perhaps commanded) him to do?<sup>9</sup>

In that case, Thomas' demands are met and his christological confession is directly related to his earlier demand, arising precisely because the request is satisfied.

Further, it is unclear how far Jesus' response to Thomas' confession commends Thomas or criticises him. Clearly at one level it commends Thomas: "have you believed because you have seen me?"<sup>10</sup> and in Johannine terms,

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<sup>7</sup> For recent discussion of the issue, with extensive references to other treatments, see Peter J. Judge, "A Note on Jn 20,29," in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck* (ed. Frans Van Segbroek et al.; Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 2183–92, and "John 20,24–29: More than Doubt, Beyond Rebuke," in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Gilbert Van Belle), 913–30.

<sup>8</sup> So e.g. Brown, *John*, 1046, as part of his argument that Thomas does indeed come to full (Johannine) faith which is *not* based on the miraculous: "the evangelist would never had considered Thomas' faith adequate if the disciple had taken up Jesus' invitation and would never have put on Thomas' lips the tremendous confession of vs. 28." Also Lincoln, *John*, 503: "Thomas comes to faith not because he actually touches Jesus' hands and side—there is no indication that he takes up Jesus' invitation—but because Jesus graciously offers himself for Thomas to do so."

<sup>9</sup> Given the very high status that Jesus has in John, an "invitation" by Jesus to do something may almost have the force of a command. Cf. Smith, *Theology*, 123: "most readers probably assume that [Thomas] did [touch Jesus]."

<sup>10</sup> It is uncertain if the words are to be taken as a question (so e.g. NRSV) or a statement (so RV and many other earlier versions). According to Judge, "Death of Jesus," 919–20, the saying is much more positive about Thomas if taken as a statement (and, he argues, should

to “believe” is a thoroughly positive, and indeed the entirely appropriate, response of human beings to God and to Jesus. Thus at least this part of Jesus’ response to Thomas is positive and commendatory. But do then the words of Jesus which follow modify this commendation? According to some, they do not. The continuation (“blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe”) introduces a distinction between the original eye-witnesses and later readers of the gospel. For John, the faith of the original eye-witnesses may be based on their physical sight and direct experience of the events concerned; those who come after must base their faith on the testimony of the eye-witnesses. Thomas is thus commended as one of the eye-witnesses, and v. 29b simply refers to the (different) faith which subsequent generations must have.<sup>11</sup> On this reading there is then no critique of Thomas at all: the only contrast in the story is between seeing and not seeing.<sup>12</sup>

However, this does not fully explain the form of the Thomas story following on from the earlier appearance to the other disciples (in vv. 19–23). Why does Thomas not believe on the basis of their (eye-witness) testimony? The fact that he demands direct tangible evidence, despite the (indirect) testimony of the other disciples, seems to strike a slightly negative note in the gospel story as it now stands.<sup>13</sup> Thus it is hard to escape the

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be taken as such); cf. too Barrett, *John*, 573; Brown, *John*, 1047. If however it is a question, it is surely a question presuming the answer “yes”!

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. Brown, *John*, 1050; so too Judge, “Note,” and “Death of Jesus”; Lincoln, *John*, 503: the saying “underscores the authority and reliability of the disciples’ witness”; Ismo Dunderberg, *The Beloved Disciple in Conflict? Revisiting the Gospels of John and Thomas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 60: “The repeated sequence of eyewitness testimony and its verification in John 20:19–29 underscores the reliability of that testimony for the intended audience of the gospel.”

<sup>12</sup> De Boer, *Johannine Perspectives*, 212–14, argues that the Thomas story focuses on the wounds of Jesus and hence is designed to affirm the identity of the risen Jesus with the crucified Jesus, perhaps in a context of persecution of the Johannine community. (For the broad theme, see too his “Johannine History” essay, focusing on the use of the Son of Man title, though he does not treat the Thomas story there; also “Son of Man” is not used in this pericope.) However, the issue in the Thomas story seems to be seeing vs. not seeing: the contrast is not between a glorious risen Jesus and the risen Jesus bearing the marks of the cross. The focus here on Jesus’ wounds may simply reflect a concern to establish Jesus’ identity: see e.g. Dunderberg, *Beloved Disciple*, 63–64 (with reference to Riley and DeConick), for post mortem identification of various people by their scars and wounds.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Lindars, *John*, 616. This may be even more the case if, as de Boer, *Johannine Perspectives*, 213 argues, the earlier story of the appearance to the (other) disciples has been subsequently redacted by adding in the reference to Jesus showing them his hands and his side to align this appearance story with the Thomas story. What Thomas then demands to see and experience for himself has already been granted to the other disciples and they presumably testify to this: hence Thomas’ demand to see for himself implicitly denies the value of the testimony of the others.



implication of an element (however small) of a critique of Thomas in the blessing of v. 29b: “blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” As all commentators note, the group of such people here undoubtedly encompass all the readers of the gospel and all those who come after the first eye-witnesses of the events recounted: they are in the position of “not seeing” and from whom a response of “believing” is expected. The existence of the very high christological confession<sup>14</sup> on the lips of Thomas in v. 28 almost certainly means that it would be wrong to see any kind of “polemic” against Thomas here.<sup>15</sup> But Thomas is not presented entirely positively. It is true that the christological confession is taken as an indication that Thomas now “believes.” Nevertheless, even “believing” in John is not always regarded as absolutely uniformly positive without any remainder. This can be seen in the note in 2:23–24, or rather in the comment which v. 24 provides to the statement in v. 23: many in Jerusalem “believed” in Jesus’ name when they saw the signs he was doing; *but* Jesus “would not entrust himself to them,” apparently because their believing as was not as well founded as it might have been.<sup>16</sup> The “believing” of the Jerusalem crowds in 2:23 is remarkably similar to the “believing” of

<sup>14</sup> Only Thomas, of the characters in the story, comes to the insight that Jesus is in some sense “God.” The evangelist has stated this in the opening verse of the prologue (1:1), and (probably) concludes the prologue with the same claim (1:18, though the text is slightly insecure). It is then an epithet which John approves of without any question. Hence Thomas’ confession in 20:28 is viewed positively by the evangelist equally without any question. But whether John regards Thomas himself, i.e. in his entirety as a character in the story, in equally unreservedly positive terms may be another matter.

<sup>15</sup> See the theories of Gregory J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: Thomas and John in Conflict* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), and April D. DeConick, *Voices of the Mystics: Early Christian Discourse in the Gospels of John and Thomas and Other Ancient Christian Literature* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), both of whom see the figure of Thomas in John as representing the theology of the *Gospel of Thomas*, with John in a “conflict” situation with this gospel. The overall theory is somewhat unconvincing (not least because different theories argue for very different views of “Thomas” which John is then meant to oppose): see the detailed critique of Dunderberg, *Beloved Disciple*, esp. 28–46; also 64–65 on the significance in this context of the fact that *Thomas* makes his confession which is “paradigmatic” for John’s audience: it is very hard to conceive this if Thomas were the spokesperson for a theology and ideology that John were seeking to oppose. See too Judge, “Death of Jesus,” arguing against Riley (and the adoption of Riley’s views by Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* [New York: Random House, 2003]).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. too the apparently scornful rebuke of Jesus to the nobleman (and others: cf. the second person plural) in 4:48: “Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.” The relationship between “seeing” and “believing” in John has been much discussed; for a valuable treatment of the topic, with full engagement with other views, see the two essays of Koester, “Hearing, Seeing, and Believing in the Gospel of John,” *Bib* 70 (1989): 327–48, and “Jesus’ Resurrection, the Signs, and the Dynamics of Faith in the Gospel of John,” in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (ed. Koester and Bieringer), 47–74.

Thomas in 20:28: it is “believing,” and hence is regarded positively at one level by the evangelist; but perhaps there is an element of suspicion about whether it is fully valid because it is based on what people have “seen” by way of miracles etc. Genuine (in Johannine terms) believing is to be based on what is not seen (or perhaps on seeing what is potentially rather more ambiguous).<sup>17</sup>

Thomas’ status in the story may thus be slightly questionable. He is not an outright enemy of the Johannine Jesus. Clearly such a view would be absurd. There are enemies of the Johannine Jesus and/or Johannine Christians, e.g. “the Jews,” possibly Pilate, but Thomas is not in that category at all. He is too the mouthpiece for the climactic christological confession of the gospel; he expresses what the evangelist wants to assert about Jesus without any apparent qualification, at least in terms of the words used. Nevertheless, perhaps the context in which the words are expressed by Thomas as a character in the story does exert an element of qualification on what is said: what is said by Thomas is right; but the ideal is that these words are expressed by those who have “not seen,” not on the basis of what has been “seen.”<sup>18</sup>

## 2. *Peter and the Beloved Disciple at the Empty Tomb (John 20:2–10)*

The story of Peter and the Beloved Disciple coming to the empty tomb and finding it empty has also been the focus of intense discussion. Much of this has concerned the way in which the evangelist may be setting up some kind of contrast and/or “competition” between Peter and the Beloved Disciple, both here and in the rest of the gospel, with then further speculation about what these two characters in the story might represent.<sup>19</sup> Thus much

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<sup>17</sup> In his two essays, Koester argues persuasively that “seeing” can be positive if arising from a context of existing “faith,” but it cannot generate (true) faith. If this is the case, then the Thomas story, which seems to imply that Thomas’ faith has arisen on the basis of what he has “seen,” is indeed to be taken as not reflecting quite so unambiguously positively on Thomas as some have argued.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Bultmann, *Theology*, 57: “in it [v. 29] lies a criticism of the small faith which asks for tangible demonstrations of the Revealer. It also contains a warning against taking the Easter stories for more than they are able to be: signs and picture of Easter faith.” Similarly his *Gospel of John*, 696. For a survey of others taking the view that John regards faith based on seeing negatively, see Koester, “Hearing, Seeing, and Believing,” 327–28, and his “Jesus’ Resurrection,” 53–54.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Peter and the Beloved Disciple have been taken as representing Jewish and Gentile Christianity respectively: so Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 685; or “catholic” Christianity (or the “great church”) and Johannine Christianity: so e.g. Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 83 (modifying his earlier *John*, 1007,

has been made of the fact that the Beloved Disciple reaches the tomb first, beating Peter in the race, but that he does not go into the tomb (at least initially), and also that when he does go in, he “believed” (v. 8), something that is not said of Peter. Thus for many, the Beloved Disciple is presented here as exhibiting the ideal kind of “believing” that is expected of every (Johannine) Christian follower of Jesus: unlike Peter, the Beloved Disciple does not need to go into the tomb (or at least does not do so initially); and unlike Peter, the Beloved Disciple “believes.” For some, even, the Beloved Disciple’s “believing” here is interpreted as similar to the kind of believing that is commended by the risen Jesus in v. 29: the Beloved Disciple has *not* seen the risen Jesus, and yet here he “believes.”<sup>20</sup>

Such a model of interpreting Peter (and to a certain extent the Beloved Disciple) has been called into question in the recent work of Blaine.<sup>21</sup> Blaine questions just how far there is any critique of the figure of Peter throughout the gospel, and finds little if any evidence for such an interpretation. So also specifically in this story, it is very difficult to find any conclusive indication that Peter is being presented in any worse (or better) light than the Beloved Disciple. For what is said of both figures far outweighs anything that might distinguish them. Thus both come to the empty tomb; both go into the tomb;<sup>22</sup> both “see” the linen cloths;<sup>23</sup> it is then said of both that they do not understand the scriptures (v. 9); and finally both go to their homes at the end of the story (v. 10).<sup>24</sup>

The one feature that might distinguish the Beloved Disciple from Peter is the note that he “believed” (v. 8), whereas this is not said of Peter. However, before one jumps to a conclusion that the Beloved Disciple is here being presented thoroughly positively and in contrast with an implied negative portrayal of Peter, some caution may be necessary. Although it is said positively (at one level) that the Beloved Disciple “believed” (v. 8), it is not said

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where he argued that there was no contrast implied); Lincoln, *John*, 489. See the surveys in Terence V. Smith, *Petrine Controversies in Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 146–48, and Brad B. Blaine, *Peter in the Gospel of John: The Making of an Authentic Disciple* (Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 112–13.

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. Lindars, *John*, 602; Lincoln, *John*, 491: the Beloved Disciple “demonstrates immediate and exemplary faith in contrast to Peter.” See also Ashton, *Understanding*, 506: the Beloved Disciple’s believing is a response “to a vision of emptiness.” Cf. too Fortna, *Fourth Gospel*, 191.

<sup>21</sup> Blaine, *Peter*.

<sup>22</sup> Despite getting there first and then giving way to Peter, the Beloved Disciple does *not* stay outside the tomb: he too goes in, following Peter inside.

<sup>23</sup> The Beloved Disciple sees the headcloth, though whether this distinguishes him from Peter is not clear.

<sup>24</sup> See Blaine, *Peter*, 121.

that Peter did not believe. The narrative is silent at this point. Is the silence a meaningful one? Is the reader meant to deduce from the absence of anything said explicitly that Peter is in a worse state than the Beloved Disciple? What may give pause for thought here is the note in v. 9 (and perhaps v. 10 also), which may introduce a slightly negative note, and which applies to both Peter *and* the Beloved Disciple: both v. 9 and v. 10 are in the third person plural and clearly apply to both the Beloved Disciple and Peter equally.

The note in v. 9 seems to be providing an explanation (cf. γάρ) for what has just been said; moreover, it seems to be some kind of quasi-“apology” for something that could be taken as slightly negative (or potentially negative): what has just been said appears to need some kind of “excuse,” or explanation, and the reason is given that “as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.” The precise force of the γάρ in the sentence is only rarely noted, and if it is, often effectively side-stepped. Most assume that the reference to the fact that the Beloved Disciple “believed” (absolutely) is unquestionably positive (see above); hence v. 9 cannot be taken as an attempt to excuse him in any way (since no excuse is called for). But this evades the force of the γάρ. Thus, for example, Bultmann argues that the whole verse is a later gloss to the text and not part of the original text at all: if the substance of the note were original, one would expect a δέ not a γάρ.<sup>25</sup> For others, v. 9 is the vestige of an earlier source, clashing slightly with the evangelist’s own comment in v. 8.<sup>26</sup> Others still have taken v. 9 more seriously, as providing some kind of excuse for an implied shortcoming previously mentioned, and hence interpreted the “believed” in v. 8 as implying only that the Beloved Disciple believed the report of Mary about the emptiness of the tomb (as perhaps her explanation that someone had taken the body away) as true:<sup>27</sup> in other words, the Beloved Disciple does not yet exhibit full Christian (or Johannine Christian) faith, the reason being that he did not yet understand the scriptures. But it is hard to take an absolute use of πιστευεῖν, especially in John’s gospel, in such a weak form: the ἐπιστεύουσεν in v. 8 is surely taken, in the context of John’s gospel as a whole, in its more natural Johannine sense of a full

<sup>25</sup> Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 685. Cf. too Ashton, *Understanding*, 506: Bultmann “may be right.”

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Lindars, *John*, 602 (referring to Leaney for the source theory); Fortna, *Fourth Gospel*, 197: v. 8 “logically collides with the evidently traditional v. 9”; Lincoln, *John*, 491: the sequence “is in line with earlier awkwardnesses in the narrative caused by insertion of material about the Beloved Disciple.”

<sup>27</sup> The explanation is as old as Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Io.* 120.9; see the discussion in Brown, *John*, 989; Blaine, *Peter*, 118; also Daniel A. Smith, *Revisiting the Empty Tomb: The Early History of Easter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 143–44.

(and to a certain extent proper, though cf. below) response to the person of Jesus and/or God.<sup>28</sup>

What is however also striking in the present context is that v. 9 is in the third person plural: what is said applies to both Peter and the Beloved Disciple without any attempt to differentiate between them. Insofar as one is “excused,” or some kind of “explanation” or “apology” is offered for his shortcomings, the same applies to the other. Thus insofar as one is apparently found (slightly) wanting in his response, the same applies to both. With this in mind, it is hard to take the silence in narrative about any reference to Peter’s “believing” too seriously, or at least as implying some adverse contrast of Peter with the Beloved Disciple.<sup>29</sup> The Beloved Disciple “believes,” but some “apology” is offered to explain an apparent deficiency, and the deficiency is something that applies to both figures equally.

One wonders too if a note of slight criticism (or at least not entirely full approval) is present in the last verse of the pericope: “the disciples returned to their own homes.”<sup>30</sup> The conclusion here is so low-key that it rarely generates any comment at all.<sup>31</sup> Yet it may be surprising, and also surprising in the context of John’s gospel, that the disciples do *not* go and tell anyone about what they have seen (or if they do, it is not said explicitly). In ch. 1, those who are called by Jesus immediately go and tell others about what they have seen and heard from Jesus, and then bring others to Jesus. In 20:18, perhaps in a note that is intended to provide a deliberate contrast with v. 10, Mary Magdalene’s response to her encounter with the risen Jesus is to go and *tell* the disciples what she has seen and heard. Is then the low-key finale to the pericope of Peter and the Beloved Disciple a further indication that both figures are responding to the events they have experienced in a way that is not perhaps ideal and leaves something to be desired?

But whatever one makes to v. 10, it seems that the response of *both* Peter *and* the Beloved Disciple is presented as in some way (slightly) inadequate

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Dunderberg, *Beloved Disciple*, 136; also Lincoln, *John*, 490, who says that the narrative is “banal” if v. 8 refers only to the Beloved Disciple believing Mary’s earlier report.

<sup>29</sup> Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 684, argues that the narrative implies that Peter *does* “believe” as well as the Beloved Disciple: otherwise it would have explicitly said that he did not believe.

<sup>30</sup> Blaine, *Peter*, 106, 121.

<sup>31</sup> Though cf. Ashton, *Understanding*, 506, who refers to the “quiet reticence” here; also David R. Catchpole, *Resurrection People: Studies in the Resurrection Narratives of the Gospels* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd 2000), 168, who talks of the “lowest of low-key endings.” Cf. too Koester, “Jesus’ Resurrection,” 68–69: the “subdued conclusion to this scene works against the idea that seeing the empty tomb is a sure way to believe and comprehend the resurrection.”

and not ideal, the reason being stated that “as yet they did not understand the scriptures that he must rise from the dead.” In what way though is the Beloved Disciple’s response in particular inadequate if he is said to “believe”? The verb is one of the most distinctive and characteristic Johannine terms to express the right and proper human response to Jesus and/or God. It is this that makes the transition from v. 8 to v. 9 so problematic.

The solution may lie in the *whole* of what is said in v. 8 to be the Beloved Disciple’s response when he goes into the empty tomb. For what the text says is not simply that “he believed,” but that “he *saw and* believed.” In this respect, the Beloved Disciple is in a very similar position to that of Thomas in the later scene in the chapter. Thomas sees the risen Jesus (as he has demanded that he do before he will believe), and although he is thereby led to make his great christological confession (v. 28), there is an added rider in the (mild) critique implied about the way in which Thomas’ circumstances have enabled him to make this confession (v. 29; see above). The ideal (and the demand on the Johannine readers) is to be in a position where one does *not* “see” and yet “believes.” So then here, the Beloved Disciple is in the position of “*seeing and* believing.” As such, is his belief perhaps just slightly second-rate, like the “believing” of the Jerusalem crowds in 2:23–24 who have “believed” because they have “seen” (the signs that Jesus performed), or the attitude of those addressed in 4:48 who will not believe unless they see signs and wonders and thereby earn Jesus’ rebuke)? The mini-explanation in v. 9 may then be intended to provide the reason, possibly “apology” or “excuse,” for this slightly second-rate form of believing:<sup>32</sup> they did not yet understand the scriptures. Perhaps the implication is that later, when they do understand the scriptures, they will have no need to “see” any tangible, visible evidence of the claims about the resurrected state of the risen Jesus.

Further, v. 9 applies to both Peter and the Beloved Disciple. There is thus no sense in which Peter is being criticised and the Beloved Disciple set on a pedestal. There may be a sense in which the Beloved Disciple is some kind of “ideal” figure, presenting the model of true discipleship, at least in the overall presentation of the gospel as a whole. But in this pericope, the Beloved Disciple is perhaps slightly less than ideal, and in this respect no different from Peter: *both* do not yet understand, and hence both produce a reaction that is not quite ideal (and perhaps as part of that, they both quietly go home at the end, rather than proclaiming the gospel to others).

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. too Koester, “Jesus’ Resurrection,” 69: the Beloved Disciple’s faith was “not a faith that entailed much comprehension or resulted in an announcement of resurrection ... If there is to be a faith that leads to proclamation, it will have to come from something more than the empty tomb.”

The message of the pericope as a whole may thus be very similar to that of the later Thomas story. Discipleship can lead to good responses to Jesus; but a “believing” which is based on “seeing” tangible evidence of the Christian claims, whilst not being necessarily bad, is perhaps not quite as ideal as a believing without seeing. The Beloved Disciple are both represented here as perhaps in this liminal stage, inching towards what is, for John, the full (or “proper”) Christian response to the Christ event, but perhaps falling just slightly short of the mark at this stage in the story.

### 3. *Jesus and Mary Magdalene (John 20:11–18)*

It may be that the same picture emerges from the story of the encounter between Mary Magdalene and the risen Jesus in the garden (20:11–18). Again the story has been analysed many times and there are well-known, enormous problems of interpretation. The command of Jesus to Mary, “do not touch me,” and the relation of this to the apparent explanation that is given (in another γάρ clause!), “for I have not yet ascended to the Father,” have been debated almost endlessly.<sup>33</sup> Certainly the use of the present tense imperative (μὴ μου ἅπτου) has often been noted as perhaps implying the refusal of a continued action on Mary’s part (perhaps of clinging on to Jesus, rather than simply “touching” him once and almost instantaneously).

The precise relationship between the negative command the reason given is also obscure. In particular, what it might imply for the situation which might ensue after Jesus has ascended to the Father is unclear.<sup>34</sup> Would it, for example, be appropriate or not for Mary to “touch” Jesus when he has ascended to the Father? If yes, this would mean that Mary should not touch Jesus now, because he has not yet ascended, but when he has ascended then touching him would be right and proper. Such an idea seems however very strange. Perhaps then the answer to question posed above is no: when Jesus has ascended, any “touching” is inappropriate, and hence Mary should not touch Jesus now because he is already in this process of ascending which renders such a relationship out of place.

<sup>33</sup> A full treatment, with comprehensive discussion of alternative views, is provided by Bieringer, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (John 20:17): Resurrection and Ascension in the Gospel of John,” in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (ed. Koester and Bieringer), 209–235; Bieringer argues (to my mind convincingly) against any theories which separate the γάρ clause from the “Do not touch me.”

<sup>34</sup> See e.g. Brown, *John*, 992–93; de Boer, *Johannine Perspectives*, 126–27, and his “Jesus’ Departure to the Father: Death or Resurrection?” in *Theology and Christology in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Gilbert Van Belle, Jan G. van der Watt and Petrus J. Maritz; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 1–19, 6.

Certainly it seems clear that, at this point in the pericope, Mary is not being presented entirely positively. (She may well be presented more positively in what follows in v. 18, in that her response to her encounter with Jesus is to go and to *tell* others about what has happened: see above and the possible contrast with v. 10.) Even when Jesus addresses Mary by name and she realizes who he is (i.e. that he is not the gardener), she calls him “Rabbouni,” which the evangelist explicitly translates for his readers as “Teacher.” In Johannine terms, this is a positive but nevertheless inadequate address for Jesus. It is, for example, all but the same as the address of Jesus used by Nicodemus in 3:2 (ῥαββί; “we know that you are a *teacher* sent from God”); and for all his positive traits, Nicodemus (especially in ch. 3) is not an absolute paradigm for the Christian follower.<sup>35</sup> To see Jesus as (only) a “teacher” is not bad, but it fails to get to the deepest significance of the person of Jesus for John. Mary is thus clearly being presented as making an *inadequate* response to Jesus.<sup>36</sup>

This may be confirmed by what follows and the negative command which Jesus gives: “Do not touch me.” The story line implies that Mary has touched, or is touching Jesus. The present imperative may also imply that Mary is attempting to do this on a continuous basis, i.e. she is trying to keep hold of him physically. The risen Jesus commands her not to do so. Clearly then Mary is trying to do something that is considered inappropriate.

The difficulties which many have found with the “not yet” in Jesus’ reply to Mary may stem from an over-literal interpretation of the surface level meaning of the story and its sequential details.<sup>37</sup> Jesus’ “ascending” in John has various forms and meanings. It is in one way his being “lifted up,” although in a real (Johannine) sense this has already happened—on the cross. But the ascension is also the departure of Jesus from the present world. And in the liminal, or transitional, state of things as depicted in ch. 20, Jesus has not yet ascended: he is still present on earth, at least for a short time. But there may be a real sense in which Jesus’ departure is already happening (or anyway is about to happen very shortly). Hence he tells Mary that

<sup>35</sup> E.g. he comes to Jesus “by night”; his response is based on the “signs” that Jesus has performed; and he singularly fails to understand what Jesus says to him: see e.g. Wayne A. Meeks, “The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism,” in *In Search of the Early Christians* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), 55–90, esp. 62–64 (originally in *JBL* 91 [1972] 44–72).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 686–87: “Mary’s address to Jesus ... shows meanwhile that she does not yet fully know him”; de Boer, “Jesus’ Departure,” 6: “a low Christology”; Koester, “Jesus’ Resurrection,” 69: Mary’s “understanding is not fully developed, since she seems to assume that her relationship with Jesus the rabbi will be much as it was before.”

<sup>37</sup> See Brown, *John*, 1014; de Boer, *Johannine Perspectives*, 126–27, and “Jesus’ Departure,” 6: the narrative, qua narrative, has to impose a temporal sequence, but John is trying to get across a unified message about the nature of the resurrection (and/or ascension).



he is not yet ascended (i.e. he is present with her and speaking with her), but that she is to go and tell his “brother”/disciples that he is in the process of ascending now. In this state of being in the process of departing, any kind of physical contact is not appropriate, because the physical presence which it implies, and which perhaps it tries to maintain and continue, is about to end. Mary thus should not “touch” (or “cling on” to) the risen Jesus because that is not the way in which the true believer will and/or should appropriate and relate to Jesus in the post-Easter period.<sup>38</sup> Mary (and through the figure of Mary, the reader of John) is being told to realise that resurrection means departure, not presence in the same way as before.<sup>39</sup>

What Mary is forbidden to do is thus to try to maintain a relationship based on the tangible and the visible. Just as with Peter, the Beloved Disciple and Thomas, one can come to some (real and genuine) understanding of who Jesus is on the basis of the visible and the tangible (and Thomas is indeed invited to verify the tangible evidence).<sup>40</sup> But this is basically an inadequate situation, only possible perhaps in this special, short time-span when the risen Jesus appears briefly to a few followers before completing the process of departing from this world and returning to the Father. Any attempt to maintain the conditions of this temporary and limited period represents an inadequate and *not* ideal form of discipleship.

#### 4. *Jesus and the Disciples (John 20:19–23)*

Finally we may note the short pericope of the appearance of Jesus to the disciples in vv. 19–23. In some ways, the story ties in well with other parts of the gospel and provides a fitting “conclusion” to a number of aspects.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Cf. too Koester, “Jesus’ Resurrection,” 69, as cited above (n. 36).

<sup>39</sup> See especially de Boer, “Jesus’ Departure,” 7. Whether the risen Jesus is thought of as “present” in a new mode (e.g. via the Spirit) in the post-Easter situation is another matter. (Arguably he is not: what is present is the Spirit/Paraclete, and he is “another” [cf. 14:16], i.e. *not* Jesus.)

<sup>40</sup> Some have tried to reconcile the Thomas and the Mary stories in this respect, by arguing that between the appearance to Mary and the appearance to Thomas, the ascension “happens”: see the survey in Smith, *Revisiting*, 147. However, this may take the sequential sequence in John’s narrative too woodenly as a strictly temporal one. If one does, one lands oneself fairly rapidly in a number of absurdities: see Ashton, *Understanding*, 503: “To attempt to make sense of 20:1–23 as a continuous narrative ... is to enter an Alice-in-Wonderland world where one event succeeds another with the crazy logic of a dream.” See too Brown and de Boer, as above (n. 37): John is seeking to say something that is universally true through the medium of a temporal, sequential narrative.

<sup>41</sup> See the very full analysis, with comprehensive reference to recent scholarly literature, in Johannes Beutler, “Resurrection and the Forgiveness of Sins. John 20:23 against its

As many commentators have noted, Jesus' "breathing" the Spirit on to the disciples creates resonances of ideas of a new creation (cf. the prologue); and the gift of the Spirit provides the fitting conclusion of the promise implied earlier in e.g. (7:37–39 that the Spirit would come after—and only after—Jesus' glorification,<sup>42</sup> as well as the predictions in the Farewell Discourses (see 14:16–17; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7–15) of the coming of the Paraclete/Holy Spirit. So too, at one level, what is said to be the characteristic, or distinctive, aspect of the activity of the disciples as now the possessors of, or inspired by, the Spirit is not unprecedented in Johannine terms. The disciples are told that they have the authority to forgive or retain sins (v. 23). As many commentators have pointed out, this correlates with the general theme running throughout John's gospel that the ultimate sin is to reject the claim of Jesus and those who do so reject him bring about judgement upon themselves; hence the activity of the Spirit-endowed disciples continues this process of judgement, as was adumbrated already in 16:8–9.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, whilst in one way what is said here fits with the rest of the gospel, in other respects it strikes quite a surprising note. The language itself of v. 23 is slightly unexpected: nowhere earlier in John is there talk of forgiving and retaining sins.<sup>44</sup> The language may well be traditional (cf. Matt 18:18) and it could be then that John is developing a tradition he has received (whether from Matthew's gospel itself or from common traditions). But above all the activity of the disciples as Spirit-possessed, here set in terms of forgiving and retaining sins, seems somewhat unlike other significant aspects of early Christianity.

Luke's presentation of early Christian history in Acts is famous for its focus on the Spirit as the empowering activity of the Spirit in driving forward the Christian mission, and above all being the agency by which Christians perform striking miracles and powerful signs of the divine presence at work in their activity. The account in Acts 2 is in many ways typical: the Spirit comes on the disciples, with the result that they "speak in tongues," an activity which arouses amazement on the part of the onlookers who all miraculously understand what is being said. "Spirit" and visible divine activity seem to go hand in hand.

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Traditional Background," in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Koester and Bieringer), 237–51.

<sup>42</sup> Thus suggesting that, at least by this stage in the narrative, Jesus' glorification has already happened.

<sup>43</sup> See e.g. Lincoln, *John*, 499, and others.

<sup>44</sup> Hence e.g. Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 690, takes it as the vestige of a source; Fortna, *Fourth Gospel*, 193, ascribes the verse to either the evangelist "or a later hand."

The picture in Paul is different in details in some respects, though similar in others. Paul himself insists on the huge variety of activities which should be associated with the Spirit (see especially 1 Cor 12–14). He is probably faced with a situation in Corinth where others stressed the *extraordinary* activity of the Spirit, above in the activity of “speaking in tongues” (see Paul’s discussion in 1 Cor 14).<sup>45</sup> Paul himself does not deny the existence of such extraordinary activity as a valid gift of the Spirit, though he does seek to set it in a broader context and insist on the full range of activity of all Christians as that of the Spirit. But he clearly still regards extraordinary activity as potentially that of the Spirit; and he certainly can refer to the gift of the Spirit as something that should be self-evidently obvious in the life of Christians, perhaps too being manifested in “deeds of power” (see e.g. Gal 3:1–5, especially v. 5).<sup>46</sup> Thus although Paul seeks vigorously to extend the sphere of what should be regarded as the work of the Spirit, to include more mundane activities as well as the more spectacular and/or miraculous, he does not exclude the latter.

When set against this background, if it is justifiable to do so,<sup>47</sup> the presentation in John’s gospel is striking in its difference. There is not a hint that the bestowal of the Spirit will lead to any extraordinary activity at all. The Spirit’s activity is solely in terms of adjudicating over others in relation to their sins. *If* one can bring the picture from Luke and Paul to bear here, could it be that the Johannine account functions as something of a corrective to this alternative view of the Spirit? For John, the activity of the Spirit is decidedly *un*“charismatic”: the Spirit does not manifest it-/himself in miraculous works at all.

Is this then another aspect of the “not seeing” that John appears to want to insist throughout this chapter as characterising the post-Easter situation of Christians? As we have seen, the “signs” that Jesus performs in the gospel are potentially ambiguous: they are certainly open to more than one interpretation and they do not compel faith. Could it be that this res-

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<sup>45</sup> Almost certainly Paul and Luke have different things in mind when referring to “speaking in tongues”: for Luke it is speech which others can understand, even if they would not necessarily understand the native language of the speaker; for Paul, it is speech which is basically unintelligible, and only becomes intelligible via someone acting as an interpreter.

<sup>46</sup> On this see de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 182–83.

<sup>47</sup> I am fully aware that the legitimacy of making such comparisons might be questionable, especially if one wishes to attempt to argue that the differences between John and other early Christians might be intentional on the part of the Fourth Evangelist. One cannot necessarily presume that early Christianity was too monochrome, or that any one early group or community knew other groups or communities. Hence what is suggested here can only be with a considerable degree of tentativeness and uncertainty.

urrection story in John, when read against the background of other prominent early Christian claims and experiences, implies something similar? The activity of the Christian disciples as Spirit-possessed will *not* result in extraordinary events which will convince others of the truth of the Christian claims. Rather, the Spirit will lead only to the much “quieter,” and less easily “provable,” activity of forgiving/retaining sins. The only promise attached to this is that such forgiving and retaining will be divinely confirmed,<sup>48</sup> perhaps only to be visible at the final judgement. For John, post-Easter Christian existence is *not* to be seen in activities, actions or events that are extra-ordinary.

### *Conclusion*

In his magisterial commentary, Bultmann claimed that the resurrection stories involving Thomas and Mary both involve an element of critique of any attempt to overvalue the Easter stories.<sup>49</sup> The argument of this essay has been that perhaps this critique, at times fairly gentle but nonetheless real, runs through all the stories in John 20. “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” is a motif that the evangelist seems to stress in various ways throughout the chapter. There *is* an important sense in which the Christian disciples (and others) “see”: they have “seen his glory” (1:14), but the glory of Jesus is, for John, to be seen most clearly on the cross (see above). Hence the “seeing” to which John 1:14 refers may be primarily the event of the cross, not any visible tangible “proofs” that would take away the scandal of the crucifixion. So too, when Nathaniel is told in 1:50 that he will “see” greater things (than the relatively trivial “miracle” of Jesus knowing who he is before being told), the “greater things” may equally refer to the cross (rather than e.g. to other miracles). If then one “sees” anything, it is primarily the highly ambiguous figure of Jesus on the cross: “they will look on *the one whom they pierced*.”<sup>50</sup> For John, followers of Jesus are indeed called on to “believe” on the basis of what they have “seen”; but for the most part, there is not necessarily any “seeing” that provides a resolution of the scandal of the cross. Faith based on that kind of “seeing” is regarded as just slightly inferior—a lesson that John 20 seems to press home insistently.

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<sup>48</sup> Assuming with most that the passives here are divine passives.

<sup>49</sup> Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 696: “As in the story of Mary ... there is embedded in the narrative of Thomas also a peculiar critique concerning the value of the Easter stories; they can claim only a relative worth.”

<sup>50</sup> See further Christopher M. Tuckett, “Zechariah 12:10 and the New Testament,” in *The Book of Zechariah and its Influence* (ed. Tuckett; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 11–22.

## WHAT AUTHORITY DOES THE FOURTH EVANGELIST CLAIM FOR HIS BOOK?

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The New Testament has been, and still is, considered by Christians as a collection of authoritative writings, that is, writings that are definitive for their faith, for the life of their church and of themselves as individuals. As a part of the New Testament, the Gospel of John shares in its authority, and together with the other three canonical gospels, it is usually viewed as the core of the New Testament. It has achieved a special authority because it has, in Christian faith and theology, often determined the perspective from which the other canonical gospels and the rest of the New Testament have been read and understood.<sup>1</sup>

An important and interesting question is: how does the authority that Christian tradition has ascribed to the documents of the New Testament relate to the authority that these documents claim for themselves? In the case of the Pauline Epistles, for example, there is some difference between the two: Paul certainly claims authority for the gospel he preaches (see, e.g., Rom 1:16–17; Gal 1:6–12) and for himself as an apostle (see, e.g., Rom 1:1–7; 1 Cor 4:14–21), but he does not consider his letters as deserving the respect due to Holy Scripture, whereas in Christian tradition, they have achieved precisely the status of Holy Scripture. The late Dutch biblical scholar Lucas Grollenberg once suggested that if Paul had known the canonical status his letters would acquire, he would not have written them, or, more probably, he would have written them but he would have added at the end the order to destroy them after reading.<sup>2</sup> This suggestion may be slightly exaggerated, but it clearly shows the distance between the status ascribed to these letters by their author and the status ascribed to them in later Christian tradition.

In this contribution for my respected colleague and friend Martin de Boer, with whom I share an interest in the Johannine literature, I shall try

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. the impact of Johannine Christology on the *Symbolum Niceo-Constantinopolitanum* (“only-begotten of the Father,” “God from God, light from light, true God from true God,” “through whom all things came into being,” “come down and become flesh”).

<sup>2</sup> Lucas Grollenberg, *Paul* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 8.

to find out what claims to authority are present in the text of the Gospel of John. It is immediately evident that the protagonist of this book, Jesus, claims divine authority for himself: he asserts that he has come from God and returns to him, and that he speaks God's words (see, e.g., John 8:26; 12:49; 16:28). The evangelist apparently accepts these claims, and in this way his book participates in the claims of its protagonist. However there are also claims to authority that the author makes for his book itself, and these are the topic of this contribution. What claims to authority does the evangelist make for his book and what strategies does he follow to realize these claims? An answer to these questions will allow some remarks, by way of conclusion, on the relation between the authority John's Gospel ascribes to itself and the authority ascribed to it in Christian tradition.

It is often assumed that John's Gospel has come into existence in various stages, starting with a relatively short and simple narrative and ending with the Gospel as we know it.<sup>3</sup> Questions such as those which are the topic of this contribution can then in theory be asked for each stage of development. I shall here only distinguish between John 1–20 and the appendix John 21. That John 21 constitutes an appendix is clear from the fact that 20:30–31 is the evident conclusion to chs 1–20. As far as claims to authority are concerned, John 21 exceeds in at least one respect the preceding chapters.

### 1. *The Beloved Disciple*

One of the ways in which the Johannine author creates authority for his narrative, is assigning a special role to the Beloved Disciple.<sup>4</sup> This disciple is explicitly said to have been present at several occasions: during the last meal of Jesus and his disciples (13:23–26), together with the mother of Jesus at the cross (19:26–27), together with Peter at the empty tomb (20:2–10), together with other disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, when Jesus

<sup>3</sup> Out of the many theories current in this field, I only mention the well thought-out proposal of Martinus C. de Boer, *Johannine Perspectives on the Death of Jesus* (CBET 17; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> There are, to my mind, no serious arguments to consider the Beloved Disciple as a completely fictional character. On this person and his significance for the authority of John's Gospel, see Thomas Söding, "Die Wahrheit des Evangeliums: Anmerkungen zur johanneischen Hermeneutik," *ETL* 77 (2001): 318–55, esp. 348–51; Jürgen Becker, *Johanneisches Christentum: Seine Geschichte und Theologie im Überblick* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 61–67. For a recent survey of views on the identity and function of the Beloved Disciple, see Harold W. Attridge, "The Restless Quest for the Beloved Disciple," in *Early Christian Voices: In Texts, Traditions, and Symbols* (ed. David H. Warren et al.; BIS 66; Boston: Brill, 2003), 71–80.

appears to them (21:7) and speaks with Peter about the Beloved Disciple (21:20–23). He may be identical with the anonymous companion of Andrew at the beginning of the story (1:35–40) and with the “other disciple” who after the arrest of Jesus introduces Peter into the courtyard of the high priest (18:15–16). He must also be the one who saw and testified in 19:35. We may expect this person to be someone sympathetic to and acquainted with Jesus, which excludes “the Jews” and the Roman soldiers, and leaves the Beloved Disciple who is present when Jesus dies (19:26–27) as the only candidate.<sup>5</sup> The Beloved Disciple is finally mentioned in the second conclusion of the Gospel (21:24).

Aspects of his role that are significant for the Gospel’s claims to authority, are the following. During the meal, the Beloved Disciple is leaning against Jesus’ chest, and Peter makes use of his mediation to ask Jesus a question (13:23–25). The Beloved Disciple takes the earthly place of the dying Jesus in the new family of God (19:26–27).<sup>6</sup> He is the reliable witness who testifies to what he has seen after the death of Jesus, so that “you also may believe” (19:35).<sup>7</sup> He reaches the empty tomb before Peter, sees and believes (20:4–8). Among the seven disciples present when the risen Jesus appears at the Sea of Tiberias (see 21:2), he is the first one to recognize Jesus (21:7). In the second conclusion, it is said about him: “This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true” (21:24).

In short: the Beloved Disciple is the most intimate disciple of Jesus, he is the perfect believer, who through the visible outside of the Jesus event arrives at its spiritual inside, and he testifies to what he has seen so that the addressees of the Gospel may believe in Jesus. He apparently is the disciple who constitutes the link between the addressees and Jesus, and he guarantees the truth of the Gospel narrative. The latter aspect is present in the parenthesis in 19:35, where it seems to apply, at least primarily, to what immediately precedes, the flowing of blood and water from the pierced side of Jesus (19:34). The same aspect is found in the parenthesis in 21:24,<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> So also, e.g., Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (xiii–xxi)* (AB 29A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 936; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium 3* (HTKNT 4/3; Freiburg: Herder, 1976), 340.

<sup>6</sup> See Jean Zumstein, *L'évangile selon saint Jean (13–21)* (CNT 4b; Genève: Labor et Fides, 2007), 247–51.

<sup>7</sup> English translations of biblical passages come from the NRSV (unless otherwise indicated).

<sup>8</sup> On the parenthetical character of John 19:35 and 21:24, see Gilbert Van Belle, *Les parenthèses dans l'évangile de Jean: Aperçu historique et classification. Texte grec de Jean* (SNTA 11; Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1985), 100, 104.

but now in expanded form: the Beloved Disciple testifies to “these things,” that is, to the whole preceding Gospel narrative, and he is in addition the one who wrote it down.

So the Beloved Disciple functions in John 1–20 as the ideal disciple of Jesus and as the one who guarantees for the addressees the truth of certain parts of the narrative. In these functions, he gives authority to John’s Gospel. At the end of ch. 21, in a secondary addition,<sup>9</sup> he functions as a witness to all events narrated in the Gospel and as its author—which even enhances the authority of John.

## 2. *The Post-Easter Perspective*

There are some passages in John that clearly show the evangelist to be aware of writing from a post-Easter vantage point. The first one is John 2:22. After Jesus has cleansed the temple, “the Jews” ask him to show them a sign for doing this (2:14–18), and he answers them: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (2:19). “The Jews” do not comprehend these words (2:20), and the evangelist elucidates that Jesus “was speaking of the temple of his body” (2:21). He then comments: “After he [Jesus] was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken” (2:22). An understanding recollection of Jesus’ word on “the temple of his body” is only possible after, and thus in the light of, his resurrection. The result<sup>10</sup> of this recollection is that the disciples believe in the Scripture and in Jesus’ word.<sup>11</sup>

Another relevant passage is John 12:16. In 12:12–15, the evangelist has narrated Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem and pointed out that this event agrees with what is written in Zech 9:9. He then continues: “His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done

<sup>9</sup> That 21:24 is a secondary addition to what precedes, is evident from the fact that “we” are now speaking, in contrast to the third person narrative style of what precedes, and from the circumstance that the verse cannot have been written by the one who in it is identified as the author of the gospel, for this person has apparently died, as suggested by 21:23.

<sup>10</sup> I would take the first *καί* in 2:22 as a consecutive *καί*, see Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (ed. Friedrich Rehkopf; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, <sup>16</sup>1984), §442.2.

<sup>11</sup> That recollection implies understanding, was rightly emphasized by Otto Michel, “μνησκόμα, κτλ.,” *TWNT* 4:678–87, esp. 681. “The Scripture” may refer to the quotation from Ps 69:10 in 2:17, but a wider reference is also possible, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (i-xii)* (AB 29; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 116.



to him" (12:16). After the glorification of Jesus, that is, after Jesus' death and resurrection (see 12:23, 28; 13:31–32; 17:1–5),<sup>12</sup> the disciples remember, and thus understand, what is written about Jesus in Zech 9:9, and what has been done to him. Again, the post-Easter perspective makes it possible for the disciples to understand the Jesus event and its relation to the Scriptures.

The third passage to be considered in this context is John 20:9. Peter and the Beloved Disciple have entered the empty tomb, and the Beloved Disciple has seen and believed (20:3–8). The evangelist then remarks: "For as yet they had not known the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead" (20:9; own translation). That the Beloved Disciple sees and believes (20:8), in the Johannine context can only mean that he believes in the full sense of the word, and, in the light of the two passages just discussed, his faith necessarily implies belief in the Scriptures as fulfilled in Jesus. In the next verse (20:9), the adverb οὐδέπω must be translated not by the usual "not yet" but by "as yet ... not," and indicate a situation that has ceased to exist at the moment the Beloved Disciple believes in the risen Jesus (see John 19:41–42; Acts 8:16–17); ἤδεισαν then gets the meaning of a pluperfect: "they had known."<sup>13</sup> Once again, we meet John's post-Easter perspective: a full understanding of Scripture (whichever Old Testament text or texts may have been in view) is only possible after, and in the light of, the resurrection of Jesus.<sup>14</sup>

Sometimes, the evangelist presents the earthly Jesus as if he has already returned to his Father in heaven. This is especially the case in the prayer of Jesus in John 17 (see vv. 11, 13, 24), but not only there (see 12:26; 14:3, 28). Such a projection of the glorified Lord onto the earthly Jesus betrays once more that the evangelist writes from a post-Easter perspective. This perspective allows him to see his protagonist as who he really is: the full meaning of the Jesus event only becomes perceptible from its end, that is, Jesus' death and his resurrection. John claims to give the authentic picture of Jesus, viewing him in retrospect and knowing about his present exalted status.

<sup>12</sup> According to de Boer, *Johannine Perspectives*, 176–217 (see esp. 182), John applies δοξάζειν, "to glorify," primarily to Jesus' resurrection, and secondarily to his death.

<sup>13</sup> For this interpretation, see Klaus Zelzer, "ΟΥΔΕΠΩ ΓΑΡ ΗΙΔΕΙΣΑΝ—'denn bisher hatten sie nicht verstanden': Philologisches zu Übersetzung und Kontextbezug von Jo. 20,9," *Wiener Studien* 93 (1980): 56–74.

<sup>14</sup> See further Maarten J.J. Menken, "Interpretation of the Old Testament and the Resurrection of Jesus in John's Gospel," in *Resurrection in the New Testament* (ed. Reimund Bieringer et al.; BETL 165; Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 2002), 189–205, esp. 201–4.

### 3. *The Spirit*

The post-Easter perspective is a perspective that is inspired by the Spirit. According to John, the Spirit will be given to believers after the glorification of Jesus (7:39). In his farewell discourse, Jesus announces to his disciples that after his departure the Spirit will come to them, sent by the Father in the name of Jesus, or by Jesus who is with the Father (14:16–17, 26; 15:26; 16:7–11, 13–15). At the end of John's narrative, the risen Jesus effectively bestows the Spirit on his disciples (20:22). So the Spirit works in the disciples after Jesus has returned to the Father.

Two descriptions of the task of the Spirit are directly relevant to John's authority claims. We meet the first one in 14:26, where Jesus says to his disciples that the Spirit "will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you." The two activities ascribed to the Spirit imply more than just recalling the bare facts about Jesus and his sayings. Διδάσκειν, "to teach," naturally has the connotation of "to make understand." A parallel to 14:26 is found in Jesus' word in John 8:28: "I speak these things as the Father taught (ἐδίδαξεν; NRSV: instructed) me." "Teaching" is here an aspect of the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son, and suggests a unity of will between the two; in a comparable way, the Spirit creates intimate knowledge of the whole Jesus event (πάντα) in the believers (see 1 John 2:27).<sup>15</sup> The verb ὑπομιμνήσκειν, "to remind," also has the connotation of "to make understand." In the preceding section we saw that the disciples' remembrance (μιμνήσκεισθαι) of Jesus and of the Scriptures led to faith and therefore must imply understanding; similar considerations are valid for 14:26. The Spirit creates in the believers recollection and understanding of what Jesus said.

The other relevant passage is John 16:13–14. Jesus says to his disciples: "The Spirit of truth ... will guide you in the truth in its full extent (NRSV: into all the truth);<sup>16</sup> for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you." In Johannine language, "truth" is the reality of God as revealed in Jesus;<sup>17</sup> the Spirit will make the disciples fully acquainted with the Jesus event as rev-

<sup>15</sup> See Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, "διδάσκω, κτλ.," *TWNT* 2:138–68, esp. 146–47.

<sup>16</sup> This is a translation of ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πάσῃ; there is a well attested *v.l.* εἰς τὴν ἀλήθειαν πᾶσαν, "into the truth in its full extent." Brown, *John* (*i-xii*), 707, refers to discussions about the reading to be preferred, and rightly remarks: "Probably too much is made of shades of differences in prepositions that were used quite vaguely at this time."

<sup>17</sup> See esp. John 14:5–11, and cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1968), 370–71.

elation of God. The Spirit will not speak of his own accord, but he will be in the service of Jesus, and declare to the disciples the inner reality of Jesus. “The things that are to come” (τὰ ἐρχόμενα) also belong in this context: the expression probably refers here to what the Christian community will experience after Easter, and this reality is determined by the risen Jesus.<sup>18</sup> So in this passage as well, the role of the Spirit appears to be the disclosure of the meaning of what Jesus said and did to the disciples.

The concrete medium in which the Spirit discloses the meaning of the words and deeds of Jesus to his followers can only be identified with the Gospel of John. This document gives, at least in the eyes of its author, a true picture of Jesus: it is based on the testimony of Jesus’ most intimate disciple, it views him in retrospect from a post-Easter perspective, that is, from the time of the Spirit, and it discloses the inner reality of Jesus, the truth he is in person (14:6), under the guidance of the Spirit. By means of Jesus’ sayings on the Spirit in 14:26 and 16:13–14, the evangelist claims, maybe not directly but in any case clearly enough, that the Gospel of John is the product of the Spirit.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4. *The Conclusion in John 20:30–31*

In 20:30–31, the evangelist concludes his gospel with these words:

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe<sup>20</sup> that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

<sup>18</sup> See Christian Dietzfelbinger, “Paraklet und theologischer Anspruch im Johannesevangelium,” *ZTK* 82 (1985): 389–408, esp. 395; Donald A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Leicester: InterVarsity/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 540–41; Zumstein, *Évangile selon saint Jean*, 139–40.

<sup>19</sup> See further Dietzfelbinger, “Paraklet,” 402–8; Hans-Christian Kammler, “Jesus Christus und der Geistparaklet: Eine Studie zur johanneischen Verhältnisbestimmung von Pneumatologie und Christologie,” in Otfried Hofius and Hans-Christian Kammler, *Johannesstudien: Untersuchungen zur Theologie des vierten Evangeliums* (WUNT 88; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 87–190; Udo Schnelle, “Johannes als Geisttheologe,” *NovT* 40 (1998): 17–31, esp. 18–22; Söding, “Wahrheit,” 347–48.

<sup>20</sup> According to a footnote in the NRSV, “[o]ther ancient authorities read *may continue to believe*.” There is on the one hand the reading πιστεύετε, “you may continue to believe” (P<sup>66vid</sup> B\* Θ *et al.*), on the other the majority reading πιστεύσητε, “you may come to believe.” To judge by John’s Gospel as a whole, the former reading has the better chance to be the original one. For my purposes, this problem of textual criticism is of minor importance. A very similar textual problem is found at the end of 19:35.

He indicates that among the many things he could tell about Jesus,<sup>21</sup> he has selected materials that serve the faith of his addressees in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, and that bring them life through their faith. He gives his book much weight: it is able to strengthen or to raise faith, and through this faith the book provides life, which is in the Johannine terminology identical with “eternal life” (see, e.g., John 3:36; 5:24; 1 John 5:11).

It is important to note that the book is supposed to have the same impact on its readers as the protagonist of the book had on the people he addressed. In the narrative that precedes the conclusion in 20:30–31, faith is the proper response to what Jesus says or does (see, e.g., John 2:11; 4:41–42; 8:30; 11:45), and faith in Jesus leads to eternal life (see, e.g., John 3:14–16; 6:47; 11:25–26). So the sequence is: Jesus says or does something, people respond with faith, and their faith brings them eternal life. In John 20:30–31, the sequence is: people read or hear what is written in the book, this leads to faith, and this faith leads to life. The parallelism of the sequences can be illustrated by a comparison of Jesus’ saying in John 5:24 with the conclusion of the Gospel:

<i>John 5:24</i>	<i>John 20:31</i>
anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life	these are written so that you may come to believe ... and that through believing you may have life

The comparison shows quite clearly that the word of Jesus parallels the written Gospel. In a similar way, the sequence of the appearance to Thomas in John 20:26–29 and the conclusion in 20:30–31 suggests that “those who have not seen and yet have come to believe” (v. 29) have come to faith on the basis of the Jesus story of John’s Gospel.<sup>22</sup> To the later generations of the post-Easter period, the book replaces its protagonist, Jesus, and it participates in the authority of Jesus.

But this is not yet all; the written Gospel also takes the function of the Scriptures.<sup>23</sup> In 5:39–40, the Johannine Jesus says to “the Jews”: “You search

<sup>21</sup> “Doing signs,” and also the titles “the Christ” and “the Son of God,” point back to the whole preceding narrative, see Gilbert Van Belle, “The Meaning of σημεῖα in Jn 20,30–31,” *ETL* 74 (1998): 300–325; idem, “Christology and Soteriology in the Fourth Gospel: The Conclusion to the Gospel of John Revisited,” in *Theology and Christology in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. G. Van Belle et al.; BETL 184; Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 2005), 435–61.

<sup>22</sup> See Jan van der Watt, “The Presence of Jesus through the Gospel of John,” *Neot* 36 (2002): 89–95.

<sup>23</sup> For similar considerations, see Andreas Obermann, *Die christologische Erfüllung der Schrift im Johannesevangelium: Eine Untersuchung zur johanneischen Hermeneutik anhand der Schriftzitate* (WUNT 2/83; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 418–22; Klaus Scholtissek, “Geschrieben in diesem Buch’ (Joh 20,30)—Beobachtungen zum kanonischen Anspruch des Johannesevangeliums,” in *Israel und seine Heilstraditionen im Johannesevangelium* (ed. Michael Labahn et al.; Paderborn: Schöningh, 2004), 207–226, esp. 221–23.

the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” Jesus’ opponents think that eternal life is available to them in the Scriptures, but in Johannine reality, it is only available in Jesus as the one to whom the Scriptures testify. To post-Easter followers of Jesus, this means that eternal life is available through the book that represents Jesus with the believers—which is exactly what the conclusion to the Gospel states. So John’s Gospel has the same function for believers as the Scriptures have for “the Jews”: to mediate eternal life. And because the Scriptures testify to Jesus, and Jesus is represented by the Gospel of John, the Scriptures indirectly testify to John’s Gospel, and the authority of this Gospel is correspondingly greater than the authority of the Scriptures. Are there other indications in John that the evangelist claims for his book an authority that is similar to or even higher than the authority of the Scriptures?

##### 5. *Scriptural Allusions at the Beginning and at the End of the Gospel*

The very first clause of John’s Gospel reads: “In the beginning was the Word” (1:1a). It contains an evident allusion to the very first clause of the book of Genesis: “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth ...” (1:1).<sup>24</sup> There are at least four markers in John 1:1a that point to Gen 1:1; these are a combination of words, the specific meaning of one word, the position of the combination, and theme. The combination of words ἐν ἀρχῇ, “in the beginning,” occurs in both Gen 1:1 LXX and John 1:1a, and it is repeated for the sake of emphasis in John 1:2. However, the expression “in the beginning” in itself is not yet very significant;<sup>25</sup> it is not only the combination of words that matters, but also the fact that ἀρχή is used in both John and Genesis in the sense of the absolute beginning of all. Moreover, the expression ἐν ἀρχῇ occurs in both John and Genesis not only at the beginning of a sentence but even at the beginning of the whole book.<sup>26</sup> Fi-

<sup>24</sup> According to Ziva Ben-Porat, “The Poetics of Literary Allusion,” *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1 (1976): 105–128, esp. 107–8, an allusion can be defined as “a device for the simultaneous activation of two texts”: a text refers by means of a “marker” to another text, and “the simultaneous activation of the two texts thus connected results in the formation of intertextual patterns whose nature cannot be predetermined.”

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., LXX Judg 20:18 B; 2 Kgdms 17:9; 2 Chr 13:12; 2 Esd 9:2; Jer 28(51):58; Acts 1:15; Philo, *Opif.* 170; *Her.* 273; Josephus, *A.J.* 15.179; 16.384.

<sup>26</sup> Emphasized by Domingo Muñoz León, “El Pentateuco en San Juan,” in *Entrar en lo Antiguo: Acerca de la relación entre Antiguo y Nuevo Testamento* (ed. Ignacio Carbajosa and Luis Sánchez Navarro; Presencia y diálogo 16; Madrid: Facultad de Teología ‘San Dámaso,’ 2007), 107–66, esp. 153.

nally, John and Genesis are connected by the theme of creation by God's word: the Word (λόγος) of John 1:1a belongs with God (1:1b–2) and is the Word through which all things came into being (1:3, with γίνεσθαι), while the pattern of Gen 1 as a whole is that God speaks and his creatures come into being (γίνεσθαι in the Greek versions).<sup>27</sup> Using Richard B. Hays's list of criteria to establish allusions,<sup>28</sup> we can say that the allusion has more than enough volume, and that there is thematic coherence between John 1:1a and Gen 1:1. The other criteria of Hays (availability, recurrence, historical plausibility, history of interpretation, satisfaction) equally apply in this case: the book of Genesis was available to John (and to Johannine tradition), Gen 1–4 is used elsewhere in John and 1 John,<sup>29</sup> a reference to Gen 1:1 LXX is historically plausible,<sup>30</sup> many exegetes have drawn attention to the allusion,<sup>31</sup> and the allusion makes sense, for example to John's Wisdom Christology.<sup>32</sup> The first verses of John's Prologue are then very probably meant to parallel the Creation story at the beginning of Genesis, as a series of points of contact confirms. In the Word "was life, and the life was the light of all people" (John 1:4); "life" (ζωή), "to live" (ζῆν) and "light" (φῶς) occur in the Greek versions of the Creation accounts of Gen 1–2 (1:3–5, 20, 24, 30; 2:7, 9, 19).

The allusion is relevant to the way in which the evangelist wants his book to be understood. It clearly implies a claim to authority: that John's Gospel begins in the same way as the first book of the Torah and of the entire Bible,<sup>33</sup> suggests quite strongly that the evangelist intended to write

<sup>27</sup> Ps 33:6 ("By the word [LXX: λόγος] of the Lord the heavens were made") may have functioned as an intermediary between Genesis and John.

<sup>28</sup> Richard B. Hays, "Who Has Believed Our Message?" Paul's Reading of Isaiah," in idem, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 25–49, esp. 34–45.

<sup>29</sup> See Maarten J.J. Menken, "Genesis in John's Gospel and 1 John," in *Genesis in the New Testament* (ed. Maarten J.J. Menken and Steve Moyise; LNTS 466; London: T&T Clark, 2012), 83–98.

<sup>30</sup> That the Greek clause was well known in John's environment is evident from the quotations in Philo, *Opif.* 26, 27; *Her.* 122; *Aet.* 19; Josephus, *A.J.* 1.27. See further Bradley H. McLean, *Citations and Allusions to Jewish Scripture in Early Christian and Jewish Writings through 180 C.E.* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1992), 17.

<sup>31</sup> Some random examples: Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1941), 6; C. Kingsley Barrett, *The Gospel according to St John* (London: SPCK, 1978), 151; Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (SP 4; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 35.

<sup>32</sup> See John Painter, "Rereading Genesis in the Prologue of John?," in *Neotestamentica et Philonica* (ed. David E. Aune et al.; NovTSup 106; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 179–201.

<sup>33</sup> We do not precisely know which books were considered to belong to the Scriptures in John's time and environment (see below), but we can be fairly certain that the Torah, with Genesis at the beginning, ranked first in sequence and importance.

a book that would constitute to his audience a new Torah or even a new Bible, a book with an authority comparable to that of the Scriptures. The actual form of the allusion even suggests that John claims for his gospel an authority higher than that of the Scriptures: the “beginning” of John 1:1 lies before creation, whereas the beginning of Gen 1:1 coincides with creation. Taking into account the ancient principle of *πρεσβύτερον κρείττον*,<sup>34</sup> we can say that John tracing back his narrative to God before creation scores so to speak higher than Genesis beginning at creation. In this context, it is also relevant that when John uses concepts that are used in Gen 1–2, he transposes them from the physical to the spiritual and eschatological level: ‘life’ and ‘light’ are now God’s own life and light, his eschatological gifts which are present in the person of Jesus (see John 8:12; 11:25–26; 14:6). The evangelist contends that his book is divine revelation to a higher degree than the Scriptures.

Does the conclusion of John’s Gospel in this respect correspond to its beginning? Is there perhaps at the end of the Gospel an allusion to the end of the Torah or to the end of the biblical book that we may suppose to have been considered, in John’s time and environment, as the last book of the Bible? There are certainly agreements between the two endings of John (chs 20 and 21) and the ending of the Torah, the story of the death of Moses (Deut 34): the protagonist leaves the stage, his successor or successors have been appointed and have been endowed with the Spirit, the great and powerful signs and other acts of the protagonist are referred to. There is not, however, a literal correspondence between the final words of either John 20 or John 21 and the final words of Deuteronomy, comparable to the literal correspondence between the beginning of John and the beginning of Genesis.

If we look for a literal correspondence between one of the endings of John and the ending of a biblical book that may have been the final one of John’s Bible, we first have to decide which version of the Old Testament text we should compare to John’s Greek text. Study of John’s Old Testament quotations strongly suggests that the evangelist normally used the LXX,<sup>35</sup> so we should compare John’s endings with endings of LXX books.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Pilhofer, *Presbyteron kreitton: Der Altersbeweis der jüdischen und christlichen Apologeten und seiner Vorgeschichte* (WUNT 2/39; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990).

<sup>35</sup> See Maarten J.J. Menken, *Old Testament Quotations in the Fourth Gospel: Studies in Textual Form* (CBET 15; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996). This view is accepted by many exegetes, see, e.g., Andreas J. Köstenberger, “John,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. Gregory K. Beale and Donald A. Carson; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker/Nottingham: Apollos, 2007), 415–512, esp. 417: “John’s default version seems to have been the LXX.”

There is in the LXX one book whose ending literally corresponds to the first ending of John's Gospel in 20:31, and that is Ezekiel. The second half of Ezek 48:35 reads: καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς πόλεως, ἀφ' ἧς ἂν ἡμέρας γένηται, ἔσται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτῆς, translated in NETS as: "And the name of the city: after whatever day it comes to be, it shall be its name." The Hebrew text reads: וּשְׁמֵהָ עִיר מִיּוֹם יְהוָה שָׁמָּה, "And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The Lord is there." The LXX translator has apparently read the divine name as the verbal form יְהִי, and the final word שְׁמָה as the substantive שָׁם with a third person singular feminine suffix.<sup>36</sup> The result is that the LXX version of Ezekiel ends with τὸ ὄνομα αὐτῆς, while John 20:31 ends with τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ. Apart from the case of ὄνομα and the gender of the possessive pronoun the wordings are identical. An allusion to Ezekiel would not be surprising given the fact that John obviously knows the book of Ezekiel (see, e.g., Jesus' shepherd discourse in John 10, which was heavily influenced by Ezek 34, or his discourse on the vine and the branches in John 15:1–10, influenced by Ezek 15:1–8).<sup>37</sup>

Is it possible that Ezekiel was the final book of John's Bible? The question of which books were considered in early Judaism and early Christianity to belong to authoritative Scripture is a very complex one. At the end of a discussion of 4QMMT C 10–11 with its division of the Scriptures into "the book of Moses [and] the book[s] of the pr[o]phets and Davi[d ...] [the annals of] each generation,"<sup>38</sup> George J. Brooke concludes "that by the end of the second century [BCE] most Jews acknowledged the authority of the Law and the Prophets, the Law as a relatively well-demarcated collection of five books, the Prophets as more open-ended."<sup>39</sup> In John's time, some two centuries later, the situation will not have been very different. In any case, we find in the New Testament several references to a division of the Scriptures into the Law and the Prophets,<sup>40</sup> over against one only to what looks like a tripartite division (Luke 24:44) but may also be quite well read as a reference to a bipartite division with an open-ended category of "the

<sup>36</sup> Aquila gives a precise translation of the MT (ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμέρας κύριος ἐκεῖ), Theodotion a kind of combination of LXX and MT (ἀφ' ἡμέρας κυρίου ὄνομα ἐκεῖ).

<sup>37</sup> See Gary T. Manning Jr, *Echoes of a Prophet: The Use of Ezekiel in the Gospel of John and in Literature of the Second Temple Period* (JSNTSup 270; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 100–197.

<sup>38</sup> Trans. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (ed. Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar; Leiden: Brill/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997–1998), 801.

<sup>39</sup> George J. Brooke, "The Psalms in Early Jewish Literature in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Psalms in the New Testament* (ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J.J. Menken; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 5–24, esp. 14.

<sup>40</sup> See Matt 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16, 29, 31; 24:27; Acts 13:15; 24:14; 26:22; 28:23; Rom 3:21.



Prophets” (see the Prologue to Sirach). John’s Gospel contains one such reference, in 1:45, to “Moses and the Prophets,” so we may assume that the evangelist also knows about a division of the Scriptures into the Law and the Prophets, the latter category being open-ended.

It is difficult to establish what the position of Ezekiel may have been in this open-ended category. The few available detailed enumerations of books belonging to “the Prophets” from the first centuries of our era differ among each other,<sup>41</sup> but in two of these, both of Christian origin, Ezekiel is the final one of the prophets, preceded by Daniel (considered as a prophet), and almost the final book of the Old Testament.<sup>42</sup> In LXX manuscripts, Daniel is also sometimes placed before Ezekiel, while the Minor Prophets precede the other prophetic books,<sup>43</sup> so that Ezekiel is the final Old Testament book. There is therefore at least a good chance that in John’s (real or mental) list of authoritative biblical books Ezekiel was the final prophetic book. Whether that also meant that Ezekiel was the final book of John’s entire Bible, depends of course on the position of the Writings in John’s list: were they integrated in or added to the Prophets? In any case, apart from the Psalms John does not use very much from the Writings.

Does an allusion to Ezek 48:35 LXX in John 20:31 meet the criteria of Hays? The criteria of availability, recurrence and historical plausibility cause no problem: the LXX of Ezekiel was available to John, we already saw that he knew and used this prophetic book, and so did many of his contemporaries.<sup>44</sup> The volume of the allusion consists in a verbatim agreement between ends of books. The criteria of thematic coherence and satisfaction also apply. The name in question is in Ezekiel the name of the Holy City, in John the name of Jesus. In the final section of Ezekiel (48:30–35) the Holy City takes over the role of the temple as the place of God’s presence,<sup>45</sup> and in John Jesus is more than once depicted as the new and definitive temple, the real place of God’s presence (John 1:51; 2:21; 4:20–24; 7:37–38). So there is thematic agreement, and it makes sense in the context of John’s Christology.

<sup>41</sup> See E. Earle Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research* (WUNT 54; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 10–19.

<sup>42</sup> In the list of Melito of Sardis (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.26.14), only Esdras follows Ezekiel, and in the list of Origen (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.2), Ezekiel is followed by Job and Esther. In the list in *b. B. Bat.* 14b, the sequence of the latter prophets is: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, the Twelve, and this list is followed by a list of the Writings.

<sup>43</sup> See Jennifer M. Dines, *The Septuagint* (ed. by Michael A. Knibb; Understanding the Bible and its World; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 13.

<sup>44</sup> See Manning, *Echoes of a Prophet*, 22–99.

<sup>45</sup> See Walther Zimmerli, *Ezechiel*, 2. Teilband: *Ezechiel 25–48* (BKAT 13/2; Neukirchenvluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), 1237.

The problematic criterion is obviously the history of interpretation: as far as I know, exegetes have not connected the first ending of John to the ending of Ezekiel. I am very well aware of the hypothetical character of my view of an allusion to Ezek 48:35 LXX in John 20:31, but I think that in combination with the established allusion to Gen 1:1 in John 1:1, it is worth considering. In any case, the allusion to Gen 1:1 in John 1:1 already shows that John considers his gospel as a book with scriptural authority, and the allusion to Ezek 48:35 LXX in John 20:31, if tenable, confirms that John had such an exalted view of his own writing.

### 6. 1 John 5:6–12

First John contains some indirect but relevant information about the authority attributed to John's Gospel by the author of the Johannine Epistles. We do not know for sure whether the author of the Johannine Epistles and the author of the Gospel of John were one and the same person, but it is a serious possibility, and if they were not identical, they must at least have belonged to the same early Christian "school." So the authority that the author of 1 John claims for the Gospel of John, is at least close to and possibly identical with the authority the evangelist claims for his book.

I presuppose that 1 John was written to combat the ideas of a group that had left the Johannine communities and whose main fault was in the eyes of the author that they did not "confess Jesus as the Christ come in the flesh" (1 John 4:2, own translation; cf. 2 John 7), that is, that they did not attach soteriological value to the humanity of Jesus and especially to his death. The secessionists probably based their views on a selective reading of John's Gospel, and the author of 1 John answers by emphasizing the salvific value of the humanity and the death of Jesus, thereby giving what he sees as the right interpretation of John's Gospel.<sup>46</sup>

It is in this context that he speaks in 1 John 5:6–12 about the testimony of the Spirit, the water and the blood (vv. 6–8), and about the testimony of God (vv. 9–12).<sup>47</sup> "Water" refers here to Jesus' baptism, and "blood" to his death on the cross. "Water" and "blood" indicate beginning and end of John's narrative of Jesus' public ministry; together, they constitute

<sup>46</sup> For a more detailed argument, see Maarten J.J. Menken, "The Opponents in the Johannine Epistles: Fact or Fiction?," in *Empsychoi Logoi—Religious Innovations in Late Antiquity* (ed. Alberdina Houtman et al.; AJEC 73; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 191–209; idem, 1, 2 *en 3 Johannes: Een praktische bijbelverklaring* (Tekst en toelichting; Kampen: Kok, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> What follows, has been worked out in my article "Three That Testify" and 'The Testimony of God' in 1 John 5,6–12," that will appear in 2013.

a merism, and refer to Jesus' ministry as a whole. As we have seen, the Fourth Evangelist considers his gospel as the product of the activity of the Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13); that "the Spirit is the one that testifies" (1 John 5:6), means then that the entire narrative of John's Gospel, from "water" to "blood," is a testimony of the Spirit. The Spirit makes "water" and "blood" into witnesses, so that the author of 1 John can say: "There are three that testify, the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree" (5:7–8; cf. Deut 19:15).

In 1 John 5:9–12, the author moves from the testimony of the Spirit to "the testimony of God": God has testified concerning his Son, the believer has this testimony in himself and has therefore life through the Son. "The testimony of God" must be the same as the joint testimony of Spirit, water and blood, but there is a striking difference in the verbal tense used: Spirit, water and blood are said to "testify," in the present (*μαρτυροῦν* v. 6, *μαρτυροῦντες* v. 7), whereas God is said to "have testified," in the perfect (*μεμαρτύρηκεν*, vv. 9, 10). To interpret this difference of tense, John 5:37–40 is helpful, because we meet there, in a passage dealing with God's testimony on behalf of Jesus, the same verb *μαρτυρεῖν*, "to testify," with the same difference in tense between present (v. 39) and perfect (v. 37). In v. 39, John's Jesus evidently appeals to a present testimony: the Scriptures testify now, at the moment he is speaking, on his behalf. In v. 37, he appeals with the perfect *μεμαρτύρηκεν* to a past testimony of God with a present result.<sup>48</sup> In the context of a list of testimonies that have to be perceptible to "the Jews" (5:31–40), *μεμαρτύρηκεν* can only refer to God's past testimony in the history of Israel, with the Scriptures, that testify now, as its present result. Because the Father has testified, the Scriptures testify.

The use of the perfect and present tenses of *μαρτυρεῖν* in 1 John 5:6–12 is comparable to that in John 5:37–40 (although the sequence of perfect and present has been inverted). The present tense concerns the testimony of the Gospel of John; the perfect in the clause *μεμαρτύρηκεν περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ*, "he has testified to his Son," in vv. 9, 10 must then concern the testimony of God in the history of Jesus. From the perspective of the author and addressees of 1 John, this testimony of God belongs to the past, but its present result, the Gospel of John, is in their midst. "The testimony of God" is God's testifying activity in Jesus as embodied in John's Gospel, and perhaps "the testimony of God" was simply the name under which John's Gospel was known in the Johannine communities. The parallelism between

<sup>48</sup> See Blass-Debrunner, *Grammatik*, §340; Nigel Turner, *Syntax*, vol. 3 of James H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1963), 81–85. Cf. John 1:34; 3:26; 5:33; 19:35.

John 5:37–40 and 1 John 5:6–12 is in any case clear: just as the Scriptures are the present result of the past testimony of God in the history of Israel, so the Gospel of John is the present result of the past testimony of God in the history of Jesus.

This parallelism is telling as far as concerns the authority that John's Gospel has in the eyes of the author of 1 John. In the Gospel, the Scriptures as the written result of God's testimony in the history of Israel testify to Jesus. The authority of the Scriptures is obvious not only from the programmatic statements in John 1:45 and 5:39, but also from the quotations from and allusions to the Scriptures that are found throughout the Gospel. In 1 John, the Gospel of John as the written result of God's testimony in the history of Jesus testifies to Jesus. The Scriptures are not absent from 1 John (see, e.g., 3:12), but they do not explicitly function as a witness on behalf of Jesus; John's Gospel now testifies on behalf of Jesus. One could say that 1 John relates to John's Gospel as John's Gospel relates to the Scriptures. In 1 John, the Gospel has gained the authority that the Scriptures have in the Gospel.

So 1 John confirms what beginning and ending of John suggest: the Gospel claims an authority that is at least equal to the authority of the Scriptures. The Scriptures remain valuable, as John's Gospel itself shows, but John's Gospel presents itself (and is presented by the author of 1 John) as a new Holy Scripture.

### *Conclusion*

The Fourth Evangelist claims authority for his book in the following ways: the ideal disciple of Jesus, the Beloved Disciple, guarantees the truth of the Gospel; it has been written from a post-Easter vantage point and under the guidance of the Spirit, so that it gives the authentic picture of Jesus; the Gospel replaces its protagonist, Jesus, so that it has the same impact on people as Jesus had; the Gospel is a new Holy Scripture, fulfilling and exceeding the old Scriptures. This view of John's Gospel is confirmed by 1 John 5:6–12, where it is emphasized that the Gospel is the product of the Spirit and that it constitutes a new Holy Scripture.

In the case of the Gospel of John, there is no great distance between the authority claimed by the Gospel itself and the authority ascribed to it in Christian tradition. The high claims made by the Gospel have apparently been honoured by the church. At the same time, the church has mitigated the claims of John's Gospel by including it in a series of four Gospels. We do not know whether the Fourth Evangelist aimed at ousting the Synop-

tic Gospels or at perfecting their image of Jesus; we do not even know for sure whether he knew the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>49</sup> What is evident from the Fourth Gospel itself, is that the evangelist has the intention to give a true, definite and salvific picture of Jesus, and that the believer does not need other narratives about Jesus in addition to this Gospel. Precisely here, later tradition has corrected John by putting his image of Jesus (at least in principle) on a par with the three synoptic images. To my mind, this has been a wise correction: John's absolute and exalted image of Jesus deserves to be permanently confronted with the three other, more down-to-earth images of the Synoptics. No evangelist should be given the final word about Jesus; final words stop curiosity and end discussion, whereas Christian faith and theology need curiosity and discussion.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> The least one should say is that he was familiar with synoptic tradition, and corrected it on occasion (3:24).

<sup>50</sup> I am grateful to Dr John M. Court, who was so kind as to improve my English.

## PAUL'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE HOPE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

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Paul's apocalyptic worldview and imminent expectation of the parousia are evident in his earliest letter, the first letter to the Thessalonians. In response to his proclamation of the gospel, the Thessalonians abandoned their traditional gods and turned to worship the living and true God. They also learned from Paul that Jesus is the Son of God and that God raised him from the dead and exalted him to heaven. Most importantly, they are to expect his coming from heaven, at which time he will rescue them from the wrath that is coming. The formulation "the wrath that is coming" suggests that this wrath is not merely a matter of the punishment of sinners in this life by illness and other misfortunes. Furthermore, it is not simply a matter of an individual judgment immediately after death followed by an afterlife designed to deprive or punish sinners. It suggests rather a public, cosmic event, the definitive divine visitation of the last days in which the righteous will be blessed and the wicked punished.<sup>1</sup>

Apparently, some members of the newly founded community died after Paul's initial visit, and he had not addressed the problem of what would happen to those who died before the coming of Christ.<sup>2</sup> To deal with that issue, he relates their deaths to the shared belief that Jesus died and was raised.<sup>3</sup> If God had the power and graciousness to raise Jesus, they can be confident that God will bring with Jesus the believers who have fallen asleep when Jesus returns. As he says in 1 Cor 15:23, "Each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then those who belong to Christ at his coming." Paul goes on to give more details about the coming of Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

In this further teaching, the problem in Thessalonica becomes clearer: "For this we say to you with a word of the Lord, that we who are living, who remain until the coming of the Lord, will surely not precede those who have fallen asleep." It is likely that when Paul founded the community he

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Paul's description of the "day of wrath" (ἡμέρα ὀργῆς) in Rom 2:5–11. See also *Sib. Or.* 3:545–72.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess 4:13; Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (AB 32B; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 261.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thess 4:14.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Thess 4:15–17.

spoke about the imminent coming of the risen and exalted Jesus as the “Lord”<sup>5</sup> and the benefits that the believers alive at that time would enjoy. The kind of tradition Paul probably taught the Thessalonians occurs in the Jewish apocalypse known as *4 Ezra* in the interpretation of a vision of a man who rises from the sea, namely, the Messiah:

The one who brings the peril at that time will protect those who fall into peril, who have works and faith toward the Almighty. Understand therefore that those who are left are more blessed than those that have died.<sup>6</sup>

Now Paul corrects that earlier teaching by explaining that those who are alive when the Lord comes will have no advantage over those who have died in Christ.

Then he gives a vivid account of the coming of the Lord, describing him as descending from heaven. A “command,” a “voice of an archangel,” and the sound of a trumpet accompany the descent.<sup>7</sup> The command may be addressed to the dead, perhaps through the agency of the archangel’s voice, since the next event described is the rising of “the dead in Christ.”<sup>8</sup> Then the resurrected dead and the living, those who are left, will be snatched up together in clouds to meet the Lord in the air.<sup>9</sup> Since they will hardly remain in the atmosphere of the earth, in the air, the implication of the account is that they will accompany the Lord in his ascent back to heaven to be with him and one another forever. Thus heaven is the place where the new age occurs. Toward the end of the letter, Paul gives a summary of his eschatological teaching:

For God has not assigned us to wrath but to attaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us in order that, whether we wake or sleep, we might live together with him.<sup>10</sup>

In his letter to the Galatians, in the elaboration of the greeting, Paul says of Jesus Christ that he “gave himself for our sins so that he might deliver

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<sup>5</sup> In certain contexts in Paul’s letters, “Lord” is equivalent to “Son of Man” in the Synoptic Gospels. A likely hypothesis is that Paul did not use the term “Son of Man” because it is based on an Aramaic idiom that would be difficult for his Gentile audience to grasp and appreciate.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Esd 13:23–24; translation from the New Revised Standard Version. See also Michael Edward Stone, *Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 392. For more such references, see Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 284.

<sup>7</sup> On the imagery, its sources, and uses elsewhere, see Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 274.

<sup>8</sup> This interpretation is supported by Phil 3:20–21, where it is Christ who has the power to transform (μετασχηματίζειν) our lowly bodies to be similar in form to his glorious body by the power that enables him also to subject all things to himself.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Thess 4:17.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Thess 5:9–10.

us from the present evil age" (1:4).<sup>11</sup> Instead of emphasizing the wrath that is coming, as he did in 1 Thessalonians, Paul focuses here on the present evil age and the powers that rule it. Paul's understanding of the new age becomes visible in the allegory concerning the two sons of Abraham and their mothers in chapter four. Hagar is associated with the Sinai covenant, which Paul polemically associates with slavery. She is also identified with "the present Jerusalem." With her, Paul contrasts the free woman and "the Jerusalem above," which is "our mother."<sup>12</sup> Similarly, in Phil 3:20 Paul says, "But our commonwealth is in the heavens, from where we also await a savior, Lord Jesus Christ."

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul speaks about God's wisdom in the following terms:

Yet in the presence of the mature we do speak wisdom, but a wisdom that does not belong to this age or to the rulers of this age, who are being brought to an end. Rather, we speak, in the form of a secret, God's hidden wisdom, which God decided upon before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew. If they had known (it), they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.<sup>13</sup>

It is likely that "the rulers of this age" refer to heavenly powers. Paul can say that "they crucified the Lord of glory" because of the traditional view that earthly groups and their leaders have heavenly representatives or counterparts who influence their behavior.<sup>14</sup> Thus it was the influence of such beings that brought about the crucifixion of Jesus.

The expression "Lord of glory" here refers to Jesus. With this phrase Paul does not seem to be making the point that Jesus was pre-existent and descended from heaven through the cosmos.<sup>15</sup> Rather, in light of the connection between the phrases "for our glory" and "the Lord of glory,"<sup>16</sup> one may infer that Jesus is the "Lord of glory" because God raised and glorified him and through him will raise and glorify those who belong to him. This inference is supported by the following verse, which speaks about the wonderful things that God has prepared for those who love him:

But as it is written:  
Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard

<sup>11</sup> The verb translated "deliver" here is ἐξαίρῶ.

<sup>12</sup> Gal 4:26.

<sup>13</sup> 1 Cor 2:6–8.

<sup>14</sup> Deut 32:8–9; Dan 10:13, 20–21; 11:1; 12:1; cf. 1QS 3:13–26.

<sup>15</sup> Contra Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 63.

<sup>16</sup> εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν in v. 7 and ὁ κύριος τῆς δόξης in v. 8.



And have not entered the human mind,  
 These things God has prepared for those who love him.<sup>17</sup>

Although the text cited here has not been identified, it has affinities with biblical, post-biblical apocalyptic and rabbinic language.<sup>18</sup> Paul is reticent about details, but conveys the impression that the new age, when the power of the rulers of this world is at an end, will be wonderful in a way beyond all human experience.

In his discussion of marriage and other matters in 1 Cor 7, Paul's principle is that each believer should remain the way he or she is with regard to marriage, circumcision, and slavery: "In the state in which each one was called, brothers, let him remain in this state before God."<sup>19</sup> The most important thing, in Paul's view, is that all the members of the congregation concentrate on pleasing the Lord and on serving the Lord in a constant, undistracted manner.<sup>20</sup> In order to convey the urgency of the matter, Paul gives the following rationale, "For the world in its present form is passing away."<sup>21</sup> Paul gives no details about what this statement implies, but the context suggests the abolition or transformation of social structures, such as slavery and marriage, and of bodily characteristics and practices like sexual relations and circumcision.<sup>22</sup>

Second Corinthians contains one of the few passages in which Paul describes the afterlife in some detail. In chapters 4 and 5, Paul argues that the afflictions the apostles suffer do not invalidate their authority and their work. On the contrary, the apostles do not become discouraged because "our momentary trifling affliction is bringing about for us an absolutely incomparable, eternal abundance of glory."<sup>23</sup> The notion of an abundance of future glory is typically apocalyptic.<sup>24</sup> The confidence of the apostles in spite of their hardships is grounded in their knowledge that "if our earthly, tent-like house should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."<sup>25</sup> The earthly, tent-like house

<sup>17</sup> 1 Cor 2:9. On the difficulties of the syntax of the sentence and its translation, see Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 56.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 63–64.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Cor 7:17–24; quotation is of v. 24.

<sup>20</sup> 1 Cor 7:32, 35.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Cor 7:31b.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Mark 12:18–27; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), *ad. loc.*

<sup>23</sup> 2 Cor 4:17; trans. from Victor P. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (Anchor Bible; Garden City: Doubleday, 1984), 252.

<sup>24</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 290.

<sup>25</sup> 2 Cor 5:1; trans. from Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 252.

is “our outer person,” which is also referred to as “our mortal flesh” and “our bodies.”<sup>26</sup> The “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” may refer to the heavenly temple in the new Jerusalem.<sup>27</sup> This interpretation fits with Paul’s remark in Galatians that “the Jerusalem above” is “our mother” and the one in Philippians that our commonwealth is in the heavens.

In Rom 8 Paul discusses “the glory that is about to be revealed to us”:

I think that the sufferings of the present time are not to be compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us. For creation waits eagerly for the revelation of the sons of God. For creation was subjected to futility, not willingly but on account of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will also be freed from slavery to decay into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans together and experiences a common pain until now. Not only (the creation), but we also, having the first fruits of the spirit, groan within ourselves as we eagerly await adoption, (namely,) the redemption of our bodies.<sup>28</sup>

The subjection of the creation to futility appears to be equivalent to its subjection to transitoriness, as the phrase “slavery to decay” suggests.<sup>29</sup> Paul here probably draws on a traditional interpretation of Gen 3:17, “cursed is the ground because of you.” Compare *4 Ezra* 7:11, “For I made the world for [Israel’s] sake, and when Adam transgressed my statutes, what had been made was judged.”<sup>30</sup>

The context suggests that “the revelation of the sons of God” will bring about the end of the slavery of creation to transitoriness. It too will be granted “the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” This freedom seems to be equivalent to “the redemption of our bodies.”

It seems likely that “the redemption of our bodies” is equivalent to the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the transformation of those who are left into a form that may ascend to heaven. The process to which Paul refers involves leaving what is earthly and corruptible behind and “putting on” what is heavenly and incorruptible.

Since the manumission or redemption of creation is closely linked to “the redemption of our bodies,” it appears from this passage that Paul’s view of the new age is entirely heavenly and spiritual. Perhaps Paul shared the view of the author of *4 Ezra*, who wrote:

<sup>26</sup> ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἀνθρώπος (2 Cor 4:16); ἡ θνητὴ σὰρξ and τὸ σῶμα ἡμῶν (4:10–11); Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 293.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 294–95.

<sup>28</sup> Rom 8:18–23.

<sup>29</sup> δουλεία τῆς φθορᾶς (Rom 8:21).

<sup>30</sup> 2 Esd 7:11; translation from the NRSV; passage cited by Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980; 4th German ed. 1980), 233.

After those years my son the Messiah shall die, and all who draw human breath. Then the world shall be turned back to primeval silence for seven days, as it was at the first beginnings, so that no one shall be left. After seven days the world that is not yet awake shall be roused, and that which is corruptible shall perish.<sup>31</sup>

It is likely that Paul shared the view of this work that the present age is transitory and corruptible, whereas the age or world to come is spiritual and eternal.<sup>32</sup> Yet the idea that “all who draw human breath” will die and that “the world will be turned back to primeval silence” does not fit with some of Paul’s ideas. The notion that those who are alive at the coming of Christ will be “changed”<sup>33</sup> and the implication that the creation will be freed from its bondage when those in Christ are redeemed from their earthly bodies suggest that Paul envisaged a dramatic transformation, equivalent to a new creation, at the coming of Christ.<sup>34</sup>

I will now give a brief summary of Paul’s apocalyptic ideas before I trace their transformation in post-Pauline literature. Paul never mentions Hades, the Greek term for the underworld.<sup>35</sup> He never mentions Gehenna, a name for a place of punishment after death used seven times by Matthew, three times by Mark, once by Luke, and once by James.<sup>36</sup>

Paul does, however, speak about the wrath of God that is coming upon sinners<sup>37</sup> and the sudden destruction that will come upon those who say, “There is peace and security.”<sup>38</sup> He pronounced judgment on the man who was living with his father’s wife and instructed the Corinthians “to hand him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.”<sup>39</sup> This instruction is the counterpart to 1 Thess 1:10; those in Christ will be rescued by him from the wrath that is coming; those not in Christ, including the man handed over to Satan, will suffer the consequences of that wrath.<sup>40</sup> Along the same

<sup>31</sup> 2 Esd 7:29–31; translation from the NRSV.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. 2 Esd 7:39–42.

<sup>33</sup> 1 Cor 15:51; cf. 1 Thess 4:17.

<sup>34</sup> This interpretation is supported by 1 Cor 15:23–24, if “the end” of v. 24 is rightly understood as following immediately upon the parousia of Christ in v. 23.

<sup>35</sup> According to the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland text. The majority text, however, reads *ποῦ σου, ἄδην, τὸ νῆκος* 1 Cor 15:55.

<sup>36</sup> Matt 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; Jas 3:6.

<sup>37</sup> 1 Thess 1:10.

<sup>38</sup> 1 Thess 5:3.

<sup>39</sup> 1 Cor 5:5.

<sup>40</sup> In the last part of 1 Cor 5:5, “the spirit” (*τὸ πνεῦμα*) that is to be “preserved” (*σώζειν*) on the day of the Lord is probably not the personal spirit of the man in question, but the spirit of Christ or God that dwells in the Corinthian community. If they do not expel the man, the spirit will depart from them because of the offense and the impurity caused by the man’s behavior. See Adela Yarbro Collins, “The Function of ‘Excommunication’ in Paul,” *HTR* 73 (1980): 251–63.

lines, Paul says with regard to those who build upon the foundation he laid when he founded the community in Corinth, "The work of each will become manifest, for the Day will make it clear, because it will be revealed with fire; and the work of each, of what sort it is, the fire will test [it]."<sup>41</sup> In Rom 2 it becomes clear that "the day of wrath" is also the day on which God will conduct a universal and final judgment. In that context, however, Paul speaks about punishments and rewards in very general terms: "eternal life" for those who have done what is good and "wrath and anger" for the wicked. There will be "tribulation and distress" for those who do evil, and "glory and honor and peace" for those who do what is good."<sup>42</sup> Since his rhetorical point here is that God shows no partiality and that sinners will be punished and the righteous blessed, regardless of whether they are Jews or Gentiles, he does not go into detail about the nature of these rewards and punishments or about the locations in which they will take place.

An important characteristic of Paul's view of the other world and the new age is clear, however, from the passages that we have discussed. They will be radically different from this world and this age with respect to their form and probably substance as well. They will be heavenly and spiritual and the "bodies" that play a role in them will not be made up of the same "stuff" as their earthly counterparts.<sup>43</sup>

### *The Transformation of Paul's Hopeful Expectations*

Although the issue is disputed, many New Testament scholars view the letter to Colossians as written, not by Paul, but by one of his associates soon after his death. A reason for this view is the transformation of Paul's ideas about the end time from temporal into spatial terms.<sup>44</sup> A hint of this transformation comes already in the thanksgiving, when the Colossian Paul refers to "the hope that is laid up for you in heaven." Then, in the introduction to the hymnic praise of Christ, he states that the Father has granted the Colossians "a share in the lot of the holy ones in light." Not only that, he has already rescued us from the "tyrannical rule of darkness and

<sup>41</sup> 1 Cor 5:5.

<sup>42</sup> Rom 2:5–11.

<sup>43</sup> See the discussion of "astral souls and celestial bodies" in Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 117–20.

<sup>44</sup> See Angela Standhartinger, *Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte und Intention des Kolosserbriefs* (NovTSup 94; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 129–30.

transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son.”<sup>45</sup> Instead of “the lot of the holy ones in light,” the New Revised Standard Version gives the translation “the inheritance of the saints in the light.” It is more likely, however, that the expression “holy ones” refers to angels. The communities of those in Christ have been joined to the angels, and thus they may also be called “holy ones.”<sup>46</sup>

The Colossian Paul maintains a future dimension in his teaching. He talks about “the hope of glory” and refers to the time when “he may present every person mature in Christ.”<sup>47</sup> The hoped for “glory” is associated with the moment when Christ is made manifest, because at that time those who belong to him will also be made manifest in glory.<sup>48</sup> Being “mature” in Christ means fulfilling the will of God in obedience.<sup>49</sup>

When Paul discussed the effects of baptism in Rom 6, he stated that the baptized are united with Christ in his death and *will be* united with him in his resurrection at a future time, assuming they do not allow sin to exercise dominion in their mortal bodies. In contrast, the Colossian Paul wrote:

In [Christ] you were circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands by taking off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ. You were buried with him in baptism, *in which you were also raised with him* through faith in the activity of God who raised him from the dead.<sup>50</sup>

Some scholars have interpreted this statement about baptism as an indication that, for the author of Colossians, the individual's hope for the future has already been fulfilled in baptism. There is no major salvific event yet to come. This view may be questioned in light of the future dimension of the letter's teaching regarding “the hope of glory.” Why then does the Colossian Paul speak so differently about baptism than the Paul of Romans?

We can understand this difference by reflecting on the rhetorical aims of each letter. In Romans, Paul is concerned to show that his law-free gospel does not create a situation in which sin continues in the lives of the baptized. He is especially interested in showing that Gentiles may lead ethical lives without living under the Jewish law. An important purpose of Colossians is to persuade the audience to heed the following admonitions:

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<sup>45</sup> Col 1:12–13; my translation is inspired, in part, by that of Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 32.

<sup>46</sup> Lohse, *Colossians*, 36.

<sup>47</sup> Col 1:27–28.

<sup>48</sup> Col 3:4; Lohse, *Colossians*, 76.

<sup>49</sup> Lohse, *Colossians*, 78.

<sup>50</sup> Col 2:11–12.

If therefore you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God. Be intent on what is above, not on earthly matters. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.<sup>51</sup>

These exhortations certainly concern progress in living ethically, as the following discussion makes clear.<sup>52</sup> But they also conclude the immediately preceding argument intended to dissuade the audience from paying heed to a certain kind of “philosophy” that is based on human tradition rather than on Christ. It is likely that this “philosophy” is a presentation of the Jewish way of life that the intended audience found attractive. One of the main concerns of the historical Paul was to make the case that Gentiles could be included in the eschatological people of God without becoming proselytes. Although he used quite different language, the Colossian Paul argues similarly. Gentiles do not need the law and Jewish practices because God has already freed them from their trespasses and the uncircumcision of their flesh by making them alive with Christ through faith. Therefore, they should not observe practices that relate to perishable things. Such things are only human traditions and lack the power of ethical transformation granted to the Gentiles in Christ.

It thus seems likely that the Colossian Paul states that those who have been baptized have not only died with Christ but have also already *risen* with him for a specific rhetorical purpose. This is a striking image that moves the audience to turn their attention to heavenly matters, to the transformation they have already experienced, which was granted to them through Christ. It also moves them to reject the ritual practices they are tempted to adopt and to view them as only “earthly.”

This seemingly small change in imagery had profound consequences for the reception of Paul's language of hope. The letter to the Ephesians places even more emphasis on the heavenly world than Colossians does. The Ephesian Paul tells how:

[God] raised [Christ] from the dead and seated him on his right hand in the heavenly places high above every ruler and authority and power and bearer of ruling power and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the [age] to come; and he has subordinated all things under his feet and made him head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all in all.<sup>53</sup>

The historical Paul used the image of a body to speak about the church as an interdependent unity.<sup>54</sup> He never says that Christ is the head of that

<sup>51</sup> Col 3:1–3.

<sup>52</sup> Col 3:5–17.

<sup>53</sup> Eph 1:20–23.

<sup>54</sup> 1 Cor 12:12–31; Rom 12:5.

body. Both Colossians and Ephesians, however, speak of Christ as the head of his body, the church.<sup>55</sup> In 1 Corinthians, the image of the body is used to instruct and exhort the community about how to behave in relation to one another. In Ephesians, the image is used to portray the cosmic Christ, who is the head of all things.

In Rom 8, Paul emphasized the *future* glory awaiting those who are in Christ. The passage just read, in the first chapter of Ephesians, emphasizes the *present*. Christ is already enthroned above every type of angelic power, both for this age and the age to come. Contrast 1 Cor 15:25–26, where Paul states that Christ is in the *process* of subjecting all hostile powers.

The cosmic perspective of Ephesians is also evident in chapter 2:

God, who is rich in mercy, on account of the great love with which he loved us, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead because of our trespasses—by grace you are saved—and he raised us with him and seated us in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come he might show the extraordinary richness of his grace in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.<sup>56</sup>

The idea that we are raised from the death that results from sin and seated in the heavenly places *in Christ* indicates that the present exaltation of Christ anticipates our own. As we have seen, Col 3:1 urges the audience to consider themselves raised with Christ and to set their minds on the things above. Ephesians intensifies that image in asserting that we are not only raised, but also seated on the right hand of God “in Christ.” The reference to “the ages to come” in Ephesians overlooks the moment mentioned in Colossians, when Christ will be made manifest. It is at that time that “we also will be made manifest with him in glory.”

Ephesians presents the high point of God’s plan as the recent inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God, a plan revealed to Paul and carried out through him.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, there are hints that God’s plan has not yet been fully implemented. The addressees are exhorted to “make the most of the time, for the days are evil.”<sup>58</sup> The present time is characterized as a battle with the devil and with rulers and authorities that are not of flesh and blood. The addressees must fight with “the cosmic rulers of this darkness” and “the evil spiritual powers in the heavenly places.”<sup>59</sup> This exhortation may be a reception and elaboration of Paul’s poetic claim that nothing can

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<sup>55</sup> Col 1:18; 2:19; Eph 1:22–23.

<sup>56</sup> Eph 2:4–7.

<sup>57</sup> Eph 3:1–13.

<sup>58</sup> Eph 5:16.

<sup>59</sup> Eph 6:11–12.

separate us from the love of God in Christ.<sup>60</sup> The Ephesian Paul juxtaposes enthronement in heaven “in Christ” with the need to battle the cosmic evil powers, which are still active.

Like the historical Paul, the Ephesian Paul dissuades his audience from immoral behavior by declaring that immoral people will not inherit the kingdom of God.<sup>61</sup> For the historical Paul, however, the wrath of God was a future, cosmic event. When the Ephesian Paul speaks about God’s wrath coming upon “the sons of disobedience,” it is not quite clear whether this wrath comes as an eschatological event or as a repeated, even timeless one.<sup>62</sup>

Origen wrote a commentary on Ephesians, which survives in “fairly extensive Greek fragments in a catena commentary which can be supplemented by the more or less free translation of most parts of the work in Jerome’s Latin commentary on the same epistle.”<sup>63</sup> The Latin word *catena* means “chain,” and a catena commentary is a collection of comments on a biblical work from a variety of earlier authors. Such commentaries were composed in the fifth century and later.<sup>64</sup>

Origen’s interpretation of Ephesians can best be understood in the context of his theological thought. He takes as a premise that “An end or consummation would seem to be an indication of the perfection and completion of things.”<sup>65</sup> He argues further, “The end of the world then, and the final consummation, will take place when every one shall be subjected to punishment for his sins; a time which God alone knows, when He will bestow on each one what he deserves.” Then comes Origen’s distinctive inference from this traditional idea:

We think, indeed, that the goodness of God, through his Christ, may recall all his creatures to one end, even his enemies being conquered and subdued. For thus says holy Scripture, “The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool” [Ps 110:1]. And if the meaning of the prophet’s language here be less clear, we may ascertain it from the Apostle Paul, who speaks more openly, thus, “For Christ must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet” [1 Cor 15:25].

Origen then argues that the subjection of the enemies is the same kind of subjection by which the apostles and all those who are followers of Christ

<sup>60</sup> Rom 8:37–39.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Eph 5:3–5 with 1 Cor 6:9–10.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Eph 5:6 with 1 Thess 1:10.

<sup>63</sup> Ronald E. Heine, *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians* (Oxford Early Christian Studies; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), vii.

<sup>64</sup> Heine, *Commentaries*, 35–36.

<sup>65</sup> Origen *De Principiis* 1.6.1; translation (slightly modified) by Frederick Crombie in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, p. 260.



wish to be subject to him. In other words, those who are subject to Christ have the salvation that proceeds from him.<sup>66</sup> Although he seems to have left the question open throughout his life, he entertained the idea that even Satan and other evil spirits would be redeemed and restored to union with God.<sup>67</sup> Origen also comments on Paul's statement that, at the end, God will be "all in all" or "all for all" [1 Cor 15:28]: "God will ultimately be the totally satisfying object of every mind's activity: 'the measure of every motion,' and so the personal, immediate basis for the unity of creation."<sup>68</sup>

From this ending, which can be inferred from Scripture, Origen then infers what the beginning must have been like, since "the end is always like the beginning."<sup>69</sup> The hypothesis foundational to all of Origen's theological thought is that, prior to the creation of the material universe, God created a universe of rational beings in harmonious contemplation of the divine Being. This body of rational beings included those who would come to be known as the good angels, who did not turn away from this contemplation. It also included those who turned away, namely, the devil and his angels and those who became souls. The material universe was created for these souls, who became enclosed in physical bodies.<sup>70</sup>

Thus, when Origen says that the end will be like the beginning, he means that eventually all the rational beings who turned away from God will choose God again and return to their original condition. Such a return to the original state may require more than one lifetime for souls. Origen thus concludes "that there may be a series of worlds or ages through which souls will pass in their journey back to the beginning."<sup>71</sup>

The main future expectation that Origen retains from tradition is the battle between the faithful, on the one hand, and the devil, his angels, and the opposing spiritual powers, on the other. In his work *On First Principles*, he explains the nature of this battle:

This kind of struggle must be understood as follows; that when losses and dangers, insults and accusations are raised up against us, the opposing powers do not do this with the mere object of making us endure these sufferings, but of provoking us by means of them to fierce anger or excessive sorrow or the depths of despair, or indeed, what is more serious, of induc-

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Brian E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 58–59.

<sup>68</sup> Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church*, 51. He cites Origen *De Principiis* 3.6.3; cf. Jerome *Ep. 124 ad Avitum* 9–10.

<sup>69</sup> Origen *De Principiis* 1.6.2; *ANF*, 4.260.

<sup>70</sup> Heine, *Commentaries*, 48.

<sup>71</sup> Heine, *Commentaries*, 49. See also Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church*, 49.

ing us when wearied out and overcome by these annoyances to complain against God on the ground that he does not control human life fairly and righteously. Their aim is that by these efforts our faith may be weakened or that we may lose hope or be driven to abandon the true doctrines and persuaded to accept some impious belief about God.<sup>72</sup>

Similarly, in his commentary on Eph 6:11, Origen explained that one who has “girded himself with the truth,” will not be dragged off to assent to persuasive and sophisticated words of falsehood. One who has “put on justice” will not be wounded by the arrows of injustice, and such arrows will not make him unjust.

We see then that the intense, imminent expectations of the historical Paul have been transformed in the letters to the Colossians and the Ephesians and in Origen's commentary on Ephesians. The accent has been shifted from future events to heavenly places and from struggles that involve a mission to the whole inhabited world and the powers that be to the life of the spiritual person and ethics. Yet Origen's interpretation of Ephesians maintains the cosmic sense of struggle in two ways. His church is a persecuted church and thus the struggle still has a worldwide and communal dimension. That church is also divided by differences of opinion as to the basic doctrines of the church. Whereas some today would affirm and celebrate such diversity, Origen perceived it as a threat to unity and truth.

We have traced one line of interpretation from the historical Paul to Colossians to Ephesians to Origen. There are of course other lines of reception, and some of these retain a hopeful expectation closer to that of Paul's. The *Didache*, or *Teaching of the Lord through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations*, is a late first century or early second century work. It ends with a description of the last days and the coming of the Lord. One of the events near the end is “the fire of testing.”<sup>73</sup> At that time many will fall away and perish, but those who endure in their faith will be saved. Something like this fire of testing seems to be presupposed by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians in his discussion of divisions or parties among his addressees. He affirms that both he and Apollos are God's servants: Paul planted, Apollos watered, and God gave the growth. Yet anyone who builds on the foundation Paul laid should do so with care. For “the work of each [such

<sup>72</sup> Origen *De Principiis* 3.2.6; translation from George W. Butterworth, *Origen: On First Principles* (New York: 1966; reprint of original 1936 ed.), 220; cited by Heine, *Commentaries*, 68.

<sup>73</sup> ἡ πύρωσις τῆς δοκιμασίας in *Did.* 16:5; text and translation from Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers* (2 vols; LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1.442–43.

builder] will become manifest, and the Day will disclose it [that is the Day of the Lord, the Day on which Christ comes], because [that Day] will be revealed with fire.<sup>74</sup>

The concluding chapter of the *Didache* describes the coming of the Lord in a way similar to the account in 1 Thess 4. After “the fire of testing” the “signs of truth will be manifest.” One of these signs is “the sound of a trumpet,” which will precede the coming of the Lord.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, Paul mentions the sound of “a trumpet of God” accompanying “the coming of the Lord.”<sup>76</sup>

Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch in Syria, was arrested, taken to Rome, and martyred at some point in the early or mid-second century. On his way, he wrote letters to several churches in Asia Minor. In his letter to the Ephesians, he wrote, “These are the last days.”<sup>77</sup> In 1 Cor 7, Paul makes a similar point, saying, “The world in its present form is passing away.”<sup>78</sup> In the same passage of his letter to the Ephesians, Ignatius also speaks about “the wrath that is coming,” an event about which Paul also wrote, in this case to the Thessalonians.<sup>79</sup>

The *Apocalypse of Paul* is a work that dates to the late fourth century in the form that has survived. It is an account of “The revelation of the holy apostle Paul: the things that<sup>80</sup> were revealed to him when he went up even to the third heaven and was caught up into Paradise and heard unutterable words.” The problem raised by Paul’s remark that no human being was permitted to say what Paul heard there is solved in a narrative way. In chapter 19 of the work, an angel is introduced, the one who had caught Paul up to the third heaven to show him “the places of the righteous.”<sup>81</sup> This angel sets Paul at the door of a gate. This is the gate to Paradise. When Paul enters, he meets Enoch and Elijah. Then the angel says to Paul, “Whatever I now show you here and whatever you will hear, do not make it known to anyone on earth.” Paul, the narrator, then says, “And he brought me and showed me *and I heard there words which it is not lawful for a man to speak.*

<sup>74</sup> 1 Cor 3:13.

<sup>75</sup> σημείον φωνῆς σάλπιγγος in *Did.* 16:6 and ἤξει ὁ κύριος in 16:7; Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers* 1.442–43.

<sup>76</sup> ἐν σάλπιγγι θεοῦ in 1 Thess 4:16 and ἡ παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου in 4:15.

<sup>77</sup> ἔσχατοι καιροί in Ign. *Eph.* 11.1; text and translation (modified) from Ehrman, 1.230–31.

<sup>78</sup> 1 Cor 7:31b.

<sup>79</sup> ἡ μέλλουσα ὀργή in Ign. *Eph.* 11.1; ἡ ὀργή ἡ ἐρχόμενος in 1 Thess 1:10.

<sup>80</sup> So the Greek version of *Apoc. Paul* preface; translation from Hugo Duensing and Aurelio de Santos Otero, “Apocalypse of Paul,” in *New Testament Apocrypha* (ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; rev. ed.; 2 vols.; Cambridge, UK: James Clarke; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1991–1992), 2.716.

<sup>81</sup> “Apocalypse of Paul,” 724.

And again he said: Follow me further and I shall show you what you ought to tell openly and report.<sup>82</sup>

According to the *Apocalypse of Paul*, sinners are judged and punished immediately after death.<sup>83</sup> The great judgment day, however, is still expected.<sup>84</sup> The angel also tells Paul, "When Christ whom you preach comes to reign, then ... the first earth will be dissolved and this land of promise will be shown ...; and then the Lord Jesus Christ ... will be revealed and he will come with all his saints to dwell in it and he will reign over them for a thousand years ..."<sup>85</sup> A general resurrection is also expected. Until then the righteous will rejoice in Paradise or in the city of Christ.<sup>86</sup>

The Valentinians and other Gnostics transformed Paul's future expectation in a more creative and radical way. But that is a story for another day.

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<sup>82</sup> *Apoc. Paul* 21; "Apocalypse of Paul," 725.

<sup>83</sup> *Apoc. Paul* 15-18, 31-42; "Apocalypse of Paul," 722-24, 730-35.

<sup>84</sup> The "future judgment" is mentioned in *Apoc. Paul* 15 and "the great day of judgment" at the end of section 16.

<sup>85</sup> *Apoc. Paul* 21; "Apocalypse of Paul," 725-26.

<sup>86</sup> *Apoc. Paul* 14-15, 23-29 "Apocalypse of Paul," 720-22, 727-29.

EIGHT KINGS ON AN APOCALYPTIC ANIMAL FARM  
REFLECTIONS ON REVELATION 17:9–11\*

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*Introduction*

A brief survey of recent New Testament introductions, commentaries and scholarly articles on the Book of Revelation suggests that a growing number of biblical scholars favour an early date for the book's composition, i.e., shortly after the death of Nero (68 CE) and before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple two years later. This was, in fact, the dominant position of nineteenth-century biblical scholarship.<sup>1</sup> While John A.T. Robinson's pre-70 CE dating of the book was part of larger experiment to see if it was possible to have the entire New Testament collection completed before the destruction of the temple in 70 CE,<sup>2</sup>— one that could easily be dismissed as an idiosyncrasy of an anti-establishment scholar—in recent times a growing number of biblical scholars of various persuasions have come to defend an early (“Neronian”) date of the book: Christopher C. Rowland (1982),<sup>3</sup> Ken-

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\* Paper read at the *Amsterdam New Testament Colloquium* at the Faculty of Theology of VU University, 20 March 2012. I have earlier published (and lectured) on this topic in, e.g., Arie W. Zwiep, “Het beest en de acht koningen,” in: idem, *Jezus en het heil van Israëls God: Verkenningen in het Nieuwe Testament* (EvTheol; Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2003), 133–51; idem, “*Apocalypse Now?* Een exercitie in actualiserend bijbellezen n.a.v. de Openbaring van Johannes,” *Soteria* 24/1 (2007): 3–18.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Joseph B. Lightfoot, *Essays on the Work Entitled Supernatural Religion* (London, New York: Macmillan, 1889, 21893), 132: “The Apocalypse was written, according to the view which our author [= one of the authors of *Supernatural Religion*] represents ‘as universally accepted by all competent critics,’ about A.D. 68, 69.” Also (posthumous) Fenton J.A. Hort, *The Apocalypse of Saint John: The Greek Text with Introduction, Commentary and Additional Notes* (Cambridge Library Collection, Religion; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908, repr. 2010), 1:x (the early date “the general tendency of criticism”). For a brief survey, see John A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1976), 224–26.

<sup>2</sup> Robinson, *Redating*, 221–53. On the mixed response to the book, see Eric James, *A Life of Bishop John A.T. Robinson: Scholar, Pastor, Prophet* (London: Collins, 1987), 231–38.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982), 403–413. But note that in 2005, he is more cautious: C.C. Rowland, “The Book of Revelation,” in: *The New Interpreter's Bible. New Testament Survey* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 345: “Evidence from Revelation itself suggests that an earlier date [than the mid-90s, AZ] is equally likely. This derives from the most obvious reading

neth L. Gentry (1989),<sup>4</sup> Robert B. Moberly (1992),<sup>5</sup> J. Christian Wilson (1993),<sup>6</sup> E. Earle Ellis (2000),<sup>7</sup> Gonzalo Rojas-Flores (2004),<sup>8</sup> Stephen S. Smalley (2005),<sup>9</sup> Ian Boxall (2007),<sup>10</sup> George H. van Kooten (2007),<sup>11</sup> and Karl Jaroš (2008),<sup>12</sup> to name but a few.

One of the classic pillars for dating the book is Rev 17:9–11, “the most obvious interpretation” of which suggests, at least according to these scholars, an early date of the book. In this article I will review the evidence and suggest a more coherent (not necessarily novel) reading of the text. My aim is not solve the problem of the date of Revelation as such, but to tackle only one of the perennial obstacles in response to some of these recent proposals and propose a way of reading that makes sense in the context of the book’s ideology and generic strategies as a whole.

In Rev 17:9–11 an angelic interpreter (*angelus interpres*) gives an at first sight clear and lucid explanation of a vision John had seen earlier on in chapter 13 about the seven-headed Beast from the sea (13:1–10). Explaining the meaning of the seven heads, the angel says:

Αἱ ἑπτὰ κεφαλαὶ  
ἑπτὰ ὄρη εἰσὶν,

The seven heads  
are seven mountains

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of Rev 17:9–10. After Nero’s death in 68 CE, there were four claimants to the throne in one year. So it may have been during the period of great upheaval in the empire while the power struggle was going on that John saw his vision. But the events of the 60s could easily have dominated the visionary horizon if he had his vision thirty years later.”

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth L. Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell. Dating the Book of Revelation. An Exegetical and Historical Argument for a Pre-A.D. 70 Composition* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, [1989] 31998) (“before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70”).

<sup>5</sup> Robert B. Moberly, “When Was Revelation Conceived?,” *Bib* 73 (1992): 376–92.

<sup>6</sup> J. Christian Wilson, “The Problem of the Domitianic Date of Revelation,” *NTS* 39 (1993): 587–605.

<sup>7</sup> E. Earle Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents* (Biblical Interpretation 39; Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 1999; Boston, Leiden: Brill Academic, 2000), 210–16 (AD 68–70).

<sup>8</sup> Gonzalo Rojas-Flores, “The *Book of Revelation* and the First Years of Nero’s Reign,” *Bib* 85 (2004): 375–92 (“after Nero’s ascension to the throne in 54 and before the earthquake of Laodicea in 60”).

<sup>9</sup> Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (London: SPCK, 2005), 2–3 (“[T]he book emerged just before the fall of Jerusalem to Titus, Vespasian’s son, in AD 70”).

<sup>10</sup> Ian Boxall, *The Revelation of Saint John* (BNTC; Peabody: Hendrickson; London, New York: Continuum, 2006), 7–10.

<sup>11</sup> George H. van Kooten, “The Year of the Four Emperors and the Revelation of John. The ‘pro-Neronian’ Emperors Otho and Vitellius, and the Images and Colossus of Nero in Rome,” *JSNT* 30 (2007): 205–248 (“during the first half of Vitellius’s reign mid-April and August 69”).

<sup>12</sup> Karl Jaroš, *Das Neue Testament und seine Autoren: Eine Einleitung* (UTB 3087; Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, 2008), 191–203 (“wohl noch in der ersten Hälfte des Jahres 70”).

ὅπου ἡ γυνὴ κάθηται ἐπὶ αὐτῶν.  
καὶ βασιλεῖς ἑπτὰ εἰσιν  
οἱ πέντε ἔπεσαν,  
ὁ εἷς ἔστιν,  
ὁ ἄλλος οὐπω ἦλθεν,  
καὶ ὅταν ἔλθῃ  
ὀλίγον αὐτὸν δεῖ μείναι,  
καὶ τὸ θηρίον ὃ ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν.  
καὶ αὐτὸς ὄγδοός ἐστιν  
καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἐστιν,  
καὶ εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει.

on which the woman is seated;  
also, they are seven kings,  
of whom five have fallen,  
one is living,  
and the other has not yet come;  
and when he comes,  
he must remain only a little while.  
As for the beast that was and is not,  
it is an eighth  
but it belongs to the seven,  
and it goes to destruction (NRSV).

From these few verses it is not difficult to construct a list of eight “kings” (βασιλεῖς) in chronological order: the first five belong to the past (“five have fallen”), the sixth king seems to be ruling in the narrator’s own time (ὁ εἷς ἔστιν, “one is living,” i.e., “one is living *now*,” at the presumed time of writing), and the seventh and eighth kings are, from the implied author’s perspective, to be expected in the (possibly near) future. The eighth king, the Beast (i.e., the Beast from the sea in 13:1–10), looks like a reincarnation of one of the previous kings or at least shares some significant features with them: “it belongs to the seven” (ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἐστιν).

At first sight, it seems easy to draw some further conclusions. Once we have established who or what is meant by king number six, the “one who is living (now)” (ὁ εἷς ἔστιν, present tense), we have a significant clue for dating the Book of Revelation. The identity of number six may further help us to determine the identity of the five preceding kings, which, in turn, may be important for understanding the identity of the mysterious eighth king, the expected eschatological opponent of the Lamb.<sup>13</sup>

### 1. A Symbolic or Historical-Literal Approach?

Unfortunately, things are not that easy. A number of commentators holds that it is pointless to make such calculations, since the list of kings should be taken symbolically, that is: the numbers are not to be taken with strict literalness but they are significant in themselves. Seven, for instance, is the well-known biblical symbolic number of fullness. When John refers

<sup>13</sup> Antichrist, according to some, or a such-like figure. See two opposing views on the ancestry of the Antichrist myth: Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte, *The Antecedents of Antichrist: A Traditio-Historical Study of the Earliest Christian Views on Eschatological Opponents* (JSJSup 49; Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1996); Geert W. Lorein, *Het thema van de antichrist in de intertestamentaire periode* (dissertatie Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 1997). See further David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16* (WBC 52B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 2:751–55.

to seven kings, he is supposedly not referring to exactly seven historically datable persons but to a totality of rulers in history, regardless how long or short the actual list of “kings” in historical reality may have been.<sup>14</sup> That “five of them have fallen” is then to be taken in the sense that the course of history has significantly moved forward: the major part of the events lies already in the past; it is only a relatively short time (short compared with the long history already behind the readers) before the reign of terror of the Beast—the eighth king—commences.

The frequent use of symbolic numbers in the Book of Revelation (three, four, seven, twelve, 144,000 etc.) surely favours such a symbolic understanding of the list of kings. It seems to capture, at any rate, the message of the Seer quite well: John wants to warn his readers that the coming events, especially the rule of the Beast and his defeat (!), are imminent. After the sixth king there is a short intermezzo, the rule of the seventh king, but “when he comes, he must remain only a little while” (ὀλίγον αὐτὸν δεῖ μείναι, v. 10) and then the eighth king will make his terrifying appearance, only to be defeated by God’s Messiah.

However, the fact that the sixth king can and should be dated (identified) in John’s present (ὁ εἶς ἔσται), makes it extremely difficult not to apply calculations to the remainder of the list of kings.<sup>15</sup> To the implied reader it is impossible *not* to look for a link with his or her own time (by identifying number six with whatever there is in his or her time) and to resist the temptation of calculating backwards to establish the identity of

<sup>14</sup> Gustaaf Adolf van den Bergh van Eysinga, “Die in der Apokalypse bekämpfte Gnosis,” *ZNW* 13 (1912): 293–306; idem, “Merkwaardige getallen,” *NedTT* 4 (1915): 62–66; George B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (BNTC; London: A.&C. Black, 1966) 218: “The seven kings are a symbolic number, representative of the series of emperors, and they would remain seven no matter how long the actual list happened to be”; Eduard Lohse, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes übersetzt und erklärt* (NTD 11; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960, <sup>3</sup>1971), 95: “Es kümmert den Seher wenig, ob die feststehenden Siebenzahl genau zu dem zurückgelegten Lauf der Geschichte stimmt oder nicht. Sein Interesse richtet sich vielmehr allein auf dem achten König, der in Kürze da sein wird”; Aune, *Revelation* 3:948–49; Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Cambridge: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 869: “The number ‘seven’ is not a literal number designating the quantity of kings in one epoch but is figurative for the quality of fullness or completeness (...) [T]he seven mountains and kings represent the oppressive power of world government throughout the ages ...”; James L. Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 224–25: “As always in Revelation, seven is a number of completeness. The seven kings are thus emblematic of total or complete human rule that engages in self-deifying activities (...) The ten kings that align with the beast represent the total earthly opposition to the Lamb.”

<sup>15</sup> Taking for granted that the text makes sense in its present context, that is, even if the list comes from elsewhere, as e.g., Henry B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indices* (London: Macmillan, 1906, <sup>3</sup>1908), 221–22, thinks likely.



the preceding five,<sup>16</sup> especially since John himself explicitly encourages his readership to make such calculations: “Let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast” (ὁ ἔχων νοῦν ψηφισάτω τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ θηρίου, 13:18). In apocalyptic writings of the time this way of allusive referring to contemporary events is not uncommon (see below). And, last but not least, although much of the symbolism comes in from the Book of Daniel in a preformatted way, the notion of the *seven* heads does not. That cannot be said to be predisposed.<sup>17</sup> It is probably the Seer’s own “update” or actualization of the Danielic vision and therefore deserves to be taken seriously as an intended number, a number chosen on purpose.

## 2. *Kings or Kingdoms?*

Even if it is granted that John’s claim is that he and his readers are living under the rule of the sixth “king,” not much is won as long as it is unclear who or what are meant by these “kings” (βασίλεις). The next question, then, is whether these “kings” refer to historical individuals, e.g., Roman emperors, or represent kingdoms, world powers. Linguistic conventions and metaphorical language would admit of such a collective-figurative understanding: in ancient thinking a king, after all, represents a kingdom. In this scenario, the “king who is living” is taken as a reference, not to a Roman emperor, but to the Roman empire.<sup>18</sup>

Thinking along these lines, commentators have suggested a number of possibilities to identify the five fallen kings/kingdoms with historical world empires. According to Theodor Zahn, for instance, the five kings represent successive “gottfeindliche Weltmonarchien” with their rulers, possibly the dynasty of the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the empire of

<sup>16</sup> Note the apt remark by Jarl Henning Ulrichsen, “Die sieben Häupter und die Zehn Hörner: Zur Datierung der Offenbarung des Johannes,” *StTh* 39 (1985): 2: “*Es gehört zum Wesen der Apokalyptik, daß ein Verfasser seinen zeitlichen Standort enthüllt. Der Leser/Hörer muß eine Möglichkeit haben sich zu orientieren, um die Zeichen der Zeit richtig zu deuten*” (my emphasis). See also Heinz Giesen, “Christusbotschaft in apokalyptischer Sprache: Zugang zur Offenbarung des Johannes,” *BiKi* 2 (1984): 42–53 (see par. 2.4).

<sup>17</sup> Thus rightly van Kooten, “The Year of the Four Emperors,” 215.

<sup>18</sup> A completely different interpretation of the vision is given by Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 209–216. According to them, John is an astral seer, who receives sky-visions that are to be interpreted according to ancient astronomical and astrological knowledge. They interpret the Beast from the sea as a reference to the Caanite deity Baal/Adonis/Jupiter (211). Accordingly, “the seven rulers in the sky are, of course, the planets” (212). The section Rev 17:7–18 is entitled “A Presumed Allegorical Interruption.”

the Medes and the Persians and the Graeco-Macedonian empire.<sup>19</sup> George Eldon Ladd argued in a similar vein for such a collective understanding.<sup>20</sup> The sixth “king,” in this scenario, refers to the Roman empire (the period in which the book was written), and the eighth king, “the beast that was and is not,” allegedly refers to a (still future) “restored Roman empire” or to Babylon that will rise from its ashes.<sup>21</sup>

There are a number of objections to the view that the seven kings/heads are symbols of seven empires instead of seven rulers. In the text itself there is no indication that the word “kings” is not to be taken in its *prima facie* meaning. On the contrary. As the Beast from the Sea seems to be a look-alike or replica of the four animals in Dan 7,<sup>22</sup> it is likely that John’s symbolism to a large degree concurs with Daniel’s. In the symbolic imagery of the Danielic visions an animal stands for a kingdom or an empire, and a horn represents a client king (*rex sociusque et amicus*).<sup>23</sup> This concurs with the imagery used thus far in the Book of Revelation’s visions in chapters 13 and 17. In addition, this use of imagery is also found in other apocalyptic writings from the time of John, where the reference is unmistakably to historical individuals, read: Roman emperors. In the Fourth Book of Ezra, to mention only a very obvious example, we find the imagery of an Eagle (= a symbol of the Roman empire) arising from the sea with twelve wings (= twelve “kings” in succession, 4 *Ezra* 12:14), eight little wings and three heads at rest (= three eschatological “kings,” 4 *Ezra* 12:23):

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<sup>19</sup> Theodor Zahn, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (KNT 18; Leipzig: A. Deichert, Werner Scholl, 31926), 2:560–66; idem, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, Georg Böhme, 31900), 2:627: “Von untergeordneter Bedeutung ist die Frage, welches nach der Ap die Phasen der Weltmonarchie sind. Wahrscheinlich 1) Ägypten mit Pharao als dem typischen Königsnamen, 2) Assyrien mit Sanherib, 3) Babel mit Nebukadnezar, 4) das medisch-persische, 5) das griechisch-macedonische, 6) das römische Reich mit seinem Cäsar, 7) das kurzlebige, welches kommen wird, woran als achttes das erneuerte fünfte mit dem Gegenbild des Antiochus, dem Antichrist der Endzeit sich anschließt.”

<sup>20</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 228–29.

<sup>21</sup> Other attempted identifications of the said empires can be found in the commentaries, e.g., Hendrik R. van de Kamp, *Openbaring: Profetie vanaf Patmos* (CNT derde serie; Kampen: Kok, 2000), 386.

<sup>22</sup> The Beast from the sea is a composite of the four Danielic animals (= empires) in Dan 7:3–8 and manifests itself as exceeding them all in evil. The ten horns (v. 1) correspond with the ten horns of the fourth animal in Dan 7:7. The Beast “was like a leopard” (the third animal, Dan 7:6), “its feet were like a bear’s” (the second animal, Dan 7:5) and “its mouth was like a lion’s mouth” (the first animal, Dan 7:4). John’s description, then, follows the description of the four animals in Daniel but *in reverse order*, as if John is looking back into the past.

<sup>23</sup> See John E. Goldingay, *Daniel* (WBC 30; Dallas, TX: Word, 1989), *ad loc.*

He (= the *angelus interpres*) said to me, “This is the interpretation of this vision which you have seen: The eagle which you saw coming up from the sea is the fourth kingdom which appeared in a vision to your brother Daniel. (...) Behold, the days are coming when a kingdom shall arise on earth, and it shall be more terrifying than all the kingdoms that have been before it. And twelve kings shall reign in it, one after another. But the second that is to reign shall hold sway for a longer time than any other of the twelve. (...). As for your seeing eight little wings clinging to his wings, this is the interpretation: Eight kings shall arise in it, whose times shall be short and their years swift. (...) As for your seeing three heads at rest, this is the interpretation: In its last days the Most High will raise up three kings, and they shall renew many things in it ...<sup>24</sup>

In the Eagle Vision we have the following symbolism: an animal (the Eagle) represents an empire; the wings and heads stand for individual rulers in a hierarchical relation. Admittedly, in Dan 7:17 MT the four animals (= empires) are said to be four kings (מַלְכֵי), if this is the text to be read,<sup>25</sup> but in the larger context there is no doubt that the four animals refer first and foremost to four kingdoms and the ten horns to ten kings (Dan 7:23, 24). The Greek translators of Daniel (LXX and Theodotion) and the Vulgate, at any rate, have taken the text that way:

Ταῦτα τὰ θηρία τὰ μεγάλα εἰσὶ τέσσαρες βασιλείαι, αἱ ἀπολοῦνται ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς (LXX);  
 Ταῦτα τὰ θηρία τὰ μεγάλα τὰ τέσσαρα, τέσσαρες βασιλείαι αἱ ἀναστήσονται ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, αἱ ἀρθήσονται (Theodotion);  
 hae bestiae magnae quattuor quattuor *regna* consurgent de terra ... (Vg).

In addition, the seven mountains that are mentioned in Rev 17:9—an unmistakable allusion to the city of Rome!—are *all seven* associated with

<sup>24</sup> 4 Ezra 12:10–23; ed. A. Frederik J. Klijn, *Der lateinische Text der Apokalypse des Esra. Mit einem Index Grammaticus von G. Mussies* (TU 131; Berlin: Akademie, 1983); transl. Bruce M. Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra. A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* 1 (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 550. See on this text: Lorenzo DiTommaso, “Dating the Eagle Vision of 4 Ezra: A New Look at an Old Theory,” *JSPE* 20 (1999): 3–38. He gives an elaborate survey of the various hypotheses that link these symbols to the historical emperors of Rome. See also Michael E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990) *ad loc.* Cf. Theodoor C. Vriezen, Adam S. van der Woude, *Oudisraëlitische en vroegjoodse literatuur* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, [1948] 192000), 479: “Naar algemeen gevoelen zijn met de drie adelaarskoppen de Romeinse keizers Vespasianus, Titus en Domitianus bedoeld. Aangezien de dood van laatstgenoemde nog niet verondersteld is (12:28), moet het boek nog vóór Domitianus’ sterfjaar (96 n. Chr.) ontstaan zijn.” Further Gerbern S. Oegema, “Apokalypsen,” in *Einführung zu den Jüdischen Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit* (ed. Oegema and Hermann Lichtenberger; Supplementa JSHRZ 6; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2001), 111–12.

<sup>25</sup> See the conjectures in the *txt app.* of *BHS*.

Rome and its empire, a feature which is not so easily explained when the reference is to seven world empires in succession.<sup>26</sup> All this leads to the conclusion that the seven heads/kings are not empires, but individual rulers, or to be more specific: seven kings or emperors of Rome.<sup>27</sup>

Who, then, is this sixth king/emperor and who are his predecessors and associates? A common way to answer these questions is to take the current assumed date of the Book of Revelation as a starting-point and compare it with the known emperors of the time and draw conclusions. If the book was composed during the reign of emperor Domitian (81–96 CE), then Domitian would be “the one who is living.” The five fallen kings would then have to be found among his predecessors. Unfortunately, there are more than five of them. Alternately, if the Book of Revelation was written during or shortly after the reign of emperor Nero (54–68 CE), we could apply the same procedure, with different results but with similar complications.

Although the first readers/listeners presumably had no difficulty at all in identifying the sixth king (!), contemporary readers are in a less fortunate position, especially so since the dating of the Book of Revelation is a complicated matter (after all, the unity of the book and the coherence of the visions should not be taken for granted) and one is continuously at risk of proving one’s position from the position to be proved. A more promising avenue into the matter is to try to understand John’s “logic” and see if we can make an informed guess on how he would have his readers understand his words.

### 3. *The Seven Kings and the Lists of Roman Emperors*

If we are right in thinking that the sixth king, “the one who is living,” stands for a specific historical figure—a Roman emperor—we will have to account for the rationale of including and excluding candidates from the list.

<sup>26</sup> In ancient thought Rome was built on seven hills, and hence called “the city of the seven hills” (*urbs septicollis*). See Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.781–84. In the time of emperor Vespasian (69–79 CE) coins were in currency with the image of the Roman goddess on seven hills (cf. Rev 17:3!). See further Aune, *Revelation* 3:944–45.

<sup>27</sup> It was, incidentally, not uncommon to call the Roman emperor βασιλεύς, “king” (1 Pet 2:13, 17; cf. 1 Tim 2:2), see Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, Roderick McKenzie et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon. With a Revised Supplement 1996* (Oxford: Clarendon, [1843], <sup>9</sup>1940/1996), 309, s.v. βασιλεύς (III.3); Adolf Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten: Das Neue Testament und die neuentdeckten Texte der hellenistisch-römischen Welt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1908, <sup>4</sup>1923), 310–11; James Hope Moulton, George Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914–1930; repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 104–5; Aune, *Revelation* 3:946; Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (rev. and ed. by Frederick W. Danker; Chicago, London: Chicago University Press, <sup>2</sup>2000), 170, s.v. βασιλεύς.

What makes the current emperor a fit candidate for being number six? If the five fallen ones also stand for individual rulers, why are they picked from the larger list and others not? A list (not *the* list, for reasons to be explained below) of Roman emperors from the beginning of the Roman empire to the early second century CE looks like this:<sup>28</sup>

Caesar	60–44 BCE
Augustus	27 BCE–14 CE
Tiberius	14–37 CE
Gaius Caligula	37–41 CE
Claudius	41–54 CE
Nero	54–68 CE
Galba	69 CE
Otho	69 CE
Vitellius	69 CE
Vespasian	69–79 CE
Titus	79–81 CE
Domitian	81–96 CE
Nerva	96–98 CE
Trajan	98–117 CE

Before we proceed, some initial clarifications may be appropriate here. First, the known lists of Roman emperors at the time disagree as to whether Julius Caesar (Suetonius) or Augustus (Tacitus) should be counted as the first emperor of the Roman empire.<sup>29</sup> Second, the period after Nero's death in 68 was followed by a notoriously chaotic year in Rome's history. In 69 three pretenders to the throne (Galba, Otho and Vitellius) fought against each other, while a fourth one (Vespasian) ultimately gained power. All of this was of course bound to confuse the historians.<sup>30</sup>

The critical matter for our present purpose is to find a reasonable explanation for the inclusion and exclusion of kings on John's *mental map*. Given the unclarity among Roman historians themselves as to who should open the list, we may well try to understand the procedure from John's (the implied author's) own perspective as a first-century writer in a Christian community under threat.

<sup>28</sup> See Helmut Koester, *Einführung in das Neue Testament im Rahmen der Religionsgeschichte und Kulturgeschichte der hellenistischen und römischen Zeit* (De Gruyter Lehrbuch; Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 296–336; Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, <sup>3</sup>2003), 20–40, and the literature cited there.

<sup>29</sup> Ulrichsen, "Sieben Häupter," 6; cf. the survey in Aune, *Revelation* 3:947–48.

<sup>30</sup> Peter A.L. Greenhalgh, *The Year of the Four Emperors* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975); David Shotter, *Nero* (London, New York: Routledge, 1997, <sup>2</sup>2005), 74–86; G. Morgan, *69 A.D. The Year of the Four Emperors* (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); van Kooten, "The Year of the Four Emperors," 205–248.

From the wider context of chapters 12, 13 and 17 it appears that the seven kings are clearly anti-*Christian* in character, that is: they are portrayed as persecutors of the Christ and his church, the (predominantly non-Jewish) *Christian* community, that is. For this reason alone it is not very likely that John would start the list of emperors with Julius Caesar, Augustus or even Tiberius for that matter: their reign preceded entirely (Caesar, Augustus) or for the most part the period in which the historical Christian community came into existence. None of them, as far as we can tell, ever took a hostile attitude towards Judaism and early Christianity, or, to put it differently, none of them emerged as a fierce opponent of the Christian (and Jewish) faith. This situation changed dramatically under Gaius Caligula, whose rule (37–41 CE) coincided with the first years in which the Christian community spread over the Roman empire. While his predecessors had taken a quite pragmatic stance towards the emperor cult and saw their divine worship as a mere formality, Caligula insisted on his claim to divinity and enforced emperor worship throughout the empire. Although there is no hard evidence that he had Christians persecuted, he was feared for his conflicts with the Jews.<sup>31</sup> Ancient historians report several incidents.<sup>32</sup> This interpretation lines up with the worldwide persecution by the Beast announced in chapter 13 as a consequence of a failed local persecution of presumably Jewish Christians in chapter 12:13–16 (note that the persecutions mentioned in chapter 12 are not associated with the Beast, but with the Dragon and seem to relate to the persecution of the Jewish and Jewish-Christian community before the fall of Jerusalem).<sup>33</sup>

All this suggests that there are good historical reasons to start the list of kings/emperors with Caligula, the well-known “madman” and first public opponent of the Christian community.<sup>34</sup> Were we then to add the next four

<sup>31</sup> Josephus, *BJ*. 2.10.1–5 (184–203; *LCL* 203:394–403); *Ant.* 18.8.2–10.9 (261–309; *LCL* 433:154–79); Philo, *Leg.* 188, 207–8; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.9.

<sup>32</sup> See Scott T. Carroll, “Caligula,” *ABD* 1:820–21.

<sup>33</sup> *Contra* van Kooten’s interpretation of Rev 12 and 13, “Year of the Four Emperors.” I take 12:16 as a veiled reference to the flight (historical or not) of the Jewish Christians to Pella. Cf. also P.H.R. (Rob) van Houwelingen, “Vlucht naar voren: het vertrek van de christenen uit Jeruzalem naar Pella,” in *Exeget(h)isch: Feestbundel voor prof. dr. J. van Bruggen* (ed. van Houwelingen et al.; Kampen: Kok, 2001), 339–61; idem, “Fleeing Forward: The Departure of Christians from Jerusalem to Pella,” *WTJ* 65 (2003): 181–200.

<sup>34</sup> So also Lyder Brun, “Die römischen Kaiser in der Apokalypse,” *ZNW* 26 (1927): 128–51; August Strobel, “Abfassung und Geschichtstheologie der Apokalypse nach Kap. XVII, 9–12,” *NTS* 10 (1964): 439ff.; Pierre Prigent, *L’Apocalypse de saint Jean* (CNT 14; Paris, Neuchâtel, Lausanne: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1981), 254ff.; Ulrichsen, “Sieben Häupter” 1–20, and others. Cf. Zahn, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes 2* (KNT 18; Leipzig: A. Deichert, Werner Scholl, 31926) 480: “(Caligula) ... den ersten nachchristlichen Vorläufer des Antichrists.”

Roman emperors on the list, emperor Otho would be the fifth “fallen king” and Vitellius “the one who is living (now).” This is possible, of course. The Book of Revelation would then have to be dated in the year 69 or shortly afterwards, even though Vespasian’s ten-year rule cannot be said to be short (69–79 CE), and Titus cannot be said to be a fit eschatological opponent or an antichrist figure. How valid these objections are, remains to be seen (in fact, I do not think they are valid for reasons to be explained below). Scholars who have taken Caligula as the first of the five fallen kings disagree, however, on the identity of the remaining four. So we cannot leave it at that.

If we start from the other end (that is, beginning with a hypothetical date and reason our way backwards), we meet no fewer difficulties. If John wrote during the nineties of the first century, as a large segment of biblical scholars still holds, then Domitian or Nerva would have to be identified as “the one who is living.” If we follow the list as it stands in reverse order, the five “fallen kings” would be Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian and Titus (if we take the traditional Domitian date as point of departure). But in that scenario it is entirely unclear why the insignificant and uninfluential emperor Galba, who was only seven months in office, should inaugurate the list of the Christian antagonists at the cost of a much more fit candidate, Caligula (or Nero, for that matter). The same objections go for the other two, Otho and Vitellius. It is difficult to see why they should be on the list at all.

The year 69, as I remarked earlier, was a chaotic period in the history of Rome, a time which Mark alludes to as one of *πολέμους και ἀκοάς πολέμων* “wars and rumours of wars” (Mark 13:7).<sup>35</sup> Ancient historiographers give different estimates of this period, depending on their perspective and factual knowledge. The lists of emperors accordingly diverge.<sup>36</sup> Typically, Tacitus opens his report on the two years after Nero’s death with a deep lament on the reign of chaos at the time.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Camille Focant, *L’Évangile selon Marc* (CB.NT 2; Paris: Cerf, 2004), 494.

<sup>36</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.5.1; *LCL* 153:198, for one, does not mention Vitellius, only Galba and Otho.

<sup>37</sup> Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.2: “[2] Opus adgredior opimum casibus, atrox proeliis, discors seditionibus, ipsa etiam pace saevum. quattuor principes ferro interempti: trina bella civilia, plura externa ac plerumque permixta: prosperae in Oriente, adversae in Occidente res: turbatum Illyricum, Galliae nutantes, perdomita Britannia et statim ommissa: coortae in nos Sarmatarum ac Sueborum gentes, nobilitatus cladibus mutuis Dacus, mota prope etiam Parthorum arma falsi Neronis ludibrio. iam vero Italia novis cladibus vel post longam saeculorum seriem repetitis adflicta. haustae aut obrutae urbes, fecundissima Campaniae ora; et urbs incendiis vastata, consumptis antiquissimis delubris, ipso Capitolio civium manibus incenso. pollutae caerimoniae, magna adulteria: plenum exiliis mare, infecti caedibus

A solution, which other scholars have advanced as well, is not to include the names of Galba, Otho and Vitellius on the list at all. They were pretenders to the throne in a period of immense chaos after the death of Nero.<sup>38</sup> The Roman historian Suetonius speaks slightly of the events as “an insurrection of three princes” (*rebellio trium principum*).<sup>39</sup> Galba and Vitellius both ruled (notably with a partial overlap) seven months, Otho only five. In Roman historiography this period is usually remembered as the *interregnum*, as if there were no ruling authorities at all. If John decided to ignore these “kings,” whose authority was by all accounts a matter of dispute, no one would blame him.

If the five fallen kings do not stand for a symbolic entity but represent five historical Roman rulers in succession and if we are right to skip the names of the three “rulers” of the interregnum, it may tentatively be suggested that John (and possibly his readers) may have had the following Roman emperors in mind. The five fallen kings are the five Roman emperors of the Christian era, viz. Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian and Titus. The king “who is living” at the time of writing is Domitian:

(1) Caligula	37–41 CE
(2) Claudius	41–54 CE
(3) Nero	54–68 CE
(4) Vespasian	69–79 CE
(5) Titus	79–81 CE
(6) Domitian (ὁ εἰς ἔσταν)	81–96 CE

John’s list of kings, however, does not contain six but eight persons. After the current sixth king, he expects a seventh one, who “must remain only a little while” (17:10), after whom comes the eighth king, who will inaugurate the rule of the eschatological opponent of the Lamb, the antichrist-like figure.

Now it would be tempting to just follow the list of the six emperors and supplement it with the historical successors of Domitian, viz. Nerva and Trajan, as if John could look into the immediate future. Nerva, to be sure, would fit very well. His rule was in fact short, from September 18, 96 CE,

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scopuli. atrocius in urbe saevitum: nobilitas, opes, omissi gestique honores pro crimine et ob virtutes certissimum exitium. nec minus praemia delatorum invisa quam scelera, cum alii sacerdotia et consulatus ut spolia adepti, procurationes alii et interiorum potentiam, agerent verterent cuncta odio et terrore. corrupti in dominos servi, in patronos liberti; et quibus deerat inimicus per amicos oppressi.”

<sup>38</sup> Swete, *Apocalypse* 220: “It is more than doubtful whether a writer living under the Flavian Emperors would reckon Galba, Otho or Vitellius among the Augusti.”

<sup>39</sup> Suetonius, *Vesp.* 1.1: ... *rebellio trium principum* ...; cf. *Sib. Or.* 5:35: “Three princes (!) after him (= Nero) will perish at each others’ hands.”



when Domitian was murdered by members of the praetorian guard, till he died a natural death (quite exceptional for a Roman general!) on January 27, 98 CE, that is 16 months only.<sup>40</sup> But Trajan, his successor, hardly qualifies as an “antichrist” or a beast. Furthermore it is not clear in what respect Trajan can be identified with one of his predecessors except for the noncontroversial observation that he is a king or an emperor as well (the eighth king is “one of the seven”).<sup>41</sup>

However, the typical apocalyptic mode of writing history suggests in my view a clear and often overlooked solution to the problem of the identity of numbers seven and eight.<sup>42</sup> What we have in Rev 17:9–11 is a miniature historical survey, which is a well-known generic feature of Jewish and Christian apocalypses, beginning with the Enochic literature and the book of Daniel, and including writings such as the Book of Jubilees, Fourth Ezra, Second Baruch and the Testamental literature. In these writings we find historical surveys of the Jewish people, from Creation and Flood to the Day of Judgement at the end of times. A marked feature of these historical reviews is the division of times into successive periods, covering Creation and Fall, the period of Abraham and the Patriarchs, the Davidic kingdom, the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and so on and so forth, ultimately ending in the future Day of Judgement. The interesting thing for our present purpose is the proportioning of the time divisions. The distant past is usually painted with very broad strokes: in just a few verses thousands of years are summarized. Closer to the time of writing, the description of events becomes more detailed and condensed; events of the recent past receive much more attention than earlier events. And the authorial present is often pictured in as much detail as possible. But at that precise point, where the author’s present evolves into the future, there is a “turning-point,” after which the coming events are again painted with broad strokes, even up to the point where we have events in the very distant future summarized in just a few verses. The said “turning-point,” reflecting the standpoint of the author, nicely helps the intended readers (and contemporary scholars) to determine the time in which the book was composed and find out their place in the course of events.

A clear example of such a “telescopic historiography” is found in the Dream Visions, which are now part of the First (Ethiopic) Book of Enoch

<sup>40</sup> Brian W. Jones, “Nerva,” *ABD* 4 (1992): 1081–1082.

<sup>41</sup> On Trajan, see further Brian W. Jones, “Trajan,” *ABD* 6 (1992): 639–40.

<sup>42</sup> On the literary genre of the Book of Revelation, see John J. Collins, “Introduction. Toward the Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 1–20; Aune, *Revelation* 1:lxx-xc.

(1 *En.* 83–90).<sup>43</sup> The visions contain a historical survey of Israel's past, from the Great Flood to the rule of the Maccabees in the second century BCE up to the Maccabean revolt and the beginning of the Hellenistic period (1 *En.* 89:73–90:5), the details of the historical course of events are readily recognizable and can easily be identified; from that point onwards (i.e., from the author's perspective, the future), the description of events becomes vaguer, less pronounced, more difficult to determine. The period up to the end smoothly evolves into the End, the Day of Judgement, as if it were a brief period.

In the Book of Daniel, the transition between present and future is found at 9:26 and/or 11:40.<sup>44</sup> In the New Testament, Mark 13 has a similar time switch, the turning-point being found in verse 14, where we have the ominous words about the “desolating sacrilege” (τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως) that is to be set up in the Jerusalem temple and the warning to the readers to flee.

There can be no doubt that in Rev 17:10–11 we have John's own disclosure of the time of writing. Writing under the rule of Domitian (ὁ εἷς ἔσται), he describes the recent past in recognizable terms and in some detail (especially so in chapter 12 and 13), while the future (from his perspective) is painted with broad strokes. Everything between his own time and the reign of the eighth king is “a short while,” which I take as clear evidence of the imminent expectation that characterizes the Book of Revelation as a whole (cf. the glorified Jesus' repeated announcement of his imminent arrival). Surely the Seer was convinced that the End of time was to arrive very soon.

The eighth king is said to “belong to the seven” (NRSV). It is ἐκ τῶν ἐπτά. This may actually mean no more than that he is a king, a Roman emperor, as were his predecessors. However, a more plausible reading would take the words to mean that the eighth king is understood to be one of the seven in a more particular way: he is to be *identified* as one of them. According to some interpreters, the idea is that of a literal return of one of the Roman emperors, in the same way as some Jews expected Elia to return in person. Others think of a return of “someone in the spirit of” the Roman emperors. Either way, the notion of a return of a king well resonates with popular beliefs at the time about Nero's feared return from the Abyss. So let us see how this fits the overall picture.

<sup>43</sup> See Ephraim Isaac, “1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch: A New Translation and Introduction,” in: Charlesworth (ed.), *OTP* 1:61–72.

<sup>44</sup> Goldingay, *Daniel*, 305.

#### 4. *The Expected Return of Nero*

When Nero committed suicide on 9 June, 68 CE, as rumour had it by cutting his throat with a sword, the people of Rome felt relieved now that they finally had been liberated from the cruel tyrant. Nero's death was followed by a tumultuous period in which three generals (Otho, Galba and Vitellius) disputed each other's claims to the throne.

Although Nero had received a public funeral, rumours spread that he had not really died but had fled to the eastern parts of the Roman empire, to the region of the Parthians, where he was allegedly making preparations for his return to take the throne back and take revenge on all his adversaries. The Roman historian Tacitus writes the following:

Sub idem tempus Achaia atque Asia falso exterritae velut Nero adventaret, vario super exitu eius rumore eoque pluribus vivere eum fingentibus credentibusque. Ceterorum casus conatusque in contextu operis dicemus: tunc servus e Ponto sive, ut alii tradidere, libertinus ex Italia, citharae et antus peritus, unde illi super similitudinem oris propior ad fallendum fides, adiunctis desertoribus, quos inopia vagos ingentibus promissis corruperat, mare ingreditur.

About this time Achaia and Asia were terrified by a false rumour of Nero's arrival. The reports with regard to his death had been varied,<sup>45</sup> and therefore many people imagined and believed that he was alive. The fortunes and attempts of other pretenders we shall tell as we proceed; but at this time, a slave from Pontus or, as others have reported, a freedman from Italy, who was skilled in playing on the cithara and in singing, gained the readier belief in his deceit through these accomplishments and his resemblance to Nero.<sup>46</sup>

According to Suetonius, after Nero's death decrees were still issued in his name, as if he were still alive:

[1] Obiit tricensimo et secundo aetatis anno, die quo quondam Octavianam interemerat, tantumque gaudium publice praebuit, ut plebs pilleata tota urbe discurreret. et tamen non defuerunt qui per longum tempus uernis aestivisque floribus tumulum eius ornarent ac modo imagines praetextatas in rostris proferrent, modo edicta quasi uiuentis et breui magno inimicorum malo reuersuri. [2] quin etiam Vologaesus Parthorum rex missis ad senatum legatis de instauranda societate hoc etiam magno opere orauit, ut Neronis memoria coleretur. denique cum post uiginti annos adulescente me exitis-

<sup>45</sup> "The reports with regard to his death had been varied," this almost sounds like a literary topos, see Arie W. Zwiep, "The Mysterious Death(s) of Judas," in: idem, *Christ, the Spirit and the Community of God: Essays on the Acts of the Apostles* (WUNT 2/293; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 68–76.

<sup>46</sup> Tacitus, *Hist.* 2.2.8 (*Library of Latin Texts*; transl. Clifford H. Moore, *LCL* 111:172–73). See also Dio Cassius 64.9.3: *ἑάλω δὲ τις καὶ Νέρων εἶναι πλασάμενος κατὰ τόνδε τὸν καιρόν, οὗ τὸ ὄνομα τῷ Δίῳι ἠγνόηται, καὶ τὸ τέλος καὶ δικὴν ἔδωκεν* (*TLG*).

set condicionis incertae qui se Neronem esse iactaret, tam fauorabile nomen eius apud Parthos fuit, ut uehementer adiutus et uix redditus sit.

He died in the thirty-second year of his age, upon the same day on which he had formerly put Octavia to death; and the public joy was so great upon the occasion, that the common people ran about the city with caps upon their heads. Some, however, were not wanting, who for a long time decked his tomb with spring and summer flowers. Sometimes they placed his image upon the rostra, dressed in robes of state; at another, they published proclamations in his name, as if he were still alive, and would shortly return to Rome, and take vengeance on all his enemies. Vologesus, king of the Parthians, when he sent ambassadors to the senate to renew his alliance with the Roman people, earnestly requested that due honour should be paid to the memory of Nero; and, to conclude, when, twenty years afterwards, at which time I was a young man, some person of obscure birth gave himself out for Nero, that name secured for him so favourable a reception from the Parthians, that he was very zealously supported, and it was with much difficulty that they were prevailed upon to give him up.<sup>47</sup>

Speculations about Nero's return were so persistent that, when it became clear to all that too much time had elapsed for him to be still alive, the rumours gained mythical proportions: admittedly, Nero had died but he would make his return from Hades. The myth of *Nero rediturus* turned into the myth of *Nero rediuius*. The expectation (or should we say, the threat) of a return of Nero in person or of someone "in the spirit and power of Nero" (cf. Luke 1:17) was also current in Jewish and Christian circles, as we know for instance from the fifth book of the *Sibylline Oracles* (e.g. in *Sib. Or.* 5:367), which originates from a Jewish background at the end of the first or the beginning of the second century CE<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Suetonius, *Nero* 57.1–2 (ed. M. Ihm); transl. Alexander Thomson, *Suetonius: The Lives of the Twelve Caesars; An English Translation, Augmented with the Biographies of Contemporary Statesmen, Orators, Poets, and Other Associates* (Medford, MA: Gebbie, 1889) (*Library of Latin Texts*).

<sup>48</sup> *Sib. Or.* 5:12–19; 5:28–35; 5:93–110. Cf. 4:138. Victorinus 17: "Unum autem de capitibus quasi occisum in mortem et plagam mortis eius curatam, Neronem dicit. constat enim dum insequeretur eum equitatus missus a senatu, ipsum sibi gulam succidisse. hunc ergo suscitatum Deus mittet" (*Library of Latin Texts*). That the *Sibylline Oracles* refer to the *Nero rediuius* myth is disputed by Jan Willem van Henten, "Nero Rediuius Demolished: The Coherence of the Nero Traditions in the *Sibylline Oracles*," *JSP* 21 (2000): 3–17, who thinks this is "a modern scholarly construction, at least as far as the *Sibylline Oracles* and the Graeco-Roman sources are concerned" (3–4). He concludes that "references to a second performance of Nero hardly concern a miraculous posthumous revival. In the context of the Sibyl's prophecies of doom they seem to indicate that a later ruler, human or superhuman, will be as horrible as Nero in character and deeds" (17). Be that as it may, the *Sibylline Oracles* are at least evidence of the *Nero rediturus* myth. Van Henten rightly stresses the stereotyped nature of the Nero figure. On the *Nero rediuius* myth, see further Aune, *Revelation* 2:737–40.

It is against the background of these *Nero redivivus* speculations, as most contemporary commentators have rightly acknowledged, that the description of the Beast (the Beast from the Sea, that is) in Rev 13 and 17 receives its full colour. More than once we find allusions to the myth, e.g., και μίαν ἐκ τῶν κεφαλῶν αὐτοῦ ὡς ἐσφαγμένην<sup>49</sup> εἰς θάνατον, και ἡ πληγὴ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ ἔθεραπεύθη “one of its heads seemed to have received a death-blow, but its mortal wound had been healed” (13:3); τὸ θηρίον ... ἦν και οὐκ ἔστιν, και μέλλει ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου “the beast ... was, and is not and is about to ascend from the bottomless pit” (17:8), and ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἐστιν “it belongs to the seven” (17:11), and especially in the notion of the mysterious number of the beast, 666 (13:18), which I elsewhere have interpreted (in line with *communis opinio*) as a reference to Nero.

In the said article, I argued that Rev 13:18 is a typical example of the widespread numerological exegetical technique in antiquity, in Jewish sources known as the technique of *gematria*, according to which a name could be replaced by a number representing the total of the numerical values of the letters making up the name.<sup>50</sup> From such ancient examples as the famous wall-inscription at Pompey, φιλω ἧς ἀριθμὸς φμε’ “I am in love with the girl whose number is φμε’ (= 545),” (before 79 CE)<sup>51</sup> it is clear that this declaration of love is nonsensical to the casual passer-by (since he or she does not know how to connect the number 545 to a name, even if he or she knows how to reckon with numbers and letters); it is, however, meaningful to the persons involved. In other words, one has to have a name if one is to make sense of this riddle. From this, I surmised that the identity of the Beast was known (or could be known) to John’s readership.

Having briefly surveyed the basic solutions in antiquity and recent scholarship I concluded that the most likely explanation is that the number of the Beast must be connected some way or another with emperor Nero. Now in Greek, neither the name Nero nor Nero Caesar yields the required number 666. However, if his name is reverted to Hebrew (or Aramaic, for that matter)<sup>52</sup> and we follow the Hebrew spelling of the name Nero Caesar (נרור קסר), then the result is 666: נ = 200 + ס = 60 + ק = 100 + ו = 50 + ו = 6 + ר = 200 + ו = 50.<sup>53</sup> Although the Hebrew equivalent of Caesar is usually spelled

<sup>49</sup> The words ὡς ἐσφαγμένην can be rendered “as slain” and “as if slain.” The parallel with 5:6 (a Lamb standing ὡς ἐσφαγμένον, and cf. 5:12; 13:18) suggests the former, the notion of the wound’s *healing* (ἔθεραπεύθη) suggests the latter.

<sup>50</sup> BDAG 131, s.v. ἀριθμὸς; Zwiep, “Het beest en de acht koningen,” in: idem, *Jezus en het heil van Israëls God*, 145–50.

<sup>51</sup> Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten*, 237.

<sup>52</sup> Guido Baltus, *Hebräisches Evangelium und synoptische Überlieferung. Untersuchungen zum hebräischen Hintergrund der Evangelien* (WUNT 2/312; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), has recently made a strong case for the active use of Hebrew in first-century Judaism, alongside Aramaic and Greek.

<sup>53</sup> Zo ook Aune, *Revelation 2:770–71*.

קיסר, the form without the ך is also attested by the Dead Sea Scrolls<sup>54</sup> and in the Talmud.<sup>55</sup> Interestingly (not to complicate matters), if the Hebrew name is spelled in Latin (i.e., without the final *n*), we have the numerical value of 616, which we know as a textual variant since the time of Irenaeus (C and Irenaeus<sup>mss</sup>) and which was recently confirmed by a new discovery<sup>56</sup> (and which yields the name Gaius Caligula, Nero's notorious predecessor ( $\gamma = 3 + \alpha = 1 + \iota = 10 + \omicron = 70 + \sigma = 200 + \chi = 20 + \alpha = 1 + \iota = 10 + \sigma = 200 + \alpha = 1 + \rho = 100$ ).<sup>57</sup>

Without explicitly mentioning him by name (which strengthens the ominous nature of the upcoming events) the historical-mythical figure of Nero is taken as a type of the Beast. The Beast has all the features of the figure of Nero, the cruel tyrant and persecutor of Christians, whose post-mortem career gained mythic, demonic proportions. In some early Christian sources Nero was explicitly identified with Belial, a designation of both Satan and Antichrist.<sup>58</sup>

If the number of the Beast derives from a Semitic (Hebrew or Aramaic) background, the number 666 probably was known before John adopted it (in Greek) in his book. It then probably was current in Aramaic / Hebrew speaking Jewish or Jewish-Christian circles. And although the calculation underlying the Hebrew name did not exactly work in Greek (hence the textual variation?), the symbolism by then was obvious enough for the readers to recognize an allusion to Nero. It is not a coincidence that in the *Sibylline Oracles* Nero is characterized as a “destructive beast” (ὄλονόν δάκος)<sup>59</sup> and a “wild beast, a monster” (θήρ μέγα).<sup>60</sup>

<sup>54</sup> See Pierre Benoit, Józef T. Milik, Roland de Vaux, *Les Grottes de Murabba'at* (DJD 2; Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), 18 plate 29.

<sup>55</sup> See Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: Pardes, 1903; repr. New York: Judaica Press), 1365.

<sup>56</sup> *P. Oxy.* LVI 4499. See David C. Parker, *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and Their Texts* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 242–44.

<sup>57</sup> For other solutions, see Lodewijk van Hartingsveld, “Die Zahl des Tieres, die Zahl eines Menschen. Apokalypse 13,18,” in *Miscellanea neotestamentica. Studia ad novum testamentum etc.* (ed. Tjitze Baarda, A. Frederik J. Klijn, Willem C. van Unnik; NovTSup 48; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), 191–201.

<sup>58</sup> *Sib. Or.* 3:63 (TLG): ἐκ δὲ Σεβαστηνῶν ἤξει Βελίαρ μετόπισθεν; “Then Beliar (= Nero) will come from the *Sebastēnoi* (= the line of Augustus);” transl. John J. Collins, *OTP* 1:363; *Mart. Isa* 4:1–2.

<sup>59</sup> *Sib. Or.* 5:343 (TLG); transl. Collins, *OTP* 1:362.

<sup>60</sup> *Sib. Or.* 8:157–59 (TLG): καὶ τότε θήρα μέγαν μετελεύσεται αἶμα κελαινόν. τὸν δὲ λέοντ' ἐδίωξε κύων ὀλέκοντα νομῆας. σκῆπτρα δ' ἀφαιρήσουσι καὶ εἰς Αἶδαο περήσει; transl. Collins, *OTP* 1:421–22: “[T]hen dark blood will pursue the great beast. The hound pursued the lion that was destroying the herdsmen. They will take away dominion, and he will pass over to Hades.” See also Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.38: περὶ μὲν γε θηρίων οὐκ ἂν εἴποις, ὅτι τὰς μητέρας ποτὲ τὰς αὐτῶν ἐδαίσαντο, Νέρων δὲ ἐμπεφόρηται τῆς βορᾶς ταύτης (TLG); transl. Frederick C.

### 5. *The Imperium Romanum as an Endtime Power*

Taking the narrator's historical perspective seriously, i.e. taking his comment that he writes under the rule of the sixth king for what it is, viz. a reference to his own time, gives us a coherent explanation of the evidence, although admittedly the solution proposed here is not watertight. Whether, for example, the ten horns have their exact parallel in history is difficult to determine and probably unlikely. Different from the seven heads, where we have an explicit affirmation of their meaning, the ten horns are probably directly transferred from Daniel's vision and have a more allusive-symbolic meaning. John's first readers may have associated them with the Parthian allies of Nero. Differently from the heads that represent a chronological succession of rulers, the ten horns form an occasional coalition of client kings who will reign as kings together with the Beast "for one hour only" (17:12–14).<sup>61</sup>

In sum, based on the observations I made above, it seems to me that this is the most plausible interpretation of the list of kings:

(1) Caligula	37–41 CE
(2) Claudius	41–54 CE
(3) Nero	54–68 CE
(4) Vespasian	69–79 CE
(5) Titus	79–81 CE
(6) Domitian	81–96 CE = John's time
(7) ?	"a little while"
(8) Nero <i>redivivus</i>	endtime

This is perfectly in line with the narrative conventions of apocalyptic writing, especially the use of "telescoping historiography" combined with the subtle disclosure of the author's and readers' position on the time-line. The reason that John does not identify the seventh and eighth king is very simple indeed. He cannot give us their names, because they have not made their entry yet. To John, they are future rulers. Rulers he expects to appear in the imminent future (let us say in the course of months), admittedly, but they are, from his perspective, still to come and they are anonymous. It would be wrong to read subsequent events into his text and supplement the list of identified persons with the names of Nerva and Trajan. John is warning his readers that the conflict between good (Lamb) and evil (Dragon) is on the verge of escalation. From the recent history of Rome and its rulers

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Conybeare: "And again there is no animal anyhow of which you can say that it ever devours its own mother, but Nero is gorged with such quarry."

<sup>61</sup> See the various options discussed in Ulrichsen, "Sieben Häupter" 12–15.

the Christian community could know what to expect of the immediate future. John extrapolates the present into the future and thereby creates a full-blown apocalyptic scenario that helps his readers to put their present misfortunes in the perspective of eternity.<sup>62</sup>

John the Seer may have grossly exaggerated the evil nature of the Roman empire—there is a good deal of rhetorical *Schrecklichmachung* (fear-mongering or scare tactics) at work in these texts—but how he works out his message is clear: looking back to the time of Nero, he warns his readers that the imminent future may be even worse than that, but that in the end Christ will conquer the Beast and inaugurate his reign. Seen from that perspective, the Book of Revelation is a book of hope ...

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<sup>62</sup> A modern analogy may help to clarify the issue at hand. The historical situation of John may well be compared with the events before the outbreak of World War II. At the eve of the war, everyone who was aware of the political situation in the Third Reich could foresee that the situation was likely to escalate. The first signs were already visible to all (the speeches of Hitler, the *Anschluss* of Austria, the occupation of Poland), although probably few people expected the course of events to run as it did. No one would have guessed that the war would be terminated at the other end of the globe, or that the war would end by the dropping of two atom bombs on two Japanese cities. John's situation is comparable. He writes, so to speak, from the historical perspective of 1939, not from that of 1945. Of course, reading the book from a later perspective is intriguing, but reading later knowledge back into the text does no justice to the historical setting of the book.



## HOW ANTICHRIST DEFEATED DEATH: THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN APOCALYPTIC ESCHATOLOGY IN THE EARLY CHURCH

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In many of his publications Martinus C. de Boer has argued that Paul should be understood as an apocalyptic thinker.<sup>1</sup> Especially in his dissertation and his contribution to the *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, de Boer has given an analysis of Paul from the perspective of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology. It is in the latter that he rightly states: “Paul’s apocalyptic eschatology, like that of Revelation, is thus as much a matter of a *past* event (the resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah) as of an event still to occur (the *parousia*).”<sup>2</sup> A comparison with the Book of Revelation is important, since it brings together two authors who are both apparently rooted in Jewish apocalypticism, and sheds light on the particular interpretation of apocalyptic eschatology offered by the emerging Christ movement. Paul’s description of the eschatological scenario in 1 Cor 15 belongs to the oldest stratum of Christian eschatological texts, but, as will be argued below, it was overtaken by other scenarios in the early Church.

This contribution, offered to Martin de Boer as a token of friendship on the occasion of his retirement, intends to compare the messianic reign as depicted by Paul in 1 Cor 15 with that described in Rev 20:1–6, and describe the development of these two scenarios in the second and third centuries. The most important difference between the two scenarios is immediately clear: in 1 Cor 15 the focus is on the present state of Paul and the believers, whereas the seer John refers to a future event or period. This essay can be read as an attempt to further illustrate the point made by de Boer, that Paul was indeed rooted in Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, and depict the way in which Paul found his way into the eschatology of the Church fathers.

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. de Boer, *The Defeat of Death: Apocalyptic Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5* (JSNTSup 22; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988); his inaugural address *De apocalyptiscus Paulus* (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1998); “Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* (ed. John J. Collins; New York: Continuum, 1998), 1:345–83; and also excursus 2 in *Galatians: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 31–36.

<sup>2</sup> De Boer, “Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” 355, italics original.

The structure of this essay is as follows. In the first section de Boer's analysis of apocalyptic eschatology will be summarized. In the next two sections, the scenarios depicted in 1 Cor 15 and the Book of Revelation will be looked into. And subsequently, a slant within the development of early Christian eschatology will be studied by looking at a number of key authors from the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Here it will become clear that originally distinct scenarios of the final period of history gradually merged into a harmonization of texts in the period under consideration, a development in which 1 Cor 15 gave way to 2 Thess 2, and death was ultimately defeated by Antichrist.

### 1. *Paul and Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology*

Already in his dissertation, de Boer argued that there were two different "tracks" in Jewish apocalyptic eschatology. In his analysis, we have to distinguish between a cosmological track and a forensic one.<sup>3</sup> Since this is an important point that recurs in his later work, it is worth the effort to look into the distinction.

In the cosmological track of apocalyptic eschatology, the world is seen as dominated by two different aeons. These aeons can best be defined as cosmic spheres, but they also coincide with "the present world" and "the world to come." Various Jewish sources describe how the "present, evil age" has come about in the early stages of history, because of a super-human transgression. The myth of the Watchers is perhaps the clearest example of how a transgression has been committed against the divinely ordained order of creation. The state of corruption that thereby entered into the world coincides with the evil sphere of the old aeon. The ideal world, one of justice, peace, and righteousness, is already present, but as a heavenly one. Eschatological scenarios of this type depict the coming of this world, under direct rule of God himself, as e.g. the advent of the Kingdom of God. Usually, the arrival of the new aeon is described as a cosmic event.

The second form of apocalyptic eschatology, according to de Boer, makes use of forensic language and imagery rather than of cosmic ideas. Here, the idea is that God has given free will to humankind and human beings have the opportunity either to conform to God's wishes or to neglect them. In Jewish apocalyptic eschatology it is the Mosaic law that functions as the instrument by means of which God communicates His will to hu-

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<sup>3</sup> De Boer, *Defeat*, 39–91.

man beings. Therefore, adherence to the law is decisive with regard to the question whether or not people act according to God's will.

In the letters of Paul the two forms of apocalyptic eschatology can both be found. There are several passages where Paul clearly speaks about the cosmological implications of God's ultimate intervention in history. Paul describes the past dimension of the Christ event as having ushered in cosmological changes. The *στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου* of Gal 4:3 probably refer to "fundamental principles," the "basic elements from which the world is made and of which it is composed."<sup>4</sup> As for the future dimension of the Christ event: Paul describes the *parousia* as an event of cosmic importance, too. At the same time, Paul uses language from the domain of the forensic form of apocalyptic eschatology. His emphasis on *δικαιούσθαι* and cognate terms, especially in Romans, should be seen against this background.

Where de Boer distinguishes these two slants in Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, it is clear that the two are intertwined in Paul's eschatological views. Here, it becomes important to make a comparison of Paul's view of the reign of Christ as God's ultimate envoy, described in 1 Cor 15, and the eschatological scenario of the Book of Revelation. As it seems, both Paul and the seer John were thoroughly influenced by Jewish apocalyptic ideas. In both cases, the cosmological and the forensic forms of eschatology are combined into a scenario in which the confession of Jesus as the Messiah defines the expectation retrospectively as "Christian." Since the two scenarios of 1 Cor 15 and Rev 20 should be seen as literarily independent from one another, a comparison between the two may shed light on the extent to which Paul should be considered either a loner or an author whose apocalyptic roots connect him to other parts of the Christ movement. This comparison will also prove important for understanding the position of these two distinct scenarios in later Christian sources.

The most important difference between 1 Cor 15:24 and Rev 20:1–6 is immediately clear. In 1 Cor 15:24 the rule of Christ is seen as a present one which will last until the defeat of the final enemy (death). Rev 20 describes Christ's reign as a future state that will come about after the first defeat of the enemy powers. And yet there are also similarities: in both cases Christ is depicted as a ruler, and there is an assault of enemy powers, which ultimately results in their own defeat, and in 1 Cor 15 death is the last enemy, whereas in Rev 20 death is one of the last enemies. In what follows, first

<sup>4</sup> See de Boer, "The Meaning of the Phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Galatians," *NTS* 53 (2007): 204–224; and idem, *Galatians*, 252–56 ("Excursus 13: 'The Elements of the World' in Galatians").

the scenario of 1 Cor 15 will be discussed, and next that of Rev 20 will be looked into. The remainder of this contribution will then focus on the way in which these scenarios were incorporated into later Christian reflections on the final period of history.

## 2. 1 Cor 15:24 and the Reign of Christ

The rhetorical context in which Paul describes the eschatological scenario of 1 Cor 15 is that of the discussion of the resurrection of the dead. Apparently, certain members of the Corinthian congregation had their doubts about the idea of a bodily resurrection, and Paul apparently wants to instruct them on this. In his argument Paul links the idea of the past resurrection of Christ—which, he assumes, was believed in by the Corinthians—to the future *parousia* and the general, bodily resurrection at the Last Judgment.<sup>5</sup>

In the whole of chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians, Paul argues in favor of the belief in the eschatological resurrection. The argument is carefully crafted: vv. 1–11 refer to the traditional confession of Christ's resurrection from the dead, and Paul continues his argument in vv. 12–20 by linking the past and individual resurrection of Jesus to the expectation of a future, collective resurrection at the *parousia*. In this particular passage, Paul argues from the *qal wachomer* principle: “if this particular case is true, then the general case must be at least as valid.” In vv. 21–28 Paul describes the relationship between the individual resurrection of Christ and the expected resurrection of the many in an eschatological scenario, which he obviously intends the Corinthians to share with him. In vv. 29–34 Paul adds a rhetorical objection to his thesis, to wrap up his argument in vv. 35–49 with an exposition on how exactly the dead will be raised and what will happen at the *parousia*. The summary conclusion to his point follows in vv. 50–57, where Paul describes how “flesh and blood” will not be able to “inherit the kingdom,” but will be “changed.” Paul puts this description in traditional terms, and here brings together the various lines of his argument. The final sentence (v. 58) is an instruction addressed to the Corinthians on the need to stick to the faith that Paul has described.

<sup>5</sup> For this distinction, see the analysis by Joost Holleman, *Resurrection and Parousia: A Traditio-Historical Study of Paul's Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15* (SNT 74; Leiden etc.: Brill 1996), e.g. 42–3: “Although Paul does not explicitly state in verse 13 that the resurrection connected to Jesus' resurrection (*ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν*) is the resurrection at the end of time, it is abundantly clear from Paul's whole argumentation that he is speaking about the future, eschatological resurrection.”

As Joost Holleman has argued, Paul apparently links two different conceptions of resurrection to each other in this chapter. The one is that of the individual resurrection of the righteous martyr, in the case of Jesus an event from the past. The other is the collective, eschatological resurrection that was one of the ideas held in early Judaism about the ultimate intervention of God in history and that Paul considered a future event. Paul is able to link these two, distinct events by interpreting the resurrection of Christ as the “first fruits” (ἀπαρχή), the start of the harvest. This brilliant metaphor points out how the temporal difference between the individual, martyrological resurrection of Christ and the collective, eschatological resurrection is to be understood: with Christ, the harvest has already begun! Since the image of the harvest is a traditional image for the final intervention of God in history,<sup>6</sup> the interpretation of Christ’s resurrection as the first fruits encapsulates this event in the idea of the final, eschatological resurrection.

The temporal distance between the past resurrection of Christ and the expected future resurrection of the believers leads to a question: how should the present “in between” state, in which the final intervention of God has already begun, although it has not yet been completed, be interpreted? It is this particular question that Paul addresses in the pericope of vv. 20–28. For the understanding of Paul’s argument in 1 Cor 15 it is important to analyse the scenario Paul gives in this particular section. First, an analysis of the rhetoric of this section will have to be made, and next the question will be addressed how Paul uses traditional elements here.

In v. 20 Paul repeats the assertion of the preceding lines—this is clear from the opening words, *ὡνὶ δὲ κτλ.*—and poses this as the point of departure for the next step in his argument. It is here that Paul introduces the image of the ἀπαρχή, and links the Christ event to Adam by stating that as death has come into the world “through a person” (δι’ ἀνθρώπου), the resurrection has come about “through a person as well” (καὶ δι’ ἀνθρώπου). The rhetorical move that Paul makes here is that he interprets the resurrection of Christ as the beginning of the collective resurrection of the dead, thereby mirroring the meaning of Christ and that of Adam. The collective impact of the sin of Adam, which caused death, is put on the same level as the collective impact of Christ, the alleged effect of which is, of course, a future event (v. 22). Vv. 23–24 describe the τάγμα, order, of the events Paul

<sup>6</sup> Horst Balz, Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1990 [orig. 1978–1983]), s.v. ἀπαρχή. For the development of the idea of Christ’s resurrection as the “first-fruits,” see Holleman, *Resurrection and Parousia*, 133–8.

mentions: first Christ, then those who belong to Christ (οἱ τοῦ χριστοῦ), and then finally the end (τὸ τέλος).

An interesting detail with regard to the reconstruction of Pauline eschatology is the mention of what will happen at the end. Paul describes the end as: ὅταν παραδιδῶ τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί, ὅταν καταργήσῃ πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναμιν. Apparently, the two clauses are meant as parallel descriptions of the same moment, and the implicit assumption is that Christ will reign until that moment, when he will have defeated all opposing forces, and hands over his rule to God the father. The use of the verb βασιλεύω here is telling: for Paul, Jesus is the Lord, whose role consists of ‘ruling’ on behalf of God.

The confession of Jesus as Lord (κύριος) is a traditional element in Paul’s letters, and one of the first—probably: pre-Pauline—references to Jesus Christ as Lord is found in the hymn of Phil 2:6–11.<sup>7</sup> This so-called “Christ hymn” indicates that the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord has to be situated in the oldest layers of the Christ movement. In this particular text, the final lines also contain the idea of a heavenly rule by Christ (vv. 10–11). The observation that the risen Christ was perceived as a heavenly ruler already in the earliest stages of the Christ movement is further underlined by the Aramaic confession formula “Maranatha” in 1 Cor 16:22. Obviously, Aramaic speaking followers of Christ saw him as their ܡܪܝܢ, their “Lord.”<sup>8</sup> The confession of Christ as the Lord who rules from heaven obviously goes back to the very beginnings of the Christ movement. Paul’s remark in the passage under discussion about Christ’s activity as βασιλεύειν should be seen in this context.<sup>9</sup>

It is remarkable that Paul often refers to Christ as the κύριος, but hardly uses the verb κυριεύω. The notable exception is Rom 14:9, where Paul speaks about Christ’s death and resurrection as resulting in his reign: εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἔζησεν, ἵνα καὶ νεκρῶν καὶ ζώντων κυριεύσῃ. Given the argument Paul makes in 14:1–9, the “reign” of which Paul speaks here should be seen as already effectuated in the present.<sup>10</sup> Paul does not

<sup>7</sup> See Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte, “The Name above All Names (Philippians 2:9),” in *The Revelation of the Name of YHWH to Moses: Perspectives from Judaism, the Pagan Graeco-Roman World, and Early Christianity* (ed. George H. van Kooten; TBN 9; Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006), 187–206.

<sup>8</sup> Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003), esp. 111.

<sup>9</sup> The verbs κυριεύω and βασιλεύω belong to the same semantic domain, as do the nouns κύριος and βάσιλευς. See Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1 (New York: UBS, 1988), 478–83.

<sup>10</sup> See Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 115, esp. n. 87.

speak of a future reign by Christ, but instead describes the present context of the believers.

Turning back to the situation in 1 Cor 15:24, we may now conclude that the eschatological scenario Paul must have had in mind is this. God has intervened in human history by sending his Son at the turning point of the ages (Gal 4:4). By his death and resurrection Jesus Christ has been inaugurated as the heavenly Lord, who rules on behalf of God. This rule will continue until all enemies have been defeated, and when death will be overcome, he will hand over his rule (*βασιλεία*) to God.

It seems as though the idea of the heavenly rule of Christ is an adaptation of an earlier Jewish expectation, viz. that the Anointed One would reign over Israel and cast out all its enemies. The text in which this idea is stated most prominently is, no doubt, *Psalms of Solomon* 17. In *Ps. Sol.* 17:21 “Solomon” prays to God that He may raise up a “Son of David” to rule as king over Israel. It is clear that this king is seen as an earthly ruler, who will pass judgment on unrighteous rulers and cast the Gentiles out of Israel (17:22!). One of the things that this king is supposed to do is ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ συσθρήψαι πᾶσαν ὑπόστασιν αὐτῶν. Here, the reference to Ps 2:9 is evident. The shattering of enemies with a rod of iron would later be used in the Book of Revelation as a standard reference to the Messiah (see Rev 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). As *Ps. Sol.* 17 proves, there was a line of thought in Israel of those who hoped for a real king to cast out Israel’s enemies and inaugurate a messianic reign. This messianic reign was clearly thought of as an earthly reign, in which God’s commandments would be used as the ultimate guide for life.

Paul’s use of the term *βασιλεία* for Christ’s rule in 1 Cor 15:24 is remarkable. Elsewhere, he only speaks of the *βασιλεία* (τοῦ) θεοῦ.<sup>11</sup> The later, Ephesian Paul combines the two ideas, viz. that of the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of God, and speaks of the *βασιλεία τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ* (Eph 5:5). It is clear that Paul’s use of the term *βασιλεία* in 15:24 refers to the present rule of Christ as the heavenly *κύριος*. It is also clear that this rule will be terminated by the defeat of the final opponent, death. Paul’s words here imply that the reign of Christ was inaugurated at the moment of his resurrection. Apparently, Paul thinks here of a fixed period of a messianic interregnum — the period between resurrection and *parousia*. Within this scenario, Christ will hand back his authority to God himself at the moment the forces of evil have suffered their final defeat. For Paul, this moment coincides with the defeat of death. It is important to see that the Book

<sup>11</sup> Rom 14:7; 1 Cor 4:20; 6:9; 15:50; Gal 5:21 (1 Thess 2:12).

of Revelation describes something similar, though in very different terms. Let us turn to the messianic reign as depicted in Rev 20 and search for the agreements and differences.

### 3. *The Messianic Reign in the Book of Revelation*

In his *Defeat of Death* de Boer compares the two scenarios of 1 Corinthians and Revelation with each other.<sup>12</sup> In this comparison the conclusion is, that — with the exception of the thousand-year reign — “the similarities between Revelation’s scenario of events and that found in 1 Cor 15:20–28 is patent.”<sup>13</sup>

It is indeed important to notice the differences between Paul’s idea of a messianic interregnum and the thousand-year reign depicted in Rev 20. The first and most important difference is that Paul’s characterization of Christ’s rule as a βασιλεία points at the present situation, whereas Rev 20 refers to a future state of being. Within the framework of the book of Revelation as a whole, verses 1–6 of chapter 20 clearly describe a future event. Chapter 17 describes the city of Rome in symbolic terms as the Whore Babylon, and the book continues with the verdict over this city in chapter 18. One of the crucial points for understanding the book as a whole is the phenomenon that events in heaven prefigure and influence events on earth. The fall of the Devil from heaven, for instance, as described in 12:7–11, has a double result. On the one hand, the power of the Devil is broken in heaven. On the other hand, and exactly because of this, the Devil rages on earth against the followers of Christ. In similar fashion the author depicts the defeat of Babylon in 18:2: ἔπεσεν, ἔπεσεν, Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη. The past tense of the aorist refers to the fact that John describes the fall of Babylon as part of a vision that he has seen in the past. For him, this vision of the past signifies as a heavenly reality in his present. On earth, however, this event has not yet taken place.<sup>14</sup> The description of the ultimate battle of Jesus against the evil powers is given in 19:11–21. This battle is evidently seen as a future event, in which the Beast and the False Prophet are captured and defeated, to be cast in a pool of sulphur (19:20). After this battle, the Devil will be caught by an angel (20:2), and the chaining of the Devil inaugurates the thousand-year reign of the Messiah (20:1–6). The language

<sup>12</sup> De Boer, *Defeat*, 134–35.

<sup>13</sup> De Boer, *Defeat*, 135.

<sup>14</sup> See the analysis of the heavenly and earthly settings in the book of Revelation by Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 64.



in which the defeat of death is put, differs from 1 Cor 15, and death is not explicitly mentioned as an enemy, but the description in Rev 20:14 does imply that this final defeat of the enemy powers also comprises the defeat of death.

Interestingly enough, the eschatological scenario here distinguishes between the resurrection of the martyrs and the general resurrection at the end of history. It is the martyrs who will take part in Christ's thousand-year reign (ἔζησαν καὶ ἐβασίλευσαν μετὰ τοῦ χριστοῦ χίλια ἔτη), and the author explicitly states that no others will come to life at this point (v. 5). So the resurrection of the martyrs is presented as the 'first resurrection' (v. 5), and they will reign together with the Messiah.<sup>15</sup>

Notwithstanding the many differences between 1 Cor 15 and Rev 20 there are a number of important similarities. First, there is the idea that Christ/the Messiah will "reign" on behalf of God until the final victory over all enemy powers will be accomplished. Second, Christ/the Messiah will share this reign with a number of his followers, i.e. the martyrs who have lost their lives on his behalf. Third, these martyrs are thought to have a share in a special resurrection, that is restricted only to them. This last point is also found in Paul, who interprets Jesus' resurrection as the resurrection of a martyr, and can also speak of his own fate as that of a potential martyr who will then "be with Christ" (Phil 1:23). Compared to the situation depicted in 1 Cor 15, the resurrection of the martyrs in Rev 20:4 is slightly different: here, their resurrection is not seen as an individual fate, but as a collective event.

The fact that the thousand-year reign of Christ and the martyrs is presented here as a future event raises the question what their status in the present is supposed to be. Here, it seems that the martyrs are considered as living in heaven with Christ, a view that coheres with what we find in 1 Cor 15. In the opening of his series of visions John describes the heavenly throne of God surrounded by twenty-four elders on their thrones (4:4). In front of the throne of God dwell his seven spirits (4:5), and surrounding it are the four creatures who eternally praise God with the *sanctus, sanctus, sanctus* (4:7–8). Chapter 5 introduces Christ as the Lion of Judah (5:5), the Lamb (5:6–7). It is also clear that the realm of the heavens is full of angels, but where are the souls of the martyrs? In 6:9 they are mentioned as staying underneath the altar of God, a description that clearly locates them in

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<sup>15</sup> The use of the article in μετὰ τοῦ χριστοῦ seems to indicate that χριστός here is not used as a name, but as a reference to either "the Anointed One" or "the Messiah"; see David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22* (Word Biblical Commentary 52C; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 1090.

heaven. In consequence, the situation depicted in the Book of Revelation is that the souls of the martyrs are received in heaven immediately after they have died, and they will come back to an earthly state of life when the millennium will be inaugurated. All in all, this means that the situation in the Book of Revelation is not so very different from what Paul describes in 1 Cor 15, with the exception that in the scenario of Revelation the present rule of Christ is restricted to the heavens. The millennial rule of Christ will be a rule of heaven *and* earth.

#### 4. *Christian Eschatology in the Second and Third Centuries*

In the development of Christian eschatology in the second and third centuries, the two different conceptions of the messianic reign found in 1 Corinthians and the Book of Revelation are both recognizably present. As will become clear, however, the importance of 1 Cor 15 and Rev 20 soon dwindles as time passes, and in the end a more or less coherent eschatological legend concerning Antichrist and the end of time takes precedence, based especially on the combination of the Book of Revelation and 2 Thess 2.<sup>16</sup>

##### 4.1. *Justin Martyr*

Thus, Justin Martyr († ca. 165) is the first witness who explicitly describes a chiliastic scenario in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, usually dated to the middle of the second century. Whereas the name of Christ is mentioned in ch. 30 as a means to ward off demons—Christ is the true ruler, whose power is greater than theirs!—it is in chapters 80–81 that Justin describes the eschatological scenario. In ch. 80 Trypho asks Justin: “But tell me, do you really admit that this place, Jerusalem, shall be rebuilt; and do you expect your people to be gathered together, and made joyful with Christ and the patriarchs, and the prophets, both the men of our nation, and other proselytes who joined them before your Christ came? (80:1)” In Justin’s answer he refers to the scenario depicted in the Book of Revelation, though without mentioning the work. Instead, Justin refers to the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah: “But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand

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<sup>16</sup> Translations have been taken from the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* collection: *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 1885–1887, 10 vols. Reprint Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994. Reprint and digital versions of the American edition are available online in the *Christian Classics Ethereal Library* ([www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org)). The survey given in this essay is eclectic, but does cover the general picture.

years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare” (80:5).

In the next chapter, Justin explicitly refers to the Book of Revelation by describing that its author, “John, one of the apostles of Christ,” had prophesied that Christ should rule over his followers in Jerusalem for a period of a thousand years. After this period, the general resurrection is expected to happen.

In his analysis of Justin’s chiliastic ideas, Stefan Heid argues that Justin formed his ideas more on the basis of apocalyptic Jewish traditions than the Book of Revelation.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, there is a point to the fact that Jerusalem is not mentioned in Rev 20:1–6 as the place where Christ shall rule, but the sequence of events described by Justin Martyr does agree to such an extent, that it is likely that this point was added to the vision of Revelation on the basis of traditions from the prophets of the Hebrew Bible. The footnote in the translation of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* is probably correct in calling Justin’s description of the millennium “a primitive exposition of Rev. XX.4–5.”<sup>18</sup>

One element from Justin’s description is particularly important as background to the concept of a thousand-year reign. Justin here quotes a saying that may go back to Ps 89(90):4, that “the Day of the Lord is as a thousand years.” The LXX text of this psalm is quite different from the phrase quoted by Justin (χίλια ἔτη ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς σου ὡς ἡ ἡμέρα ἢ ἐχθές ἤτις διήλθεν, whereas Justin writes ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς χίλια ἔτη).<sup>19</sup> Justin’s version is rather closer to the words of 2 Pet 3:8: μία ἡμέρα παρά κυρίῳ ὡς χίλια ἔτη καὶ χίλια ἔτη ὡς ἡμέρα μία. The choice of the words ἡμέρα κυρίου gives an explicit eschatological overtone to these words. Since Justin refers to the expression not as a direct quote but as a saying (τὸ εἰρημένον), it seems that we here encounter an already in his day traditional interpretation of the eschatological intervention of the Lord in terms of Ps 89(90):4, comparable to what we find in 2 Pet 3:8.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Stefan Heid, *Chiliasmus und Antichrist-Mythos: Eine frühchristliche Kontroverses um das Heilige Land* (Hereditas 6; Bonn: Borengässer, 993), esp. 20–22 (also 40!). See also Leslie W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 166.

<sup>18</sup> *ANF* 1:240, n. 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Die ältesten Apologeten: Texte mit kurzen Einleitungen* (ed. Edgar J. Goodspeed; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1914), 193. Also *Justin Martyr: Dialogue avec Tryphon—Edition critique, traduction, commentaire* (ed. Philippe Bobichon; Paradosis 47/1; Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2003), 408. The saying quoted here by Justin is also found in e.g. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.23.2; 28.3.

<sup>20</sup> It is unclear whether 2 Peter pre- or postdates Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho*.

#### 4.2. *Irenaeus*

Irenaeus of Lyons<sup>21</sup> is the first Christian author to mention the figure of Antichrist in a coherent eschatological scenario. He combines the various scriptural passages on God's, or rather: Christ's, ultimate intervention in history and harmonizes the often quite different scenarios found in these passages into one more or less consistent eschatological scenario.<sup>22</sup>

In *Haer.* 3.23 Irenaeus argues against Tatian that the salvation granted by God through Christ also includes the first Adam. Irenaeus quotes from Ps 90(91):13, saying that this is "indicating that sin, which was set up and spread out against man, and which rendered him subject to death, should be deprived of its power, along with death, which rules [over men]; and that the lion, that is, Antichrist, rampant against mankind in the latter days, should be trampled down by Him; and that He should bind 'the dragon, that old serpent' (Rev 20:3!) and subject him to the power of man, who had been conquered so that all his might should be trodden down" (3.23.7). The argument continues with a reference to 1 Cor 15: "Now Adam had been conquered, all life having been taken away from him: wherefore, when the foe was conquered in his turn, Adam received new life; and the last enemy, death, is destroyed, which at the first had taken possession of man. Therefore, when man has been liberated, 'what is written shall come to pass, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting?' (3.23.7)." Remarkably enough, Irenaeus transposes the defeat of death from the final, future victory of Christ back in time and uses this theme as an interpretation of the effect of Christ's own resurrection.

Over against attempts of several scholars to put the final chapters of *Haer.* 5 aside as a later insertion, Heid argues correctly that they belong to the core of Irenaeus' ideas.<sup>23</sup> These chapters discuss the millennial reign of Christ as a future, eschatological reign more or less along the lines of

<sup>21</sup> On Irenaeus' ideas on chiliasm, see Heid, *Chiliasmus*, 86.

<sup>22</sup> The passages discussed here are presented in an Italian translation, with comments, in Gian Luca Potestà, Marco Rizzi, *L'Anticristo: Il nemico dei tempi finali*, vol. 1 (Milan: Mondadori, 2005). The edition used is that of Norbert Brox: *Irenäus von Lyon: Adversus Haereses / Gegen die Häresien* (5 vols.; Fontes Christiani; Freiburg, etc.: Herder, 1993–2001). On Irenaeus' eschatological ideas, see esp. Antonio Orbe, "San Ireneo y el régimen del milenio," in: *Eschatology in Christianity and Other Religions* (ed. Mariasusai Dhavamony et al.; Studia Missionalia; Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1983), 345–72; Dominique Bertrand, "L'eschatologie de saint Irénée," *Théophilyon* 16 (2011): 113–48. See also the remark by Brox, *Adversus Haereses*, 12: "Irenäus lässt den Herrn chiliastisch reden, wie man sieht, und seine Leser in ein Milieu blicken, das (...) apokalyptisch endzeitlich orientiert ist, nicht historisch."

<sup>23</sup> Survey and argument in Heid, *Chiliasmus*, 86: "der Chiliasmus bildet einen integralen Bestandteil und geradezu die Krönung der irenäischen Theologie."

Rev 20. In a long exposition Irenaeus describes the eschatological scenario, compiling it—no doubt—from the various sources he had at his disposal. This scenario follows on from that described in cc. 24–30, where Irenaeus describes Antichrist as the final enemy to be defeated in the eschatological battle. The move he makes is clear: the moment of death's defeat changes from an event in the future (1 Cor 15) to a moment in the past, viz. the resurrection of Christ, and Antichrist is inserted into the eschatological scenario as the final enemy. One of the proof texts mentioned here is the description of the Ungodly One of 2 Thess 2:1–12, a text that is read by Irenaeus as stemming from the apostle Paul himself. Here the process can be observed how in the early church pseudo-Paul has overtaken the real Paul if it comes to Christianity's expectation of the end.

In 5:34 Irenaeus describes the “first resurrection” in terms of, among other texts, Isa 26:19, Ezek 37–38, Jer 23:6–7, Isa 30:25–26, but also Dan 7:27 and 12:13. Irenaeus links all these prophetic verses to Luke 12:37–38, and then adds “Again John also says the very same in the Apocalypse: ‘Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection.’” Here, too, Irenaeus clearly offers a systematic harmonization of the eschatological predictions in the Old Testament and in the writings of the apostles.<sup>24</sup>

#### 4.3. *Tertullian*

Tertullian refers to the millennial reign of Christ most explicitly in *Marc.* 3.24.2. Here, he remarks that he has dealt with the issue at length in his *De Spe Fidelium*, but unfortunately this work has not been preserved. In a remarkable move, Tertullian depicts his expectation of the thousand-year reign in a combination of apostolic images. He combines the scenarios of Rev 20:1–10 and 21:2 with Paul's remark on the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal 4:26), his idea on the heavenly citizenship of the followers of Christ (Phil 3:20), and the prophecies of Ezekiel (probably 48:30–35): “But we do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth, although before heaven, only in another state of existence; inasmuch as it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years in the divinely-built city of Jerusalem, ‘let down from heaven,’ which the apostle also calls ‘our mother from above;’ and, while declaring that our *πολίτευμα*, or citizenship, is in heaven, he predicates of it that it is really a city in heaven. This both Ezekiel had knowledge of and the Apostle John beheld.”<sup>25</sup> Tertullian expects this

<sup>24</sup> The “New Testament” as a literary corpus was obviously not yet in existence in Irenaeus' day, though he does use the term (see *Haer.* 1.38.2; 34.1).

<sup>25</sup> Translation *ANF*.

earthly rule of the Saints as taking place in a walled city, that is fenced off from the outside world.<sup>26</sup>

In his treatise on the resurrection, Tertullian does not explicitly mention the messianic reign. He does present Antichrist as the one final opponent to be overthrown, and in *Res.* 24 he interprets 2 Thess 2:3–7 as Paul's description of Antichrist: " ... 'For that day shall not come, unless indeed there first come a falling away,' he means indeed of this present empire, 'and that man of sin be revealed,' that is to say, Antichrist, 'the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or religion; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, affirming that he is God. Remember ye not, that when I was with you, I used to tell you these things? And now ye know what detaineth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now hinders must hinder, until he be taken out of the way.' What obstacle is there but the Roman state, the falling away of which, by being scattered into ten kingdoms, shall introduce Antichrist upon (its own ruins)?"

Tertullian interprets the enigmatic *κατέχων* or *κατέχων* mentioned by "Paul" in 2 Thess 2:6–7 as an encrypted reference to the Roman empire.<sup>27</sup> It is clear that he prefers 2 Thess 2 as Paul's description of the eschatological scenario over 1 Cor 15. The final enemy, to be defeated at the *parousia* of Christ is Antichrist, and not death. This observation is underlined by the following chapter (ch. 25) in the same treatise, where Tertullian discusses the prophecies by John, described in the Book of Revelation.

#### 4.4. Hippolytus

In Hippolytus of Rome's work on Christ and Antichrist, the latter is ultimately enthroned as the final eschatological opponent of Christ, the one whose defeat shall usher in the period of eschatological bliss.<sup>28</sup> Hippolytus is a disciple of Irenaeus of Lyons, and continues in his tradition.<sup>29</sup> The main focus for him is on the interpretation of Scripture, and Hippolytus combines the writings of the Old Testament with those of the apostolic age, considering them both authoritative. It is especially noteworthy that

<sup>26</sup> Heid, *Chiliasmus*, 111.

<sup>27</sup> On this and alternative interpretations, see Paul Metzger, *Katechon: II Thess 2,1–12 im Horizont apokalyptischen Denkens* (BZNW 135; Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> Hippolytus, *De antichristo*, should most likely be dated to 202/203 CE. The work is probably intended as an instruction for catechetical purposes and addresses an eastern bishop, Theophilus of Antioch or Caesarea. For further details, see John A. Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West: The Commentaries and the Provenance of the Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 147–57.

<sup>29</sup> See Heid, *Chiliasmus*, 125–34.

Hippolytus sees a continuum between the work of the prophets of Israel, especially Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, and the apostles.

In his treatise *De antichristo* Hippolytus gives a detailed analysis of the eschatological period.<sup>30</sup> In it, he discusses the various references he can find to Antichrist and the eschatological period, and combines the many texts from prophetic and apostolic writings into one harmonized scenario. It is obvious that Hippolytus reads the texts he refers to as reflecting one and the same expectation, and in this expectation the final enemy, once again, is not death, but Antichrist. It is especially the Book of Daniel that plays an important role in Hippolytus' treatise. In a sense, Hippolytus moves decisively past Irenaeus: where the latter combined various traditions on eschatological opponents into a description of Antichrist, the former tries to unite every single reference he can find in the holy Scriptures. In doing so, Hippolytus gives the first and most important coherent description of Antichrist in the early Church. It is his description that would set the boundaries for Christian speculations on eschatology and Antichrist for centuries to come.

In chapters 63–65 of the treatise Hippolytus combines the description found in 2 Thess 2:1–12, a passage he quotes at length, with verses from several other biblical sources.<sup>31</sup> When Hippolytus finally comes to discuss the “resurrection of the righteous” (ch. 66), he refers to the apostle Paul's argument in 1 Thess 4:13–17. Remarkably enough, he does not even mention the point made in 1 Cor 15, and neither does he refer to the millennium here. It seems that the development has proceeded a decisive step beyond Irenaeus: the Antichrist legend has firmly taken root and it is this legend that defines the eschatological scenario.

In his commentary on Daniel Hippolytus describes how the fourth empire predicted by the prophet will eventually usher in the final period of history.<sup>32</sup> It is remarkable to see how in this particular commentary Hippolytus occasionally uses the Book of Revelation to make sense of the prophecies of Daniel. In *Comm. Dan.* 4.23 he explains that when Christ was born, 5,500 years had passed since the creation of the world. The whole of human history, Hippolytus assumed, would last for 6,000 years, and after that period, a 1,000 year reign has to be assumed: an eschatological Sab-

<sup>30</sup> For further details, see the introduction to the edition by Enrico Norelli, *Ippolito: L'Anticristo. De Antichristo* (Firenze: Nardini, 1987), esp. 35–42.

<sup>31</sup> The quoted are: Isa 26:10; Dan 9:27; Luke 21:28, 18; Matt 24:27, 31; Ps 19:7; Isa 26:20; Rom 1:18; Dan 12:2; Isa 26:19; John 5:25; Eph 5:14; Rev 20:6, 14; Matt 13:43; 25:34, 41; Rev 22:15; 21:8; Isa 66:24. They are put in Hippolytus' order.

<sup>32</sup> For the text, see *Hippolyt Werke 1.1: Kommentar zu Daniel* (ed. Georg Nathanael Bonwetsch and Marcel Richard; GCS, neue Folge 7; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000).

bath. Remarkably enough, Hippolytus does not describe this millennial reign explicitly. It appears that Hippolytus here opts for a spiritualized version of the millennium, thereby departing from Irenaeus' trail.<sup>33</sup>

All in all, Hippolytus' work signifies the next stage in the development of what was to become orthodox Christian eschatology. Exegetically, Hippolytus moves beyond his precursors by interpreting the many texts he treats from the perspective of a harmonistic Antichrist legend, and both 1 Cor 15 and Rev 20 appear to be downplayed in his scenario.<sup>34</sup> Paul's ideas in 1 Cor 15 are overruled by what is regarded as an authentic prophecy of Paul, the description of the Ungodly One in 2 Thess 2, who is understood to coincide with Antichrist. The chiliastic scenario of Rev 20 may have caused problems for Hippolytus, and it may be that it is because of the sensitive nature of this particular expectation that he refrains from taking an explicit stand in this matter.

#### 4.5. *Later sources*

In the third century, traces of Antichrist and the millennium can be found in the works of numerous authors. Some of those, such as Origen and Cyprian, try to dispose of the eschatological scenario in which these two elements occur. Other authors, however, continue the line of speculation we have found in the works discussed above.<sup>35</sup>

An apocalypse of unclear date and provenance, in which both the advent of Antichrist and the millennium are described, is the *Apocalypse of Elijah*.<sup>36</sup> According to David Frankfurter's careful reconstruction, the writing should be dated to the second half of the third century. In this particular text, the eschatological scenario is depicted in a way that betrays influence of both biblical traditions and local, Egyptian speculations. The way in which Antichrist is described shows that this text stands in a longer tradition of eschatological speculation in which Antichrist has become

<sup>33</sup> See Heid, *Chiliasmus*, 126–27; Cerrato, *Hippolytus*, 247–48.

<sup>34</sup> For a detailed description of Hippolytus' scenario, see Cerrato, *Hippolytus*, 236–49. See also Alberto D'Anna, "Escatologia e scrittura in Ippolito. Speculazioni cronologiche, antiromanismo, anti giudaismo," in *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 16/1: *La fine dei tempi* (1999), 179–96.

<sup>35</sup> Three authors whose work would have deserved some special interest here, if it had not been for reasons of space and time, are Lactantius, Victorinus of Pettau, and Commodianus.

<sup>36</sup> Introduction and translation by Orval S. Wintermute, in: James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Vol. 1 Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 721–53. A more recent introduction, with edition and translation is given by David Frankfurter, *Elijah in Upper Egypt: The Apocalypse of Elijah and Early Egyptian Christianity* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).



the ultimate eschatological opponent. It is also quite remarkable that the description in the *Apocalypse of Elijah* ends with the arrival of the millennium, in which Rev 20 is followed and summarized in brief: "On that day, the Christ, the king, and all his saints will come forth from heaven. He will burn the earth. He will spend a thousand years upon it. Because the sinners prevailed over it, he will create a new heaven and a new earth. No deadly devil will exist in them. He will rule with the saints, ascending and descending, while they are always with the angels and they are with the Christ for a thousand years." And with this the work ends. Here, as in so many other texts in the early Church, the Pauline scenario that is combined with Rev 20 is not that of 1 Cor 15, but the one found in 2 Thess 2. The Ungodly One depicted there is interpreted as Antichrist, and he is the one who is to be defeated before the millennial reign of Christ can start. In the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, the millennium even seems to be the final chapter in the book of history.

### *Conclusion*

In the above, the transition of Jewish to Christian apocalyptic eschatology was studied by looking at what happened to the scenarios mentioned in 1 Cor 15 and Rev 20. It was argued that both these chapters are firmly rooted in Jewish soil. The analysis of Martin de Boer, viz. that there were two forms of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, led to the observation that both Paul and the presbyter John described an eschatological scenario that primarily belongs to the cosmological line of thought reconstructed by de Boer. This cosmological line of thought paved the way for the development of Christian eschatology in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is the fact that the Mosaic Law, so important to the forensic type of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, lost its prominent position in the early Church.

Though both scenarios are primarily cosmological in character, the differences became clear too. In 1 Cor 15 the crucial elements are that Christ *now already* rules as king, and will do so until the final enemy, death, is defeated. The scenario in Rev 20 differs from this, in the sense that Christ is expected to vanquish Satan and his companions as the final enemies before he can start his thousand-year reign, together with his saints, the martyrs.

The remainder of this essay described a number of early Christian sources that attest to a development in which the scenario of Rev 20 became crucial to the developing Christian eschatology. It was combined,

however, with what was seen as a prophecy by Paul, but here 1 Cor 15 lost the battle: it was the description of 2 Thess 2 that was read by the fathers as the ultimate Pauline scenario for the last period of history. The Ungodly One, depicted there, was interpreted as coinciding with Antichrist (who, in the writings of the NT, is mentioned only in 1 and 2 John), and in the early centuries of Christianity this evil counterpart of Christ became the one and only final enemy of Christ. It is thus that Paul's eschatology of 1 Cor 15 was replaced by deuterio-Pauline eschatology, especially because early Christian authors considered 2 Thess an authentic letter by Paul, and preferred the latter scenario over the former. In the interpretative process that started with Justin Martyr, reached its first pinnacle in Hippolytus, and would form the dominant eschatological scenario for Christianity after that, death was thus slowly but surely defeated as the last enemy by Antichrist.

JOHN 3:13: “THE SON OF MAN WHO IS IN HEAVEN”  
A PLEA FOR THE LONGER TEXT

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*Introduction*

Shortly after the publication of the Revised Version of the New Testament in 1881,<sup>1</sup> the Dean of Chichester, John William Burgon, took the so-called Revisers to task.<sup>2</sup> He could not overlook their decision with respect to John 3:13:

At S. John iii.13, we are informed that the last clause of that famous verse (“No man has ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man, *which is in heaven*”), is not found in “many ancient authorities.” But why, in the name of common fairness, are we not *also* reminded, that this ... is a *circumstance of no Textual significancy whatever?*<sup>3</sup>

After a survey of the textual evidence, Burgon concludes with that indignant tone so peculiar for this great scholar:

Shame,—yes, *shame* on the learning which comes abroad only to perplex the weak, and to unsettle the doubting, and to mislead the blind! Shame,—yes, *shame* on that two-thirds majority of well-intentioned but most incompetent men, who,—finding themselves (in an evil hour) appointed to correct “*plain and clear errors*” in the *English* “Authorized Version,”—occupied themselves instead with *falsifying the inspired Greek Text* in countless places, and branding with suspicion some of the most precious utterances of the SPIRIT! Shame,—yes, *shame* upon them!<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ translated out of Greek: being the Version set forth A.D. 1611, compared with the most ancient Authorities, and Revised A.D. 1881.* Printed for the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, Oxford 1881.

<sup>2</sup> Three articles in the *Quarterly Review*, reprinted in his rather famous book *The Revision Revised* (London: Murray, 1883), in which he also included a long letter to bishop Charles John Ellicott (369–529); cf. also the author’s *The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels Vindicated and Established* (ed. Edward Miller; London-Cambridge: Bell & Co., 1896), 114–15; *The Causes of Corruption of the Traditional Text of the Gospels* (ed. Miller; London: Bell and Sons, 1896), 223–24.

<sup>3</sup> Burgon, *Revision Revised*, 132–33.

<sup>4</sup> *Revision Revised*, 134–35.—Cf. his “Reply to Ellicott” (*Revision Revised*, 510): “not only has many a grand doctrinal statement been evacuated of its authority, (as, by the shameful mis-statement found in the margin against S. John iii. 13 ...) ...”; cf. also Burgon, *The Tradi-*

As far as I can see, the deletion of the pertinent clause "which is in heaven" was for the first time introduced in any *official* edition of the New Testament by Westcott and Hort.<sup>5</sup> Burgon, at least, refers to the editions of Lachmann, Tregelles, and Tischendorf, in order to demonstrate that good textual critics had maintained the pertinent reading in their texts. "In short, [it] is quite above suspicion: why are we not told that?," he sighed, neglecting the fact that Tischendorf had omitted the clause in his well-known Synopsis of 1864.<sup>6</sup> After 1881 the longer text was still reproduced in the editions of Souter, Lagrange, and Vogels,<sup>7</sup> and—of course—also in the more recent editions of the so-called Majority Text.<sup>8</sup> However, one may fairly say that the short text has now been generally accepted as the original wording of John 3:13.<sup>9</sup>

Still one may say that there is here, at least for a textual critic, an "embarras du choix" which cannot be easily solved, if at all. One certainly cannot resort to the means of theological magic that Burgon chose for his weapon to charm the threats of new textual discoveries and theories. On the other hand, however, one cannot short-circuit the dilemma by either maximizing the evidence *pro* the omission (Westcott: "omitted by many very ancient authorities"; Brown: "omitted in the majority of manuscripts")<sup>10</sup> or minimize the number of witnesses that plead against the omission (Schneider: "von einigen Handschriften zugefügten Worte," Brown: "found in a

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*tional Text*, 288 (Appendix 5: The Sceptical Character of B and  $\aleph$ , sub I. "Passages detracting from the Scriptural acknowledgement of the Divinity of our Lord").

<sup>5</sup> Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton J.A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Cambridge-London: Macmillan, 1881; repr. London-New York, 1895), 169.

<sup>6</sup> Constantin Tischendorf, *Synopsis Evangelica* (Leipzig: Mendelsohn, 1864), 16.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Souter, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1947) (note f. mentions the omission); Marie-Joseph Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Jean* (Paris: Gabalda, 1948), 80 (in his Greek text); Heinrich J. Vogels, *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine 1* (Freiburg-Barcelona: Herder, 1955), 295; peculiarly not the edition of Gianfranco Nolli, *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1981), 482, apparently omitting the words under influence of the so-called Neo-Vulgate which he printed on p. 483 (col. 2); Nolli does not even mention a variant reading in his apparatus, although he also gave the Latin text of the so-called Clementina (483, col. 1: "qui est in caelo").

<sup>8</sup> Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad, *The Greek New Testament according to the Majority Text* (Nashville-Camden-New York: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 297.

<sup>9</sup> There were, however, some scholars that defend the longer text on internal and external criteria; I may refer here to an interesting article of David Alan Black, "The Text of John 3:13," *Grace Theological Journal* 6 (1985): 49–66. There is, however, more than a tinge of prejudice in his *intro*, where he concludes already "Therefore, John 3:13 is a proof of the omnipresence of the earthly Jesus."

<sup>10</sup> Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: Macmillan, 1882), 54, 65–66. (under 2); Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John 1*, (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 133.

few mss").<sup>11</sup> If one has to decide the matter on sound textual principles it remains admittedly a rather difficult choice.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, one can easily understand that some scholars present the words within brackets to denote their uncertainty.<sup>13</sup> Even in the *third* edition of the *Greek New Testament* it turned out that scholars wished to express some uncertainty, because it was a so-called C-decision, which means that there was "a considerable degree of doubt" within the committee, although later on, in the *fourth* edition, it was notified as a B-decision, which means that the short text is "almost certain."<sup>14</sup> There remained, however, dissenting voices which preferred the longer text either led by a different evaluation of the external criteria<sup>15</sup> or by theological preferences. It may be of some interest to deal with the question about the long or short reading in this volume which is dedicated to a scholar who takes such a great interest in the Johannine literature.<sup>16</sup>

### 1. *The Short Text and its Testimony*

Westcott and Hort made their decision to print the *short* text merely on the basis of *five* Greek manuscripts (Ⲛ Ⲑ Ⲗ ⲗ Ⲙ ⲙ [= 083] 33) and its presence in "many" patristic quotations.<sup>17</sup> The small number of manuscripts was scorned by Dean Burgon, "Why, above all, are we not assured that the precious clause in question ... is found in every MS. in the world, except five

<sup>11</sup> Johannes Schneider (and Erich Fascher), *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (THKNT Sonderband; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1978), 98 (cf. however Fascher in n. 32 ["an sich gut bezeugt"]); Brown, *John* 1, 133.

<sup>12</sup> Even Westcott (*John*, 65) acknowledges that "the problem in v. 13 is more difficult" (sc. than in another passage treated by him as a problem); cf. Vincent Taylor, *The Text of the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1963), 96; Lagrange, *Évangile*, 80 ("non sans hésitation"); cf. Fascher (in Schneider, *Johannes*, 98, n. 32).

<sup>13</sup> E.g. Hugo Odeberg, *The Fourth Gospel* 1. *The Discourses of John* 1<sup>9</sup>–12 (Uppsala 1922; Amsterdam: Grüner, 1968), 72; cf. Brown, *John* 1, 133.

<sup>14</sup> Kurt Aland et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: UBS, 1975), 329; cf. idem, 1993, 321; Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: UBS, 1971), 203–4 (idem, 1994, 174–75).

<sup>15</sup> See e.g. James K. Elliott and Ian Moir, *Manuscripts and the Text of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1995), 63 ("This longer reading ... is likely to be original"); long before them Taylor (*The Text*, 96) seems to have been inclined to accept the longer text ("... perhaps on the whole it should be accepted").

<sup>16</sup> John 3:13 plays an important role in the study of Martin de Boer on *Johannine Perspectives on the Death of Jesus* (CBET 17; Kampen: Kok-Pharos, 1996); see 103, 159–62, and 173–74.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Hort, in Westcott and Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek, Introduction, Appendix* (Cambridge, London: Macmillan, 1882), "Appendix," 75.

of bad character?”<sup>18</sup> If our learned faultfinder had lived to see new discoveries of manuscripts he would perhaps have slightly moderated his tone. We have now more witnesses for the short reading, and some of them very early ones such as P<sup>66</sup> and P<sup>75</sup>; then the *fourth* century Mss. S and B, further the *fifth* until *eighth* century Mss. T, W,<sup>19</sup> and o86, two rather late uncials (L, o83), and some medieval cursives (33 109 747 1010 1241 1273 1293 1592 2646),<sup>20</sup> in short *thirteen* more than mentioned by Westcott and Hort.

However, although the support of the short reading has increased since, the recognition that its testimony is “trop exclusivement égyptienne”<sup>21</sup> still holds, since most of these witnesses are in spite of their difference of age or finding place all more or less related to the so-called *Alexandrian* text type. The Egyptian character of the short text is corroborated by the southern, middle, and part of the northern Egyptian texts in the Coptic language.<sup>22</sup>

There are, however, some *versional* witnesses that also have the short text and still are not supposed to belong to the “Alexandrian” text type. For example, the *Opiza* and *Tbet* manuscripts of the Georgian version present us also with the short text.<sup>23</sup> According to a note in Zohrab’s edition the short text is also testified in Armenian tradition.<sup>24</sup> If there was, indeed, a tradition of the short text in Armenia, this may have been also the source of the Georgian version. One might even consider the possibility that

<sup>18</sup> Burgon, *Revision Revised*, 133.

<sup>19</sup> In fact, it is found in a so-called supplement of W which is of later date than the original manuscript.

<sup>20</sup> Kurt Aland et al., eds., *Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments 5, Das Johannevangelium: 1. Teststellenkollation der Kapitel 1–10* (ANTF 35, 36; 2 vols.; Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 2005), 2:46–48; GNT<sup>3</sup> also mentions 0113, but GNT<sup>4</sup> omits it.

<sup>21</sup> Lagrange, *Évangile*, 80; cf. Taylor, *The Text*, 96; Metzger, *Commentary*, 203 (2174); cf. also Black, “The Text,” 50.

<sup>22</sup> I could consult George W. Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Southern Dialect 3* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911; repr. Osnabrück: Zeller, 1969), 34 (35); *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Northern Dialect 2* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1898; repr. Osnabrück: Zeller, 1969), 354 (355); Walter E. Crum and Frederic G. Kenyon, “Two chapters of St. John in Greek and Middle Egyptian,” *JTS* 1 (1900): 415–33, esp. (420–)421; Herbert Thompson, *The Gospel According to St. John According to the Earliest Coptic Manuscript* (London: British School of Archeology [...], 1924), 2 (photograph 9/10).

<sup>23</sup> Robinson Pierpont Blake and Maurice Brière, *The Old Georgian Version of the Gospel of John* (PO 24:4; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1959), 479 [29] app.; Joseph Molitor, “Das Adysh-Tetraevangelium neu übersetzt und mit altgeorgischen Paralleltexen verglichen” 1, *OrChr* 44 (1960): 1–16 (Joh 1–5), esp. 7. The *Adysh* text, however, reads *რომელ არს ცათაჲშინა*, “qui est in caelis” (not *ყოფი*, “erat”).

<sup>24</sup> Johannes Zohrab, *Astowacašownc’ matean hin ew nor ktakaranac’* (Venice: Gortsarani Srboyn Ghazaru, 1805), 187 app.; the short text is further found in a paraphrasing quotation of Agathangelos (cf. Stanislas Lyonnet, *Les origines de la version arménienne et le Diatessaron* [Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1950], 65).

both the Georgian and Armenian versions could have been derived from a Syriac tradition. We know at least two Peshitta manuscripts, nos. 9 and 11 in Gwilliam's edition, which have omitted the words "who is (or: was) in heaven."<sup>25</sup> One might even theorize, as has been done, that the short text already existed in very early Syriac tradition, namely in the Diatessaron. We shall deal with that problem in a separate section.

### 2. *The Longer Text and its Testimony*

The longer form of the Greek text was the generally accepted reading before Westcott and Hort, being the reading of the Textus Receptus. When Erasmus introduced this reading on the basis of cursive 2 and rendered it with "qui est in coelo" (in spite of his interpretation "qui erat in coelo"<sup>26</sup>), he did not create a new text, because the longer text was the usual form in Vulgate. Later on it turned out that this manuscript also represented the majority of manuscripts that were then labelled as *Koine*, *Syrian*, or *Byzantine*, or as *Majority* text. If we look at the apparatuses of modern editions we find several uncials such as Ms. A (of the fifth century)<sup>27</sup> and Mss. E F G H K M N S U V G L P Δ Θ Π Ψ 063 (most of them of the ninth century), and a vast amount of cursives (generally from the tenth to the fifteenth century).<sup>28</sup> This type of text is usually held as being late and less trustworthy, and therefore should be rejected. However, in textual criticism one never should generalize such a preconceived idea and apply it to every textual situation, but reckon with the possibility that even such later texts might have preserved very early readings that existed side by side with the so-called *neutral* "Egyptian" text.

### 3. *The Longer Text a "Western" Reading?*

Westcott and Hort have labelled the longer reading as "Western" and "Byzantine." As a matter of fact they once characterised "who is in heaven" as

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Philip E. Pusey and George H. Gwilliam, *Tetraevangelium Sanctum juxta simplicem Syrorum versionem* (...) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1901), 494 (495), app.: Ms. 9 "sed addit in margine."

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Erasmus von Rotterdam: Novum Instrumentum* (ed. Heinz Holeczek; Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1986), Part 1, 197 (text), Part 2, 357 (annotation: "ὁ ὢν ἐν οὐρανῷ participium uerti poterat per praeteritum imperfectum, qui erat in coelo, uidelicet antequam descenderet").

<sup>27</sup> Ms. A reads ὁ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ (omitting ὢν).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Text und Textwert* 5.1, 2:46: at least more than 1600 cursives are mentioned for the longer text.

a “Western Gloss.”<sup>29</sup> And this is in their view not a recommendation, because they usually have a low opinion of this text type. The problem is that Ms. D, their main witness, is defective here. However, the fact that the long reading was attested in most Old Latin and Vulgate manuscripts (“... qui est in caelo,” aur b c f ff<sup>2</sup> j l q r<sup>1</sup> Vulg.)<sup>30</sup> was basic for their argument. The longer reading was also found or presupposed in Syriac witnesses in the East, which strengthened their conclusion that it was “Western” in the technical sense of the word (a Syro-Latin text). However, one might reason differently. The fact that it was present in early Latin and Syriac texts could also point to the existence of one or more early Greek manuscripts with this reading that later became dominant in Byzantine texts. This does not necessarily imply that the longer text was original, nor does it mean that the short text was a secondary development.

#### 4. *The Longer Text in Caesarea and Alexandria*

The longer text could also be labelled as a “Caesarean Text,”<sup>31</sup> for it is found in its crown witness, the Koridethi manuscript (Θ), and in many cursives such as 28 565 700, in fam<sup>1</sup> (1–118–131–209) and in fam<sup>3</sup> (13–69–124–174–230–346–543–788–826–983). Their text is usually connected with Palestine, and seen as a sort of mixture between Byzantine and Alexandrian text types. Although the witnesses are late, ranking from the 9th up to the 15th century, they may represent a text that can be traced to the third century at least. This seems to imply that the roots of this Byzantine reading also lies in that century. One might even hold the view that the longer reading was not wholly unknown in Egypt, since a few witnesses such as Δ Ψ 579 and 892 (belonging to category II and III of the Alands) have a strong “Alexandrian” status.<sup>32</sup> Additional evidence for the presence of the longer text is found in more than fifteen Bohairic texts or fragments which were registered for the reading ϣⲏ ⲉⲧⲱⲟⲛ ϩⲉⲛ ⲧⲡⲉ, “he who is in-the-heaven.”<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Hort, in Westcott and Hort, *The New Testament* (1882), “Appendix,” 75: “The character of the attestation marks the addition as a Western gloss, suggested perhaps by i.18.”

<sup>30</sup> Adolf Jülicher, Walter Matzkow and Kurt Aland, *Itala 4. Johannesevangelium* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1963), 22; Ms. e “qui erat in caelis”; Ms. a “qui est in caelis”; John Wordsworth and Henry J. White, *Novum Testamentum Domini Nostri Iesu Christi Latine. Vol. 1. Euangelium secundum Iohannem* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1889), 520.

<sup>31</sup> Or the I-Text of von Soden, cf. Category III in Aland’s system.

<sup>32</sup> Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *Der Text des Neuen Testaments* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1989), 123, 145, 152.

<sup>33</sup> Horner, *Coptic Version in the Northern Dialect 2*, 354 (355), app.: add. Mss. Ⲛ A C D<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> Γ Δ<sup>1,2</sup> E F<sup>1c</sup> ϣ H<sup>1,3</sup> Θ K L N O S V<sup>c</sup>; om. B Δ<sup>1\*</sup> F<sup>1\*</sup> G<sup>2</sup> J<sup>1</sup> M P Q T Paris 61<sup>\*</sup> Hunt 26.



But there was an awareness that it was not part of the usual Greek text, for some copyist added the gloss: “between the signs an *addition* in Coptic.”<sup>34</sup> The Southern Coptic texts, however, present us with the short text.<sup>35</sup>

### 5. *The Longer Text in Syriac Tradition*

There is reason to assume that the longer text was present in a Greek text that formed the basis for the Syriac versions of John.<sup>36</sup> The fifth-century Syriac Vulgate reads ܘܚܘܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ, “He who is in heaven,”<sup>37</sup> and that reading is maintained in the Harclean revision.<sup>38</sup> Although the earlier Old Syriac version presents us with two different readings, they are both still witnesses for the longer text, namely (Sy<sup>s</sup>) ܘܚܘܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ, “who *is* from heaven”<sup>39</sup> and (Sy<sup>c</sup>) ܘܚܘܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ, “who *was in* heaven,” the latter reading being also found in Ms. 14 of the Peshitta.<sup>40</sup>

Our survey of texts has made it clear that the longer text can pride itself not only upon a large number of Greek texts and versions, but also on a wide spread from the East to the West. This in itself is not a *conclusive* argument in favour of the long text, since one might explain this spread by assuming that “who is in heaven” was introduced in textual witnesses at a very early stage in one or more influential scriptoria. But still, it also could imply that *both* text traditions were around at a *very early* stage of transmission.

### 6. *Two Modifications of the Longer Reading*

We have seen that the Syriac tradition favoured the long form, but that there were two different deviant renderings compared with the Greek text:

<sup>34</sup> The gloss reads: بين العلامتين مزايد في القبطي.

<sup>35</sup> Horner, *Coptic Version in the Southern Dialect* 3, 34–35; his “short” text was based on several parchment fragments and one papyrus.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. George A. Kiraz, *Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels 4: John* (Leiden etc.: Brill, 1996), 36–37.

<sup>37</sup> Pusey and Gwilliam, *Tetraevangelium Sanctum*, 494 (495); we learn from their apparatus that their codex 9 omitted the words, but that they are supplied in the margin. One cannot adduce this reading as a certain witness for the short text, because the reason is here most likely a homoioteleuton fault (ܘܚܘܘܢܐ ... ܘܚܘܘܢܐ).

<sup>38</sup> Joseph White, *Sacrorum Evangeliorum Versio Syriaca Philoxeniana* 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1778), 445.

<sup>39</sup> A. Smith Lewis, *The Old Syriac Gospels or Evangelion da-Mepharreshê* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1910), 213.

<sup>40</sup> Francis C. Burkitt, *Evangelion da-Mepharreshê 1: Text* (Cambridge: University Press, 1904), 430; cf. Pusey and Gwilliam, *Tetraevangelium sanctum*, 494, app.

1. “who *is from* heaven” (Sy<sup>s</sup>)

GNT<sup>3</sup> mentions the fact that apart from Sy<sup>s</sup> the reading ὁ ὢν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ was also attested in the Greek Mss. 0141 and 80,<sup>41</sup> whereas GNT<sup>4</sup> attributes this variant reading to Ms. 0141 and some lectionaries (68<sup>1/2</sup>; 673; 1223<sup>1/2</sup>; 1627<sup>1/2</sup>). In *Text und Textwert* seven witnesses are mentioned: 0141, 80, 315\*, 397, 821, and 2782\*.<sup>42</sup> It was the view of Adalbert Merx<sup>43</sup> that this variation possessed “ein gutes Präjudiz,” by which he meant that Sy<sup>s</sup> (which he thought to be the oldest known text of the Gospels) might have preserved the original wording. I am not certain whether Merx’s view was well received, but strangely enough the same idea has been defended by O’Neill not long ago: “it looks to me”—he writes—“as if the true original text of John is that found in 0141 80 and 88, attesting an early Egyptian text that was picked up in the Syrus Sinaiticus.” One could think—he says—that the phrase looks a bit redundant, but that is not uncommon in John. Moreover, one might interpret it in the sense of “who took his origin from heaven.”<sup>44</sup>

2. “who *was in* heaven” (Sy<sup>c</sup>)

GNT<sup>3</sup> mentions for the reading ὁς ἦν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ three witnesses: besides Sy<sup>c</sup> it also mentions Sy<sup>pal</sup>, the latter with a question mark, which has been dropped in GNT<sup>4</sup>. In Sy<sup>pal</sup> we read indeed: ܩܘܡܘܢ ܩܘܡܘܢ ܩܘܡܘܢ ܩܘܡܘܢ ܩܘܡܘܢ, which can be interpreted as “the Son of Man, the one who *was in* heaven.”<sup>45</sup> It is quite certain that the Syriac *Vorlage* of the Armenian Letter of Aithallaha of Edessa presupposes the very same reading (... ԻՐԻԻԻ ԲԱՐԻԻԻ, ԻՐ ԷՐԻՆ յԷՐԼԻԻՆԱ; “the Son of Man, who *was in* heaven”).<sup>46</sup> The reading “erat” is also found in Latin, not only in Ms. e, but—as GNT<sup>4</sup> tells us—also in one Latin author, Zeno. And indeed, the fourth century Zeno

<sup>41</sup> Cf. also Black in 1985 (“The Text,” 50).

<sup>42</sup> Ms. 169 is mentioned for the reading ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν; one might ask whether εἰς was merely a misreading of ἐκ (εἰκ < εἰς) and then of course: τὸν οὐρανόν < ΤΟΥ ΟΥΡΑΝΟΥ.

<sup>43</sup> Adalbert Merx, *Die vier kanonischen Evangelien nach ihrem ältesten bekannten Texte* 2.2: *Johannes* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1911), 60–61.

<sup>44</sup> O’Neill assumes that “who is in heaven” was a correction made by a clumsy scribe to make the clause more meaningful (see John C. O’Neill, “The Rules Followed by the Editors of Vaticanus,” *NTS* 35 [1989]: 219–28, 223).

<sup>45</sup> Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret D. Gibson, *The Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of the Gospels* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1899), 9 (Lesson 5); 236 (Lesson 159 add.); I can understand that the GNT editors were not quite certain about this attestation, for theoretically ܩܘܡܘܢ can be a participle (“being” as a literal rendering of ὢν).

<sup>46</sup> Joannes Thorossian, *Aithallae Episcopi Edesseni Epistola ad Christianos in Oersarum regione de Fide* (Venice: San Lazzaro, 1942), 53:12–14; for the Armenian version of Aphrahat’s quotation, cf. n. 63 (էրև-*was*).

of Verona quotes the text in this way: “Nemo ascendit in caelum, nisi qui de caelo descendit, filius hominis, qui *erat* in caelo.”<sup>47</sup> One could have added here other witnesses, such as Aphrahat and others.<sup>48</sup> It is questionable whether there was ever a Greek text with the verb ἦν, unless a phrase of Origen (“... non dixit *qui fuit* sed *qui est* in caelo ...”<sup>49</sup>) is taken as text-critical observation and not a theological observation about the ubiquitous nature of Christ, which it was in my view. My personal opinion is that the participle ὄν was the textual reading that stood behind the imperfect tenses in these witnesses.<sup>50</sup>

These two deviations presuppose the longer text, for they are different attempts to avoid the strangeness of a text, in which the Son of Man is said to be in heaven, whereas it is claimed that he had come down (καταβάς), in fact that he was the one who was talking with Nicodemus.

### 7. A Short Text in the Diatessaron?

After our excursion on the Syriac tradition of the text, it seems worthwhile to investigate the text of what may have been a very early text in Syria, the Diatessaron. If we could establish what kind of text this harmony contained, we might perhaps know which text Tatian had read in Rome shortly after the middle of the second century. The first reconstruction of this harmony, made by Zahn, offered the text in this form:

Et nemo ascendit in caelum, nisi qui descendit de caelo, filius hominis,  
[er, der im Himmel war].<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Bengt Löfstedt, *Zenonis Veronensis Tractatus*, Tract. 2.4.2–3 (CCSL 22; Turnhout: Brepols, 1971), 159:18–19. Cf. 159:21–24: “Age, excita sensum, lector, inuenies ueritatem. *Qui erat in caelo*, de caelo descendit; qui descendit, ipse est et qui ascendit in caelum, filius hominis, *qui erat in caelo*.”

<sup>48</sup> See below; cf. Jeffrey P. Lyon, *Syriac Gospel Translations* (CSCO Subs. 88; Louvain: Peeters, 1994), 182–84; cf. also Arthur Vööbus, *Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac* (Louvain: Durbecq, 1951), 182 (Rabbula), 185 (Syriac translation of a work of Cyril).

<sup>49</sup> *Origenis in Epistolam ad Romanos Commentariorum Pars II*, in *Origenis Opera Omnia* 7 (ed. Carl H.E. Lommatszsch, Charles and Charles Vincent Delarue; Berlin: Haude & Spener, 1837), 200.

<sup>50</sup> Therefore I agree with Friedrich Baethgen’s reconstruction of the Greek Vorlage of Sy<sup>c</sup> with the participle ὄν (*Evangelienfragmente: Der Griechischen Text des Cureton’schen Syrens* [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1885], 41).

<sup>51</sup> Theodor Zahn, *Tatian’s Diatessaron* (FGNK 1; Erlangen: Deichert, 1881), 183 (Text and note 7); cf. Tjitze Baarda, “Tatian’s Diatessaron and the Greek Text of the Gospels,” in *The Early Text of the New Testament* (ed. Charles E. Hill and Michael J. Krüger; Oxford: OUP, 2012), 336–49, esp. 344–45.



longer text.<sup>58</sup> It may be useful to have a closer look at the various parts of the quotation in Ephraem and Aphrahat, because both authors had used the Diatessaron, but most likely had also knowledge of the “Separate Gospels”:

(a) ܐܘܢ ܠܐܘܪܘܫܐܝܡ ܘܥܠܘ ܫܡܝܘܬ ܥܠܝܘܢ: “and nobody ascended to heaven”;<sup>59</sup>

(b) ܐܘܢ ܠܐܘܪܘܫܐܝܡ ܘܥܠܘ ܫܡܝܘܬ ܥܠܝܘܢ [ܐܘܢ] ܐܘܢ: “except He who descended from heaven”;<sup>60</sup>

(c) ܐܘܢ ܕܢܘܨܘܬ ܡܢ ܫܡܝܘܬ: “the Son of Man.”<sup>61</sup>

The last phrase (d) ܐܘܢ ܕܡܢ ܫܡܝܘܬ ܥܠܝܘܢ ܐܘܢ: “He who was in heaven” was not attested in Ephraem, only in Aphrahat (with the same wording as in Sy<sup>c</sup>).<sup>62</sup> I myself have defended the thesis that “certainty is as yet unattainable.”<sup>63</sup> do we really have in Aphrahat’s reference the true Diatessaron wording? I am now inclined to consider the possibility that the phrase “who was in heaven” was indeed part of the Diatessaron, and that the omission of these words in Ephraem’s commentary is not decisive.<sup>64</sup> A look at the Arabic Diatessaron shows that this late witness has indeed the last phrase “who *is* in heaven,”<sup>65</sup> but admittedly one cannot use this as a

<sup>58</sup> See for Aphrahat’s testimony: Baarda, *The Gospel Quotations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage 1: Aphrahat’s Text of the Fourth Gospel* (Diss. VU University Amsterdam; Meppel: Krips Repro, 1975), 87–91 (§ 21), 430–33 (Notes). The passages of Aphrahat: (A) *Demonstrations* 8.9; ed. Wright 173:10–12; ed. Parisot 404:21–24; (B) *Ibid.* Wright 173:16–17, Parisot 405:1–2 (only the first four words).

<sup>59</sup> Ephr.: A, B [-a], C, F, and Aphr (-a: A, B). The omission of the conjunction is required in the context.

<sup>60</sup> ܐܘܢ alone is found in Ephr. (A-B-F), ܐܘܢ ܐܘܢ in Aphr. (A); ܐܘܢ ܕܡܢ ܫܡܝܘܬ is found in Ephr. (F) and Aphr.; ܐܘܢ ܕܡܢ ܫܡܝܘܬ in Ephr. (A); ܐܘܢ ܕܡܢ ܫܡܝܘܬ ܥܠܝܘܢ in Aphr. (B, D, E).

<sup>61</sup> Ephr.: A, B, F, Aphr. A.

<sup>62</sup> Black, “The Text,” Table 1, adopts the idea that both Aphrahat and Jacob of Nisibis were witnesses to the longer reading, as was indicated in GNT<sup>3</sup>, where the two names are given side by side; however, the Armenian work published by Nicolaus Antonellus, *Sancti Patris Nostri Jacobi Episcopi Nisibeni Sermones* (Rome: De Propaganda Fide, 1756), is nothing else than the Armenian version of Aphrahat’s treatises (cf. Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 3–6); the quotation “who was in heaven” is also found in the Armenian version of Aphrahat: ܡܢ ܫܡܝܘܬ ܥܠܝܘܢ ܐܘܢ ܕܡܢ ܫܡܝܘܬ ܥܠܝܘܢ (Guy Lafontaine, *La version Arménienne des oeuvres d’Aphraate le Syrien* 2 [CSCO 405; Arm. T. 9; Louvain: CSCO, 1979], 84:5); Antonellus, *Sermones*, 268 (Arm. col. 2:23; here the words “the Son of Man” are omitted, because the phrase was omitted in his Roman manuscript [Ms. S in Lafontaine’s edition, where also mention is made of Ms. N for the omission]).

<sup>63</sup> Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 91.

<sup>64</sup> I hope to deal more lengthily with this problem in a separate article (“John 3:13 in the Diatessaron tradition”), because it would take too much place here.

<sup>65</sup> T<sup>A</sup>, ch. 32:39 (الذي هو في السماء), *hu* [*huwa*] as copula). Besides the text in the editions of Ciasca and Marmardji (based on Mss. A, B, and E), I have consulted also Mss. Sbath 1020 and 1280, both having the same text.

safe argument for the longer reading in the Diatessaron, since the form of the words is apparently influenced here by the Peshitta.<sup>66</sup>

### 8. *Patristic Evidence—The Case of Origen*

Although several patristic authors are called up as witnesses for the *short* text in many editions,<sup>67</sup> it is often difficult to establish the weight of their attestation. It is, indeed, possible that in their quotations authors only refer to a text *as far as* it is conclusive or meaningful for their reasoning.<sup>68</sup> To demonstrate the difficulty of the probative value of patristic citations I will deal with the passages in the works of Origen in which John 3:13 has played a role.<sup>69</sup> He is the more interesting witness, because he worked in Alexandria *and* in Caesarea, two centres of scholarship after which types of text are named: the Alexandrian and the Caesarean texts. There are several references in Origen’s works that hardly give us an idea of the Johannine text that he knew,<sup>70</sup> but there are a few that may tell us something about his text.<sup>71</sup> In a homily on Isa 41:2 the following words deal with our verse:

Vocavit autem Christum pater, quo ob nostram salutem ad nos iter faceret, et descenderet de coelo ad nos: “nemo” enim “adscendit in coelum, nisi qui de

<sup>66</sup> R. Larry Overstreet (“John 3:13 and the Omnipresence of Jesus Christ,” *A Paper presented to the Evangelical Theological Society*, 19 November 2003, an interesting article that I found on the internet: [www.reclaimingthemind.org/papers/ets/2003/Overstreet2/Overstreet2.pdf](http://www.reclaimingthemind.org/papers/ets/2003/Overstreet2/Overstreet2.pdf), consulted 26 September 2012) made Tatian the first witness to the longer reading (31), apparently on the testimony of T<sup>A</sup>; by the way, he also added “Jacob of Nisibis” besides Aphrahat (cf. note 62 above).

<sup>67</sup> GNT<sup>3</sup> mentions Origen<sup>lat</sup>, Apollinaris, Didymus, and Cyril; GNT<sup>4</sup> adds Eusebius, Adantius, Gregory of Nazianze, Gregory of Nyssa, Didymus, Epiphanius<sup>3/4</sup>, Theodoret<sup>1/4</sup>, and modifies the testimony of Origen (<sup>lat2/4</sup>) and Cyril (<sup>14/16</sup>).

<sup>68</sup> Hort (“Appendix,” 75) defends a different view: “But there are many quotations of v. 13 which stop short at τ. ἀνθρώπου; and it is morally certain that most of them would have included ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, if it had stood in the texts used by the writers.”

<sup>69</sup> Tischendorf, *Novum Testamentum Graece* 1 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 81869), 765 app. quotes Origen for the long text: “Or<sup>int 2,72</sup> et 4,<sup>622</sup> (‘non dixit *qui fuit*, sed *qui est in caelo*’),” and for the short text: “Or<sup>int 3,114</sup> (certe non add, ...)”

<sup>70</sup> Cf. e.g. ἀλλ’ ἔδει ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καταβῆναι ... (Claude Jenkins, “Origen on Corinthians,” *JTS* 9 [1908]: 231–47, 353–72, 500–534, esp. 235:9 [§ VI]); and “et Filium hominis esse qui descendit de caelo” (Marcel Borret, *Origène, Homélie sur l’Exode* [SC 321; Paris: Cerf, 1985], 158:40); this text does not mean that Origen (or Rufinus) read a text with a reading like what we found in Sy<sup>s</sup>, but it is merely the preceding phrase “... qui de caelo descendit” which has been placed after the Son of Man.

<sup>71</sup> We always meet with the difficulty that his commentaries are often preserved in Latin and therefore may betray the hand of the translator.

coelo descendit, filius hominis." Vocavit eum de oriente: non de isto sensibili, sed de oriente lucis verae.<sup>72</sup>

This could plead for the short text, but then one has to consider the fact that the author refers to this verse to illustrate how Christ made his way to us: he descended from heaven. There was no need for the words "qui est in caelo."

Another reference is found in a Homily on Ezechiel,<sup>73</sup> where he contrasts those who *fall* from heaven on earth (e.g. Satan) with Christ:

Ecce omnes *de caelo cecidisse*, non *descendisse* referuntur; Dominus vero meus *de caelo descendit et qui descendit*, ipse est *Filius hominis*. At non sic Satanas, non enim descendit de caelo neque ei mali quicquam acciderat, si descendisset. Audi Iesum dicentem: *Videbam Satanam quasi fulgur de caelo cadentem* (Luke 10:18), non descendentem. Verum non solus Salvator *e caelo descendentem*; cotidie multitudo descendit et adscendit super Filium hominis: *Videbitis enim caelum apertum et angelos Dei adscendentes et descendentes super Filium hominis* (John 1:51).

Here again, one might adduce this comment as a proof of the short text, because there is no trace of "qui est in caelis," but again we must keep in mind that the need to mention these words were absent, for all the emphasis is on the descending of the Son of Man.

Then there is also reference found in a comment on Genesis (dealing with the apparition of God in Mamre), where we read:<sup>74</sup>

Descendit ergo. Neque enim alius *adscendit in coelum, nisi qui descendit de caelo, filius hominis, qui est in caelo*. Descendit ergo Dominus non solum curare, sed et portare, quae nostra sunt. ... Sed et cum descendit, aliis deorsum est, aliis vero adscendit et sursum est. (etc.)

Here we find the longer text, but one might suggest that it was added by the translator or a copyist. However the play with "deorsum" et "sursum" seems to plead for the originality of the long text here.

There is still another text with the words "who is in heaven," namely in his Commentary on Romans,<sup>75</sup> where he quotes the longer text:

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *Origenis Opera Omnia* 13 (ed. Lommatzsch et al.; Berlin: Haude & Spener, 1842), 265–71: *Homilia* 5, esp. 266:3–8.

<sup>73</sup> Homily 13:2, in Borret, *Origène, Homélie sur Ezechiel* (SC 352; Paris: Cerf, 1989), 412 (tr. 413).

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *Origenis Opera Omnia* 8 (ed. Lommatzsch et al.; Berlin, Haude & Spener, 1842), 162–71: *Homilia* 4, esp. 168:1–8; W.A. Baehrens, "Homiliae in Genesim," *Origenes Werke* (GCS 29, Leipzig: Teubner, 1920), 1–144, 55:19.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *Origenis Opera Omnia* 7 (Berlin, 1837), 200:8–14 (comments on Rom 10:4ff.); cf. PG 14 (Paris: Migne, 1857), 837–1292, col. 1162.

Quid ergo est, quod per hoc Apostolus docet? Ne scilicet dicamus in corde nostro, et putemus, quod Christus in loco aliquo continetur, et non ubique est, ac per omnia ipse diffunditur: quippequi cum esset in terris, dicebat, quia esset in coelo. Sic enim loquebatur ad Apostolos suos: “nemo<sup>76</sup> adscendit in coelum, nisi qui de coelo descendit, Filius hominis, qui est in coelo.” Non dixit, “qui fuit,” sed: “qui est in coelo.”

If the original author is, indeed, Origen (be it in Rufinus’ translation), it is obvious that he knew the longer text, when he wrote his works in Caesarea. The manuscript or manuscripts of John—to which he had access there—may have been part of the library that he possessed in Alexandria, so that we cannot exclude the possibility that he quoted an “Alexandrian” text here. In fact, the way in which Origen refers to the text of John 3:13, demonstrates that an author can cite the short text or the longer text, depending on the purpose of his quoting.

### 9. *The Application of Text-Critical Rules*

The rule “lectio brevior potior”<sup>77</sup> sometimes underlies the decision of textual critics: “... the majority of the Committee, impressed by the quality of the external attestation supporting the shorter reading, regarded the words ὁ υἱὸς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ as an interpretative gloss, reflecting later Christological development” (Metzger *re* GNT<sup>3.4</sup>). The idea expressed in many comments on the text is that if the clause were part of the original text it is difficult to explain the omission; therefore, it must have been an interpretative gloss, just because there was no motive for omission, or in other words, as it stands the text without the addition is complete in itself, when it ends with the Son of Man,—and consequently the assumption of an omission is not necessary. Then it is often said that it was a gloss formed after John 1:18, be it an early gloss probably added in the second century, and one of Western character.

One might ask why an interpretative gloss was needed if the sentence without it was complete in itself. The answers are not always clear.<sup>78</sup> It was a later development of Christology, not in conformity with the views

<sup>76</sup> The editor adds: “Ed. Merlini add. nisi qui descendit de coelo.”

<sup>77</sup> Griesbach’s own words: “Brevior lectio, nisi testium vetustorum et gravium auctoritate penitus destituatur, praeferenda est verbiosiori. Librarii enim multo proniores ad addendum fuerunt, quam ad omittendum” (Johann Jacob Griesbach, *Novum Testamentum Graece. Textum ad fidem codicum versionum et patrum recensuit et lectionis varietatem adiecit* ... [2 vols.; Halle etc.: Curt etc., 1796–1806], 1:lx).

<sup>78</sup> I collect here some of the ideas concerning the “addition,” which I found in commentaries and articles.



of the Evangelist. Or it was inserted to bring out “the right contrast between the ascent of a man to heaven and the abiding of the Son of Man in heaven.” Or it was added “to correct any misunderstanding arising out of the position of ἀναβέβηκεν as coming before καταβάς.” Or: some glossator wanted “to express the *Postexistenz*: he who now is again in heaven.” What have all these considerations to do with second century developments of christology? What kind of christology is thought of, if the glossator was someone “putting in a theological oar”? Some scholars even overstate their case, when they observe that the addition “makes the argument difficult to follow,” which is a strange effect of an “explanatory gloss.” Even worse seems the statement that “the longer text obscures the main thrust of the sentence,” so that it “must stem from a clumsy glossator,” since the Son of Man “is the only person on earth who can speak with authority of heavenly things, and that because he has come down from heaven itself”; so he cannot be in heaven when he talks with Nicodemus. These last interpreters may perhaps present the reason why one might theorize that the omission could have been a deliberate retouch of the longer reading. For the question, “quomodo filius hominis, qui in terris loquebatur, esse dicebatur in caelo?” was once been articulated by Eusebius Vercellensis, an author who still kept to the longer text.<sup>79</sup>

Then it is time to proceed to the other rule of Bengel, “proclivi scriptiōni praestat ardua,” which is rephrased by Scrivener in this way: “it would seem more probable that a copyist tried to explain an obscure passage, or to relieve a hard construction, than to make that perplexed which was more easy.” The addition “who *is* in heaven” complicates the understanding of the pronouncement, if it is taken as part of Jesus’ dialogue with Nicodemus. So the other possibility is indeed that an early scribe or reviser deleted the clause to avoid a difficulty in the text. Less radical were such apparent corrections as “who *was* in heaven” or “who was *from* heaven” that we mentioned before, but they also reveal that scribes or revisers had sometimes a difficulty with the longer text. Now this might plead in favour of the view that the words “would not have got into the text if they had not be genuine.” These considerations could plead in favour of the opinion expressed by the minority in the GNT Committee.<sup>80</sup> If, indeed, the final

<sup>79</sup> Cf. *De Trinitate Liber* 10.45 in Vincent Bulhart, *Eusebii Vercellensis Episcopi Quae supersunt* (CCSL 9; Turnhout: Brepols, 1957), in Appendix IV, 142 (ll. 312ff.) for the text “Nemo ascendit in caelum nisi qui descendit de caelo, filius hominis qui est in caelo,” *ibid.* 142 (ll. 310–11), and 11.23 (152: ll. 157–58).

<sup>80</sup> Metzger, *Commentary*, 203–4 (2174–75), where two rather convincing arguments were given that we have woven in our argumentation.

phrase was suppressed, one might think of a deliberate “correction” of a reviser in a scriptorium in Egypt—most of the witnesses seem related to the Alexandrian text—it remains impossible to peg it down to some specific person such as, for example, Hesychius<sup>81</sup> or some “heretical” person such as Apollinaris.<sup>82</sup> Personally, I am inclined to believe that *if* the short text was the result of a scribal intervention it was not necessarily a theological or heretical correction, but rather the result of a common sense emendation: how could Jesus, the Son of Man, be in heaven, while he was talking to Nicodemus? Such a consideration is rather the activity of a “historian” than of a “theologian.”<sup>83</sup>

#### 10. *A Plea for the Longer Text*

In the more recent history of exegesis scholars sometimes accepted the longer text, following an interpretation of Erasmus: “(sic) participium [sc. ὄν] verti poterat per praeteritum imperfectum, qui erat in coelo, videlicet antequam descenderet.”<sup>84</sup> This idea was accepted by several exegetes in his time (e.g. Luther) and afterwards (e.g. Bengel, B. Weiss). Theodor Zahn also defended this interpretation with an appeal to both Johannine theology and linguistic possibility.<sup>85</sup> In my view, this solution is not very convincing, for the phrase would indeed be somewhat redundant after the preceding clause with *καταβὰς*. Nor would I be inclined to follow another approach, namely “that John is speaking from the standpoint of the post-resurrection Church,” so that one might render the words with “der jetzt (wieder) im Himmel ist,”<sup>86</sup> even if it is solemnly described as the *Postexistenz* resulting from his Ascension.

<sup>81</sup> Zahn: someone in Egypt in the time after Origen, probably Hesychius (*Das Evangelium des Johannes* [KNT4; Leipzig, Erlangen: Deichert, 1-21908], 197).

<sup>82</sup> Burgon—although he admits that the short reading was perhaps 150 years earlier—still upholds the view that the short text in the detested Ms. B was a heretical depravation. In my view, there is no absolute certainty about the precise form of our text in the remaining works of the author, nor is it certain that the theology of Apollinaris would forbid the wording of the longer text.

<sup>83</sup> I do not enter here into a discussion with those commentators (whom I found on the internet) who explain the short text as a Gnostic corruption: e.g. *Gnostic Corruptions in the Critical Texts—A Case Study* (in which John 3:13 figures), apparently in defense of the traditional text, the *Textus Receptus*, but with a reasoning that I could not understand. In such a case it is difficult to evaluate the force of the arguments.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. n. 26 above. In fact this was the idea behind the variant reading of Sy<sup>c</sup> mentioned above.

<sup>85</sup> Zahn, *Johannes*, 197.

<sup>86</sup> E. g. Merx, *Evangelien* 2.2, 61.

In this plea for the longer text I follow another line of thought which, however, is not a quite new interpretation of the words “who is in heaven.”<sup>87</sup> Although there are several structural problems in the Nicodemus episode, I will try to defend here the thesis that one might accept the longer reading as being in harmony with the author’s beliefs, and therefore probably being original. The general idea of those who reject the longer text is that the last words represent a later, perhaps even second century christological concept, which then later was elaborated by patristic exegetes in the sense of the two natures doctrine. It may be true that the longer text played a role in later christology, but this in itself is not an argument against it. It is obvious that, if one accepts the longer reading and takes it in its strict sense, it seems to imply that he who speaks here of himself as the Son of Man was still in heaven, even though he had descended from heaven. Several exegetes have accepted this anomaly and explain it as a spiritual or mystic communion with God. I am inclined to follow that line of interpretation, but my reasoning starts with the ambiguousness of the title “Son of Man,” as the one who is both on earth and in heaven.

This title is found earlier in John 1:51, a verse which may be the key text for our understanding of the title also in John 3:13. The saying ὄψεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεωγῶτα καὶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου admittedly echoes the words of Gen 28:12, where it is said that Jacob saw in a dream a ladder set up on the earth, whose top reached the heavens. Then it is said: “And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it” (LXX: καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ ἀνέβαινον καὶ κατέβαινον ἐπ’ αὐτῆς). Now, in early Jewish exegesis two questions were raised. *First*, concerning the order of the verbs: why did the heavenly angels “ascend” before they did “descend”? The answer is that two angels had been banished from heaven to earth since the Sodom episode, and they were here accompanying Jacob on earth. They saw him sleeping, so they *ascended* to heaven to tell the other angels about him: “Come, and see the pious man, whose image is graven in the throne of glory, the one upon whom you have desired to gaze.” Then all angels *descended* to look at him. “They *ascended* and found his image, they *descended* on earth and found

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<sup>87</sup> I wrote on this interpretation in: “Over wie Mozes schreef, èn de profeten ...’ (Johannes 1,45)—De belijdenis van Filippus in het licht van Johannes 1,51,” in *Broeder Jehosjoea, Opstellen voor Ben Hemelsoet* (ed. Theodorus H.M. Akerboom; Kampen: Kok, 1994), 63–76; I followed suggestions made earlier by others: Charles F. Burney, *The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1922), 115–16; Odeberg, *Fourth Gospel*, 33–40; Martin McNamara, *Targum and Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972 [American edition]), 146–47.

him sleeping.”<sup>88</sup> The second question was whether we should interpret בּוֹ as “on it” (*i.e.* on the ladder) or “on him” (*i.e.* on Jacob). The last possibility was preferred in some interpretations: “... were ascending and descending (and gazing) upon him.” This Jewish exegesis lays stress on the virtual identity of the *earthly* fugitive Jacob and the *heavenly* image in the throne of God, which is “Israel—in whom I will be glorified.”<sup>89</sup>

Since I am convinced that this Jewish exegesis of the Bethel episode was shared by the author of the Fourth Gospel when he wrote the Nathaniel episode, I am inclined to assume that this interpretation of the identity of the earthly and the heavenly was expressed in John 3:13 as well: he who descended from heaven—the one who talked with Nicodemus—was at the same time in heaven. My view about this particular type of exegesis behind John 1:51 led me to the conviction that there is certainly a good reason to consider the possibility that we should read in John 3:13 ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ as part of the original text. Nevertheless I can easily sympathize with the early scribe or redactor who found it illogical that the one who spoke here was in heaven,—and consequently dropped the phrase. However, my plea remains in favour of the longer reading.

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<sup>88</sup> In my article “Over wie Mozes schreef ...” I have discussed the texts of the Targums (*Neofiti I*, *Yerušalmi I* and *II*, and the *Fragmentary Targum*), and of course the interesting final paragraphs of *Midrash Rabbah* on Genesis, 68 (אָב״ק).

<sup>89</sup> The parallelism of Jesus/the Son of Man with Jacob/Israel is confirmed by the fact that in the same episode Nathaniel is called an “Israelite” which echoes “Israel” in the Jewish interpretation of Gen 28:12.

## WHO COINED THE NAME “AMBROSIASTER”?\*

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### 1. *Status Quaestionis*

In New Testament and patristic scholarship, a commentator named “Ambrosiaster” is known as the author of the first commentary on the Pauline epistles, written about 380 CE.<sup>1</sup> This Latin commentary, traditionally attributed to Ambrose, but clearly not written by the famous bishop of Milan,<sup>2</sup> is important for diverse reasons. According to Adolf Jülicher, “Seine Auslegung der Paulusbrieve ist nicht bloß durch manche interessante Notiz zur Geschichte von Dogma, Sitte und Verfassung wichtig, sie ist die beste, die vor dem 16. Jhd. überhaupt geschrieben ist.”<sup>3</sup> The commentary is also important text-critically, as it is independent from the Latin Vulgate; it is referred to more than 400 times in the Nestle-Aland apparatus.<sup>4</sup> The identity of its author will probably never be known,<sup>5</sup> but that is not the theme of this contribution. The question asked here is simpler: why was this author called “Ambrosiaster,” and who was the first to do so?

Traditionally, in the twentieth century at least, the coinage of the name “Ambrosiaster” has been attributed to Desiderius Erasmus, the first modern

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\* This essay is dedicated to my *Doktorvater* Martin de Boer, in gratitude for the many ways in which he stimulated my scholarly work.

<sup>1</sup> *Ambrosiastri qui dicitur commentarius in epistulas Paulinas* (ed. Heinrich J. Vogels; CSEL 81; 3 vols.; Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1966–1969). Another work, attributed to the same anonymous author, is *Quaestiones veteris et novi testamenti (Pseudo-Augustini quaestiones veteris et novi testamenti)* [ed. Alexander Souter; CSEL 50; Vienna etc.: Tempsky etc., 1908]).

<sup>2</sup> Current patristic scholarship distinguishes between authentic works by Ambrose of Milan, dubious works, and works falsely attributed to Ambrose; among the latter, the *Expositio super Apocalypsin* by Berengaudus, the *Confessio fidei* by Damasius, an epigram by Mallius Theodorus, *De paenitentia* by Victor Cartennensis, and works by “Ambrosiaster.”

<sup>3</sup> Adolf Jülicher, article “Ambrosiaster,” in Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyclopädie* 1, 2 (1894), cols. 1811–12, 1812.

<sup>4</sup> Data according to NA<sup>27</sup>. The abbreviation used is “Ambst.” Ambrosiaster could also be mentioned outside the Pauline epistles; Bruce M. Metzger (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [London: UBS, 1994]) does so at Acts 13:8 and Acts 28:16.

<sup>5</sup> Current scholarship holds the anonymity to have been intentional.

editor of Ambrose's works.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes even an obvious but still imprecise reference to Erasmus' Ambrose edition can be found. In 1969, René Hoven remarked that nobody gives a precise source for this attribution, which is often a tell-tale sign for questionable scholarship. He started checking some sources, and as a result of his work, the former near consensus of scholarship could not be sustained.<sup>7</sup> In my reconstruction, the idea that Erasmus doubted the attribution of the commentary to Ambrose came first,<sup>8</sup> and was then “completed” by the idea that Erasmus also coined the name. Both ideas are wrong, in fact, as was pointed out by Hoven. Even earlier, scholars such as Jülicher (around 1900) actually doubted the attribution of the coinage to Erasmus.<sup>9</sup> In any case, Hoven's article should have put an end to the latter attribution.

<sup>6</sup> See below for Erasmus' edition. The list of scholars ascribing the coinage to Erasmus is long. A few examples: Souter, *The Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul. A Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927), 39: “The name ‘Ambrosiaster’ was coined, apparently by Erasmus, ...” (here Souter goes further than in his 1905 study); Vogels, *Das Corpus Paulinum des Ambrosiaster* (BBB 13; Bonn: Hanstein, 1957), 9: “Jener unbekannte Schriftsteller, ... den Erasmus unverdientermaßen auf den Namen Ambrosiaster (Amst) taufte, ...”; Henk Jan de Jonge, in Erasmus, *Apologia respondens ad ea quae Iacobus Lopis Stunica taxaverat in prima duntaxat Novi Testamenti aeditione* (ed. de Jonge; ASD 9.2; Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1983), 144: “Er. was the first scholar in modern times to doubt the ascription to Ambrose of the Latin commentaries on the thirteen Epp. of Paul which the mss. and mediaeval authors had ascribed to Ambrose; and it was Er. who, in his ed. of Ambrose of 1527, first called the unknown author Ambrosiaster”; E. Ann Matter, “The Church Fathers and the *glossa ordinaria*,” in *The reception of the Church Fathers in the West. From the Carolingians to the Maurists* (ed. by Irena Dorota Backus, Leiden etc.: Brill, 1997), 83–111, 107: “... a still largely-unstudied anonymous fourth-century Roman author we (following Erasmus) know as Ambrosiaster”; Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, *Ordained Women in the Early Church. A Documentary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2005), 16: “In the sixteenth century, Erasmus proved the ascription spurious; since then, the author has been known as Ambrosiaster”; Ian Christopher Levy, *The Letter to the Galatians* (The Bible in Medieval Tradition; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 23: “A patristic writer who did have a profound influence on the later tradition was the commentator dubbed ‘Ambrosiaster’ (pseudo-Ambrose) by Erasmus in the sixteenth century, ...”; Mark Edwards, “Augustine and His Christian Predecessors,” in *A Companion to Augustine* (ed. Mark Vessey; Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), 215–26, 225: “... Erasmus gave him the name Ambrosiaster because his works were wrongly bound with those of Ambrose.”

<sup>7</sup> René Hoven, “Notes sur Érasme et les auteur anciens,” *L'Antiquité classique* 28 (1969): 169–74, esp. 172–74.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Souter, *A Study of Ambrosiaster* (Cambridge: University Press, 1905), 4, flatly states that “Erasmus, in the year 1527, was the first to suspect the accuracy of this ascription” (of the commentary to Ambrose).

<sup>9</sup> Jülicher, article “Ambrosiaster,” col. 1811: “Ambrosiaster, seit etwa 1600 Bezeichnung eines irrthümlich unter die Werke des Ambrosius von Mailand gerathenen Commentars zu den 13 paulinischen Briefen ...”

Hoven himself however also complicated matters, by giving the impression that the origin of the name “Ambrosiaster” could be found in the 1686–90 edition of Ambrose’s works by the Benedictines of St Maur.<sup>10</sup> Having first stated that “C’est seulement dans une notice de l’édition donnée en 1686–1690 par les Bénédictins de Saint-Maur, Du Frische et Le Nourry, que nous l’avons rencontré pour a [sic] première fois,”<sup>11</sup> he nevertheless concludes his article with a reference to “le vocable forgé par les Mauristes.”<sup>12</sup> It seems, then, that he went from initial prudence to a certain degree of rashness.

Regrettably, the latter was followed by many scholars, for instance in the recent study by Sophie Lunn-Rockliffe (2007).<sup>13</sup> Indeed, in the wake of Hoven’s article,<sup>14</sup> and even more so in the wake of Lunn-Rockliffe’s book, there seems to be another emerging consensus on the matter, at least among those who do not simply follow outdated scholarship, according to which these Benedictine editors coined the name.<sup>15</sup> However, while they indeed used the name “Ambrosiaster,” and indeed elaborated on the spuriousness of the commentary within Ambrose’s works, they were not the

<sup>10</sup> If correct, the coinage of the name would occur in the second volume: *Sancti Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi Opera*, ad manuscriptos codices Vaticanos, Gallicanos, Belgicos, etc. nec non ad editiones veteres emendata, studio et labore monachorum Ordinis S. Benedicti, e Congregatione S. Mauri. Tomus Secundus (Paris: Coignard, 1690).

<sup>11</sup> Hoven, “Notes,” 173.

<sup>12</sup> Hoven, “Notes,” 174.

<sup>13</sup> Sophie Lunn-Rockliffe, *Ambrosiaster’s Political Theology* (Oxford Early Christian Studies; Oxford etc.: OUP, 2007), 29–32, 31: “The invention of the name ‘Ambrosiaster’ should be attributed to the Benedictines of St Maur, in their 1686–90 edition of Ambrose’s works. Confusion apparently arose because the Maurists implied that Erasmus and Turrianus had recognized that the *Commentaries* were not by Ambrose, but were vague as to their exact role in this process.” Lunn-Rockliffe follows Hoven in dispelling the idea of an Erasmus coinage, quoting from Erasmus’ 1527 edition, but her own solution is not correct.

<sup>14</sup> Notably by Jean Claude Margolin in his description of Hoven’s article (*Neuf années de bibliographie érasmienne (1962-1970)* [Paris etc.: Vrin etc., 1977], 439: “... l’édition ... (où figure en réalité la première mention du nom controversé)”). Also Pieter F. Hovingh (in Erasmus, *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum [Pars prima]* [ed. Hovingh; ASD 6.5; Amsterdam etc.: Elsevier, 2000], 15 n. 101): “The commentaries to which Erasmus refers, were not written by Ambrose, but by an author who was called Ambrosiaster by the Maurists for the first time, in their edition of Ambrose ...”; see also 34 n. 240 with even a precise reference to the Benedictine edition, and *Annotationes ... (Pars quinta)* (ASD 6.7; Leiden etc.: Brill, 2012), 8.

<sup>15</sup> In spite of the more nuanced statements by Joachim Stüben, “Erasmus von Rotterdam und der Ambrosiaster. Zur Identifikationsgeschichte einer wichtigen Quelle Augustins,” in *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 60 (1997): 3–22, 21–22. Stüben however is not clear whether he accepts Hoven’s attribution or not. A more recent example of a scholar following Hoven and Lunn-Rockliffe is Andreas Kosuch (*Abbild und Stellvertreter Gottes. Der König in herrschaftstheoretischen Schriften des späten Mittelalters* [Passauer historische Forschungen 17; Köln etc.: Böhlau, 2011], 90: “... das Werk eines Anonymus, der, nicht wie häufig behauptet schon von Erasmus von Rotterdam, sondern wohl erst seit dem späten 17. Jh. als Ambrosiaster bezeichnet wird”).

first to use the name itself. Their use of the name “Ambrosiaster” can be shown to depend on earlier sources.

Given this state of affairs, this contribution’s aim is to propose a better candidate for the coinage. In doing so, it hopefully solves the riddle once and for all. At least, it will turn out that Jülicher, in 1894, was pointing in the right direction when he mentioned “around 1600” for the first use of the name “Ambrosiaster.”

## 2. *The Name Itself*

The name “Ambrosiaster” itself is straightforward.<sup>16</sup> It is formed through the suffix *-aster*, which implies (poor) imitation and which is known from classical Latin. There are parallels in humanist scholarship, e.g. “Hieronymaster” (or “Hieronymiaster”); “Dominicaster”; “poetaster.” The last two words were used, though not necessarily coined, by none other than Erasmus. In 1521, he wrote to Aloisius Marlianus, “The world is full of printing houses, full of bad poets [*poetastris*] and rhetorical scribblers.”<sup>17</sup> And in 1523, in a letter to Ulrich Zasius, he wrote: “I cannot fail to approve the religious spirit of the emperor who, under the influence of Dominicasters and Franciscans, believes that these things play an important part in the Christian religion.”<sup>18</sup> In sum, the suffix could be applied by any humanist scholar with a reasonable command of Latin.

One may wonder whether the name “Ambrosiaster” indeed has a negative connotation to it, or simply means “Pseudo-Ambrose.” According to Joachim Stüben, the name reflects a certain humanist superiority in the detection of false attributions.<sup>19</sup> That may well be the case, but there is more, as we will see.

<sup>16</sup> Souter (*A Study of Ambrosiaster*, 1): “... which were wrongly attributed to S. Ambrose until about the year 1600, and, since that time, have passed under the rather fanciful name of ‘Ambrosiaster.’”

<sup>17</sup> *The Correspondence of Erasmus: Letters 1122 to 1251. 1520 to 1521* (ed. Roger A.B. Mynors and Peter G. Bietenholz; Collected Works of Erasmus [CWE] 8; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 175 (Ep. 1195 ll. 154–55); “Mundus plenus est officinis typographicis, plenus poetastris et rhetoristis” (*Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami denuo recognitum et auctum* [ed. Percy S. Allen and Helen M. Allen; vol. 4; Oxford: Clarendon, 1922], 462 (EE 1195 ll. 133–34).

<sup>18</sup> *The Correspondence of Erasmus: Letters 1252 to 1355. 1522 to 1523* (ed. Mynors and James M. Estes; CWE 9; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 444–45 (Ep. 1353 ll. 117–19); “Non possum non probare religiosum Caesaris animum, qui, persuasus a Dominicastris et Franciscanis, credit in hisce rebus magnum esse momentum Christianae religionis” (*Opus epistolarum* [vol. 5; 1924], 264–65 (EE 1353 ll. 103–5).

<sup>19</sup> Stüben, “Erasmus,” 6–7.



## 2. Erasmus

Consultation of Erasmus' 1527 edition of Ambrose's works<sup>20</sup> shows that Erasmus did not doubt the authorship of the commentary as such, though he did question the authenticity of some parts of Ambrose's writings. Two passages in the fourth volume are important in this respect. The first is the "To the Reader"; Erasmus writes:

In the New Testament volumes I discovered nothing foreign to have been included,<sup>21</sup> except that someone unknown to me added introductions to several Pauline epistles under Ambrose's name, or in any case contaminated what Ambrose had put down, particularly in the epistles to the Romans, the Corinthians and the Galatians; in the commentaries themselves it seems some things have been occasionally inserted or omitted.<sup>22</sup>

And as Erasmus' "censura" before the commentary on Romans:

The reader should know that the introductions to the epistles are not by Ambrose, but patched up by someone without skills. In the introduction to this epistle, the variation between the copies was enormous, so that it is readily evident that the scribes could play around as they saw fit, as in their own field. Whoever reads the introductions under Jerome's name found in bibles, will soon discover some of the patchwork by this rhapsodist. If only he had not played around similarly in the commentaries themselves!<sup>23</sup>

In conclusion, Erasmus certainly detected some problems in the introductions, and in the commentary itself as well. He took a clearly negative view

<sup>20</sup> *Divi Ambrosii episcopi Mediolanensis omnia opera ...* (ed. Erasmus; 4 vols.; Basel: Froben, 1527).

<sup>21</sup> In the other "biblical" works, Erasmus raises doubt on a sermon *De Salomone*, and on two prayers.

<sup>22</sup> *Divi Ambrosii episcopi Mediolanensis operum tomus Quartus, continens explicationes, hoc est ea quae faciunt ad interpretationem divinarum scripturarum, veteris testamenti, denique novi* (ed. Erasmus; Basel: Froben, 1527), f. A 1<sup>v</sup>: "In novi testamenti voluminibus nihil admixtum alienum comperi, nisi quod in singulas Pauli epistolas adiecit argumenta, nescio quis, Ambrosii titulo, aut certe quae posuerat Ambrosius, contaminavit, praesertim in epistolas ad Romanos, ad Corinthios, et ad Galatas: et in ipsis commentariis alicubi videntur adiecta quaedam, alicubi decurtata." The passage is also quoted by Stüben ("Erasmus," 11), by Miekske van Poll-van de Lisdonk (Erasmus, *Annotationes ... [Pars quarta]* [ed. van Poll-van de Lisdonk; ASD 6.8; Amsterdam etc.: Elsevier, 2003], 21; referring to "unnummeriertes fol. 2<sup>vo</sup>"), and by Lunn-Rockliffe (*Ambrosiaster's Political Thought*, 30, with a different translation).

<sup>23</sup> *Ambrosii operum tomus Quartus*, 762 (f. Sss 5<sup>v</sup>): "Scito lector argumenta, quae praeferuntur epistolis, non esse Ambrosii, sed inepti cuiuspiam consarcinatoris. In hoc autem argumento prodigiosa erat exemplariorum varietas, ut facile liqueret hic scribas suo arbitrato luisse, velut in suo campo. Si quis legat argumenta, quae feruntur in Bibliis Hieronymi titulo, mox deprehendet aliquot huius rhapsodi centones. Qui utinam non similiter lisset in ipsis commentariis." The passage is also quoted by Stüben ("Erasmus," 12), and by Lunn-Rockliffe (*Ambrosiaster's Political Thought*, 30–31).

of the foreign hand he saw at work. However he did not use the word “Ambrosiaster,” a term, moreover, that would only have been fitting if Erasmus had doubted Ambrosian authorship *in toto*.

#### 4. Sources Earlier than the Benedictine Edition

According to the more recent consensus of scholarship, then, the name “Ambrosiaster” is first found in the 1690 Ambrose edition of the Benedictine editors of S. Mauri. The problem with this position is that it is immediately falsified, when one finds texts such as the following, in 1678, by the jansenist scholar Godefroy Hermant in his biography of Ambrose:

Quant à celuy [the commentary] qui porte son nom sur les Epistres de S. Paul, quiconque l'a leü apres avoir leü les Ecris de saint Ambroise, ne peut pas douter, dit Maldonat, que cét ouvrage ne soit d'un autre auteur. Il semble que ce soit aujourd'huy le sentiment general de toutes les personnes habiles, qui citent souvent ce Commentaire sous le nom d'Ambrosiaster plustost que sous celuy de Saint Ambroise.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, according to Hermant, well-informed scholars, for some time already, cite the commentary under Ambrosiaster's name. In fact, throughout the seventeenth century, references to “Ambrosiaster” can be found, mostly in Jesuit publications.<sup>25</sup> Hence there was a tradition in which this name was used. But where did it start?

#### 5. Lucas Brugensis and his Notationes

The earliest use of the name “Ambrosiaster” I was able to find occurs in Franciscus Lucas Brugensis' 1580 *Notationes*.<sup>26</sup> This book consists of 631

<sup>24</sup> Godefroy Hermant, *La vie de S. Ambroise archevesque de Milan, docteur de l'Eglise et confesseur* (Paris: Du Puis, 1678), 29b. The reference to Maldonatus can be traced to a comment on Matt 19:9, where Maldonatus writes: “Legimus nonnullos auctores veteres in ea fuisse sententia, Tertullianum ..., Ambrosium, aut, ut ego arbitror Remigium in commentariis in priorem epistolam ad Corinth. cap. 7. nam eos commentarios Ambrosii non esse, qui et illos, et Ambrosii legit scripta, dubitare non potest” (Johannes Maldonatus, *Commentarii in quatuor evangelistas* [Lyon: Bruysson, 1598], c. 403).

<sup>25</sup> E.g. Joannis de Pineda, *In Ecclesiasten commentariorum liber unus* (Seville: Vejarano, 1619), 81a; Ludovicus ab Alcasar (Luis del Alcázar), *Vestigatio arcani sensus in Apocalypsi* (Antwerp: Keerbergh, 1614), 89a.

<sup>26</sup> Franciscus Lucas Brugensis, *Notationes in sacra biblia, quibus, variantia discrepantibus exemplaribus loca, summo studio discutiuntur* (Antwerp: Plantin, 1580). The permission for printing is from July 1579 (see page 469). The book can be consulted online at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (<http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/~db/0002/bsb00021531/imagines/>; consulted 23 November 2012). On Lucas Brugensis, see Arthur C. De Schrevel, “Docu-

numbered comments, varying in length from between a few lines to a few pages, on text-critical issues involving the Vulgate, from Gen 3:15 to Rev 22:14. The notes are related to the Vulgate revision by the Louvain scholars, first published in 1574, then in 1580.<sup>27</sup>

Though it is not possible to actually prove Brugensis' personal coinage of the name "Ambrosiaster," a strong case for it can be made, based on the way in which he describes the author of the commentary. As he is studying text-critical problems in the Vulgate, sources such as Ambrosiaster's commentary are of particular importance to him. In the 77 notes on the Pauline epistles (Hebrews excepted, as it is not included in the commentary), the commentary is referred to 43 times. In the very first note (no. 506 on Rom 1:32), it is clear that Brugensis is convinced the commentary was falsely attributed to Ambrose, for he speaks about "the author of the commentaries ascribed to Ambrose."<sup>28</sup> Throughout the notes on Romans and 1 Corinthians, one finds numerous variations on this formula.<sup>29</sup> Then, in the note on 2 Cor 1:21, suddenly "Ambrosiaster" occurs for the first time, explained as follows: "We mean him whom most call Ambrose, joined to Ambrose's works."<sup>30</sup> From then on, one finds either descriptions such as in the notes on Romans, or "Ambrosiaster." This mixture, of course, can be explained by assuming that the notes were not composed in the exact canonical order. In preparing his notes for the printer, Brugensis may have included some that had been written at an earlier stage. Moreover, one should not expect a high degree of editorial consistency in such sixteenth-century publications.

Brugensis' views on the author and the name "Ambrosiaster" become clearer through some of the notes, in particular note 568 on 1 Tim 2:6:

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ments pour servir à la biographie de François Lucas dit Lucas Brugensis—Luc de Bruges," in *Annales de la Société d'émulation pour l'étude de l'histoire et des antiquités de la Flandre* 39 (1889): 191–400.

<sup>27</sup> In the Plantin editions themselves, Ambrosiaster's commentary is referred to in rather neutral terms, though the doubt on its Ambrosian authorship is expressed: "those commentaries that bear Ambrose's name" ("ea commentaria quae Ambrosii titulum ferunt" [e.g. the 1584 edition, f. \*2<sup>v</sup> col. b]). In the marginal notes to the Pauline letters, "*Amb.*" is used.

<sup>28</sup> "Author commentariorum Ambrosio adscriptorum" (*Notationes*, 397).

<sup>29</sup> E.g. "commonly credited to Ambrose" ("quae Ambrosio vulgo tribuuntur" [no. 524 on Rom 12:10; *Notationes*, 411]); "found among Ambrose's works" ("quae in Ambrosii sunt operibus" [no. 529 on Rom 14:9; *Notationes*, 414–15]); "attributed to Ambrose" ("Ambrosio attributorum" [no. 527 on Rom 13:5; *Notationes*, 413]).

<sup>30</sup> No. 547: "illum volumus quem Ambrosium plerique nominant, Ambrosii operibus coniunctum" (*Notationes*, 424).

... in Ambrose or rather Ambrosiaster (for he appropriates Ambrose’s name, but the book is deceptive, though it is by an ancient writer).<sup>31</sup>

More subtle is no. 550 on Gal 2:5: “that Ambrosiaster.”<sup>32</sup> In both expressions, it would seem that for Brugensis, “Ambrosiaster” was not simply a name, but a name in which the pejorative suffix *-aster* was still active.

In other words, it is likely that Brugensis himself coined the name, when he became somewhat tired of inventing endless variations of “the author of the commentary found in the works of Ambrose,” and for that reason introduced the name “Ambrosiaster.” Therefore, the creation of the name may be related to the pride of the humanist scholar Brugensis certainly was—as Stüben assumed it would—, but editorial fatigue probably played a role as well.

### *Conclusions*

The name “Ambrosiaster” is modelled after “Ambrosius” by means of the pejorative suffix *-aster*. It was first published in Franciscus Lucas Brugensis’ 1580 *Notationes*. The name was most likely coined by Brugensis himself, as part of his text-critical work on the revision of the Vulgate. Brugensis probably introduced it when he grew weary of using descriptive terms such as “the author of the commentary attributed to Ambrose.”

It is to be hoped that henceforth Pauline scholars will refrain from referring to Erasmus as the originator of the term “Ambrosiaster,” and give Brugensis the credit he deserves.

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<sup>31</sup> “apud Ambrosium aut Ambrosiastrum potius (usurpat enim, sed mentitur liber, Ambrosii nomen, quanquam sit veteris authoris)” (*Notationes*, 435).

<sup>32</sup> “Ambrosiaster ille” (*Notationes*, 426).



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