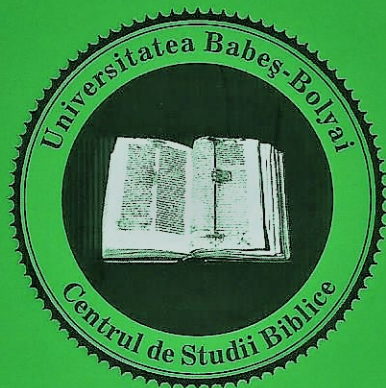


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**AUFSÄTZE ZUR BIBEL
UND IHRER AUSLEGUNG**
-Festschrift für Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr-

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Year XIX, 2021/1-2

Cluj-Napoca

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VORWORT

Mit dem Ende des Wintersemesters 2021/22 ging Prof. Dr. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, Lehrstuhlinhaber für Neues Testament an der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, in den Ruhestand. Zwar mag dies eine gewisse Zäsur bedeuten, denn tatsächlich werden hoffentlich manche, eher lästige Aufgaben, die der Universitätsbetrieb so mitbringt, weniger werden. Die Begeisterung für entscheidende Dinge aber wird sicherlich weitergehen: die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Text des Neuen Testaments als Teil der Welt des frühen Judentums, die Beschäftigung mit biblischer Anthropologie, die Arbeit an einem monumentalen, mit Spannung erwarteten Kommentar zum Jakobusbrief, das Engagement für Ökumene und christlich-jüdischen Dialog, die Liebe zur Musik – und sicherlich auch die Arbeit, die diejenigen verbindet, deren Artikel in diesem Band zusammengestellt sind: der Einsatz für das Eastern European Liaison Committee (EELC) der SNTS.

Auf die eine oder andere Weise haben alle, die sich an dieser kleinen Gabe zu Ehren von Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr beteiligten, ihn über das gemeinsame, zunächst von Uli Luz initiierte Projekt kennengelernt, Bibelwissenschaftler*innen aus Ost und West, evangelisch, katholisch und orthodox, über die Grenzen des einstigen „eisernen Vorhangs“ und über die Grenzen von Konfessionen hinaus zusammenzubringen. Schon Uli Luz ging es immer darum, in möglichst großer Offenheit, Toleranz und Freiheit über das zu diskutieren, was uns verbindet, die Liebe zur Bibel – und dabei nicht einfach zu belehren, sondern zu lernen. Mit seiner kompetenten, unendlich freundlichen, friedlichen, liebenswürdigen und absolut vertrauenswürdigen Art baut Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr als Präsident des EELC Brücken, wo dies alles andere als selbstverständlich ist: Brücken des aufmerksamen Hörens aufeinander, die zu gegenseitigem Respekt, zu Verständnis und in vielen Fällen zu engen, wertvollen Freundschaften geführt haben.

Diese, über Jahre gewachsene Freundschaft wollen die in dem folgenden Bändchen zusammengestellten Beiträge älterer und jüngerer Weggefährter*innen Dir, lieber Karl-Wilhelm, zeigen – und damit gleichzeitig sagen, wie sehr sie sich auf die weitere Zusammenarbeit und gemeinsame wertvolle Zeit – Zeit, die bleibt! – freuen.

Athen, Regensburg und Bukarest im Februar 2022

Christos KARAKOLIS, Tobias NICKLAS und Cosmin PRICOP

EDITORIAL

The biblical Journal *Sacra Scripta* is especially honored to host in its pages, for the year 2021, a Festschrift dedicated to a well-known New Testament biblical scholar, Professor Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, from the Friedrich-Schiller University of Jena, Faculty of Theology.

Sacra Scripta Journal belongs to the Center for Biblical Studies, which functions as a Center for biblical research within the most prestigious University in Romania, namely the "Babeș-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca.

"Babeș-Bolyai" University has among the personalities, who are part of its academic family, famous names from around the world. All these personalities belong to almost all fields of scientific research and have earned their place in the family of our university, either by awarding Doctor Honoris Causa titles or consecrations of honor volumes. Among all these names, additionally there are theologians and Church leaders, as well.

I will mention only a few personalities in this regard: Bartholomew I (Ecumenical Patriarch), Joseph Ratzinger (Vatican, former Pope Benedict XVI), Daniel (Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church), Ulrich Luz (Switzerland), Joannis Zizioulas (Greece), Wolfahrt Pannenberg (Germany), Cristoph Schönborn (Austria), Franz König (Austria), Sirat René-Samuel (France), John Breck (France) etc.

Among all these names is now added, through this Festschrift, Professor Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr.

His scientific activity stands out both in the academic area of teaching and biblical research, through countless publications (Books, Studies, Articles), as well in the theological-ecumenical international field. As an active member of the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* (SNTS) and President of the "Eastern European Liaison Committee" (EELC), he constantly promoted and encouraged New Testament biblical research among young biblical scholars. He did so especially in Eastern European countries dominated for decades by the dictatorial communist regime, which did not allow the Church and Theology to become known in the world through academic exchanges or publications that should go beyond their borders.

In this sense, our colleague Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr followed the policy of promoting these international academic relations, whose pioneer was Professor Ulrich Luz. Thus, at the initiative of U. Luz and with the support of the EELC headed by Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, seconded by his close colleagues, Tobias Nicklas, Christos Karakolis, Carl R. Holladay, William R. G. Loader and others *supported the establishment of Biblical Libraries* in Sankt Petersburg, Sofia, Belgrade, or Biblical Research Centers, such as the one in Cluj-Napoca, which has, thanks to the direct support of Professor U. Luz, even a Biblical Library that currently owns over 4500 volumes. This is the first Biblical Library in Romania established after 1990 in a Biblical Research Center within a University.

This is the reason why this honoring volume was published in Cluj, summing up the two issues of the Sacra Scripta Journal for the year 2021.

I must say, however, that the initiative of writing this volume belongs to Tobias Nicklas and Christos Karakolis. Therefore, they started to gather articles from colleagues or former colleagues of Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr from the International Biblical Organizations "Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas" (SNTS) or "Eastern European Liaison Committee" (EELC). Thus, through their contributions, all the authors express their appreciation and gratitude for all the efforts Karl W. Niebuhr has undertaken in spreading the word of God as a theologian, priest, researcher, and ecumenist.

Through this Festschrift, the prestige of our Journal also increased and the name of our colleague Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr thus entered the gallery of the most prestigious personalities who crown the reputation of "Babeş-Bolyai" University.

On this occasion, we wish our colleague Professor Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr health for his future work as a young retired biblical scholar, concluding our wishes with the words of the third Epistle of John: *"Lieber Bruder, ich wünsche dir in jeder Hinsicht Wohlergehen und Gesundheit, so wie es deiner Seele wohlergeht"* (3 Jn. 1:2).

Stelian TOFANĂ

- Editor in Chief -
Sacra Scripta

Cluj-Napoca,

August, 2022

ONCE MORE ON MK 16.9-20

ANATOLY A. ALEXEEV

Abstract. For the diaspora and the first pagan Christians, Galilee was not an authoritative centre of the Hellenistic era, therefore, in the accounts of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, this event is either simply transferred to Jerusalem (Luke) or separated from the main text by a colophon (John) or questioned in parts of the manuscript tradition (Mark), which influences the modern criticism.

Keywords: Galilee, resurrection, Hellenism, diaspora, Mark's long ending.

The resurrection of Jesus, his return from death to life is actually the content of all four Gospels. In this regard, the sudden end of Mark at 16.8, which is preceded by the firm promise of a meeting with the resurrected Jesus in Galilee (14.28, 16.7), has spawned a great variety of research literature with special emphasis on the contrast between the ending in Mark and other Gospels¹. However, the ending of Jesus' earthly story, as presented in other NT sources, also lacks strong ideological or theological accents. Thus, Jesus' promise of the post-Easter meeting in Galilee in the gospel of Matthew (26.32), repeated by the angel (28.7), is fulfilled in the last lines of the gospel (28.6-20), where it looks like an epilogue, a summary, and not an account of the most significant moment of the whole earthly history of Jesus. A better documented meeting in Galilee is present in John (chapter 21), but, as is commonly believed, it goes beyond the bounds of his gospel, forming a kind of an appendix or addition. Luke does not have a Galilean conclusion to the story at all, and after the crucifixion Jesus appears in the flesh twice - in Emmaus and Jerusalem. In both cases, the eating of bread is evidence of his bodily resurrection (Lk 24.30 and 24.43). This reiteration and at the same time the rejection of Galilee in Luke can hardly be seen as a documentary description. In general, it can be said that the theme of the bodily resurrection in Galilee did not receive a detailed description in any of the four gospels.

It is worth noting that there is other evidence in the Gospels that the Galilean theme was not developed with the care that might be expected.

¹ An eloquent picture of different comments is presented by the collective opus: D. A. BLACK, D. BOCK, K. ELLIOTT, M. ROBINSON and D. WALLACE. *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark: 4 views*. Ed. by D. A. BLACK. Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, 2008.

So, contrary to NT historical message, the birth of the baby Jesus takes place in Bethlehem (Mt 2.2, Lk 2.8), as well as his presentation at the Temple in Jerusalem (Lk 2.22-33), while the subsequent settlement in Nazareth in Galilee is explained by the fear of persecution (Mt 2.22). Jesus spends his coming-of-age day (bar mitzvah) in the Jerusalem temple (Lk 2.42). In his turn, Nathanael (“an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile” Jn 1.47) doubts that there can be “any good thing” coming from Nazareth (Jn 1.46). The Pharisees state with full confidence that “out of Galilee arises no prophet” (Jn 7.52). It is not the inhabitants of Galilee that come to the Jordan to hear John the Baptist preach, but “all the land of Judea and they of Jerusalem” (Mk 1.5), despite the mountainous and difficult terrain². The “synagogues of Galilee” where Jesus preached (Lk 4.44) are supplanted in some manuscripts by “synagogues of Judea”, and this reading is accepted as the basic one in NA 27, that is, it is recognized as the original one. Likewise, rumour of Jesus as a great prophet spread throughout Judea (Lk 7.17), although the return to life of the widow's son took place in Galilee (Lk 7.15-16). One of the temptations of Jesus by the devil takes place on the roof of the Jerusalem temple (Lk 4.9).

It is against this background, in our opinion, that the final episode of the gospel narrative must be viewed. The Long Ending in Mk 16.9-20 after a lengthy discussion was recognized secondary, which was reflected in NA 27 by enclosing it in square brackets. The motivation is based on the textual criticism - this passage is absent from some ancient and authoritative manuscripts. Textual criticism was the first objective and, as it seemed, reliable way to solve basic questions of the history of a text. Still, textual criticism is not the only available tool, only the coincidence of results of different research procedures can provide a reliable result. Doubts about the reliability of the NA 27 position became extremely serious after the recent linguistic research by N. P. Lunn³.

For my part, I try to draw attention to the fact that the NT authors were somewhat skeptical about the Galilean material. Only John's exceptional artistic skill gave the Galilean finale deep expressiveness. By no means can one agree with the widely accepted opinion that Jn 21 is not part of the whole. This chapter contains three most important episodes of John's NT story: 1) the appearance in the flesh of the resurrected Jesus in Galilee, 2) making Peter the main figure of the NT movement, 3) the fate of the Beloved Disciple. The colophon that ends chapter 20

² E. g. some comments: «There is a touch of hyperbole in Mark's reference to all the land of Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem» (TAYLOR V. *The Gospel According to St. Mark*. London, 1966. P. 155) and “When Mark reports that all the people from Judea and Jerusalem were “going out” to John, he may be implying that this was the beginning of a new Exodus (Exodus 13:4, etc.)” (CULPEPPER R. A. *Mark*. Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2007. P. 46).

³ LUNN N. P. *The Original Ending of Mark: A New Case for the Authenticity of Mark 16:9-20*, Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2015.

(absent in many manuscripts, including A and B) can be considered a postscript of an editor who was incapable of a true understanding of the Galilean scene, of its inherent connection with the entire preceding narrative. The perceptible pause in Mark's coherent story between 16.8 and 16.9 is due to the fact that between the two events - the empty open coffin and the Galilee meeting - several days elapsed, not filled with any significant content and simply spent by the apostles in getting from Jerusalem to the Sea of Galilee. Reproduction of the details of Mark's version in Matthew and Luke confirms the existence of the Long Ending. Thus, Mt 28.7 and 28.10 reiterate the order for the disciples to go to Galilee to see the resurrected Jesus, although the resurrected Jesus himself has already appeared at the Jerusalem tomb (Mt 28.9-10). Lk 24.13 has two nameless disciples going to Emmaus, their significance being explained in Mk 16.12-13: they also carried the message of the Resurrection.

It seems that only John proved able to give an integral meaning to the final episode of the NT agony. Luke's literary treatment of the material is not done as carefully, individual scenes are weakly connected to each other. The transfer of the event to Emmaus is not motivated. It seems that the appearance of the resurrected Jesus in Galilee to some extent reduces the significance of the Resurrection, gives it a certain provinciality in the eyes of the evangelists. This turn of the events is inconsistent with the expectations placed on the phenomenon of the Resurrection. From the point of view of the diaspora, Galilee means almost nothing, while the Jerusalem temple means a lot. So, according to a historian, 'the center of Jewish tradition was Jerusalem, the Jewish community of the Diaspora also stood four square on tradition, and this was officially recognized by the authorities'⁴. Moreover, "One of the most important privileges in Jewish eyes was the permission to collect money and to send it to Jerusalem. Augustus stressed this in the clearest possible fashion (Ant. XVI, 162ff.), not being satisfied with mere permission, but also classifying the money as "sacred funds": anyone who stole it was liable to the death-penalty as a *hierosylos*, one guilty of sacrilege"⁵. Collecting money for the Temple, in particular, was one of the aspects of Paul's activity⁶. It is quite obvious that the target audience of the NT message was the Diaspora.

⁴ TCHERIKOVER V. *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*. Translated by S. APPLEBAUM. Philadelphia; Jerusalem, 1959. P. 345.

⁵ Idem. P. 308. Cf. also: HENGEL M. *The 'Hellenization' of Judaea in the First Century after Christ*. In collaboration with Christoph Marksches. London; Philadelphia, 1989. P. 9-18.

⁶ "The very apostle Paul appears as a 'Diaspora Jew' who had become alienated from the faith-ideas of the fathers" (SCHOEPS H. J. *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*. London, 1961. P. 261).

Talking about the promise of a meeting in Galilee with the risen Jesus, W.R. Telford believes that «the significance of the inserted verses 14.28 and 16.7 in Mark is that the evangelist is telling his readers that Jesus promised his disciples that he would appear among the Gentiles, and before them at that»⁷. But our observations rather suggest the opposite. As the “Galilee of the Gentiles” (Isa 8.23), this country is devoid of attraction for the Diaspora. That is why, contrary to the tradition preserved by the other three gospels, Luke excludes Galilee from his account of the Resurrection.

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⁷ TELFORD W. R. *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark*. Cambridge University Press, 1999. P. 149.

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PHILIPPOI OR PHILIPPOLIS, NICOPOLIS EPIRUS OR NICOPOLIS AD NESTUM

IVAN DIMITROV

Abstract. In the Biblical science, including New Testament research, assumptions and hypotheses are often expressed, and great efforts are made to defend opinions that differ from traditionally accepted facts about biblical personalities or events. Such an example are the aspirations of some ambitious Bulgarian scholars to redraw the path of the preaching activity of the apostle Paul on the Balkan Peninsula arguing that he went not to the city of Philippi, but to the city of Philippopolis. The other ancient city that is claimed to be a biblical site is the town of Nicopolis ad Nestum in the middle reaches of the Mesta River in southern Bulgaria. Strange as it may seem, some researchers claim that this is the city where apostle Paul wished to spend the winter months, as he wrote to his disciple Titus (Tit 3:12), and not Nicopolis Epirus. The reasons for the interest in such hypotheses are clear: everyone is seduced by the thought that his place or his country had a glorious but already forgotten history; that only more famous countries and cities are considered to be the centers of events in world history, including Christian history. But history is a memory of truth, not of imaginary events.

Keywords: Philippi, Philippopolis, Nicopolis Epirus, Nicopolis ad Nestum, apostle Paul, province of Macedonia, province of Thrace, the Acts of the Apostles.

In the Biblical science, including New Testament research, assumptions and hypotheses are often expressed, and great efforts are made to defend opinions that differ from traditionally accepted facts about biblical personalities or events. The motives for efforts of this kind could be different, but very often they are related to the desire of certain authors to offer solutions that satisfy their personal ambitions in science (and not just in science). Usually there is a desire to prove something that, according to the authors, will increase the authority of their homeland or their country. But a motive could be not only that, as is the case with the Dr. Heinz Warnecke's study of the site of the Apostle Paul's shipwreck on his way to Rome¹.

¹ Cf. Heinz WARNECKE und Thomas SCHIRRMACHER, *War Paulus wirklich auf Malta?* Neuhausen, 1992. In fact, Dr. Warnecke's theses pitted not so much the scholars among themselves as the inhabitants of Malta against the inhabitants of the Greek island of Kefalonia.

We see such an example in the aspiration of some ambitious Bulgarian scholars to redraw the path of the preaching activity of the apostle Paul on the Balkan Peninsula. Similar attempts have been made with regard as well to other historical figures outside of biblical history.

And now specifically to the examples. In connection with the story of the Acts of the Apostles about the preaching of the apostle Paul in the city of Philippi, Macedonia, some Bulgarian scholars have been seduced by the possibility that he went not to the city of Philippi, but to the city of Philippopolis.²

The reason is that at the time of apostle Paul's visit Philippi was a "small town" inhabited by Roman military colonists - veterans, while Philippopolis was a large city with a developed economic, cultural and religious life, including a synagogue building. The city of Philippopolis is on the banks of the big river Hebros (today called Maritsa), which at that time was navigable.³ Dr. Asen Chilingirov from Berlin in his book "Apostle Paul, Philippi and Philippopolis" and in a number of other related publications tries to refute the traditional perception of the testimony of Acts and the Paul's epistles, and his position gained considerable popularity, especially among non-specialists. Guided by unscientific criteria, many ask themselves: why should we accept that the apostle was in the city of Philippi and not in the city with the similar-sounding name of Philippopolis? In addition, Dr. Chilingirov points to a significant number of scientific literature that he has studied and on whose information he relies. But, of course, he interprets the information in his own way and is definitely biased.

Such a statement is confronted above all with the repeated mention of the name of the city of Philippi outside the story in Acts 16. Here are the examples:

In Acts 20:6 the author notes: "we sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we joined them in Troas" (ἡμεῖς δὲ ἐξεπλεύσαμεν μετὰ τὰς ἡμέρας τῶν ἀζύμων ἀπὸ Φιλίππων καὶ ἤλθομεν πρὸς

² One such is the Bulgarian art historian Asen Chilingirov. Since 1965 he has specialized and then worked in (East) Berlin, teaching History of Arts at the University of Leipzig and at Humboldt University. He is known for often supporting the so-called "fringe theories" that differ from those accepted in science in a given field. It is probable that his scientific pursuits were influenced by his passion for the esoteric teachings of the „White Brotherhood” sect in Bulgaria. In Germany he published the books: 1. Assen TSCHILINGIROV, *Die Kunst des christlichen Mittelalters in Bulgarien*. Beck Verlag München, 1979; 2. *Bulgarien. Kulturgeschichte im Prisma. Vom Altertum bis 1878*. Leipzig 1987. In the last three decades he has published in Bulgaria books on the history of the country and the Bulgarian people, which, however, are met very critically by the scientific community. Among his publications is the book that interests us in the concrete case: *Apostle Paul, Philippi and Philippopolis*. Sofia, 2019 (in Bulgarian: Апостол Павел, Филипи и Филипопол. София, 2019).

³ Valkan VALKANOV, *Maritime History of Bulgaria*. Sofia, 2000, p. 73 (in Bulgarian: Вълкан Вълканов. Морска история на България. София, 2000, с. 73).

αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν Τρωάδα ἄχρι ἡμερῶν πέντε). Of course, they started from Neapolis, which served as a port for the important city of Philippi.⁴

At the beginning of the Epistle to the Philippians (Philippians 1:1), the name of the city of Philippi is mentioned: „Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi” (Παῦλος καὶ Τιμόθεος δοῦλοι Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις).

At the end of the same epistle (4:15), the apostle called the local Christians by the name of their city, associating them with the province of Macedonia: „You Philippians indeed know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia...” (οἴδατε δὲ καὶ ὑμεῖς, Φιλιππησίοι, ὅτι ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, ὅτε ἐξῆλθον ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας...).

The First Epistle to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 2: 2) speaks of what happened to the apostle in the city of Philippi: „but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition” (ἀλλὰ προπαθόντες καὶ ὕβρισθέντες, καθὼς οἴδατε, ἐν Φιλίπποις ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα ἐν τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν λαλήσαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πολλῷ ἁγῶνι).

Even assuming that an error was made in one of these places and the name Philippi was recorded instead of Philippopolis, it is difficult to accept that in all places the information about the city of Philippi is wrong,⁵ and it must be understood the other city named after the Macedonian ruler Philip II – Philippopolis. On the other hand, if the apostle Paul intended to go to Philippopolis, which is still in the province of Thrace, and not in the province of Macedonia, then from Troas he would easily cross the Hellespont Strait (now the Dardanelles) and travel north first and then northwest to Philippopolis. It was not necessary to sail to the island of Samothrace, from there to the port of Neapolis (now Kavala), and only then to look for a way on the river Hebros to Philippopolis. A separate issue is that sailing against the current of this river was not easy. In some places the depth is small and was sailed mainly by rafts, which were pulled upstream by horses. In any case, the apostolic route drawn by the author of the Acts through the island of Samothrace and Neapolis naturally leads to the city of Philippi.

The history of the apostolic work of St. Paul, as can be seen from the description of his missionary journeys, witnesses that his goals were mainly the larger cities on the Mediterranean coast, in which there were also Jewish synagogues, i.e. Jewish

⁴ St. Ignatius of Antioch also speaks of this in his Epistle to Polycarpus, 8, 1 (IGNATIUS ANTIOCHENUS. *Epistula ad Polycarpon*. PG 5, 728).

⁵ Unserious sound the following words of A. Chilingirov: „At the end of the 4th and during the 5th century all liturgical literature, including the four Gospels, was basically re-edited and supplemented with new texts, as very clumsily and without elementary knowledge of the history and topography of the holy places, stories were written, which have nothing to do with the truth” (*Apostle Paul, Philippi and Philippopolis*, p. 114).

communities. The apostle always sought to preach first among them, as he himself points out in his letter to the Roman Christians: „to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι – Rom. 1:16; 2:10). He did this both because of the Jews' familiarity with the expectation of the Messiah and because of their knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.

It is true, that in Asia Minor the apostle Paul went into the mainland, but because of its geographical proximity to Palestine, there was a Jewish community in every major settlement. Nevertheless, the apostle did not go very deep into the land of the peninsula of Asia Minor. While the problem with Philippopolis is that the city is too far (about 300 km) from the Mediterranean coast, and respectively, from the usual route of the apostle, traveling west or east.

The other ancient city that is claimed to be a biblical site is the town of Nicopolis ad Nestum in the middle reaches of the Mesta River in southern Bulgaria. Strange as it may seem, some researchers claim that this is the city where apostle Paul wished to spend the winter months, as he wrote to his disciple Titus: „When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there” (Ὅταν πέμψω Ἀρτεμᾶν πρὸς σὲ ἢ Τύχικον, σπούδασον ἔλθειν πρὸς με εἰς Νικόπολιν, ἐκεῖ γὰρ κέκρικα παραχειμάσαι (Tit 3:12)).

A few kilometers from the current Bulgarian town Gotse Delchev can be seen excavated remains of Nicopolis ad Nestum⁶. According to archeological finds, the city existed in the second millennium BC. As a Thracian settlement during the Hellenistic era, it was known by the Greek name Alexandropolis, and was called Nicopolis by Emperor Marcus Ulpius Traianus in 106, when he conquered Dacia and established it as a Roman province. Trajan gives the name Nicopolis („city of victory”) to two cities in Thrace, located along the rivers Ister (Danube) and Nestos (Mesta).⁷ In any case, this did not happen until the beginning of the second century AD. or about half a century after the apostle Paul's supposed wintering in a town called Nicopolis.

⁶ Or Nicopolis ad Mestum, as the name is written in Greek on coins from antiquity (see Holger KOMNICK, *Die Münzprägung von Nicopolis ad Mestum*. Griechisches Münzwerk. Berlin, 2003, pp. 4, 90).

⁷ Named Nicopolis ad Istrum and Nicopolis ad Nestum respectively. See Velizar VELKOV, “Development of Urban Life. Road System.” – In: *History of Bulgaria I*, 1979, p. 307. Dilyana BOTEVA, “Name and Foundation of Nicopolis on the Mesta River.” – In: *Numismatics, Sphragistics and Epigraphy 3*, Part 2, Sofia, 2007, p. 196 (in Bulgarian: Велизар Велков. «Развитие на градския живот. Пътна система.» – В: История на България I, 1979, с. 307. Диляна Ботева. «Име и основаване на Никополис на р. Места.» – Нумизматика, сфрагистика и епиграфика 3, част 2, София, 2007, с. 196).

Titus 4:2 is the only place in the New Testament where the city of Nicopolis is mentioned. The text of the Epistle to Titus does not specify exactly where this city was. In fact in ancient times there were many cities with recurring names such as Nicopolis, Neapolis, Caesarea, Antioch and others. It is known that Octavian Augustus founded two cities named Nicopolis, both dedicated to his victory at Actium in 31 BC: one in the region of Epirus, on the Ionian Sea coast, not far from the present-day Greek city of Preveza, and the other in Egypt.⁸ Nicopolis of Epirus was founded in 31 BC, and Nicopolis in Egypt – in 24 BC.

Nicopolis in Epirus with its double port was the largest city on the west coast of Greece at that time. Augustus built and organized it as a Greek polis, using the existing settlements around,⁹ and formed a new capital of the province of Epirus. From Nicopolis to Brindisi(um) by sea is about 200 miles, and from there on Via Apia the traveler reaches Rome. As a capital city and a port of contact with Italy and Rome, the city could have been a natural destination for apostle Paul traveling west.

Unlike the Nicopolis Epirus, Nikopolis ad Nestum is still more than 100 km from the sea coast, and the road to it passes through high mountain saddles, because in the valley of the river Mesta the terrain is impassable in places. And perhaps most importantly: from Nicopolis ad Nestum there is no easy access to other large settlements that would be of interest to the missionary Paul. Therefore, it seems pointless to choose such a place for a winter break.

However, these considerations do not prevent some authors from insisting that the apostle remained in Nicopolis ad Nestum during the winter months. They even point out as evidence the hot mineral springs in the vicinity of the city, as well as modern churches and chapels dedicated to apostle Paul.¹⁰

The reasons for the interest in such hypotheses are clear: everyone is seduced by the thought that his place or his country had a glorious but already forgotten history; that only more famous countries and cities are considered to be the centers of events in world history, including Christian history. But history is a memory of truth, not of imaginary events.

⁸ JOSEPHUS FLAVIUS in his work *De bello Iudaico* (4, 659) notes the name of the Egyptian Nicopolis: μέχρι Νικοπόλεως, εἴκοσι δὲ αὕτη διέχει τῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας σταδίου. He also mentions the inhabitants of Nicopolis (apparently Nicopolis of Epirus): ἀλλ' Ἀθηναῖοι καὶ Λακεδαιμόνιοι Νικοπολῖται τε (Ibidem, 1, 425). See also STRABO, *Geography*, 7.7.5-6; 10.2.2 and more details in DIO CASSIUS, *Roman History*, 50.12.1-8; 51.1.2-3.

⁹ According to DIO CASSIUS (*Roman History*, 51.1.2-3).

¹⁰ This is used as evidence of a possible memory of apostle Paul in the area. See for this hypothesis: TODOR SABEV, "The Missionary Work of St. Paul the Apostle and His First Disciples on the Balkan Peninsula." – In: *Duhovna kultura*, 7-8 /1967, p. 34 (in Bulgarian: Тодор Събев, «Мисионерското дело на св. апостол Павел и неговите първи ученици на Балканския полуостров.» – В: Духовна култура, 7-8/1967, с. 34).

It is natural that such stories and tales as the mentioned hypotheses about Philippopolis and Nicopolis ad Nestum have a place in world literature, but when we talk about the truth and exactly the truth about important events in the life of the Church, we can not get carried away and trust unprovable fabrications.¹¹

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¹¹ Because very often these are "statements of unproven knowledge and emotions" (Prof. Plamen RADEV, "Let's be careful with the life of St. Hermas." *Vestnik „Plovdivski universitet”*, issue 5-6 / 14.6.2011, pp. 18-19. In Bulgarian: Проф. дпн Пламен Радев, «Да бъдем внимателни с житието на св. ап. Ерм.» Вестник „Пловдивски университет”, бр. 5-6/14.6.2011 г., с. 18-19).

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VERWANDLUNG DURCH DIE CHRISTOLOGISCHE SCHRIFTLESUNG (2 KOR 3,18)

Das Lesen der Schrift als „mystische“ Erfahrung

PREDRAG DRAGUTINOVIĆ

Abstract. Im Aufsatz wird eine Auslegung des 2 Kor 3,18 vorgeschlagen, die versucht, diesen Vers enger an Anagnosko-Diskurs von 2 Kor 3,1-18 zu binden. Das Verb κατοπτρίζομαι wird im Rahmen des Anagnosko-Diskurses verstanden und daraus resultierende Verwandlung wird als eine ethische Transformation betrachtet. Die Schrift christologisch lesend, werden die Christen verwandelt, indem sie sich Jesus angleichen, der das Bild Gottes ist. Das Leben nach dem aus der Schrift gewonnen Bild Christi verwandeln, heißt zunächst mit ihm leiden, um zur Doxa zu erlangen. Die Doxa Christi in der Schrift wie in einem Spiegel zu schauen ruft zu einer inneren Verwandlung des Lesenden in das Bild Christi hervor. Durch den Anagnosko-Diskurs wird das Spiegelmotiv nicht eliminiert, sondern in der Akt des Lesens involviert.

Keywords: Paulus, Mystik, christologische Lesung der Schrift.

Auf dem Feld der Untersuchungen zur Mystik des Paulus nimmt der 2. Korintherbrief eine Sonderstellung ein. Neben dem berühmten Abschnitt 2 Kor 12,1–4, der als der wichtigste Text zum Thema gilt, werden noch zwei Texte als von Bedeutung zum Thema betrachtet, nämlich 2 Kor 3,18 und 4,6. Im Unterschied zu 2 Kor 12 und 4,6, die wohl ein einmaliges Ereignis beschreiben (im ersten Fall wenigstens ein seltenes, vgl. 2 Kor 12,4: ἡρπάγη; 4,6: ἔλαμψεν), geht es bei 2Kor 3,18 um eine dauernde, wiederholbare Erfahrung der Christen (κατοπτριζόμενοι, μεταμορφούμεθα). Wird hier eine „mystische Erfahrung“ beschrieben? Oft ist in der Forschung eine positive Antwort zu treffen: Ja, hier redet Paulus wohl über eine mystische, nicht aber näher greifbare Erfahrung, die zur Christusbildung gehört und zu der alle Christen aufgerufen sind.¹ In diesem Sinne schreibt B. Blackwall:

¹ Es gibt eine Reihe von Forschern, die 3,18 gerade so deuten. Der Vokabular variiert – vision, deification, theosis, christosis, Offenbarungsgeschehen, mystisches Erlebnis –, aber die Sache ist dieselbe: Es geht um ein in 3,18 beschriebenes „mystisches“, göttliches Erlebnis. G. THEISSEN, „Paulus und die Mystik. Der eine und einzige Gott und die Transformation des Menschen“, *ZThK* 110 (2013) 263-290, diskutiert 2Kor 3,18 im Kontext der mystischen illuminatio und in Bezug auf die drei neuere Vorschläge, die alle „einen berechtigten Kern“ haben (270-271): Die

„Probably more than any other verse in the Pauline corpus, the transformation in 2 Cor 3,18 has attracted comments about deification in modern literature“.²

Kann man die beschriebene Erfahrung näher bestimmen? Wie verhält sich diskursiv diese Beschreibung eines mystischen Geschehens in 2 Kor 3,18 mit dem komplizierten Gedankengang 3,1–17? 2 Kor 3,18 stellt nach wie vor eine *crux interpretum* dar. Vieles in diesem Vers ist umstritten. Er gehört zu einem nicht weniger umstrittenen Abschnitt 3,1–18, der inhaltlich so reich, so voll verschiedener Themen, so umfassend ist, dass man hier ein undurchsichtiges Netz von verschiedenen Diskursen beobachtet. Es wird sich zeigen, dass der dominierende Diskurs in dem

mystische Deutung auf Verwandlung durch Gottesschau, die kerygmatische auf das Charisma des Offenbarungsmittlers, und die ethisch-moralische Verwandlung des Menschen. Zur „mystischen“ Deutung der Stelle im Mittelalter TH. SCHMELLER, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther (2Kor 1,1 – 7,4)*, EKK VIII/1, Neukirchener – Patmos, Neukirchen – Vluyn – Ostfildern 2010, 229–231. Vgl. M. D. LITWA, *We are Being Transformed. Deification in Paul's Soteriology*, BZNW 187, de Gruyter, Berlin – New York 2012, 216–223; B. BLACKWELL, *Christosis. Pauline Soteriology in Light of Deification in Irenaeus and Cyril of Alexandria*, WUNT 314/2, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2011, 183ff; J. LAMBRECHT, „Transformation in 2 Corinthians“, *Biblica* (1983) 243–254; V. RABENS, „The Holy Spirit and Deification in Paul: A 'Western' Perspective“, in: P. DRAGUTINOVIĆ, K.-W. NIEBUHR, J. B. WALLACE, in co-operation with CH. KARAKOLIS (Hg.), *The Holy Spirit and the Church according to the New Testament. Sixth International East-West Symposium of New Testament Scholars, Belgrade, August 25 to 31 2013*, WUNT 354, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2016, 209–216; M. J. GORMAN, „Paul's Corporate, Cruciform, Missional Theosis in 2 Corinthians“, in: M. J. THATE, K. J. VANHOOZER, C. R. CAMPBELL (Hg.) *„In Christ“ in Paul. Explorations in Paul's Theology of Union and Participation*, WUNT 2/384, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2014, 181–208. Vgl. z.B. A. WIKENHAUSER, *Die Christusmystik des Apostel Paulus*, Herder, Freiburg 1956, 152: „Als Hauptbeweisstelle für die These, dass auch Paulus eine Gottesschau ähnlich der Mystik kenne, gilt 2 Kor 3,18 ...“; H.-CH. MEIER, *Mystik bei Paulus. Zur Phänomenologie religiöser Erfahrung im Neuen Testament*, Francke, Tübingen und Basel 1998, 83–94; S. VOLLENWEIDER, *Freiheit als neue Schöpfung. Eine Untersuchung zur Eleutheria bei Paulus und in seiner Umwelt*, FRLANT 147, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1989, 277–279 (der Text wird aber vom selben Autor nicht diskutiert in: „Außergewöhnliche Bewusstseinszustände und die urchristliche Religion. Eine alternative Stimme zur psychologischen Exegese“, in: G. THEISSEN und P. VON GEMÜNDEN (Hg.), *Erkennen und Erleben. Beiträge zur psychologischen Erforschung des frühen Christentums*, Gütersloh 2007, 73–90); J. B. WALLACE, *Snatched into Paradise (2 Cor 12:1–10). Paul's Heavenly Journey in the Context of Early Christian Experience*, BZNW 179, de Gruyter, Berlin – New York 2011, 184–188; U. LUZ, „Paulus als Charismatiker und Mystiker“, in: T. HOLTZ, *Exegetische und theologische Studien. Gesammelte Aufsätze II*, ABG 34, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Leipzig 2010, 92. D. MARGUERAT, „Paul the Mystic“, in: id., *Paul in Acts and Paul in His Letters*, WUNT 310, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2013, 162–178, erwähnt in seinem Aufsatz die Stelle nicht. Was alles unter „Mystik“ verstanden werden kann, ist nicht das Thema dieser Untersuchung. Ich begnüge mich hier mit einer einfachen Definition der Mystik als „Erfahrung göttlicher Wirklichkeit“ (MEIER, *Mystik bei Paulus*, 94).

² BLACKWELL, *Christosis*, 191.

Abschnitt der *Diskurs des Lesens* (und Verstehens) ist,³ und dass gerade dieser Diskurs ganz entscheidend die Bedeutung des Verses 3,18 bestimmt. Der Vers 3,18 müsste m. E. viel dichter im Duktus dieses Diskurses betrachtet werden, als in der bisherigen Forschung getan wurde. Die entscheidende Frage ist, ob man 3,18 aus dem vorangehenden Diskurs des Lesens (und Verstehens) löst, und auf eine ganz andere Weise deutet (z. B. als eine plötzliche Beschreibung eines nicht näher bestimmten „mystischen“ Geschehen der Ausstrahlung der Gesichter der Christen), oder ob man konsequent aus dem Diskursnetz der vorangestellten Ausführungen, besonders aus dem Anagnosko-Diskurs, die Inhalte 3,18 zu verstehen versucht.

1. Diskurse und Gegenüberstellungen. 2 Kor 3, 1–18 – ein Text über das Lesen der Schrift?

2 Kor 3,1–18 gehört einem breiteren Diskurs in dem 2. Korintherbrief, nämlich 2 Kor 2,14–7,4. Das Hauptthema dieses Abschnitts ist der Aposteldienst des Paulus.⁴ Das Thema beginnt mit der Frage nach *παρηγοία* des Paulus (2,14) und endet mit einer Bitte um Vertrauen (6,11–7,4). In 2 Kor 3,1–18 wird die *διακονία* des Paulus thematisiert, besonders als *καινή διακονία*, die mit dem Dienst des Moses

³ So seit Altertum Origenes (Princ IV 1,6). Vgl. in Bezug dazu U. LUZ, *Theologische Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments*, Neukirchener Theologie, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2014, 470: „Die wissenschaftliche allegorische Lektüre der Schrift, welche die Augen öffnet für die göttlichen Geheimnisse und für das Christuszeugnis des Mose und der Propheten, und der Glaube an den Mensch gewordenen Gottessohn, welcher die ‚Decke‘ über den biblischen Schriften entfernt, erschließen sich also wechselseitig“. Vgl. auch M. MITCHELL, *Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2010, 59-60; E. KÄSEMANN, Geist und Buchstabe, in: id., *Paulinische Perspektiven*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 1969, 253-267; S. GROBE, „Geist und Buchstabe, Varianten eines biblischen Themas in der Theologieschichte“, in: *Heiliger Geist, JBTh* 24 (2009) 157-178, bes. 157-162; J. SCHRÖTER, „Schriftauslegung und Hermeneutik in 2 Korinther 3. Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Schriftauslegung des Paulus“, *Novum Testamentum* 40/3 (1998) 231-275; M. D. HOOKER, „Beyond the Things that are Written? St Paul's Use of Scripture“, *Novum Testamentum* 27 (1981) 303: „2 Corinthians 3-4 is an important passage, not simply because it is an interesting example of Pauline exegesis, but because in its central section it raises the question of the role of scripture.“ J. ECKERT, „Die geistliche Schriftauslegung des Apostel Paulus nach 2 Kor 3,4-18“, in: id., *Dynamik in Wort. Lehre von der Bibel. Lehre aus der Bibel*, KBW, Stuttgart 1983, 241-256.

⁴ Vgl. die thematische Aufteilung bei R. BULTMANN, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, KEK, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1976, 65. Er geht davon aus, dass die Korintherkorrespondenz aus vier Briefen besteht, wobei der erste Brief eine Kombination aus Briefen A und B, während der zweite eine Kombination aus C und D ist (ibid., 22-23). Die anderen Hypothesen arbeiten lediglich entweder mit anderer Zahl der Briefe oder mit anderen Kombinationen, während die Zugehörigkeit des Abschnittes 3,1–18 zu 1-7 meist unbestritten bleibt. Vgl. SCHMELLER, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, 26. Nach K. Berger gehört der Abschnitt 2Kor 3,1-18 der literarischen Gattung Selbstempfehlung, deren Charakteristiken sind: Apologie, das Verhältnis des Apostels mit der Gemeinde, biographische Elemente, Polemik. Vgl. K. BERGER, *Formgeschichte des Neuen Testaments*, Quelle und Meyer, Heidelberg 1984, 265-267.

verglichen wird.⁵ Der Vergleich geschieht aber so, dass der Mosedienst als bleibend wichtiger Teil eines größeren Ganzen verstanden wird, in dem der Geistesdienst des Paulus hinzukommt, ohne den ersten Dienst vollständig aufzuheben.⁶

Eine Beschreibung des Textes 2 Kor 3,1-18 zeigt einerseits die Komplexität des Gedankenganges des Paulus, andererseits eine permanente Fokussierung an die Thematik des Lesens und Verstehens der verschiedenen Texte (die Empfehlungsbriefe und jüdische Schrift, besonders Ex 34,29-35 LXX). Dass die Thematik des Lesens eine ganz wichtige Thematik dieses Abschnittes ist, kann man anhand von zwei Beobachtungen verdeutlichen: 1) An einer bemerkenswerten Häufung des Vokabulars zum „Lesen“ durch den ganzen Abschnitt, und 2) An einer Reihe von Gegenüberstellungen, in denen Lesen und Verstehen eine diskursiv prominente Rolle spielen.

1) Der Akt des Schreibens/Lesens und Verstehens ist sprachlich eine Konstante. Der Abschnitt wird eröffnet mit der Frage nach Empfehlungsbriefen, um dann festzustellen: ἡ ἐπιστολὴ ἡμῶν ὑμεῖς ἐστε, ἐγγεγραμμένη ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν, γνωσκομένη καὶ ἀναγινωσκομένη ὑπὸ πάντων ἀνθρώπων (V 2). Ähnliches Vokabular wird weiterhin verwendet: ἐγγεγραμμένη οὐ μέλανι ἀλλὰ πνεύματι θεοῦ ζῶντος, οὐκ ἐν πλαξὶν λιθίναις (V 3). In den Versen 6 und 7 ist von γράμμα, bzw. ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου ἐν γράμμασιν ἐντετυπωμένη λίθοις ἐγενήθη ἐν δόξῃ die Rede. Ab V. 13 und 14 wird das Lesen und Verstehen intensiver thematisiert: τὸ αὐτὸ κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τῇ ἀναγνώσει τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης (V 14), ἃν ἀναγινώσκηται Μωϋσῆς (V 15).

2) Es ist nicht immer einfach, die einzelnen Diskurse im größeren Netz der Diskurse und Gegenüberstellungen auseinanderzuhalten. Sie alle aber ruhen auf dem Prätext Ex 34, d.h. sie entwickeln sich entlang dieses Textes der jüdischen Schrift.⁷

a) Der Doxa-Diskurs (alt/neu). Es handelt sich um ein thematisches Hauptwort, das alleine im Abschnitt 2 Kor 3,7–4,6 dreizehn Mal vorkommt. Es geht zuerst um eine Auslegung der Doxa des Mose, so wie sie im Ex 34 dargestellt wird. Paulus bestreitet die Doxa des Mose bzw. die des Alten Bundes nicht. Auch ihr kommt göttliche Herrlichkeit zu, aber im Vergleich mit der neuen Doxa gilt sie als vergänglich. Dies sehen aber nicht alle, weil die Hülle des Mose und die Verstockung der Gedanken (VV 13.14) sie immer noch daran hindert, die neue Doxa Christi zu sehen.⁸

⁵ Vgl. T. NICKLAS, „Der verborgene Herrlichkeit des Paulusdienstes. Überlegungen zu 2Kor 3,1-4,6“, in: D. SÄNGER (Hg.), *Der zweite Korintherbrief. Literarische Gestalt – historische Situation – theologische Argumentation. Festschrift für Dietrich-Alex Koch*, FRLANT 250, Göttingen 2012, 240-256; J. SCHRÖTER, „Schriftauslegung und Hermeneutik“, 252.

⁶ NICKLAS, „Der verborgene Herrlichkeit“, 248.

⁷ Vgl. THRALL, M., „Conversion to the Lord. The Interpretation of Exodus 34 in 2 Cor 3,14b-18“, in: L. LORENZI (Hg.), *Paulo – Ministro del Nuovo Testamento*, SMBen.BE 9, Rom 1987, 197-232.

⁸ NICKLAS, „Die verborgene Herrlichkeit“, 252.

b) Der Diatheke-Diskurs (alt/neu) bringt das Thema des „Bundes“ zur Sprache (VV 6.14; bezogen auf Jer 38,31-34 LXX) und zwar als Antithetik von Mosediatheke und Christusdiatheke.⁹ Aufgrund seiner Christologie unterscheidet Paulus zwischen Altem und Neuem Bund, indem ab V 7 „der Kontrast zwischen Altem und Neuem Bund in die Frage nach der Bedeutung und rechten Interpretation des Alten Testaments als heiliger Schrift mündet“.¹⁰

c) Der Diakonia-Diskurs (alt/neu) durchdringt 1Kor 3,1-4,6, wobei der ganze Abschnitt 2,14–7,4 als Verteidigung des paulinischen Aposteldienstes gelesen werden kann.¹¹ Paulus bittet hier einen Vergleich von Mose- und Aposteldienst: „Dem Text geht es nicht in erster Linie um eine Bestimmung des Verhältnisses von altem und neuem Bund. Die Aussagen des Textes, die sich damit auseinandersetzen, stehen vielmehr im Dienst, die (verborgene) Herrlichkeit des Apostolischen Dienstes des Paulus zu beschreiben“.¹²

d. Der Pneuma-Diskurs funktioniert in der Antithetik Buchstabe – Geist (VV 3.17.18). In diesem Diskurs wird behauptet, dass „von Christus her das Wesen des Alten Bundes als tötendes Gramma, als Gesetz, das in den Tod führt, offenbart, das Wesen des Neuen Bundes aber als in die Freiheit entlassende Rechtfertigung sola gratia.“¹³

e. Der Kalymma-Diskurs (VV 13. 14.15.16.18) ist ein wichtiger Bestandteil der Argumentation.¹⁴ Die Hülle verhindert das richtige Verständnis der jüdischen Schrift und steht einer adäquaten Christuserkenntnis im Wege.¹⁵ Diese Hülle liegt bis heute auf dem Vorlesen des Alten Bundes, wenn Mose vorgelesen wird, sie wird aber entfernt, wenn sich einer zum Herrn bekehrt. Damit wird das Gesicht enthüllt (3,18) und ein adäquates Lesen der jüdischen Schrift ermöglicht. Es geht

⁹ E. GRÄSSER, *Der Alte Bund im Neuen. Exegetische Studien zu Israelfrage in Neuen Testament*, WUNT 35, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 1985, 78.

¹⁰ GRÄSSER, *Der Alte Bund im Neuen*, 87.

¹¹ NICKLAS, „Der verborgene Herrlichkeit“, 242: „Die Rede von ‘alten’ und ‘neuen Bund’ jedoch steht im Dienst der Rede von beiden ‚Dienstern‘ – und nicht umgekehrt“. Vgl. SCHRÖTER, „Schriftauslegung und Hermeneutik“, 250-255.

¹² NICKLAS, „Der verborgene Herrlichkeit“, 243.

¹³ GRÄSSER, *Der Alte Bund im Neuen*, 92. Vgl. BLACKWELL, *Christosis*, 177.

¹⁴ D.-A. KOCH, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums. Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus*, BHT 69, Tübingen 1986, 340: „V 14f. zeigt, dass Paulus sich an der Situation der Verlesung der Schrift im Synagogengottesdienst orientiert, d. h. an der Tatsache der prinzipiell divergierenden Schriftauslegung in Synagoge und christlicher Gemeinde“; J. GÖTTESBERGER, „Die Hülle des Moses nach Ex 34 und 2 Kor 3“, *Biblische Zeitschrift*, 16/1-2 (1924) 1-17; W. C. UNNIK, „With Unveiled Face. An Exegesis of 2 Corinthians iii 12-18.“, *Novum Testamentum* 6 (1963) 153-169.

¹⁵ Th. WITULSKI, „Der alte und der neue Bund. Die Funktion von 2Kor 3,7-18 im Kontext der Argumentation des Paulus in 2Kor 2,14-4,6“, in: D. SÄNGER (Hg.), *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 351.

dabei offenbar um richtiges Verstehen dessen was in der Schrift steht, wobei κάλυμμα der alten Lesung ein richtiges Verstehen der Schrift verhindert. Es handelt sich in dieser Passage gerade um „die gewaltsame Uminterpretation des Alten Testaments“, bzw. um „eine unbewusste Umstrukturierung des Alten Testaments“. ¹⁶

f. Der Eleutheria-Diskurs entfaltet sich, indem sich der V 17 über V 18 an V 16 anschließt. ¹⁷ So wird die Freiheit als die Freiheit in der Interpretation der Schrift kundgegeben. ¹⁸

g. Der Anagnosko-Diskurs. Neben genannten Diskursen kommt in 2Kor 3,1–18 noch einer vor, der m. E. den Abschnitt zusammen hält, der Anagnosko-Diskurs. Es geht wiederum um eine Opposition alt/neu und zwar um die Frage, wie man die Schrift liest. Fast alle Diskurse münden dann im V 18, wobei der Diskurs des Lesens dort nicht nur nicht verschwindet, wie eine „mystische Deutung“ die im V 18 die gewisse Ausstrahlung der Christen sieht, sondern gerade eine prominente Rolle spielt.

2. 3,18 – Textpragmatisch. Die mystische Erfahrung der Schriftlesung als ethische Verwandlung?

Aus dem Gesichtspunkt der Textpragmatik sollte V 18 eine Schlüssel-Rolle für die Vernetzung aller Diskurse spielen. Das zeigt sich nicht zuletzt darin, dass der Vers „die ungewöhnlich dichte theologische Füllung (um nicht zu sagen Überfrachtung)“ aufweist. ¹⁹ Andererseits gibt es viele exegetische Probleme und in der Forschung viele verschiedene Vorschläge, wie sie zu lösen sind.

Der Text kann folgendermaßen übersetzt werden:

„Wir alle aber schauen mit enthültem Gesicht die Herrlichkeit des Herrn wie in einem Spiegel und werden in dasselbe Bild umgewandelt, von Herrlichkeit zu Herrlichkeit, wie vom Herrn, dem Geist“. ²⁰

¹⁶ G. THEISSEN, *Psychologische Aspekte paulinischer Theologie*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen ²1993, 157.

¹⁷ BULTMANN, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, 93.

¹⁸ R. B. HAYS, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, Yale University, New Haven and London 1989, 149-153.

¹⁹ SCHMELLER, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, 224.

²⁰ Die Übersetzung hier von SCHMELLER, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 193. So ähnlich die neue Einheitsübersetzung (*Stuttgarter Neues Testament*, 2018): „Wir alle aber schauen mit enthültem Angesicht die Herrlichkeit des Herrn wie in einem Spiegel und werden so in sein eigenes Bild verwandelt, von Herrlichkeit zu Herrlichkeit, durch den Geist des Herrn“. Eine ausführliche Liste der Vertreter dieser Bedeutung (sonst belegt bei Philo, LA III.101) findet sich bei S. LORENZEN, *Das paulinische Eikon-Konzept. Semantische Analysen zur Sapientia Solomonis, zu Philo und den Paulusbriefen*, WUNT 2/250, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2008, 228 (Anmerkung 121). Eine alternative Übersetzung vgl. z.B. bei E. REINMUTH, *Anthropologie im Neuen Testament*, Francke,

Eine close reading zeigt, dass hier fast alle zuvor genannte Diskurse zusammen kommen: 1) ὑμεῖς δὲ πάντες (wahrscheinlich Diakonia-Diskurs, Paulus und *seine* Gemeinde in Korinth), 2) ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ - Kalymma-Diskurs / Lesen-Diskurs (περιαιρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα durch Glauben an Jesus, V 16), 3) τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι (Doxa-Diskurs / Lesen-Diskurs: κατοπτριζόμενοι funktioniert im Rahmen des Anagnosko-Diskurses!), 3) τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα (Lesen Diskurs, Ethik), 4) ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν (Doxa-Diskurs, Ablesen der beiden Herrlichkeiten in der Schrift), 5) καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος (Pneuma-Diskurs).

Die Deutung der πάντες ist umstritten. Die Forscher sind sich nicht einig, ob Paulus hier an sich und die weiteren Apostel denkt, was dem Diakonia-Diskurs entsprechen würde, oder hier an die zum Glauben an Jesus Christus bekehrte Korinther gedacht wird. Die meisten vertreten die Meinung dass hier im Grunde an alle Christen gedacht wird.²¹ Zitiert sei G. Theißen, bei dem man von Sozialmystik sprechen kann: „Alle Christen erleben die Schau der Gottheit unmittelbar und sind dazu berufen, sie an andere zu vermitteln“.²² Obwohl diese Deutung durchaus plausibel ist, würde ich unter πάντες eher „ich und ihr (die Korinther)“ als „alle Christen“ verstehen.

Auf jeden Fall treten die πάντες mit ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ auf. Das hier verwendete Partizip Perfekt bezeichnet keinen temporären Zustand, sondern eine „permanent condition“²³. Es liegt nahe, dass die Phrase „mit enthülltem Gesicht“ eher ein Schauen-können als von den anderen geschaut werden zu können bezeichnet. Aber es scheint so zu sein, dass das Verstehen dieser Phrase von der Exegese des weiteren Ablaufs des Diskurses abhängt.

Die πάντες stehen in einer doppelten Entsprechung: einerseits gegenüber zu Israel bzw. den Juden, andererseits gegenüber zu Mose, denn nur sein Gesicht war

Tübingen und Basel 2006, 219: „Wir alle spiegeln mit enthülltem Angesicht die Herrlichkeit des Herrn wider, und werden so in sein eigenes Bild verwandelt, von Herrlichkeit zu Herrlichkeit, durch den Geist des Herrn“.

²¹ Für die Deutungsmöglichkeiten vgl. BLACKWELL, *Christosis*, 183ff. Vgl. auch SCHMELLER, *Der zweite Brief and die Korinther*, 224-225.

²² THEIßSEN, „Paulus und die Mystik“, 270 (vgl. auch S. 276. 288). Vgl. auch NICKLAS, „Die verborgene Herrlichkeit“, 253; er sucht die Phrase enger an den Diakonia-Diskurs zu binden: „Der Paulusdienst hat tatsächlich Herrlichkeit an sich, und zwar nehmen alle, die sich dem Herrn zuwenden, an einem Transformationsprozess teil, der sie nach demselben Bild in Herrlichkeit gestaltet.“

²³ J. LAMBRECHT, *Second Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina 8, Collegeville, Minnesota 1999, 55. Durativer Aspekt des Partizip Präsens suggeriert, dass es sich um „kein punktuell, einmaliges Ereignis der Vergangenheit, sondern ein sich gegenwärtig vollziehendes dauerhaftes Sehen“ handelt (F. BACK, *Verwandlung durch Offenbarung bei Paulus. Eine religionsgeschichtlich-exegetische Untersuchung zu 2Kor 2,14 – 4,6*, WUNT 2/153, Tübingen 2002, 144). Gegen MEIER, *Mystik*, 95: Das beschriebene Ereignis stellt „eine Ausnahme“ dar.

verhüllt.²⁴ Aus der Entscheidung, welche Entsprechung hier vorliegt, wird auch die Übersetzung von κατοπτρίζομενοι abhängen. Da es hier um ein Hapax Legomenon im Neuen Testament geht, ein in der antiken Literatur ansonsten seltenes Verb, wird die Bedeutung heftig diskutiert. Eine Entscheidung ist aber nur möglich, wenn man den unmittelbaren Kontext berücksichtigt. In der Forschung werden zwei Übersetzungen diskutiert: Entweder bedeutet das Verb κατοπτρίζομαι „widerspiegeln“ oder „schauen (wie im Spiegel)“.²⁵ Also, im Kontext betrachtet, ergeben sich drei Möglichkeiten: 1) Wenn die πάντες ihre Entsprechung zu Mose finden, dann könnte das Verb mit „widerspiegeln“ übersetzt werden,²⁶ 2) Falls die πάντες den Juden gegenüberstehen, dann könnte es mit „schauen, beschauen“ übersetzt werden, und 3) Wenn die πάντες sowohl Mose als auch den Juden gegenüberstehen, dann ist eine Entscheidung in dieser Hinsicht unmöglich zu treffen.²⁷

Im V 13 wird behauptet, dass eine Hülle Mose daran hinderte, Israel Gottes Herrlichkeit zu zeigen. Das könnte zu der Annahme verleiten, dass die Enthüllung in V 18 etwas ist, das πάντες befähigt, Gottes Herrlichkeit widerzuspiegeln, die die anderen Menschen an ihrem enthüllten Gesicht als Ausstrahlung sehen können. Es muss aber beachtet werden, dass ab V 14 der Akzent versetzt wird, und die Hülle wird zu einem Etwas, das sich über Israels Herzen legt und sie daran hindert, Gottes Herrlichkeit zu sehen: „... wenn sie den alten Bund lesen, bleibt dieselbe Hülle unangetastet; denn nur in Christus ist sie weggenommen (V 14)“; „... eine Hülle liegt über ihren Herzen (15)“; „... wenn man sich dem Herrn zuwendet, wird die Hülle weggenommen“ (16). Dies deutet darauf hin, dass im V 18 eher das Gegenüber der πάντες zu Israel bzw. zu den Juden, dargestellt wird.²⁸ So wie die Hülle, die Juden

²⁴ SCHMELLER, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, 225.

²⁵ Das Verb bedeutet im Aktiv „spiegeln“ oder „widerspiegeln“, im Medium aber „sich im Spiegel sehen“ oder „wie in einem Spiegel sehen“. Die ausführliche Diskussion und die Begründung verschiedener Entscheidungen bei L. TACK, „A Face Reflecting Glory. 2 Cor 3,18 in its Literary Context (2 Cor 3,1 – 4,15)“, *Biblica* 1 (2015), 85-111. M. F. HEATH, *Paul's Visual Piety: The Metamorphosis of the Beholder*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013, 218-223. M. D. HOOKER, „Beyond the Things“, 308 (footnote 12), sieht keinen wesentlichen Unterschied zwischen den beiden Bedeutungen: „Many commentators understand κατοπτρίζεσθαι here to mean ‚behold‘, but the parallel with Moses suggests that it is used with its alternative meaning ‚reflect‘. The difference is not great. It is only as they gaze at Christ that Christians are able to reflect his glory. If they are said to be changed from glory to glory through looking at the glory of Christ, then they are clearly understood to be reflecting that glory“.

²⁶ Dass das Vers 2 (ἀναγινωσκομένη ὑπὸ πάντων ἀνθρώπων) zur Deutung von κατοπτρίζομενοι als einer sichtbaren Ausstrahlung der Gesichter der Christen engagiert werden könnte, leuchtet nicht ein, weil es sich dort auf die ἐπιστολή bezieht und nicht auf δόξα.

²⁷ So J. KREMER, *2. Korintherbrief*, SKK 8, Katholisches Bibelwerk, Stuttgart ²1998, 42.

²⁸ Vgl. z. B. zu Tachuma Buber Schemot 16, G. STEMBERGER, *Mose in der rabbinischen Tradition*, Herder, Freiburg – Basel – Wien 2016, 77: „Mose verhüllt sein Gesicht und als Belohnung für dieses Zeichen der Ehrfurcht vor Gott bewirkt Gott, dass die Israeliten sich fürchten, das

daran hindert zu schauen, so ermöglicht die Enthüllung das Schauen der Doxa. Auf diese Weise wird das Verb in seinem Medium Form verstanden: „schauen wie in einem Spiegel“.²⁹

Wenn es so ist, was dann schauen die πάντες wie in einem Spiegel? Was ist gemeint mit dem Spiegel, in den die πάντες schauen? Und was könnte Gegenstand ihres Wie-im-Spiegel-Schauens sein? Margaret Thrall schreibt:

“On the other hand, when one attempts to give experiential content to this beholding of Christ as the mirror of God’s glory, it seems as though a two-stage process is required by way of explanation. Paul himself has seen the glorious Christ face to face, but his readers had not. For them, Christ, the reflection of God, must be reflected in some further medium. This must be a ‘visible’ medium of some sort ...”³⁰

strahlende Gesicht Moses anzusehen. Deshalb legt er einen Schleier über sein Gesicht. Genz anders als in 2 Kor 3,12-18, wo die Hülle auf dem Gesicht Moses bedeutet, dass die Israeliten die Bedeutung des biblischen Wortes nicht verstehen, deutet der Midrasch die Hülle auf dem Gesicht Moses positiv – sie ist dem Abglanz Gottes auf Moses Gesicht geschuldet ...“ Vgl. M. THRALL, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Vol. I: Introduction and Commentary on II Corinthians I–VII (ICC)*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1994, 283; HEATH, *Paul’s Visual Piety*, 219. Vgl. H.-J. KLAUCK, *Zweiter Korintherbrief*, Neue Echter Bibel 7. Neues Testament, Würzburg 1986, 41, plädiert für die Bedeutung „schauen“ und die Gegenüberstellung der Christen zu Israeliten: „Übersetzt man ‘schauen (wie in einem Spiegel)’, so befinden sich die Christen in der Rolle der Israeliten, nur dass ihnen möglich ist, was jene nicht vermochten, nämlich den göttlichen Glanz auszuhalten.“

²⁹ Die Spiegelmetaphorik ist sowohl in der religiösen Sprache des Judentums als auch der des Hellenismus häufig. Vgl. F. BACK, *Offenbarung*, 24-58; MEIER, *Mystik bei Paulus*, 83-94; Besonders ergiebig für das Thema ist die Untersuchung von A. WEISSENRIEDER, „Der Blick in den Spiegel. II Kor vor dem Hintergrund antiker Spiegeltheorien und ikonographischen Abbildungen“, in: A. WEISSENRIEDER, F. WENDT and P. VON GEMÜNDEN (Hg.), *Picturing New Testament. Studies in Ancient Visual Images*, WUNT 2/193, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2005, 313-343. Vgl. S. 315: „Dieses Sehen, das als Blick gedacht ist, unterscheidet sich von unserem heutigen Vorstellung des Sehens insofern, als man in der Antike davon ausgegangen ist, dass sowohl von dem Gegenstand als auch von dem Auge eine Strahlung ausgeht ... Antike visuelle Artefakte geben wieder, dass Spiegel Wirklichkeit verwandeln und nicht repräsentieren ... Bei allen Abbildungen, die Spiegel zum Thema haben, ist eines bemerkenswert: die Partizipation am Spiegelbild. Der Betrachter wird durch das Gesehene transformiert.“

³⁰ THRALL, *Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 284. Vgl. HEATH, *Paul’s Visual Piety*, 225: “The kind of seeing that is involved has a spiritual dimension, but a physical object is not to be excluded.” Gegen TACK, “A Face Reflecting Glory”, 110; sie sieht 2 Kor 4,16-18 als Erklärung zu 3,18 (also „reflect“, nicht „behold“) und schreibt zum Spiegel: „As a visible optical instrument it does not so much refer to itself as an object, but it refers rather to the object that exists outside itself and is reflected on its polished surface. Even a blurred mirror in the end directs the attention away from the bronze disk, of which mirrors usually consisted, to the particular image it shows on its surface.“

Gleich danach bestimmt die Autorin “two ‘visible’ modes of Christ’s presence. His own ministry ... a kind of replica of the death and resurrection of Jesus” und “in the Eucharist”.³¹

Diese Auslegung überzeugt nicht ganz, stellt aber die Frage nach dem “visible medium of some sort”. Sie überzeugt nicht, weil es Paulus selbst (samt der πάντες) ist, der „schaut wie im Spiegel“. Es kann nicht daran gedacht werden, dass Paulus sich selber betrachtet, z.B. sich als Träger des Dienstes oder seinen Dienst. Die πάντες, Paulus eingeschlossen, sind das Subjekt des Schauens. Dass Paulus hier so über lediglich über seinen Dienst spricht, leuchtet also nicht ein. Dass hier, andererseits, ein gottesdienstliches Ereignis beschrieben wird, ist nahe liegend, besonders wenn man den angeführten Synagogengottesdienst als Vergleich nimmt (V 14).³² Der Kontext des Gottesdienstes darf hier wohl angenommen werden, es geht aber Paulus nicht um Brot und Wein oder Gebet, sondern um einen Vorgang, den er mit der schwierigen Formulierung τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα beschreibt. Gerade aber diese Analogie des Blickens mit verhülltem Gesicht bei der Synagogenvorlesung, also des Gespertheits für das christologische Verstehen der Schrift, suggeriert, dass es auch in V 18 τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι um ein christologisches Lesen/Verstehen der Schrift gehen könnte. Die Formulierung „schauen die Doxa des Herrn“ weist auf die paulinische christologische Vorlesung der Schrift hin und ist eine Explikation des V 14: ἄχρι γὰρ τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας τὸ αὐτὸ κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τῇ ἀναγνώσει τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης μένει μὴ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον, ὅτι ἐν Χριστῷ καταργεῖται. Das Ergebnis eines solchen enthüllten Lesens der Schrift ist dann eine Umwandlung des Lesenden, der das Bild Christi in sich selbst entdeckt (deswegen wie im Spiegel!) und dementsprechend seine/ihre Lebensweise anpasst. Das Bild ist hier von 2 Kor 4,4 zu verstehen, wo das Bild Gottes Christus ist (ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ).³³

Die Verwandlung ist also hier eine ethische Transformation³⁴, die als Folge des christologischen Lesens der Schrift geschieht. Das Leben nach dem aus der

³¹ THRALL, *Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 284-285.

³² BULTMANN, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, 98, schreibt: „An eine kultische oder mystische Schau denkt Paulus nicht, selbst wenn für ihn – analog dem Blicken mit verhülltem Gesicht bei der Synagogenvorlesung – der Augenblick des Schauens primär der christliche Kult ist, in dem das Evangelium verkündet wird ...“

³³ SCHMELLER, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, 227: „Wenn in 3,18 die Glaubenden in ‘dasselbe Bild’ verwandelt werden (sc. in das Bild, das sie sehen), dann ist nur mittelbar an den Bildspender (Gott) gedacht, der seinerseits für die Christen zum Bildspender wird.“ Vgl. auch REINMUTH, *Anthropologie*, 217-222; LORENZEN, *Das paulinische Eikon-Konzept*, 233-234.

³⁴ Vgl. RABENS, “Holy Spirit”, 216; LITWA, *We are Being Transformed*, 216-223. Religionsgeschichtlich gesehen, ist der Gedanke, durch Verwandlung durch das Schauen aufgegriffen zu werden,

Schrift gewonnen Bild Christi zu verwandeln, heißt zunächst mit ihm zu leiden, um zur Doxa zu erlangen.³⁵ Die Schrift christologisch lesend, werden die Christen verwandelt, indem sie sich Jesu angleichen, der das Bild Gottes ist (4,4). Die Doxa Christi in der Schrift zu schauen ruft eine innere Verwandlung des Lesenden in das Bild Christi hervor, eine Verwandlung, die dann in der Lebensweise im Glauben, ohne Gesetz, sichtbar wird. So wird das Spiegelmotiv nicht eliminiert, sondern in den Akt des Lesens integriert.

Die Phrase ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν ist exegetisch höchst umstritten.³⁶ Wenn man sie aber aus dem Aspekt des Lesens und Verstehens der Schrift zu deuten versucht, dann wird auch hier ein christologisches Verstehen der Schrift vorausgesetzt, wo die alte Doxa in eine neue übergeht. Sie wird hier ähnlich wie die Phrase „aus Glauben zum Glauben“ (Röm 1,7), also vom Ursprung zum Ziel verstanden.³⁷ So wird die Doxa des Alten Testaments in der Doxa des Neuen Testaments zur Schau gebracht.

Der Ausdruck καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος ist im Lichte vom V 6 (δὲ πνεῦμα ζωοποιεῖ), V 8 (ἡ διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος) und V 17 (ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν· οὗ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου, ἐλευθερία) zu verstehen. V. 17 ist eine weiterführende Erklärung der vorhergehenden Aussage (V 16): Die Wirkung desselben Herr wird im V 16 und V 17 beschrieben.³⁸ Das V 17 umschließt den Vorgang des christologischen Lesens der Schrift: Der Geist ist Hermeneut, er ermöglicht eine christologische Lesung der Schrift, die dann die Christen verwandelt, in eine neue Existenz im Glauben hineinführt:

„Die Schrift muss von Christus her und auf ihn hin gelesen werden, wobei dann selbst das Gesetz seine ursprüngliche göttliche Intention zurückgewinnt und zur Verheißung des neuen, eschatologischen Gehorsams wird. Der Geist erhält hier eine hermeneutische Funktion“.³⁹

ziemlich verbreitet: J. ECKERT, „Zeichen und Wunder in der Sicht des Paulus und Apostelgeschichte“, *TThZ* 88 (1979) 19-33.

³⁵ WALLACE, 187: “Paul may imply the necessity of suffering in 3,18”. Vgl. auch GORMAN, “Paul’s Corporate”, 191.

³⁶ Vgl. z. B. die Diskussion P. DUFF, “Glory in the Ministry of Death: Gentile Condemnation and Letters of Recommendation in 2Cor 3: 6-18”, *Novum Testamentum* 46 (2004) 313-337; J. LAMBRECHT, “From Glory to Glory (2 Corinthians 3,18). A Reply to Paul B. Duff”, *ETL* 85/1 (2009) 143-146.

³⁷ M. WOLTER, *Paulus. Ein Grundriss seiner Theologie*, Neukirchener Theologie, Neukirchen – Vluyn 2011, 173.

³⁸ I. HERMANN, *Kyrios und Pneuma. Studien zur Christologie der paulinischen Hauptbriefe*, StANT 2, Kösel, München 1961, 44.

³⁹ E. KÄSEMANN, „Geist und Buchstabe“, 266-267.

Es ist also gut möglich, dass es im V 18 beim Verb κατοπτρίζομαι eine Synonymie vorliegt, und zwar mit einer Steigerung der semantischen Intensität.⁴⁰ Es könnte ein Synonym für ἀναγινώσκω sein, und die Bedeutung der sprachlichen Konstruktion könnte man dann so verstehen: „Wir alle aber mit enthülltem Gesicht die Herrlichkeit des Herrn (in der Schrift) sich hineingebend lesen“ oder „seine Herrlichkeit aus der Schrift aus wie in einem Spiegel lesen (und verstehen) ...“.⁴¹ Liege dann hier eine paulinische *lectio divina* vor? Oder sind hier die Ansätze zu der späteren patristischen θεωρία zu erkennen? Das Verb κατοπτρίζομαι drückt viel stärker das Ereignis des Hinein-involviert-seins in die Sache der Schrift als ἀναγινώσκω aus, weil die Folge einer solchen Akt nicht einfach Verstehen ist, sondern Verwandelt-Sein. Wenn man Christus in der Schrift schaut, schaut man sich selbst und wird verwandelt in das Bild Christi, was nichts anderes bedeutet als ein verwandeltes Leben zu führen.⁴² Der Glaube an Christus, der durch die christologische Lektüre der Schrift fundiert ist, führt in ein verwandeltes Leben, das nicht mehr auf dem Gesetz aufruht, sondern auf dem Glauben an Jesus Christus.

Folglich werden im V 18 die vorige diskursive Gegenüberstellungen intensiviert und zum Punkt gebracht:

⁴⁰ Dazu H. LAUSBERG, *Elemente der Literarischen Rhetorik. Eine Einführung für Studierende der klassischen, romanischen, englischen und deutschen Philologie*, Hueber, Ismaning¹⁰1990, 92.

⁴¹ In diese Richtung geht auch WALLACE, 187: “Those who turn to the Spirit see something more than just the letters of the Law of Moses and something more than just the outwardly contemptible body of Paul”.

⁴² D. LITWA, “2 Corinthians 3.18 and Its Implications for Theosis”, *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 2/1 (2008) 129–130: “We immediately observe that the church’s divinity, for Paul, is not an ontological state—let alone a mystical one—but consists (at least in this life) in a mode of being that is manifested in concrete ethical acts. This is why in Rom 12:2 Paul’s exhortation to ‘be transformed’ (μεταμορφωθῆτε, the only other Pauline use of the verb μεταμορφώω outside of 2 Cor 3:18) is definitely a moral transformation ...”. Bei der Auslegung des 3,18 wird Röm 12,2 nur nebenbei als eine Stelle erwähnt, an der das Verb auch vorkommt. In der Regel werden aber die Ausführung von Röm 12,2 für das Verstehen von 3,18 als unbrauchbar erklärt (z. B. BACK, *Offenbarung*, 153-154). Diese Stelle ist aber wichtig, weil sich zeigt, dass Verwandlung nicht ein irrationales, unbegreifbares Ereignis ist, sondern sich eng mit dem Verstehen verbindet (μεταμορφωθῆτε τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοός). Vgl. LAMBRECHT, “Transformation”, 303. Vgl. auch H.-D. BETZ, „Das Problem der Grundlagen der paulinischen Ethik (Röm 12,1-2)“, in: id, *Paulinische Studien. Gesammelte Aufsätze II*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 1994, 184-205.

Verhüllende Lesung – unverhüllte/christologische/geistliche Lesung (ἀνακαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ)
Die Lektüre, die die Doxa Christi erkennt – Lektüre, die die Doxa Jesu Christi <i>in der Schrift</i> schaut (τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτρίζομενοι)
Lebensführung nach dem tötenden Buchstaben des Gesetzes – Lebensführung nach dem aus der Schrift gewonnen Bild Jesu Christi (τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα)
Alter Bund – Neuer Bund (ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν)
Der Geist des Herrn ermöglicht die christologische Lektüre (καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος)

3. Schlussbemerkungen: Die neue Lektüre der jüdischen Schrift in Christus

2 Kor 3,1–18 ist ein polemischer Text. Polemisiert wird über die Schrift. Deswegen ist der Anagnosko-Diskurs so präsent und deswegen ist 2 Kor 3,18 als der Höhepunkt des Anagnosko-Diskurses aufzufassen. Hier geht es um die christologische Lesung der Schrift, durch welche die Christen in das Bild bzw. die Existenz Jesu verwandelt werden. Soweit liegt hier eine mystische Erfahrung vor. Die Christen werden eingeladen, in eine schriftgemäße Wirklichkeit einzutreten, die sich dann im Leben im Glauben manifestiert. Diese mystische Erfahrung besteht aber m.E. nicht darin, dass die Christen die Doxa Christi reflektieren und so sichtbar machen, sondern darin, dass sie die Schrift christologisch lesen und das Gelesene auf das eigene Leben zurückwirken lassen.

Mit den Gegnern, die Judenchristen sind, polemisiert Paulus mittels Gemeinde: Seine Mitteilungen rufen die Gemeinde auf, seine Gedanken an Richtigkeit zu prüfen und ihm Recht zu geben. Mit einer durchdachten Strategie werden die Gegner mit der Synagoge gleichgestellt. Paulus meint, dass die Gegner im Lesen und Verstehen der Schrift viel Gemeinsames mit der Synagoge haben. Wirft Paulus seinen Gegnern ein Unvermögen vor, sich aus dem Judentum und der alten Doxa vollständig zu lösen? Ist somit ihre Lesung der Schrift ähnlich der Lesung der Juden und damit defizitär? Hindert diese defizitäre christologische Lesung der Schrift die Gegner daran, wirklich dem Ethos Christi zu folgen – ohne das Gesetz des Mose? In 3,18 wird gesagt, dass eine christologisch-befreiende Lektüre der Schrift das Leben der Lesenden verwandelt, indem sie sie befähigt, Christus auf seinem Kreuzweg nachzufolgen (so wie es Paulus tut!). Diese Art des

Lesens und Verstehens der Schrift wird dann mit der Ethik eng verbunden.⁴³ Ein Christ, der die Schrift christologisch liest und deutet, wird ethisch verwandelt.⁴⁴

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⁴³ Das könnte kompatibel sein mit dem, was Volker Rabens „transformation through contemplation“ nennt. Vgl. RABENS, “Holy Spirit”, 208.

⁴⁴ WOLTER, *Paulus*, 173: „Auch wenn die sprachlichen Verhältnisse undurchsichtig bleiben, ist deutlich erkennbar, was Paulus hier sagen will: dass es nämlich der Geist ist, der es den Christen erlaubt, anderes als Mose (V. 13) und anders als Israel (V. 15), die Herrlichkeit Gottes unverhüllt zu sehen. Er macht („verwandelt“) sie dadurch zum demselben Abbild Gottes, wie es bereits Jesus Christus selbst ist, an dem sie die Herrlichkeit Gottes „wie im Spiegel“ erkannt haben. Der Geist bewirkt also nicht nur die Erkenntnis Gottes in Jesus Christus, sondern auch die Angleichung der Glaubenden an Jesus Christus. Durch den Geist bekommen sie Anteil an die Herrlichkeit Gottes, die sie in seinem Sohn erkennen.“

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“GREATER THAN THEY” (LUKE 9:46) ON THE RECEPTION OF A MARKAN DOUBLET IN LUKE

WOLFGANG GRÜNSTÄUDL

Abstract. The most widely accepted example of a Markan doublet is the logion on greatness in Mark 9:35//10:43–44. Both halves of this “sayings doublet” are themselves part of two episodes on quarrels among Jesus’ disciples (cf. Mark 9:33–37; 10:35–45) which build something like a “narrative doublet” in Mark. Assuming Luke’s redaction of Mark, the present study analyzes the fate of this striking Markan doublet(s) within the Lukan framework in order to shed some new light at Luke’s redactional activity as well as his theological agenda. After a brief look at Luke’s incorporation of Mark 9:33–37 and Mark 10:35–45, this paper highlights some unexpected interpretative challenges in Luke 9:46–48 and argues for a fresh reading of Luke 9:46 (based on a very old proposal) that may offer a solution to the riddles of Luke’s redaction of Mark 9:33–37.

Keywords: Gospel of Mark – Gospel of Luke – doublets – quarrel over greatness – redaction criticism.

One of the main reasons for the importance of so-called “doublets” in the history of the Synoptic Problem is their uneven distribution. While the gospels of Matthew and Luke contain a significant number of doublets, hardly any of them can be found in Mark.¹ The most widely accepted example of a Markan doublet is the logion on greatness in Mark 9:35//10:43–44. Both halves of this “sayings doublet” are themselves part of two episodes on quarrels among Jesus’ disciples (cf. Mark 9:33–37; 10:35–45) which build something like a “narrative

¹ For terminological discussions (e.g., “sayings doublet”, “narrative doublet”) and the history of research on doublets in Luke, cf. W. GRÜNSTÄUDL, ‘Wieviele Doubletten finden sich im Lukasevangelium? Forschungsgeschichtliche und methodologische Klärungen’, *ETL* 97 (2021), 191–222. For a discussion of doublets in Matthew, see P. FOSTER, ‘The Doublets in Matthew: What Are They Good For?’, in *An Early Reader of Mark and Q*, eds. ed. J. VERHEYDEN and G. VAN BELLE. BTS 21 (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 109–138. Possible doublet-based arguments for or against a certain solution to the Synoptic problem are evaluated in W. GRÜNSTÄUDL, ‘Luke’s Doublets and the Synoptic Problem’, *NTS* 68 (2022), 13–25.

doublet” in Mark.² Assuming Luke’s redaction of Mark, the present study analyzes the fate of this striking Markan doublet(s) within the Lukan framework in order to shed some new light at Luke’s redactional activity as well as his theological agenda.

This enterprise seems to be promising for at least two reasons: First, Luke is well known for his tendency to picture Jesus’ disciples in a rather favorable way. The omission of both Peter’s rebuke as ‘Satan’ (cf. Mark 8:33) and the abandonment by the disciples (cf. Mark 14:50) are among the most prominent examples for this Lukan characteristic. Hence it will be interesting to see how Luke deals with a Markan tradition which not only contains a quite unfavorable image of Jesus’ disciples but even appears twice within Mark’s narrative. Second, Luke’s treatment of doublets has been assessed in very different ways: While some scholars underscore Luke’s *Dublettenfurcht*,³ others state that Luke displays even more doublets than Matthew.⁴ Studying Luke’s redactional activity in relation to a doublet which he already found in one of his sources can fairly be expected to foster the understanding of Luke’s attitude to the literary phenomenon of doublets.

After a brief look at Luke’s incorporation of Mark 9:33–37 and Mark 10:35–45, the following study highlights some unexpected interpretative challenges in Luke 9:46–48, proposing that a fresh reading of Luke 9:46 (based on a very old proposal) may offer some solutions to the riddles of Luke’s redaction of Mark 9:33–37.

1. Luke’s Reception of a Markan Doublet

On the assumption of Markan priority, Luke found two passages about quarreling disciples in Mark. With neither Mark 9:33–37 nor Mark 10:35–45 being part of the so called “great omission” (Mark 6:45–8:26, which is missing between Luke 9:17 and 9:18) the question poses itself in which way Luke, who tends to draft a more positive image of the disciples as Mark, incorporated these passages into his own narrative.

² For a helpful introduction to repetitions in Mark, see G. VAN OYEN, “Repetitious Style and the Interpretation of the Gospel of Mark”, in *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel: style, text, interpretation*, ed. G. VAN OYEN, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 223 (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 109–125.

³ This view was most prominently advocated by H. SCHÜRMANN, ‘Die Dubletten im Lukasevangelium: Ein Beitrag zur Verdeutlichung des lukanischen Redaktionsverfahrens’, *ZKT* 75 (1953) 338–345: 341 n. 25. For a critique, cf. GRÜNSTÄUDL, ‘Dubletten’ (see n. 1), 209–212.

⁴ Cf. M. TIWALD, *Die Logienquelle. Text, Kontext, Theologie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016), 19.

1.1 Luke’s Reception of Mark 9:33–37

With the important exception of the “great omission” mentioned above, Luke’s ninth chapter follows the Markan story line quite closely until the beginning of the so-called *Reisebericht* or Central Section in Luke 9:51. This is also true for the dispute among the disciples which is related in Mark 9:33–37. As in Mark, this episode follows the second passion prediction (Luke 9:43b–45; cf. Mark 9:30–32; Matt 17:22–23) and precedes John’s complaint about the foreign exorcist (Luke 9:49–50; cf. Mark 9:38–40, missing in Matthew). Luke’s representation of the Markan material includes nevertheless a series of noticeable modifications. First of all, Luke omits the secret journey through Galilee mentioned in Mark 9:30, the return of the group to Capernaum, and the location of Jesus’ teaching ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ (Mark 9:33). The missing topographical information strengthens the connection between Luke’s version of Mark 9:33–37 and the second passion prediction.⁵ Because Luke further omits the short dialogue from Mark 9:28–29 (the references εἰς οἶκον and κατ’ ἰδίαν included), no change of time or place is narrated between the descending of Jesus, Peter, John, and James from the mountain the day after the transfiguration (cf. Luke 9:37) and the decision to go towards Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). Thus, Luke 9:46–48 appears to be connected not only with the passion prediction in Luke 9:44–45, but even with the healing of the possessed boy in Luke 9:37–43.

In addition to these modifications of narrative context, Luke undertook a major reworking of the content of Mark 9:33–37, which is described by Joseph Fitzmyer in the following way: “He omits the first saying of Jesus (= Mark 9:35bc) and composes his own version of it at the end of the story (v. 48c). In introducing, first of all, the illustration of the little child and the saying about it, to which v. 48c is then appended, he creates a much more unified episode”⁶ then Mark 9:33–37, where “two incidents are topically arranged”⁷. Luke’s Jesus addresses the disciples (cf. Luke 9:43.46) but neither does he call the Twelve (ἐφώνησεν τοὺς δώδεκα, Mark 9:35) nor does he take the child in his arms (cf. Luke 9:47 with Mark 9:36; see also Luke 18:15–17, where diff. Mark 10:16 not even the laying of his hands on the children is reported). In sum, Luke 9:46–48 may not only be called “a much more unified episode” then Mark 9:33–35.36–37, but also appears to be much better embedded into its immediate context of Luke 9:37–50.

⁵ Cf. F. BOVON, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Lk 1,1–9,50), EKK III/1 (Zürich: Benziger/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989), 517.

⁶ J. A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke (I–IX): Introduction, translation, and notes*, The Anchor Bible 28 (Garden City: New York Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1986), 815–816.

⁷ FITZMYER, *Luke I* (see n. 6), 815.

1.2 Luke's Reception of Mark 10:35–45

Luke's reception of Mark 10:35–45 is rather different compared to that of Mark 9:33–37. After the third passion prediction (Mark 10:32–34//Lk 18:31–34) and before the healing of the blind man at Jericho (Mark 10:46–52 [after Jericho]//Lk 18:35–43 [before Jericho]), a parallel to Mark 10:35–45 *is missing* in Luke's storyline. For this reason, Mark 10:35–45 is sometimes listed among Luke's omissions from Mark.⁸ Later in the Lukan narrative (Luke 22:24–27), however, we do find a second scene which depicts Jesus and his disciples discussing greatness: Placed immediately after the Last Supper (Luke 22:14–23), this pericope displays some striking similarities with Mark 10:35–45 and thus the possibility of a Lukan transposition (and transformation) of Mark 10:35–45 needs to be considered. Closely linked to the thorny issue of identifying sources behind Luke's passion narrative,⁹ the debate whether Luke omitted or transposed Mark 10:35–45 is organized around one crucial question: Is it plausible to assume that Luke inserted a quarrel (φιλονεικία) among the apostles into such a solemn context as the Last Supper?

This question appears to be even more pressing if one takes into account Luke's above-noted tendency to brighten the portraits of the disciples. Shall we consider that no one other than Luke, who demonstrably changed Mark several times in order to put the disciples in a more favorable light, moved the story about the disciples' quarrel to one of the most inappropriate places one could think of – right after the Last Supper? On first sight, this would seem to be absurd. On a closer look, however, Luke 22:24–27 fits quite well into Luke's narrative. Peter K. Nelson convincingly demonstrated that Luke 22:24 is closely connected to Luke 22:23 on at least two different levels. First, the reference backwards with δὲ καὶ is not “künstlich”¹⁰ at all, but guarantees that καὶ is taken in an adverbial sense: After the search for the betrayer *another* debate arises amongst the apostles.¹¹ Second, the structure of Luke 22:23 is paralleled in Luke 22:24 with both verses including an indirect question about a certain person within the group. Both observations lead to the impression that Luke

⁸ E.g., in D. RUSAM, ‘Das Lukasevangelium’, in *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, eds. M. EBNER and S. SCHREIBER, 3rd. ed., Kohlhammer-Studienbücher Theologie 6 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2020), 187–209: 193, who gives the following reason for Luke's omission: “Der Jüngerstreit in Mk 10,35–45 ist von Lukas deshalb ausgelassen, weil er wie eine Dublette des Streites von Lk 9,46 wirkt und dadurch die Jünger – ähnlich wie in Mk 8,14–21 – in schlechtem Licht dargestellt werden...”.

⁹ Cf. the discussion in M. WOLTER, *Das Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 686–692.

¹⁰ H. KLEIN, *Das Lukasevangelium*, KEK I/3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 669.

¹¹ Cf. P. K. NELSON, *Leadership and discipleship: a study of Luke 22:24–30*, Dissertation series/Society of Biblical Literature 138 (Atlanta: Ga. Scholars Press, 1994), 139.

22:24–27 should be read in the light of Luke 22:21–23 with the former being an “escalation”¹² based on the latter. According to Nelson, “in terms of the Lukan story line, the immediate occasion for the v 24 quarrel is the v 23 dispute, for it is not impossible, that other factors (e.g., table position and posture) may have had a role in shaping the sequence of events.”¹³ In difference to Mark 10:35, where the request of James and John, ultimately leading to Jesus’ teaching about greatness in Mark 10:43–44, follows the third passion prediction (Mark 10:32–34) rather abruptly, the φιλονεικία of Luke 22:24 arises thus in a situation of doubt and stress. By this, Luke 22:24–26 is not only located at a plausible place within Luke’s narrative but also introduced in a way that makes the concern(s) of the disciples a bit more understandable than in Mark 10:35–45.¹⁴

This brief look at the incorporation of Mark 9:33–37/10:35–45 into the Third Gospel reveals some substantial changes by Luke’s redaction. In Luke 9:46–48, Luke moves the saying about greatness from the beginning of Jesus’ answer (Mark 9:35) to its end (Luke 9:48) and ties his version of Mark 9:33–37 very closely to its immediate context which turns Luke 9:37–50 into a new, coherent unit. However one decides upon the source behind Luke 22:24–26, it is both striking that Mark 10:35–45 is missing at its “proper” place in Luke (between Luke 18:34 and 18:35) and that Luke includes an episode about quarreling disciples at the Last Supper which is introduced in a very similar way as his reworking of Mark 9:33–37 in Luke 9:46–48 (compare Luke 9:46 [εἰσῆλθεν δὲ διαλογισμὸς ἐν αὐτοῖς, τὸ τίς ἂν εἴη μείζων αὐτῶν] with Luke 22:24 [ἐγένετο δὲ καὶ φιλονεικία ἐν αὐτοῖς, τὸ τίς αὐτῶν δοκεῖ εἶναι μείζων]!). To sum up, Luke did not take over the doublet Mark 9:33–37/10:35–45 as it appears in Mark, but created a doublet of his own (Luke 9:46/22:24)¹⁵ on the basis of Markan material.

¹² NELSON, *Leadership* (see. n. 11), 140.

¹³ NELSON, *Leadership* (see. n. 11), 141. KLEIN, *Lukasevangelium* (see. n. 10), 669: “Aus der Diskussion, wer der Verräter sei, wird ein Streit, wer der Größte ist (V.24).” This statement is meant ironically (as a critique of Luke’s bad connection at this point) – but in my opinion, it is true in its plain sense.

¹⁴ Although an elaborated case for or against a Markan background of Luke 22:24–26 lies beyond the scope of this study, the observation of G. CAREY, (‘Moving Things Ahead: A Lukan Redactional Technique and Its Implications for Gospel Origins’, *BibInt* 21 (2013), 302–319, at 309) that Luke’s transmissions of Markan material usually include heavy reworking, seems worth of noting.

¹⁵ Interestingly, Luke 9:46/22:24 is listed in most of the classical studies of Lukan doublets, but seems to be somehow “forgotten” in more recent literature on the topic, cf. GRÜNSTÄUDL, ‘Dubletten’ (see n. 1), 213–214.220.

2. Difficulties With a Careful Redaction (Luke 9:46–48)

Luke 9:46–48 is, as we just have seen, a careful adaption and transformation of Mark 9:33–37 and could be considered a text-book example of Luke’s redactional activity. The resulting Lukan text, however, is not without its difficulties. Two observations are particularly striking: First, Luke uses ἀποκριθεὶς δέ (Luke 9:49) to connect the discussion on greatness in Luke 9:46–48 with the following episode about the unknown exorcist. This leads to the question how John’s complaint can be understood as a response to Jesus’s teaching in the preceding verses. Second – and this is puzzling in a much more fundamental way –, the train of thought in Luke 9:46–48 seems to be far from clear: Even experienced commentators struggle severely in explaining the narrative logic of Luke’s redaction of Mark at this point. Both of these observations deserve a closer look.

2.1 John’s Report as Reaction to Jesus’ Teaching in Luke 9:49

In Luke 9:37–50, Luke keeps Mark’s sequence and tightens it by omitting topographical information from Mark 9:28.30.33 – thus all of the changes of place and time between Luke 9:37 and 9:51 disappear (cf. § 1.1). Moreover, Luke drops some of the Markan elements of the exorcist story (Mark 9:39b.41) – but unlike Matthew not the episode itself. As a result it is prominently placed as the ultimate completion of Jesus’ “Galilean ministry” immediately before the turning point of Luke 9:51.

Already in Mark the story about the unknown exorcist is connected with the dispute among greatness due to the catchword connection ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου/ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου (Mark 9:37.38). Although the expressions ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου (Luke 9:48a) and ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου (Luke 9:49) do not appear back to back in Luke because the saying on greatness is placed in between of them (Luke 9:48b), the link itself appears to be even stronger: On the one hand, there is no buffer between the dialogue on greatness and the story of the unknown exorcist (diff. Mark 9:36–37), on the other hand, the expression ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου is now placed in the center of Jesus’ response to the disciples (Luke 9:48a).

Luke not only strengthens an already existing connection between both stories but adds a further, more obvious connection of his own. Instead of Mark’s ἔφη αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰωάννης, Luke’s version of the exorcist episode opens up with ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ Ἰωάννης εἶπεν. Although ἀποκριθεὶς in Luke 9:49 often remains untranslated, it should not be underestimated. In their seminal study on *Semitisms in Luke’s Greek*, Albert Hogeterp and Adelbert Denaux analyze in great detail Luke’s use of ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν as “biblical language modelled after

LXX Greek”¹⁶ (or: “biblical Hebraistic variety of Greek”¹⁷) in great detail.¹⁸ They conclude: “Inchoative use of ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν is not ‘strictly redundant’, but it can mark the continuation or taking up of discourse”¹⁹. This becomes apparent if one looks at the “clear instances of non-responsorial ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν”²⁰ in Luke as given by Hogeterp/Denaux. Besides Luke 9:49, they list Luke 1:60 (Elizabeth’s reaction to plans about the name of her son); 13:2 (Jesus’ reaction to the story of Pilate’s victims); 14:3 (Jesus’ reaction to the appearance of the ἄνθρωπος ὕδρωπικός); 15:29 (the reaction of the elder son to his father’s invitation); 17:17 (Jesus’ reaction to the thankfulness of only one of the healed Samaritans) and 22:51 (Jesus’ reaction to cutting off an ear).²¹ In light of this evidence, François Bovon seems to be right: “Indem Lukas dieses Material bearbeitet, versucht er auch die nächste, die letzte Episode damit in Verbindung zu setzen, was daraus ersichtlich wird, daß die Johannesfrage (9,49) als Reaktion (ἀποκριθεὶς δέ) erscheint.”²²

Both of these observations – the increased force of the catchword connection ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου/ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου and the change of Mark’s ἔφη to ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν – demonstrate that Luke strengthened the connection between the dialogue on greatness and the story of the unknown exorcist. But why? Of course, both episodes deal with the correction of the disciples. Nevertheless it is legitimate to question the narrative plausibility of depicting John’s report as a *reaction* to Jesus’ teaching in Luke 9:48.²³

¹⁶ A. L. HOGETERP/A. DENAUX, *Semitisms in Luke’s Greek: a descriptive analysis of lexical and syntactical domains of semitic language influence in Luke’s gospel*, WUNT 401 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 386.

¹⁷ HOGETERP/DENAUX, *Semitisms* (see n. 16), 388.

¹⁸ Cf. HOGETERP/DENAUX, *Semitisms* (see n. 16), 381–388.

¹⁹ HOGETERP/DENAUX, *Semitisms* (see n. 16), 388.

²⁰ HOGETERP/DENAUX, *Semitisms* (see n. 16), 388.

²¹ HOGETERP/DENAUX, *Semitisms* (see n. 16), 388, give Luke 13:14 as a further example, but ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν is missing there.

²² BOVON, *Lukas I* (see n. 5), 515. Similarly WOLTER, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 9), 360: “Formgeschichtlich handelt es sich um zwei Chrien, die thematisch voneinander unabhängig sind, jedoch von Lukas mit Hilfe des einleitenden ἀποκριθεὶς in V. 49a miteinander verklammert werden. In beiden Fällen werden die Jünger korrigiert und belehrt.”

²³ The tension is felt by KLEIN, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 10), 355: “Das kleine Gespräch zwischen Jesus und Johannes erscheint wie ein Kommentar zur Aussage über die wahrhaftige Größe. Dennoch handelt es sich um einen anderen Gedanken.”

2.2 Issues With the Train of Thought in Luke 9:46–48

Speaking of “narrative plausibility”, Jesus’ teaching in Luke 9:47–48 is a challenge on its own. This is easily overlooked if interpreters take the message of Luke 9:47–48 for granted in respect of its *Vorlage* in Mark 9:33–35. Such readings *assume* that Luke wants to narrate Jesus encouraging the disciples to humble themselves and teaching them that the one who aims to become the smallest will receive true greatness. However, if one follows closely Luke’s text, several issues with such a *Markan interpretation* of Luke 9:47–48 appear. To illustrate this fact, I will briefly discuss three passages from major commentaries on Luke, demonstrating how quickly a Markan perspective on Luke 9:47–48 leads into trouble.

My first example comes from the volume on Luke in the *Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar* series, authored by Hans Klein. Commenting on Luke 9:48, Klein writes:

“Aber es wird jetzt nicht gesagt, daß dieses Kind in Wirklichkeit der/das Größte sei, sondern völlig unerwartet, daß derjenige, der dieses Kind im Namen Jesu, d.h. unter Berufung auf ihn, im Wissen um seinen Auftrag aufnimmt, ihn und damit Gott selbst aufnimmt (vgl. 10,16). Nicht das Kind an sich ist groß, sondern das, was ‘mit ihm’ aufgenommen wird. Das Kind hat nur eine abgeleitete oder gar nur bildhafte Größe. Groß ist also nicht, was getan wird, sondern was angenommen, aufgenommen wird. Es handelt sich um eine passive Größe und zwar für den Aufnehmenden, nicht für den Aufgenommenen. Daraus wird etwas zu rasch der Schluß gezogen: Groß ist, wer unter euch klein ist. Der Satz ist bewußt paradox gefaßt und ans Ende gerückt. Er erinnert mit μικρότερος noch an 7,28. Die wahrhafte Größe, so dürfte Lk gemeint haben, erkennt man an dem, der klein ist oder klein wird.”²⁴

Klein, a careful reader of Luke, is puzzled by two details of the text: First, he assesses the transition from Luke 9:47, where Jesus takes the child and puts it besides him, to Luke 9:48, where Jesus explains that receiving this very child means receiving him and, in fact, receiving the one who sent Jesus, as “completely surprising”. According to Klein, it would have been much more natural for Luke to follow up Luke 9:47 with a statement declaring that this child is the greatest. This reasoning reveals that in Klein’s view, the combination of Luke 9:47 and 9:48a does not account for a truly fitting response to the question about greatness posed in Luke 9:46. According to him, the fitting answer to Luke 9:46 is to be found in Luke 9:48b – which is the logion that responds to the question about greatness in Mark (see Mark 9:34.35).²⁵

²⁴ KLEIN, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 10), 354–355.

²⁵ Accordingly, KLEIN, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 10), 353, writes in the introduction to the commentary on Luke 9:46–48: “Auf die Problemanzeige in V.46 antwortet die Sentenz in V.48b. Die Bildhandlung in der Mitte mit Kommentar in V.47.48a hat damit kaum Berührungspunkte

Second, Klein thinks that after the exemplary act and its interpretation in Luke 9:47–48a the general conclusion in Luke 9:48b follows “a little bit too quickly”. Again, the Lukan sequence appears to be somehow loose or disordered in Klein’s view. Like with the transition from Luke 9:47 to Luke 9:48a discussed above, Klein implicitly identifies Mark’s sequence as the correct one without trying to explain why Luke should have rearranged it in such an unconvincing way.

A second example for the interpreters’ struggle with Luke’s train of thought comes from François Bovon’s commentary on Luke. Bovon, without doubt one of the most influential Lukan scholars of our times, shows similar concerns as Klein but aims for a slightly different solution. He writes:

“Aber *der dazu passende Spruch* ist nicht das nächste Wort, sondern das Weisheitslogion vom Kleineren, der in der Tat ‘groß’ ist (9,48b). Auf den ersten Blick behandelt das dazwischenliegende Wort (9,48a) ein anderes Thema: die theologische Zugehörigkeit der Gesandten zum göttlichen Urheber und die entscheidende ethische Haltung ihnen gegenüber. Aber die Reihenfolge innerhalb des Wortes (das Kind – ich [= Jesus] – der Aussendende [= Gott]) begründet das theozentrische Wort vom Kind. Damit wird also auch hier auf den Streit angespielt, wie die Zusammengehörigkeit der Geste (Jesus nimmt ein Kind zu sich [9,47b]) und des ersten Wortes (Anspielung auf dieses Kind [9,48b]) zeigt.”²⁶

Basically, Bovon’s trouble with this passage is the same as Klein’s: After commenting on Jesus’ action in Luke 9:47b he identifies the Logion in Luke 9:48b as “the saying which is fitting to this [action]”. Again, Luke 9:48a is seen as some sort of a distraction, as a somehow misplaced piece of teaching. In difference to Klein, however, Bovon proposes an explanation for Luke’s redactional changes. On the one hand, he sees the catchword connection in Luke 9:47b/48a as an allusion to the question about greatness. This minimizes the effect of distraction in Luke 9:48a. On the other hand, Bovon describes the structure of Luke 9:46–48 as concentric (V.46: A – V.47: B – V.48a: B’ – V.48b: A’) and designed to express two different aspects of justification: The acceptance of the elect by God and the acceptance of God (and his missionaries) by the believer. This is a sophisticated solution indeed, yet it remains doubtful if the concentric structure

und verändert den Gedanken etwas. Dies zeigt an, daß der Text eine Vorgeschichte hat. Sie wird in Mk 9,35.37 erkennbar...”

²⁶ BOVON, *Lukas I* (see n. 5), 514–515.522 (on Luke 9:48a): “Merkwürdigerweise steht das deutende Wort zur Eingangsfrage nach der Größe in einer gewissen Spannung, weil das Kind nicht sofort nach dem erwarteten Paradox als der Erwachsene, d.h. als der ‘Große’ vorgestellt wird.”

found by Bovon helps any reader of Luke to cope with the assumed rupture between Luke 9:47 and 9:48.

With far less sophistication, but with far more directness, the author of my third and last example from commentary literature reacted to the structural challenges of Luke 9:46–48. In his commentary published with the widely read series *Regensburger Neues Testament*, Josef Ernst just placed the commentary section of Luke 9:48a *after* Luke 9:48b. Without changing text and translation of Luke 9:46–48 and without defending his approach on a methodological or hermeneutical level, Ernst creates a surprisingly smoothly running commentary on Luke 9:46–48. When he reaches Luke 9:48b (after Luke 9:48a!), he laconically writes:

“Die zweite Deutung der Symbolhandlung, die im vorliegenden Text an erster Stelle angeführt ist, gibt dem Gedanken noch eine andere Wendung: Jesus sieht das Kind in seiner Hilflosigkeit.”

Without any sign of hesitation, Ernst claims that “within the present text”, i.e. canonical Luke, “the second interpretation of the symbolic action” (= Luke 9:48a) is placed before the first one (= Luke 9:48b). According to Ernst, this second interpretation “turns the train of thought in another direction”. Without even wondering how a reader of canonical Luke would and should read the sequence Luke 9:46.47.48a.48b, he simply comments on the passage *as if* its sequence would be Luke 9:46.47.48b.48a. For sure, most students of Luke will not agree with this bold move. However, Ernst’s radical solution is closely related to the more nuanced reflections of Klein and Bovon. Far from being the odd approach of an outsider, Ernst’s decision to comment Luke 9:48a after Luke 9:48b just highlights the troubles with Luke’s sequence experienced also by other interpreters of Luke 9:46–48.

3. Repetition and Difference in Luke 9:46/22:24

In order to shed some new light on the interpretative challenges noted in the previous paragraph, it might be helpful to remember a very old proposal. Back in 1878, Bernhard Weiss drew attention to a small but striking difference between the two “accounts of quarrel” in Luke 9:46–48 and Luke 22:24–27. Compared to the topic of the φιλονεικία in Luke 22:24 which is rendered with τὸ τίς αὐτῶν δοκεῖ εἶναι μείζων, the topic of the διαλογισμός in Luke 9:46–47 is expressed through a slightly different word order: τὸ τίς ἂν εἴη μείζων αὐτῶν. Usually both phrases are translated in roughly the same way. Joseph Fitzmyer, for

example, offers in Luke 9:46 the translation “Which of them would be greatest?” and in Luke 22:24 “Which one of them would seem to be greatest?”²⁷

Weiss, however, argued that a translation of Luke 9:46/22:24 should not only take into account the difference between ἄν εἷη (Luke 9:46) and δοκεῖ εἶναι (Luke 22:24), as Fitzmyer’s obviously does, but also the difference in word order. With αὐτῶν placed not after τίς as in Luke 22:24, but after μείζων, Luke 9:46 allows a translation which is neither possible in Mark 9:34 nor in Luke 22:24, namely “Who would be greater *than they*?”²⁸ Instead of narrating a conflict *within* the group of the disciples, this reading sees the disciples discussing if there might be someone greater than them *outside* of their group. According to Weiss, the usual translation of Luke 9:46 underestimates the difference of word order between Luke 9:46 and 22:24 and reads Luke 9:46 through a Markan lense (cf. Mark 9:34). Therefore Weiss harshly labels the classical translation as “[w]ortwidrige Harmonistik”²⁹, i.e. a harmonization with the Markan *Vorlage* that ignores the Lukan wording.

Weiss, however, did not find many followers for this proposal.³⁰ Most scholars found it unnecessary even to discuss this possibility and simply continued to read Luke 9:46 in the sense of “which of them”. An important exception to this rule is the brief but philologically careful commentary of Erich Klostermann. Commenting on Luke 9:46, Klostermann notes: “... αὐτῶν trotz 22²⁴ zu τίς gehörig, nicht zu μείζων; sonst hätte Jesus mit einer symbolischen Handlung bezeugen wollen: größer *als ihr* ist das demütige Kind, das ich hier neben mich stelle”.³¹ Klostermann accepts the different word order in Luke 22:24 as a possible argument in support of Weiss’s view (“trotz”), but nevertheless thinks that Jesus’ reaction (Luke 9:47) – placing the child besides him – is not compatible with

²⁷ FITZMYER, *Luke I* (see n. 6), 815 (9:46) and J. A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel according to Luke II* (X-XXIV), The Anchor Bible 28A (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 1411 (22:24).

²⁸ B. WEISS, *Erste Abtheilung, zweite Hälfte, die Evangelien des Markus und Lukas umfassend*. 6th. ed., KEK 6 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1878), 395. According to Weiss, “[will] Luk[as], der das αὐτῶν ausdrücklich nicht wie 22, 24 nach τίς setzt, die Frage nicht auf ihre Ueberhebung über einander, sondern auf ihre Selbstüberhebung über Andre beziehen (‘wer wohl grösser wäre, als sie’), um auch V. 49f. unter dies Thema zu subsumieren.”

²⁹ WEISS, *Evangelien des Markus und Lukas* (see n. 28), 395.

³⁰ Against Weiss see H. SCHÜRMANN, *Das Lukasevangelium (1,1–9,50)*, HThK III/1 (Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 1969), 575 n. 2, who argues that μείζων has to be taken as superlative and that αὐτῶν ist to be combined with τίς. W. GRUNDMANN, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, ThHK 3 (Berlin: EVA, 1969), 196, translates Luke 9:46 with “wer größer sei als sie” and explains (id., 197): “Der Text des Lukas läßt im Unterschied zur Markus-Fassung die Möglichkeit zu, die Frage der Jünger zu übersetzen, wer größer sei als sie; sie halten sich für die Größten, weil sie Jesu Jünger sind.” Against Grundmann see F. BOVON, *Lukas I* (see n. 5), 521 n. 40 (without reasons).

³¹ E. KLOSTERMANN, *Lukas*, HNT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1919), 109 (emphasis original).

the reading “greater than they”. This reading, Klostermann argues, would lead to the consequence of Jesus assessing the child greater than the disciples. Yet this argument completely overlooks Jesus’ *teaching* (Luke 9:48a), which is not about the greatness (or rather: smallness) of the child at all but about receiving (δέχεσθαι) it. Moreover, Michael Wolter demonstrated convincingly the importance of the specification ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι (Ἰησοῦ): It is not a certain act, not the receiving of the child (however perceived), which is of importance here, yet acting ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι (Ἰησοῦ). In Wolter’s words: “Selbst wer etwas so Kleines und Unbedeutendes aufnimmt wie ein Kind, nimmt – sofern er es ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Jesu tut – Gott auf.”³² For this reason, Jesus’ twofold answer to the thought/discussion of the disciples (placing the child besides him and talking about it) does not lead to a comparison between the disciples and the child. Thus, Klostermann’s argument against Weiss seems unconvincing.

Most recently, Wolter himself aimed to refute Weiss’s reading. After conceding the philological possibility of the alternative reading (“Rein sprachlich könnte man 46b auch übersetzen: ‘wer größer sei als sie’”), he argues that “auf Grund von ἐν πᾶσιν ὑμῖν in V. 48d ist αὐτῶν nicht mit μείζων, sondern mit τίς zu verbinden”³³. There is, however, no necessity to combine ἐν πᾶσιν ὑμῖν with ὁ μικρότερος³⁴ and with μέγας. It seems perfectly possible to read Luke 9:48b as “The smallest one among you, he is great” without implying that “great” is meant in the sense of “great among you”. In contrast to Mark 10:43 (ὅς ἂν θέλῃ μέγας γενέσθαι ἐν ὑμῖν; Luke 22:26: ὁ μείζων ἐν ὑμῖν; cf. also πρῶτος in Mark 9:35), Luke uses μέγας (9:48) here in an absolute way, as he does in Luke 1:15 (John the Baptist) and 1:32 (Jesus).

Hence, after more than 130 years of research, there seems to be still no decisive argument against Weiss’s proposal to read Luke 9:46 as “greater than they”. But should this *possible* reading also be regarded as a *probable* one? In my view, there are two observations in favor of a positive answer to this question: First, Luke’s use of “doublets” in general and second, the solution to the interpretative challenges (noted in § 2 above) which is offered by the reading “greater than they”.

Regarding the first point, it should be emphasized that the term “doublet”, as used in the study of the synoptic gospels, is a “fuzzy term”³⁵ indeed. As I have shown in detail elsewhere, there is currently neither an exact and unified definition of the term in New Testament scholarship nor an agreed list of

³² WOLTER, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 9), 362.

³³ WOLTER, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 9), 361.

³⁴ SCHÜRMANN, *Lukasevangelium I* (see n. 30), 577: “Auf die Frage nach der Größe wird nicht die auffordende Antwort gegeben: wer sich zum ‘Letzten’ und ‘Diener aller’ macht, sondern die seinshafte Feststellung: je und immer der Kleinste in der Jüngergemeinde!”

³⁵ I owe this description to Prof. Dr. Jens Schröter (Berlin).

doublets in Matthew or Luke.³⁶ Nevertheless, the long history of research on doublets provides us with many important insights into Luke’s treatment of repetitions that prove to be helpful for every student of Luke. In the present context, it is not important to agree on a certain definition of “doublet” or to connect this phenomenon with a specific solution to the Synoptic problem. It is relevant, however, that Luke repeats, connects and rearranges even very small portions of text. To name but a few examples, Luke inserts sayings in foreign contexts (Lk 21:18),³⁷ assimilates sayings to each other (Luke 8:16/11:33),³⁸ creates echoes (Luke 19:44/21:6; cf. Mk 13:2),³⁹ duplicates Markan material (Luke 9:22/17:25; cf. Mark 8:31),⁴⁰ applies parallel phrasing to create structural effects (ἐλεύσονται ἡμέραι in Luke 21:6/17:22; diff. Mark 13:2) and even uses repetitions as section markers (Luke 15:1–2 [par. 5:29–30] as opening to the dispute in Luke 15:1–32). In other cases, repetitive elements create a certain complementary effect (Luke 9:50b/11:23). While some of such smaller repetitions are located closely to each other, others appear in rather distant areas of the Lukan text (cf. Luke 5:32/19:10 or 11:43/20:46). Taken together, Luke’s ability to coordinate smaller textual units within the larger framework of the Third Gospel should not be underestimated.

In the case of Luke 9:46/22:24, it was noted above that Luke significantly reworked both Mark 9:33–37 and Mark 10:35–45 and thus *created* the close parallel between Luke 9:46 and Luke 22:24 which is without a counterpart in Mark. Even if Luke 22:24–26 should stem from a pre-Lukan source other than Mark, Luke would have *assimilated* Mk 9:34 to this source. This is, of course, no definitive proof that Luke intentionally created the different word order of the disciples’ question in Luke 9:46 and Luke 22:24, yet it demonstrates that it was at least Luke’s concern to create some sort of connection between both verses.

Regarding the second point, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. As was shown above, Luke’s redactional activity transformed the various episodes in Mark 9:9–40 into a coherent unit without any changes of time and place

³⁶ Cf. GRÜNSTÄUDL, ‘Dubletten’ (see n. 1), *passim*.

³⁷ Luke 21:18 (cf. Acts 27:34) is inserted between Mark 13:13a and 13:13b and builds thus a “redactional doublet” with Luke 12:7; cf. W. GRÜNSTÄUDL, ‘Companions, Hairs, and Swords: Preliminary Remarks on Dys/functional Variation in Luke’s Story of Christ’, in *Christ of the Sacred Stories*, eds. P. DRAGUTINOVIC et. al., WUNT II/453 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 77–100: 82–85.

³⁸ Cf. J. SCHRÖTER, *Erinnerung an Jesu Worte: Studien zur Rezeption der Logienüberlieferung in Markus, Q und Thomas*, WMANT 76 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 335, who points to the fluidity of the early textual transmission (*ibid.*, 335 n. 131), and H. T. FLEDDERMANN, ‘The doublets in Luke’, *ETL* 84 (2008), 419–422.

³⁹ Cf. WOLTER, *Lukasevangelium* (see n. 9), 634.

⁴⁰ Cf. FLEDDERMANN, ‘Doublets’ (see n. 39), 413–415.

(Luke 9:37–50). Placed in the middle of this passage, the disciples' question "Who would be greater than we?" is bracketed by two stories of exorcistic (in)competence: In Luke 9:37–43 the disciples as a group fail to cast out a single demon (despite the power they received ἐπὶ πάντα τὰ δαμόνια, Luke 9:1), in Luke 9:49–50 a single foreigner casts out several demons. Seen from this perspective, the question of the disciples seems to be motivated by their failure as exorcists (obviously a lack of "greatness") on the one hand and the rivalry with a successful competitor active outside their group on the other hand. Because of Luke's tightening of the story line, John's conflict with the foreign exorcist must have happened sometimes before the transfiguration, maybe during the mission of the Twelve (Luke 9:1–6), which means that this is already a *past* experience of the disciples when the διαλογισμός of Luke 9:46 takes place.

Jesus's reaction in Luke 9:47, puzzling if one sees an in-group-conflict in Luke 9:46, is spot on: By pointing to the child besides him, he ensures the disciples that anybody (ὅς ἐάν) who receives a child in his name (ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου) receives him and the one who has sent him. i.e., something besides which nothing greater can be received. Because of this, everybody within the group of the disciples (even ὁ μικρότερος!), who obviously received not only a child, but Jesus himself, is "great" (μέγας). In my view, the parallel with Luke 7:28 (λέγω ὑμῖν, μείζων ἐν γεννητοῖς γυναικῶν Ἰωάννου οὐδεὶς ἐστίν· ὁ δὲ μικρότερος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ μείζων αὐτοῦ ἐστίν) is striking: Even the smallest of the disciples, which are in some sense "in" the βασιλεία because of their fellowship to Jesus (cf. Luke 4:43; 6:20 and 12:32), is μέγας in such a sense that he is μείζων compared to John the Baptist who was not able to see the βασιλεία himself (cf. Luke 7:18–23).

Up to this point, the story is one of encouragement for insecure followers. But Jesus's teaching – anybody who receives a child in my name is μέγας – has another aspect, too. This other side comes to the fore through John's remark in Luke 9:49. Its designation as a response to Jesus' teaching is perfectly understandable if the conflict with the foreign exorcist already lures in the background of the διαλογισμός in Luke 9:46. Now the dialogue on greatness and acting in Jesus' name continues and takes another turn: While the disciples can be sure about their soteriological status (μέγας), they do not have reason nor right to attack the soteriological status of others outside their group who act successfully⁴¹ in the name of Jesus.

4. Conclusion

On the assumption of Markan priority, Luke found two episodes of quarreling disciples in his Markan source (cf. Mark 9:33–37; 10:35–45). He used Mark 9:33–37

⁴¹ This is not a given, as Acts 19:13–17 demonstrates.

to create his own, significantly different version of a discussion (διαλογισμός) among the disciples in Luke 9:46–48. Besides rearranging this episode he integrated it into a coherent unit (Luke 9:37–50) placed between the Transfiguration and the beginning of the so-called *Reisebericht*. In contrast, Luke did not include Mark 10:35–45 into his narrative – at least not at its “proper” place between Luke 18:34 and 18:35. It remains an issue of debate if Luke 22:24–26, the quarrel of the disciples about greatness at the Last Supper, should be identified as a transmission of Mark 10:35–45, as Luke’s own creation or as material taken over from a non-Markan source. In any case, Luke did change Mark in Luke 9:46–48 in such a way that a striking parallel appears between Luke 9:46 and 22:24. Luke thus avoided to take over the doublet in Mark 9:33–37 and Mark 10:35–45 as he found it in his source, but nevertheless created a doublet of his own (Luke 9:46 and 22:24) in the course of redacting Mark.

In spite of the widespread consensus that Luke redacted Mark 9:33–37 quite carefully, Luke 9:46–48 poses some challenges to interpreters of Luke. On the one hand, the close connection to the story of the foreign exorcist (ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ Ἰωάννης εἶπεν, Luke 9:49 diff. Mark 9:38) demands an explanation. On the other hand, some Lukan scholars (e.g., Klein, Bovon, Ernst) struggle severely with the train of thought on Luke 9:46–48 and judge Jesus’ reaction (Luke 9:47–48a) to the disciples’ discussion (Luke 9:46) as a distraction before the “real” answer in Luke 9:48b.

Already back in the 19th century, Bernhard Weiss proposed to take the different word order between the two doublet halves in Luke 9:46 and 22:24 as a hint to an alternative reading of Luke 9:46 (“Who would be greater than they?”). While attempts to refute Weiss’ proposal (Klostermann, Schürmann, Wolter) remain unconvincing, the agreements and differences between Luke 9:46 and 22:24 – a parallel created by Luke himself! – should be taken carefully into account. Moreover, reading the disciples’ question in Luke 9:46 as “Who might be greater than they?” allows for a congruent interpretation of Luke 9:37–50 as a passage which shows the disciples’ self-assurance shattered by their incompetence as exorcists while their teacher reminds them of their status within the realm of the βασιλεία (cf. Luke 9:48 with 7:28). As a consequence, the apostles – and maybe some of their followers today – need to learn not to hinder people working ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ outside their own community.

Taken together, a widely neglected proposal of old and insights from the current study of repetitions in Luke path the way for a fresh reading of Luke 9:46 which hopefully answers some riddles about Luke's redaction of Mark 9:33–37.

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EARLY CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION OF THE JEWISH SCRIPTURES: PRECURSOR TO MODERN HISTORICAL CRITICISM?

CARL R. HOLLADAY

Abstract. This essay explores C. F. D. Moule's intriguing suggestion that early Christian interpretation of Scripture, especially the use of promise-fulfillment and typology as hermeneutical approaches, anticipated some aspects of the modern historical-critical method. Included is a discussion of the metaphorical use of "flat" (two-dimensional) and "round" (three-dimensional) to characterize ways of reading Scripture. Attention is given to two ancient authors—Philo of Alexandria and Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora*—both of whom exemplify three-dimensional approaches to Scripture interpretation, although in different ways.

Keywords: C. F. D. Moule, promise-fulfillment, typology, Philo of Alexandria, Ptolemy, *Epistle to Flora*, Scripture interpretation, dimensionality in Scripture, "flat," "round" views of Scripture.

Of the many remarkable insights offered by C. F. D. Moule in his ground-breaking book *The Birth of the New Testament*, none is more intriguing than his suggestion that early Christian interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures foreshadows, and, in a certain sense, initiates historical criticism as it emerged and developed in the modern period.¹ This essay explores this claim and how it fits into Moule's overall understanding of how the New Testament writings originated, especially in relation to his understanding of Jewish methods of interpreting the Bible that were both prior to and contemporary with emergent Christian interpretations of the Old Testament.²

¹ C. F. D. MOULE, *The Birth of the New Testament*, BNTC (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1962; 2nd edition, with minor revisions, 1966; 3rd edition, revised and rewritten, 1981).

² In exploring this aspect of the early Christian use of the Jewish Scriptures, I wish to honor the scholarly career of Prof. Dr. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, with whom I have worked over the years in the Eastern European Liaison Committee of The Society of New Testament Studies. He has brought energetic, creative leadership to this initiative, and he has done so while carrying out his professorial duties at the University of Jena. His numerous publications relating to Second Temple Judaism have explored important aspects of Jewish hermeneutics, and many of these essays are now available in his collection of essays *Tora und Weisheit: Studien zur frühjüdischen Literatur*, WUNT 1/466 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021).

In the first edition of *Birth*, in his discussion of “The Use of the Jewish Scriptures,” which he treats as the second stage in which “The Church Explains Itself” (Ch. 4), Moule rehearses how Scripture was interpreted in pre-Christian Judaism,³ by Jesus himself,⁴ and finally by Jesus’s earliest followers.⁵ Acknowledging that NT writers often employed “verbal play and literalism” when interpreting the OT, Moule insists that a way of interpreting Scripture emerged among early Christians that can be characterized as follows: “This new use has been described as a use of scripture ‘in the round’, in contrast to its use—for instance by Philo—as a flat, two-dimensional area.”⁶ With this metaphor, Moule describes a way of interpreting Scripture in which a reader sees the entirety of Scripture as a collection of “divine pronouncements,” each of equal value (and authority), each functioning like an oracle or as part of an oracle. This way of viewing Scripture enables and encourages interpreters to derive meaning or an application from a text even when the words are “intractable and unpromising.” Moule finds these interpretive practices especially in the rabbis and Philo.

Moule concedes that this way of reading Scripture can be found in the NT, but insists that it does not reflect what is truly distinctive about early Christian interpretation. He writes:

But this is not the distinctively New Testament use of scripture. Whatever New Testament specimens there may be of rabbinic and Philonian interpretations, these are not the most characteristic. What marks the New Testament use as new is precisely this treatment of scripture “in the round”, as a three-dimensional entity—indeed, one ought to say four-dimensional, for time is a very important factor. The most characteristic New Testament use of scripture is “modern” in that it treats the Old Testament as a *record* of revelation—as a historical narrative of God’s dealings with his people, to be listened to as a whole and learnt from as a continuous story. There is a world of difference between this and the use of scripture as a divining-medium.⁷

He observes further, “And the reason why the Christians began thus to use scripture ‘historically’ (as we should say) was that they had actually found in Jesus of Nazareth the climax of the long story of God’s dealings with his people.”⁸

Moule spells out this latter claim by rehearsing the ways in which Jesus reprimed the numerous individual roles one finds in the OT such as “anointed king, anointed priest, prophet and sage”—all representative figures—but in which

³ MOULE, *Birth* (1966), 58–62.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 62–67.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 67–71.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 67; and 67 n. 2, citing C. H. DODD, *The Old Testament in the New* (The Ethel M. Wood Lecture for 1952); and *idem*, *According to the Scriptures* (1952).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Jesus also was understood—and experienced—as a corporate figure symbolizing “the ideal people of God.” Thus “upon Jesus converged the whole history of Israel in the past, and from him deployed the whole future of the People of God. It was the coherent organizing of all this into a single inclusive personality that made a completely new thing of Old Testament exegesis.”⁹ This unusual convergence of images from Israel’s Scriptures, illustrated and confirmed by various passages used by early Christian interpreters, formed the body of *testimonia* that eventually saw their way into the NT writings. In one sense, this process of Scripture interpretation is traceable to Jesus himself, to his own use of Scripture to clarify his identity and mission, but equally, and perhaps more, important was the role that Jesus’s own personality played:

[Although] . . . Jesus’ own expositions no doubt set a precious example and began a lasting tradition, it was this living person even more than his remembered words that conditioned its course. To have lived responsively through the events of the ministry, death, and resurrection was to have gained a completely new angle of approach to scripture: or, to change the figure, it meant viewing the map of scripture for the first time as a genuinely three-dimensional relief map illuminated centrally by a brilliant light.¹⁰

Moule’s use of the metaphors “two-dimensional” and “three-dimensional” to distinguish between different construals, or even different paradigms, of Scripture continues in the thoroughly “revised and rewritten” third edition of *Birth*. Here, in his discussion of pre-Christian Judaism, Moule takes a slightly different tack, explaining how Jews, especially the rabbis, conceived of Scripture as a single, unified whole:

It appears that the basis of all methods was an assumption alien to modern critical scholarship, namely, that the Torah (and other scriptures also, in their degree) constituted a divine means of revelation in the sense that it might be treated as a kind of oracle—not historically and, as it were, three-dimensionally, but as a kind of two-dimensional flat surface, from any part of which equally authoritative words might be drawn.”¹¹

One of the major changes in the third edition of *Birth* is Moule’s identification of five different modes or devices used by pre-Christian Jews in interpreting the OT: (1) direct, simple application in which moral instruction is given in a straightforward manner so that readers/hearers experience “God’s voice” addressing them directly; (2) *pēsher* exegesis, in which words or a message from an earlier context is “contemporized” in order to be applied to the interpreter’s own situation; (3) prediction, in which an

⁹ Ibid., 69–70.

¹⁰ Ibid., 70.

¹¹ MOULE, *Birth* (1981), 75.

OT text explicitly foretells an event that will occur in the near or distant future; (4) allegory, which especially typified Alexandrian exegesis, most notably Philo, though also practiced at Qumran; and (5) etymology, or “etymological conceits,” in which a certain meaning is deduced from how a word is spelled or from its “root meaning,” or some other aspect of its usage.¹² Each of these methods is illustrated with specific examples, especially from Qumran, but also from Philo. The latter four devices illustrate how, in the long history of pre-Christian Judaism, a biblical text can be the starting point for interpretive embellishment and serve simply as a vehicle through which new meaning is derived from an old text. Moule calls this a “vehicular use” of Scripture.¹³ Reviewing the five devices, he observes that in all except the first (direct application), “no attention is paid to the original meaning or to historical perspective. The whole is treated in the flat, two-dimensional way already referred to.”¹⁴

Another change in the third edition is Moule’s explanation of how each of these five devices, sometimes blending with each other, can be found in the New Testament.¹⁵ After reviewing in rich detail some of the ways in which Christian interpreters employed each of the five modes of Jewish interpretation rehearsed earlier, Moule notes that “the sheer arbitrariness and the flat, ‘two-dimensional’ character of such methods were in no way repudiated by Christians.”¹⁶ “It is easy enough,” he writes, “to find in the New Testament the old, ‘two-dimensional’, arbitrary uses of scripture, in which words originally referring to something quite different are simply commandeered to serve purely as vehicles for a conviction or message of which the authority (of whatever sort it may be) is derived from somewhere else.”¹⁷

A major aspect of Moule’s exposition is to contrast early Christian forms of interpreting the Jewish Scriptures with those known at Qumran. He observes that both communities can practice “vehicular” interpretation in which some word or phrase from an OT text such as Isa 40:3 or Hab 2:4 can be taken out of context and simply appropriated in order to explain some aspect of either community’s beliefs. While both groups can be described as eschatological communities who saw themselves as living in the “last days,” convinced that the end of the world is near, one of the main differences, Moule insists, is how each community regarded its leader—the Teacher of Righteousness and Jesus Christ respectively. While the former was revered by the Qumran community, he did not function as an interpretive lens through which his followers read Scripture in the same way that Jesus Christ did within early Christian exegesis of the OT. For Christians, it was “their experience of

¹² Ibid., 77–80.

¹³ Ibid., 86–87.

¹⁴ Ibid., 80.

¹⁵ Ibid., 81–84.

¹⁶ Ibid., 84.

¹⁷ Ibid., 85–86.

Christ,” both the historical Jesus and the risen Lord, or what might be called the “Christ factor” (my term), that was the determinative element shaping Christian interpretation of the OT.¹⁸ What especially characterized Christian ways of reading the OT was:

the discovery that, in a historical and “three-dimensional” way, Jesus actually implemented and achieved in his person, and represented the culmination of, that relation between God and [humanity] which is the basic theme of scripture. This genuinely historical and “three-dimensional” approach to scripture—the lines of divine-human relations converging on Jesus—which has only become deliberate and conscious in “modern” thought, is, nevertheless, implicit in ancient Christianity in typology, when typology means drawing analogies and tracing connexions between Jesus Christ with his Church, and figures in the Old Testament representing relations between the divine and the human.¹⁹

The use of typology to illustrate a distinctive feature of early Christian interpretation is another innovation of the third edition.²⁰ Elaborating on the Christian use of typology, Moule envisions a form of insightful exposition that “[bears] witness to a real and unforced correspondence between the great types and patterns of relationship and their fulfillment and consummation in Christ, both as an individual (God’s beloved Son) and as an inclusive and ‘summary’ figure (the Son, Israel, whom God called out of Egypt).”²¹ When this broader, more comprehensive perspective of Christian exegesis of the OT is fully understood, it is “something that the modern historian, whose approach is ‘three-dimensional’ not ‘two-dimensional’, can recognize as valid and supremely significant and quite distinctive.”²²

Reflecting further on the importance of typology, Moule writes: “Christian uses of scripture . . . although starting from common ground, created in the end a new thing. ‘Historical typology came into existence with Christendom.’”²³

¹⁸ Ibid., 86–87.

¹⁹ Ibid., 87.

²⁰ In the 1966 edition, in his discussion of later Alexandrian and Antiochian schools of exegesis, Moule explains the latter approach as “not so much in rejecting other senses as in preferring ‘typology,’ which recognizes the importance of historical events as such, to allegory, which would reduce everything to timeless truths” (p. 163).

²¹ MOULE, *Birth* (1981), 87, noting Matt 2:15; 3:17.

²² Ibid., 88.

²³ Ibid., 89. Here Moule is quoting G. W. H. LAMPE and K. J. WOOLLCOMBE, eds., *Essays on Typology* (London: SCM, 1957), which, he reports, is cited by D. MOODY SMITH, “The Use of the Old Testament in the New,” in J. M. EFIRD, ed., *The Use of the Old Testament in the New and Other Essays*, FS W. F. Stinespring (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 37n93. On Harnack’s claim that typological exegesis originated with Paul, see Joseph A. FITZMYER, “The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament,” *NTS* 7

[What was new in the] Christian phenomenon was the convergence of the Old Testament images and patterns on Jesus. That in him, as both an individual and one who transcended the individual, these patterns became coherent meant that the history of Israel converged on him and that from him deployed the future of the people of God. It was the coherent organizing of all this into a single inclusive figure, the crown of Israel and the ultimate Adam, that made a completely new thing out of Jewish exegesis. And whatever antecedents there were in the uses of scripture by Jesus himself, it was his living person even more than his remembered words that conditioned its course. To have lived responsively through the events of his ministry, death, and resurrection was to have gained a completely new angle of approach to scripture: or, to change the figure, it meant viewing the map of scripture for the first time as a genuinely three-dimensional relief map illuminated centrally by a brilliant light.²⁴

Dimensionality in Scripture

The spatial metaphors “two-dimensional” and “three-dimensional” are used to characterize two fundamentally different ways of viewing Scripture. The former envisions Scripture as a single genre—the Bible understood as the Word of God, or, at least, throughout its pages mediating the Word of God, and thus uniformly divine revelation. So conceived, it is read as though every statement in Scripture is of equal value and authority. What is said in one place is on the same level as what is said in another place. This construal of Scripture is said to typify what one finds in rabbinic interpretation and in Philo of Alexandria.

The three-dimensional view, by contrast, still conceives of Scripture as a single whole, but just as a topographical map or model displays variation in height within a given terrain, so does Scripture contain statements of different literary quality and theological insight. Some of its statements reveal penetrating insight into human nature and the reality of God, while others are problematic in their depiction of human relationships and behavior, along with how they portray God. Scripture thus reflects highs and lows in both style and content. It has peaks and valleys—some parts reflecting profound religious experience or probing theological insight (the Psalter, Second Isaiah), other parts prosaic, even superficial and humanly demeaning. Such awareness requires readers to differentiate between the various claims of Scripture, some unimaginably compelling, others highly problematic, even repulsive. Reading Scripture this way means that it is viewed “in the round” as opposed to being read “on the flat.”

(1961): 297–333, esp. 332; repr. in idem, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Chapman, 1970; repr., Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1974), 3–58. E. Earle ELLIS, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 90–92, 129, finds typological exegesis present in pre-Pauline strata of the NT.

²⁴ MOULE, *Birth* (1981), 89–90. See n. 10 above.

The suggestion that a fourth dimension—time—can also be taken into account can imply two things: temporal linearity within the story unfolded in Scripture, and with respect to its composition.

In the first instance, rather than being seen simply as a collection of writings, even if these can be arranged into sub-groups according to genre, Scripture is read as a continuous narrative in which the story of God's people Israel is rehearsed sequentially from the time of creation until the post-exilic period. As such, Scripture is a "record of revelation" that is envisioned as moving through time and in which distinct chronological periods can be delineated—patriarchs, Egyptian captivity, exodus, wilderness, conquest, judges, kings, etc.

In the second sense, Scripture can be seen as having been composed—written and edited—at different times or during different periods of Israel's history. Some parts are read as early, others as late, that is, from the standpoint of their time of composition. This can be reflected in the titles given to different sections, some writings attributed to Moses, others to David—both claims implying different time periods in which the writings originated.

While the latter aspect became especially prominent in the modern stages of historical criticism, the former—temporal linearity within the OT narrative—is the primary focus of Moule's argument. What distinguishes early Christian interpretation of the OT is its pervasive awareness of an ongoing, continuing story that can be conceived in periods or stages, and within which the relationship between God and humanity/Israel is depicted cyclically. Through the ups and downs of this sometimes turbulent, sometimes calm, even constructive, relationship readers of the OT can detect what God intends humanity to be—what the ideal divine-human relationship should be like.

Two aspects of this linear way of reading Scripture are especially important and prominent within early Christian interpretive practice: the notion of fulfillment and the use of typology.

Fulfillment

Although Qumran research was still in its early stages when the first edition of *Birth* was published (1962), Moule drew heavily on the scholarship then available in his analysis of early Christian use of the OT. The profoundly transformative experience of Jesus's resurrection convinced Christians that "they were living in the midst of a divine fulfillment of all the hopes of Israel."²⁵ In support of this claim, Moule notes:

It is very striking, that, with all the parallels between the New Testament use of scripture and its use in the Qumran writings and in other Jewish literature, the note of *fulfilment*

²⁵ MOULE, *Birth* (1966), 57.

seems to be peculiar to the New Testament. *CD* vii.10–11 is not far off, but מלא appears not to occur in this connexion.²⁶

If fulfilment is a distinctive, or even prominent, element in NT interpretation of the OT, its presence heightens the sense of temporal linearity by sharpening the difference between past and present while simultaneously connecting them conceptually as part of an ongoing historical continuum. This is the force of Moule's claim that Christians "began thus to use scripture 'historically' (as we should say)."²⁷ His reformulation in the third edition is even more emphatic: it is "this genuinely historical and 'three-dimensional' approach to scripture" that distinguishes early Christian use of Scripture from its Jewish counterparts.²⁸ Although Moule does not elaborate on how he is using "historical" and "three-dimensional," he appears to be emphasizing, first, the notion of temporal linearity—that Scripture can be read as a "record of revelation" in which the continuing, ongoing story of Israel is narrated. By his use of "three-dimensional," he does not appear to be thinking of the "highs and lows" of literary and theological quality within the OT, but rather signaling his insistence that the OT story as

²⁶ Ibid., 57n1, citing FITZMYER, "Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations," 297–305 (see n. 23 above); similarly, *Birth* (1966), 61n1, noting "the absence of the idea of 'fulfilment'" in the Qumran writings. These assertions are repeated in *Birth* (1981), 74n1, which now includes reference to Moule's SNTS Presidential Address in 1967: "Fulfillment-Words in the New Testament: Use and Abuse," *NTS* 14 (1967–1968): 293–320. In this article, he examines in detail the Hebrew and Greek terminology relating to the overall theme of "promise-fulfilment." Through this linguistic analysis, he mainly sharpens the point originally expressed in *Birth* (1966): "to locate that in the faith of the New Testament which gives unique and distinctive appropriateness to the use of promise and fulfilment to describe the 'Christ-event' in its relation to the entire design of God" ("Fulfillment-Words," 295). He also acknowledges his indebtedness to Fitzmyer's 1961 article, which noted the absence of fulfilment phrases in the Qumran writings that "first set me thinking along these lines" (304). Another impetus was an anonymous review of *Birth* (1962) in *The Times Literary Supplement* (1963), 220, in which the reviewer questioned Moule's argument about the distinctive understanding of fulfilment in the NT. According to the reviewer, "It is at least arguable . . . that though the object of applied prophecy in the New Testament is more specific than in the Qumran literature, the application of prophecy itself is in the latter just as much concerned with fulfillment." See Julio TREBOLLE BARRERA, "The Interpretation of the OT in the Qumran Writings," in idem, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible*, trans. Wilfred G. E. WATSON (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 452–59. Barrera adduces 1QpHab 7:3–8 as an example of applying an OT text to the Teacher of Righteousness; he also sees "fulfillment" within Qumran exegesis comparable to what later occurs in the early Christian community: "The Qumran community called itself 'Israel,' meaning that the history, promises, and institutions of the OT had their fulfillment in their community, just as later Christians also presented themselves as the 'true Israel,'" (455); similarly, 1QH 3:6–18, in which the prophecy of Immanuel is applied to the Qumran community; 1QH 6:25–27; 7:8–9, applying the cornerstone image (Isa 28:16) to the community in a manner comparable to the NT (455).

²⁷ MOULE, *Birth* (1966), 68.

²⁸ MOULE, *Birth* (1981), 87.

reinterpreted by Christians points forward to, and culminates in, the person of Jesus Christ and his Church as a living community.

In what sense has this way of reading Scripture “only become deliberate and conscious in ‘modern’ thought”?²⁹ Presumably Moule is thinking of the modern understanding of history growing out of the Enlightenment in which interpreters distinguish between “the story being narrated in the text” and the story (or history) that can be constructed through critical inquiry in which the biblical text is used, along with other literary and non-literary evidence such as archaeology, as evidence for historical reconstruction.

Typology

As already noted, in the third edition of *Birth*, typology is adduced as another indication of historical, “three-dimensional” consciousness. Rather than seeing certain OT expectations or “promises,” variously conceived, coming to fulfilment in NT persons or events, especially those relating to Jesus, typology envisions some perceived connection, perhaps best understood as an analogical relationship, between OT and NT persons or events. Fulfilment imagines a promise or some statement of future expectation articulated in a specific text as the beginning point of an arc or trajectory that reaches forward to another, usually distant, point in the future, which is seen as the target, or realization, of the promise. Typology, by contrast, envisions no such one-directional arc, but instead imagines a moment in the OT story—a person or event—that is captured with a certain characterization, which is then set beside another person or moment in the NT story. The main interpretive move is comparative not chronological. It is as though the first moment—the type—and the second moment—the antitype—are separated by a colon, as if to say: “x is to y” in some plausible sense. Not only is y thought about in relation to x, but in this form of comparison the reverse is true. The interpreter can also think about x in relation to y. It is a form of reciprocal comparison that trades on analogical imagination—seeing each moment, type and antitype, in their relation to each other. Even if the claim that biblical typology is a Christian innovation is contested, its hermeneutical function in various strata of the NT is indisputable.

The thrust of Moule’s claim is that typology captures a dimension of Scripture interpretation that anticipates, even foreshadows, modern historical consciousness and thereby attests to a “genuinely historical and ‘three-dimensional’ approach to scripture” that is reflected in the NT. As with fulfilment, typology is predicated on a clearly perceived difference between “then” and “now,” which is axiomatic within modern historical criticism. As such, it is another expression of temporal linearity.

²⁹ Ibid.

Philo's Conception of Scripture: Flat or Round?

While it is true that Philo, in both the Exposition of the Law and the Allegorical Commentary, frequently treats Scripture as a divine oracle in which each part is of equal value and authority, two-dimensional as it were, there are clear indications that he views Scripture as a textured composition that should be seen as multi-dimensional.³⁰

This becomes evident in several passages. In *Mos.* 2.45–48, Scripture is referred to as “the sacred books” (αἱ ιερῶταται βίβλοι, 45), which are said to consist of two parts: the historical (τὸ ἱστορικὸν μέρος) and “commands and prohibitions” (τὰς προστάξεις καὶ ἀπαγορεύσεις). The historical section of Scripture also has two parts, one treating the creation of the world (περὶ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου γενέσεως), the other treating individual people (τὸ γενεαλογικόν). The latter does not appear to be a reference to the genealogies of Gen 5, 10–11, but to persons like Noah and his descendants, Abraham and his descendants. In particular, Philo observes that such persons are portrayed in order to show how the righteous are rewarded and the wicked punished. Although Philo does not specify which people he has in mind, he is probably thinking of all the named individuals treated in Gen 4–50.

In *Decal.* 175–176 Philo distinguishes between the ten oracles “which God gave forth Himself as well befitted His holiness” and the special laws delivered by Moses:

For it was in accordance with His nature that the pronouncements in which the special laws were summed up should be given by Him in His own person, but the particular laws by the mouth of the most perfect of the prophets whom He selected for his merits and having filled him with the divine spirit (ἐνθέου πνεύματος), chose him to be the interpreter of His sacred utterances.³¹

One of the most revealing passages is *Mos.* 2.187–191 in which Philo differentiates between three types of inspired utterances. He acknowledges that “all things written in the sacred books are oracles delivered through Moses,” but that some are “more especially his.” Within the latter, three sub-types are delineated:

³⁰ See Francis T. FALLON, “The Law in Philo and Ptolemy: A Note on the *Letter to Flora*,” *VC* 30 (1976): 45–51.

³¹ PHILO, *Decal.* 175. Trans. F. H. COLSON, LCL 7:93. Cf. *Decal.* 18, in which Philo distinguishes between those oracles “God judged fit to deliver in His own person alone without employing any other,” and those given “through His prophet Moses whom He chose as of all men the best suited to be the revealer of verities.” In *Decal.* 175, Moses’s role is portrayed as that of interpreter of God’s sacred utterances; cf. *Spec.* 2.104. In other places, Philo emphasizes that some aspect of legislation is attributed specifically to Moses’s initiative or his special insight: *Spec.* 1.262, 344; 2.58, 64; 3.24, 47, 91, 117. References given in FALLON, “Law in Philo,” 50n15.

- (1) Some “divine utterances” are “spoken by God in His own Person with His prophet for interpreter.” These are “absolutely and entirely signs of the divine excellencies, graciousness, and beneficence, by which [God] incites all [humanity] to noble conduct, and particularly the nation of His worshippers, for whom He opens up the road which leads to happiness.”³²
- (2) Some “divine utterances” occur through question and answer; these occur through “combination and partnership; the prophet asks questions of God about matters on which he has been seeking knowledge, and God replies and instructs him.”³³ The examples Philo cites include the following: (1) Lev 24:10–16, treated in §§193–208; (2) Num 15:32–36, treated in §§213–220; (3) Num 9:1–14, treated in §§222–232; and (4) Num 27:1–11, treated in §§234–245.
- (3) Others “are spoken by Moses in his own person, when possessed by God and carried away out of himself.”³⁴ This group of utterances “are assigned to the lawgiver himself: God has given to him of His own power of foreknowledge and by this he will reveal future events.”³⁵ Philo’s examples include: (1) Exod 14, treated in §§247–257; (2) Exod 16:4–30, treated in §§258–269; (3) Exod 32, treated in §§270–274; (4) Num 16, treated in §§275–287; and (5) Deut 33–34, treated in §§288–291.

The first group, Philo insists, cannot be discussed because they “are too great to be lauded by human lips; scarcely indeed could heaven and the world and the whole existing universe worthily sing their praises. Besides, they are delivered through an interpreter, and interpretation and prophecy are not the same thing.”³⁶

The second group can be discussed, although Philo admits that his discussion of this group will be interwoven with the third group, in which the speaker is motivated to speak through divine inspiration or possession “in virtue of which he is chiefly and in the strict sense considered a prophet.”³⁷

While many aspects of these fascinating passages remain obscure, it becomes clear that Philo envisions Scripture, the Mosaic legislation, at least, as having different levels. The ten oracles of the Decalogue are in a category unto themselves: they are utterances by God that are to be understood as having been delivered by God without any intermediary—they come directly from God, and God alone. The

³² PHILO, *Mos.* 2.189.

³³ PHILO, *Mos.* 2.190.

³⁴ PHILO, *Mos.* 2.188.

³⁵ PHILO, *Mos.* 2.190.

³⁶ PHILO, *Mos.* 2.191.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

special laws, by contrast, are in another category, but even this category must be conceived at different levels. Some are divine utterances in which Moses functions as God's interpreter—they are God's words, but in a different category from the Decalogue, and yet they need explanation. This group of utterances are inescapably collaborative. They fuse God's voice with that of Moses, God's interpreter.

Then come passages in which divine revelation occurs through question and answer sessions between Moses and God. A question of interpretation within a given life situation arises, which prompts Moses to convene with God, seeking explanation, and in which God answers with a divine response. The four examples given illustrate how human inquiry can interact with divine response, thereby producing a clearly defined set of divine utterances.

Closely related, though still conceived as a separate category, are those instances in which Moses experiences divine, prophetic ecstasy. These utterances can be understood as "Mosaic" in a distinct sense, for although God may initiate the moment of inspired ecstasy, the formulation of the prophetic utterance comes from Moses himself.³⁸

Another example, although in a different category, is Philo's exposition of Gen 1–3 in *De opificio mundi*. Rather than reading this account of the creation "on the flat," or two-dimensionally, Philo recognizes that not one, but two accounts of creation are given. Accordingly, this requires him to find some explanation, which he does by drawing on the Platonic tradition, Middle Platonism in particular. The first account of creation Philo interprets as the creation of the noumenal world, the second of the phenomenal world. While Philo insists that time is created as part of God's original creative process, it is nevertheless clear that Philo reads the two Genesis accounts as sequential, the creation of the phenomenal world following that of the noumenal world. Given Philo's account, these have to be characterized as two separate creations that occur in different moments of time. Whether Philo's reading of Gen 1–3 reflects his "historical" perspective depends on what one means by "historical." But at the very least, it seems to envision some form of temporal linearity.

Ptolemy's Epistle to Flora

Although Ptolemy's *Epistle to Flora* represents a later perspective, well after the NT period and more than a century after Philo, it provides yet another example

³⁸ John BARTON, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 135, sees similar differentiation in ancient Jewish canonical divisions: "The Torah is thought of as direct revelation through Moses, the Prophets as the result of a somewhat lower level of inspiration, and the Writings, according to some, as primarily human works." He also notes the threefold canonical division in JOSEPHUS, *Ag.Ap.* 1.37–43.

of how the Old Testament was read within one stream of early Christianity.³⁹ It reflects the outlook of Valentinian Gnosticism, since Ptolemy is remembered as a major exponent of this stream of Gnostic thought. It was written in Greek and conforms to the genre of a philosophical epistle in which a teacher offers instruction to a pupil. In this case, the recipient is Flora, a Christian woman, to whom Ptolemy writes, giving simple, elementary instruction. The provenance is not known but Rome is a reasonable guess, since Ptolemy's sphere of activity and influence was in the West.⁴⁰

The topic of this epistle is the "law established by Moses" (33.3.1), i.e., the Pentateuch. Ptolemy begins by asserting that the law was not established "by the perfect God and Father" (33.3.4), nor is it attributable to "the adversary," the devil (33.3.5). Ptolemy's stated aim is to explain to Flora "what sort of law the law is" and "which legislator established it" (33.3.8). He also indicates that his exposition will draw on Jesus's own remarks—"our Savior's words"—which he regards as a definitive source of authority (33.3.8).

One of Ptolemy's major claims relates to different levels of authorship in the Pentateuch: "the law contained in the Pentateuch of Moses was not established by a single author, I mean not by God alone: rather, there are certain of its commandments that were established by human beings as well" (33.4.1). The core assertion here is the multiple authorship of the Pentateuch.

Specifically, Ptolemy differentiates between three strands within the Pentateuch. "Our Savior's words teach us that the Pentateuch divides into three parts" (33.4.1): (1) "one division belongs to God himself and his legislations"; (2) "<another division> belongs to Moses—indeed, Moses ordained certain of the commandments not as God himself ordained through them, rather based upon his own thoughts about the matter"; and (3) "a third division belongs to the elders (or, presbyters) of the people, <who> likewise in the beginning must have inserted certain of their own commandments" (33.4.2). Ptolemy insists that this three-fold schematization can be derived from Jesus himself: "you will now learn how all this can be demonstrated from the Savior's words" (33.4.3).

Ptolemy's first argument, that the legislation of God must be distinguished from the legislation of Moses, is based on his analysis of Jesus's teaching about divorce in Matt 19. He observes that Jesus distinguishes between what God originally

³⁹ For this analysis, I am dependent on the introduction and translation of Bentley LAYTON, *The Gnostic Scriptures: A New Translation with Annotations and Introductions*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 306–15. I am using Layton's translation although I capitalize "God" and "Savior." Also see G. QUISPEL, ed., *Ptolémée, Lettre à Flora: Analyse, texte critique, traduction, commentaire et index grec*. 2nd ed. Sources chrétiennes, no. 24 bis. (Paris: Cerf, 1966); Adolf HARNACK, *The Letter of Ptolemaeus to Flora*, Materials for the use of theological lecturers and students 9 (Bonn: A. Marcus and E. Weber/Cambridge: Deighton Bell, 1904).

⁴⁰ The text is preserved in EPIPHANIUS, *Against Heresies* 33.3.1–33.7.10, composed ca. 375.

intended—that marriage should be permanent and indissoluble—and what Moses allowed—divorce owing to human “hard-heartedness.” The implication is clear: the “law of God” can be distinguished from the “law of Moses.”

Ptolemy concludes: “Here [Jesus] shows that <the> law of God is one thing, forbidding a woman to be put asunder from her husband; while the law of Moses is another, permitting the couple to be put asunder because of hard-heartedness. And so, accordingly, Moses ordains contrary to what God ordains; for <separating> is contrary to not separating” (33.4.5–6).

In 33.4.6–10, Ptolemy explains Moses’s thinking: in certain situations, the marriage is so conflicted that it jeopardizes the welfare of the husband (and by implication the wife as well). Accordingly, Moses relaxes God’s original intention of the indissolubility of marriage, and does so for humane reasons. His reasoning: if the couple cannot keep God’s law, they can at least keep Moses’s law. Thus we find Moses “ordaining laws contrary to those of God” (33.4.10). “This law (allowing divorce) is of Moses himself and is distinct from God’s” (33.4.10).

A third part of the Mosaic legislation, Ptolemy argues, is attributable to “the elders” (33.4.11). Here he argues from Matt 15, which reports the dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees and scribes in which he charges them with breaking God’s commandment “for the sake of your traditions.” Ptolemy reports the story in order to distinguish between a command attributable to God himself—“For God spoke: ‘Honor your father and your mother, that it may be well with you’” (Matt 15:4; Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16; cf. Exod 21:17; Lev 20:9), and the tradition of the elders, which allowed children to divert money intended for parental care to other uses. From Jesus’s statement, “for the sake of your tradition . . . you have made void the law of God,” Ptolemy concludes (not very convincingly) that part of the Mosaic legislation can be traceable to the traditions of the elders.

His conclusion relating to the threefold authorship of the Pentateuch is stated in 33.4.14: “Thus it has been clearly shown from these passages that, as a whole, the law is divided into three parts. For we have found in it legislations belonging to Moses himself, to the elders, and to God himself. Moreover, the analysis of the law as a whole, as we have divided it here, has made clear which part of it is genuine.”

Ptolemy also asserts a further level of differentiation within God’s own law (33.5.1). Three subdivisions are posited:

- (1) Pure, undiluted legislation “not interwoven with evil,” which the Savior came not to abolish but to fulfil (Matt 5:17). Since its high expectations had never been fully met, it “did not have perfection.” It is thus “pure but imperfect” (33.5.1). In view here is the Decalogue, which includes both positive and negative commands—what to do, and what to avoid (33.5.3). Although this legislation sets lofty expectations, thus is “pure” in its ideals, it remained unfulfilled until the Savior came.
- (2) That part of Mosaic legislation which is “interwoven with the inferior and with injustice,” and which “the Savior abolished as being incongruous with

his own nature” (33.5.1; Matt 5:38–41). In view is the *lex talionis* (Lev 24:17, 20) in which the principle of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” sanctions murder as a response to murder, thereby violating the Decalogue and other scriptural prohibitions (Exod 20:13; 21:12; Lev 24:17). Even if *lex talionis* has a compelling logic that reflects justice in one sense, it nevertheless must be regarded as “a deviation from the pure law because of the weakness of those to whom it was ordained: yet it is incongruous with the nature and goodness of the Father of the entirety” (i.e., the Father of the whole universe; 33.5.5).

- (3) A third part of the Mosaic legislation is “symbolic and allegorical” (or “prefigurative”), which relates to “the superior, spiritual realm” (33.5.2). In view are “offerings, circumcision, the Sabbath, fasting, Passover, the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, and the like” (33.5.8). With the Savior’s arrival, the significance (and true meaning) of these practices changed. “As to their meaning in the visible realm and their physical accomplishment they were abolished; but as to their spiritual meaning they were elevated, with the words remaining the same but the subject matter being altered” (33.5.9). In what sense did “the Savior [change] (the referent of) this part from the perceptible, visible level to the spiritual, invisible one”? He commanded us to make offerings, but in the form of praise, prayer, and good deeds, not animals and incense; to circumcise our spiritual hearts rather than the physical foreskin; to observe Sabbath by suspending evil activity; and to fast by abstaining from evil. Through the Savior’s teaching and example, his disciples learned to offer sacrifices, circumcise, keep the Sabbath, and fast in a spiritual sense (33.5.10–13).

Ptolemy summarizes his analysis in 33.6.1–4: The first part of the Mosaic legislation, the Decalogue, in which God’s highest ideals are expressed, the Savior has not only reasserted but raised to an even higher level. Those parts such as the *lex talionis*, which reflect a certain form of justice but violate other, more basic moral norms, the Savior has abolished, substituting instead non-vindictive forms of behavior. And finally, religious practices regulating daily life and worship have been elevated to a new level, giving way to higher, more spiritual, forms of behavior that nurture genuine, internal piety rather than emphasize ritual behavior and regimen.

Although Ptolemy has relied heavily on the Gospels in his analysis of the Mosaic legislation, he also finds warrant for these distinctions in the Pauline letters (Rom 7:12; 1 Cor 5:7; cf. 33.5.15; Eph 2:15).

As to the God who stands behind the Mosaic legislation, Ptolemy envisions three possibilities: the perfect God, the God of the universe; the craftsman, or Demiurge, who made the universe and everything in it; and the adversary, the devil. Of the three, the Demiurge is the better choice since he stands midway or at midpoint between the two essences of Good and Evil. Accordingly, he is best described as

intermediate (33.7.3). If the God of all is in essence good, and the devil essentially evil, the intermediate God can be characterized as neither good nor evil, but just—simply just (33.7.5).⁴¹

Although there are substantial differences between Ptolemy's conception of the Jewish Scriptures and that of Philo, both reflect a clear willingness to differentiate levels of composition or authorship. Whether God or Moses is seen as the author, based on what one finds within the Pentateuch itself, it is necessary to make these distinctions. Logic requires it. In both cases, Scripture is being viewed "three-dimensionally," if that means not as an oracle, "on the flat," but as containing statements that have different levels of authority. In both Philo and Ptolemy, the oracles of the Decalogue are in a unique category. They are pure, pristine divine oracles, a distinction that Jesus respects, and whose moral demands he even intensifies.

Philo's threefold classification of Moses's inspired utterances (*Mos.* 2.187–191), in which he posits different gradations within the Pentateuch, parallels to some extent Ptolemy's notion of multiple authorship (some parts attributable to God Himself, others to Moses and the elders respectively) and his further threefold qualitative differentiation within the legislation itself. Although Ptolemy's schematization is more elaborate than Philo's, both construals of the Jewish Scriptures belong on the same conceptual continuum. In each one, the reader is shown passages within the Pentateuch itself that are difficult to explain if they are read "on the flat" or two-dimensionally. The interpretive strategy offered by both Philo and Ptolemy involves some form of classification of Scriptural passages that can be understood as stratified levels that move from higher to lower levels.⁴²

Some Summary Observations

This brief survey began with a rehearsal of Moule's analysis of the ways in which the Jewish Scriptures were interpreted by early Christians, especially as reflected in the New Testament. Two aspects of his analysis stood out. First, his contention that early Christian interpretation of Scripture, by virtue of the ways in which Jesus Christ, both the historical Jesus and the risen Lord, functioned as the hermeneutical fulcrum; and, from this, his insistence that Christian uses of the Jewish Scripture acquired a fullness, a form of three-dimensionality, both in terms

⁴¹ See Frances M. YOUNG, *Biblical Exegesis and The Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 127–28, who finds Ptolemy's distinctions already implicit in JUSTIN, *Dialogue with Trypho*.

⁴² See Adela Y. COLLINS, *Mark, Hermeneia* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 466–67, on Mark 10:3–5, regarding the respective roles of God and Moses in originating and mediating divine revelation, and how this hermeneutical differentiation is reflected in Philo and Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*. She also notes Steven D. FRAADE, "Moses and the Commandments: Can Hermeneutics, History, and Rhetoric Be Disentangled?" in Hindy NAJMAN and Judith H. NEWMAN, eds., *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James Kugel*, JSJSup 83 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 399–422.

of their construal of Scripture as an ongoing “historical” narrative that not only continued but culminated with Christ, and with respect to the number and type of *testimonia* that were adduced to explain who Jesus is. The distinctive way in which fulfilment was understood by early Christians and their use of scriptural typology attest to this three-dimensional quality.

Second, his occasional and sometimes cryptic remarks that the early Christians forms of interpreting the Jewish Scriptures adumbrated, perhaps even initiated, modern ways of reading the Bible that are variously designated as “historical” and “critical.” Just as early Christians saw the Jewish Scriptures three-dimensionally, so did post-Enlightenment, modern interpreters, albeit in different ways and to different degrees.

Moule’s contention that Christian exegesis of the OT, compared with that of the rabbis and Philo, both of which he characterizes as being “two-dimensional” and “on the flat,” is now seen to require some modification. While Philo’s exegesis is often “two-dimensional,” reflecting his tendency to identify words or motifs in Scripture that become the basis of elaborate allegorization, elsewhere in his tractates he proposes what, by any measure, must be regarded as a “three-dimensional” understanding of Scripture. Not only does he exhibit awareness of linear temporality within Scripture, that it contains a story that moves forward from creation until later stages in Israel’s history, but he also sees a qualitative difference within various statements of Scripture. And what Philo saw as a necessary differentiation within Scripture, Ptolemy developed even more elaborately. But both Philo and Ptolemy were responding to the same set of sensibilities. They were convinced that not every statement of Scripture is equally cogent.

Moule’s suggestions that within the New Testament and early Christianity there are indications of modern, critical sensibilities are insightful and compelling. His insistence that early Christians read the OT as a “record of revelation,” not simply as a collection of divine oracles, captures an important dimension of early Christian exegesis. This can also be seen in other ways, for example, in the numerous passages in Matthew and Luke that “correct” Mark, whether grammatically or historically. Even the Lukan prologue implies that the Third Evangelist read his earlier sources critically, and this doubtlessly included earlier Gospel material.

Both Philo and Ptolemy anticipate modern explanations relating to the composition of the OT writings, e.g., the authorship of the Pentateuch or the prophetic writings, and in some ways the authorship of the NT writings. What Philo and Ptolemy saw in their reading of the Jewish Scriptures, modern biblical critics saw when they distinguished between different levels of authorship within Isaiah; or when they distinguished between the undisputed and the disputed Pauline letters.

Moule’s analysis remains pertinent to biblical scholars in the twenty-first century, even though a gap of almost a half-century separates them. His finely grained analysis of Christian use of the OT in which he distinguishes at least five different devices or strategies for interpreting the text provides ample proof of disregard

for the original context and its rather obvious “literal” sense, and corresponding forced interpretations to make Scripture fit their own experience of Jesus. His respect for the complexities of early Christian interpretation as reflected throughout the NT, but especially in difficult writings such as Hebrews but other texts as well, renders his own analysis “critical” in the best sense.

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NONVIOLENCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AN ORTHODOX-HERMENEUTICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. This study discusses the problem of the incompatibility between ethnocentric tendencies within the national Orthodox churches and the New Testament teaching on nonviolence. The three main parts outline the relevant New Testament teaching (1) in the four Gospels and the book of Acts, (2) in the Pauline epistles, and (3) in John's Revelation. The study concludes that in the New Testament texts, there is no room for the justification of violence on the part of Christ-followers against their opponents. Quite on the contrary, the New Testament views the world as having the potential to become ecclesia, and the "other" as a possible sister or brother in Christ. Unfortunately, this fundamental New Testament teaching is often forgotten in modern-day Orthodoxy, notwithstanding its claims for unbroken continuity with the apostolic tradition. As an example, the Greek-Orthodox church oftentimes emphasizes national identity and heroism over ecclesial faith and ethos. Although understandable, such ethnocentric tendencies clearly contradict the New Testament witness and should be abandoned.

Keywords: Nonviolence, Greek Orthodoxy, national Orthodox churches, ethnocentrism, national identity, heroism, martyrdom, New Testament era, Gospels, Acts, Pauline Epistles, Revelation.

It is generally known and well-documented that since the birth of national Orthodox churches, there have been and still are powerful ethnocentric tendencies within the ranks of both their clergy and laity.¹ On the other hand, the same national churches claim to be in unbroken continuity with the early church as reflected in the New Testament witnesses.² At this point, the question inescapably arises about whether the above-mentioned ethnocentric tendencies are compatible with the New

¹ See the studies published in P. MEYENDORFF (ed.), *Ecclesiology and Nationalism*, in SVTQ 57 (2013) 235–540.

² See BISHOP K. WARE, "Strange Yet Familiar: My Journey to the Orthodox Church", in *The Inner Kingdom*, The Collected Works 1, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 2001, 8–14; CH. KARAKOLIS, „Auch von den anderen kann man lernen und bereichert werden“, in S. ALKIER, CH. KARAKOLIS, and T. NICKLAS, *Sola Scriptura ökumenisch*, Biblische Argumente in öffentlichen Debatten 1, Brill / Schöningh, Paderborn, 2021, 171–188 (171).

Testament witness on nonviolence,³ which goes along with acceptance, forgiveness, and particularly unconditional love. In the present paper, I will discuss this question by presenting and underlining the open, inclusive, and nonviolent message of the New Testament⁴ as diametrically opposed to the narrow ethnocentric discourse within modern-day Orthodoxy. The latter has a long history dating back to the early Byzantine era and, of course, concrete root causes. However, the diachronic examination of its historical development should be the subject of a specialized study.⁵ Therefore, in the present paper, I will limit myself to a concise but critical overview of the relevant testimony of characteristic New Testament texts within their historical context. In the end, I will relate my analysis to the ethnocentric tendencies of the contemporary ecclesiastical discourse focusing on the example of the modern church context in Greece.

I will divide the material under consideration into (1) the Gospels and Acts, (2) the Pauline letters, and (3) John's Revelation.

1. Gospels and Acts

Due to the enormous time gap from the events of Jesus Christ's life,⁶ as well as their crucial doctrinal significance for the Orthodox churches, even nowadays, their clergy and theologians often overlook the historical setting of those events.

According to the combined witness of the four canonical Gospels, Jesus was a Jew from Galilee.⁷ He lived all of his life within the wider geographical area of

³ Here, nonviolence refers exclusively to the repudiation of physical violence that is exerted in ethnic conflicts, while all other kinds of non-physical violence in New Testament texts are a matter of a different study. For an outline of the relevant research, see J. W. VAN HENTEN, "Religion, Bible and Violence", in P. G. R. DE VILLIERS and J. W. VAN HENTEN (eds.), *Coping with Violence in the New Testament*, STAR 16, Brill, Leiden, 2012, 3–21. Apart from the studies contained in the above-mentioned conference volume, see also inter alia S. MATTHEWS and E. L. GIBSON (eds.), *Violence in the New Testament*, Clark International, New York, NY–London, 2005; M. DESJARDINS, *Peace, Violence and the New Testament*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1997.

⁴ R. B. HAYS, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*, Harper Collins, San Francisco, CA, 1996, 329–344.

⁵ See P. MEYENDORFF (ed.), *Ecclesiology*, 235–540.

⁶ For a critical discussion on the "historical Jesus" see O. HOFIUS, "Ist Jesus der Messias? Thesen", in *Der Messias, JBTh* 8 (1993) 108–134 (119–129); D. S. DU TOIT, "Redefining Jesus: Current Trends in Jesus Research", in M. LABAHN and A. SCHMIDT (eds.), *Jesus, Mark, and Q: The Teaching of Jesus and Its Earliest Records*, JSNTS 214, Academic Press, Sheffield, 2001, 82–124; For an Orthodox perspective see CH. KARAKOLIS, "Hermeneutical Reflections on Modern Jesus-Research: An Orthodox View", in CH. KARAKOLIS, K.-W. NIEBUHR, and S. ROGALSKY (eds.), *Gospel Images of Jesus Christ in Church Tradition and Biblical Scholarship. Fifth International East-West Symposium of New Testament Scholars, Minsk, September 2 to 9, 2010*, WUNT 288, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2012, 427–434. In any case, it is an unquestionable fact that the four canonical Gospels are based on shared historical traditions about Jesus, see J. D. G. DUNN, *Christianity in the Making: 1. Jesus Remembered*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI–Cambridge, 2003, 139–336.

Palestine, almost exclusively associating with fellow Jews.⁸ The terminology and content of his teaching are biblical in origin and spirit, while the images in his parables originate mainly from the everyday life of the Jews of his time. In notable cases, such as the ones of the Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7,24-30; cf. Matt 15,21-28) or the Roman centurion (Matt 8:13-13; Luke 7:1-10), Jesus is indeed presented as coming into contact with Gentiles as well, while, however, making it clear that this is a deviation from his standard practice and overall strategy.⁹ In such cases, Jesus does not teach but only acts in a miraculous way for love and mercy towards specific persons, thus moving on the borderline of the otherwise strictly defined framework of his program.¹⁰ It is also indicative that when Jesus sends his disciples to declare the coming of the kingdom of God, he draws their attention to the fact that they should by no means approach the Gentiles or the Samaritans but only the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt 10,6).

In the New Testament era, Palestine was subjugated to the Romans. The Jews were deprived of their independence and hence their ethnic pride and honor while retaining the right to exercise their religious duties freely. On the other hand, however, the Jews felt humiliated, insulted, and angered by the defilement of their land and even the holy city of Jerusalem by the presence of Roman troops. Furthermore, they paid high taxes to their Roman oppressors.¹¹

Under such circumstances, it was only natural for them to develop strong revolutionary tendencies combined with intense eschatological expectations. Concretely, the Jews used to expect a new Mosaic prophet who would release them from the Roman yoke, reenacting somehow the signs of Exodus.¹² They also anticipated the coming Elijah, who would prepare God's final intervention in history.¹³ Finally, almost everyone was expecting the royal Messiah of Davidic origin, who would initiate

⁷ On Galilee in New Testament times, see S. FREYNE, *Galilee: From Alexander the Great to Hadrian, 323 B.C.E. to 135 C.E.: A Study of Second Temple Judaism*, Clark, Edinburgh, 1998.

⁸ G. THEISSEN/A. MERZ, *Der historische Jesus: Ein Lehrbuch*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, ³2001, 156–174.

⁹ See Jesus' words in Matt 8,10-12; 15,26.28; Mark 7,27.29; Luke 7,9.

¹⁰ In principle, Jesus' program consists in addressing his teaching exclusively to the Jews, see Mark 1,15; Matt 4,17; Luke 4,14-15.

¹¹ On the interaction between Jews and Romans in the time of Jesus see R. A. HORSLEY, *Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, SC, 2014, particularly 27–79.

¹² Deut 18,15.18; John 1,21.25; 6,14; 7,40.

¹³ Mal 3,1.22-23; cf. Matt 11,14; 16,14; 17,10-12; Mark 1,2; 6,15; 8,28; 9,11-13; Luke 9,8.19; John 1,21.25.

and lead the war against the Romans, liberate God's elect people, and re-establish the kingdom of ancient Israel.¹⁴

The Jews of Jesus' time, at least those who refused to compromise with the presence of the Romans in their land, may have felt humiliated and enraged but not necessarily desperate. According to their sacred texts, they believed in a God who had often intervened in the past to rescue his elect people. He drew their ancestors out of Egypt, led them to the Promise-land, helped them prevail over the Canaanites, and settled them there permanently. He also gave them David and Solomon as their kings, brought them back from their captivity in Babylon, and liberated them from the Seleucids. In the same way—they believed—God could do the same by driving the Romans away for good even now.¹⁵

According to the above, a spark coming from a charismatic personality with a solid appeal to the Jewish masses should be (and historically speaking, was) enough for them to revolt. The Zealot movement aimed to revive the Maccabean insurrection and wars.¹⁶ The devastating Judean war between 66-70 A.D. was the peak of those irredentist tendencies. The ultimate destruction of the native Judaism of Palestine was completed with the rebellion of Bar Kochba in 132-135 C.E., its violent repression, and the transformation of Jerusalem into the Roman city of Aelia Capitolina.¹⁷

According to the testimony of the Gospels and in diametrical opposition to the above-mentioned revolutionary atmosphere and irredentist impulses in Palestine, Jesus did not urge the recipients of his preaching to revolt against the Roman invaders or even to raise claims of ethnic rights. Furthermore, he did not invoke retaliation or attempt to impose justice by force. On the contrary, in his preaching, he demanded unconditional love, even towards the enemies (Matt 5,44; Luke 6,27), self-sacrifice for the benefit of others (Matt 5,39-42), and generally self-denial (Matt 16,24-25; Mark 8,34-35; Luke 9,23-24).¹⁸ He himself provided the model for such an attitude by healing the slave of a Roman centurion, an a priori enemy of the Jews (Matt 8,13; Luke 7,10), while at the same time proclaiming that this man's faith

¹⁴ This is not the place to analyze further the complex messianisms and eschatological expectations of early Judaism. See for further information the relevant studies of the volume edited by M. BOCKMUEHL and J. C. PAGET (eds.), *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity*, Clark, London–New York, 2007.

¹⁵ Cf. M. HENGEL, *The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A.D.*, transl. by D. SMITH, Clark, Edinburgh, 1989, 271–290.

¹⁶ See HENGEL, *Zealots*, 313–376.

¹⁷ K. BIEBERSTEIN, "Aelia Capitolina", in Z. KAFABI and R. SCHICK (eds.), *Jerusalem before Islam*, BAR International Series 1699, BAR Publishing, Oxford, 2007, 134–168.

¹⁸ Cf. also Matt 20,28; Mark 10,45; 14,24; Luke 22,20; John 10,11.15; 11,51.52; 15,13. All these texts may refer to Jesus' self-sacrifice but, mutatis mutandis, his disciples will have to follow his example while preaching the gospel for the salvation of all nations and sacrificing their lives to this aim, thus, imitating him.

was greater than the one of any Israelite (Matt 8,10; Luke 7,9). Also, when asked whether the Jews should pay taxes to the Romans or not, he replied that they should give Caesar what he already owns and attribute to God that which belongs to him (Matt 22,21; Mark 12,17; 20:25). This means that they should remain faithful to God but at the same time be law-abiding subjects by paying the required tribute to the Romans.¹⁹ Among his disciples, there were even tax collectors (Matt 10,3; 11,19; Mark 2,15; Luke 3,12; 5,27-30; 15,1; 19,2-10), the most hated collaborators of the Roman conqueror.²⁰ Typical cases thereof are the ones of Matthew-Levi (Matt 9,9; 10,3; Mark 2:14; Luke 5,27-29) and Zachaeus (Luke 19,8-9).

Furthermore, in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus asks God the Father to forgive his executioners by claiming that they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23,34). Jesus is, then, in a position to plead for his opponents because he has already forgiven them.²¹ He is not presented as suffering on the cross for the ethnic liberation of the elect people but for the spiritual salvation of the world as a whole (John 3,16.17; 4,42; 6,51; 12,47). He does not respond to violence by using violence but by his voluntary self-sacrifice.²² His death on the cross is, among other things, a par excellence model of love towards the enemies. While he can protect himself by destroying those who lead him to death, he refuses to do so (Matt 26,53). Although people repeatedly challenge him to descend from the cross, he remains silent (Matt 27,40.42; Mark 15,30.32; Luke 23,35.37). He, thus, demonstrates in a concrete way how to turn the other cheek to an offender (Mark 5:39; Luke 6:29). He clearly shows what it means to forgive everything up to 490 times, practically always (Matt 18,22).²³

Besides, while during his earthly ministry, Jesus addresses his preaching exclusively to the Jews, the Gospels testify that before he departs from the world, he sends his disciples to all the nations.²⁴ At this point, an enormous paradigm shift takes place. Except for a few Old Testament texts, like most notably the book of

¹⁹ Cf. R. A. HAGNER, *Matthew 14–28*, WBC 33B, Word, Dallas, TX, 1995, 636.

²⁰ See J. R. EDWARDS, *The Gospel according to Luke*, PiNTC, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, 111–112.

²¹ This phrase of Jesus (Πάτερ, ἄφεες αὐτοῖς, οὐ γὰρ οἶδασιν τί ποιοῦσιν) is absent from some important ancient manuscripts (P⁷⁵, B, D, W, Θ, 070, etc.) resulting in the doubting of its authenticity; see the relevant discussion in R. L. OMANSON, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament*, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, 2006, 152. However, whether or not the phrase belongs to the initial text of Luke, it certainly reflects the spirit of the teaching of Jesus, who sacrifices himself for the whole world, his crucifiers included, cf. inter alia Luke 2,32; 24,47.

²² This is evident by his willing surrender to his captors and his denial to accept any violent defense on his behalf, see Matt 26,51-54; Luke 22,51; John 18,2-11.

²³ Cf. HAGNER, *Matthew 14–28*, 537.

²⁴ Matt 28,19-20; 13,10; Luke 2,32; 24,17; John 17,18.21; cf. also Matt 10,18; 24,14; Mark 11,17; Luke 2,32; John 11,52.

Jonah,²⁵ the Old Testament often propagates or at least accepts the idea of hatred against all Gentiles, especially hostile ones (Lev 19,18; cf. Matt 5,43). Thus, in the Old Testament, the Israelites are presented as having to be ruthless towards their enemies, an attitude usually attributed to God's will.²⁶ Jesus, on the other hand, preaches something radically different: he preaches love not only towards those being racially and religiously close as required by the Old Testament (Lev 19,18) but even towards the enemies (Matt 5,44; Luke 6,27.35).

The gap between Jews and Gentiles is gradually bridged in the book of Acts. Here, while the initial preaching of the first church is addressed exclusively to Jews of both Palestine and the Diaspora,²⁷ it then is extended to the Gentiles as well. Thus, Peter preaches the gospel for the first time to the Gentiles when converting the family of Cornelius (Acts 10). Furthermore, according to the command of the resurrected Jesus (Acts 1,8), Paul seeks to preach to all nations, a goal that he potentially achieves by finally reaching Rome (cf. Acts 28,14-31).²⁸ From now on, everyone believing in Jesus Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, belongs to God's new community and is invited to participate in his kingdom.²⁹

Based on the above mentioned, the four Gospels and Acts do not leave any room for an ethnocentric understanding of Jesus' and the apostles' preaching and activity. Of course, the concept of *ethnie* as a group of people with common characteristics, such as language, origin, and cultural identity, may not be altogether abolished in these books. However, *ethnie* is abolished as a collective reality that separates people from one another. Now, believers belong to the same community, regardless of their ethnic origin. They are not guided by a political program. They are called upon to relate to each other and the world through unselfish love. It

²⁵ See Jonah 1,2; 3,2.10; Corresponding notions about the possibility of the nations to come to faith and salvation can be found *inter alia* in Isaiah, see mainly 52,10.15; 55,4-5; 56,7; 60,3; 66,18-20.

²⁶ See, for instance, how the Israelites treat the inhabitants of Jericho in Josh 6,21. According to the Old Testament witness, similar principles are valid in all collective wars of Israel and sometimes even in interpersonal grudges and enmities; see, for instance, the final instructions of the dying David to his son Solomon about the extermination of his enemies in 1 Kgs 2,3-9.

²⁷ Undoubtedly, the nations mentioned as recipients of Peter's preaching right after the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2,8-12) are actually geographical attributes for Jews and proselytes living in the Diaspora and speaking various languages and dialects, cf. Acts 2,5; 10,10-17.34-35.44.

²⁸ Because at that time, Rome was considered as the center of the world, the fact that Paul's gospel reaches it, means in essence that it is just a matter of time until it is also spread to the whole world; see the relevant discussion in J. A. FITZMYER, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 31, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2008=1974, 206–207.

²⁹ According to Paul's missionary program, as described in Acts, the apostle usually initiates his local missionary activity by preaching in the Synagogue. Only at a second stage, he expands his activity outside of it (see the characteristic text in Acts 17,1-3). The new communities he founds include both Jews and Gentiles.

would seem that this attitude would eventually become the primary vehicle of the spread of Christianity.³⁰

2. Pauline Letters

Paul had been a fanatically pious Jew and a Pharisee (Phil 3,5; cf. Acts 23,6; 26,5).³¹ Therefore, we can plausibly assume that as a pious Jew, he should not have been indifferent to the Roman occupation of the sacred land, at least not before his conversion.³²

On the other hand, as is known from his letters, after his conversion, he implied or even supported, among other things, the need for loyalty towards the Roman authorities. Especially in his epistle to the Romans, Paul attributes every form of power to God (13:1). State power is granted by God to prevent people from evil in fear of punishment (13:3). Whoever opposes state power opposes God himself (13:2). State power serves God by imposing the good on the world (13:4). Christ-followers have to attribute to the rulers whatever they owe them: taxes, dues, honor (13,6-7).³³

Of course, Paul does not identify himself as part of the Roman establishment. He thinks and acts as a Jew who is well-versed in the Scriptures and firmly believes in the God of his ancestors. Assuming that the information of Acts about his being a Roman citizen by birthright is trustworthy (Acts 16,37-38; 22,25-29; 23,27), he never uses or even refers to this privileged identity of his in his letters, even when providing his recipients with autobiographical information. His reference to his multiple

³⁰ R. STARK, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*, Harper Collins, San Francisco, CA, 1997, 211–215, has convincingly demonstrated that perhaps, the most effective mission on the part of Christ-followers was not the preaching of Christ but their loving attitude towards the “other.”

³¹ See M. HENGEL, *The Pre-Christian Paul*, SCM, London, 1991, 27–34, 63–86; K.-W. NIEBUHR, *Heidenapostel aus Israel: Die jüdische Identität des Paulus nach ihrer Darstellung in seinen Briefen*, WUNT 62, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 1992, 43–66.

³² See M. R. FAIRCHILD, “Paul’s Pre-Christian Zealot Associations: A Re-examination of Gal 1.14 and Acts 22.3”, in *NTS* 45 (1999) 514–532.

³³ This particular text of Paul has been often used as an argument in favor of autocratic regimes, while also having been considered as undermining every attempt against injustice of those exerting power; see the relevant discussion in D. J. MOO, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1996, 822–826; B. LATEGAN, “Romans 13:1-7: A Review of Post-1989 Readings”, in *Scriptura: Journal for Contextual Hermeneutics in Southern Africa* 110 (2012) 259–272. However, to be adequately understood, this text should be viewed in its own historical context. Roman persecutions are still unknown, and the gospel’s message is peaceful. Paul does not aim at a violent overthrow of the Roman empire but at a peaceful conversion of its members within a very limited time period at that, since he is convinced that the Lord’s Parousia is imminent (see inter alia 1 Cor 7,31; 16,22; Phil 4,5; 1 Thess 4,17).

imprisonments and corporal punishments (2 Cor 11,23-27; cf. Acts 16,21) demonstrates that he is not privileged by the Roman state, while his overall activity could even appear as threatening to the Roman regime. It is then even more striking that Paul never questions Roman power or urges the members of his communities to disobedience, indiscipline, or even active resistance.

This attitude of Paul must be related, among other things, to the fact that the Roman Empire is the ideal setting for the spread of the gospel. Being cosmopolitan, Paul moves around and travels in the politically uniform and religiously pluralistic Roman world with great ease. Therefore, in principle, he is not and cannot be hostile to this world but considers it as the unified missionary field that God has entrusted to him (Gal 2,8-9). Accordingly, Paul does not consider himself a heroic-violent warrior but a peaceful witness (cf. Rev 22,15).³⁴ Even when using military terminology, he only does so metaphorically to refer to the spiritual struggle of the believer against sin.³⁵

In addition to the above, Paul abolishes the strict ethnic and religious distinction between Jews and Gentiles in an unprecedented way. He addresses both the Jews and the Gentiles through his local missionary activity, thus, incorporating them into the same ecclesial body.³⁶ Paul's inclusive missionary strategy has been crucially essential and fundamental to the gradual transformation of the faith in Christ from being a narrowly bounded Jewish sect into a worldwide religion.³⁷ In his epistle to the Romans (9–11), Paul envisions the eschatological re-incorporation of "Israel according to the flesh" (1 Cor 10,18) as a whole (Rom 11,26) into the unified body of the new people of God. According to God's plan, the Jews had to temporarily reject the gospel to make room for the Gentiles to enter the "ecclesia of God" (1 Cor 15,9).³⁸ However, all Jews will finally be part of the ecclesia before the Lord's

³⁴ Εἰρήνη is a constituent element in Paul's overall teaching about the new reality in Christ; see Rom 8,6; 14,17,19; 15,13; 1 Cor 7,15; 14,33; 16,11; 2 Cor 13,11; Gal 5,22; Phil 4,7; 1 Thess 5,23. On the notion of peace in Paul, see P. CHRISTOFIDES, *The Functional Role of Peace in the Ethos of the Followers of Christ according to Paul*, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, 2000 (doctoral dissertation), 141–306.

³⁵ See, for instance, Rom 5,12-8,10, as well as the relevant analysis in CH. KARAKOLIS, "Death, Life, and Resurrection: Christology, Ethics, and Soteriology in Romans 6,1-24", in J. M. G. BARCLAY (ed.), *Dying with Christ – New Life in Hope: Romans 5,12–8,39*, Colloquium Oecumenicum Paulinum 24, Peeters, Leuven, 2021, 43–75.

³⁶ Cf. Gal 2,11-14; 3,28. See also CH. KARAKOLIS, "Church and Nation in the New Testament: The Formation of the Pauline Communities", *SVTQ* 57 (2013) 361–380.

³⁷ The term "sect" is here used in its sociological and not its theological meaning; see G. THEISSEN, *Kirche oder Sekte? Über Einheit und Konflikte im frühen Urchristentum*, in *Einheit der Kirche im Neuen Testament: Dritte europäische orthodox-westliche Exegetenkonferenz in Sankt Petersburg 24.–31. August 2005*, WUNT 218, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2008, 81–101 (81–89).

³⁸ On the understanding of ecclesia in Paul also as a unified supra-local entity see R. E. BROWN, *Biblical Exegesis & Church Doctrine*, Paulist Press, New York, NY, 1985, 114–134; A. DU TOIT, "Paulus Oecumenicus: Interculturality in the Shaping of Paul's Theology", in *NTS* 55 (2009) 121–143 (132–142).

parousia.³⁹ In Paul's letters, the organic unity of Jews and Gentiles within the ecclesia is not just expressed through their shared participation in the eucharist but even through the collection gathered under his instructions in communities with mainly members of Gentile origin to be sent to the Jewish believers of Jerusalem.⁴⁰

Furthermore, the unity between Jews and Gentiles is not just an internal matter of the ecclesia; it is also a vision and a target that encompasses the world as a whole. Potentially, the whole world can and eventually should become God's ecclesia (Rom 11,12.15). From this particular perspective, the enemy cannot be anyone who, at present, is not a part of the ecclesial community. The true enemy is only the devil,⁴¹ while the outsider is potentially tomorrow's brother or sister in Christ. In the deutero-Pauline letter to the Ephesians, the ecclesia is presented as an accomplished organic unity of Jews and Gentiles, which continually expands to ultimately identify with the world as a whole (Eph 1,22-23).⁴² The most characteristic image used here is the one of a house, which is being built constantly until becoming a complete temple of God founded on the apostles and consisting of the ecclesia members as living building materials (Eph 2,19-22).⁴³ The "dividing wall" between Jews and Gentiles has now been demolished (Eph 2:14). Both Jews and Gentiles make up the one tree (Eph 3,17) or the one holy temple of God (cf. 2,21; see 3,17), that is, the ecclesia; they all belong to its body whose head is Christ himself (Eph 1,22; 4,15; 5,23).

3. John's Revelation

John's Revelation seems to be addressed to one or more ecclesial communities in view of an awaited or already occurring persecution by the Roman authorities.⁴⁴ Things are expected to become much worse for Christ believers, who will eventually have to suffer and die for their faith (cf. 13,7.10; 16,6; 17,6; 18,24).

³⁹ On Romans 9–11 and the final conversion of Israel as a whole, see S. GROVE EASTMAN, "Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-reading of Galatians 6.16 and Romans 9–11", in *NTS* 56 (2010) 367–395.

⁴⁰ Rom 15,25-27; 1 Cor 16,1-4; 2 Cor 8-9. On the Pauline collection, see among others P. VASSILIADIS, "Equality and Justice in Classical Antiquity and in Paul: The Social Implications of the Pauline Collection", in *SVTQ* 37 (1992) 51–59; D. J. DOWNS, "Paul's Collection and the Book of Acts Revisited", in *NTS* 52 (2006) 50–70.

⁴¹ Rom 16,20; 1 Cor 5,5; 7,5; 2 Cor 2,11; 11,14; 12,7; 1 Thess 2,18.

⁴² R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Der Brief an die Epheser*, EKK 10, Benzinger–Neukirchener, Zürich–Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1982, 83–85.

⁴³ See the relevant discussion in M. BARTH, *Ephesians 1–3: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, AYB 34A, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2008=1974, 314–322.

⁴⁴ See the discussion on the historical framework of this persecution in G. K. BEALE, *The Book of Revelation. A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC, Eerdmans–Paternoster, Grand Rapids, MI–Cambridge–Carlisle, 1999, 12–16.

Revelation takes a very hostile position towards Roman power,⁴⁵ which differentiates it radically from the rather neutral (or somewhat positive) attitudes of other New Testament writings, such as the Pauline letters or Luke-Acts. Rome is symbolically portrayed as the whore Babylon⁴⁶ and the Roman emperor as the beast, the instrument of the devil.⁴⁷ Roman power opposes the will of God and consequently seeks to exterminate Christ-followers and persecute God's ecclesiae that are collectively portrayed as the woman clothed with the sun, wearing a crown of twelve stars, and having the moon under her feet (Rev 12,1).⁴⁸

However, even under such circumstances, the seer does not consider Christ-followers as warriors but martyrs (Rev 20,4). Their inheritance is the new, heavenly Jerusalem, which is extensively described and presented as incomparably superior to any earthly city (Rev 21; see also Rev 3,12). Accordingly, the king and lord of the faithful is Jesus Christ and not some earthly monarch (Rev 1,5; 17,14; 19,16). The only punisher of the evildoers, those who have received the mark of the beast (Rev 13,17-18), is God through his angels (Rev 6,10; 16,2). The wars described in Revelation concern non-believers and are mainly conducted between angelic and demonic powers.⁴⁹ Christ-followers are depicted as having to suffer, be persecuted, and killed, but they are urged to persevere to the end and never resist by violent means.⁵⁰ While the book of Revelation is full of descriptions of violent events per se, Christ-followers never actively engage in such events but only endure them. On the other hand, what the outsiders suffer due to the outbreak of God's wrath is infinitely worse than the suffering of the Christ believers (Rev 3:10; 8,13; 9–10). Moreover, eventually, God will intervene vigorously by definitively punishing the evildoers and the devil (Rev 20,7-10.14-15; 21,8) and by introducing the faithful to the new Jerusalem (Rev 21,1-7), while the lamb-Christ will bride the church (Rev 21,2,9).⁵¹

⁴⁵ C. R. KOESTER, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI–Cambridge, 2001, 30–31.

⁴⁶ Rev 14,8; 16,9; 17,1.5.16; 18,2.10.21; 19,2. On the whore-Babylon symbolizing Rome, see BEALE, *Revelation*, 18–19, 25.

⁴⁷ See Rev 13; 14,9.11; 15,2; 16,2.10.13; 17; 19,20; 20,4.10. On θηρίον and its possible symbolisms, see the relevant discussion in D. E. AUNE, *Revelation 6–16*, WBC 52B, Nelson, Nashville, TN, 1998, 770–771.

⁴⁸ See also Rev 12; 19,7; 21,9.

⁴⁹ Rev 9,7; 11,7; 12,7.17; 13,7; 16,14; 19,19; 20,8. The war “against the saints” in Rev 13,7 is unilateral only on the beast's side, while the saints do not actively participate in it.

⁵⁰ Rev 1,9; 2,2.3.19; 3,10; 13,10; 14,12. See also the relevant analysis in J. A. KELHOFFER, *Persecution, Persuasion and Power: Readiness to Withstand Hardship as a Corroboration of Legitimacy in the New Testament*, WUNT 270; Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2010, 143–182.

⁵¹ On the image of marriage in Revelation, especially in its ending, see J. FEKKES III, “‘His Bride Has Prepared Herself’: Revelation 19–21 and Isaian Nuptial Imagery”, in *JBL* 109 (1990) 269–287.

At least partly, the book of Revelation is intended to function in a consoling and encouraging way for the communities it addresses.⁵² Amid immense dangers, the “saints” are urged to persevere and hope in God by remaining faithful and not giving in or actively responding to external threats, for ultimately, it is God who will justify them. During the first millennium, Revelation was not unanimously accepted as part of the New Testament canon of the Eastern church.⁵³ Indeed, apart from its obscure content, one of the reasons thereof was God’s presentation as a ruthless punisher to those who oppose him and, in particular, to the Roman establishment and its representatives.⁵⁴ However, even this radical early Christian manifesto against Rome does not push its recipients into any kind of violent resistance or insurrection. Quite on the contrary, it urges them to endure unprecedented tortures without any active resistance to be finally vindicated and saved.⁵⁵

4. Concluding Remarks

The above analysis and conclusions also apply to all other texts of the New Testament.⁵⁶ Therefore, it is clear that in the New Testament texts, there is no room for the justification of violence on the part of Christ-followers against those who oppress or assail them. Concretely, Jesus himself does not urge his fellow Jews to revolt against their Roman conquerors. On the contrary, he encourages them to pay their taxes and advocates the purely spiritual character of God’s kingdom. Furthermore, although previously a fanatic Jew, Paul presents Roman power as God-given and asks his recipients to obey it. Of course, Roman persecution against Christ believers was still unknown at that time. However, also in later New Testament texts, such as John’s Revelation, there is never any incitement for Christ-followers to the use of violence, not even by appealing to their inherent right of self-defense. The war that they have to fight is perceived as purely spiritual. In the context of this war, Christ believers ought to become martyrs who will confess Jesus Christ in front of the Roman authorities, and not warriors who will defend their faith by armed struggle.

⁵² Cf. R. BAUCKHAM, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, 15–16.

⁵³ On the reception history of John’s Revelation in the East, see C. R. KOESTER, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 34A, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2014, 29–42.

⁵⁴ Cf. P. G. R. DE VILLIERS, “The Violence of Nonviolence in the Revelation of John”, in *Open Theology* 1 (2015) 189–203.

⁵⁵ Cf. T. NICKLAS, “The Eschatological Battle according to the Book of Revelation: Perspectives on Revelation 19:11–21”, in DE VILLIERS and VAN HENTEN (eds.), *Coping with Violence*, 227–244.

⁵⁶ See on an overall review of the New Testament’s teaching on nonviolence with regard to ethnic or racial conflict, HAYS, *Moral Vision*, 329–344; contra J. PUNT, “Violence in the New Testament and the Roman Empire: Ambivalence, Othering, Agency”, in DE VILLIERS and VAN HENTEN (eds.), *Coping with Violence*, 23–39.

Besides, according to the New Testament testimony, the world can eventually be identified with the ecclesia. The apostles are sent by the resurrected Lord to the whole world. To fulfill this mission, they have to overcome all ideologies and obsessions, including ethnic ones. As a result, all Christ-followers are understood first and foremost as citizens of God's kingdom and people. Although, at the same time, they also remain subjects and citizens of concrete states and members of particular ethnies, their faith in Christ is the dominating element in shaping their collective identity.⁵⁷

Quite differently, both the Orthodox church's hierarchy and body in Greece have identified themselves with the relatively young Greek nation and state to such an extent that, oftentimes, they tend to forget the New Testament testimony about the church's ecumenical and inclusive nature and function. In such cases, then, in which they accept or even use ethnocentric rhetoric and discourse, they practically alienate some of their Orthodox brethren simply because the latter belong to different ethnicities. At the same time, they often consider members of other Christian denominations or religious communities as enemies and not as potential sisters and brothers in faith. In this way, by both practically and theoretically tending to equate national with ecclesiastical identity, the church in Greece often disorients its members and Greek society in general by implying or openly supporting the idea of Greeks being the new elect people. Thus, it contradicts the above presented New Testament testimony.

In this context, frequently, members of the church hierarchy and body in Greece tend to overlook the martyrs of the faith while promoting or at least accepting as models of imitation the warrior heroes of the Greek nation. Thankfully, the hierarchy of the Church of Greece avoided canonizing any of the nation's fallen heroes. Characteristically, however, in the case of the 400 years long Ottoman occupation of Greece that has produced a significant number of "neomartyrs," there are still church circles in Greece that rather tend to highlight the Greek revolution heroes who fought against the Turks than the above-mentioned neomartyrs, who denied the use of force and suffered martyrdom willingly, thus, fulfilling Jesus Christ's command to follow him by bearing their cross and peacefully sacrificing their lives for his sake (Matt 16,24; Mark 8,34; Luke 9,23).

Clearly, according to the New Testament testimony, the teaching of the church ought to encompass all human beings without exception. It should never radicalize, divide, or fuel feelings of intolerance, national arrogance, and supremacy towards the "other." It should also never lose its soteriological orientation, which has nothing in common with fighting real or imaginary enemies, and everything to do with bearing the own cross, namely taking the path of self-denial, forgiveness, and unconditional love towards each and every human being.

⁵⁷ Cf. Jesus' saying to Pilate, according to which his "kingdom is not of this world" (John 18,36), as well as Paul's saying: "our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil 3,20); cf. also Diogn 5,1–6,10.

Evidently, in this path, there are no “enemies” but only human beings created in the image of God (Gen 1,26-27) and potential brothers and sisters in Christ.

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DEMUT ALS TUGEND DER ERWÄHLTEN

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Abstract. Demut ist eine Tugend, die man nur selbst erbringen kann. Als Forderung an Unterstellte kommt sie einer Gehorsamsforderung gleich. Das AT hebt die demütige Haltung vor Gott hervor. Die Demütigen sind Glieder des Gottesvolkes. Im NT wird Demut auch gegenüber den Mitmenschen erwartet, eine für den Griechen kaum denkbare Vorstellung. Paulus formuliert eine in der Bibel einmalige Ermahnung, dass einer den anderen höher achten soll als sich selbst, und begründet sie mit dem Beispiel der Erniedrigung Jesu. Er wendet sich an die Erwählten.

Keywords: Selbsterniedrigung, Selbstdurchsetzung, Jesu Vorbild, Hochschätzung des Mitchristen.

Klaus Wengst hat sein Buch zum Thema Demut provokativ betitelt: „Demut – Solidarität mit den Gedeemühtigen“.¹ Damit hat er einen wichtigen Gesichtspunkt hervorgehoben. Das entsprechende griechische Wort *ταπεινοφροσύνη* ist abgeleitet vom Adjektiv *ταπεινός* in der Bedeutung „niedrig, gedrückt“ und beschreibt im Neuen Testament eine Gesinnung, die sich derer annimmt, die „gedrückt“ sind. Angesprochen sind Menschen, die eine bessere soziale Situation haben und eine Hinwendung zu den „Niedereren“ ausüben sollten. Insofern enthält der Titel des Buches von Wengst einen dem Wort entsprechenden Appell zur Solidarität mit den Gedeemühtigen. Er entspricht der Aufforderung des Paulus in Röm 12,16: „Strebet nicht nach hohen Dingen, sondern beugt euch herab zu den Niedrigen (solidarisiert euch mit den Niedrigen).“ Zu kurz kommt in dieser Darstellung eine nicht ausgesprochene Voraussetzung, dass im Verständnis des Alten Testaments aufgrund der Botschaft der Propheten die „Gedeemühtigen“ jene sind, auf die Gott besonders achtet und die somit mit seiner gnädigen Zuwendung rechnen können. Sie dürfen sich als von Gott Erwählte ansehen, als Menschen, die er in besonderer Weise mit seiner Fürsorge bedenkt. Und ebenso ist nicht ausgesprochen, dass sich der „Niedrigen“ nur ein Höhergestellter annehmen kann, der von Gott Erwählte. Insofern ist die Demut unter Christen zumindest in der Sicht des Neuen Testaments keine

¹ K. WENGST, *Demut – Solidarität der Gedeemühtigen. Wandlungen eines Begriffs und seines sozialen Bezugs in griechisch-römischer, alttestamentlich-jüdischer und urchristlicher Tradition*, München 1987.

„Erniedrigung“, sondern echte Solidarität, die darin besteht, dass beide, der sich Zuwendende und der Zuwendung Empfangende als Erwählte Gottes auf der gleichen Stufe stehen. Die in Kol 3,12 und Eph 4,2 ausgesprochene Aufforderung zur Demut ergeht an alle Gemeindeglieder, die Erwählten (Berufenen) und Heiligen zur gegenseitigen „Erniedrigung“.² Einen Schritt weiter geht Paulus mit der Erwartung, dass einer den anderen höher achte als sich selbst in Phil 2,3.

Um das Verständnis und die Bedeutung dieses Wortes im Urchristentum ermessen zu können, ist zunächst ein Blick auf die Umwelt des Urchristentums zu werfen, wobei aber vorwegnehmend gesagt werden muss, dass das griechische Wort *ταπεινοφροσύνη* im Sinne von „Demut“ eine christliche Prägung ist.³

1. Demut in der Spätzeit des Alten Testaments

Aufgrund der prophetischen Botschaft kann mit Blick auf das Alte Testament gesagt werden: „Die Armen betrachten sich als Gottes Klienten, nicht wegen ihrer Verdienste, die gering genug sind, sondern aufgrund des Wohlwollens, das Gott ihnen entgegenbringt.“⁴ Das wird später verallgemeinert, weil Israel die Eigenstaatlichkeit verloren hat und die meisten Israeliten nicht mehr an der Macht partizipieren, dafür aber drückende Lasten zu tragen haben. Im der Spätzeit des Alten Testaments ist der „Arme“, der Gedrückte, der Mensch, der die Machtspiele der herrschenden Schicht nicht mitmacht, sondern sich an die Gebote Gottes hält, sich Gott gegenüber, und das heißt gegenüber der Tora, unterwürfig zeigt. Spr 22,4 wird formuliert: „Die Folge der Demut ist Furcht vor Jahwe, Reichtum und Ehre und Leben“ (vgl. auch Spr 15,33; 22,4). An den meisten Stellen ist die „*anawah* jene Not, die Gott zum Einschreiten veranlasst“, ⁵ „*anawah* bezeichnet die Demut und Herablassung; als Parallelbegriff begegnet die Jahwefurcht“.⁶

Sind in diesen Texten des Alten Testaments die Mitglieder des Gottesvolkes Israel angesprochen, so wird in den Qumrantexten das Verhalten innerhalb einer Sondergruppe thematisiert: „Alle sollen in der Gemeinschaft der Wahrheit, gütiger Demut, barmherziger Liebe und gerechten Denkens sein, einer gegen den anderen in heiligem Rat und als Söhne der ewigen Versammlung“ (1QS 22,24). Hier wird eine Erwartung ausgesprochen, die mit dem Hinweis begründet wird, zu einer auserwählten Gruppe zu gehören (1QS 5,4). Diese Demut soll geübt werden (1QS

² G. THEISSEN, *Religion der ersten Christen. Eine Theorie des Urchristentums*, Gütersloh 2003, 113.

³ L. GOPPELT, *Der erste Petrusbrief*, KEK 12/1, Göttingen 1978, 333, Anm. 44. Vgl. auch W. GRUNDMANN, Art. *ταπεινός* κτλ., ThWNT VIII, 1,27, 23, 14-16: „Das Wort Demut drückt eine Möglichkeit des Verhaltens aus, die bei den Griechen nicht gesehen wird und die auch die Aussagen des Alten Testaments und des Judentums überschreitet.“

⁴ E. JENNI, Art *‘nh*, elend sein, ThWAT II, 341-353, 350.

⁵ E. GERSTENBERGER, Art. *‘anah* III, ThWAT VII, 247-258, 256.

⁶ E. JENNI, *‘nh*, 346.

5,3) und das bedeutet, dass einer dem anderen gehorsam ist, aber dann doch der Geringere in der Rangordnung dem Höheren (1QS 5,23), wiewohl das Verhalten in „Demut und huldvoller Liebe untereinander“ geschehen soll (1QS 5,25).⁷ Es geht dabei aber nicht um das Verhalten insgesamt, sondern um die Unterweisung gemäß den Vorschriften der Tora und den Ordnungen der Gemeinde.⁸ Hier entsteht „Demut als soziale(r) Tugend mit ihrer Einbettung in kommunitäre Gemeinschaften“.⁹ Die hier zusammen lebenden Menschen verstehen sich als Gemeinschaft der Demütigen. Demut ist „das zentrale Element der Identität“ der Gruppe in Qumran.¹⁰

2. Demut in der griechisch-römischen Welt

Ταπεινοφροσύνη begegnet in der griechischen Welt nur zweimal, einmal bei Epiktet, in der Bedeutung Servilität und einmal im Sinne von Unterwürfigkeit bei Josephus.¹¹ Der gesamte Wortstamm kennzeichnet das „Niedrige“, Verachtungswürdige, Untaugliche, Schwache. Dies wird von den Sklaven erwartet, ein Verhalten, von dem sich der freie Bürger absetzt.¹² Die Tendenz ist jene des Aufsteigens, nicht die der Herablassung. Aber der Hochmut, die Hybris, wird verabscheut. Hybris ist nach Plato „die negative Seite des Eros.“¹³ Plutarch kennt den Brauch, dass man sich durch „Verhüllung des Hauptes bei Opfer und Gebet“ gegenüber den Göttern erniedrigt, demütigt, verwirft ihn aber.¹⁴ Dass man sich Menschen gegenüber erniedrigt, demütigt, liegt nicht im Gesichtsfeld der Gedankenwelt, die von den freien Bürgern gepflegt wird. Die Unfreien sind die „Niederer“, mit denen man in der Gemeinschaft der freien Bürger nicht kommuniziert.

⁷ Vgl. J. GNILKA, *Der Philipperbrief*, HThK X/3, Freiburg – Basel – Wien ²1976, 106.

⁸ Vgl. H. LICHTENBERGER, *Studien zum Menschenbild in Texten der Qumrangemeinde*, StUNT 15, Göttingen 1980, 217.

⁹ Formulierung von G. THEISSEN, *Religion* (s. Anm. 2), 117, der dieses Verhalten als Voraussetzung des Demutverständnisses im Urchristentum ansieht.

¹⁰ D. MARKL, Art. *‘nh* II, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zu den Qumrantexten* II, Stuttgart 2016, 167-172, 172.

¹¹ W. BAUER/ K. u. B. ALAND, *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur*, Berlin – New York ⁶1988, 1604 bezeichnet sie als niedrige Gesinnung mit Hinweis auf Epiktet, Diss. III 24,56 und JosBell 4,494.

¹² W. SCHRAGE, *Ethik des Neuen Testaments*, NTD Erg 4, Göttingen ⁵1989, 207: „Der Begriff Niedrigkeit (*tapeinophrosyne*) z.B. wird in der Profangräßigkeit nur pejorativ gebraucht, weil der grundsätzliche Verzicht auf Selbstbehauptung der hellenistisch-römischen Welt fremd ist.“

¹³ G. BERTRAM, Art. ὑβρις, ThWNT VIII,295-307, 298,23.

¹⁴ W. GRUNDMANN, ταπεινός (s. Anm. 3), 5, 19-29.

3. Demut im Urchristentum

Das Urchristentum hat die alttestamentlich-jüdische Tradition übernommen, diese aber aufgrund des Kreuzesstodes Jesu und seiner Auferstehung neu akzentuiert.

3.1 Die alttestamentlich-jüdische Tradition

Gottes Handeln an den Niedrigen wird in Lk 1,48 ausgesprochen: „Denn er hat die Niedrigkeit seiner Magd angesehen“. Hier ist mit „Niedrigkeit“ nicht die Demut der Maria beschrieben, sondern ihre Notsituation, die Gott zum Eingreifen bewegen soll.¹⁵ Das gilt für das von Lukas verwendete Gebet, das in Anlehnung und Aktualisierung des Hannaliedes in 1Sam 2,1-10 als Gebet einer Mutter formuliert wurde und das Lukas als Tradition zugekommen ist.¹⁶ Lukas hat hier indes auch „Demut“ mitgehört, da er Maria sagen lässt: „Siehe ich bin des Herrn Magd, mir geschehe nach deinem Wort“ (Lk 1,38).

Niedrigkeit, die auch mit Demut wiedergegeben werden kann, wird als das vor Gott angemessene Verhalten angesehen. Es ist beides, ein sozialer Stand und die diesem Stand angemessene Verhaltensweise vor Gott. Damit ist die Erwartung mitgegeben, dass Gott sich dieser Menschen annimmt. Maria dankt Gott für diese Zuwendung (Lk 1,48) und spricht gleichzeitig aus, dass Gott immer wieder so handelt, wenn er „die Gewaltigen vom Thron stürzt und die Niedrigen erhöht“ (Lk 1,52).

Diese Sicht wird auch durch Lk 18,13 belegt. Der Zöllner verhält sich vor Gott richtig, wenn er seine Niedrigkeit vor Gott als Sünder ausspricht. Und Jesus erklärt ihn für gerecht.

Die angeschlossene weisheitlich anmutende Sentenz: „Wer sich selbst erhöht wird erniedrigt und wer sich selbst erniedrigt wird erhöht“ (Lk 18,14, vgl. 14,11/ Mt 23,12) ist apokalyptisch verstanden. Gott erhöht den, der sich erniedrigt (demütig ist), und erniedrigt (demütigt) den, der sich selbst erhöht. Im Worte Jesu wird die Endzeit Gegenwart.¹⁷

In 1 Petr 5,6 werden die Adressaten aufgefordert: „Demütigt euch unter die gewaltige Hand Gottes, damit er euch erhöhe zum (kommenden) Zeitpunkt.“ Gemeint ist eine von Geduld geprägte Annahme des Schicksals als Situation der Bedrängnis der Gemeinde, Annahme des politischen Druckes. Dieser wird aus Gottes Hand angenommen. Die Erhöhung erfolgt bei der bald offenbar werdenden

¹⁵ J. NOLLAND, *Luke 1-9,20*, WBC 15A Dallas 1989. 69, „ταπεινῶσις is in any case an objective unfavorable condition“, nach W. RADL, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas. Kommentar. Erster Teil. 1,1-9*, Freiburg/ Br. 2003, 74, „die Not, die nach Rettung schreit“. M. WOLTER, *Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5, Tübingen 2008, 182 spitzt zu: „in keinem Fall Demut“.

¹⁶ Näheres dazu in: H. KLEIN, *Zwei intertestamentarische Hymnen im Lukasevangelium. Benediktus und Magnifikat*, SETHV 5, Münster – Hamburg – London 2014, 74-108.

¹⁷ H. KLEIN, *Das Lukasevangelium*, KEK I/3, Göttingen 2006, 586.

Herrlichkeit (1 Petr 5,1), der erwarteten Endzeit. Gewissheit darüber geben die Erfahrungen der Rettung im Alten Testament und mehr noch die Erhöhung Jesu in die Herrlichkeit nach seinem Leiden.¹⁸ Die Aufforderung zur Demut hat als Voraussetzung die künftige Herrlichkeit, die durch die Erwählung durch Gott garantiert ist.

In 1 Petr 3,8 steht „Demut“ neben anderen Tugenden, die der Gemeinschaft dienen. Man kann auch übersetzen: Bescheidenheit. Die Aussage wird eschatologisch mit einem Zitat aus Ps 34,13-17 begründet, das am Abschluss die Worte enthält: „Die Augen des Herrn sehen auf den Gerechten ...“, womit die endzeitliche „Belohnung“ angesprochen wird.

Ganz im Rahmen der Weisheit bewegt sich die Aussage in Lk 14,11. Der, der sich einen hinteren Platz sucht, wird nach vorne gerückt. Irdisch gesehen gilt das nur für Auserwählte, Hochgestellte, Weise. Denn, dass man bei einer Einladung, wenn man sich einen hinteren Platz sucht, nach vorne geholt wird, geschieht nur den besonders „Erwählten“. Im Normalfall werden Menschen, die sich hinten setzen, in Ruhe gelassen; allenfalls werden sie etwas nach vorne geholt. Aber selten erregt das Aufsehen. Man bekommt den „angemessenen“ Platz. Demut wird irdisch selten belohnt. Suggestiert wird durch Lk 14,11: Bei Gott ist das anders.

Über rechte Demut vor Gott spricht Lk 17,7-10, ohne das Wort zu gebrauchen. Mit dem Gleichnis aus der Welt des Sklaven wird den Jüngern Jesu eingeschärft, dass sie auf keinen Lohn warten sollen. Sie sollen sich vielmehr sagen, dass sie „unnütze Knechte“ sind und nur ihre Schuldigkeit tun. Sie sind aber „Sklaven“ des höchsten Gottes und somit „Erwählte“. In solchem Dienst des Herrn weiß sich auch Paulus nach Apg 20,19. Das ist die vom Glaubenden erwartete Demut vor Gott in seinem Dienst. Zur Unterordnung unter jeden „Bruder“, wie sie in Phil 2,3 erwartet wird, ist noch ein weiter Weg. Er führt über das Urbild Christus.

3.2 Jesus in seiner Demut

In Mt 11,28f lädt Jesus ein, zu ihm zu kommen mit der Begründung, dass er demütig sei. Die Einladung lautet: „Kommt her zu mir alle, die ihr euch müht und beschwert seid, und ich will euch zur Ruhe bringen. Nehmt auf euch mein Joch und lernt von mir. Denn ich bin sanftmütig und von Herzen demütig, und ihr werdet Ruhe finden für eure Seelen.“

Die Nähe dieses Textes zu Sir 51,23-27, in dem die Weisheit einlädt, ihr Joch anzunehmen und damit Ruhe zu finden, zeigt an, dass hier traditionelle Aussagen über die Weisheit auf Jesus übertragen wurden.¹⁹ Neu ist die Kennzeichnung Jesu als „sanftmütig

¹⁸ L. GOPPELT, *Der erste Petrusbrief*, KEK 12/1, Göttingen 1978, 337.

¹⁹ Nach R. BULTMANN, *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, FRLANT 12, Göttingen ³1957, 172 wurde Jesus ein jüdisches Weisheitswort in den Mund gelegt.

und demütig“. So bezeichnet sich die Weisheit nirgends.²⁰ Demut und Sanftmut stehen auch Kol 3,12 und Eph 4,2 nebeneinander. Die beiden Worte kennzeichnen das Verhalten der Christen. Hier ist auch formelhafte Sprache erkennbar. Mit beiden Adjektiven wird Jesu Nähe zu den „Mühseligen und Beladenen“ beschrieben.²¹ Er neigt sich zu ihnen herab. Damit wird Jesus als der ideale Lehrer gekennzeichnet, der seinen Schülern die richtige Anweisung für das Leben gibt, ein Lehrer, der nicht mit Drohung arbeitet, sondern auf die Schüler eingeht²² und ihnen das Wichtigste für das Leben vermittelt, das ihnen nicht fremd und somit auch keine wirkliche Bürde ist. Seine Lehre deckt sich mit seinem Verhalten.

In Phil 2,8 wird innerhalb eines Lobliedes auf Christus formuliert: „Er erniedrigte sich selbst und ward gehorsam bis zum Tod.“ Vorher war ausgesprochen worden, dass er Knechtsgestalt annahm (Phil 2,7). Das ist völlige Erniedrigung bis in die „tiefste Tiefe“²³, eine Demutshaltung bis zum Tod als Beschreibung eines gottgewollten Verhaltens, ein gewaltiger Statuswechsel nach unten hin.²⁴ Jesus wählt nicht Herrschaft, sondern Ohnmacht. Christus „wird zum Gegenbild zum Typ des sich selbst erhöhenden Herrschers.“²⁵ Dies Verhalten wird mit dem Wort „gehorsam“ näher gekennzeichnet. Demut und Gehorsam Gott gegenüber gehören zusammen.

In Mk 10,42-45 gibt Jesus die Anweisung an die Jünger, dass sie nicht den Mächtigen und Gewaltigen nachstreben sollen; wer groß sein will, soll das im Dienst an den anderen zeigen. Begründet wird das ähnlich wie in Phil 2,6-11 mit der Erniedrigung Jesu zum Heil für die Vielen in Mk 10,45. In Lk 22,27 stellt sich Jesus als Vorbild dar, ohne dass auf seinen Tod hingewiesen wird: „Ich bin unter euch wie ein Dienender.“ Ähnlich geschieht es in der Episode von der Fußwaschung. Sie „ist der Ausdruck *par excellence* des demütigen Dienstes am Nächsten“.²⁶ Sie wird als vorbildliches Handeln, als Beispiel der sich erniedrigenden Liebe gekennzeichnet²⁷, die Jesus bis zum Ende an seinen Jüngern ausübt (Joh 13,2).

²⁰ Vgl. F. CHRIST, *Jesus Sophia. Die Sophia-Christologie bei den Synoptikern*, AThANT 17, Zürich 1970, 115, Anm. 441.

²¹ Vgl. E. SCHWEIZER, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, NTD 2, Göttingen 1973, 177.

²² K. WENGST, *Demut* (s. Anm. 1), 74 deutet „sanftmütig und demütig“ mit Hinweis auf die LXX, die mit dieser Wendung das hebräische *dal w^{ec}any* wiedergibt, als „verarmt und gedemütigt“ und meint, dass sich Jesus mit diesen Worten mit der niederen Volksschicht solidarisiert. Es geht aber wohl um mehr als um Solidarisierung, sosehr diese auch vorausgesetzt ist.

²³ O. HOFIUS, *Der Christushymnus Philipper 2,6-11*, WUNT 17, Tübingen 1976, 63f.

²⁴ U. SCHNELLE, *Paulus. Leben und Denken*, Berlin New York 2003, 415.

²⁵ S. VOLLENWEIDER, „Der `Raub´ der Gottgleichheit. Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Vorschlag zu Phil 2,6-11“, *NTS* 49 (1999), 413-433, 431. Für diese Sicht bringt er viele Belege aus dem Alten Testament und der hellenistisch-römischen Welt.

²⁶ J. ZUMSTEIN, *Das Johannesevangelium*, KEK 2, Göttingen 2016, 492.

²⁷ In *Joseph und Aseneth* 13,15 verspricht Aseneth im Gebet vor Gott, dass sie Joseph, den sie ehelichen wird, die Füße waschen und ihm dienen wird. Es ist das Zeichen dienender Liebe. Diese Stelle zeigt die Denkweise im hellenistischen Judentum an.

3.3 Demut in der Gemeinschaft der Glaubenden

An drei Stellen wird in allgemeiner Weise zur Demut innerhalb der Gemeinde angehalten:

a. In Kol 3,12 wird ermahnt: „Zieht an als die Auserwählten, Heilige und Geliebte Gottes, herzliches Erbarmen, Güte, Demut, Sanftmut, Langmut.“ Gemeint ist das „Anlegen“ einer neuen Verhaltensweise gegenüber den Mitchristen, wobei es bei „Demit“ nicht nur um die Gesinnung geht, sondern auch, und wohl mehr, um die Haltung, die dadurch zum Ausdruck kommt. Gemeint ist die Achtung des Mitchristen, die zum Aufsehen auf ihn führt,²⁸ „das allem menschlichen Wesen Entgegensetzte und deshalb das vor Gott Angemessene“²⁹, das darum „angezogen“ werden soll. Dies ist das Ziel, auf das hin die Kolosser zu leben berufen wurden.

b. In Eph 4,2 ist eine Ermahnung zu würdigem Wandel der Berufung entsprechend enthalten: „Mit aller Demut und Sanftmut, mit Langmut nehmt euch untereinander in Liebe an.“ Es geht in dem Abschnitt um die Einheit der Gemeinde, die in rechter Weise durchgehalten werden soll. Demut und Sanftmut ergänzen sich im „Verzicht auf Machtanspruch, im Handeln am Nächsten, auf Machtausübung“³⁰; mit „Demit“ ist die innere Haltung gemeint, die auf Selbstdurchsetzung verzichtet.³¹ Es sind aber nicht Tugenden, die „angezogen“ werden sollen, wie in Kol 3,12, sondern Verhaltensweisen, die der Berufung entsprechen sollen. Sie stellen ein fundamentales Verhalten für die Einheit der Gemeinde dar.³²

c. In 1 Petr 5,5: werden die Gemeindeglieder angewiesen: „Alle aber, in Beziehung zueinander, umbindet euch mit Demut“. „Umbinden mit Demut... ist die Basis des Kontaktes unter Christen“. „Demütig unter Christen ist demnach ... wer elementar weiß, dass er auf ihn (sc. den anderen) angewiesen ist und deshalb auf ihn hört.“³³

²⁸ E. LOHSE, *Die Briefe an die Kolosser und an Philemon*, KEK 9/2, Göttingen 1968, 212.

²⁹ E. LOHMEYER, *Briefe an die Philipper, an die Kolosser und an Philemon*, KEK 9, Göttingen 1964, 145.

³⁰ G. SELLIN, *Der Brief an die Epheser*, KEK 8, Göttingen 2008, 318.

³¹ H. SCHLIER, *Der Brief an die Epheser. Ein Kommentar*, Düsseldorf 1957, 185 kommentiert, ohne dies zu vermerken, nach Phil 2,3: „... das Verhalten, das von dem anderen mehr hält als von sich selbst... aus echter Bescheidenheit, das das dem anderen und ihm selbst Beschiedene als solches erkennt und anerkennt.“

³² W. GRUNDMANN, ταπεινός (s. Anm.), 3), 23, 9- 13 „Durch die ταπεινοφροσύνη, die Verzicht auf die Durchsetzung der eigenen Person ist, kann allein die Einheit der Gemeinde gewonnen und erhalten werden, ohne die sie zerfiele. Die ταπεινοφροσύνη bekommt also ihre positive Bedeutung durch die dem Einzelnen übergeordnete Einheit der Gemeinde des Christus.“

³³ L. GOPPELT, *Petrusbrief* (s. Anm. 18), 333.

3.4 Den anderen Höher achten

In Phil 2,3 wird zur Demut in besonderer Weise aufgerufen: „Nicht mit Streit, auch nicht mit Prahlen, sondern in Demut sehe einer den anderen höher an als sich selbst.“

Die „demütige Gesinnung“ wird jedem Gemeindeglied gegenüber erwartet, das in Christus Jesus ist (2,1). Es geht darum, sich selbst in seiner Selbsteinschätzung (Prahlerci) und seinem Recht-behalten-Wollen zurückzuhalten und dem Mitchristen/der Mitchristin einzuräumen, dass sie/er auch Recht haben kann und dass er/sie in mancher Hinsicht auch überlegen ist. Es ist das Gegenteil von Prahlen (vgl. 1 Kor 4,7), das Lob des Mitchristen bei verschiedenen Gelegenheiten, aber auch das Gegenteil der Tendenz aufzusteigen, die im Römischen Reich groß geschrieben wurde.³⁴ Der Mitchrist/ die Mitchristin hat jeweils andere Gaben³⁵, die ermöglichen, dass sie/er „erhoben“ wird, höher geachtet, als man sich selbst einschätzt. Die Aussage ist verallgemeinernd. Das Zusammenleben in der Gemeinde ist möglich und sinnvoll, wenn jeder seinen Platz hat, in dem er/ sie einzigartig ist, jeder/ jede mit seinen/ ihren spezifischen Gaben. Jeder in der Versammlung der Gemeinde „hat“ einen Psalm, eine Lehre, eine Offenbarung, eine Zungenrede oder deren Auslegung (1 Kor 14,26). Die christliche Gemeinde lebt davon, dass die Gruppe nicht uniformiert wird, dass sich der eine oder andere in ihr auch nicht profilieren will, indem er prahlt oder Streit beginnt, sondern so lebt, dass jeder seinen eigenen Beitrag für die Gemeinschaft leistet, denn jeder/ jede lebt dem Herrn (Röm 14,8) und gibt darum auch dem Bruder/ der Schwester keinen Anlass zum Ärgernis (1 Kor 8,13). Das bedeutet immer auch, dass sich jeder in gewisser Weise zurücknimmt. Aber das soll nicht durch einen Akt der Selbstbeschränkung geschehen, sondern positiver, durch Blickwechsel: Wie man eine ältere Schwester oder einen älteren Bruder selbstverständlich schätzt und zu ihm aufsieht, so soll das im Kreis der Gemeinde

³⁴ Vgl. K. WENGST, *Demut*, 90: „Das läuft dem gesellschaftlichen Trend zuwider... die Gesellschaft der römischen Kaiserzeit (war) in starkem Maße vom Aufstiegsbewusstsein bestimmt.“ Ähnlich U.B. MÜLLER, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Philipper*, ThHK 11/1, Leipzig 1993, 86: Paulus wirkt solcher Aufstiegsmentalität entgegen, er ist darin in der jüdischen Tradition. Das deckt aber die Aussage nur partiell ab.

³⁵ Diesen Gedanken habe ich nur bei J. A. BENDEL, *Gnomon. Auslegung des Neuen Testaments in fortlaufenden Anmerkungen II. Römerbrief bis Offenbarung*, Stuttgart ⁸1970, 380 (lateinische Ausgabe, Stuttgart 1891, 783), gefunden. Er kommentiert: „Überlegen an Vorrechten wie an Gaben (*superiores iure et dotibus*). Dieses Höherachten Anderer kann, und zwar nicht nur so äußerlich, sondern recht von Herzen und in wahrer Demuth geschehen, wenn wir mit Verleugnungssinn von unsern Vorzügen wegschauen und die Gaben Anderer, worin sie uns voraus sind, geflissentlich betrachten.“ H. SCHLIER, *Epheserbrief* (s. Anm. 31) spricht von dem dem Anderen „Beschiedenen“, denkt also noch nicht konkret an die Gaben. W. GRUNDMANN, *τῶν αἰνών* (s. Anm. 2), 22, 29, kommentiert. „auf des anderen Wohl bedacht“, das ist sehr allgemein. Bei solch einem Verhalten kann man auch auf das „höher Achten“ verzichten. W. SCHENK, *Die Philipperbriefe des Paulus. Kommentar*, Stuttgart – Berlin – Köln – Mainz 1974, 185 spricht vom „eigenen Profil“ und auch von dem des anderen. Dies klingt sehr theoretisch, man möchte sagen, ideologisch. M.E. hat Paulus geistlicher gedacht.

geschehen.³⁶ Aber das Erstaunliche ist: Jeder soll den Bruder oder die Schwester höher achten als sich selbst, auch unabhängig vom Alter.

Dieser Gedanke, dass jeder den Anderen höher schätzt als sich selber, ist ungewöhnlich und einmalig in der Bibel. Er setzt die grundsätzliche Gleichwertigkeit aller Gemeindeglieder voraus und erwartet von hier aus, dass sich jedes Gemeindeglied selbst zurücknimmt und positiv auf das achtet, was in der Gemeinde durch die Gemeindeglieder, „in Christus“, geschieht und dieses positiv wertet. Jede von Gott in den Dienst genommene Person soll höher geachtet werden. Paulus spricht hier eine Gegenvision gegenüber der Tendenz der Selbstüberschätzung Geistbegabter aus.³⁷ Sie ist geprägt vom Ideal des Zusammenlebens der Christen. „In Christus“ kann solche gegenseitige Wertschätzung geschehen. Dieses Ideal kann allenfalls punktuell, jeweils in der konkreten Situation, und immer wieder, aber nicht dauerhaft gelebt werden, wie auch das neue Leben in Christus sich nur punktuell realisieren lässt. Paulus setzt vor die Aussage über die neue Kreatur ein „Wenn“: „Wenn jemand in Christus ist ...“ (2 Kor 5,17). Es ist eine geistliche Einstellung, die dem Mitchristen/ der Mitchristin seine/ ihre Geistbegabung anerkennt und diese Anerkennung auch ausspricht und ihn damit tatsächlich höher achtet, als sich selbst. Es ist eine in Christus gegebene Möglichkeit, die gelebt werden will.³⁸

Die Voraussetzungen solchen Denkens liegen m.E. im Handwerk, wo jeder Handwerker ein Spezialist auf seinem Gebiet ist, das gesamte Handwerk aber nicht abdecken kann. So wie der jeweilige Meister auf Wertschätzung angewiesen ist, ist es auch der Handwerker eines anderen Berufes.³⁹ Das gesellschaftliche Milieu, in dem Paulus diesen einmaligen Gedanken formuliert, ist das der Stadt. In der Stadt gibt es Diversifizierung des Handwerks, ganz verschiedenen Tätigkeiten. In der kleinen Welt gibt es Höherachtung im Hinblick auf die Älteren. Das sich an die

³⁶ E. LOHMEYER, *Die Briefe an die Philipper, an die Kolosser und Philemon*, KEK 9, Göttingen 1964, 88: „Die Überlegenheit des anderen ist nicht durch sein Sein oder Haben bestimmt, sondern wiederum nur durch den Gedanken der eigenen Demut durch das Nichtshaben und Nichtssein vor Gott. Demut um der Demut willen.“ Diese Sicht wird von der „grundsätzlichen Gleichheit“ vor Gott abgeleitet (ebd.). Auf die in Phil 2,8 ausgesprochene „Demut“ wird nicht hingewiesen. Das „Nichtssein vor Gott“ ist eine sehr pointierte und darum falsche Formulierung. Der Christ ist der von Gott Erwählte. Die Rede vom „Nichtssein“ ist in den dreißiger Jahren des 20. Jh. üblich gewesen und ist sehr missbraucht worden. Beim „Nichtshaben“ ist ausgeblendet, dass Paulus ergänzt: „und doch alles besitzen“ (2 Kor 6,10).

³⁷ Vergleichbar ist der Ausdruck „sich selbst verleugnen“ als „Gegenformulierung zu Christus verleugnen“, vgl. U. LUZ, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (8-17)*, EKK I/2, Zürich – Neukirchen-Vluyn 1990, 491.

³⁸ Näheres dazu bei H. KLEIN, „Die Gegenwart des neuen Lebens in den paulinischen Homologoumena“, in: Ders., *Entwicklungslinien im Corpus Paulinum und weitere Studien zu Paulustexten*, hg. von T. NICKLAS, FRLANT 265, Göttingen 2016, 23-40.

³⁹ Vgl. dazu bei H. KLEIN, „Handwerkliche Voraussetzungen der paulinischen Theologie“, in: Ders., *Entwicklungslinien* (s. vorigen Anm.), 354-360.

Menschen allgemein richtende Liebesgebot erwartet nur das „wie dich selbst“, nicht „einer den anderen höher“, auch wenn Liebe das Wohl des Anderen sucht (1 Kor 13,5).

Die Wertschätzung des Mitchristen/der Mitchristin ist freilich allgemein christlich. Sie ist in dem Wort Mt 18,4 enthalten: „Wer sich erniedrigt wie dieses Kind, der ist der Größte in der Herrschaft der Himmel.“ Das Besondere am Verhalten dieses Kindes ist nicht, dass es sich erniedrigt, sondern dass es zu den älteren Menschen aufschaut.⁴⁰ Sie sind ihm Vorbild für sein künftiges Verhalten. Um das geht es wohl in erster Linie, auch wenn der bei Matthäus anschließende Vers 18,5 auf die Aufnahme eines Kindes zielt.⁴¹

Solche Wertschätzung begegnet auch bei Johannes in der Episode der Fußwaschung. Das Jesuswort: „Ich habe euch ein Vorbild gegeben, dass ihr auch tut, was ich euch getan habe“ leitet dazu an, dass die Jünger Jesu, die Erwählten (Joh 13,18), und damit die Christen, sich auch einander den niedrigen Dienst der Fußwaschung erweisen.⁴² Jesus ist dafür Urbild und Vorbild zugleich.⁴³ Was er tut und die Jünger tun sollen, ist ein Zeichen der Ehrerbietung. Dieser Dienst in Ehrerbietung wird von Christus abgeleitet. Das ist auch in Phil 2,3 so, auch wenn dort der Hinweis auf Christus erst in 2,8 folgt, der die Demutsforderung begründet. Ein solches Verhalten ist nicht selbstverständlich. Darum folgt auch bei der Fußwaschung die Seligpreisung derer, die solches tun (Joh 13,17). Aber es ist noch nicht das, was Paulus erwartet und wozu er anhält, dass einer den anderen höher achtet als sich selbst. Bedacht ist die Bewegung der Erniedrigung, nicht die des Aufschauens, die das „Höher-Achten“ ausmacht. In beiden Fällen ist aber das erwartete Verhalten von Jesu Handeln abgeleitet, bei Paulus durch das angeschlossene Christuslied in Phil 2,5-11, das Christi Erniedrigung und Erhöhung beschreibt. Erwartet wird ein Verhalten „in Christus“, das durch Christi Erniedrigung und Erhöhung

⁴⁰ J. GNILKA, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, HThK I/2, Freiburg – Basel – Wien ²1992, 132 formuliert negativ: „Es ist das Gegenteil jener Haltung gemeint, die die Größe für sich in Anspruch nehmen möchte.“ Nach W. GRUNDMANN, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, ThK 1, Berlin 1968, 414 bezieht sich das „Werden wie ein Kind“ auf „die rechte Stellung vor Gott“; vgl. auch J. JEREMIAS, *Neutestamentliche Theologie I*, Gütersloh 1971, 154: „Wieder wie ein Kind werden heißt: wieder Abba sagen lernen“. Dazu auch A. SAND, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, Leipzig 1986, 366: „Dabei geht es nicht nur um die Erfahrung der Niedrigkeit vor Gott, sondern um den freiwilligen Akt der Selbsterniedrigung.“

⁴¹ U. LUZ, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 18-25)*, EKK I/3, Zürich – Düsseldorf – Neukirchen-Vluyn 1997, 15 kommentiert grundsätzlich: „Freiwillig niedrig werden heißt umfassend, die bisherigen Maßstäbe der Gesinnung und Praxis völlig aufzugeben und sich nach einer anderen Ordnung und nach anderen Maßstäben auszurichten.“ Die Richtung, in der dies erfolgen kann, ist doch wohl die Naivität des Kindes, das voll Vertrauen zu den „Großen“ aufschauen kann.

⁴² Nach J. ZUMSTEIN, *Das Johannesevangelium*, KEK 2, Göttingen 2016, 481 „handelt es sich hier um eine sehr alte Gemeinderegeln, die vorgeschrieben hat, wie Macht und Dienst in der Gemeinde auszuüben sind; indem man dem Beispiel Jesu folgt“

⁴³ U. SCHNELLE, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, ThHNT 4, Leipzig 1998, 216.

ermöglicht wurde. Von Phil 2,5-11 lässt sich indes nur der Gedanke der Erniedrigung begründen, wie es in Joh 13 geschieht, aber noch nicht der der Höherachtung des Nächsten. Er ist auch sonst singulär. Paulus hat hier die bei den Christen übliche Forderung nach „Erniedrigung“ positiv gewendet: nicht Selbsterniedrigung, sondern Erhöhung des Mitchristen soll geschehen.

Die zuletzt angezeigte Selbsterniedrigung ist auch in Röm 12,16: „Habt einerlei Sinn untereinander. Trachtet nicht nach dem Hohen, sondern beugt euch zu den Niedrigen.“⁴⁴ Haltet euch nicht selbst für klug.“ Hier spricht der Lehrer ein wenig distanzierter als in Phil 2,3. Aber dort wie hier wird die Einheit der Gemeinde beschworen. Es wird vorausgesetzt, dass es Gemeindeglieder gibt, die sich nicht in gleicher Weise für die Gemeinde einbringen, in der auch ein Aufschauen wie zu einem älteren Geschwister nicht vorausgesetzt werden kann. Darum besteht Demut in Herabneigung zu den „Niedrigen“, den Gedeemühten“. Sie sind Gemeindeglieder, Erwählte.

In seinem Bewusstsein hat Paulus so gelebt. Er schreibt den Korinthern, dass er sich erniedrigt hat, „damit die Korinther erhöht werden“ (2 Kor 11,7). Gemeint ist, dass er sich nicht durchsetzen wollte.⁴⁵ Der Normalfall ist freilich, dass Selbsterniedrigung dazu führt, dass man weniger beachtet und geehrt wird. Das wird an dem Verhalten des Paulus in Korinth sehr deutlich. In 2 Kor 11,7 fragt er, ob er „gefehlt“ hat, als er sich selbst erniedrigte und das Evangelium *gratis* verkündigte oder als er im Streit versöhnlich reagierte und sich damit „erniedrigte“, demütigte (2 Kor 10,1). Er stellt fest, dass jene, die sich dafür bezahlen lassen (2 Kor 2,17) Anerkennung und Ehre bekommen, er hingegen abgelehnt wird (2 Kor 10f). Er nennt diese Missionare sarkastisch „Überapostel“, weil sie offensichtlich von den Korinthern hochgeschätzt wurden. Er hofft, dass Gott ihn, wenn er kommt, nicht wieder „demütige“, was dazu führen würde, dass er wieder traurig ist (2 Kor 12,21). Irdisch gesehen kann echte Demut ins Kreuz führen, wie das Christuslied in Phil 2,8 zeigt. Der sich „Erniedrigende“ darf mit himmlischem Lohn rechnen (Lk 18,11). Irdisch ist solcher Lohn nur in der Zusage, der Verheißung gegenwärtig. Demut ist eine Haltung des Erwählten, der bereits erwählt ist und keine Bestätigung dafür braucht.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Ob Paulus sich damit gegen die von Platon oben genannte Meinung wendet, dass der Mensch hinaufstreben (Eros) und sich nicht mit niedrigen Dingen beschäftigen soll?

⁴⁵ Nach K. WENGST, „... einander in Demut für vorzüglicher halten.... Zum Begriff Demut bei Paulus und in der paulinischen Tradition“, in: W. SCHRAGE (Hg.), *Studien zum Text und zur Ethik des Neuen Testaments*, FS H. Greeven, Berlin New York 1986, 428-439, 431 hat sich Paulus dadurch erniedrigt, dass er handwerklich gearbeitet hat.

⁴⁶ Konflikte, in denen es um die Sache geht, können mit „Selbsterniedrigung“ nicht zum Ziel gebracht werden, weil Demut irdisch nicht belohnt wird. Im Streit um die Wahrheit bedarf es zuweilen harter Worte, wie der Fall in Korinth zeigt. Der Zeuge muss zu seiner Botschaft stehen. Er darf sich in diesem konkreten Fall nicht „erniedrigen“. Dafür ist der letzte Teil des 2. Korintherbriefes (2 Kor 10-13) beispielhaft.

Wahre Demut besteht in der richtigen Selbsteinschätzung, die dem Anderen zugesteht, dass er an seinem Teil es besser machen kann als man selbst, in gewisser Beziehung auch besser ist. Demut ist das Verhalten eines Menschen, der sich selbst und anderen nichts vormachen muss und die anderen in ihrer Eigenart zu schätzen vermag. Die Christen haben diese Demut Jesus zuerkannt. Der Christ/ die Christin kann sie nur immer neu verwirklichen. Vorausgesetzt ist, dass der Zuspruch der Erwählung verinnerlicht wurde. Denn Demut ist eine Tugend der Auserwählten.

Nachwort

Klaus Wengst und Ulrich B. Müller haben die Sache richtig erspürt. Es geht bei Paulus, wenn er von Demut spricht, um eine Gegendarstellung gegenüber der Tendenz der Selbsterhöhung. Einer soll den anderen höher achten als sich selbst. Vorausgesetzt ist, dass es „in Christus“ geschieht, die Menschen „in Christus“ leben und sich immer wieder sagen lassen, dass sie Erwählte sind.

Weniger im Verständnis der Schrift als in der Lebenshaltung gibt es zwischen den Kirchen östlicher Prägung und denen westlicher Einstellung Unterschiede im Hinblick auf die Wirkung dieses Wortes. In den verschiedenen Traditionen wird Demut anders konnotiert. Die Unterscheidung ist freilich verkürzt, schematisch, es mag im Einzelfall anders aussehen.

In den Kirchen des Ostens hat sich die alttestamentlich geprägte Unterwürfigkeit unter Gott und davon abgeleitet auch unter den Priester und die Obrigkeit erhalten, und die „Demit“ eines Menschen wird als besondere Tugend herausgestellt, die immer wieder lobend bei Menschen hervorgehoben wird. Dass sie als Erwählte zur Demut angehalten werden, wird viel zu wenig gesagt. Dadurch droht „Demit“ zur Geste der Unterordnung, des Gehorsams zu werden, die nur Gott gegenüber gefordert ist.

In der Kultur des Westens wird Selbstbeschränkung und „Demit“ immer wieder erwartet, ohne dass dabei das Sein in Christus und damit die Erwählung mitbedacht ist. Demut kann als Grundhaltung gefordert und erwartet werden, ohne dass dabei das Verhältnis zu Gott angesprochen wird. Hier bekommt das Wort eher den Charakter von Gehorsam, ohne dass gesagt, wem gegenüber Gehorsam geleistet werden soll. Es wird auch selten bei einem Menschen hervorgehoben, dass er „demütig“ ist. Hier ist das griechische Verständnis zumindest teilweise prägend geblieben, dass der freie Bürger sich nicht erniedrigen muss. Die Forderung nach Demut wird zur Erwartung der Unterwerfung und ist darum nicht gut gesehen.

Wird in den westlichen Kirchen Demut erwartet, ohne dass die Erwählung durch Gott bewusst gemacht wird, wird sie in den östlichen eher im Bewusstsein der Stellung vor Gott gelebt. Dabei zeigen sich auch die entsprechenden Schattenseiten, die hier nicht beschrieben werden sollen.⁴⁷ Mit Menschen östlicher und westlicher

⁴⁷ Für den Westen kann auf das Wort von F. NIETZSCHE, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches II*, 17, in: Ders., *Werke I*, Leipzig, o.J., 52 hingewiesen werden: „Wer sich selbst erniedrigt, will erhöht werden.“ Solches Verhalten geschieht, wenn das Bewusstsein der Erwählung verloren geht und

Prägung richtig umzugehen wünsche ich dem Jubilar Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, der seit seiner Dissertation⁴⁸ immer wieder Fragen des rechten Verhaltens nachgegangen ist und das Gespräch der Neutestamentler zwischen Ost und West liebe- und wirkungsvoll leitet und fördert.

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die alte griechische Vorstellung vom rechten Verhalten durchschlägt. Die Redeweise „meine Wenigkeit“ zeigt den Krampf an, unter dem „gut Erzogene“ stehen. Es ist gekünstelte Demut, gelernte Zurückhaltung. Für den Osten sei auf ein gelerntes und teilweise gespieltes Verhalten der Ehrerbietung hingewiesen, dass zuweilen unwahr sein kann.

⁴⁸ K.-W. NIEBUHR, *Gesetz und Paränese. Katechismusartige Weisungsreihen in der frühjüdischen Literatur*, WUNT 28, Tübingen 1987.

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LOST IN TRANSLATION THE GOSPEL IN TRANSITION IN CHRISTIAN BEGINNINGS

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Abstract. Jesus Christ was not the son of Mr and Mrs Christ. A child or maybe an unsuspecting adult might be forgiven for thinking this was so, given that Christ does sound like Jesus' surname. The title, Mashiach, Messiah, translated Christ, did indeed become the equivalent of a name, its original meaning lost in translation or at least in the transition as the Jesus movement moved from its Jewish culture into the cultures of the wider world. More was at stake, however, than the shift from a title to a name. Changes which the transition entailed included a shift from corporate hopes based on restoring Israel's kingdom to universal concerns with individual salvation and the hope of heaven, from good news for the poor addressed to Israel to care for the poor primarily among believers, and from Jesus the Jewish Messiah to Jesus the Logos incarnate, and in the process the issue of continuity and discontinuity with faith's heritage, not least in the light of what became exclusive claims to salvation.

Keywords: Messiah, Hope, Judgement, Forgiveness, Good News for the Poor, Christology, Wisdom, Continuity and Discontinuity.

1. Introduction

It is an honour to have been asked to contribute to this Festschrift for Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, whose work I have known for decades, but who in recent years has been a colleague within the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*, where I coordinate the International Initiatives program and Karl-Wilhelm runs the Eastern European Liaison Committee, which has set a pattern for our work across the world and modelled bringing east and west together.

The following paper seeks to take seriously in broad overview the implications of moving across diverse cultures. It does so, in particular, in relation to the cultural transition entailed in bringing what began as good news for Israel to become also good news for the wider world of the Roman Empire and beyond. The paper draws on my engagement with these issues, especially over recent decades, and so draws upon detailed research and interaction with the research of others as presented in my numerous works cited as references for this broader discussion. I offer it in part in that sense as a set of summary conclusions and as belonging to the ongoing

challenge of listening and communicating across cultures, modelled so well in the present day through the work of Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr and his Liaison Committee colleagues.

2. Hope in Transition

Jesus Christ was not the son of Mr and Mrs Christ. A child or maybe an unsuspecting adult might be forgiven for thinking this was so, given that Christ does sound like Jesus' surname. The title, Mashiach, Messiah, translated Christos, Christ; in English: Anointed One, did indeed become the equivalent of a name, its original meaning lost in translation or at least in the transition as the Jesus movement moved from its Jewish culture into the cultures of the wider world.

More was at stake, however, than the shift from a title to a name. For Christ, the Christ, the Messiah, was one of the ways Jews imagined God would restore their fortunes, liberating them from the Romans and bringing about a kingdom of love and peace. While needing to distance from its sometimes military connotations of a warrior prince who like David would defeat the world's Philistines, the first Christ-believers did indeed hail Jesus as the one appointed Messiah to come who would in his own way "liberate Israel", as Luke has the disciples put it on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:21). At the ascension Luke has the disciples similarly ask whether that was the time he would "restore the kingdom to Israel," only to have Jesus respond, not that their hopes were awry but that they should not worry about the timing, for that was in God's hands (Acts 1:7). Luke also has Peter announce that the times of refreshing would come if the people repented, as he puts it, "that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, that is, Jesus, who must remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration that God announced long ago through his holy prophets" (Acts 3:19–21). The notion of repentance to hasten the prospect of the breaking in of God's kingdom would not have been unfamiliar in Judaism of the day.

In the parallel accounts of the nativity of John and Baptist and Jesus, Luke has Mary and Zechariah sing songs of freedom which hail Jesus as Messiah (Luke 1:46–55, 67–79) and portrays Simeon and Anna as devout Jews also longing for Israel's and Jerusalem's liberation (2:25–38). Such faith also marks out Joseph of Arimathea, who was "waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God" (23:51). Luke has Jesus speak of his return to Jerusalem in the end time, bringing liberation (21:28), to be hailed with the words, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord" (13:35). The notion of a messianic reign, reflected also in Revelation's 1000 year reign (Rev 19:11–21; 20:1–6), and paralleled in 4 Ezra 7:26–30 and 2 Baruch 22–30; 35–40; and 53–74,¹ was still alive and well in Justin Martyr's eschatology (*Dial.* 80).

¹ All three, Revelation, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch envisage a two-stage eschatology, namely a messianic reign followed by a transformed manner of existence. See William R. G. LOADER, "Sexuality and

Contrary to attempts to accommodate Jesus to our contemporary preferences, I believe that the traditions about Jesus support the view that he shared a set of Jewish eschatological expectations which envisaged imminent divine intervention, resurrection, and judgement, and that the kingdom for which he had his followers pray would be good news for Israel's poor and hungry. In that sense, Luke, I would argue, reflects this eschatology, generally. Early traditions depict Jesus speaking of sharing the kingdom's government with his disciples, significantly twelve in number reflecting national consciousness (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:28–30). They also depict Jesus as embracing the prophetic hope that the nations would also come and join Israel or at least gather around it in peace (Matt 8:11–12; Luke 13:28–29; Isa 2:2–4; 25:6–10).

It accords with these expectations that the first followers interpreted Jesus' resurrection within this frame of reference. To it they applied texts like Ps 110:1 and 2:7 to affirm that God had appointed Jesus to messiahship, enthroned him as the promised Son of David, the Messiah, the Christ, God's Son, as the tradition Paul cites in Rom 1:3–5 affirms (see also 8:34; Acts 2:34–36; 5:31; 13:33; Heb 1:3–14). Time shifted the focus from future imminent fulfilment (as Mark 14:62) to his status in waiting of the one so enthroned at God's right hand (Luke 22:69), but the role remained. It defied in irony the false accusation which Pilate placed over his execution of being "King of the Jews", for so, indeed, he was or would be. Indeed, so central to their faith was this conviction that Luke tells us they became known as *Christianoi*, at least in Syrian Antioch (Acts 11:26), and have been known as Christians ever since.

However, the translation of this messianic hope, deeply rooted in Jewish tradition, into the wider world faced difficulties, perhaps not initially as the movement spread through diaspora synagogues, but certainly as it moved out of a Jewish milieu. Why would Corinthians or Romans yearn for a restored Israel with a Jewish Messiah its agent? It therefore made more sense for them to embrace the status so claimed of the enthroned Jesus in heaven, more meaningfully as Lord than as Messiah/Christ, and to affirm only those aspects of that hope which applied to them, namely the prospect of surviving the coming universal judgement. "Lord"

Eschatology: In Search of a Celibate Utopia in Pseudepigraphic Literature" *JSP* 20 (2014): 43–67, 57–64; also in William R. G. LOADER, *Sexuality and Gender. Collected Essays*; WUNT 458 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 145–65, 157–64; and on 2 Baruch: Liv Ingeborg LIED, *The Other Lands of Israel: Imaginations of the Land in 2 Baruch*, JSJSup 129 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 185. John J. COLLINS, "The Third Sibyl Revisited," in *Things Revealed: Studies in Honor of Michael E. Stone*, eds. Esther CHAZON and David SATRAN (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 3–19, suggests that Sibylline Oracles Book 3 may also envisaging a two stage eschatology if reign of "a king from the sun" (652) refers to the future reign of a Ptolemaic king (cf. also 193, 318, 608). He identifies the figure with either Ptolemy VI Philometor (180–145 BCE) or Ptolemy VIII Physcon (145–116 BCE) (pp. 8–17); disputed, however, by Rieuwerd BUITENWERF, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles and its Social Setting: With an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, SVTP 17 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 272–83.

was familiar from the cults and, more significantly, was the preferred rendering of the divine name. The highly exalted Jesus received the name bestowed upon him, not just “Son” as in Hebrews (1:4–5), but also the divine *kyrios*, Lord, according to the Philippians hymn (Phil 2:9–11).

The good news was then not the imminent return of the Messiah to set up his reign in Jerusalem, but that they could face their maker knowing their sins had been forgiven. Forgiveness of sins had always been central in the tradition, from the days of John the Baptist onwards, and linked with eschatological hope, “The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15). Without, however, its context in hope for God’s reign, it morphed into what in effect was the call: “Repent, for judgement day is coming.” On the one hand, this gave it universal significance, but, in the process, it lost connection with the earlier vision of the kingdom, which had been so closely associated with Israel’s hope.

The matter is, however, considerably more complex as are the results. There were changes in relation to the shape and nature of future hope, the hope of good news for the poor, how Jesus’ role was understood, and how continuity and discontinuity was handled.

3. The Nature of Future Hope in Transition

Luke’s portrayal of future hope coheres with what evidence suggests was the hope of Jesus, although the matter is not straightforward. While at least Revelation envisages a resurrection of the righteous to participate in the Messiah’s reign for a thousand years, other traditions emphasise that resurrection is not to be seen as a raising back to normal life but as transformation of the corpse, transfigured to become a spiritual body. Already in Paul we see this distinction (1 Cor 15:35–49; 2 Cor 5:1–5) and stories about the appearance of the risen Jesus assume the same, a transformed existence with no physical remainder, hence an empty tomb, and the ability to appear and disappear. This notion of resurrection applies to the future hope of resurrection which also assumes empty tombs and transformed bodies which are no longer flesh and blood and corresponds more to what 2 Baruch in its two-stage eschatology describes as the state of being after the period of the messianic reign (51:1–13; similarly 4 Ezra 7; Revelation 20–22). Revelation distinguishes between the 1000-year reign of the Messiah on earth with the faithful resurrected and the new heaven and earth with new life in the new Jerusalem and paradise located on the new earth.

Paul, indeed, sees such transfiguration/metamorphosis applying also to those like himself still living at Christ’s return (1 Cor 15:51–52; see also 1 Thess 4:13–18), suggesting that he did not embrace an eschatology which included a messianic kingdom on earth but saw Christ’s reign as taking place already in his lifetime in heaven, as 1 Cor 15:25 (“For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet”). While he retains hope for Israel (Rom 11:25–36), he will have understood it as

of a different nature. The fourth evangelist also knows the tradition according to which Jesus would come to take his own to be with him in the heavenly world: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also” (14:3).

This also makes sense of Paul’s not encouraging marriage in the light of the impending parousia because after it life would not be normal and, as Mark’s Jesus puts it (12:25), there will be no marrying or being given in marriage, i.e., sexual relations, sexuality no longer having a role not just because of no need to procreate but because of the different nature of existence.² As I have noted elsewhere,³ the more widely attested Jewish view was of an earth-based existence abounding in fertility and fruitfulness, from plants and animals to humans (e.g., 1 Enoch 5:7–9; 10:17; 2 Bar 29:1–8; 73:7; Wis 3:7–15), in part fulfilling the promise of Exod 23:26, which Philo also cites as informing his eschatological vision of abundance (*Praem.* 98–109, esp. 107). Even Luke, who envisages a Jerusalem based kingdom, nevertheless assumes that the resurrected will be like angels (20:35–36).

Possibly this was the pattern of hope from the beginning and allusions to an earthly kingdom an aberration or perhaps, as in Revelation, the resurrected were to participate in the earthly kingdom in their angelic state. In any case, we see over time a change from focus on an earthly based kingdom to focus on a heavenly one, not least as reflecting in part the transition from a predominantly Jewish milieu. There was a certain compatibility between apocalyptic understandings of the heavenly world and popular platonic thought which smoothed the transition.

There was diversity among Jewish expressions of hope and it is reflected in diversity in the writings of Christ-believers. Paul was among those for whom future resurrection was the focus of hope, the soul waiting in the interim in Hades/Sheol in semiconsciousness/sleep (1 Cor 15:51–52; 1 Thess 4:13–14), though his hope included that he would on death be with Christ (Phil 1:21–24), presumably in that state. Others embraced the view that post-mortem existence entailed consciousness. Luke’s parable of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19–31) and his depiction of Jesus’ promise to his co-crucified that he would be with him in paradise that day (so before his resurrection) (23:43) reflects such belief. Hope in both John and Hebrews assumes fulfilment of hope at death (John 12:26; 17:24; Heb 12:22–24), while at the same time holding to the traditional belief in a future resurrection of the dead (John 5:28–29; 6:39, 40, 44; Heb 6:1–2). In effect, having one’s destiny determined at death significantly reduces the emphasis given to the traditional belief in resurrection and

² See William R. G. LOADER, *The New Testament on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 453–67.

³ LOADER, *Sexuality and Gender*, 152–57. See also George W. E. NICKELSBURG, “Where is the Place of Eschatological Blessing?” in *Things Revealed: Studies in Early Jewish and Christian Literature in Honor of Michael E. Stone*, JSJSup 89, eds., Esther G. CHAZON, David SATRAN, and Ruth A. CLEMENTS (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 53–71, 54–55.

judgement. The transition from focus on judgement day to destiny at death makes individual salvation all the more central. It also helped deal with the failed expectation of the imminent arrival of the Day of the Lord and Jesus' triumphant return.

Whether focused on the day of judgement or de facto judgement at death, hope came to be centred not on Israel's restoration in its land but the salvation of the individual, including therefore the incorporation of the individual into the body of the saved. Transposed into a universal framework, such hopes focus primarily on the individual or on the new community of faith. Thus, the fourth gospel envisages dwelling places and a sense of togetherness of the new family of faith of Jesus and his own in the heavenly realm. This is now a long way from what Luke portrays as hope for the restoration of Israel.

4. Good News for the Poor in Transition

The transition of hope from its Jewish focus on an earthly kingdom and the transition of expectation from imminent to delayed fulfilment had an impact on what people saw as hope and also on how they saw the present. Jesus had announced good news for the poor, addressing Israel in its need (Luke 4:16–20; 6:20–21). He also claimed that his healings and exorcisms of his fellow Jews were signs of the kingdom of God already partially breaking in (Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20). There are indications that his first followers continued such engagement. Their situation, however, became increasingly difficult, not only among their fellow Jews where they were increasingly seen as a sect, but above all when they saw themselves commissioned to take in hand the implementation of the prophetic hope of gathering gentiles to join with the people of God and share its blessings. They were a minority under pressure, even more so as they became minority enclaves in cities like Corinth and Rome.

Announcing good news to Israel in need and engaging in making it a reality in their midst through acts of compassion did not, however, become a gospel of good news for the world's poor and engagement in acts of compassion towards all fellow citizens of the world.⁴ It remained focused on Israel as God's people. Rather than a simple expansion of the target audience from Israel to the world, the good news was that gentiles could now share in the blessings promised to Israel of future hope and its interim manifestations in acts of compassion by responding to the invitation to join this new manifestation of God's people. In this way these gentiles

⁴ William R. G. LOADER, "What Happened to 'Good News for the Poor'? On the Trail of Hope Beyond Jesus," in *Reflections on Early Christian History and Religion*, AJEC 81, eds., Cilliers BREYTENBACH and Jörg FREY (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 233–66; William R. G. LOADER, "Good News for the Poor and its Survival," in *Jesus Left Loose Ends: Collect Essays* (Adelaide: Australian Theological Forum Press, 2021), 215–36.

could share the blessing God had promised to them through Abraham (Gen 12:1–3). They were now God’s people and in that sense the outreach of love towards God’s people became the mandate to love fellow Christ-believers.

Good news for the poor remained, therefore, a promise to Israel in its need but now benefitted those whom God was grafting into Israel, as Paul put it (Rom 11:17). It was good news for the poor of the world by inviting them to join with God’s people. Good news for the poor, for Israel in its need, now became good news for God’s people, the church. They were now God’s people and in that sense the outreach of love towards God’s people became the mandate to love fellow Christ-believers.

Thus, the love and compassion manifest as signs of the kingdom already during Jesus’ ministry remained as markers of the Spirit in their midst, the fruit which counted foremost more than ecstatic and other gifts, as Paul reminds the Corinthians (1 Cor 13:1–13; Gal 5:22–23). The focus of that love and compassion was, however, now primarily on caring for the needy within these little communities and sometimes the needs of distant ones, such as the poor believers in Judea for whom makes a collection which he sees as symbolic of the prophetic hope of Gentiles one day coming to Jerusalem, but now already transposed symbolically into the form of their gifts of charity (1 Cor 16:1–4; 2 Cor 8–9; Gal 2:10; Rom 15:26; Acts 20:7).⁵

Poverty among members matters greatly as the author of 1 John reminds his hearers: “How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?” (3:8).⁶ The command to love one another was not about being nice. It was about caring and that included caring for their well being as they often lived on the edge of poverty, something those of us living in more prosperous societies frequently fail to recognise.

Aside from their retaining the reference to Israel embodied in the term, “the poor”, as they transitioned from their Jewish milieu, and so applying it to the world’s poor only as they joined the people of God, it would also have been seen as unrealistic for small minority enclaves in the empire’s big cities to seek to do what Jesus did in Galilee. In that sense, the transition led to a narrowing of the good news and its expression in the present to mutual love and support within these communities. That narrowing went alongside a fading of restoration eschatology and a focus on the salvation of individuals and on the church as the community of the saved and in time it would manifest itself as a narrow understanding of the

⁵ On this see Margaret THRALL, *II Corinthians: Volume II: VIII – XIII*, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 2000), 503–20.

⁶ On this see William R. G. LOADER, “What Happened to ‘Good News for the Poor’ in the Johannine Tradition?” in *John, Jesus, and History; Vol. 3, Glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine Lens*, Early Christianity and its Literature 18, eds., Paul N. ANDERSON, Felix JUST, and Tom THATCHER (Atlanta: SBL, 2016), 469–80; also in William R. G. LOADER, *Christology, Soteriology, and Ethics in John and Hebrews. Collected Essays*, WUNT 478 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 213–24.

good news as primarily about forgiveness and the blessing of heaven and lacking the dimensions of social justice and social change.

Indeed, this was explicable, since, for many, life in this world was a burden and so hope had to focus on escape. For some, this was ideologised into gnostic dualism where salvation was escape from this reality as the bad creation of a bad god, and for others, it was escape from one of God's lesser works of creation, the world below, to God's eternal presence, in time, understood, as noted above, as occurring as the soul survived death. The individual's forgiveness of sins, acquittal, restoration to right relationship with God, was elevated to become the apex of the good news. Thus, in the transition the wider dimension of the kingdom, of good news for the poor, of social justice and social change, was largely lost, surviving primarily as in internal ethic of in-house care for fellow believers.

It is beyond this paper to explore the attempts to re-assert a wider focus, from nations seeing themselves as Christian and, theocratically as Christendom, imposing their understanding of mutual Christian love, to monastic and other movements genuinely taking compassion beyond church boundaries to the poor of the world, to recent times when secular movements for freedom and human rights have moved many to revisit message of "good news for the poor" and embrace care not so much about another world and not narrowed to the faithful but about this world, its people and its future, including its climate. We must now acknowledge that Christian faith does not hold a monopoly on such compassion and finds itself joining hands with the many who share it across all cultures.

5. Christology in Transition

As the focus moved from the event of God's kingdom with Jesus its agent, to the person of Jesus himself, enthroned above as Lord, the image of Jesus as the Jewish royal Messiah lost traction in the gentile world. It was Wisdom mythology which helped make the transition of christology into the wider world. For it served well to highlight Jesus' present exalted status. Indeed, while the notion of messianic rule is largely lost, the notion of rule is not.⁷ Wisdom mythology made it possible to celebrate that status in its own terms. Wisdom was God's firstborn and God's image (Prov 8:30–31; Wis 7:24–28). Philo follows this model and speaks of the Logos as God's "firstborn son" (πρωτόγονος υἱός: *Agriculture* 51; *Confusion* 146) or even as "God" (θεός: *Dreams* 1.229–230; *Alleg. Interp.* 3.207–208; *QG* 2.62; *Migration* 5–6) or divine (*Migration* 83). Accordingly, Jesus is acclaimed as the divine Son, with and as "God" (John 1:1–2; Heb 1:2–3, 8–9; Col 1:15–16, juxtaposed to messianic tradition in 1:17–20). Beyond highlighting just his present

⁷ On wisdom mythology see Martin SCOTT, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus*, JSNTSup 71 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992).

status, it could also acclaim him as God's co-creator (Prov 8:22; Wis 7:22), like, indeed, as Wisdom, God's Word (1 Cor 8:6; John 1:1–2; Heb 1:2–3). Wisdom speculation helps transition Jesus from being Israel's Christ to being one with the being of God and so lay the foundation for what later became the doctrine of the Trinity.

Wisdom mythology had also served Jewish tradition well in highlighting the authority of the Law, in part to celebrate Israel's privilege as its host (Sirach 24:8–12; Bar 4:1), or alternatively to confront its disobedience in not complying (1 Enoch 42).⁸ Matthew employs this tradition to depict Jesus as Wisdom's spokesperson (11:19, 28–30), expounding what the Law required in Wisdom's name as the one designated to be the coming judge with a strong emphasis on love for one's own. Matthew was developing traditions which had spoken of Jesus as Wisdom's emissary, as the earlier form of the "Q" saying preserved in Luke 11:49–51 shows (cf. (Matt 23:34–36).

Using Logos, Word, as an alternative term for Wisdom, traditions developed, in part adapting Stoic thought,⁹ which depicted Jesus not only as Wisdom's emissary, but as the one through whom, in whom, and for whom all things exist (1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15–16; Heb 1:2–3). In the fourth gospel Jesus is Wisdom, the Word, who, as in 1 Enoch 42, had come to his own and been rejected (1:10–13).¹⁰

Unlike in Matthew, Jesus' identification with Wisdom as Logos in John's Gospel served not to expound the Law (cf. Matt 5:17–20), but to be its sequel which its earthly cult foreshadowed and its words predicted (John 1:16–17; 6:32). The author of John's Gospel, thus, transfers the universal images of bread, water, light and life, from the Law to Jesus the Word. And while the author clearly embraces the ethical principles of the decalogue, as many other peoples in their own terms espoused

⁸ George W. E. NICKELSBURG and James C. VANDERKAM, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 37–82*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), suggest that 1 Enoch 42 was likely written to contrast with what Ben Sira claimed of Mosaic Torah (pp. 138–41). In William R. G. LOADER, *The Pseudepigrapha on Sexuality: Attitudes towards Sexuality in Apocalypses, Testament, Legends, Wisdom, and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), I suggest that the allusion to water may well also contrasting with the use of such imagery in Sir. 24:25–31 (pp. 10–11).

⁹ On this see SCOTT, *Sophia*, 58–61. Peter PHILLIPS, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel: A Sequential Reading*, LNTS 294 (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 106–13, writes of "an amalgam between Platonic theories about 'ideas' and 'archetypes', Jewish understanding of 'the word of God' and the general Stoic understanding of divine reason" (p. 108). See also Kenneth SCHENCK, *A Brief Guide to Philo* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 59–60; Cristina TERMINI, "Philo's Thought within the Context of Middle Judaism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, ed. Adam KAMESAR (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 95–103, 97–101; and Michael THEOBALD, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes Kapitel 1 – 12* (Regensburg: Pustet, 2009), 118.

¹⁰ In Philo, unlike in Sirach 24 and 1 Enoch 42, Logos descended, not Wisdom/Sophia (*Dreams* 1.85–86). SCOTT, *Sophia*, 61.

such values, he now became the sole authority for ethical instruction, which, as to be expected, is focused on mutual love within the community.¹¹

Creative use of Wisdom mythology made it possible therefore to develop a christology no longer limited by the cultural specificity of its messianic origins. It made the transition possible to the wider world. It also made it possible to shift from grounding ethics in Jewish Law as the embodiment of Wisdom to grounding ethics in Jesus as its embodiment. There was a transition from Wisdom as embodied in Torah to Wisdom identified with Jesus alone. This creative move thus adapted a Jewish spirituality to make it universal, namely that eternal life is to live in oneness with the Word, now a person, and in so doing to live in oneness with God.¹²

6. Continuity and Discontinuity in Transition

The claims made for Jesus, especially as reflected in the fourth gospel, go far beyond what would have been acceptable to most Jews of the time. Indeed, the claims made by Paul and the other gospel writers about Jesus would also have met with much opposition, despite these writers' claims of continuity. For some Jews this would have meant painful division within households. For others it would have been claim and counterclaim linked to group identity. That my fellow Jews reject the good news I offer would have been painful.¹³

There would be a range of emotions and a range of explanations. Like lovers who declare that they were meant for each other, destined to be together, so Christ-believers could celebrate their new found life as the elect, given and chosen by God, destined to be part of the saved community (Eph 1:3–6; John 6:39, 44–45; 17:6, 9). Conversely, such rhetoric was employed in rationalising why others rejected the gospel. They were destined to do so (John 6:44, 64–65). Or worse, they are bad people and bad people do not come to the light (John 3:19–21; 8:44). The depiction of Judas is a prime example (John 6:64; 17:12).

Such rhetoric was not the invention of these communities but an almost standard theistic response to joy and pain. We see it in the sectarian documents found at Qumran

¹¹ On John and the Law, see William R. G. LOADER, *Jesus in John's Gospel: Structure and Issues in Johannine Christology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017, 443–52.

¹² William R. G. LOADER, "Competing Spiritualities: Reflections on John 6 in Global Perspective," in *Matthew, Paul, and Others: Asian Perspectives on New Testament Themes*, Papers of the Society for New Testament Studies Asia Pacific Liaison Committee Conference, Taipei, 19–21 October, 2018, eds., William LOADER, Boris REPSCHINSKI, and Eric WONG (Innsbruck: Innsbruck University Press, 2019), 275–89.

¹³ See the discussion in William R. G. LOADER, "Dissent and Disparagement. Dealing with Conflict and the Pain of Rejection in the Gospel according to John," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77.2 (2021): 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i2.6570>; also in LOADER, *Christology, Soteriology, and Ethics*, 263–78.

(1QS III, 13–IV, 26).¹⁴ It usually sits comfortably though paradoxically beside the assumption that by changing their minds, repenting, people could change categories and move from the non-elect to the elect group.

Alongside issues of joy and pain in response to mission went also competitive marketing. It enhanced one's persuasive power if one could offer exclusive advantage, as advertisers do in claiming that only their product achieves certain goals and others do not.

Processing the disaster of Jesus' shameful death included attributing to it vicarious significance, such as had been attributed to the deaths of Maccabean martyrs and the suffering servant in Isaiah 53. This could well have sat alongside other traditions which spoke of God's forgiving grace, such as is assumed in the Lord's Prayer, in Jewish tradition generally and in the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus, and does so in each of the gospels. At some stage, however, and in some circles, and I suspect in the interests of seeking to win over converts, this understanding of Jesus' death morphed into an exclusive claim that Jesus' death was the sole basis on which forgiveness and reconciliation with God, including acquittal at the judgement was possible.¹⁵ This, for some, became *the* gospel for both Jews and gentiles. Few apparently would have seen and have seen since, that this sat awkwardly with the early traditions which affirm John's and Jesus' message of forgiveness of sins for all who repent (Mark 1:4; 2:10; Matt 3:6; 6:12, 14–15; 9:2, 6; Luke 11:4), not to speak of Israel's faith tradition (Psalm 51).

Such exclusive claims raised acutely the issue of continuity because a declaration of discontinuity is implicit in the claim that salvation and forgiveness of sins was not possible before Jesus' death or at least before his coming. Two examples of dealing with this crisis which embrace a similar solution are the fourth gospel and Hebrews. In John the pain (and anger) is still evident in its depiction of exchanges between Jesus and his Jewish contemporaries where he deems them the devil's children for rejecting him (8:44). The author depicts Jesus as far from rejecting his Jewish faith. Never disparaging it, he asserts that the Law was indeed God's gift but then describes it as limited in time and scope to being a witness and a foreshadowing of God's new and superior gift of Jesus (1:16–17). It was both temporary and limited in application to the lower order of reality, called in a non-

¹⁴ William R. G. LOADER, "Sexuality Issues and Conflict Development in Qumran Literature," in *"Wisdom Poured Out Like Water": Studies on Jewish and Christian Antiquity in Honor of Gabriele Boccaccini, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies 38*, eds., J. H. ELLENS, I. W. OLIVER, J. VON EHRENBROOK, J. WADDELL, and J. ZURAWSKI (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018), 232–50, also in LOADER, *Sexuality and Gender*, 223–40; Craig KEENER, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary*. 2 vols. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005), 762.

¹⁵ On this see William R. G. LOADER, "Forgiveness Monopoly? Identity Formation and Demarcation in the Jesus Movement," in *Tempel, Lehrhaus, Synagoge. Orte jüdischen Gottesdienstes, Lernens und Lebens. Festschrift für Wolfgang Kraus*, eds., Christian EBERHART, Martin KARRER, Siegfried KREUZER, and Martin MEISER (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2020), 351–64.

disparaging tone the “flesh” in contrast to the “spirit,” the higher reality (3:6; 4:20–24; 6:63).

We see a similar use of this popular platonic apocalyptic frame of reference applied more systematically but without so much pain and anger in Hebrews. The Law provided the earthly cult, including Atonement Day ritual, to deal with ritual impurity, and as such in part reflected the heavenly reality and typologically foreshadowed the event on the basis of which alone forgiveness of sins and so reaching *teleiosis*, the goal of God’s heavenly presence, was made possible (7:18–19; 9:8–12; 11:39–30).¹⁶ The claim to continuity rests on a salvation historical perspective as in John but at the expense of a reduction of the old which scarcely can be claimed to do it justice. Much is lost in that transition.

7. Loss and Gain in Translation and Transition

Hope transitioned from below to above. Good news transitioned from being for all in Judea and Galilee to being for all who joined the movement. Christology transitioned from messianic agency to divine wisdom and word. Forgiveness transitioned from being based on God’s generosity to being based on exclusive benefits available on through Christ’s death. Love made its transition to all, indeed, but with gain and loss.

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¹⁶ See the discussion in William R. G. LOADER, “Ethics in Hebrews: Faith in Danger,” in LOADER, *Christology, Soteriology, and Ethics*, 367–74.

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THE MATTHEAN ANTITHESES IN RELATION TO THEIR OLD TESTAMENT THESES

JOEL MARCUS

Abstract. A pervasive emphasis in the work of Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr has been the relation between ancient Judaism and the New Testament. In an early treatment of the Matthean Antitheses (Matt 5:21-43), Niebuhr emphasized the consonance between the teaching of the Antitheses and Second Temple Jewish thought: the Matthean Jesus is expanding the Torah rather than replacing it. This essay applauds the anti-Marcionite and ecumenical impulse behind Niebuhr's argument and notes a number of points of agreement with it, but presents a different interpretation of the third, fourth, and fifth Antitheses. Like many biblical writers and later Jewish exegetes, the Matthean Jesus sometimes radically revises the Torah while claiming to uphold it.

Keywords: Matthew, Second Temple Judaism, Torah, legal revisionism, Antitheses.

Personal Retrospective

I believe that I first met Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr when we both presented papers at a colloquium on "The Scriptures and the Gospels" held in Leuven in 1996. Mine concerned the relation between Mark 7:1-23 and Jewish interpretations of the Isaiah text discussed in this New Testament passage.¹ His was on the fascinating Qumran fragment, 4Q521, which depicts an anointed figure whom heaven and earth obey—a striking parallel to the resurrected Jesus's claim to cosmic authority at the climax of Matthew's Gospel (Matt 28:18). Later in the fragment, either this same figure or God himself is described as liberating captives, restoring sight to the blind, healing the wounded, raising the dead, and bringing good news to the poor—a conflation of Old Testament allusions amazingly similar to Jesus's answer to John the Baptist in Matt 11:4-5//Luke 7:22.² From early in our respective careers, then, both Karl-Wilhelm and I have been interested in the relation between early Christianity

¹ Joel MARCUS, "Scripture and Tradition in Mark 7," in *The Scriptures in the Gospels*, ed. Christopher M. TUCKETT, BETL 131 (Leuven University Press, 1997), 177–95.

² Karl-Wilhelm NIEBUHR, "Die Werke des eschatologischen Freudenboten. 4Q521 und die Jesusüberlieferung," in *The Scriptures in the Gospels* (see n. 1), 637–46.

and its Jewish background, especially as the latter relates to biblical interpretation; indeed, I think it is fair to say that this has been a Leitmotif of Karl-Wilhelm's published work.

It is not for nothing that Karl-Wilhelm's dissertation dealt with the concept of Law in early Judaism³ and his Habilitationsschrift with the Jewish identity of Paul.⁴ He has also co-chaired symposia and co-edited scholarly tomes on Philo Judaeus in relation to the New Testament,⁵ early Judaism and New Testament in the horizon of biblical theology,⁶ and even the New Testament exegesis of Nazi theologian Walter Grundmann.⁷ Nor is Karl-Wilhelm's ecumenical impulse exhausted by his many publications on the relation between the New Testament and Judaism. For the past decade, I have been privileged to take part in symposia ably organized by Karl-Wilhelm and sponsored by the Eastern European Liaison Committee of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas, the purpose of which is to bring together Eastern Orthodox and Western New Testament scholars for exegetical and hermeneutical dialogue. Karl-Wilhelm has also written a book whose title poses the important question of whether Christians and Muslims believe in the same God.⁸ It seems, then, that, wherever German New Testament scholars are engaging in hermeneutical dialogue across confessional lines, there is Karl-Wilhelm in the midst of them.

In this essay, I would like to take a close look at a fairly early work by Karl-Wilhelm, his treatment of a significant New Testament response to the Jewish scriptures: the so-called "Antitheses" in the Gospel of Matthew (Matt 5:21-48). Here, in six interconnected passages, the Matthean Jesus first quotes or alludes to a passage or principle from the Torah, then reacts to it with a response that begins, "But I say to you..." This is the first major section of the Sermon on the Mount after the introductory Beatitudes (5:1-16) and the programmatic statement about the fulfillment of the Law (5:17-20), and it is an appropriate continuation of that statement since it, too, concerns the relation of Jesus to the Law.

³ Karl-Wilhelm NIEBUHR, *Gesetz und Paränese: Katechismusartige Weisungsreihen in der frühjüdischen Literatur*, WUNT 2/28 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987).

⁴ Karl-Wilhelm NIEBUHR, *Heidenapostel aus Israel: die jüdische Identität des Paulus nach ihrer Darstellung in seinen Briefen*, WUNT 62 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992).

⁵ Roland DEINES and Karl-Wilhelm NIEBUHR, eds., *Philo und das Neue Testament: wechselseitige Wahrnehmungen: I. Internationales Symposium zum Corpus Judaico-Hellenisticum, 1.-4. Mai 2003, Eisenach/Jena*, WUNT 172 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

⁶ Wolfgang KRAUS, Karl-Wilhelm NIEBUHR, and Lutz DOERING, eds., *Frühjudentum und Neues Testament im Horizont biblischer Theologie*, WUNT 162 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

⁷ Roland DEINES, Volker LEPPIN, and Karl-Wilhelm NIEBUHR, eds., *Walter Grundmann: ein Neutestamentler im Dritten Reich*, Arbeiten Zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte 21 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007).

⁸ Karl-Wilhelm NIEBUHR, *Glauben Christen und Muslime an denselben Gott? Bekenntnis 34* (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1995).

Karl-Wilhelm addressed this subject in detail in his contribution to a Festschrift for Werner Vogler significantly entitled *Gedenkt an das Wort*. This itself is, of course, a biblical allusion, since it echoes Jesus's exhortation to his disciples to "remember the word which I spoke to you" (John 15:20).⁹ In this essay, I will try to follow this exhortation by probing Karl-Wilhelm's "word" about Matthew's "word" about some key Jewish scriptures. While I do not always end up agreeing with him, I have found that listening to his word has consistently opened up new lines of inquiry, partly because of the clarity of his analysis, partly because of his mastery of Jewish sources. Perhaps, in later years, others will continue the chain of tradition by critiquing my critique of Karl-Wilhelm's word about Matthew's word about God's word in the Torah.

The Central Question

With typical concision, Karl-Wilhelm identifies the central question in exegesis of the Antitheses thus:

Wird der in V. 17-20 vorangestellte Grundsatz vollkommener Toratreue Jesu durch die folgenden Antithesen in der Sache aufgehoben oder christologisch interpretiert? Ist also—immer im Sinne des Matthäus—Jesu Lehre eschatologisch *Entfaltung* der Tora unter den Bedingungen der Gottesherrschaft, oder ist sie ihr eschatologischer *Ersatz*? (emphasis original)¹⁰

Karl-Wilhelm, after twenty-five pages of close analysis, sides with the first alternative: the Matthean Jesus, in the tradition of Jewish biblical interpretation, is paraenetically expanding the Torah rather than replacing it¹¹—a conclusion that seems to accord with the fact that Matthew introduces 5:21-48 with the programmatic, Torah-embracing statement of 5:17-20.¹² Yet, as Karl-Wilhelm also remarks, the antithetical structure of the

⁹ Karl-Wilhelm NIEBUHR, "Die Antithesen des Matthäus. Jesus als Toralehrer und die frühjüdische weisheitlich geprägte Torarezeption," in *Gedenkt an das Wort. Festschrift für Werner Vogler zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Christoph KÄHLER, Martina BÖHM, and Christfried BÖTTRICH (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1999), 175–200.

¹⁰ NIEBUHR, "Antithesen," 177. I have changed the period at the end of the passage to a question mark, in what I believe is the correction of a typo.

¹¹ Karl-Wilhelm frequently refers to this sort of Jewish biblical interpretation as "weisheitlich geprägter Toraparänese." I am unclear as to exactly what he means by this term. Is he referring to the sort of paraenesis one finds in books commonly ascribed to the "Wisdom" movement, such as Ben Sirach, which he quotes several times? Or does he think that all postbiblical Torah exegesis was "weisheitlich geprägt," in the sense that it tried to find a rational way to respond to new challenges not faced by the biblical writers themselves? I suspect that he takes up this question somewhere in his writings.

¹² See W. D. DAVIES and D. C. ALLISON, *Introduction and Commentary on Matthew I-VII*, in *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 501: "In denying the suspicion that Jesus abolished the Torah, 5.17-20

passage suggests an opposition between Jesus's directives and the Torah that seems at first to belie this conclusion.¹³ We will explore below Karl-Wilhelm's way of resolving this paradox, and along the way I will highlight some individual points of agreement and disagreement. Let me begin, however, by detailing some large areas of agreement and why I think they are important.

1) Karl-Wilhelm ably demonstrates that parallels can be found in Second Temple Jewish paraenetic texts for most of the things the Matthean Jesus positively endorses in 5:21-48, such as restraining anger and lust; avoiding divorce, oaths, and retaliation; and showing benevolence to enemies.¹⁴ Even when Jesus intensifies matters beyond the point where Jewish exegesis traditionally goes—Karl-Wilhelm finds, for example, no explicit command to *love* enemies in Second Temple Jewish literature¹⁵—the groundwork for Jesus's exhortations has been laid in Second Temple Judaism. This demonstration, I take it, is the heart of the essay, as is shown not only by the quantity of pages devoted to it (sixteen out of twenty-five pages) but also by the subtitle (“Jesus als Toralehrer und die frühjüdische weisheitlich geprägte Torarezeption”) and the conclusion (pp. 198-199). This emphasis on the essential Jewishness of the Antitheses is important, not least because of the persistent threat of Marcionism within the church and the tendency of Christians to hold negative and distorted views of Judaism.¹⁶

2) Karl-Wilhelm is also astute in discussing the parallels in Jewish texts to the claim to Mosaic authority implicit in Matt 5:21-48 and to the antithetical structure of the section—and also the limitations of these parallels.¹⁷ He mentions, for example, the way in which the Temple Scroll introduces new commands not found in the biblical text, implicitly ascribing them to God by using the same first-person language found in the biblical citations. Jubilees (2:29-30) and Josephus (*Ant.* 4.196-301) are similarly innovative in their extensions and alterations to the Mosaic Torah, which they implicitly include under the rubric of Torah itself. In none of these cases, however, are the alterations highlighted as departures from the biblical text, as they are in the Antitheses; they are, rather, integrated seamlessly *into* the scripture (or a paraphrase of it) in a process Hindy Najman suggestively

looks forward...[T]he verses anticipate and therefore introduce 5.21-48, setting the reader right beforehand: the so-called ‘antitheses’ are not to be interpreted as antitheses, for Jesus does not overturn the Pentateuch.”

¹³ NIEBUHR, “Antithesen,” 198–99.

¹⁴ NIEBUHR, “Antithesen,” 181–98.

¹⁵ See NIEBUHR, “Antithesen,” 196.

¹⁶ See Amy-Jill LEVINE, “Bearing False Witness: Common Errors Made About Early Judaism,” in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament. Second Edition*, ed. Amy-Jill LEVINE and Marc Zvi BRETTLER (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 759–63.

¹⁷ NIEBUHR, “Antithesen,” 177–81.

calls “seconding Sinai.”¹⁸ The Antitheses of Matt 5:21-48, then, show continuities with much Jewish exegesis of the Torah (in extending its commands and calling those extensions “Torah”) but also discontinuities (in being more explicit about the revisionary nature of the process).

Karl-Wilhelm is also accurate in disputing some supposed Jewish parallels to the antithetical structure of Matt 5:21-48. In a famous article, for example, David Daube compared the Antitheses to rabbinic traditions in which שומע אני (lit. “I hear”) means “I might interpret it thus” and אמרת (lit. “you said”) can mean “you should rather interpret it thus.”¹⁹ Others, most recently John Kampen, have compared the form of the Antitheses to 4QMMT, where “we” Qumranians reprove “you” Jerusalem authorities for mistaken halakhic conclusions.²⁰ The problem, as Karl-Wilhelm clearly and concisely shows, is again the antithetical structure of Matt 5:21-48: the Jewish parallels pit one halakhic interpretation against another, whereas the Matthean Antitheses seem to pit Jesus’s new Law against the word of the Torah itself. All of this leads to the conclusion that, despite the striking parallels, a different sort of claim to authority is being made in the Matthean Antitheses than in the Second Temple Jewish literature so far adduced.²¹

Individual Antitheses

Despite my agreement with Karl-Wilhelm on these crucial points, it seems to me that, when he comes to treat individual Antitheses (pp. 181-198), he sometimes reduces the friction between the Matthean Jesus and the Mosaic Torah in a way I find unconvincing. This is especially true of his treatment of the third, fourth, and fifth Antitheses (Matt 5:31-32; 5:33-37; 5:38-42), which, in contrast to the first two (5:21-26; 5:27-30), seem to revoke the Torah references in the theses.²²

¹⁸ Hindy NAJMAN, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism*, JSNTSup 77 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2003).

¹⁹ David DAUBE, “‘Ye Have Heard--But I Say Unto You’,” in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (1956; repr., New York: Arno, 1973), 55–66; cf. the critique by Eduard LOHSE, “‘Ich aber sage euch’,” in *Die Einheit des Neuen Testaments. Exegetische Studien zur Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 73–87.

²⁰ John KAMPEN, *Matthew Within Sectarian Judaism*, AYBRL (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2019), 85–112.

²¹ Cf. NIEBUHR, “Antithesen,” 199: “Mit ihnen [sc. the Antitheses] erweist sich Jesus als derjenige, der Autorität hat, den Gotteswillen in eschatologischer Vollmacht zur Sprache zu bringen, der selbst in Namen Gottes, des Gesetzgebers spricht.”

²² The sixth Antithesis, Matt 5:43–48, is a special case, since “You shall love your neighbor” is from Lev 19:18, but “and you shall hate your enemy” is not drawn directly from any biblical text, certainly not from Lev 19:18 in its immediate context. In fact, when the word “hate” appears in the previous verse, it is used for what one should *not* do, namely hate one’s brother in one’s heart (Lev 19:17). As Karl-Wilhelm notes (NIEBUHR, “Antithesen,” 195), moreover, Lev 19:34 already widens the exhortation from Lev 19:18 to love the neighbor as oneself to include “the stranger who dwells in your midst” (cf. Deut 10:19). There are, to be sure, numerous biblical passages that

With regard to the Antithesis about divorce (5:31-32), for example, it is perfectly true, as Karl-Wilhelm mentions a number of times, that the Old Testament contains no *commandment* to divorce, and it is therefore technically inaccurate to speak of Matt 5:32 as a revocation of a biblical command.²³ It is also true that the “thesis” of the Antithesis about swearing (5:33-37) does not contain any Old Testament citations *stricto sensu*; here, as in 5:43, we can speak of Matthew “seconding Sinai” by reformulating biblical allusions and principles as a biblical command.²⁴ But it is also the case that the Torah implicitly endorses the practice of swearing oaths when it forbids swearing false ones (Lev 19:12) but stipulates that those made “to the Lord” are to be carried out (Num 30:3; Deut 23:33).²⁵ And it remains true that the Torah *allows* divorce and oaths, and even encourages the latter, whereas Matt 5:31-37 *forbids* them.²⁶ Similarly, Karl-Wilhelm, in discussing the fifth Antithesis (5:38-42), quotes Dieter Sanger to the effect that its intention corresponds to that of the early Jewish Wisdom tradition, which also urges abstention from retaliation. When he concludes, however, “Auch hier kann die antithetische Struktur der Aussage nicht als Ausdruck

enjoin fierce opposition to national enemies (for example, Deut 7:2; 20:16; 23:3-7; Ps 137:7-9) or express hatred for sinners within the camp (for example, Pss 26:5; 139:19-22). Perhaps the closest we come to an injunction to hate the enemy is Deut 23:3-7, where the instruction not to abhor the Edomite is played off against the instruction not to seek the peace of the Ammonite or Moabite. By implication, the latter are objects of abhorrence. None of these passages, however, appears in proximity to Lev 19:18.

Where an injunction to hate the enemy *does* occur is in 1QS 1:9-11, where the prospective inductee is instructed to love all the children of light but to hate all the children of darkness. This is similar to Josephus’s description of the Essene induction ceremony, where initiates swear oaths to be benevolent to humanity in general but to hate the unrighteous forever (J.W. 2.139). As Ulrich LUZ, *Matthew: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (3 vols.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989–2005), 1.288 writes, therefore, “In no other antithesis is there so much support for the classic ‘Protestant’ thesis that the antitheses are directed not against the Old Testament but against its Jewish interpretation.” I am surprised that Karl-Wilhelm does not mention the 1QS passage in his treatment of Matt 5:43-48.

²³ NIEBUHR, „Antithesen“, 186–88; cf. already E. P. SANDERS, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 256–57 and DAVIES and ALLISON, *Matthew I–VII*, 507.

²⁴ But the “seconding” of Sinai here occurs in the thesis statement, not in the Antithesis; contra KAMPEN, *Matthew*, 88–89, who thinks both the thesis statements and the Antitheses are instances of “seconding Sinai” by the Qumran community and the Matthean community respectively.

²⁵ Acknowledged by NIEBUHR, „Antithesen“, 191: “Die Wendung οὐκ ἐπιорκῆσεις steht im vierten Antithesenabschnitt bei Matthus textpragmatisch fur ein Gebot der Tora, auch wenn sich ein solches im Pentateuch gar nicht finden!”

²⁶ NIEBUHR, „Antithesen“, 189 concedes this when he says, “Die dritte Antithese hat somit als Ganze gegenuber der zweiten die Funktion einer paranetischen Entfaltung, *auch wenn sie fur sich noch einmal nach dem Modell einer Antithesen formuliert ist*” (emphasis added). I wonder, however, how the third Antithesis can be a paraenetic development as a whole (“als Ganze”), when it is formulated as an antithesis. Also, in the other instances Niebuhr speaks of the Antitheses as paraenetic developments of biblical commands, not of other Antitheses.

expliziter und grundsätzlicher Torakritik Jesu verstanden werden” (emphasis original),²⁷ I detect a non sequitur. Although the positive teaching about renouncing retaliation may (and does) correspond to some Jewish teaching and Torah interpretation, it still remains the case that Matthew formulates 5:39-42 as an antithesis to the biblical citation in 5:38, and that means that he presents it as a criticism of the Torah.

In following the twists and turns of Karl-Wilhelm’s thought, I sense that there is a real hermeneutical struggle going on. He wants to find a way to interpret the Antitheses as a development of the Torah rather than a critique of it, but he is too good an exegete to ignore the contrary evidence. Perhaps I am not proficient enough in German or psycholinguistics to make this claim, but it seems to me that this struggle is reflected in the ambivalent syntax of some of his sentences. For example, when he refers to “[u]nsere Leitfrage, ob die Weisungen Jesu in den Antithesen im Gegensatz zur Tora stehen oder als eine Möglichkeit ihrer weiterführenden Auslegung verstanden werden können,”²⁸ does the contrast between the strength of “stehen” and the uncertainty of “verstanden werden können” suggest that he knows that the case for his “Torah-development” position is weak? Similarly, when he asserts, “Insofern könnte man die dritte Antithese auch im Kontext frühjüdischer ‘halachischer’ Toraauslegung interpretieren,” does “könnte” suggest that this is a possibility rather than a probability—especially when the next paragraph begins with “allerdings” and acknowledges that this preferred interpretation “lässt sich ... nur schwer mit dem Kontext der matthäischen Antithesen in Einklang bringen”?²⁹

What is a “Jewish” Interpretation?

I am far from disparaging such a desire to find a way to interpret the Antitheses in a non-Marcionite manner. We all start out with presuppositions and exegetical desires,³⁰ and sometimes the most interesting exegesis results from the collision between those presuppositions and desires, on the one hand, and the hard core of the text, on the other. Not only Karl-Wilhelm’s work, but much recent German New Testament exegesis has manifested an extraordinary sensitivity to Jewish concerns and a commendable ambition to get to know early Jewish sources firsthand and to characterize them accurately, without the explicit or implicit bias that marred the approach of earlier generations.

In line with this tendency, Karl-Wilhelm, in the final footnote of his essay, even goes so far as to refer to his interpretation as a “Jewish” one and therefore appropriate as a contribution to Werner Vogler’s Festschrift:

²⁷ NIEBUHR, „Antithesen,” 195.

²⁸ NIEBUHR, „Antithesen,” 187.

²⁹ NIEBUHR, „Antithesen,” 189.

³⁰ Rudolf BULTMANN, “Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible?” in *New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings* (1957; ET Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 145–53.

Die hier anhand der Antithesen angedeutete “jüdische” Jesusinterpretation des Matthäus mag bei einem Exegeten Interesse finden, der sich intensiv mit jüdischen Jesusinterpretationen in unserem Jahrhundert auseinandergesetzt hat.³¹

The quotation marks around the word “jüdische,” I take it, do not imply distancing, but rather reflect the irony that this “Jewish” interpretation is the work of a Christian interpreter.

At the same time, I note with interest that Karl-Wilhelm’s wording (“this ‘Jewish’ interpretation”) does not necessarily imply that his is the *only* possible Jewish interpretation of the Matthean passage. I would like to use this as an opening to suggest that not all Jewish approaches to the Law emphasize the sort of smooth continuity with the biblical *Ur-text* that Karl-Wilhelm envisages. Not all Jewish tradents were concerned with merely “seconding Sinai.” Rather, I would claim, there was also a biblical and Jewish tradition of revising or even revoking the letter of the biblical Law while at the same time claiming to uphold its essence. We must distinguish what Matthew says he is doing (upholding the Law) from what he is *actually* doing (revising it). “Interpretation or replacement,” then, may turn out to be a false dichotomy, since Matthew may wish to present as a mere interpretation what is actually a radical revision. And this is a very “Jewish” thing to do.

Revising the Bible

This sort of revisionary process is in fact inevitable in a society centered around the notion of an eternal, God-given law.³² Despite such an emphasis, times change, and, when they do, changes become necessary in the law. What is one to do in such a case? The only answer seems to be to present the new law as a continuation of the old one—even when it is not.

Bernard Levinson has been the most astute analyst of this process. His starting point is the movement from the practice of sacrificing everywhere, which is enshrined in the Covenant Code of Exodus 20-23, to the Deuteronomic restriction of sacrifice to just one locality, “the place that Yahweh will choose” (Deut 12:14; cf. 12:5; 14:25; 15:20; 26:2). The Deuteronomic text shows signs of being a self-conscious revision, since God in Exodus promises that he will bless the worshipper who sacrifices “in every

³¹ NIEBUHR, “Antithesen,” 199 n. 80.

³² Not all ancient societies, to be sure, operated with this sort of concept; see, for example, Bernard M. LEVINSON, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 146 on the Hittites who, “when it became necessary to amend older laws, explicitly qualified them as obsolete and as now superceded by a new penalty”; cf. Bernard M. LEVINSON, *Legal Revision and Religious Renewal in Ancient Israel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 28–32.

place” (בכל־המקום) where the divine name is mentioned (Exod 20:24),³³ but the Deuteronomist rephrases this as a warning *against* sacrificing “in every place”:

Watch yourself, lest you offer up your burnt offerings **in every place** (בכל־מקום) that you see. Rather, **in the place** (במקום) that Yahweh will choose, in one of your tribes, *there* you shall offer up your burnt offerings, and *there* you shall do all that I am commanding you. (Deut 12:13-14, RSV alt.)

The use here of the phrase “in every place” (בכל־מקום), in a context having to do with sacrifice, conjures up the Exodus text, yet in a way that reverses its meaning. Astonishingly, however, a few lines after this drastic revision, the author adds a stringent warning to keep the law exactly as it was delivered once-and-for-all to Moses, neither adding to nor subtracting from it (Deut 13:1 [ET 12:32]).³⁴ The author of Deuteronomy, then, revises the Law in a striking way, even teasing attentive readers into noticing the revision by employing the key phrase from Exodus, at the same time that he insists on the Law’s unchangeableness.³⁵ The Matthean Jesus, similarly, revokes the Pentateuchal edicts on divorce, oaths, and retribution, yet insists that he is not altering a jot or tittle of the Law.³⁶

³³ On the use of the definite article here, see LEVINSON, *Deuteronomy*, 32 n. 18.

³⁴ Aaron D. PANKEN, *The Rhetoric of Innovation: Self-Conscious Legal Change in Rabbinic Literature*, Studies in Judaism (Lanham/Boulder/New York/Oxford: University Press of America, 2005), 124–28 shows that this verse, along with Deut 17:11, became central to rabbinic discussions of whether or not rabbinic revisions of the Torah were justifiable. Panken notes the irony that “both these texts come from Deuteronomy, long considered the latest part of the Torah by critical scholars, and a major source of legal change itself” (p. 124).

³⁵ NAJMAN, *Seconding Sinai*, 1–40 criticizes Levinson for his conclusion that the author of Deuteronomy intended to replace the Covenant Code. But, as Justin DOMBROWSKI, “Review of Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai*,” *WTJ* 67 (2005): 180–81 points out, Najman’s alternate proposal that Deuteronomy was intended as an *accompaniment* to the Covenant Code is asserted rather than argued, and it does not grapple with passages in which there is a clear contradiction between the two codes, such as in the present instance and the instructions for preparation of the Passover lambs in Exod 12:9 and Deut 16:7. Maxine L. GROSSMAN, “Beyond the Hand of Moses: Discourse and Interpretive Authority,” *Prooftexts* 26 (2006): 298 notes Najman’s unexamined assumption that, if Levinson were right that pseudepigrapha such as Deuteronomy were meant to replace their sources, that would imply that they were “unhistorical, morally tainted, and undeserving of the authority they have enjoyed” (NAJMAN, *Seconding Sinai*, 6).

³⁶ Bernard M. LEVINSON, “The Hermeneutics of Tradition in Deuteronomy: A Reply to J.G. McConville,” *JBL* 119.269–286 (2000): 284 links the two passages in a brief side-glance at Matthew 5:17-20: “In his rhetoric, this Mosaic-prophetic Jesus...assiduously complies with the pentateuchal requirement to heed the law by neither adding to nor taking away from it in any way (Deut 4:2; 12:32 = 13:1 Hebrew). Precisely this assertion of consistency with Torah, however, grants Jesus the legitimacy to challenge the authority of Jewish law. In redactional terms, it strategically introduces the series of six antitheses whereby the Matthean Jesus validates his transformation of Torah as itself authoritative Torah (Matt 5:21-48).”

Levinson's other premier example of inner-biblical revisionism takes as its starting point the earliest biblical version of the Second Commandment, where Yahweh warns that he is "an impassioned God...visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Exod 20:3-5).³⁷ The Deuteronomist substantially reiterates this warning in Deut 5:9-10, but when he repeats it again in 7:9-10 he "so fundamentally transforms the original as to revoke it,"³⁸ altering the reference to a judgment that looms over the sinner's family for three or four generations to a reference to a God who does not delay but requites the sinner "to his face." Yet, while radically softening the original, so that the idea of intergenerational punishment is effaced, the Deuteronomic revision presents itself as "a studied series of annotations to the original doctrine."³⁹

An even more radical rejection of the Decalogue principle of transgenerational punishment occurs in Ezekiel 18:1-4 (which has a close parallel in Jer 31:29-30). Here the prophet quotes a proverb (משל) that, according to him, is being bandied about in Israel: "Fathers eat sour grapes and their children's teeth are set on edge." Ezekiel rejects this proverb, declaring that henceforth it will have no further currency in the land; rather, "The soul that sins, [only] it shall die!" (Levinson trans. alt.). Although most of the language is different, the proverb seems to echo the Second Commandment, since the two traditions share not only the principle of transgenerational punishment but also the resonant vocabulary of "fathers" and "sons."⁴⁰ But a radical distancing is also being accomplished, since a core biblical principle is not only being rejected but also "devoiced" by demotion to the status of a proverb.⁴¹ Similarly, in the theses of Matt 5:21-48, Jesus repeats Mosaic commands but does not identify

³⁷ This translation combines the RSV with the JPS rendering of אֵל קָנָא.

³⁸ LEVINSON, *Legal Revision*, 74.

³⁹ LEVINSON, *Legal Revision*, 79.

⁴⁰ LEVINSON, *Legal Revision*, 62. The echo of Exod 20:5-6 in Ezek 18:1-4 is disputed by Joel S. BADEN, "Review of Bernard M. Levinson, *Legal Revision and Religious Renewal in Ancient Israel*," *JNES* 71 (2012): 156, who cites Ezekiel's reference to a proverb rather than a law and accuses Levinson of presenting "a simplistic view of the canonicity of the Pentateuch—or, more importantly, of its constituent elements—in ancient Israel." It seems likely, however, that by the time of Ezekiel, the Decalogue had a "canonical," or at least a normative status; see Moshe WEINFELD, "The Uniqueness of the Decalogue and Its Place in Jewish Tradition," in *The Ten Commandments in History and Tradition*, ed. Ben-Zion SEGAL and Gershon LEVI (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990), 16–18 on the other echoes of the Decalogue in Ezek 18. Some rabbis recognized the connection between Ezek 18:1-4 and Exod 20:5-6; see below.

⁴¹ LEVINSON, *Legal Revision*, 60–63. In the opening of the prophet's complaint, both the noun משל and the participle משלים reduce the biblical passage to the status of a piece of traditional wisdom, and an invalid one at that.

them as such; they are simply things that were “said” (ἐρρέθη) to “the ancients”—it is not said by whom—and seem no longer to be definitive.⁴²

Nor did this process of legal revision stop with the close of the biblical canon. It continues in the literature of the rabbis, who also struggled with the issue of how to change the Torah while affirming its permanence.⁴³ Indeed, it is ironic that many New Testament scholars get nervous about affirming that Jesus or Matthew (or Paul or Mark) abrogated the Torah, but some ancient rabbis had no qualms about speaking positively about abrogation of the Torah either by the Old Testament prophets or by themselves.⁴⁴ One example occurs in a Talmudic tradition discussing the Ezekiel passage we have just examined:

R. Jose ben Hanina [a second generation Amora] said, “Our master Moses decreed four sentences against Israel, but four prophets came and *annulled* them (ביטלו)...Moses said, “visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.” But

⁴² “As it has been said” (שנאמר) is the commonest biblical citation formula in rabbinic literature (see Wilhelm BACHER, *Die exegetische Terminologie der jüdischen Traditionsliteratur* [1897; repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965], 6), and this is closer to Matthew’s formulation than instances in the Qumran literature that use the root אמר in biblical citation formulas in the active voice; see Joseph A. FITZMYER, “The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament,” in *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (1961; repr., Sources for Biblical Study; Missoula: Scholars, 1971), 10–12. Matthew elsewhere uses ἐρεῖν (“to say”) in the passive voice to refer to scripture positively, especially in the “formula citations” that are so important for establishing continuity between Jesus and the Old Testament (1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 3:3; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 27:9; cf. 22:31; 24:15). But it is striking that, in all the other Matthean instances in which passive forms of ἐρῶ are used to refer to scripture, an agent of the speaking is specified (either a name such as Jeremiah or Isaiah, or a vaguer term such as “the prophet”). Almost always (22:31 is the exception) this agent is referred to as the one “through whom” the word was spoken, presumably because the real speaker was God. The absence in the Antitheses of this formula, and even of Moses’s name, is therefore striking, suggesting an attempt at erasure, especially in combination with the implication of time-boundedness in ἀρχαίους.

⁴³ Yair FURSTENBERG, “Die zweite Tora. Die ‘Antithesen’ Jesu innerhalb des jüdischen Diskurses über die schriftliche Tora des Mose,” *BK 4* (2017): 254–56 argues that there was a widespread consensus among Second Temple period elites that the written Law was inadequate to address the new questions and conditions that the changes in society had produced. Of the major sects described by Josephus, only the Sadducees thought the written Law by itself was adequate for purposes of jurisprudence. The Pharisees relied on oral tradition, which later morphed into Oral Law, as an additional source of authority, and the Essenes, as shown by Jubilees 1-2 and the Temple Scroll, believed that other documents had an authority co-equal with that of the written Law.

⁴⁴ To be sure, the assertion that they did so is controversial, for obvious reasons; see Hayyim ANGEL, “‘The Person Who Sins, He Shall Die’: Ezekiel and Intergenerational Punishment”, <https://library.yctorah.org/files/2016/09/The-Person-Who-Sins-He-Should-Die.pdf>.

Ezekiel came and *annulled* it (ביטלה): “The soul that sins, [only] it shall die!” (b. Mak. 24a)⁴⁵

Other rabbinic traditions use a different vocabulary, speaking of rabbis who “uprooted” (עקר) or “enacted against” (התקין על) the Torah by their “enactments” (תקנות).⁴⁶ A classic example is the *prozbul* of Hillel, an early first-century Pharisee and the founder of the most influential proto-rabbinic “house.” In Hillel’s time, the provision of Deut 15:1-2 that a person must remit the debts of “his neighbor, his brother” in the sabbatical year was impeding the free flow of credit, since creditors became reluctant to lend money as the seventh year approached. By means of a legal fiction, Hillel transferred these loans temporarily to the courts, so that the money was no longer owed to the “brother” and thus did not fall under the purview of the Deuteronomic regulation. Creditors, then, could lend money without fear that the debts would be wiped out by the sabbatical year.⁴⁷ The Mishnah describes Hillel’s promulgation of the *prozbul* as

one of the matters that Hillel the Elder enacted (התקין). When he saw that people were refraining from lending and violating what is written in the Torah, “Beware lest you harbor the base thought [‘the seventh year, the year of release is approaching,’ so that you are hostile to your needy brother and give him nothing” (Deut 15:9)], Hillel enacted (התקין) the *prozbul*. (Mishnah, Šebi’it 10:3, Hayes trans. alt.)

The Deuteronomic law of sabbatical debt forgiveness (Deut 15:1) is thus vitiated, but in the name of another part of the same law, the warning against harboring a “base thought” against the “brother” (Deut 15:9). There is a certain similarity here to the dual rhetoric of the Matthean Jesus, who invalidates portions of the Torah in the name of fulfilling its central intent, which Matthew elsewhere defines as love of neighbor (Matt 22:39-40; cf. 7:12).⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Trans. alt. from LEVINSON, *Legal Revision*, 63 n. 8. The other revocations are of Deut 33:28 by Amos 7:5-6, of Deut 28:65 by Jer 31:1, and of Lev 26:38 by Isa 27:13.

⁴⁶ For an inventory of the תקנות, see PANKEN, *Rhetoric*, 111–246. For an illuminating study of the phenomenon, see Christine HAYES, *What’s Divine About Divine Law? Early Perspectives* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015), 292–306. In a chapter significantly entitled “The Flexibility of the Torah,” Hayes argues that tannaitic and early Palestinian sources often assert a rabbinic prerogative to overturn biblical law, whereas later Palestinian and Babylonian sources tend to dial back these assertions. For a list of the relevant passages, see p. 293, nn. 11-12.

⁴⁷ According to Aaron ROTHKOFF, “Prosbul,” in *EncJud*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 2007), 16.586–87, פרוסבול or פרוזבול is an abbreviation for πρὸς βουλῇ βουλευτῶν, “before the assembly of counselors,” a reference to the court officers to whom the debt was transferred.

⁴⁸ This, of course, is also close to the famous story in b. Šabb. 31a about the pagan who impudently asked Hillel to convert him to Judaism while he stood on one foot; Hillel responded, “What is

Conclusion

Ultimately I agree with Karl-Wilhelm that in the Antitheses “erweist sich Jesus als derjenige, der Autorität hat, den Gotteswillen in eschatologischer Vollmacht zur Sprache zu bringen, der selbst im Namen Gottes, des Gesetzgebers spricht.”⁴⁹ But I disagree with him when he adds, “Nicht die Neuheit der Lehre Jesu im Gegensatz zur Tora oder ihrer nachfolgenden Auslegung kommt in den matthäischen Antithesen zur Sprache, sondern die Neuheit des eschatologisch-weisheitlichen Lehrers Jesus.”⁵⁰ It is not just Jesus who is new, but also his version of the Torah, at least in Matthew’s own eyes;⁵¹ and this is not hidden behind the fiction of “seconding Sinai” but boldly asserted by the very form of the Antitheses.

Although this is a bold step, it does not place the Matthean Jesus outside of a Jewish framework. Like the Deuteronomist, Ezekiel, and some of the rabbis, he takes it upon himself to challenge the very words of scripture because of a claim to superior insight into the divine will. The Matthean Jesus’s תְּקִנוֹת are no more radical than those of some rabbis, though they are based on a different sort of claim: what Karl-Wilhelm calls “der Autorität ... den Gotteswillen in eschatologischer Vollmacht zur Sprache zu bringen” rather than the collective authority of those who assert an unbroken chain of transmission back to Moses himself (cf. m. Abot 1). We know, from the wonderful story in b. Men. 29b, in which Moses is amazed to hear Rabbi Akiba’s interpretations of the Torah, that some rabbis recognized the fictitious nature of the latter claim, and even exulted in it with a touch of self-deprecating humor.⁵² No such humor graces the Matthean Jesus’s claim to Mosaic authority, but a pervasive sense of eschatological urgency (cf. Matt 28:18-20).

hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor; this is the whole Torah, the rest is commentary—go and learn!”

⁴⁹ NIEBUHR, “Antithesen,” 199.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Note the qualification “at least in Matthew’s own eyes.” Karl-Wilhelm’s point that the Matthean Jesus’s positive teachings have parallels in Second Temple Judaism is well-taken. But it is still true that Matthew *frames* them as new vis-à-vis the Torah itself.

⁵² On this story, see MARCUS, “Scripture,” 178–79.

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Whether that is a difference to be applauded or bemoaned is a question best left to Jewish and Christian theologians to debate, hopefully in convivial forums such as those Karl-Wilhelm has helped to create throughout his career.

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„IHR ABER SEID DER LEIB CHRISTI!“ (1 KOR 12,27). IMPULSE FÜR EINE METAPHORISCHE EKKLESIOLOGIE¹

TOBIAS NICKLAS

Abstract. Im Anschluss an Arbeiten von Ruben Zimmermann, die zeigen, welche Bedeutung der Verwendung von Metaphern für die Christologie des Johannesevangeliums zukommt, versucht der Beitrag die paulinische Rede von der Ekklesia als Leib Christi konsequent als Metapher auszulegen. Sobald dies geschieht, ist es unmöglich, eine „ursprüngliche“ Bedeutung der Rede vom Leib Christi zu definieren: Je nachdem, mit welchen Elementen paulinischen Denkens man sie verbindet, ergeben sich neue fruchtbare Bilder. Der Beitrag geht von 1 Kor 12,27 aus und stellt solche Verbindungen her. Gleichzeitig versteht er sich als Dialogangebot zwischen Exegese und Systematischer Theologie.

Keywords: 1 Corinthians, Metaphor, Ecclesiology, Body of Christ.

Die paulinische Rede von der Ekklesia als „Leib Christi“ in 1 Kor 12,27 wurde mehr als einmal zum Zentrum gewichtiger exegetischer Untersuchungen. Die Fragen richteten sich dabei auf Herkunft und Ableitung der Metapher oder ihre Weiterentwicklung in nachpaulinischer Literatur.² Die Kommentarliteratur diskutiert regelmäßig ihr Verhältnis zu anderen paulinischen Aussagen über den Leib Christi (Röm 12,4-6), ihre Funktion im Gesamt des 1. Korintherbriefs wie auch im Abschnitt 1 Kor 12-14 oder – mit noch engerem Fokus – als Teil von 1 Kor 12,12-27 (oder

¹ Ich habe Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr vor mehr als 15 Jahren kennengelernt – und hatte die Möglichkeit seit 2007, als ich ins EELC gewählt wurde, viele Dinge mit ihm gemeinsam zu erleben und zu organisieren. Unvergesslich wird mir eine gemeinsame Fahrt mit Karl-Wilhelms VW-Bus durch die Länder Ex-Jugoslawiens bleiben ... Lieber Karl-Wilhelm, ich bin froh und dankbar, dich als Freund zu haben. Du gehörst zu den liebenswürdigsten Menschen, die mir bisher über den Weg gelaufen sind! Dein Tobias

² Wichtig hierzu z.B. der Band von M. WALTER, *Gemeinde als Leib Christi. Untersuchungen zum Corpus Paulinum und zu den „Apostolischen Vätern“* (NTOA 49; Freiburg, CH: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), der nicht nur einen ausführlichen Überblick über bekannte Verwendungen der Leib-Metaphorik in der Antike bietet (S. 70-104), sondern auch das Nachleben der paulinischen Leibmetaphorik in nachpaulinischer Literatur beleuchtet. Einen bei Walter nicht im Blick stehenden Aspekt beleuchtet R. von BENDEMAN, „Körperkonzeptionen im Corpus Paulinum im Licht der hellenistisch-römischen Medizin“, in: C. BREYTENBACH (Hg.), *Paul's Graeco-Roman Context* (BETL 277; Leuven et al.: Peeters, 2015) 157-191, bes. 170-176.

12,12-31a). Spannendes lässt sich auch zur Funktion des Bildes „Leib Christi“ im Verhältnis zu anderen Bildern von „Kirche“ im Corpus Paulinum sagen.³ Sicherlich sind auch auf diesen Feldern noch viele Nuancen neu zu entdecken, vielleicht auch Schwerpunkte anders zu setzen als bisher. Ein wichtiger Aspekt der Rede von der Ekklesia als „Leib Christi“ scheint mir aber bisher noch nicht ausreichend berücksichtigt. Wenn Paulus die Mitglieder der Ekklesia Gottes in Korinth (1 Kor 1,2) als „Leib Christi“ anspricht, kann er wohl einerseits auf bereits bekannte Formen metaphorischer Verwendung des Begriffs „Leib“ zurückgreifen; andererseits aber prägt er alleine schon durch die Attribuierung als „Leib Christi“ die Metapher neu.⁴ Vor diesem Hintergrund versteht sich die These des folgenden knappen Beitrags: Wenn wir die Rede von der Ekklesia als „Leib Christi“ als (lebendige, bewusst geprägte!) Metapher ernst nehmen, lässt sich ihre Bedeutung nicht einfach semantisch festlegen.⁵ Vielmehr eröffnet sich ein nicht eindeutig abzugrenzendes Feld semantischer Assoziationen, innerhalb dessen die Metapher unterschiedliche Bedeutungsnuancen entwickeln kann. Was der historische Paulus bei der Niederschrift seines Briefs konkret mit dieser Metapher ausdrücken wollte, kann schon deswegen nur noch ansatzweise bestimmt werden: Durch die Verwendung einer Metapher ist im Text selbst schon ein Bedeutungswachstum angelegt, das sich – je nachdem, welche Aspekte des möglichen Assoziationsfelds aktiviert werden – nicht vollständig kontrollieren lässt. So problematisch dies auf den ersten Blick zu klingen scheint, so sehr eröffnet die Möglichkeit, metaphorische Rede bewusst als solche wahrzunehmen und zu deuten, Faszinierendes. Vielleicht kann man Sprechen in Metaphern als theo-logischem Sprechen in besonderem Maße angemessene Form des Redens bezeichnen.⁶

³ Hierzu vgl. z.B. die Überlegungen bei K. ZAMFIR, *Men and Women in the Household of God. A Contextual Approach to Roles and Ministries in the Pastoral Epistles* (NTOA 103; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013) 60-97.

⁴ Dabei verstehe ich das Genitivattribut in der Rede vom „Leib Christi“ nicht nur in dem Sinne von „Leib, der (zu) Christus gehört“, sondern im Sinne von „Christusleib“, was beide Dimensionen (Zugehörigkeit und Identität) umfassen kann. Anders z.B. D.J. WILLIAMS, *Paul's Metaphors. Their Context and Character* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999) 90.

⁵ Dass uns in 1 Kor 12,27 eine Metapher (und damit mehr als ein Vergleich) begegnet, wird in der Sekundärliteratur immer wieder betont, daraus aber exegetisch häufig keine Konsequenzen gezogen. Typisch etwa J. KREMER, *Der Erste Brief an die Korinther* (RNT; Regensburg: Pustet, 1997) 275: „Hier bezeichnet Paulus erstmals (und nur hier!) die Gemeinde ausdrücklich als „Leib Christi“ und zeigt damit, daß die vorherigen Ausführungen nicht nur bildhafte Vergleiche waren.“ Damit aber endet die Interpretation von V. 27a. Eine Ausnahme bildet R. ZIMMERMANN, „Moralische Signifikanz durch Sprachbilder: Ein Beitrag zur ‚metaphorischen Ethik‘ der Paulusbriefe“, in: ders. – U. VOLP – F.W. HORN (Hg.), *Metapher – Narratio – Mimesis – Doxologie: Begründungsformen frühchristlicher und antiker Ethik* (WUNT 356; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016) 9-37, hier 30-36, der sich allerdings auf die ethische Signifikanz der Metapher konzentriert.

⁶ Dass metaphorisches Reden verschiedene wichtige Aspekte neutestamentlicher Texte betrifft, zeigt sich ganz zentral auch in der Bedeutung von Gleichnissen und Bildrede in Jesu Verkündigung der Königsherrschaft Gottes.

Schon diese knappen Vorüberlegungen machen klar, dass es unmöglich ist, allen möglichen Aspekten eines durch die Rede von der Ekklesia als Leib Christi eröffneten Felds von Assoziationen nachzugehen. Ich werde im Folgenden in thesenhafter Form vor allem Gedanken nachgehen, die sich wenigstens in einem ersten Schritt mit Passagen des 1. Korintherbriefs selbst verbinden lassen.⁷ Dabei soll gezeigt werden, welcher dramatischer Unterschied zwischen einem ermahnenen Vergleich im Sinne von „Ihr sollt wie ein Leib sein“ (oder gar wie ein solcher „funktionieren“) und dem Zuspruch „Ihr seid (der)“⁸ Leib Christi“ (1 Kor 12,27a) besteht.⁹ Nicht zu vergessen ist: In 1 Kor 12,27b wird diese Metapher durch eine zweite ergänzt: „und ihr (seid), (jede[r] einzelne) als Teil angesehen, Glieder“ (καὶ μέλη ἐκ μέρους). V. 27a spricht somit die Ekklesia der Korinther als Ganze an, V. 27b jedes einzelne ihrer Mitglieder.

Die Basis der nun folgenden Gedanken verdankt sich Ruben Zimmermanns mit dem Beispiel der johanneischen Rede vom „Lamm Gottes, das die Sünde der Welt trägt“ (Joh 1,29; vgl. 1,36) illustrierten Überlegungen zu Aspekten einer „metaphorischen Christologie“ im Johannesevangelium.¹⁰ Meine grundlegende These ist, dass der Satz „Ihr aber seid (der) Leib Christi“ (1 Kor 12,27a), auf den ich mich im Folgenden besonders konzentrieren werde, in vergleichbarer Weise Ausdruck einer „metaphorischen Ekklesiologie“ sein kann. Dabei ist der aus der Systematischen Theologie entnommene Begriff „Ekklesiologie“ sicherlich in der Gefahr anachronistisch verstanden zu werden: Dies liegt schon daran, dass wir das griechische ἐκκλησία im Munde des Paulus

⁷ Dabei setze ich voraus, dass sich 1 Kor als zusammenhängender, in sich geschlossener Text verstehbar ist.

⁸ Der griechische Text bietet hier keinen Artikel; trotzdem halte ich beide Übersetzungen „Ihr aber seid Leib Christi!“ und „Ihr aber seid der Leib Christi!“ für gerechtfertigt. Vgl. hierzu auch D. ZELLER, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (KEK 5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010) 401.

⁹ Die Formulierung dieses Satzes verdankt sich weniger der Lektüre aktueller Sekundärliteratur als der Erfahrung, wie 1 Kor 12,12-27 häufig in Predigten oder studentischen Abschlussprüfungen ausgelegt wird – viel zu häufig einfach als banales Sinnbild dafür, dass wir alle in der Kirche irgendwie zusammenhelfen sollen. Doch auch die Ergebnisse des an sich guten Beitrags von D.G. HORRELL, „Σῶμα as a Basis for Ethics in Paul“, in: F.W. HORN – U. VOLP – R. ZIMMERMANN (Hg.), *Ethische Normen des frühen Christentums. Gut – Leben – Leib – Tugend* (WUNT 313; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 351-363, hier 362-363 könnten vollkommen ohne das Attribut „Christi“ erbracht werden.

¹⁰ Mein Ansatzpunkt verdankt sich in erster Linie den Überlegungen in R. ZIMMERMANN, „Jesus – the Lamb of God (John 1:29 and 1:36): Metaphorical Christology in the Fourth Gospel“, in: R.A. CULPEPPER – J. FREY (Hg.), *The Opening of John's Narrative (John 1:19-2:22). Historical, Literary, and Theological Readings from the Colloquium Ioanneum 2015 in Ephesus* (WUNT 385; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) 79-96; wichtige grundlegende Gedanken finden sich aber auch in idem, *Christologie der Bilder im Johannesevangelium: Die Christopoetik des vierten Evangeliums unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Joh 10* (WUNT 171; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), hier bes. 105-136. Ansätze zu einer metaphorischen Ekklesiologie – ebenfalls im Zusammenhang mit dem Johannesevangelium – finden sich z.B. bei R.A. CULPEPPER, „Designs for the Church in the Imagery of John 21:1-14“, in: J. FREY – J.G. VAN DER WATT – R. ZIMMERMANN (Hg.), *Imagery in the Gospel of John: Terms, Forms, Themes and Theology of Johannine Figurative Language* (WUNT 200; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 369-402.

nicht als Kirche (oder auch Gemeinde), sondern wenigstens zunächst einmal als „Versammlung“ übersetzen sollten,¹¹ aber auch daran, dass Paulus keine systematische Lehre von „der“ Kirche im Sinne einer weltumspannenden Bewegung mit konkreter Organisation, klar definiertem Selbstverständnis und von Ort zu Ort vergleichbarer Praxis entwickelte. Stattdessen spricht er auch in 1 Kor 12,12-27 zunächst einmal eine konkrete Situation in Korinth an, die sicherlich mit den bereits in 1 Kor 1,10-17 angesprochenen Spaltungen zu tun haben dürfte, konkreter wohl auch mit Auseinandersetzungen um den Wert bestimmter Charismen für die „christliche“ Ekklesia der Korinther. Dass dabei die sogenannte Glossolalie besonders umstritten gewesen sein muss, wird allgemein angenommen.¹² Bereits die Tatsache, dass 1 Kor nicht erst heute als Teil einer Paulusbriefsammlung vorliegt, die Teil des Neuen Testaments ist, bedeutet aber auch, dass in die konkrete Situation der korinthischen Ekklesia hinein formulierte Gedanken des Paulus auch über diese Situation hinaus Gültigkeit beanspruchen und deswegen auch im Dialog zwischen Exegese und Systematischer Theologie auch ins Heute hinein „ekklesiologisch“ fruchtbar gemacht werden dürfen, ja müssen.¹³

Für die folgende Skizze setze ich vor allem an zwei Aspekten dessen an, was Zimmermann im Zusammenhang mit seiner Idee „metaphorischer Christologie“ formuliert und die ich nun für die Interpretation von 1 Kor 12,27a fruchtbar machen will: Wenn wir die Rede „Ihr aber seid (der) Leib Christi!“ als Metapher ernst nehmen,¹⁴ deren Bedeutung nicht vollständig kontrolliert werden kann, müssen wir die Vorstellung aufgeben, eine vom Autor Paulus konkret intendierte, definier- und damit begrenzbare Bedeutung dieses Satzes exegetisch erfassen zu können (oder gar zu müssen). Vielmehr ergeben sich (mindestens) zwei Konsequenzen:¹⁵ (1) Da Metaphern nicht

¹¹ Hierzu auch die Übersetzungsentscheidung bei S. ALKIER – T. PAULSEN, *Die Apokalypse des Johannes. Neu übersetzt* (Frankfurter Neues Testament 1; Leiden – Boston: Brill; Paderborn: Schöningh, 2020) 134. Zu Hintergründen des Begriffs vgl. z.B. Y.-H. PARK, *Paul's Ekklesia as a Civic Assembly: Understanding the People of God in their Politico-Social World* (WUNT II.393; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

¹² Interessante Gedanken zur Glossolalie (beim übersetzt als „Sprachengebete“) bei N. BAUMERT, *Sorgen des Seelsorgers. Übersetzung und Auslegung des ersten Korintherbriefes* (Würzburg: Echter, 2007) 197-198.

¹³ Für mich als Katholiken versteht sich dies auf der Basis des II. Vatikanischen Konzils. Dass der dabei grundlegende Satz von Dei Verbum 24 auch durchaus problematisch ist, habe ich in dem Beitrag „Das Studium des Heiligen Buches ist gleichsam die Seele der Theologie.“ (*Dei Verbum* 24). Eine bibelhermeneutische Skizze, in: *Lebendige Seelsorge* 72 (2021) 104-108 gezeigt.

¹⁴ Es ist hier nicht mein Ziel eine eigene Metaphertheorie zu entfalten. Entscheidende Elemente finden sich in der oben (n. 9) zitierten Literatur sowie in R. ZIMMERMANN, „Metaphertheorie und biblische Bildersprache. Ein methodologischer Versuch“, in: *Theologische Zeitschrift* 56 (2000) 108-133.

¹⁵ Die folgenden Gedanken zu Konsequenzen einer Interpretation von 1 Kor 12,27a als Metapher orientieren sich an ZIMMERMANN, „Jesus – Lamb of God“, 95-96. Zimmermann bietet darüber

auf eine einzige, klar präzisierbare Bedeutung hin eingeengt werden können, erlauben sie verschiedene Deutungen. Gleichzeitig ist die auch nicht uneindeutig festlegbare und begrenzbar Vielfalt von Deutungen einer Metapher aufgrund verschiedener (nicht immer nur) durch den Text evozierter Assoziationsfelder kein Defizit metaphorischen Sprechens. Sie wird jedoch zur Herausforderung an eine Theologie, die sich einerseits dessen bewusst ist, dass menschliche Sprache die Wirklichkeit Gottes nie in ihrer Fülle erfassen oder gar eingrenzen und festhalten kann, die aber andererseits, in Unterscheidung der Geister (vgl. auch 1 Kor 12,3!), kritisch zwischen angemessenem und unangemessenem Reden differenzieren möchte und muss.¹⁶ (2) Die Interpretation der Metapher *als Metapher* verlangt einen im Letzten leserorientierten Zugang. Dies liegt daran, dass – empirisch – die durch verschiedene Leserinnen und Leser evozierten Assoziationsfelder sehr unterschiedlich sein können. Um nun jedoch nicht einfach völliger Beliebigkeit anheim zu fallen, werde ich vorschlagen, Assoziationen in den Vordergrund zu stellen, die durch den Text des 1. Korintherbriefs selbst nahegelegt sind und so als privilegiert verstanden werden können. Mein eigener Zugang versteht sich also als textzentriert *und* leserorientiert.¹⁷

Bevor ich jedoch – thesenartig – einige Gedanken formuliere, ist eine weitere Vorbemerkung wichtig. Die Metapher „Ihr aber seid (der) Leib Christi“ verbindet zwei semantische Felder, einerseits die in zweiter Person Plural angesprochenen Personen – zunächst einmal die Mitglieder der Ekklesia von Korinth, dann aber darüber hinaus die sich durch diesen Satz angesprochen fühlenden Leserinnen und Leser aller Zeiten – und andererseits den „Leib Christi“. Dabei steht die Rede vom „Leib Christi“ für den bildspendenden Bereich, die Angesprochenen wiederum können aufgrund eines semantischen Transfers Selbstbilder von sich entwickeln, in welche Elemente des bildspendenden Bereichs integriert werden.¹⁸ Ein solcher Transfer aber verläuft nicht einfach einlinig: Stattdessen kann auch der zunächst

hinaus weitere Konsequenzen, die für die Stoßrichtung meines Beitrags aber eher weniger wichtig sind.

¹⁶ Zu dem Gedanken, dass die (skeptische) Unterscheidung der Geister einen selbstkritisch reflektierenden Aspekt an die Basis christlichen theologischen Denkens einträgt, vgl. T. NICKLAS, „Skepsis und Christusglaube: Funktionen, Räume und Impulse des Zweifels bei Paulus“, in: ders. – B. EDELMANN-SINGER – J.E. SPITTLER – L. WALT (Hg.), *Sceptic and Believer in Ancient Mediterranean Religions* (WUNT 443; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020) 165-185, bes. 178-181.

¹⁷ Ausführlicher zu einem ähnlichen Zugang vgl. die das gesamte Buch durchziehenden hermeneutischen Überlegungen bei T. HIEKE – T. NICKLAS, „Die Worte der Prophetie dieses Buches.“ *Offenbarung 22,6-21 als Schlussstein der christlichen Bibel Alten und Neuen Testaments gelesen* (BThSt 62; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2003). Einen konkreten Begriff dessen, was ich – etwa in Anlehnung an Umberto Eco oder Wolfgang Iser – unter „Leser“ verstehe, definiere ich hier nicht, weil ich mir mehr und mehr dessen bewusst werde, dass dieser „Leser“ des 1 Kor letztendlich nicht Umberto Ecos Modellleser ist, sondern ich selbst.

¹⁸ Ich orientiere mich hier und im folgenden Abschnitt erneut an dem bei ZIMMERMANN, „Jesus – Lamb of God“, hier 81-82 Beschriebenen, der hier mit Theorien von Ricoeur und Black arbeitet.

bildempfangende Bereich Elemente auf den zunächst spendenden Bereich übertragen. Der im vorliegenden Falle bildspendende Bereich wiederum besteht aus zwei durch eine Genitivkonstruktion aufeinander bezogenen Begriffen. Mit anderen Worten: 1 Kor 12,27a spricht nicht einfach davon, dass die angesprochene Ekklesia ein Leib sei (oder gar nur „wie ein Leib“¹⁹ sei); sie bezeichnet die Ekklesia als Leib *Christi*. Der Gedanke, dass sich die einzelnen Teile der Ekklesia zueinander verhalten sollten wie die Organe eines Leibes, die nur in ihrem Zueinander einen Leib ausmachen, wiederum ergibt sich aus dem Text so klar, dass ich ihn nicht weiter erläutern möchte. Die traditionsgeschichtlichen Ableitungen der Verwendung einer solchen Metapher – eine Gruppe von Menschen *ist* ein Leib – wiederum sind so bekannt, dass ich auf sie im Folgenden nicht weiter eingehen werde.²⁰ Auf der Hand liegt zudem, dass Paulus im Vergleich zu diesen – so sehr er in Kategorien eines Honorand-Shame-Denkens argumentiert²¹ – die gegenseitige, bereits in der Schöpfung Gottes ihren Urgrund findende (vgl. 1 Kor 12,24-25) gegenseitige Sorge zunächst der einzelnen Glieder des Leibes (und dann übertragen, der Mitglieder der Ekklesia) betont. All diese Gedanken setze ich bereits voraus, lege in den folgenden Thesen aber nun besonderen Wert darauf, dass 1 Kor 12,27a nicht einfach nur vom Leib spricht, sondern vom Leib Christi. Dass meine Gedanken keinen Anspruch auf Vollständigkeit erheben, ergibt sich von selbst.²²

1. Nicht nur im Kontext des 1. Korintherbriefes, in diesem aber ganz besonders, legt sich nahe, bei der Rede vom Leib Christi an den Leib des gekreuzigten Christus zu denken.

Bereits der enge Bezug zwischen Aussagen aus 1 Kor 1 und 1 Kor 12 legt diesen Gedanken unmittelbar nahe. So mahnt bereits 1 Kor 1,10 bekanntlich die Adressaten dazu, einmütig bzw. eines Sinnes zu sein und keine Spaltungen unter sich zu dulden; die notwendige Einheit wiederum definiere sich nicht von Paulus,

¹⁹ Bekanntlich sind Metapher und Vergleich eng miteinander verwandte Stilmittel, doch bereits die Verwendung der Vergleichspartikel „wie“ erzeugt einen erkennbaren Unterschied. Paulus verwendet in 1 Kor 12,12-27 beides: er setzt in 12,12 mit einem Vergleich ein, lässt die Passage aber in 12,27 in das Zueinander der beiden beschriebenen Metaphern münden.

²⁰ Hierzu z.B. das bei WALTER, *Gemeinde als Leib Christi*, 70-104 zusammengestellte Material.

²¹ Hierzu weiterführend z.B. R. JEWETT, „Paul, Shame, and Honor“, in: J.P. SAMPLEY (Hg.), *Paul in the Greco-Roman World. A Handbook* (Harrisburg et al.: Trinity, 2003) 551-574 sowie (aktueller) J.R. HARRISON, „Paul and Ancient Civic Ethics: Redefining the Canon of Honour in the Graeco-Roman World“, in: C. BREYTENBACH (Hg.), *Paul's Graeco-Roman Context* (BETL 277; Leuven et al.: Peeters, 2015) 75-118 (beide mit ausführlicher Sekundärliteratur).

²² Die Literatur zu christologisch relevanten Aussagen bei Paulus ist kaum überschaubar. Einen besonders spannenden Zugang wählt K.-W. NIEBUHR, „Christ of Paul's Story. Jesus Christ – Son of David and Son of God“, in: P. DRAGUTINOVIC et al. (Hg.), *Christ of the Sacred Stories* (WUNT II.453; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) 141-154.

Apollos oder Kephas, sondern von Christus her, der ungeteilt sei (1 Kor 1,12-13).²³ Von Christus zu sprechen aber bedeute – gegen alle Weisheit der Welt (oder einfacher: gegen jeden „gesunden Menschenverstand“) – vom Kreuz Christi zu sprechen (1 Kor 1,17-18) bzw. Christus „als Gekreuzigten zu verkünden“ (1 Kor 1,23: ἡμεῖς δὲ κηρύσσομεν Χριστὸν ἐσταυρωμένον). Wie zentral für Paulus die Assoziation von „Christus“ und Kreuzigung ist, neben der offenbar alle anderen zurücktreten, zeigt erneut 1 Kor 2,2, wo Paulus betont, „unter euch nichts zu wissen außer Jesus Christus und diesen als Gekreuzigten“ (εἰ μὴ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ τοῦτον ἐσταυρωμένον).²⁴ Wenn wir den perfektischen Aspekt des Partizips ἐσταυρωμένον in 1 Kor 1,23 und 2,2 ernst nehmen, bezieht sich die Rede von Christus als dem Gekreuzigten zudem nicht einfach auf ein Ereignis der Vergangenheit, das mehr oder minder „vorbei“ ist. Das in der Kreuzigung Geschehene bleibt stattdessen weiterhin von entscheidender Bedeutung für das, was über Christus gesagt werden kann, oder: Das Gekreuzigt-Sein macht für Paulus auch weiterhin einen, sicherlich zentralen Aspekt dessen aus, was über Christus gesagt werden kann bzw. wie über ihn zu denken ist. Auf dieser Basis (vgl. auch 1 Kor 2,8!) entwickelt Paulus im Folgenden eine Theologie der Weisheit Gottes (in ihrem Verhältnis zur Weltweisheit) wie auch eine Idee des Apostolats. Unterschiedlich eng sind damit schließlich auch weitere Bilder der Ekklesia – als Pflanzung (1 Kor 3,6-9), als Bauwerk auf dem Fundament „Jesus Christus“ (1 Kor 3,9-11)²⁵ und, in Variation

²³ Ich verstehe 1 Kor 1,12-13 nicht als Zeugnis dafür, dass es in der christlichen Gemeinde von Korinth verschiedene „Parteien“ gegeben habe. Schon alleine die sich daraus ergebende Idee einer (möglichen) Christuspartei neben einer Paulus-, einer Apollos- oder Kephaspartei erscheint mir undenkbar. Viel eher halte ich es für wahrscheinlich, dass Paulus hier Versuche von Mitgliedern der korinthischen Ekklesia – im Sinne von „Ich gehöre zu der Gruppe, die Paulus gegründet hat“ – wiedergibt, zu erklären, zu welcher Gruppe sie gehörten. An eine Selbstbezeichnung als „Christianer“ oder „Christen“ sozusagen als „Dachbegriff“, unterhalb dessen sich verschiedene Teilgruppen bilden konnten, ist ja noch nicht zu denken.

²⁴ Auch wenn das Kreuz Christi ein für die Theologie des Paulus zentrales Motiv darstellt, darf offen bleiben, ob wir es als einziges Zentrum dieser Theologie verstehen wollen. Vgl. hierzu z.B. die sehr weitreichenden grundlegenden Überlegungen von U. LUZ, „Theologia crucis als Mitte der Theologie im Neuen Testament?“, in: ders., *Theologische Aufsätze* (WUNT 414; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018) 7-28 oder die kontroversen Beiträge von J. ZUMSTEIN, «La croix comme principe de constitution de la théologie paulinienne», und U. SCHNELLE, «Le présent du salut, centre de la pensée paulinienne», beide in: A. DETTWILER – J.-D. KAESTLI – D. MARGUERAT (Hg.), *Paul, une théologie en construction* (MoBi 51; Genf: Labor et Fides, 2004) 297-318 und 318-342. Grundsätzlich zur Kreuzestheologie des Paulus zudem D. SÄNGER, „Der gekreuzigte Christus. Gottes Kraft und Weisheit (1 Kor 1,23f)“, in: ders., *Von der Bestimmtheit des Anfangs: Studien zu Jesus, Paulus und zum frühchristlichen Schriftverständnis* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2007) 71-90 oder (knapp) M. KONRADT, „Kreuzestheologie“, in: F.W. HORN (Hg.), *Paulus. Handbuch* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 314-320 (mit weiterführender Literatur).

²⁵ Zu diesen Bildern vgl. C. GERBER, „Ekklesiologische Metaphern in den paulinischen Briefen“, in: F.W. HORN (Hg.), *Paulus. Handbuch* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 412-415, die zudem das Bild der Gemeinde als „ungesäuerter Teig“ (1 Kor 5,6-8) erwähnt.

dessen, als Tempel Gottes (1 Kor 3,16)²⁶ – verbunden, die schließlich in den grundlegenden Gedanken der Zugehörigkeit der Angesprochenen zu Christus und damit zu Gott (1 Kor 3,23) münden: „Ihr aber gehört (zu) Christus, Christus aber (zu) Gott.“ So markieren 1 Kor 1,17-18 sowie 1 Kor 1,23 und 2,2 ein *privilegiertes* Assoziationsfeld, das sich von nun an mit jeder Rede des Paulus über Christus in Verbindung bringen lässt: Wer mit Paulus Christus denkt, denkt an Christus als den Gekreuzigten.

Welche Folgen aber ergeben sich daraus für die Deutung der Metapher „Ihr aber seid (der) Leib Christi“ in 1 Kor 12,27a? Ich sehe hier mindestens drei Möglichkeiten, theologisch relevante Impulse zu setzen:

(1) Bereits 1 Kor 12,26a im unmittelbaren Kontext kann mit einer solchen Assoziation tiefere Bedeutung gewinnen. Wenn Paulus hier davon spricht, dass alle Glieder des Leibes mitleiden (συνπάσχει πάντα τὰ μέλη), wenn auch nur eines von ihnen leidet,²⁷ dann illustriert dieses Beispiel nicht einfach nur, dass alle Mitglieder einer christlichen Ekklesia zusammenstehen und einander auch in schwierigen Zeiten unterstützen sollen. Dies ist sicherlich nicht falsch, geht aber nicht weit genug. Es will auch nicht einfach sagen, dass zur vollen „Funktionsfähigkeit“²⁸ eines Leibes (und damit implizit einer Gemeinschaft) alle Glieder dieses Leibes intakt sein müssen, sondern stellt das Leid von Mitgliedern der Ekklesia in den Horizont des Kreuzesleidens Christi. Das „Mit-Leiden“ aller ergibt sich aus der gemeinsamen Zugehörigkeit zum Leib des gekreuzigten Christus; in ihm erweist sich diese Zugehörigkeit geradezu. Gleichzeitig ergeben sich Impulse für theologisch relevante Fragen, die mit Hilfe des Texts allein nicht beantwortet werden können: Kommt dem Leiden der Mitglieder der Ekklesia als Gliedern des Leibs des Gekreuzigten selbst soteriologische Relevanz zu? Oder ist es umgekehrt der als Gekreuzigter attribuierte Christus, der weiterhin – gegenwärtig? – mit den Gliedern seines Leibs mitleidet? Ich will nicht missverstanden werden: Es geht mir nicht

²⁶ Damit knüpft Paulus natürlich an alttestamentliche Schechina-Theologie an. Hierzu weiterführend z.B. S. VOLLENWEIDER, „Göttliche Einwohnung. Die Schekina-Motivik in der paulinischen Theologie“, in: ders., *Antike und Urchristentum: Studien zur neutestamentlichen Theologie in ihren Kontexten und Rezeptionen* (WUNT 436; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020) 169-183. Auch das Nebeneinander der Metaphern „Ihr seid (der) Tempel Gottes“ (1 Kor 3,16) und „Ihr aber seid (der) Leib Christi“ (1 Kor 12,27) erzeugt ein Spannungsfeld, aus dem heraus sich zentrale ekklesiologische Fragen entwickeln lassen, die sich weniger über Assoziationen zum bildspendenden Bereich der zweiten Metapher, sondern über den gemeinsamen bildempfangenden Bereich ergeben. Ihnen nachzugehen wäre sicherlich lohnender Stoff für einen weiteren Beitrag.

²⁷ Diese ist, nebenbei gesagt, ein schönes Beispiel dafür, dass der bildempfangende Bereich Auswirkungen auf die Logik dessen, was im bildspendenden Bereich gesagt wird, haben kann – denn natürlich leiden nicht alle Organe eines Körpers, wenn ein anderes Organ leidet.

²⁸ Ich verwende diesen Begriff nur zögerlich, erweckt er doch die Vorstellung, der menschliche Leib sei eine Art von Maschine aus Einzelteilen.

darum eine Antwort auf diese Fragen festzulegen, obwohl ich persönlich zur zweiten tendiere. Ich sage auch nicht, dass der Text diese Frage beantwortet oder dass Paulus diese Frage mit seinem Text stellen wollte. Meine These ist einzig und allein, dass das in 1 Kor erzeugte Beziehungsgeflecht den Impuls zu Fragen wie den eben gestellten liefert, sobald 1 Kor 12,27a als Metapher ernst genommen wird.

(2) Eine zweite Möglichkeit stellt die Verbindung zum in 1 Kor 15,3-5 zitierten traditionellen Glaubensbekenntnis – und zwar zu dessen erstem Satz – her: „Christus starb für unsere Sünden gemäß der Schriften“ (1 Kor 15,3b). Auch wenn diese Passage überraschenderweise das Sterben Jesu *nicht* explizit als Kreuzestod bezeichnet, ist im Kontext des 1 Kor natürlich klar, dass dieser gemeint ist. Das Sterben Christi aber wird bereits in diesem sehr frühen Bekenntnistext nicht einfach als Ereignis der Vergangenheit dargestellt, sondern mit Hilfe der Schriften Israels – hier womöglich Passagen aus Jes 52,13-53,12 – gedeutet.²⁹ Wie konkret die Worte „für unsere Sünden“ verstanden sind, wird kontrovers diskutiert. Dass damit aber ein Assoziationsfeld zwischen dem „gekreuzigten Christus“ und „*unseren* Sünden“ entsteht, ist klar. Die Metapher „Ihr seid der Leib Christi“ steht so im Horizont der Vorstellung, dass der Gekreuzigte ein „für *unsere* Sünden“ Gekreuzigter ist (und bleibt). Damit aber verbindet sich die Vorstellung einer Gemeinschaft derer, die, trotz ihrer Sünden, Leib Christi sind, mit dem Bild des gekreuzigten Christus. Als Impuls für die Systematische Theologie formuliert, stellt sich die Frage: Wie ist das Bild vom Leib des *für unsere Sünden* gekreuzigten Christus und der Zusage „Ihr (*als Sünderinnen und Sünder*)“³⁰ *seid* der Leib Christi“ zusammenzudenken? Noch einmal: Der Gedanke, dass 1 Kor 12,27a einen Ansatzpunkt zu einer metaphorischen Ekklesiologie bietet, bedeutet nicht, dass damit diese Frage uneindeutig systematisch aus seinem Werk zu beantworten wäre. Die Metapher aber setzt den Impuls, diese Frage ins Blickfeld zu rücken.

(3) Das mit dem Hinweis auf die „Pneumatischen“ (1 Kor 12,1; vgl. auch 14,1) – entweder die Dinge des Geistes oder eine Gruppe, die sich womöglich selbst als Pneumatiker bezeichnet³¹ – einsetzende Kapitel 12 setzt sich, kurz gefasst, mit dem Zueinander der Vielzahl von Gnadengaben in der Ekklesia und ihrer fundamentalen Einheit auseinander. Es schließt mit der Aufforderung, die

²⁹ Der Bezug auf Jes 52,13-53,12 ist nicht eindeutig. Vgl. aber knapp ZELLER, *1 Kor*, 463-464. Zur dabei erkennbaren Hermeneutik (und ihren Problemen) vgl. z.B. T. NICKLAS, „Frühchristliche Ansprüche auf die Schriften Israels“, in: ders. – I. KALIMI – G.G. XERAVITS (Hg.), *Scriptural Authority in Early Judaism and Ancient Christianity* (DCLS 16; Berlin – Boston: de Gruyter, 2013) 347-368, hier 350-352.

³⁰ Dabei kann die Frage dahingehend weiter variiert werden, ob die Angesprochenen als ehemals Sündige oder weiterhin Sündigende verstanden werden.

³¹ Eine ausführliche Diskussion der bisherigen Forschungsgeschichte bietet S. YU LI, *Paul's Teaching on the Pneumatika in 1 Corinthians 12-14* (WUNT II.455; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) 105-116, die selbst der maskulinischen Deutung zuneigt.

„größeren Gnadengaben“ (τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μείζονα; 1 Kor 12,31) zu suchen, unter denen wiederum die „Liebe“ (ἀγάπη) im berühmten „Hohen Lied der Liebe“ (1 Kor 12,31b-13,13) besonders gepriesen wird. Ob dabei die Liebe zu Gott oder die Liebe zum Nächsten, innerhalb der Gemeinschaft oder über sie hinaus gemeint ist, bleibt offen: Der Text preist die Haltung der Liebe als Grundtugend schlechthin. Von einer solchen, mit dem Wort ἀγάπη bezeichneten Liebe ist im Corpus Paulinum oft die Rede. Wollen wir das Netz möglicher Assoziationen weiter auswerfen, lässt sich auf den paulinischen Gedanken verweisen, dass die sich in der Liebe Christi zeigende Liebe Gottes der Liebe der Glaubenden vorausgegangen ist bzw. diese weiterhin umfängt. Am deutlichsten kommt dies wohl in Röm 8,31-39 zum Ausdruck, der großen Antwort auf das erste drängende Problem des Römerbriefs: Wie ist es möglich, dass die Völker zum Heil gelangen?³² Im Kern wird hier der Gedanke formuliert, dass die von Gott Auserwählten nicht verurteilt werden können, ja dass sie nichts mehr von der Liebe Christi scheiden kann (Röm 8,35: ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Χριστοῦ). Dieser Christus aber kann direkt zuvor – in 8,34 – mit dem Attribut ὁ ἀποθάνων (Ptz. Aor.), also „der, der gestorben“ ist, bezeichnet werden. Auch wenn hier der Bezug nicht explizit hergestellt wird, so legt sich doch nahe, dass das Sterben Jesu Christi als ein Akt der Liebe verstanden ist, in dem sich letztendlich die Liebe Gottes zeigt (Röm 8,39). Wo wir diesen Gedanken zugrunde legen, verbindet sich mit der Metapher „Ihr aber seid (der) Leib Christi!“ die Assoziation, dass am Leib des gekreuzigten Christus im Letzten die Liebe Gottes erkennbar ist.³³ In diesem Licht öffnen sich die in 1 Kor 12,12-27 verwendeten Bilder vom Zueinander der vielen Glieder des Leibes nicht nur für die Vorstellung eines von Liebe getragenen gegenseitigen solidarischen Handelns der Mitglieder der Ekklesia. Dieses steht dann ganz im Horizont der ihnen zuvor erwiesenen Liebe Gottes in Christus. Der Text zwingt nicht zu dieser Beobachtung, ermöglicht sie aber. Dass das paulinische Hohe Lied der Liebe in engstem Zusammenhang mit dem Bild vom Leib Christi steht, verstärkt dies noch einmal.³⁴ Was es aber ethisch

³² Ich orientiere mich hier an Franz Mußners sehr einprägsamer Formulierung des „Grundgedankens“ des Röm: „Heil für alle“, aus der MÜBNER auch seine Gliederung des Texts entwickelt hat. Weiterführend ders., *Die Kraft der Wurzel. Jesus – Judentum – Kirche*, Freiburg et al. 21989, 35, sowie ders., „Heil für alle. Der Grundgedanke des Römerbriefs“, in: *Kairos* 23 (1981) 207-214.

³³ Denkbar wäre dann auch ein Bezug zu Röm 3,25, wenn man den offen hingestellten Christus im Zeichen des „großen Versöhnungstags“ als Zeichen der Versöhnungsbereitschaft Gottes verstehen möchte. Zu einer solchen Deutung der Passage vgl. z.B. M. TIWALD, „Christ as Hilasterion (Rom 3:25). Pauline Thought on the Day of Atonement in the Mirror of Early Jewish Thought“, in: T. HIEKE – T. NICKLAS (Hg.), *The Day of Atonement: Its Interpretations in Early Jewish and Christian Traditions* (TBN 15; Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2012) 189-210.

³⁴ So gedacht, kann 1 Kor 12,31b-13,13 als mehr denn nur ein bloßer Exkurs oder Einschub (so etwa ZELLER, *1 Kor.* 384, innerhalb der Argumentation gelesen werden. Zur Bedeutung der Tugend der Liebe für die paulinische Ethik vgl. v.a. T. SÖDING, *Das Liebesgebot bei Paulus: Die Mahnung zur Agape im Rahmen paulinischer Ethik* (NTA 26; Münster: Aschendorff, 1995) sowie

wie ekklesiologisch bedeutet, dass die von Paulus verwendete Metapher das Handeln der Mitglieder der Ekklesia ganz in den Horizont der vorausgehenden Liebe Gottes in Christus stellt, ist damit erneut noch nicht beantwortet – die Frage aber ist angestoßen.

2. Paulinisches Denken, auch im Kontext des 1. Korintherbriefes, legt nahe, bei der Rede vom „Leib Christi“ auch an den Leib des von den Toten auferweckten Christus zu denken.

Der 1. Korintherbrief aber spricht nicht einfach nur vom gekreuzigten Christus, sondern verbindet in seinem Christusbild Kreuz und Auferweckung.³⁵ Erneut ist es für meine Überlegungen nicht notwendig zu entscheiden, wie sich Paulus die Leiblichkeit des auferweckten Christus (bzw. der von den Toten Auferweckten allgemein) vorstellt. Wichtig ist in erster Linie, dass er sein „Evangelium“ auf dem in 1 Kor 15,3b-5 zitierten kurzen Glaubensbekenntnis aufbauen kann, in dem Tod Christi und seine Auferweckung „am dritten Tage gemäß der Schriften“ in engster Verbindung zueinander stehen. Die hier verwendete Verbform ἐγήγερται (1 Kor 15,4) steht im Perfekt – und drückt damit aus, dass das vergangene Ereignis der Auferweckung resultativ in die Gegenwart weist: Christus ist damit, auch wenn seine „österlichen“ Erscheinungen nach 1 Kor 15,8 mit Paulus ihr Ende gefunden haben, bleibend der Auferweckte. Auch daraus ergeben sich mehrere Möglichkeiten, Assoziationen herzustellen: (1) So rückt damit nicht nur die Rede vom Mitleiden aller Glieder des Leibes (1 Kor 12,26a) in den Horizont des Bilds vom gekreuzigten Christus, es stellt sich auch die Frage, ob auch die in 12,26b ausgedrückte gemeinsame Freude schon eschatologische Freude ist oder zumindest auf diese verweist. Ist damit jede gemeinsame Freude der Glieder des Leibes *als* Glieder des Leibes – auch wenn sie klein und unscheinbar erscheint – bereits qualitativ anders als bisher zu verstehen? (2) Ein zweiter Gedanke ist vielleicht noch gewichtiger: Wenn nach paulinischer Logik³⁶ Auferweckung Christi und Auferstehung von Verstorbenen aufs Engste zusammengedacht werden müssen (vgl. 1 Kor 15,12-16)³⁷ und nun –

knapp M. WOLTER, „Die Liebe“, in: F.W. HORN (Hg.), *Paulus. Handbuch* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 449-453.

³⁵ Ein spannende Linie, der ich hier nicht nachgehen werde, könnte auch über die Assoziation „Leib des erhöhten Christus“ gehen. Wie ist das Zueinander von Erhöhung Christi und der Identität der Ekklesia als Leib Christi zu denken.

³⁶ Eine Analyse der Logik dieser Passage bietet M. MAYORDOMO, *Argumentiert Paulus logisch? Eine Analyse vor dem Hintergrund antiker Logik* (WUNT 188; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005) 95-123, der feststellt, dass Paulus hier im Sinne antiker Logik „logisch gültig argumentiert“ (S. 123).

³⁷ Dass es frühchristliche Theologien gibt, die diesen Zusammenhang nicht oder zumindest nicht explizit sehen, habe ich in dem Beitrag T. NICKLAS, „Auferstehung zu Tod und Strafe. Unpaulinische Auferstehungsvorstellungen im frühen Christentum“, in: ders. – J. VERHEYDEN – A. MERKT (Hg.), *If Christ has not been raised ... 'Studies on the Reception of the Resurrection Stories and*

nach ihm, dem Ersten – alle folgen, „die (zu) ihm gehören“ oder präziser „die Christi sind“ (1 Kor 15,23: οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ; vgl. die Parallele zu dem oben zitierten 1 Kor 3,23), dann öffnet dies den Blick für eine geheimnisvolle diachrone Dimension der Metapher „Ihr aber seid (der) Leib Christi!“ Auch wenn Paulus die Auferstehung der Toten, die „zu ihnen gehören,“ erst für die Parusie erwartet (vgl. 1 Kor 15,23: ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ), so gehören Christus eben nicht nur die Lebenden an, sondern auch die in Christus Verstorbenen. Damit aber lässt sich denken, dass auch sie, die einst als Lebende „Leib Christi“ waren, dies auch weiterhin sind. Erneut ist dies ein Gedanke, der sich ergibt, wenn 1 Kor 12,27a konsequent *als Metapher* gedacht wird, mithilfe derer Assoziationsfelder geschaffen werden. Ob Paulus selbst so weit gedacht haben mag, kann wieder ganz offen bleiben. Die Frage, wie konkret zu denken ist, dass die Verstorbenen auch vor ihrer endzeitlichen Auferstehung zu Christus gehören, ist damit noch nicht beantwortet, sie steht aber – als Impuls – im Raum.³⁸ Wenn wir diesen Impuls aber ernst nehmen, so entwickelt sich aber auch das Bild der Ekklesia in dramatischer Weise: Diese ist nicht einfach nur „Versammlung“ einer mehr oder minder großen Gruppe von Personen: diejenigen, die sich zu einem bestimmten Zeit und an einem bestimmten Ort versammeln, „präsentieren“ damit den nicht auf Zeiten und Räume festzulegenden Leib Christi vor dem Horizont seiner vollständigen Sammlung am Ziel der Zeiten.

3. Der Gehalt der Metapher „Ihr aber seid (der) Leib Christi!“ wird präsentiert in der Feier der Eucharistie.

Immer wieder wurde diskutiert, ob das bei der Feier der Eucharistie verwendete Bild des Leibes Christi Paulus dazu bewogen habe, die Metapher von der Ekklesia als Leib Christi zu entwickeln.³⁹ Ich schließe keineswegs aus, dass dies der Fall gewesen sein mag. Doch ist es erneut nicht dieser Punkt, der mich interessiert. Die Tatsache, dass 1 Kor 10,16-17 davon spricht, dass „das Brot, das wir teilen,“ „Gemeinschaft mit dem Leib Christi ist“ (1 Kor 10,16) und dass „wir vielen ein Leib sind“, da wir „alle an dem einen Brot teilhaben“ (1 Kor 10,17), eröffnet einen

the Belief in the Resurrection in the Early Church (NTOA 115; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016) 105-122 gezeigt.

³⁸ Dass solche Fragen Christinnen und Christen über Jahrhunderte bewegt haben und sich dabei die Antworten in unterschiedlichen historischen Kontexten sehr unterschiedlich formulieren ließen, zeigt die faszinierende Monographie von P. BROWN, *The Ransom of the Soul. Afterlife and Wealth in Early Western Christianity* (Cambridge, Mass. – London: Harvard University Press, 2015).

³⁹ So z.B. GERBER, „Ekklesiologische Metaphern“, 414: „Die Rede vom ‚Leib Christi‘ ... stammt wohl aus dem Abendmahlskontext (1 Kor 10,16f.). Das Organismusbild als solches ist aber aus der politischen Sprache der griechisch-römischen Literatur vertraut“ oder die ausführlicher Diskussion bei J.D.G. DUNN, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (London – New York: T&T Clark, 1998) 549-552.

solch starken innertextuellen Bezug innerhalb des 1 Kor, dass wir auch hier von einem privilegierten Assoziationsfeld sprechen können. An das Zueinander von Ekklesia (bzw. Mitgliedern der Ekklesia) und Leib Christi lässt sich eine weitere, im Kern metaphorische Aussage anknüpfen: „Dies“ – d.h. das Brot in der Hand des „Herrn Jesus“ (1 Kor 11,23) – „ist mein Leib für euch.“ Das Brechen des Brotes zur Erinnerung (1 Kor 11,24) ist, sobald das Brot als „mein Leib für euch“ gedacht ist, in der Interpretation, wie sie in 1 Kor 10,16-17 geboten wird, Versinnbildlichung des Gedankens, dass die Vielheit derer, die an der Ekklesia teilhaben, an dem einen Brot – und damit dem einen Leib Christi – teilhaben. Präziser gesagt: Es wird hier nicht nur Gemeinschaft mit dem Leib Christi symbolisiert oder bildlich illustriert: Mit 1 Kor 10,16 ist das Brot, das wir teilen, „Gemeinschaft mit dem Leib Christi“. So entsteht geradezu ein Netzwerk metaphorischer Aussagen, deren Zueinander kein auf den ersten Blick erkennbar kohärentes Bild zu konstruieren erlaubt, die aber gerade *deswegen* Impulse zu setzen vermögen, wie sie nur aufgrund metaphorischer Sprache möglich sind:

1 Kor 10,16 Ist das Brot, das wir teilen, nicht Gemeinschaft mit dem Leib Christi?
τὸν ἄρτον ὃν κλῶμεν, οὐχὶ κοινωνία τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐστίν;

1 Kor 10,17 Ein Leib *sind* wir vielen.
ἐν σῶμα οἱ πολλοὶ ἐσμεν.

1 Kor 11,24 Dies ist mein Leib für euch.
τοῦτό μου ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν.

1 Kor 12,27 Ihr aber *seid* (der) Leib Christi und, als Teil angesehen, Glieder.
ὁμεῖς δὲ ἐστε σῶμα Χριστοῦ καὶ μέλη ἐκ μέρους.

Rein wörtlich genommen wäre keine einzige dieser Aussagen sinnvoll, aber auch ihr Zueinander ließe sich kaum logisch erklären. Gerade aber die Tatsache, dass sich aus den verschiedenen nebeneinander im gleichen Text verwendeten Metaphern, die alle um das Bild vom Leib Christi kreisen, kein einheitliches abgeschlossenes System bilden lässt,⁴⁰ eröffnet den Raum, die verschiedenen Aussagen auf unterschiedliche Weise miteinander ins Spiel zu bringen; sie kreierte Impulse, die sich in Fragen umsetzen lassen. Der engste und am wenigsten problematisch erscheinende Zusammenhang besteht sicherlich zwischen 1 Kor 10,17 und 12,27. Doch wie ist es denkbar, dass Brot Leib Christi ist und – wenn wir es geteilt haben – Gemeinschaft mit dem Leib Christi? 1 Kor 10,16 sagt nicht nur, dass das Teilen des Brotes (oder sein Verzehr) Gemeinschaft mit Christus (oder seinem Leib)

⁴⁰ Diese Beobachtung findet sich im Grunde schon bei DUNN, *Theology*, 548-549, der schreibt: „To be noted is the fact that Paul does not speak uniformly or stereotypically of ‚the body of Christ‘. His usage is more varied ... Evidently the imagery was still fresh and malleable and not yet fixed or formalized.“

erzeugt. Wenn das Brot Gemeinschaft „ist“, dann präsentiert das gemeinsame Brechen des Brotes diese Gemeinschaft, macht sie also räumlich wie zeitlich präsent. Wie aber hängt das Brechen des Brotes der Gemeinde *jetzt* mit der Identifikation der Metapher „Dies ist mein Leib“, gesprochen beim letzten Abendmahl – in der Vergangenheit – zusammen? Was bedeutet es als Gemeinschaft, die „Leib Christi ist“, dieses Abendmahl „zur Erinnerung“ am Christus (1 Kor 11,24) zu feiern und dabei Brot zu brechen, das Gemeinschaft mit Christus ist?⁴¹

Fazit:

Um nicht missverstanden zu werden, möchte ich meinen Grundgedanken noch einmal wiederholen: Mir ging und geht es nicht darum zu zeigen, was die Metapher „Ihr aber seid (der) Leib Christi!“ bedeutet. Ich will auch keine Überlegungen darüber anstellen, vor welchem Hintergrund und mit welchem Ziel Paulus diese Metapher auf die konkrete Situation in Korinth hin entwickelte. Mir geht es darum, ernst zu nehmen, dass Paulus in seinem Zuspruch an die Mitglieder der Ekklesia von Korinth in 1 Kor 12,27 metaphorische Sprache einsetzt, um zu beschreiben, was die Mitglieder dieser Gemeinde „sind“.⁴² Auf der Basis des Gedankens, dass eine „Übersetzung“ metaphorischer Sprache in eine „Sachebene“ ihr genauso wenig gerecht wird wie die Verkürzung auf ein einzelnes, klar erkenn- und umschreibbares *tertium comparationis*,⁴³ habe ich stattdessen versucht, an einigen Beispielen zu zeigen, welche Assoziationsfelder sich ergeben können, wenn wir die paulinische Aussage als Metapher ernst nehmen. Wie sehr Paulus selbst offenbar in der Lage war, mit solchen Assoziationsfeldern zu spielen und sie ethisch wie theologisch fruchtbar zu machen, zeigen Passagen wie 1 Kor 6,15, wo der Apostel wohl eine Variation der Metapher „Ihr aber seid (der) Leib Christi!“ für seine

⁴¹ Dies sind nicht die einzigen Assoziationsfelder, die sich auf Basis der Metapher „Ihr aber seid (der) Leib Christi!“ ergeben. Paulus selbst stellt in 1 Kor 12,13 explizit einen Bezug zu Aspekten seiner Tauftheologie her, die natürlich am besten Sinn macht, wenn wir den Leib, von dem 1 Kor 12,13 spricht als den Leib des gekreuzigten und als solchen auferweckten Christus verstehen. Dies jedoch auszuführen würde bedeuten, paulinische Tauftheologie – am besten an Röm 6,1-14 – zu entfalten, ohne dass sich damit ein unmittelbarer ekklesiologischer Impuls ergeben würde, der nicht auch direkt aus Röm 6 abzulesen wäre.

⁴² Mit Recht schreibt H. KLEIN, *Entwicklungslinien im Corpus Paulinum und weitere Studien zu Paulustexten* (FRLANT 265; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016) 187: „In 1 Kor 12,27 nennt er [Paulus; TN] die Gemeinde Leib Christi. ... Aber er führt dessen Gedanken nicht weiter aus, sondern spricht schon im folgenden Vers von der ἐκκλησία, in der es verschiedene Charismen gibt. Das zeigt, dass der Apostel den Gedanken des ‚Leibes‘ nicht zur Bezeichnung der Kirche ausbaut, sondern nur als Grenzaussage benützt, um die Zusammengehörigkeit der Gemeindeglieder auszudrücken.“ – Wie sehr die Metapher aber geradezu zu einem solchen „Ausbauen“ drängt, zeigen bereits ihre Rezeptionen in postpaulinischen Schriften.

⁴³ So auch ZIMMERMANN, „Jesus – the Lamb of God“, 81.

Argumentation zu Fragen der Sexualmoral heranzieht,⁴⁴ oder 1 Kor 11,3, wo er ein Element des Bildes vom Leib aufzunehmen scheint, um über das Verhältnis von Mann und Frau zu sprechen.⁴⁵ Dabei bleibt klar: Die Tatsache, dass sich Metaphern im Letzten nicht kontrollieren, nicht auf eine einzige, fest umreißbare Bedeutung festlegen lassen und es letztlich Rezipientinnen und Rezipienten sind, die in Auseinandersetzung mit Metaphern bzw. auf ihrer Basis Sinnstrukturen konstruieren, bedeutet auch eine Herausforderung für eine sich als wissenschaftlich verstehende Exegese. Anhand struktureller Bezüge innerhalb des Texts von 1 Kor (und dann darüber hinaus ins *Corpus Paulinum*) habe ich versucht, einige privilegierte Assoziationen herzustellen, die für die Auslegung von 1 Kor 12,27 relevant gemacht werden können. Dass über diese hinaus deutlich mehr gesagt werden könnte, liegt nicht alleine an der Form des Aufsatzes, der als Skizze auf ein breiteres Programm verweisen möchte, sondern an der Natur metaphorischen Sprechens, die Impulse für Fragen setzt, aber gleichzeitig nicht zu uneindeutig festlegbaren Antworten zwingt. Damit geht ein Risiko einher, denn nicht jedes Spiel mit jeder Metapher ist in gleichem Maße angemessen: Die aufgrund metaphorischen Redens aufgeworfenen Fragen sind letztendlich nicht mit neuen Metaphern allein, sondern mit präzisen logischen Argumenten zu diskutieren. So gesehen, eröffnet die exegetisch-theologische Arbeit mit metaphorischem Sprechen nicht einfach den Raum für kritikloses Assoziieren. An die Stelle der üblicherweise mit historisch-kritischen Ansätzen verbundenen Frage nach der ursprünglichen Bedeutung eines Texts in einem konkreten Kontext tritt hier aber die kritische theologische Auseinandersetzung mit möglichen Antworten auf die durch metaphorisches Sprechen evozierten Fragen.⁴⁶ Dass diese bereits an Aussagen im Neuen Testament ansetzen dürfen, zeigt sich m.E. schon an der (inkonsequenten) paulinischen Weiterentwicklung des Bilds vom Leib Christi für das Verhältnis von Mann und Frau in 1 Kor 11,3, das sich mehr an gesellschaftlichen Konventionen orientiert als an den Möglichkeiten, die sich bei konsequentem Weiterdenken der Impulse aus 1 Kor 12,27 ergeben könnten. Doch nicht nur die konkreten Impulse, die sich aus der Exegese von Metaphern ergeben, bieten Ansätze für über die reine Exegese

⁴⁴ Ausführlicher zur ethischen Argumentation in 1 Kor 6,12-20 vgl. F. BLISCHKE, *Die Begründung und die Durchsetzung der Ethik bei Paulus* (Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 25; Leipzig: EVA, 2007) 143-159, der jedoch den Bezug zu 1 Kor 12 nur ganz knapp anspricht (S. 151), sowie J. KÖRNER, *Sexualität und Geschlecht bei Paulus: Die Spannung zwischen ‚Inklusivität‘ und ‚Exklusivität‘ des paulinischen Ethos am Beispiel der Sexual- und Geschlechterrollenethik* (WUNT II.512; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020) 140-163.

⁴⁵ Weiterführend z.B. KÖRNER, *Sexualität*, 247-273; vgl. aber auch WALTER, *Gemeinde als Leib Christi*, 114-120.

⁴⁶ Um nicht missverstanden zu werden: Mit dieser Aussage lehne ich historisch-kritisches Arbeiten (oder besser: kritische historische Auseinandersetzungen) mit dem Text des Neuen Testaments natürlich nicht ab. Die Texte selbst wie auch eine an den Anforderungen menschlichen Lebens orientierte Theologie fordern, über rein historisch geprägte Perspektiven immer wieder hinauszugehen.

hinausreichende, relevante Fragen. Es ist der in der Exegese erbrachte Verweis auf den metaphorischen Charakter manch theologischen Redens – sei es über Christus, Gott oder aber auch die Kirche –, der zur Anfrage für jede Theologie wird, die meint, von Festlegungen und Definitionen leben zu müssen, ohne zu bedenken, dass es in der Rede von Gott immer um ein unendlich unerreichbares „Mehr“ gehen muss, welches Sprache alleine deswegen wenigstens ansatzweise ausdrücken kann, weil sie – etwa in Metaphern – sich selbst zu überschreiten in der Lage ist.

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RESURRECTION ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS? EXPLORING PAUL'S PURVIEW ON HIS DAMASCUS EXPERIENCE

KARL OLAV SANDNES

Abstract. Scholars agree that Paul's Damascus experience was life-changing, but they disagree when it comes to how that is to be defined. This article delves into the resurrection-aspects present in how Paul describes this event. Romans 4,17 about God "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" is given a bearing on Paul's experience. The grace he found in this event is resurrection at work.

Keywords: Grace, transformation, resurrection, God, Abraham, paradigmatic.

Karl Wilhelm Niebuhr has contributed significantly to Pauline scholarship, not least through his *Heidenapostel aus Israel: Die Jüdische Identität des Paulus nach ihrer Darstellung in seinen Briefen* (WUNT 62; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992). In this study, he emphasizes also how Paul's biography impacted on his theology. It is, therefore, a pleasure to pay homage to him with a Pauline paper. Paul's Damascus-event was "life-changing,"¹ albeit what that entails, is indeed negotiable. This incident in Paul's life often works as a pointer to how his theology is viewed more generally in Pauline scholarship. The Damascus event is often presented primarily as a commission or mandate given in a call,² or that Paul came to realize that the "time" for the eschatological ingathering of Gentiles had arrived, like the prophets of old spoke about the pilgrimage of the nations to Jerusalem.³ No doubt, this may account for the life-changing effect of this event. Nevertheless, the way Paul himself and his way of thinking were altered and transformed, is, I think, not sufficiently accounted for.⁴ The most obvious change is put in the mouths of the "Judean churches." They noticed a change from previous

¹ Pamela EISENBAUM, *Paul was not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009, 142.

² See the influential contributions of Krister STENDAHL, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976.

³ Paula FREDRIKSEN, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle*. New Haven. Yale University Press 2017, 73–77 and EISENBAUM, 132–49.

⁴ See Karl Olav SANDNES, "Prophet-Like Apostle: A Note on the 'Radical New Perspective' in Pauline Studies," *Bib* 96 (2015): 550–64 and Karl Olav SANDNES, *Paul Perceived: An Interactionist Perspective on Paul and the Law*. WUNT 412. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018, 37–47.

persecutions to Paul presently being a proclaimer of what he used to fight (Gal 1:22–23). This points to a change which goes beyond a commission and being an eschatological herald.⁵ I will not delve into the debate on the Damascus event on a more general basis. My focus will be on the resurrection-aspects and how they might have a bearing on Paul's way of addressing his life-changing experience. This is a neglected aspect regarding this topic. The view-point that will be substantiated here is that Rom 4:17 about God "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist," is applicable to how Paul came to view his Damascus experience.

In three passages on which scholars generally agree that they refer to this incident, resurrection motifs are at play:⁶ 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8–10 and Phil 3:6–11. Scholars familiar with these texts will recognize this, regardless of what they make out of that observation. These passages have in common that Damascus and resurrection talks are intertwined. In spite of the scholarly efforts gone into understanding the Damascus-incident, this fact has not been given due attention. To explore this relationship is what I now embark upon. The incident as such, or what really happened, is inaccessible. What I am interested in is Paul's retrospective purview on this past incident. The term "purview" is significant here, as it refers to the full scope or compass that can be anticipated of a statement. It refers to the range of things that comes with a statement. The idea is that there is a range of meaning which may not necessarily be sufficiently defined by the actual wording, but nonetheless implicit. This may be illustrated in the following dictum found in many of the dictionaries consulted: "such a case might be within the purview of the legislation." A synonymous noun is "horizon," and a possible German translation could be "Bereich." Hence, this term is helpful as it conveys that texts often come with more than their mere wording.

The Damascus Event: A Christophany of Transformative Power (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8–10)

Paul's rhetorical question "Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" (οὐχὶ Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν ἑώρακα) in 1 Cor 9:1 is embedded in a context about his apostleship. The question substantiates Paul's apostleship, manifesting that the Damascus incident is at

⁵ I am, of course, aware that prophetic vocations, as e.g. in the case of Jeremiah, penetrated deeply into their personal fate and life.

⁶ We may speak of a maximalist and a minimalist view regarding Pauline texts which refer to Damascus. A minimalist attitude refers to those mentioned above, in addition to Gal 1:15–16a. Surely, references to this event goes beyond the number given by the minimalists, although it may be hard to prove in each case. A maximalist attitude may be illustrated by Christian DIETZFELBINGER, *Die Berufung des Paulus als Ursprung seiner Theologie*. WMANT 58. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1985 and especially Seyoon KIM, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*, WUNT2.4. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981. An American edition is published in 1982, and a reprint also in 2007 (Wipf and Stock). Kim mentions (pp.55–56) the importance of resurrection language, but does not develop that further. Romans 4:17 does not figure in his index of references.

play here.⁷ The question works like his “you have heard” in Gal 1:13, referring to his biography which he assumes his converts to be familiar with. He reminds them of this now; conveying a piece of “old information.” The rhetorical question in 1 Cor 9:1 echoes John 20:18, 20 and 25, almost verbatim. Mary of Magdala and the disciples claim to “have seen the Lord,” a testimony encapsulating the Easter story. Paul is familiar with traditions which John 20 later gives witness to. The narrative Easter testimonies of the New Testament consist of what may be labelled “discoveries” and “justifications.” Discoveries are immediate and overwhelming and come without explanations, while justifications are attempts at coming to terms theologically with overwhelming observations.⁸ This distinction paves the way for the suggestion that ἑώρακα in 9:1 is more about discovery than ὤφθη (“he appeared”) in 1 Cor 15:8 which conveys more justification (see below). This implies that even a later text such as John 20 have preserved elements on the level of discovery, and that “we have seen...” is among them. In 1 Cor 9:1 the reference to the Damascus experience portray Paul as unique and foundational vis-à-vis his Corinthians converts.

Paul's treatise on resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 starts with presenting the foundations on which Easter faith is grounded,⁹ and mentions the many times the risen Jesus appeared: ὤφθη. Hans-Joachim Eckstein says with regard to this: “Die Besonderheit der Erscheinungsformel liegt in ihrer spezifischen traditionsgeschichtlichen Prägung. So dient ὤφθηναί τιμι in der LXX als *terminus technicus* zur Beschreibung von *Theophanien*...”¹⁰ This is language of theophany, found in the Septuagint, equivalent to God making Godself seen or revealing Godself. By carving the appearances into this tradition, justification or meaning-making takes place. A “room” or context for understanding the appearances is identified in the theology of epiphanies. Hence, I consider this a more sophisticated language than “we have seen.” Like in 1 Cor 9, apostleship and Christophany represent also here a tandem. Paul considers his Damascus event to justify enlisting himself among those to whom the risen Lord appeared.

Paul intends a rhetorical contrast between v. 9 and v. 10. While Paul according to v. 9 is not ἰκανός, not worthy, v. 10 emphasizes how God's grace (χάρις) changed this. There is no credit with Paul here. Three times χάρις is mentioned in v. 10, and in two of the

⁷ See e.g. Douglas A. CAMPBELL, *Pauline Dogmatics: The Triumph of God's Love*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020, 382–84.

⁸ See Karl Olav SANDNES and Jan-Olav HENRIKSEN, *Resurrection: Texts and Interpretation, Experience and Theology*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2020, 16–27, 120–24, 155–57.

⁹ See SANDNES and HENRIKSEN, *Resurrection*, 89–119. We argue that the empty tomb, albeit not mentioned, is implicit in Paul's Easter testimony.

¹⁰ Hans-Joachim ECKSTEIN, „Die Wirklichkeit der Auferstehung Jesu: Lukas 24,34 als Beispiel früher formelhafter Zeugnisse,“ in *Die Wirklichkeit der Auferstehung* (ed. Michael WELKER; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener 2010), 1–30 (at 14–16).

instances it is the grace of *God*, thereby highlighting a *theocentric* perspective. The noun χάρις encapsulates the transformative power of God: χάριτι δὲ θεοῦ εἰμι ὃ εἰμι (V.10). Paul's use of χάρις here is not quite uniform; the last case is more in line with e.g. 1 Cor 3:10 where it is about God's accompanying grace in his ministry, made visible in the σὺν ἐμοί attached to grace in 1 Cor 15:10. The two first appearances are more directly about the foundation of Paul's apostleship; that the persecutor was turned into an apostle. We will notice that the logical structure of vv. 9–10 is almost identical with how Gal 1:13–14 works vis-à-vis vv.15–16a and where χάρις forms the bridge between persecution and commission. Both passages mention Paul's Christophany against the backdrop of Paul's persecutions. What does not exist is brought into being by God. This is the subtext of Paul speaking about his Damascus event. I think this is confused when Seyoon Kim calls apostleship and grace a hendiadys in Paul's letters.¹¹ There are certainly passages where the two merge, but 1 Cor 15:9–10 demonstrates that the primary meaning of χάρις is to bring into being something which was not there beforehand. It then makes little sense to see the two as hendiadys here. Anthony C. Thiselton has formulated this aptly: "The emphasis lies in the *undeserved grace of God* (explicated further in v. 10), who chooses to give life and new creation to those reckoned dead, both a miscarried, aborted foetus whose stance had been *hostile* to Christ and the new people of God."¹² Thiselton here nicely formulates that grace in this context is about giving life to the dead. This insight needs further elaboration.

In Paul's metaphor of being a miscarriage (ἔκτρωμα) in 1 Cor 15:8 reverberates the motif of death. Matthew W. Mitchell argues that the lexical meaning of the term ἔκτρωμα is of little help for identifying how it works in this particular context.¹³ Mitchell argues that ἔσχατον πάντων ("last of all;" v. 8) provides the key to unlock Paul's language here. The key is the comparison with the other apostles. It "refers simply to his place among the apostles, that he portrays himself as something that is cast aside or rejected in the manner of an aborted fetus, most likely with respect to his claims to equal authority with the other apostles."¹⁴ I find Mitchell's argument that ἔκτρωμα has nothing to do with Paul's former persecution not convincing. Mitchell says: "Simply put, when Paul says that 'I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God (15.9), he is not referring to 'God's Grace'."¹⁵ Hence, focusing on "grace" is to Mitchell misleading here. I

¹¹ KIM, *Origin*, 25–26, 288–96.

¹² Anthony C. THISELTON, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2000, 1208. I have reservations about the phrase "the new people of God" though.

¹³ Matthew W. MITCHELL, "Reexamining the 'Aborted Apostle': An Exploration of Paul's Self-Description in 1 Corinthians 15.8," *JSNT* 25 (2003): 469–85.

¹⁴ MITCHELL, "Reexamining," 484.

¹⁵ MITCHELL, "Reexamining," 482.

find that γάρ in v. 9 serves as a continuation of v. 8, elaborating on in what way Paul differed from the other apostles. It is worth noticing that the superlative ἐλάχιστος somehow corresponds to ἔσχατον in v. 8. This takes us to Paul's persecutions, and also to the emphasis on grace in v. 10, a verse ignored in Mitchell's interpretation. The lexical meaning of ἔκτρωμα should not be easily dismissed, and I agree with Mitchell that "wretchedness" hardly catches what is implied here. All references in the Septuagint (Num 12:12; Job 3:16 and Eccl 6:3–5) associate the noun with death.¹⁶ Num 12:12 equals death and miscarriage: μὴ γένηται ὥσει ἴσον θανάτῳ ὥσει ἔκτρωμα ἐκπορευόμενον ἐκ μήτρας μητρός ("Do not let her be like unto death, like a miscarriage out of a mother's womb;" NETS). In the two last-mentioned passages, it is part of a rhetorical comparison. Job laments that he was not like an ἔκτρωμα or like "infants that did not see the light" (Job 3:16). According to Eccl 6:3–5, a miscarriage is better than having no burial. The rhetorical effect of the comparison is that life is worse than death. This background reverberates in "grace" here. In commenting on 1 Cor 15:8–10, Anthony Thiselton rightly, in my view, says that "grace gives life to the dead," and that the noun ἔκτρωμα fits into that line of thought, "reflecting the theme of resurrection as God's sovereign gift of life to the dead ... throughout this chapter."¹⁷

Advocates of "Paul within Jerusalem" take Paul's Damascus experience to be about time; the arrival of the eschatological time. According to Paula Fredriksen, this is motivated by Christ's resurrection as the "first-fruit" (1 Cor 15:20).¹⁸ This inspires Fredriksen's concept of "eschatological Gentiles" coming to Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel. But what about Paul himself? Fredriksen is right in pointing out that the resurrection of Jesus triggered Paul's view of time, but is he himself touched by this? By including himself in his treatise on resurrection, Paul conveys that his own meeting with the risen Lord changed him. He was touched by the transformative power of resurrection, to which the last part of 1 Cor 15 is devoted. Thus, 1 Cor 15:8–10 witnesses not primarily to the commission Paul received, but also to what happened to himself, when he looked back at the Damascus event. In this perspective, resurrection motives resonate. It is noticeable that Paul here portrays the Damascus incident as not only something setting Paul apart from his converts, but transforming him also, like them (cf. Rom 8:9–11).

¹⁶ See also the only occurrence in PHILO, *Leg.* 1.76 where Num 12:12 is commented upon. See also BDAG and LSJ s.v.

¹⁷ THISELTON, *Corinthians*, 1209–10. It confuses me that Thiselton goes on to say that this coheres well with his being appointed before birth by God's grace (see below). I think the metaphors "from mother's womb" and miscarriage are not analogous here.

¹⁸ FREDRIKSEN, *Paul*, 76, 132.

Phil 3:6–11: The Persecutor Justified

While 1 Cor 9 and 15 speak in terms of Christophany, Phil 3 explores the Damascus event as Paul being touched by the power of resurrection. Thus, it develops what is implicit especially in 1 Cor 15. Paul presents his credentials. In what happened to him on the road to Damascus, all his valued credentials are re-evaluated. This re-evaluation is introduced with ἀλλά in vv. 7–8. I call here upon the general view that Paul alludes to the Damascus incident here.¹⁹ The re-evaluation is given in terms rather pejorative (σκύβαλα), which means “rubbish.” The contrast between previous and present in Paul’s life does not portray the essence of Paul’s former credentials, but aims at *heightening* the role of Christ. Among his credentials, his former persecutions—presented in terms echoing Gal 1:13–14—stand out, because within a list of positive credentials is found this single negative. Paul who wrote Philippians would certainly not consider his former persecutions positively. The paradoxical nature of Paul’s credential is that his persecutions grew out of the “best” in Paul, his devotion to Torah: “In this lies the terror of these verse: it was the best and not the worst of Paul which led him into sin.”²⁰ The climax of his devotion to Torah was his persecuting Christ-believers.²¹

This insight is in v. 9 formulated in the language of justification: “... and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ.” Paul’s Damascus event is here conceived as a building-block in his theology. The contrast is sharply formulated in a righteousness which is either ἐκ νόμου or ἐκ θεοῦ. Thereby the Damascus event is written into Paul’s theology on law and sin (see below), and the perspective is ultimate theocentric.

However, Paul goes on in v. 10 to speak about resurrection. His coming to know the righteousness offered by God through faith: “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection ...” Vv. 10–11 speak of resurrection in a double perspective, present and future. Paul embarked on a trajectory marked by resurrection, which eventually will transform also his body (Phil 3:21). I notice that in Phil 3:21 the noun ἐνέργεια translates the transformative power at work in resurrection, and that in Gal 2:8 Paul uses the cognate verb in participle (ὁ ἐνεργήσας) to denote how the apostolic mandate was conveyed to Peter and to himself.

Philippians 3 continues what we observed in 1 Cor 15 regarding Damascus, namely that this event set Paul apart from his converts, but that it also embraced theological concepts applicable to both himself and his converts. It seems that the power of resurrection is the primary force uniting Paul and his converts. Romans

¹⁹ E.g. Gerald F. HAWTHORNE, *Philippians*. WBC 43; Waco TEX: Word Books, 1983, 136.

²⁰ Stephen J. CHESTER, *Conversion at Corinth: Perspectives on Conversion in Paul’s Theology and the Corinthian Church*. London: T&T Clark, 2003, 166.

²¹ SANDNES, *Paul Perceived*, 41–44. This is further developed in my Norwegian book, Karl Olav SANDNES, *Var Paulus kristen? Har kirken forstått hans teologi og tro?* Follese: Efrem, 2021, 98–120.

7:7–25 shows some remarkable similarities to Phil 3. The power of sin manifests itself in the best, namely in Torah. That culminates how Paul conceived of the power of sin. Torah, which was supposed to offer help,²² has itself become a victim. As demonstrated by John M. G. Barclay, “Paul repeatedly draws attention to the resurrection of Jesus throughout Romans 6–8.”²³ The power of resurrection is the ultimate expression of what grace accomplishes in these chapters, also vis-à-vis sin. For the purpose of the present paper, it is worth noticing that Rom 7:7–25 includes, among many other aspects, also a biographical note from Paul's life, “a piece of biographical reconstruction.”²⁴

Gal 1:15–16a: Grace to the Persecutor

We now turn to the Damascus text *par excellence* within Paul's epistles. He assumes his readers to be familiar with what happened to him. Hence, the pieces of information work like tags, serving as reminders to a larger and more developed story. Every element in this story is important, conveying both the past event and the interpretation thereof. Thus, keeping the idea of a purview in mind is highly relevant here. Thus, there is a surplus beyond the immediate wording to be imagined here. The key to identify the nature of this surplus is the way vv. 13–14 work as a contrast or backdrop for vv.15–16a: the persecutor is called by God's grace. The text is calculated to convey a contrast between persecutor and proclaimer, overcome only by God's grace which calls into being what is not there beforehand. Shortly put, Paul's biography is structured around three key motives: persecution–grace–apostle, as it is in 1 Cor 15.

Vv. 15–16a are at home in a larger biography conveying the *unexpectedness* of Paul's call. Within his biography, Damascus is an abrupt and unforeseen event, paving the way for a divine initiative solely. The noun χάρις bridges Paul's former life and the mandate given to him. His identity now becomes “grace accorded.”²⁵ This is the only link, provided by God alone, and made possibly only by Godself. Hence, Paul's apostleship manifests God at work. God calls into being what formerly was not there. The theocentric perspective can hardly be more emphasized. For an adequate reading of the Damascus event, it is compelling to notice this theocentric character, as we have seen already. This comes into view in this text as well. The theocentric perspective finds its full sense in resurrection talks. The fundamental structure of Paul's story in Gal 1, organized according to human vs. divine (1:1.10–12), plays into this. While Gal 1:13–14 is told in 1. person singular (“I”), vv. 15–16 speak about

²² SANDNES, *Paul Perceived*, 144–48; SANDNES, *Var Paulus kristen?*, 160–61.

²³ John M. G. BARCLAY, *Paul and the Gift*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015, 500–503.

²⁴ CHESTER, *Conversion at Corinth*, 189–95; quotation on p. 195.

²⁵ John M. G. BARCLAY, “Paul's Story: Theology as Testimony,” in *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (ed. Bruce W. LONGENECKER; Louisville, KE: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 133–56; quotation p. 139.

God's will and action towards Paul. This contrast is further emphasized by Paul saying that he did not confer with any human being (σὰρκι καὶ αἵματι). No idea brings out the theocentric perspective more emphatically than God bringing into existence that which is not. It is worth noticing that Paul in Gal 1:1 introduces himself by saying that his being an apostle was given him by God who raised Jesus from the dead, thereby associating God's power to raise Jesus from the dead with his own apostleship.

Although the noun God (θεός) is textcritically uncertain in v.15, there is no doubt that the revelation Paul refers to is seen as an act of God. The theocentric perspective is anyway spelled out in v. 16: ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοί. In biblical tradition, God is intimately associated with creation and new creation (resurrection). Reinhard Feldmeier and Hermann Spieckermann gave their book on God in the Bible the title *Der Gott der Lebendigen* to convey this fact.²⁶ This title aims at God who gives or brings life into being, thus making God-talks into talk about creation widely understood. Biblical belief in God makes creation, new creation and resurrection coalesce.²⁷ The theocentric perspective on what occurred to him outside Damascus, has repercussions on how he came to think about it, paving the way for new creation or resurrection motifs.

Two aorist participles indicate the role of God here (ἀφορίσας and καλέσας); both are embedded in a narrative structure and in biblical language bringing to mind prophetic commissions.²⁸ A key question is whether these participles should be considered a call in two stages or refer to a singular call which took place in his mother's womb. Paul's presentation of what happened to him is carved in language taken from e.g. Jer 1:5 (πρὸ τοῦ με πλάσαι σε ἐν κοιλίᾳ ἐπίσταμαί σε καὶ πρὸ τοῦ σε ἐξελεῖν ἐκ μήτρας ἡγίακά σε, προφήτην εἰς ἔθνη τέθεικά σε) and Isa 49:1 (ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομά μου) in which "mother's womb" holds a central position. In the words of Susan Eastman: "Specifically, the apostle shares with the Servant of the Lord in Isa 49 the distinction of being 'called (καλεῖν) 'from my mother's womb' (ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου) with a message for the Gentiles (Isa 49:1)."²⁹ This reading finds substantiation in Rom 1:1 (κλητὸς ἀπόστολος ἀφορισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ). We recognize here key terms from Gal 1. The

²⁶ Reinhard FELDMEIER and Hermann SPIECKERMANN, *Der Gott der Lebendigen: Eine biblische Gotteslehre*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2011.

²⁷ James D. G. DUNN, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998, 38–43. FELDMEIER and SPIECKERMANN, *Gott*, 261–72, 515–46. James P. WARE, *Paul's Theology in Context: Creation, Incarnation, Covenant & Kingdom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019 puts creation and resurrection up front in his presentation of Paul's theology: "God as creator was the very foundation of Paul's thought" (p. 8).

²⁸ Karl Olav SANDNES, *Paul—One of the Prophets? A Contribution to the Apostle's Self-Understanding*. WUNT 2.143. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991, 59–68; Susan EASTMAN, *Recovering Paul's Mother Tongue: Language and Theology in Galatians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007, 63–88.

²⁹ EASTMAN, *Recovering Paul's Mother Language*, 69.

two participles, rendered here in passive voice, appear as more or less synonymous. However, in Gal 1:15–16a καλεῖν is not attached to “my mother’s womb,” but to God’s “grace.” In other words, καλεῖν is to be interpreted against the backdrop of Paul’s persecutions.

I want to urge the difference between the two participles stronger than I did in my dissertation *Paul—One of the Prophets?* (1991). This is due to the fact that the backdrop of καλέσας is Paul’s persecutions, like it was in 1 Cor 15 and in Phil 3, as nicely put by Thiselton (see above). It is, therefore, confusing that Thiselton, in commenting on Gal 1:15–16a, says that Paul is appointed *before birth* by God’s grace, emphasizing that grace has thus shaped his whole life.³⁰ This is not in accordance with what he stated on καλεῖν in 1 Cor 15:9–10. If the point is that Paul’s life from his mother’s womb has been shaped by the grace he experienced outside Damascus, his persecutions hardly serve as a backdrop. The narrative structure of Gal 1:13–16a, urging the contrast between Paul’s former persecutions and God’s call, is disturbed if it all refers to the election from his mother’s womb. The participle καλέσας does not refer to a pre-natal calling, but is chronologically to be connected to ἀποκαλύψαι in v. 16a.

In my book *Paul One of the Prophets*, I argued that “all the essential elements in a prophetic call narrative ... are found in Gal 1:15–16a.”³¹ Stephen J Chester comments that “one single fact means that this is not so.”³² Although I still think that the prophetic model goes a long way to explain Paul’s presentation of his Damascus event in Galatians 1, I think Chester has made a highly relevant point in saying the following: “The Septuagint contains not a single narrative relating the call of a prophet which contains the verb καλέω.” This means that καλέω is not sufficiently accounted for by pointing to prophetic call narratives. According to Chester, καλέω can only be accounted for as a “conversion,” one that did not involve a change of religion though.³³ The present article offers the context of creation or new creation (resurrection) as the backdrop for this term, both here and in 1 Cor 15:9–10. This conclusion will find affirmation in Rom 4:17 (see below).

In his magisterial work *Paul and the Gift*, John M. G. Barclay has delved into the meaning of gift or χάρις in Paul’s letters.³⁴ He summarizes his findings in terms like “unconditioned” and “incongruous” grace. “Grace” is characterized by misfit, and even contradiction between the recipient and God who gives. Barclay’s presentation of χάρις in Galatians matches precisely how Paul lays out the basics of

³⁰ THISELTON, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1210 and 1212.

³¹ SANDNES, *Paul—One of the Prophets?*, 59.

³² CHESTER, *Conversion at Corinth*, 157.

³³ CHESTER, *Conversion at Corinth*, 163–64.

³⁴ For his interpretation of Galatians, see pp.351–422.

his biography: the misfit between persecutor and apostle of Christ is overcome by a divine gift of grace, bringing into being what was not there beforehand. He also points out that Paul's biography becomes a pattern or model for his converts: "... what has reconstituted Paul's life as a divine act of grace without regard to his ethnicity, tradition and excellence, and without regard to his former opposition to God."³⁵ Obvious evidence is how Gal 1:6 (τοῦ καλέσαντος ὑμᾶς ἐν χάριτι [Χριστοῦ]) echoes Gal 1:15. Furthermore, Barclay points out that the resurrection is presupposed throughout as the source of the life which grace brings into being, creating something new (Gal 5:25; 6:8, 15). God "creates new realities without regard to conditions of capacity, status or moral worth."³⁶ Here Barclay adds Rom 4:17 as a reference. It is all predicated on the resurrection and the transformative power of God Creator at work in resurrection, or in other words, the antithesis between what God does and what humans do.³⁷

Based on these observations, I draw attention to the word "purview": what horizon may be glimpsed through the indications left in these texts? How do we make sense of these findings? The pieces of the jigsaw are clearly there to be joined into a more complete picture. The piece which guides us to put this picture together is *God* who gives life. We notice that Paul in Gal 3:21 is engaged in the question whether Torah gives life (ζωοποιῆσαι) or not.³⁸ This brings us to Rom 4:17 where precisely "giving life" is an act reserved God of Abraham.

Rom 4:17: Calling into Existence What Is Not: Grace as Resurrection at Work

What the rhetoric of 1 Cor 15:9–10 and Gal 1:13–16a conveyed in biographic and narrative terms (persecution – χάρις – apostle), Rom 4:17 formulates theologically in such a way that it has repercussions for how to understand "grace". Unconditioned grace is an act of God Creator who brings into life what does not exist. In Romans 4, Paul addresses the meaning of Gen 15:6: "And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness." Abraham is presented here, not only as father of a multinational family, but also the paradigmatic believer.³⁹ A key term here is "grace" (χάρις) (Rom 4:4), which Paul reiterates in v. 16, the running up to v.17: ἐπίστευσεν θεοῦ τοῦ ζωοποιοῦντος τοὺς νεκροὺς καὶ καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα

³⁵ BARCLAY, *Paul and the Gift*, 359; see also p. 356.

³⁶ BARCLAY, *Paul and the Gift*, 353–54.

³⁷ SANDNES, *Paul Perceived*, 44–47.

³⁸ Paul's aim here is to address Lev 18:15; see Preston M. SPRINKLE, *Law and Life: The Interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and in Paul*. WUNT 2.241. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008, 138–42.

³⁹ BARCLAY, *Paul and the Gift*, 480–81; Karl Olav SANDNES, "Justification and Abraham; Exegesis of Romans 4," in *God's Power for Salvation: Romans 1,1–5,11* (ed. Cilliers BREYTENBACH; Colloquium Oecumenicum Paulinum 23. Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 147–81 (at 157–60).

ὥς ὄντα. This is God in whom Abraham put his trust. In the words of Christiane Zimmermann: “Der Gott, an den Abraham glaubte, ist der, der die Toten lebendig macht und das Nicht-Seiende ins Sein ruft.”⁴⁰

God, creation and resurrection coalesce. There are numerous passages portraying God in terms similar to this.⁴¹ Worth noticing is that in some of these passages God's act of creation or new creation is given in the verb καλεῖν: Isa 48:13 LXX: “And my hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand bolstered heaven; I will call (καλέσω) them and they will stand together.” (NETS). Joseph's prayer for Aseneth addresses God “who gave life to all (things) and called (καλέσας) them from the darkness to the light,” asking Godself to “make her alive again (ζωοποιήσον)” (Jos. Asen. 8.10–11 cf. 8.2). According to Jos. Asen. 15.4 this act of God, which is defined as “conversion” (μετάνοια) is spelled out in the following verbs: ἀνακαινισθήσῃ, ἀναπλασθήσῃ, ἀναζωοποιηθήσῃ. According to Christine Zimmermann, *Joseph and Aseneth* speaks in a way expressed most palpable in Jer 38:22LXX: ἔκτισεν κύριος σωτηρίαν (“... the Lord has created salvation ...” cf. Isa 45:18). She calls this “die soteriologische Schöpfersaussage.”⁴² Similarly, the language of calling is found in Rom 8:28, 30 where Paul speaks of the regenerative power at work through the Spirit, and in which resurrection talks is intertwined (vv. 9–11). In the words of Beverly Roberts Gaventa: “Here calling is calling into existence, an act of creation, not simply an act of selecting one person or group rather than another.”⁴³ It is an act of bringing into being (creative act), not of selection. This applies to Paul's addresses in Rome, to Aseneth, and to Paul the apostle; all are called into being by God.

These texts pave the way for the observation that God creating τὰ μὴ ὄντα, as in Rom 4:17, is a shared way to speak of God as Creator.⁴⁴ Philo speaks thus in

⁴⁰ Christiane ZIMMERMANN, *Die Namen des Vaters: Studien zu ausgewählten neutestamentlichen Gottesbezeichnungen von ihrem frühjüdischen und paganen Sprachhorizont*. Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 69. Leiden: Brill, 2007, 366.

⁴¹ Ps 33:6, 9; 148:5; 2 Bar. 21.4 (“O hear me, you who created the earth ... the one who in the beginning of the world called that which did not yet exist and they obeyed you”, OTP1:628); 48.8 (“And with the word you bring to life that which does not exist, and with great power you hold that which has not yet come”; OTP 636–37), Jos. Asen. 12.1–3; 20.7; Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16–17; see Halvor MOXNES, *Theology in Conflict: Studies in Paul's Understanding of God in Romans*. NovTSup 53. Leiden: Brill, 1980, 241–47.

⁴² ZIMMERMANN, *Namen*, 352, 369–71. A Pauline passage like 2 Cor 4:6 where Paul alludes to Gen 1:2–3 to reference the enlightenment of the hearts, is also relevant here. Kim and Dietzfelbinger may be right when they see this as referring to the Damascus event, but not exclusively so. The plural “in our hearts” should not be limited to Paul alone.

⁴³ Beverly Roberts GAVENTA, “On the Calling-Into Being of Israel,” in *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9–11* (ed. Florian WILK and J. Ross WAGNER; WUNT 257. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 255–69 (at 260).

⁴⁴ See the detailed work of ZIMMERMANN, *Namen*, 345–83 and 384–531.

several passages: God called that which had no existence into existence (τὰ μὴ ὄντα ἐκάλεσεν εἰς τὸ εἶναι; *Spec.* 4.187; *Opif.* 81; *Mut.* 46; *Migr.* 183; *Her.* 36). All these passages revolve around God's creation. In some texts, like in 2 Macc 7:28 the creation motif is extended to resurrection: "... recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed (οὐκ ἐξ ὄντων ἐποίησεν αὐτὰ ὁ θεός). And in the same way the human race came into being" (NRSV).⁴⁵ For the father praying for his martyr-sons, this belief serves as buttress for faith in resurrection: "... Accept death that I may get you back again along with your brothers" (v. 29).⁴⁶

Paul finds this language appropriate to convey the radicality at play in God's grace. It also catches the nature of God' election of his Corinthian converts: "... God choose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not (... ἐξελέξατο ὁ θεός, τὰ μὴ ὄντα), to reduce to nothing things that are" (1 Cor 1:26–28). We notice the marked theocentric perspective here: *God* has chosen them, and this is put in the noun κλησις, cognate to καλεῖν. Likewise, in Rom 9:24–26 where the theocentric perspective involved in καλεῖν paved the way for bringing into being a people who were not God's people: "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people'." Paul applies Hosea to Jews as well as Gentiles. Just as Abraham was called into being (Rom 4:17) so are also Jews and Gentiles together (Rom 15:7–12). The present future καλέσω and the passive future κληθήσονται imply more than «naming» here. Resurrection language is at work. Election is spelled out in a way that brings to mind Deut 7:7 (cf. Rom 11:1–6) and construes it as an act of grace. Worth mentioning is also 2 Cor 4:14–15 where the grace (ἡ χάρις) received by the Corinthians and Paul himself ("we"), is explained with explicit resurrection language. The grace given to them is included in the trajectory of God having raised Jesus from the dead.

What does this creation and new creation language refer to in the biography of Abraham? Scholars often refer to the impossibility which grace brought into being regarding Abraham becoming a father in spite of his age. Likewise, Sara, the old woman, gave birth to a son. Both illustrate the impossibility at play here, and which is overcome by God' power to bring into being what is not existent. Another analogy which goes to the heart of what Paul is arguing in Romans 4 is that Abraham as "ungodly" (v. 5) is reckoned righteous.⁴⁷ This particular aspect brings to mind the logical structure we have identified in 1Cor 15, Phil 3 and Gal 1, namely that the persecutor is turned into an apostle. "Grace" refers here to *how* Abraham as

⁴⁵ The living God" who gives life is intimately connected with the raising of the dead, not only in Rom 4:17, but also in Tob 13:2; 2 Macc 7:33. 36 and Rom 8:11. The idea of God creating out of nothing is in Wis 11:17 presented in Greek philosophical terms: κτίσασα τὸν κόσμον ἐξ ἀμόρφου ὕλης ("... created the world out of formless matter.").

⁴⁶ On this as resurrection witness, see SANDNES and HENRIKSEN, *Resurrection*, 57–59.

⁴⁷ The connection between Rom 4:5 and 17 is emphasized also by ZIMMERMANN, *Namen*, 445.

ungodly (ἄσεβής) became “friend of God.”⁴⁸ This logic echoes what we noticed in 1 Cor 15:8; Gal 1 and also in Phil 3, namely how Paul the persecutor ended up being an apostle of Christ. According to John M. G. Barclay, “the Abrahamic family is marked by a peculiar trait,”⁴⁹ which is incongruity between God’s action and what Abraham was previous to that. Barclay emphasizes incongruity and misfit. The idea of *creatio ex nihilo*, which he also points out, should include also the transformative power intrinsic to this grace. In the words of Reinhard Feldmeier: “Der Gott der Rechtfertigung wird hier in der Sprache von Schöpfung und Neuschöpfung beschrieben.... Als *deus iustificans* ist Gott auch der *deus vivificans*.”⁵⁰ God—justification by faith—grace—called into existence— all these summarize the basis for making Abraham a paradigmatic believer. Likewise, Otfried Hofius says that Rom 4:17 makes it obvious that “die *iustificatio impii* nur als das Wunder göttlicher Neuschöpfung und Lebensgewährung verstanden werden kann. Eben deshalb ist der Glaube an den Gott, ‘der den Gottlosen rechtfertigt’ (v.5), als solcher der Glauben an den ‘der die Toten lebendig macht und das Nichtseiende ins Dasein ruft’ (v. 17b).”⁵¹ The verb καλεῖν is thus rooted in God’s power to bring into being what is not there beforehand. Furthermore, Rom 4:17b is conceived as an act of resurrection. This is reinforced by Paul introducing v. 17b as an act of God “who gives life to the dead,” which is also substantiated in the final part of Romans 4.⁵²

In what way does this have a bearing on καλέσας in Gal 1:15? This suggests that “calling” in Gal 1:15 is not identical with ὁ ἀφορίσας με, and takes us to what God did to Paul in the Damascus event. I am not claiming that Rom 4 is yet another Damascus passage. What I do observe, however, is that there is a point of converging between Paul and Abraham. They were both changed by grace. The non-correspondence between what they were and what they become is due to the divine gift of grace. In Abraham’s case this is explicitly formulated in the language of resurrection. With Paul this is not so explicit, but his many references to his Damascus experience as a meeting with the risen Christ, finds in his expose of Abraham its full explanation.

⁴⁸ Karl Olav SANDNES, “Abraham, the Friend of God, in Rom 5: A Short Notice,” *ZNW* 99 (2008): 124–28.

⁴⁹ BARCLAY, *Paul*, 481–90.

⁵⁰ Reinhard FELDMEIER, „Vater und Töpfer? Zur Identität Gottes im Römerbrief,“ in *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9–11* (ed. Florian WILK and J. Ross WAGNER; WUNT 257. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 377–90 (at 379).

⁵¹ Otfried HOFIUS, „Die Gottesprädikationen Röm 4,17b,“ in *Paulusstudien II*, edited by Otfried HOFIUS. WUNT 143. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002, 58–61 (at 61). ZIMMERMANN, *Namen*, 370 puts it like this: „Der Glaube an den Schöpfer ist der Glaube an den permanent schaffenden, lebendig machenden, die Toten auferweckenden, Christus auferweckt habenden Gott (Röm 4,17.24).“

⁵² SANDNES, “Justification and Abraham,” 171–78.

Conclusion

Paul judged his Damascus experience as an event setting him apart from other prophets or visionaries in his churches, as it was foundational to the ministry which brought them into being.⁵³ The way he explains this event as a Christophany also serves this end. Paul's "last of all" in 1 Cor 15:8 conveys, albeit in humble terms, that he has been given a mandate vis-à-vis his churches. However, when he explores the implications of what this means in terms of being touched by the transformative power of resurrection, he becomes less unique and more paradigmatic to his converts. In this paper we have observed this with regard to the role assigned to God's grace in the Damascus event. Paul never uses τὰ μὴ ὄντα with reference to Damascus, but the logic of the persecutor becoming an apostle of Christ, solely dependent on divine initiative, works synonymously. To this comes also that his being a "miscarriage" in 1 Cor 15 works in the same way. This logic makes Paul and Abraham kindred figures. They were both affected by God's grace, becoming what they were not beforehand. Paul uses the language of creation or resurrection to bring about the transformative power of God's grace, which turns an ungodly into a friend, and a persecutor of Christ into his apostle. Thereby Paul's Damascus event no longer is only to be considered unique and foundational. It takes on a paradigmatic aspect as well.

I have argued that Paul's purview on this incident in his life goes beyond what is stated directly in e.g. Gal 1:15–16a. To identify what goes beyond, I found that the logical structure of that passage—the persecutor becoming apostle of Christ—echoes Abraham's biography in Rom 4, in which v. 17 about God who brings into being what was formerly not there, forms the hub. Thus, the Damascus event is inscribed in the history of God's grace which makes the impossible possible and manifest. In that perspective, Abraham, Israel, Paul and his converts participate in the same experience, i.e., being faced with God's transformative power.

Krister Stendahl's work on Paul's Damascus experience as a call, not a conversion, marked a turning point in Pauline scholarship. In my view, Stendahl rightly challenged "conversion" as a helpful category, albeit his definition is surprisingly more modern than ancient.⁵⁴ Anyway, to present-day readers "conversion" is a Trojan horse, as it easily comes with anachronistic connotations prone to misguide rather than offering adequate insight.⁵⁵ Following the lead of Stendahl, many scholars understand the Damascus event primarily as his receiving a commission, his being entrusted a

⁵³ SANDNES, *Paul—One of the Prophets*, 102–105, 245.

⁵⁴ CHESTER, *Conversion at Corinth*, 153–59.

⁵⁵ For a nuanced view on Paul and the category of "conversion," making use also of sociological theory (change of networks, relations and fellowship), see Douglas A. CAMPBELL, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009, 125–66.

mandate, in short, his being *called*. The material presented in the present paper implies that such an understanding does not sufficiently account for the way Paul describes his experience in terms taken from creation and resurrection. This should in no way be interpreted as Paul leaving one religion for another. In that regard Stendahl is right. But his interpretation is given in strokes too simple to come to terms with how profound and radical this experience was to Paul himself. It went far beyond being given a mandate. By tracing God's *creatio ex nihilo*, not only in the story of Abraham, but also in his own biography, Paul places himself in the trajectory of creation, new creation and resurrection, and God bringing into being what was previously not there. Nothing less!

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EARLY JEWISH PARABLES AND FABLES AS NON-RELIGIOUS NARRATIVES¹

LAURI THURÉN

Abstract. To understand the parables of Jesus, it is interesting to compare them with other early Jewish persuasive narratives, including parables but also fables. Recognizing their common features and functions yields a more reliable interpretation of each genre and individual story. To this end, I will scrutinize some examples of these narratives with modern argumentation analysis. I will argue that, in their original context, these stories function best as non-religious persuasive narratives. Each of them aims at enhancing the audience's acceptance of some general principle, which can then be applied to religious discussion. Within these stories, however, nothing requires an allegorical and directly religious interpretation. On the contrary, such axiomatic readings obscure their message and function.

Keywords: parables, fables, argumentation, rabbinic, Jesus.

The parables of Jesus were not unique religious innovations.² Rather, he utilized a widespread genre in a persuasive way. Similar narratives are found in the Hebrew Bible, in Hellenistic rhetoric, and especially among rabbinic parables and fables.³ Although the rabbinic narratives are somewhat younger, they may well reflect the same early Jewish storytelling tradition. Studying differences and similarities between the function and interpretation of the early Jewish persuasive stories will shed light on the way each of them was designed to be understood.

One of the most intriguing questions is whether these narratives should be read as religious allegories. To be sure, any story encouraging the listener to “look

¹ With this article I salute the EELC president, professor, and my friend Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr.

² This classical misconception was based on neglecting Jesus's parables' Early Jewish and Greco-Roman context; see M. A. BEAVIS, “Parable and Fable”, *CBQ* 52 (1990) 473–497 and E. OTTENHEIJM, “Waiting for the Harvest: Trajectories of Rabbinic and ‘Christian’ Parables”, in A. HOUTMAN et al. (ed.), *Religious Stories in Transformation: Conflict, Revision and Reception*, Brill, Leiden, 2016, 314–333 (314). See also J. JAROMIN, “A parable in Greek-Roman, Old Testament and rabbinic literature”, *Scriptura Sacra* 18 (2014), 103–111.

³ For a brief overview of the parables in the Hebrew Bible, early Jewish, and rabbinic writings, see K. R. SNODGRASS, *Stories with Intent – A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2008, 38–58.

for meanings hidden beneath the literal surface of the fiction,” such as fables and parables, may invite the reader to allegorical interpretation.⁴ Accordingly, Jesus’s parables are often read as allegories, and the same applies to rabbinic and Hellenistic parables and fables. However, I have recently argued that, with regard to the New Testament, such a reading is misleading and based on a misinterpretation of the parable genre.⁵

In this article, I will widen the scope to other early Jewish parables and fables. I will claim that even though these stories were soon allegorized, this was superfluous. Instead, the rabbinic parables and fables are inherently independent, non-religious narratives illuminating some general principle. They make their point and are applicable in their literary context without any direct analogies between their characters and those in real life or theology. If this holds true, it supports the thesis according to which the common allegorical reading of Jesus’s parables is also just a secondary way of understanding them. This is not to deny the later religious importance of the allegorical interpretations, but the evangelists and the early rabbis, probably even the historical Jesus, hardly wanted their stories to be understood in such a way.⁶

1. Parables and fables are closely related

Both genres, parables and fables, are deeply rooted in Greco-Roman and Semitic rhetoric.⁷ They can be differentiated on a formal basis, but they function in the same way. They are fictitious stories reflecting reality; they display something that holds true not just within the story but also in human (or divine) relations. For a *parable*, there are numerous closer definitions. On the basis of Rüdiger Zymner’s and Ruben Zimmermann’s suggestions, I have defined the genre as follows:⁸ “A

⁴ A. W. FLETCHER, *Fable, Parable, and Allegory*, *Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropaedia* 7, Benton, Chicago, 1979.

⁵ L. THURÉN, *Parables Unplugged – Reading the Lukan Parables in Their Rhetorical Context*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2014; L. THURÉN, “Multiple Communication Layers and the Enigma of the Last Judgment (Matt 25:31–46)”, in A. L. H. M. VAN WIERINGEN and B. J. KOET (ed.), *Multiple Teachers in Biblical Texts* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 88), Peeters, Leuven, 2017, 125–146.

⁶ For the relevance of non-historical, text-oriented studies of Jesus’s parables to the study of historical Jesus, see L. THURÉN, “The Jesus of the Text: Unmanipulated Parables as an Alternative to Historical and Theological Reconstructions”, in L. HELDGAARD BYLUND, R. FALKENBERG, M. BJELLAND KARTZOW, and K. BRO LARSEN (ed.), *Nordic Interpretations of the New Testament – Challenging Texts and Perspectives*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2020, 261–282.

⁷ See M. A. BEAVIS, “Parable and Fable”, 475–481.

⁸ R. ZYMNER, „Parabel“, in G. UEDING (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* (vol. 6), Niemeyer, Tübingen, 2003, 502; R. ZIMMERMANN, „Die Gleichnisse Jesu – eine Hinführung“, in R. ZIMMERMANN (ed.), *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu*, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, Gütersloh, 2007, 25–28.

parable is a narrative, non-historical, and metaphoric saying appealing to an audience. It illustrates a general principle to be applied in a particular context.”⁹

Moreover, according to Zimmermann, a parable ought to be realistic, so that impossible things, such as apocalyptic visions, are excluded.¹⁰ I have previously assessed this criterion as unnecessary, since Jesus’s reference to a camel going through a needle’s eye (Luke 18,25) is obviously a parable, despite its lack of realism. However, even though the sentence contains an *oxymoron*, Jesus does not actually claim that a camel could ever perform such a maneuver.

A *fable*, instead, typically draws on some “surrealistic notion of an animated world,” which is presented as “true.”¹¹ In a fable, according to Madeleine Boucher, “the characters are usually animals, plants or inanimate objects, which have a prudential lesson.”¹² More precisely, David Daube finds in the fables that “animals, plants, or objects, while retaining their essential characteristics, talk and act like people so as to convey a message about human affairs.”¹³ Such an unrealistic storyline is not typically found in parables. Thus, the anthropomorphism and lack of realism separate at least most fables from parables. Despite such formal differences, both fables and parables are rhetorical tools aimed at persuading the audience.¹⁴

Like Jesus’s parables and other early Jewish counterparts, the fables too have been often read allegorically, as reporting theological issues with cover names. However, another option exists, namely, reading them as non-religious stories. Thus understood, the fables emphasize some general principle, which then ought to be applied in different cases, whether theological or not.

In the following, I will scrutinize four case stories, each representing one type of early Jewish narrative. A more extensive analysis would further validate my findings, especially with regard to rabbinic literature.

⁹ THURÉN, *Parables Unplugged*, 369.

¹⁰ ZIMMERMANN, „Gleichnisse“, 25–28.

¹¹ OTTENHEIM, “Harvest”, 315.

¹² M. I. BOUCHER, *The Mysterious Parable: A Literary Study* (CBQMS 6), Catholic Biblical Association of America, Washington, DC, 1977, 10.

¹³ D. DAUBE, *Ancient Hebrew Fables – The Inaugural Lecture of the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1973, 5.

¹⁴ For the rhetorical function of the parables, see BEAVIS, “Parable and fable”, esp. 477. Further discussion on the relationship between parables and fables is provided by B. E. PERRY, *Babrius and Phaedrus* (Loeb Classical Library 436), St. Edmundsbury Press, London, 1965, xx; BEAVIS, “Parable and fable”, 476; OTTENHEIM, “Harvest”, 315; and E. OTTENHEIM and M. POORTHUIS, “Introduction, Parables in Changing Contexts: A Preliminary Status Quaestionis”, in E. OTTENHEIM and M. POORTHUIS, *Parables in Changing Contexts – Essays on the Study of Parables in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism* (Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series, Volume 35), Brill, Leiden, 2020, 1–11 (1–5).

2. A rabbinic fable: *The Quarreling Wheat Plant*

As an example of early Jewish fables, I will focus on the widespread story about the *Quarreling Wheat Plant*, in which different parts of the grain argue about their relative status.¹⁵ This fable has been recently discussed thoroughly by Eric Ottenheim. Although the earliest preserved version comes from the early fifth century, it may well represent an older type of fable telling. According to its common version, the story goes thus:

*The wheat, and the stubble, and the straw quarreled with each other. The ear of wheat said: "Because of us the field was sown!" The stubble said: "Because of us the field was sown!" And the straw said: "Because of us the field was sown!" Said the wheat to them: "The hour will come and you will see!" And when the harvest came, the owner of the field took the stubble and burned it, and the straw and scattered it, and the wheat and piled it into heaps. And all started to kiss these.*¹⁶

The topic recalls Jesus's references to harvest (Mark 4,29; Luke 3,17; Matt 3,12; 24,32; John 4,35)¹⁷ and Mark's parable about the automatically growing wheat (Mark 4,26-29), but the storyline resembles Paul's fable about the body parts (1 Cor 12,14-21), which I will discuss below. The reference to the harvest time, in turn, recalls Jesus's parables about the *Weeds among the Wheat* (Matt 13,24-30) or *Net* (Matt 13,47-48), which both end in final separation of the good and the bad.

The fable and its interpretations offer interesting material for comparison to the biblical narratives. First, this fable as such makes no religious connotations. Second, its credibility and persuasiveness are not based on the storyteller and his position, fame, or *ethos*, but on the narrative itself. Third, although the fable has been utilized for many purposes, the need for allegory is questionable.

According to Ottenheim, the story was probably first used in inner-Jewish social discussions. Later, it promoted Israel's mission among the nations, anti-Christian polemic, and the superiority of Judaism to Christianity. Moreover, if Mark's parable is a derivative of this fable, it refers to the disciples' mission within Israel.¹⁸ Some of these interpretations are already visible in the manuscripts, where such *nimshalim* are attached to them.

It is not surprising that all the versions have been given allegorical interpretations. Typically, in one version of this fable, Israel and the nations are quarreling, but the

¹⁵ OTTENHEIM, "Harvest".

¹⁶ GenR 83,4-5 (MS Vatican 30).

¹⁷ Except Matt 24,32 par., these references are discussed by OTTENHEIM. Overlooking this verse probably depends on the traditional translation of *θέρπος* as "summer," although the word refers to the heat of the harvest time.

¹⁸ OTTENHEIM, "Harvest", 329–330.

eschatological harvest will show that only Israel will prevail. However, if one identifies the wheat with Israel and the other parts with the nations or the Christians, this will not add to the credibility of the message. Such a syllogistic allegorical reasoning would hardly persuade anybody:

- a) Wheat is most important,
- b) Israel is wheat,
- c) Israel is most important.

The argument that wheat is superior to stubble and that Israel is the wheat while Christians are the stubble could simply be turned around by the latter. Such an interpretation would make more sense, since Israel is not a product of the Christian Church in the way that wheat comes after the stubble, but the opposite.

However, the fable is more cunning than this. Instead of allegorization, it invites the audience to focus on the storyline. It provides a marvelous example of a general principle: the importance of different things cannot always be assessed immediately but will be obvious at some point. While the wheat, the stubble, and the straw use identical expressions when quarreling, one cannot tell by just listening to them who will win in the end. To be sure, the audience has secret knowledge from the beginning—they know that the wheat will overcome—but the wheat's superiority is not yet visible, and it is hard to prove until the harvest time. When applied to the question of the priority of Israel among nations, the reasoning can be described by using Stephen Toulmin's famous model for modern argumentation analysis:¹⁹

Backing: The fable of the *Quarreling Wheat Plant*



Warrant: The superiority is not always imminently visible

Or: Time will tell who is most important



Data: Israel and the nations
quarrel for superiority



Claim: Israel's superiority will not
be evident until the last day

¹⁹ According to TOULMIN, any human reasoning can be presented with the following elements. *Data* provides the accepted particular starting point. *Claim* is the particular opinion put forward, which the audience ought to accept. *Warrant* is a general rule combining *Data* and *Claim*, while *Backing* supports the *Warrant* with generally accepted items, such as statistics, expert opinions, or acceptable examples. See closer S. TOULMIN et al., *An Introduction to Reasoning*, Macmillan, New York, ²1984, 29–69; THURÉN, *Parables Unplugged*, 30–32.

This reasoning is more compelling than simply claiming that the world was created for Israel. Instead of direct allegory, it draws on the storyline, focusing on the last sentences or *punch line*. The Jewish *qal wachomer* principle is used: If the importance of the wheat compared to other parts of the plant will not be evident until the harvest time, how much more this holds true when comparing Israel to the nations. The fable does not prove that the world was created for Israel and that all the nations are secondary. Any hearer could simply claim that the opposite is true. Instead, the fable offers a general example, to which it is hard to object: One may know already who is most important, but convincing others is difficult right now. Only time will tell.

This general principle has been applied to several questions, as the history of the interpretation of the fable shows.²⁰ Certain social groups within Israel may appear unimportant, Israel may seem to be just another tiny nation among others, and the superiority of Israel compared to Christianity (or vice versa) cannot easily be proven. However, the truth will be revealed in the end.

The *Quarreling Wheat Plant* is not theological either, but it has been used for numerous religious purposes during the history of its interpretation. The story as such may convince any reader, but allegorizing details easily blurs its persuasive potential. It thereby becomes meaningful and persuasive only for insiders, those who already accept the claim that the fable seeks to support. A similar development can be seen regarding Jesus's parables. Thus, the analysis of the fable of the *Quarreling Wheat Plant* as a non-religious and non-allegorical persuasive narrative *per se* also encourages the reading of Jesus's parables as stories with a punch line instead of basing their interpretation on allegorized details.

3. Paul's fable: *The Quarreling Body*

Another early Jewish fable, closely resembling the *Quarreling Wheat Plant* but carrying an opposite message, is presented in First Corinthians. There, Paul tells a fable about different body parts hypothetically quarreling about which of them is necessary (1 Cor 12,14-21). Moreover, Paul adds a non-hypothetical description of the body parts' roles and honor (12,22-26). Interpreters seldom read this fable allegorically; the different body parts are not interpreted as cover names for certain historical or theological entities. Instead, the somewhat hilarious imagery simply exemplifies a principle, which is applicable in the Pauline congregation.²¹

²⁰ OTTENHEIJM, "Harvest", 319–322.

²¹ See for example C. WOLFF, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, Zweiter Teil (ThHK 7/II), Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Berlin, 1982, 106–110.

Backing: The story of quarreling body parts



Warrant: Every member is equally important, irrespective of status



Data: The members of your group ► *Claim:* Everybody is just as important
have different duties

When Paul in 1 Cor 12,27 returns to his standing image of the congregation as the body of Christ (already in 10,17; 11,27-29), this does not indicate that the body parts in the fable are identical with certain individuals. Instead, it is the principle illustrated by the fable that is important.

The fable and its additional description give non-theological, common-sense backing to a general principle according to which all members of a system are necessary for the whole. Paul seeks to prove that all body parts are eventually just as important, despite their fame, appearance, or the shame connected to them. This principle should then be applied to the life and theology of the congregation in Corinth.

To be sure, the Divinity is mentioned in the middle of the Paul's story: "God has put the body together and has given special honor to the parts that lack it..." (1 Cor 12,24). This, however, recalls his role in the synoptic parables *Birds* and *Lilies* (Matt 6,26.28-30 par.): "God" refers to a natural phenomenon, not necessarily a personal or religious character.

Both the Pauline *Quarreling Body* and the rabbinic *Quarreling Wheat* fable describe a fictitious discussion between the parts of a whole about who is most important, but the punch line of the rabbinic fable is different. It shows that the importance of the different parts cannot be known until the forthcoming harvest. Some parts have extreme value, while others will be destroyed. Paul claims the opposite. Moreover, from his point of view, the rabbinic fable could be criticized: without the stubble and the straw, there would be no wheat either.

4. The Sadducees' parable: The Woman with Seven Husbands

Turning to another genre, an interesting early Jewish parable is found in Mark 12,18-25 par.²² This narrative, not told by Jesus but by the Sadducees, is not called a "parable" but an inquiry (ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν λέγοντες).²³ Thus, it could be called an halachic question. However, the Sadducees' story closely resembles one of Jesus's best-known parables, the *Good Samaritan* (Luke 10,30-37), which also

²² For the Lukan version (Luke 20,29-32), see THURÉN, *Parables Unplugged*, 44–47. Cf. Matt 22,23-30.

²³ In addition to the *Woman with Seven Husbands*, the synoptic gospels contain some parables that are not told by Jesus alone but co-narrated with his audience, such as *Tenant Farmers* (Matt 21,33-41).

ends with a question, supported by a story. Since this narrative is commonly referred to as a parable, the Sadducees' parable must be treated in the same way.

The synoptic gospels present several Sadducees telling a story about a woman with seven husbands with the aim of demonstrating that the idea of an afterlife is ridiculous. Interestingly, the storyline is not supposed to be true, or even possible. It does not convey any new information from God, nor does it depend on any interpretation of the Scriptures. The parable's argumentative function by no means depends on the authority of those presenting the story. Although it is told by Jesus's antagonists, it may still appear compelling even for modern readers.

Biblical scholars seldom read the Sadducees' parable as an allegory. For example, the woman is not identified with Israel, and the husbands are not foreign deities, even if such an interpretation would be easy to develop on the basis of the Hebrew Bible. Instead, the parable is simply read as the Sadducees' proof for their thesis, according to which there is no afterlife. In the context, the parable is aimed at persuading Jesus.

Backing: The example of a woman with seven husbands



Warrant: The idea of resurrection may result in an impossible situation



Data: Life after resurrection

resembles life on earth

► *Claim:* The idea of resurrection is impossible

Jesus does not question the argumentation implied by the parable but responds with new, prophetic information about the afterlife: "For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels in Heaven" (Mark 12,25).²⁴

Both the Sadducean parable and the rabbinic and Pauline stories are somewhat comical. The main difference between these parables and fables is that the fables are surrealistic. While it is at least theoretically possible for a woman to have seven husbands in a row, speaking body parts or wheat plants hardly exist. Common to both narratives, however, is the fact that they are commonly read as persuasive argumentation, not as prophetic proclamation. Scholars seldom find in them any allegories or direct theological connections.

²⁴ Unlike the Sadducees' almost self-evident narrative, the validity of Jesus's response can easily be questioned. The credibility of his statement completely depends on whether one believes that he has the authority to convey such theological information. In other words, here Jesus acts as a prophet, mediating divine information, unlike the Sadducees, whose parable refers to common sense.

5. A rabbinic parable: *The Rotten Fish*

Common characteristics found in the rabbinic and Pauline fables and the Sadducees' parable can also be found in rabbinic parables.²⁵ They, too, are typically self-supporting: their persuasive force rests on the story itself, not the teller's authority, which is typically downplayed. Instead of proclaiming "I say to you," a rabbi says: "They tell this parable..."²⁶

Lieve M. Teugels has studied a rabbinic midrashic parable of the *Rotten Fish*, which provides an interesting example.²⁷

They tell this parable. To what is the matter similar? To one who said to his servant: "Go out and bring me a fish from the market." He went and brought him a rotten fish. He said: "By decree, you eat the fish or you will be struck with a hundred lashes (makkot), or you will pay a hundred maneh." He said: "See, I will eat it." He began to eat, but could not finish it, saying: "See, I will be struck (with lashes)." He was struck with sixty [or] seven[ty] but could not undergo any more, eventually saying, "See, I will pay (the hundred maneh)." The result was that he ate some of the fish, was struck with lashes, and paid a hundred maneh. Thus it was also for the Egyptians: They were struck, they let (Israel) go, and their money was taken.

The parable's persuasive structure can be described as follows:

Backing: The story of the *Rotten Fish*



Warrant: It is best to face the unavoidable immediately



Data: The Pharaoh or the audience
facing an unavoidable situation

► *Claim:* They should (have) react(ed)
immediately in the correct way

²⁵ Essential discussion of and sources for the rabbinic parables are presented by OTTENHEIJM, "Harvest", 4, note 11. Some of the most important studies are D. STERN, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, and C. EVANS, "Parables in Early Judaism", in R. N. LONGENECKER, (ed.), *The Challenge of Jesus's Parables*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2000, 51–75.

²⁶ L. M. TEUGELS, "Between Hermeneutic and Rhetoric: The Parable of the Slave Who Buys a Rotten Fish in Exegetical and Homiletical Midrashim", in K. SPRONK and E. VAN STAALDUINE-SULMAN (ed.), *Hebrew Texts in Jewish, Christian and Muslim Surroundings*, Brill, Leiden, 2018, 50–64.

²⁷ L. M. TEUGELS, *The Meshalim in the Mekhilot – An Annotated Edition and Translation of the Parables in Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishmael and Mekhilta de Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai* (TSAJ 176), Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2019. I have slightly edited the translation.

The *Rotten Fish* resembles the Sadducees' parable, Paul's fable, and the rabbinic fable in several ways:

- The effect does not depend on the storyteller. On the contrary: The Sadducees' parable is told by the antagonists; in the *Mekhiltot*, the personality of the narrator is blurred by using the pronoun "they"; and the rabbinic and Pauline fables could be told by anybody.
- None of the narratives aims at conveying any new historical or theological information; they are all somewhat comic stories. God is not mentioned, and no religious affiliation is needed to understand them.
- The narratives require no extra historical information to be effective. No knowledge about ancient fish markets, punishment practices, agriculture, or human anatomy are required, even if such interesting information could be found. The rabbinic parable is an absurd and comic demonstration of someone failing to face the obvious—such as the Pharaoh's imprudent strategy (referring to Exod 10,7 and 14,5). Likewise, the Sadducees' parable demonstrates the impossibility of the afterlife, and body parts or parts of wheat do not speak. Only very general background information is needed.

In all cases, any direct allegories would be improper. The people of Israel should not be identified with the rotten fish, the pitiable woman, nor the wheat. Instead, in each case, the storyline and especially their ending punch lines convey the messages.

6. Jesus's parables are not so different

Despite the formal diversity of the early Jewish fables and parables, they appear to share a common coherent rhetorical function. The same applies to Jesus's parables, even though their external variation may be even greater than between parables and fables. The synoptic Jesus tells both brief, self-evident rules and long, almost unbelievable narratives,²⁸ but they all share the same basic function: they exemplify and support some message or principle, which applies to some issue in the context, typically discussed by Jesus and his antagonists or disciples. Instead of proclaiming some absolute, general theological or ethical principles, the parables always make sense within their framework story.

My comprehensive scrutiny of the argumentation of all the parables of Luke and Matthew indicates that in order to fulfill their function, they share two particular and

²⁸ For example, Matt 5,14, the *City on a Hill* consists of seven Greek words and presents a statement that cannot be objected to. Very different is Matt 22,2-13, the *Wedding Banquet*, which contains 206 words and a highly peculiar storyline.

interrelated features: they are typically non-theological and non-allegorical. Each of them is based on experience of how ordinary people—or sometimes strange strongmen—do or at least may behave. The effect of Jesus’s parables is based on their appeal to the audience’s reason or emotions, never on Jesus’s divine or prophetic authority. This is especially important when the parables are told to his (or the evangelist’s) antagonists.²⁹

Telling non-religious parables has a purpose: while the issue discussed is theological, the use of an earthly parable moves the discussion to an easier level. After solving the problem there, the solution can then be transferred to the original issue.³⁰ The alternative, allegorical interpretation cuts corners by making the parable itself already religious.³¹

Is a limited, controlled use of allegory unfeasible? Several scholars argue that certain *stock metaphors* derived from the Hebrew Bible invite a direct theological interpretation. Thus, for example, a shepherd, king, judge, or father in Jesus’s parables must be understood as God or Jesus.³² Identifying these metaphors would avoid some of the problems connected with an uncontrolled use of allegories.

However, inside the story world described by the evangelist, the idea of *stock metaphors* is misleading. It is based on the assumption that the audience reads Jesus’s stories as a holy text in an intertextual relation to the Hebrew Bible. This is not how the parables are presented in the text. There, Jesus is not dictating the forthcoming New Testament but telling stories about everyday phenomena to people who often do not regard him as a holy prophet. If real sheep are visible when Jesus speaks of sheep, an intertextual reference to the metaphorical sheep in the Holy Scriptures is but a secondary option.

Moreover, Jesus never presents God appearing in a cameo role. On the contrary, such a reading is often made difficult. For example, the corrupt judge in Luke 18,1-6 hardly represents God. The hesitating king in 14,31-32 cannot represent the Almighty. It is seldom noticed that the shepherd seeking his lost sheep in Luke 15,4-7 is, according to Jesus, “one of you,” namely, Pharisees and scribes, not Jesus himself. The father of the *Prodigal Son* in Luke 15,11-32 is often identified with either God or Jesus, although the boy is explicitly said by Jesus to have sinned “against Heaven and you” (v. 18, 21), using different words about his father and divinity. The same

²⁹ THURÉN, *Parables Unplugged*; THURÉN, *Matthew Unplugged* (forthcoming).

³⁰ THURÉN, *Parables Unplugged*, 362–364.

³¹ Not even the parable of the Sower (Matt 13,3-8) persuades the audience through allegory, even though an allegorical explanation is attached to it (13,18-23). Jesus does not urge the stony ground to do something impossible, to change itself into good soil. Instead, he argues that if for a sower 25% success more than suffices, a disciple should not be too worried about the success of his preaching.

³² R. ZIMMERMANN, *Puzzling the Parables of Jesus – Methods and Interpretation*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2015, 155.192.198–200.

applies to other characters in the parables too, commonly seen as representing God. Thus, the imprudent behavior of a landowner in Matt 21,33-41 or the king acting in absurd ways in Matt 22,1-13 do not encourage the reader to identify their protagonists with God. Nonetheless, this is precisely what is usually done axiomatically.

Using a *stock metaphor* means resorting to allegory, even if not all imaginable connotations are allowed. Such a limited use of allegory also deprives the parable of its essential persuasive function. The effect of any allegorical story depends on the credibility of the storyteller. If Jesus says, “A father accepts his prodigal son” and that “father” means God, this does not suffice to persuade the audience about God’s mercy, unless they believe that Jesus is a prophet, which they hardly did because the audience of Luke 15 consisted of Pharisees and scribes criticizing him. A non-allegorical interpretation is much more persuasive, irrespective of who poses the question, “If you as a father would receive gladly your lost lamb, coin, or son, how much more God?”³³

In Matthew, God is not mentioned as a character in any longer parabolic narratives. Only the two brief references to nature mention God as continuously taking care of the *Birds* and *Lilies* (Matt 6, 26.28-30), but instead of referring to a personal divinity, one could use the word “nature” as well. The same goes for the parallel Lukan *Ravens* and *Lilies* (Luke 12,23.27-28). Moreover, Luke only once presents God as a personal actor, telling a rich man about his imminent death (12,16-21). Actually, this is God’s only explicit comment in the whole New Testament. However, the story is fictitious, and even this message is not very religious.

But isn’t Jesus’s description of the relationship between *Father* and *Son* theological? According to him, “No one fully knows the son except the father, and no one fully knows the father except the son and the person to whom the son chooses to reveal him” (Matt 11,27).

If Jesus here uses the titles “Son” and “Father” about himself and God—as many translators believe—this passage is not a parable at all. In that case, Jesus simply repeats his postulation in the previous verse. If, however, the traditional axiomatic capitalization of the words ‘father’ and ‘son’ is misleading, the verse is certainly a parable. Like its sister parable in Luke 10,22, it describes the relationship of any father and his son. Such a parable is neither religious nor allegorical. It states that any son typically knows his father better than anybody else does and has a special ability to reveal his father’s secrets. This general observation can then be applied to Jesus: as God’s child, he must have a similar ability. This in turn indicates that his teaching about God is trustworthy.

³³ For a closer analysis, see THURÉN, *Parables Unplugged*, 77–106.

Backing: A son knows his father better than anyone else does



Warrant: Close kinship to an individual confers trustworthy knowledge



Data: God has revealed secrets to little children

*Data*¹: Jesus too is God's child

► *Claim:* Jesus's message about God is trustworthy

Even though the parable itself is not religious, its application is undoubtedly theological.

7. Conclusions

In summary, the early Jewish tradition of telling these stories provides the primary literary and rhetorical context in which the parables of Jesus also ought to be understood. By this I am referring to the earliest empirical version of Jesus's parables, the literary narratives as they can be found in the gospel documents, not any historical reconstructions or revamped Christian versions.³⁴ The non-biblical and the biblical parables and fables share several common features:

- Credibility does not depend on the speaker. Even when Jesus is named as the narrator, the text-internal audience in the framework story does not regard him as the Messiah, son of God, or even a prophet, especially when Jesus is telling the parables to his adversaries. Their credibility does not depend on the audience's adherence to his authority, but on the stories as such.
- The stories do not convey any novel theological information. Even Jesus's parables are *per se* earthly narratives, and the principle highlighted by the parable is not pious either. Only when it is applied to the topic at hand does the parable become theological.
- Little if any external sociohistorical information is required.³⁵ Although peculiar habits and historical details may be referred to, they are no harder to understand than correspondingly peculiar details in common fairy tales.
- To fulfill its function, the narratives require no allegorical explanations. The general principle they support can be applied to a theological discussion as such.

All these stories, the parables of Jesus and the other early Jewish parables and fables, were soon allegorized. Although there are several traditional explanations for

³⁴ Reconstructing the original parables told by the historical Jesus is too risky and complex a task to be discussed here. For my detailed attempt to do so, see THURÉN, "The Jesus of the Text".

³⁵ For discussion, see THURÉN, *Parables Unplugged*, 23–26.41–42.

the rapid rise of allegory in the early Church, one must bear in mind that a corresponding development can be found among the other early Jewish narratives, too. Thus, it would be important to discover the actual reasons for such a development.

Common to all the stories is that they were later distanced from their original contexts. When the gospel authors wrote their texts, or when the rabbinic narratives were copied and retold, the situations were not identical with the original ones. However, the gospel authors and other scribes assessed the same narratives as meaningful for their own audiences. To this end, however, some re-interpretation was necessary.

In later centuries, when the audiences of the gospels consisted of hardcore Christians, they were tempted to understand the parables as allegorical, divine proclamation, even more than before. Likewise, the rabbinic fables could be applied to new situations, including the encounter with the rising Christianity. Correspondingly, the interpretation of the Psalms developed toward new theological levels.

Another explanation could be the general need for religious authority. With regard to Jesus's parables, the early interpreters perhaps began to read them as allegories since they perceived Jesus as divine. Consequently, his parables became valuable as such, irrespective of their context, rhetorical situation, or argumentative technique. Probably the same applied to the traditional Holy Scriptures, the Hebrew Bible, the LXX, pseudo-canonical writings—and even other related texts as well, such as the rabbinic parables and fables. The more classical and well-known a story becomes, the easier it is to use allegory to apply it to new situations, irrespective of its original function.

How, then, should current scholarship interpret the early Jewish narratives? If the goal is to understand what they mean in their original literary context or before it, allegory is not an option. In order to perceive Jesus's parables as intended by their author, the evangelist, one must respect their existing literary context. In this article, I have suggested that an even wider context must be taken into account, including other types of early Jewish persuasive parables and fables. Scrutiny of some of these indicates that they, too, were originally designed to be understood as functional tools in a particular context, even if they were later heavily allegorized. A more comprehensive study would be necessary to validate this thesis.

To be sure, if purely religious issues are of interest, many allegorical interpretations may offer more inspiring material than the original documents. In addition, as pieces of literary art, the early Jewish narratives, parables of Jesus included, have given impetus to several literary and artistic trajectories, and they may continue to do so.³⁶

³⁶ ZIMMERMANN, *Puzzling*, 166–174, describes the wide possibilities offered by the parables as “polyvalent interpretation” or “interpretive diversity.”

Nevertheless, one must bear in mind that the author meant something particular and aimed at a certain rhetorical effect when telling his parable or fable. Thus, any subsequent interpretations beyond the setting of any early Jewish storyteller, the gospel author, and his protagonist, Jesus, included, are of little exegetical value, despite their religious, philosophical, or artistic beauty.

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**RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION
(JOH 20:14-18)
- A JOHANNINE THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF JESUS'
APPEARANCE TO MARY MAGDALENE -**

STELIAN TOFANĂ

Abstract. In this article, I pointed out a few aspects from the episode of the meeting between the risen Jesus and Mary Magdalene on the morning of the Resurrection day (Joh 20:14-18). I have undertaken this analysis by taking into account the paschal theological Perspective of John the Evangelist. By doing this, I have tried to emphasize the identification between the Resurrection of Jesus and His "Ascension" that is equal with His Exaltation which Jesus speaks to Mary Magdalene about. This identification between the two seemingly distinct episodes with a single saving act, i.e. His Exaltation, constitutes a feature of John's Paschal Theology.

Keywords: Resurrection, Ascension, Paschal Theology, Exaltation, Mary Magdalene.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the fundamental truth of the Gospels and the crucial biblical point of the whole doctrine of Christianity. Thus, the all four Gospels of the New Testament canon conclude their account of Jesus' life and activity with the description of His Resurrection or "Exaltation" (Matt 28; Mk 16; Lk 24; Joh 20-21). On the other hand, the kerygmatic activity of the early Church is dominated by the emphasis placed mainly on the event of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Savior, which event, together with His Passion and Death on the cross, is the supreme act of His "Ascension" or "Glorification" (cf. Acts 2:24-36; 3:14-26; 4:10-11; 5:30-32; 7:55-56; 10:39-43; 13:30-38; 17:31). From this perspective, the Resurrection cannot be treated only as an "important and interesting epilogue" of the suffering on the Cross, as it is the fundamental act of the whole salvation achieved by Jesus Christ.

But a complete description of the theological dimension of the Resurrection are required, mainly from a biblical perspective, detailed analysis and nuances of some aspects of events related to it, especially regarding the appearances of the Risen Lord.

To illustrate these truths, I will refer only to the episode of Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene. This episode reproduces, as well as possible, the perspective

of John the Evangelist on the event of the Resurrection, but especially on the relationship between it and Jesus' Exaltation or Ascension.

1. Some exegetical references to the episode

The appearance of Jesus Christ to Mary Magdalene is the first interaction, narrated by the Fourth Gospel, between the risen Lord and a person from the wider circle of His Disciples. The Synoptic Gospels seem to record the same thing, the name of Mary Magdalene appearing first in all accounts of the Resurrection (cf. Matt. 28:1; Lk 24:9-10). Mark even states, "... *He first appeared to Mary Magdalene...*" (16:9). Therefore, from a certain point of view, Mary Magdalene would be the first witness of the event of Resurrection.¹

John (20:11-13) relates first the appearance of the angels after Jesus' Resurrection and contain also material specific to the Synoptic Gospels. It seems that the Evangelist John takes it from the synoptic tradition, inserts it in his Gospel, but gives to it a different meaning, reinterpreting it.² The presence of the angels probably meant also for John, together with to the empty tomb, an indisputable heavenly proof of the Resurrection.

However, the Evangelist's interest is focused on the *personal meeting between Jesus and Mary Magdalene*. This is an event that operates a real transformation (conversion) in the way she looks at and understands Jesus. In the itinerary of her faith, she walks the path from seeing and understanding an earthly Jesus to that One of the paschal faith and understanding. Mary does not reach this faith through the angels who appeared to her (Joh 20:11-13), but only through Jesus, in the experience of His new presence after the Resurrection.

In the context of this appearance, John the Evangelist mentions a detail not at all insignificant: Mary recognizes the risen Lord only when He calls her by name: Mary! At this moment, she turns (στραφεῖσα - στρέφω) and calls him in Hebrew, Rabbuni, which means, Master! (Joh 20:16).³ Her sudden return to Jesus

¹ Cf. Gerhard MAIER, *Evangelia după Ioan*, Ed. "Lumina lumii", Korntal, Germania, 1999, 837.

² See Jean ZUMSTEIN, *L'Évangile selon saint Jean (13-21)*, Labor et Fides, Genève 2007, 276. The role of the angels in the Gospel of John is reduced, comparable with that of the Synoptic Gospels. Here they do not have the role of announcing that Jesus was risen, but only that to be the passive witness of the event (See details, Rudolf SCHNACKENBURG, *Das Johannesevangelium*, III Teil, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1975, 372- 373).

³ Raymond Brown believes that "the vocabulary of this episode has to do with the scene in Joh 1:38, where Jesus asks two of John the Baptist's disciples, "Whom are you looking for?" And they call him "Rabbi." Likewise, in this episode, Mary addresses Jesus with "Rabbi," after He first asks her, "Why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?" (Joh 20:15). R. Brown's next conclusion, according to which Mary Magdalene recognized Jesus from the beginning, otherwise she could not have exclaimed, "I have seen the Lord," seems to be a little inconclusive, when one takes into account the information given by the Evangelist. Here is Brown's conclusion: "One is tempted to theorise that by using this "old" title the Johannine Magdalene is showing her misunderstanding of the resurrection by thinking that she can now resume following Jesus in the same manner as she had followed him during the ministry. However, such a reasoning is made

by hearing her name has in the theological vision of the author of the Gospel the nuance of a new conversion, in the sense of a new entrance into a new life, inaugurated, from now on, by the Risen Jesus. The moment of turning to Him is an outward gesture, but at the same time it expresses an inward concern of a person who seeks and ends up believing.⁴ Referring to this moment, St. Cyril of Alexandria states: "And she knew him at once, leaving the suspicion from the beginning only through His sight and bringing Him the usual veneration by calling Him "Rabbuni." And, filling his mind with the highest joy, he runs with warmth to touch His Holy Body, in order to obtain blessing from Him."⁵

According to the Fourth Gospel, the verb στρέφω does not simply mean to turn, but to turn to a certain person, in order to enter into a relationship with it.⁶ So, Mary turned to the One she knew with whom she wanted to reconnect, namely, the earthly Jesus. But the relationship with Him could no longer be the same as before the Resurrection, that is a purely human one with an earthly Messiah, object of fascination rather than of faith. The relationship became, from now on, one with a Jesus carrying a spiritual body and which will be recognized, moreover, in the breaking of the bread, that is, in the Eucharistic sacrament of the Church.⁷

But the focus of the Pericope is placed by the Evangelist in verse 20:17, where Jesus, speaking to Mary and not allowing her to touch him, makes an important *comment* on the meaning of the Resurrection and its implications for the Disciples:

less plausible by the fact that in 20:18 Magdalene announces to the disciples "I have seen the Lord"; and so she knows that it was her Lord and not merely her teacher who stood before her" (Raymond E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)*, II, Garden City, New York-London 1970, 1010).

⁴ Referring to the moment of the identification of the Risen Jesus by Mary Magdalene, R. Schnackenburg states: "... Jesus begegnet jetzt Maria in neuer Weise. Sie wendet sich ihm zu eine äußere Geste, die zugleich ihre innere Öffnung für den auferstandenen Herrn ausdrückt" (*Das Johannesevangelium...*, 375). See also, Jean ZUMSTEIN, *L'Évangile selon saint Jean (13-21)*, 279.

⁵ Sf. CHIRIL al Alexandriei, *Comentariu la Evanghelia Sfântului Ioan*, in Coll. "Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești" (PSB), partea a IV-a, București 2000, 1143-1144.

⁶ Compare with Lk 7:44; 10:23; 22:61; 23:28.

⁷ The obvious proof in this regard is the episode of Emmaus, described by Luke, where the two disciples traveled with Jesus, talked with Him, but didn't recognize Him except when He has broken the bread (Lk 24: 31-35). For details regarding the sacramental significance of the episode "Emmaus", see Stelian TOFANĂ, "Euharistia la Emaus" (Lc 24:13-35). Repere exegetice și teologice", in vol. *Grai maramureșean și mărturie ortodoxă*, Baia Mare 2001, 167-181. If Luke suggests the recognition of Jesus' presence in the Eucharistic sacrament, John is alluding to another way of recognizing His presence, namely, in His word. In the act of recognizing Jesus by Mary Magdalene, at the mere hearing of her name, she seems to play a role to which the Evangelist alludes in another context: (Joh 10:3) The episode illustrates the "claim" of the Good Shepherd: "I know My sheep, and they know Me" (Joh 10:14.27). Thus, a fulfillment of Jesus' message about Himself as Shepherd seems to have been here fulfilled (See, Raymond E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)*, II, 1009-1010).

*"Jesus said unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend (ἀναβαίνω) unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."*⁸

Thus, verse 20:17a introduces us to the second stage of Mary's itinerary of faith in which she goes beyond the phase of a purely sensitive attachment to Jesus, being now with Him only in the level of faith, the only perspective from which can be understood the mystery of the Risen Christ, glorified and exalted to the Father.

The theme of *ascension to the Father* is a specific Johannine one in which the Evangelist sees the profound significance of the Resurrection: For him, the Resurrection of Jesus also is and signifies, at the same time, His ascension to the Father. But the meaning of the ascending to the Father is in the Fourth Gospel not that which is present in the act of the Ascension of Jesus, mentioned by the Evangelists Luke (Lk 24:50-53) and Mark (Mk 16:19). For Luke, the Ascension marks the end of the earthly appearances of the Risen Jesus. Instead, for the Evangelist John the *Ascension to the Father* means the apogee of Jesus' glorification in the presence of His Father, a process that begins with the Passions, paradoxically continues with the death on the cross and ends in the Resurrection. Thus, *the Ascension to the Father* constitutes together with His Death and Resurrection an *essential Whole* of the "Hour of Jesus", that is, of the moment of His full glorification.⁹

The theological truth that John the Evangelist wants to communicate is, therefore, the *identity*, in the saving work achieved by Jesus, *between the event of the Resurrection and that of the Ascension*, or the identity between the act of Resurrection and the climax of His exaltation.¹⁰

In this context, the Risen Lord entrusts Mary Magdalene with the post-resurrection message: *"Go to My brethren (τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου) and tell them; I ascend to My Father and to your Father (τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν) and to My God and to your God (θεόν μου καὶ θεὸν ὑμῶν)"* (Joh 20:17b).¹¹ Mary Magdalene, now the symbol of a

⁸ For R. Schnackenburg, the two sentences which speak of ἀναβαίνειν (to ascend) are purely Johannine interpretations. In fact, says the author, it is not only a dominant theme in John's theology, but it is also an attempt by the Evangelist to make Kerygma about the resurrection agree with the theme of Jesus ascension **to the Father** and Jesus return **from the Father** (See details, Rudolf SCHNACKENBURG, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 376. See also R. E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)*, II, 1003-1004).

⁹ This is the Johannine meaning of the phrase "My hour has not yet come" (Joh 2:4). A theological explanation of the mentioned expression, from the perspective of Johannine Theology, see Stelian TOFANĂ, "Hristologie, Sacramentalitate și Mariologie în Evanghelia a IV-a, cu specială privire la episodul CANA (In. 2,1-11)", in *Studia Theologia Orthodoxa*, nr. 1-2, Cluj-Napoca 1999, 98-100.

¹⁰ Stelian TOFANĂ, "Hristologie, Sacramentalitate și Mariologie", 99.

¹¹ The verb ἀναβαίνω (to ascend) is used 17 times in the Gospel of John. Depending on where it is used, the meanings are as follows:

1- to ascend to heaven, or to the Father (1:51; 3:13; 6:62; 20:17).

2- to go up to Jerusalem, to the Temple, occasioned by a feast (2:13; 5:1.7.8.10.14; 11:55; 12:20).

full faith, becomes, therefore, the *first missionary* in the service of the Word of the Risen One. Here we are faced with an astonishing synthesis of the whole mission and work of Jesus: His Father, who sent Him into the world *among* and *for* His own (cf. Joh 1:11), and to Whom He lived in full obedience, becomes from now on *our Father*; His God, the One who initiates and sustains the Creature-Creator dialogue also is, from now on, *our God*.¹² In this point, marked by what Jesus reveals to Mary Magdalene, namely, that His Father is also our Father, of all Christians, *the Incarnation with the Resurrection is fully met*. J. Zumstein is even of the opinion that the road of the Incarnation ends at this point.¹³

The Apostle Paul makes clear the whole meaning of the Incarnation in the Epistle to the Galatians: “*But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons (ἐστε υἱοί), God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father! (αββα ὁ πατήρ)” Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son (υἱός)...*” (Gal 4: 4-7). All these consequences of the Incarnation for the humankind are now confirmed by the risen Jesus after His Resurrection in the post-paschal mandate entrusted to Mary Magdalene.

Those to whom Mary Magdalene sends the Paschal message are, first and foremost, the Disciples of the Lord and whom Jesus calls brothers: “*Go to My brethren (τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου)...*”

Therefore, at the end of the salvation work, the Apostles and the disciples of the Lord, and since then all Christians, have also been becoming *brothers with Him*, because through the Resurrection of Jesus they enter into a new relationship with God, who is none other than the Father of their resurrected Teacher.

2. The Identity between “Resurrection and Ascension” – a feature of Johannine Paschal Theology

The words of Jesus “*Do not touch Me (μή μου ἅπτου), that I have not yet ascended to My Father*” (Joh 20:17a) seem to be part of the category of the most

3- to ascend (climb) in relation to the image of the gate (10:1). In John 20:17 one can find two great Johannine theological themes, which emphasize the Evangelist's vision with regard to the Resurrection: the ascension of the Son of Man and the return of the Son to the Father (See, Georges ZEVINI, *Commentaire spirituel de L'Évangile de Jean*, Paris 1996, 206).

¹² See details, Sf. CHIRIL al Alexandriei, *Comentariu la Evanghelia Sfântului Ioan*, in Coll. “Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești” (PSB), partea a IV-a, București 2000, 1148-1149 ; G. RICHTER, “Der Vater und Gott Jesu und seiner Brüder in Joh 20,17”, in *MüThz* 24, 1973, 95-114.

¹³ “Du point de vu théologique, l’élévation du Christ a une double signification. D’une part, la révélation arrive à son terme et à son accomplissement. Le Logos qui était sorti du Père, retourne auprès de lui. Le chemin de l’incarnation prend fin” (cf. Jean ZUMSTEIN, *L'Évangile selon saint Jean* (13-21), 280).

"enigmatic passages of the New Testament."¹⁴ Indeed, in modern Bible research, many exegetes have tried to interpret these words in a variety of ways.

Raymond Brown considers, for example, that the attention paid by so many exegetes to the meaning of the words "*Do not touch me*" is exaggerated. He thinks that the emphasis should be on the second part of the verse, "*because I have not yet ascended to My Father*", where it is clearly stated that the return of the Son to the Father has a precise saving purpose in relation to the Disciples and to the world, Jesus following to send to them the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ Here is what he writes: "*He is not going to be content to prepare heavenly dwelling places to which one day He will take his disciples (Joh 14:2-3); rather, He will return from his Father to the disciples to establish them in a new relationship to God by giving them the Spirit.*"¹⁶ I think, R. Brown is right if we take into account John's view to the relationship between the Resurrection and the Ascension, expressed in the words "*because, I have not yet ascended to My Father*" and where the emphasis seems to be placed by the author more on the expression "I haven't yet ascended."¹⁷

In this context, however, there are some questions that need to be answered: Why did Mary Magdalene intend to hold Jesus back? And what is the reason for Jesus' simple motive for not allowing her to touch Him? Might be that of not having ascended to the Father yet?

Raymond Brown believes that Mary's attitude could be interpreted in the light of Jesus' promise at the Last Supper before His Passion: "*I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. Soon the world will no longer see Me; but you will see Me, for I am alive*" (Joh 14:18-19). It is possible that when Mary Magdalene saw and acknowledged Jesus, she thought that He had already returned, as He had promised, and that He would now remain with His disciples, giving thus a new shape to His former presence in their middle.¹⁸

¹⁴ Cf. G. MAIER, *Evangelhia după Ioan*, 843; R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Das Johannesevangelium*, III Teil, 377.

¹⁵ Cf. Raymond E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)*, 1011.

¹⁶ Raymond E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)*, 1011.

¹⁷ The difficulty in understanding this expression is due in large part to exegetes who have made a comparison between not allowing Jesus Mary Magdalene to touch Him and Thomas' invitation to touch Him. It should be noted that the verb ἅπτω - *to touch, to retain*, in the words of Jesus, addressed to Mary - μή μου ἅπτου (Joh 20:17), does not appear in the episode "Thomas", where we have, instead, the verb φέρω - *to carry, to bring*, etc. (See details, R. E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)*, 1011; G. MAIER, *Evangelhia după Ioan*, 843). Other exegetes, however, see in Mary's rejection that the time has not yet come for the true worship due to Jesus (cf. G. MAIER, *Evangelhia după Ioan*, 843). However, we believe that such an interpretation is foreign to the meaning of the text.

¹⁸ Cf. R. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)*, 1012. See also, Sf. CHIRIL al Alexandriei, *Comentariu la Evangelhia Sfântului Ioan*, 1147.

The question raised by such an interpretation is whether Mary Magdalene, who was not present at the Discourse during the Last Supper, could have known so well the words of Jesus concerning His return which will bring to the disciples a joy that no one else will take it from them? (Joh 16:22). Taking into account that the disciples were scattered in the Passion and that Jesus' meeting with Mary took place sometime on the morning of the Resurrection, when they were locked up for fear of the Jews, it is unlikely that Mary would have had the opportunity in this relatively short period of time to encounter an Apostle who would have talked her in detail what Jesus said at the Last Supper. Therefore, such an interpretation may be more difficult to support.

What Jesus actually says to Mary through the words "Don't touch Me!" it is rather a reference to the fact that the new relationship with Him will not be one generated by a mere appearance of Him, but one marked by the presence of the Holy Spirit which will be sent over the Apostles and into the world after His ascension to the Father, that is, after His glorification. In this context, it should be noted: If John the Evangelist speaks about the "ascension" of Jesus to the Father, he does not consider the event of the ascension to heaven after forty days from the Resurrection at which episode the book of Acts refers: *"To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many convincing proofs, being seen of them forty days...And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight"* (Acts 1:3.9). The exegetes clearly state that the Evangelist John had in mind another ascension of Jesus, namely, His *exaltation* in the presence of His Father, and not the "ascension" understood as the "terminus point" of His post-resurrection appearances.¹⁹

Therefore, in John 20:17 the author is not concerned with the final point of the appearances of the risen Jesus, but with the final point of "His hour" in which He was to pass from the earthly world to the Father (Joh 13:1), that is, the Resurrection and His Glorification through the Resurrection.

What is clear from the pages of the New Testament is that the risen Jesus did not return to the normality of a life he lived before His death. The new condition of His existence after the Resurrection was given by the eternity of His presence, also as Man, in the communion with the Father. This new eschatological status of His post-paschal Person was no longer characterized by the features of an earthly existence, so one cannot imagine an earthly place, spatially circumscribed, in which He would have lived during the forty days in which He shewed himself to different people.²⁰ *From the moment Jesus rose from the dead through the power of God, the Father, He is already in heaven with God, His Father* (cf. Acts 2:24; Rom 1:4). From this point of view, the Resurrection means, at the same time, His glorification or

¹⁹ See details in this regard, P. BENOIT, "L'Ascension", in *RB*, 56, 1949, 161-203.

²⁰ Cf. R. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)*, 1013.

exaltation, which Jesus spoke in the "Farewell Discourse" about: "*And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself with the glory which I had with You before the world was*" (Joh 17:5).

R. Brown is even of the opinion that when Jesus appears after the Resurrection, He appears from heaven.²¹ Therefore, the phrase "I ascend to the Father" (Joh 20:17) is nothing more than a mere expression in a "spatial language" that describes the exaltation or glorification of Jesus after the Passover.²²

From this perspective, in the theological conception of the author of the Fourth Gospel, Christ enters in the process of His glorification still from the cross, which is nothing but a step in the act of His eternal exaltation and glorification in the presence of the heavenly Father: "*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself. But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die*" (Joh 12:32- 33).²³

The ascension of the Son to the Father by Resurrection, or His glorification by ascension, meant the full spiritualization or deification of His humanity, i.e. its full filling of the Spirit. Thus, His humanity being fully spiritualized became a good communicator of the Spirit, too. It should be also noted, that His humanity

²¹ R. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John*, 1013.

²² This identity between *resurrection* and *ascension* seems to be expressed by some of the oldest texts of the New Testament.

- Acts 2:32-33 records: "*God raised up this Jesus...therefore being exalted to the right hand of God...*"

- In Rom 8:34, the Apostle Paul writes: "*..it is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God*" (see also Ephes 1:20).

- In Philipp 2:8-9 Christ's humility through death contrasts sharply with His ascension to the Father: "*He humbled Himself, and became obedient to the point of death, and still death on the cross. That is why God also exalted Him...*" (comp. 1 Pet. 3:21-22).

The Gospels seem to be even more explicit in this regard:

- The risen Jesus, from the Gospel of Matthew, is the One who was given all power in heaven and on earth: "*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth*" (28:18b).

- In Luke 24:26, it is Jesus who explains that "Christ must suffer and enter into His glory." Therefore, the New Testament testimonies, according to which the resurrection from the dead presupposes the ascension of Jesus into the presence of God and the sitting by the right hand of the Father, do nothing else but explain the dramatization of John 20:17 (See details in this regard, P. BENOIT, "L'Ascension", 170 ff; A. M. RAMSEY, "What is Ascension?", in *Historicity and Chronology in the New Testament* (Theological Collections) 6, London, SPCK, 1965). What is really difficult to specify, however, in these texts, is whether the reference to the ascension refers to the event mentioned by Acts, namely the ascension to heaven after forty days or that of Jesus glorification through the Resurrection. I believe that the reference is rather to the "terminus point" of the appearances after the Resurrection and to His ascension to heaven after forty days.

²³ Cf. R. E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John*, 1013; See also, R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 378.

even if it was exalted to the supreme stage of deification that is of the work of the Holy Spirit, it did not cease to remain human for all the time.²⁴

Therefore, the identification of Jesus Resurrection with His glorification may be called a characteristic of John's paschal theology. In this regard, it is important to point out that while in the Synoptic Gospels Jesus foretells His passion three times, in the Fourth Gospel we will find a Jesus anticipating not His passion, but His glorification, or exaltation. Moreover, when Jesus speaks in His Farewell Discourse about His victory, he does not mean the Resurrection, but His ascension to the Father (cf. Joh 14:12.28; 16:5.10.28). Therefore, all these events — the crucifixion and death on the Cross, the resurrection from the dead, the ascension to the Father, and the sitting at His right hand — taken together, are but parts of one saving action and of one "Hour of Jesus."²⁵

The Resurrection thus becomes part of the act of Jesus glorification and the extension of His presence in the world, through the Spirit, will be accomplished only after His ascension to the Father. So, the One who appears in the next scene before the Disciples (cf. Joh 20:22), sharing the Holy Spirit to them, is none other than Jesus, the glorified One. From this point of view, in this scene mentioned in 20:22 ff. the act of Jesus' glorification is already involved, for it is clearly stated in John 7:39 that the Spirit will not be given until Jesus is glorified: "*But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*"²⁶

During the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, at one moment specific to the preparatory phase of the Holy Sacrifice, the priest utters the following Troparion: "*In the Grave with the body, but in Hell with the soul, in that You are God; in the Paradise with the thief, and on the throne with the Father and the Spirit, was You. O Christ, filling all things, in that You are incomprehensible.*"²⁷

The presence of this Troparion, precisely in this moment of the Holy Liturgy, clearly shows that the sacrifice, that is, the death of Jesus, is inextricably linked with the resurrection, at the hypostatic level and, therefore, did not exist a moment in which Jesus, as real God and real Man in the same time, wouldn't have existed, or existed separately. This close connection between death and resurrection is a consequence of the hypostatic Union, in which the human nature of Jesus is united forever with the divine nature, in an undivided and inseparable, unmixed and unchanged way.

²⁴ Sf. CHIRIL al Alexandriei, *Comentariu la Evanghelia Sfântului Ioan*, 1146, note 2162.

²⁵ See details, Dumitru STĂNILAOE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, București 1978, vol. II, 143.

²⁶ See also, R. E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John*, 1014.

²⁷ *Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic, Apostolic Church* (By Isabel Florence HAPGOOD, Seventh Edition), SUA, New Jersey 1996, 97.

Therefore, the risen Lord does not allow Mary Magdalene to touch Him because she was not ready to understand the new relationship with Him, which, after the Resurrection, could no longer be one with a Jesus understood only as a historical Person, but first and foremost, one with a meta-historical Jesus.

The exegete R. Schnackenburg is of the opinion that in the explaining Jesus' gesture of forbidding Mary Magdalene from embracing his feet, should also be taken into account the possible intention of the Evangelist he had when he mentioned this episode, namely that of referring to Jesus words addressed to His disciples during the Farewell Discourse: *"I am going to prepare room for you..."* (Joh 14:1-3). The author of the Gospel would thus suggest that Jesus' refusal was meant to remind that those places had not yet been prepared and, therefore, the new communion with Him could only take place in those specially arranged places in heaven.²⁸ In this sense, the episode would be in the theological-paschal line of the Gospel. Here is what the mentioned biblical scholar writes: *"Damit wird das Ostergeschehen in die theologische Linie des Evangeliums einbezogen und finden andererseits die Ankündigungen der Abschiedsrede ihre österliche Bestätigung und Verwirklichung."*²⁹

The syllogism is interesting, but since Mary Magdalene was not present at such a promise, such an intention of Jesus would have been misunderstood for her. Therefore, such an interpretation has its weaknesses. Mary Magdalene could have the task of reminding the Disciples of Jesus' promise, through the command given to her to announce them that He is ascending to His Father, but Jesus' refusal would remain, in this context, still incomprehensible for her. However, instead of being allowed to touch Him, Mary nevertheless receives from Him the mandate to be the first who was going to announce to the Disciples Jesus' ascension to His Father.³⁰ Mary Magdalene thus becomes the first who was entrusted, by the risen Lord, with the great post-resurrection mystery, namely, that of the act of Jesus glorification achieved through His passions, death, and resurrection. She thus also becomes, through the mandate received, the *first confessor of that mystery*.³¹

However, regarding the identification of Jesus Resurrection with the act of His glorification, the episode of Jesus appearance to Mary Magdalene may raise another issue which, in fact, retained already the attention of some biblical scholars. Here is what it is about: If Jesus does not allow Mary Magdalene to hold Him back because He has not yet ascended to the Father, then the appearance took place before His ascension, in which case the Resurrection no longer means one and the same event

²⁸ See details, R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 377.

²⁹ R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 377.

³⁰ Cf. Udo SCHNELLE, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, (Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament - 4), Leipzig 1998, 303.

³¹ J. Zumstein calls her "le premier apôtre pascal" (Jean ZUMSTEIN, *L'Évangile selon Saint Jean*, 281).

with Ascension. Thus, the appearance to Mary Magdalene would have taken place before the Ascension, while the other appearances have taken place, logically, after the ascension.

Put the problem in this way, such an interpretation denies that the Resurrection is identical with the Ascension, since, in this case, there would be a time that separates the two events. Moreover, believes R. Brown, "it would mean that it was not the glorified Lord who appeared to Mary Magdalene and thus she was granted only an inferior-grade appearance."³² Such a hypothesis in the explanation of the episode is shared by some biblical scholars.³³

However, such assumptions do not take into account the theological purpose of the author of the Fourth Gospel, which *unifies a theology of Resurrection with that of Ascension* and which, by definition, does not involve units of time and space in the narrative act of the event which are, moreover, logically, sequentially necessary. If, however, the theological goal of the Evangelist is overlooked, the attempt to dramatize in temporal scenes what is under the "specie aeternitatis"³⁴ creates huge misunderstandings and real theological confusions.

Therefore, when the risen Lord explains to Mary Magdalene that He must ascend, the emphasis is placed on identifying the act of the Resurrection with that of the Ascension, and not on a certain interval of time, which is supposed to be mentioned by the Evangelist in his text.

In John's paschal theology there is only one risen Jesus, and He reveals Himself in His appearances only in the fullness of the exaltation of His glorified person. What is important to be emphasized in this context is the fact that Mary Magdalene, who meets the risen Lord, apparently, "before His Ascension," exclaims, "I have seen the Lord!" (Joh 20:18). Exactly the same words are exclaimed by the Disciples who met the risen Jesus "after His Ascension": "So the other disciples said to him (Thomas), "I have seen the Lord!" (Joh 20:25). From this point of view, R. Brown rightly states that the expression "I ascend to the Father" (Joh 20:17b) "is not an exact determination of time and has no implication for the state of the risen Jesus previous to that statement. It is a theological statement contrasting the passing nature of Jesus' presence in his post-resurrection appearances and permanent nature of his presence in the Spirit."³⁵

³² See R. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John*, 1014.

³³ For instance, for H. Kraft "the Jesus of this appearance is not yet in the process of being lifted up but is in the depth of his abasement, for he still has his dead body" (cf. H. KRAFT, "Johannes 20:17", in *TLZ* 76, 1951, 570).

³⁴ R. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John*, 1014. See also, C.H. DODD, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge 1953, 441.

³⁵ Cf. R. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John*, 1015.

In the parallel account of Jesus' appearance to the myrrh-bearing women, recorded by Matthew (28:10), one can see that the Saviour commands to Mary Magdalene and to her companions to go and tell to His disciples that He will go to Galilee and there is going to appear to them. Mary Magdalene receives, in this context, a simple spatial indication regarding the framework of a future appearance of Jesus. In the Gospel of John, instead, Mary Magdalene is the beneficiary of the explanation of the meaning of the Resurrection.

Therefore, the Evangelist's concern in neglecting temporal implications to the detriment of theological meanings, as a working method, is as obvious as can be.

Speaking of His exaltation (cf. Joh 20:17), Jesus is not so much concerned with drawing the attention to His own glorification as to the meaning and significance which has the act of His glorification for men, for their history, namely, the offering of the Holy Spirit, that will make them children of God.³⁶ In this sense, the exegete Ch. Dodd states: *"It is not the resurrection as Christ's resumption of heavenly glory that needs to be emphasized, but the resurrection as the renewal of personal relations with the disciples and with the world as a whole. These relations are in mind when Jesus speaks of the disciples as 'my brothers' and describes the goal of his ascension as 'my Father and your Father, my God and your God.'"*³⁷

Therefore, with "Mary Magdalene" episode, two of the events foretold by Jesus are fulfilled:

1. *"His Hour"* in which He was to pass to the Father, and which is predicted in Joh 13:1: *"Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end."*

2. *The request to be glorified* by the Father: *"And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had before the world was"* (Joh 17:5).

These two events outline the act of the glorification of Jesus, and which, in the theological view of the author of the Fourth Gospel, is a paradoxical one: the glory of the risen Christ is not only one of victory, but also one of suffering.

³⁶ R. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John*, 1016.

³⁷ C. H. DODD, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 442.

As a *final conclusion*, it may be stated that His “Ascension”, which Jesus speaks about in the dialogue with Mary Magdalene, is a saving act that coincides with His glorification that is reached in the final act of the triumph over death, namely, His Resurrection, and not a temporary event, which occurred forty days after it.

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