

# 邁向新境界

*Reaching New Territory*

編輯

黃俊儒 吳羅伯特 陳凱英

Edited by

Samson L. Uytanlet, Thomas R. V. Forster, Susan Tan



菲律賓聖經神學院  
BIBLICAL SEMINARY OF THE PHILIPPINES



# 邁向新境界

神學文集

## *Reaching New Territory*

Theological Reflections

菲律賓聖經神學院創院六十週年紀念文集  
Published in Commemoration of the Sixtieth Founding Anniversary  
of the Biblical Seminary of the Philippines

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# 前言

以色列阿，你要聽。耶和華我們上帝是獨一的主。你要盡心、盡性、盡力愛耶和華你的上帝。(申六 4~5)

我們很高興我們的神學院——菲律濱聖經神學院(BSOP)在今年九月慶祝創辦六十週年紀念。我們滿懷激情感恩上帝差遣我們裝備主僕、扎根主道、做成主工、榮耀主名！

我們感謝上帝賦予神學院許多禮物，其中特別強調上帝賜予我們最好的，包括我們的心靈、屬靈的生命、事奉的能力。同樣地，作為上帝的禮物，即是祂通過我們神學院訓練事工所作成的美事——我們把這本學術著作呈獻給讀者。

這些文章是本院教師所撰寫，他們在神學教育領域各有自己的專長。誠然，我們的教師在聖經研究、神學研究、歷史研究、基督教教育、跨文化研究和教牧輔導方面的貢獻將是對學者的啟發，也必將鼓勵所有讀者。

願榮耀歸給上帝！

邵晨光博士

菲律濱聖經神學院院長



## FOREWORD

*“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut 6:4–5).*

We are so happy that our seminary, the Biblical Seminary of the Philippines (BSOP), celebrates our 60th Founding Anniversary in September 2017. We are thrilled that God gives us the opportunity in *equipping God’s worker with God’s Word for God’s work!*

We are thankful to our God for bestowing many gifts to our seminary. We emphasize on giving God our best, which includes our heart, our soul and our might. As a gift to our God for the wonderful things he has accomplished through the training ministry of our seminary, we offer this academic book. The articles are written by our own faculty who have their own specialty in various fields of theological education. Surely, the contribution of our faculty in biblical studies, theological studies, historical studies, Christian education, intercultural studies, and pastoral counseling will be enlightenment to the scholars, and also an encouragement to all readers.

May our Lord be honored!

Joseph Shao, PhD  
President

## INTRODUCTION

*Reaching New Territory* is our theme as we celebrate God's faithfulness to us for the past 60 years. The theme also expresses our prayer as we look forward to God's continuous work through BSOP in new areas within his kingdom where we never ministered before. We offer the essays in this collection to God in hope that he can use them for the building up of his Body.

There are four main sections with a total of fifteen articles (3 Chinese and 12 English) in this collection. Two essays were contributed relating to *Mission*. In **Eduardo Lo's** 「教會宣教邁向新境界」 (“The Mission of the Church in Reaching New Territory”), he looks at how Abraham, Joshua, Nehemiah, and the disciples fulfilled their God-given task in their respective generation. He encourages us that we also need to fulfill our task in our generation. **Juliet Lee Uytanlet** reminds us that the number of church members is not always an indicator of growth. In her essay “Transit, Transient, Transition: How the Lexington Chinese Christian Church Became an Instrument of Conversion,” she explains that there are many factors affecting the increase/decrease of church membership and attendance, and even churches without significant increase in number can be considered a growing church.

Eight articles were included in the section on *Biblical Interpretation*. **Susan Tan** examines the literary structure of James 1:1–12 in her essay 「聖經文學的分析與解經：以雅各書一章1至12節為例」 (“Literary Analysis and Exegesis of Scripture: An Example from James 1:1–12”). She shows the importance of studying this passage, not only to increase the knowledge of the believers, but more importantly, for cultivating their spiritual life. **Sunny Lu's** 「探討路加福音之嬰孩敘事的政治隱喻」 (“A Political Reading of Luke's Infancy Narrative”) is an examination of the political language used in Luke's story of Jesus' birth. This account does not only highlight God's salvation of his people (which includes salvation from social exploitation), but it also emphasizes the call to allegiance to the true king, namely, the Messiah. **Joseph Shao** surveys the three main portions of the Hebrew Bible (Law, Prophets, and Writings) underscoring the theme of ecology in his essay “An OT Theology of Creation Care.” He stresses both God's role as creator and our responsibility as stewards. In **Michael Malessa's** ““Go Out of The Midst of Her, My People!': Reading the Oracles Against Babylon in Jeremiah

50–51,” he discusses the poetical structure and theological themes of Jeremiah’s oracles. The relationship between sin and judgment, God’s relationship with his people, and his role as redeemer are some of the themes found in these oracles. **Anthony Hao** explains the nature of suffering of the second-generation Christians in his essay “Persecution of Early Christians and the Message of Hebrews for Today.” The message of Hebrews, particularly the identity of Christ and the warnings given to the Christians, is not just for the early believers, but also for us. **Samuel Tan**, in his essay “‘The Lord Will Provide’ or ‘We Should Obey’? An Inquiry into the Main Theme of Genesis 22:1–19 Using a Narrative Analysis Approach,” examines the canonical story of Abraham by employing narrative theories. He concludes that the main purpose of the story is not about God’s provision, but about God’s requirement of obedience. In **Philip Co**’s “The Relationship of the Egyptian Gods to the Plagues Upon Egypt,” he provides an overview of the various approaches in interpreting the story of the Ten Plagues. He points out that these miracles were separate miraculous acts of Yahweh, not only to save Israel, but also to confront Pharaoh and denounce the gods of the Egyptians. **Samson Uytanlet** investigates Origen’s hermeneutical assumptions and methods in his essay “The Text and the Interpreter: Origen’s Exegetical Presuppositions Based on His Commentary on John.” He accentuates Origen’s emphases, first, on the role of Christ and the Spirit in guiding the interpreters in their exegesis of the text of Scripture, and second, on the role of the interpreters as “Levites and priests” who are to present their work as offerings to God in the service of God’s people.

The section on *Church History and Theology* is composed of three essays. **Dennis Yam**, in his essay “Calvin and the Preaching of the Gospel,” reminds us of the importance of focusing on the Gospel in preaching. Gleaning on Calvin’s *Institutes*, Yam shows the sanctity of the preachers’ role as God’s representative behind the pulpit. In **Jean Uy Uayan**’s essay “‘Could They Be Made to See?’: The Educational Legacy of Xiamen to the Philippines,” she revisits the work of missionaries of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) in Xiamen in the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and the legacy they left for the Chinese in the Philippines. She particularly focuses on Iok Tek, a Chinese school in the Philippines with a system patterned after schools in Xiamen which promotes values formation among their students. Although Iok Tek had been closed long ago, its system of education can still be seen in many Chinese Christian schools in the Philippines. **Thomas Forster** reviews the

questions being discussed in the late-nineteenth century in his essay “‘What is the Old Testament About?’: Eduard Böhl’s Historico-Christological Reading of the Old Testament.” His essay focuses on Eduard Böhl, one of the defenders of a Christological reading of the OT during the period when a historical reading of OT writings was gaining popularity among exegetes.

Two essays are included in the section on *Pastoral Care and Leadership*. **Rosa C. Shao** discusses the *Comprehensive Model of Member Care* in her essay “Doing Member Care Among Chinese Missionaries.” She stresses the need for a comprehensive program for caring that focuses on the various areas of the person’s life, including the spiritual life, physical needs, career, interpersonal relationships, family, finances, response to crisis, and psychological needs of a person. In **Wilson Tran**’s “Four Variables of Leadership,” he discusses the four areas of competencies needed by leaders. Citing examples from the Bible, he demonstrates that a competent leader is not one who aims for self - aggrandizement but one who is fully dependent on the goodness of God.

*Samson L. Uytanlet*



# MISSION



# 教會宣教邁向新境界

李子群 EDUARDO LO



## 引言

菲聖六十週年慶的主題定為「傳承六十載，邁向新境界」，意即菲聖秉承過去六十年的恩典、經驗和智慧，在這關鍵性的時代，將配合時代的需求，大膽跨出去，邁向一個在神學教育、行政管理，以及領導模式各方面的新境界。

本文將以此主題為引導，而聚焦在神學教育以及教會宣教的層面，來探索「宣教」與「新境界」的互動關係。筆者試圖從一些聖經人物如何在宣教領域上突破現況，邁進新境界的經歷，來探討當今教會在宣教事工上應如何邁向新境界，以達成主耶穌所託付的大使命。



基督教是個重視普世宣教的信仰，從創世記就開始記載宣教的事蹟。因此教會所傳承的歷史、智慧和經驗，若從聖經最早的記載算起，至少也有六千年吧！<sup>1</sup>

至於「邁向新境界」，倒是有些顧慮。一提到「新」這個字，有些比較傳統保守的信徒可能會覺得有點不自在，因為聖經一再告訴我們，上帝是永不改變的(瑪三 6；詩八十九 34，一零二 27；來一 12)，既是這樣，那麼，教會不是應該堅守傳統而以不變去應萬變嗎？教會有必要邁向新境界嗎？其實按照聖經的記載，上帝是挺喜歡創新的。祂在舊約先知書裡一再地強調祂要做新事(賽四十二 9，四十三 19，四十八 6，六十五 17；耶三十一 22；民十六 20)。

上帝不但自己喜歡做新事，也鼓勵我們別安於現狀，要一直不斷地創新開拓，祂要我們擴張帳幕之地，無止地張大幔子，放長繩子，向左右開展(賽五十四 2~3)。可見上帝要教會不斷的擴張境界，突破現況，邁進新領域。

## 亞伯拉罕：宣教是蒙福的途徑

### 上帝呼召人從事宣教—「去」

亞伯拉罕可說是聖經所記載的第一位宣教士。上帝在米所波大米向亞伯蘭顯現，並給他一個差傳的使命：「你要離開本地和親族，

往我所要指示你的地方去」(徒七 2~3)。上帝不惜冒風險，差派一個拜偶像的異教徒 (pagan) 亞伯蘭「去」一個完全陌生的地方做宣教士，<sup>2</sup> 並應許要大大賜福給他和他的後裔(創十二 1~3)。

### 人必須憑信心接受宣教的呼召和挑戰

亞伯拉罕對這位向他顯現的耶和華上帝可謂萍水相逢，素未謀面，要他順服這個充滿風險的命令，實在不容易！要邁向這個嶄

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<sup>1</sup> Roy B. Zuck, "Job," (BKC; ed. John Walvoord and Roy Zuck; Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985), 717.

<sup>2</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 262.

新的境界，他首先必須踏出信心的一大步，確信上帝不會食言；還要讓信心化為膽量，去克服地理上的遷移、跨文化的生活、語言上的障礙、從拜偶像的多神信仰轉而敬拜並宣揚獨一真神耶和華，這牽涉到離鄉別井，舉目無親，千里跋涉，意識形態及信仰的 180 度轉變等等的挑戰，以及沙漠地帶的飢荒，多次的漂泊遷移，外族人的欺負等等嚴苛的信心考驗，最後還要經歷親殺愛子以撒獻為燔祭的信心試驗，來驗證自己對上帝的完全信服，還得遙遙無期地等待著上帝所應許賜福的實現。這「信心之父」的榮譽的確當之不易！這些都是要邁向宣教新境界的必經之路。

### 憑信心從事宣教必帶來祝福

亞伯拉罕放棄一切所擁有的，包括在老家吾珥的祖傳產業和鄉親，憑信心邁向新境界，被差派去外地做宣教士，一生活出信心美好的見證，雖曾有過失敗的經歷，卻能在外邦人面前榮耀耶和華上帝(創十四 17~20，二十 17，二十一 22)。

新約希伯來書的作者為他作見證說：「亞伯拉罕因著信，蒙召的時候，就遵命出去，……他因著信，就在所應許之地作

客，……因為他等候那座有根基的城，就是上帝所經營，所建造的」(來十一 8~10)。亞伯拉罕一生住在帳篷裡，表示他相信上

帝所要賜給他的福，不僅是地上迦南產業的短暫之福，更是那上帝所建造永恆之城的福。<sup>3</sup> 雖然他在生前沒有看到上帝所應許的福，卻憑信心領受了，因此上帝按照所應許的，賜福給他的後裔，也使整個以色列民族得到祝福，更讓全世界都因此而得到上帝救恩的福份。

靠信心作宣教是蒙福的途徑。首要的條件是踏出信心的一大步，大膽邁進新境界。

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<sup>3</sup> George H. Guthrie, *Genesis* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 378.

## 摩西：宣教是上帝與人的合作， 但非靠人的才能，單靠上帝的大能

上帝對宣教工作有兩個很獨特的原則，第一個原則就是祂一定要找個合作的夥伴來一起作，不像創造的工作那樣，上帝獨當一面自己做；第二個原則就是祂不讓天使做祂的宣教夥伴，而把這個特權和使命留給人類來跟祂一起作。

### 上帝親自選召祂的宣教夥伴

上帝以自己的主權，藉著焚燒不盡的荊棘向摩西顯出祂超然的大能，並呼召及差派摩西跟祂一起做宣教，向那些做奴隸且已不認識祖宗的上帝的以色列民宣揚釋放和拯救的福音(出三 8)，也向法老王和他的臣僕宣告審判的信息(出三 20)。

### 被選人必須有宣教的負擔和意願

不管是主動性的或是被動性的，上帝的選召主權必須加上人的負擔和意願才能構成宣教合作的基本條件。<sup>4</sup>

當上帝在荊棘中呼叫摩西的時候，摩西回應：「我在這裡」 (*hinneni*，出三 4)。這個回應表示他承認上帝的主權，並願意服從祂的指示。這個反應就初步建立了差遣者與被差遣者的正確關係。<sup>5</sup>

摩西曾經為了要救一個被埃及人欺負的以色列同胞，而伸手把埃及人打死了。這證明他對拯救同胞的事情有熱切的負擔。但有負擔還要加上意願(即意志力)。當上帝呼召他出來的時候，摩西缺乏意志力。他因畏懼作那麼大那麼難的差事而一再的抗拒推卸，上帝耐心地為他解答他心裡的種種疑問和顧慮，也藉著他手上的杖行了一些神蹟來保證上帝大能的同在，以此來催逼摩西接受這個合作提案。但摩西還是沒有這個意願。最後上帝向他

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<sup>4</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical & Theological Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1976), 73.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Book of Exodus: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections* (The New Interpreter's Bible; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 712.

發怒，並為他找哥哥亞倫來做幫手，同時答應賜給他們口才，又要指教他們當行的事，這才終於使摩西產生被動性的宣教意願。

有些人在年輕時就很主動的奉獻自己給主用，有些人卻像摩西一樣，不斷的抗拒推卸，上帝還是耐心地催逼等候，拖到多年後才被逼出奉獻作宣教的意願來，損失了不少宣教的機會。上帝非常重視被選人有與祂合作的宣教意願。

### 上帝願意與謙卑的人合作

民數記十二章 3 節記載「摩西為人謙和 [נָדַבְרָה] 謙卑」，勝過世上的眾人」。這句話不是摩西在自吹自擂，這種獨特性的態度是上帝所授予的。<sup>6</sup> 摩西在埃及皇宮里長大，受過四十年皇族的高等教育，學問知識何止超人一等？而且他身體健壯，武功高強，手無寸鐵地打死一個欺負自己同胞的埃及人(出二 12)，並在井旁隻手趕走一群欺負米甸七個女兒的牧羊人(出二 17)，可說是一個才智勇兼備的英雄人物，與那些一輩子做奴隸，從來沒受過教育的以色列民眾相比，這份拯救以色列百姓脫離埃及苦害的艱鉅工作的人選可說非他莫屬呀！當上帝呼召他的時候，摩西應該可以很自豪的對上帝說：「哈，祢終於找對人了！」但他卻真誠謙虛地推辭，<sup>7</sup>「我是什麼人？竟能去見法老」(出三 11)，這種人正是上帝所要找的宣教合作對象。

### 靠上帝的大能邁向新境界

摩西雖然年輕時曾經做過法老王的王子，但後來成為殺人逃犯，又在曠野渡過四十年漫長的牧人生活，現在忽然間要他邁向新境界，去面對埃及的國家元首，向兇暴的法老王挑戰，難怪他恐慌畏懼。也因為這樣，才讓他知道絕不可靠自己的才能，而要單靠上帝的大能，才能成事。

不靠才能，單靠上帝的大能。這是宣教不可忽略的功課。

<sup>6</sup> P. J. Budd, *Numbers* (WBC 5; Dallas: Word, 1998), 136; Childs, *Exodus*, 73.

<sup>7</sup> Childs, *Exodus*, 73.

摩西與上帝的長期配搭合作，不但促成他們之間有深厚的友情(出三十三 11)，也很成功的達成他們的宣教目標：「以色列人看見耶和華向埃及人所行的大事，就敬畏耶和華」(出十四 31)。

埃及人也因而看出以色列中有真神，「我們從以色列人面前逃跑罷，因耶和華為他們攻擊我們了」(出十四 25)。

## 約書亞的宣教：一條向來沒有走過的路(書三 4)

### 宣教不可依賴他人

約書亞蒙上帝呼召，帶領以色列人進迦南，在外邦異教徒中做宣教士。過去上帝透過摩西帶領他們出埃及，過紅海，行曠野，長時間以來大小事都有摩西做主，由摩西承擔所有的責任。這麼龐大的一個團隊在摩西的帶領下，度過了無數次的困難和挑戰，終於來到了迦南地的邊境，從一個幾十萬的烏合之眾，經過四十年的磨練、重整、組織、培訓，慢慢轉型成了一隊素質高、紀律強的正規軍隊，浩浩蕩蕩地逼近迦南的邊境，使迦南全地的居民都戰競轟動起來。

在這關鍵時刻，上帝對約書亞說：「我的僕人摩西死了。」這何異晴天霹靂！摩西死了，約書亞所依賴的人沒了，怎麼辦？上帝對他說：「現在你要起來，帶領百姓過約旦河，到我所要賜給你們的地去。」對約書亞來說，這確是邁向一個新境界。當時

約書亞的心情肯定是七上八下，過去他在摩西下面服事，不需要負什麼大責任，現在忽然間要他撐起這麼大的擔子，帶領眾百姓跨進一個四面仇敵的新境界。談何容易？沒有摩西可以依賴，行嗎？

### 跟著約櫃走

上帝很了解約書亞的心情，一再安慰鼓勵他不要懼怕，不要驚慌，要剛強壯膽，並吩咐他要謹守遵行一切的律法，就必與他同在。約書亞照上帝的吩咐，做好了帶領全民眾跨過約旦河的準備，在這緊要關頭，上帝就啟示約書亞一個很清楚也很關鍵性的宣教原則——「跟著約櫃去」，「使你們知道所當走的路；因為這

條路你們向來沒有走過」(書三 3~4)。約櫃代表上帝的同在，跟著上帝的指示走，當然就不會有差錯。這就讓約書亞有所依賴、有了方向感、也有了踏實感。

### 約書亞：宣教士的楷模

在聖經人物中，摩西可算是頂尖人物，但聖經裡並沒有一本「摩西記」，卻有一本「約書亞記」，可見約書亞在上帝的眼中，份量並不遜於摩西。他很踏實地默默順服上帝的命令來行事，這是他得勝的關鍵。<sup>8</sup> 這美德很值得每一位宣教士仿效。

當上帝選召/差派約書亞時，上帝在差派典禮的訓詞中(書一 6~8)，特別重複吩咐約書亞要「謹守遵行」祂的律法(書一 7~8)，就必與祂同在。聖經學者波伊斯把這篇訓詞分成四小段：(1)要仔細研讀上帝的話(7 節)，才不致偏離左右；(2)要時常宣講上帝的話(8 節 a)，常用上帝的話提醒教導家人和眾人；(3)要經常思考上帝的話(8 節 b)，把自己的意識形態向著上帝的真道調準；(4)要忠誠遵行上帝的話(8 節 c)，以上帝的真理作行事為人的準則。<sup>9</sup> 正如詩篇第一篇所應許的，這樣作，道路就必亨通順利(8 節 d；比較詩一 3)。

約書亞的宣教之路是「跟著約櫃去」，不依賴人，單依賴遵行上帝的話，宣教事工就亨通順利。所以他接任不久就得著一顆十分貴重的福音果子——外邦人喇哈(大衛和耶穌的祖先)和她一家。他在以色列民中間也為上帝做了美好的見證——「至於我和我家，我們必事奉耶和華」(書二十四 15)。

有些宣教士在邁進新境界時，所依賴的是他所屬的差會或是上司。但願約書亞的見證能提醒他們：莫依賴人，惟跟著約櫃走！

<sup>8</sup> W. Phillip Keller, *Joshua: Man of Fearless Faith* (Waco: Word Books, 1983), 178.

<sup>9</sup> James M. Boice, *Joshua: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1989), 16–17.

## 尼希米的宣教：傳遞異象，群策群力

尼希米的呼召和亞伯拉罕的呼召恰好相反，亞伯拉罕必須離開家鄉到一個陌生的地方去宣教，而尼希米卻要從外地回歸自己的故鄉作宣教，離開國外皇宮裡優越的環境和生活，來到極度貧困荒廢的老家鄉，藉著修理耶路撒冷城牆的工作，帶領自己的同胞歸向耶和華上帝。這是何等的新境界！

### 宣教事工：神賜給異象，人領受使命

尼希米是在南國猶大國淪陷在巴比倫手下被擄的八萬猶太人之一，後來波斯國滅了巴比倫，對被擄的列國人民比較溫和友善，容許他們歸回祖國。尼希米在波斯王亞達薛西的皇宮裡做高官。當時有些從猶大來的親友向他報告耶路撒冷城荒涼破壞的情況，尼希米因愛國也愛上帝的家，聽聞噩訊隨即痛哭，為國為民認罪禱告。上帝鑒于他愛國愛民愛祂的心腸，就把修理城牆的異象向他啟示。

上帝藉異象向人啟示祂的心意，使祂的旨意能行在地上如同行在天上。人領受異象所給的使命，便產生推動力去完成上帝所啟示的異象。異象能啟發人的激情，也能促進團隊的合作；有異象就有目標，使激情化為力量，使人不畏風險地勇往直前，直到達成目標。<sup>10</sup>

相信當時很多猶太人，不管是留居在耶路撒冷城的，或是移居在外邦各城的，都知道耶城的毀壞荒涼，但顯然的，他們都認為與自己無關，或是認為問題太大，非個人所能勝任，而覺得無能為力；惟有尼希米與眾不同，他因有好的靈命，對上帝的心意有敏銳的反應，辨明這是上帝給的異象，就讓這個異象成為自己的負擔和使命，定意要重建城牆，於是大膽向亞述國王請願，把異象付諸行動(參尼一 1~11)。

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<sup>10</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, “Developing a Vision,” *Christianity Today*, published July 2007, accessed 7 July 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2007/july-online-only/042705.html>.

## 現場評估：踏踏實實做好準備的工作

尼希米帶了一批官方團隊回耶路撒冷，乘夜帶幾個隨從到現場做評估。哪裡有倒塌，哪裡有裂縫，哪裡有破口，哪裡缺了一扇門，或壞了一個栓，全部記錄下來，然後再預算需要多少材料，需要多少的工時，當地有哪些人手可以動用，都一一列下來(尼二 11~16)。<sup>11</sup> 這是整個工程最重要的一步，除了要有智慧和辦事能力，還必須對問題有正確的解剖和認知。如果尼希米在觀察和評估城牆的態度是：看到一個裂縫或是一個破洞，就說：沒關係，小問題，已經幾十年了，稍微有一些瑕疵都很正常，算了，不用那麼挑剔；到頭來就大事化小事，小事化沒事。乾脆不必修理算了。

同樣的，在宣教工場不但需要有愛心和激情，也需要對種種問題有正確的分析、解剖、評估，這當然需要智慧和辦事能力。

## 傳遞異象：激發熱情，動員群眾，促使合作

做了評估之後，尼希米就召集當地的猶太人民眾，宗教領袖，貴冑和官長，告訴他們說：「我們所遭的難，耶路撒冷怎樣荒涼，城

門被火焚燒，你們都看見了。來吧，我們重建耶路撒冷的城牆，免得再受凌辱！」這是異象的傳遞，它能激發民眾的熱情。果真的，眾人就回應說：「我們起來建造吧！於是他們奮勇做這善工。」(尼二 17~18)。尼希米個人所領受的異象和負擔頓成了眾人的異象和負擔。

當時尼希米向國王所請願的種種要求，國王全都答應了，也給錢，也給材料，也給人。相信尼希米有能力要求王給他一批專業的建築工程人員，來完成修牆的工作，但他沒有這樣作，他要當地的猶太人起來群策群力。所以他把異象傳遞給當地的猶太人，讓他們參與異象的實現和達成。

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<sup>11</sup> Joseph Too Shao and Rosa Ching Shao, *Ezra & Nehemiah* (Asia Bible Commentary; Manila: OMF Literature, 2007), 127.



有些宣教士單槍匹馬的在宣教工場上鞠躬盡瘁，盡心竭力地苦幹多年，結果沒什麼功效。要是懂得傳遞異象，激發熱情，讓當地人士參與，群策群力，必能事半功倍！

### 擇善固執：承受壓力，克服攔阻(尼二 19~20)

當時猶太人的敵人參巴拉、多比雅、基善等因嫉妒而多方作難、威脅，破壞、攻擊、攔阻修城的工程。城牆荒涼破損對他們來說是好事，這樣猶太人就無法自衛，他們也方便進去偷搶。尼希米需要提防這些人的負面影響和干擾工作的行動，就吩咐工人一面拿工具繼續工作，一面拿武器防禦，警醒防敵。幸得猶太人從上到下都熱烈同心參與修建的工作，使那些敵人的負面行動無法得逞，自慚形穢，無地自容！<sup>12</sup>

在宣教事工上更是如此，撒旦最嫉恨的就是宣教工作，它肯定會慫恿一些異教徒或官方來破壞攔阻宣教的工作。宣教士必須穿戴上帝所賜的全副軍裝，才能抵擋仇敵的詭計，並且成就一切，還能站立的住(弗六 13)。彼得也提醒我們要謹守警醒，用堅固的信心抵擋敵人的攻擊(彼前五 8)。

## 耶穌的門徒：考驗通過後，頒授大使命

來到新約，第一批的正規宣教士當然是耶穌復活後的十一個門徒了。

「初出茅廬，驚慌失措，一片茫然」。像約書亞一樣，門徒過去三年跟著耶穌到處傳道，趕鬼，治病。大小事有耶穌做主，並承擔所有的責任。他們經過很多培訓，磨練，失敗，受責備，最後浩浩蕩蕩進入耶路撒冷，全城都轟動起來，門徒萬分興奮，預測他們即將站在螢光燈下，襄助耶穌帶領猶太人跨進一個新時代了。忽然間耶穌被抓也被處死了。他們的依靠沒了！驚慌失措是

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<sup>12</sup> Ralph W. Klein, *The Books of Ezra & Nehemiah: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections* (NIB 3; Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 770.

必然的反應。當下所面臨的問題是：這條邁向新境界的宣教路要不要繼續走下去？

顯然耶穌早就知道門徒們會面臨這個挑戰，所以祂從死裡復活，就馬上差天使向那些來探墓的婦女傳話給門徒，吩咐他們要回加利利去見祂。之後，耶穌還是不放心，再親自向那些婦女顯現，要他們傳話給門徒，務必到加利利去見祂。

果然不出所料，見面的時候耶穌就向他們頒佈了大使命(太二十八 19~20)，開始了歷史上最大的宣教行動。可惜很多人都忽略了一小段經文，就是在頒發大使命之前，耶穌先給門徒做一次最後的考驗，通過之後才把大使命交給他們。

讓我們從這兩節經文(太二十八 16~17)，來觀察門徒在邁向宣教新境界的前夕所做的四件事，他們如何仿效主耶穌生前所作的，來通過這次的考驗。教會可以借鏡門徒所做的這四件事，來學習及應用在宣教的處境上。特別要留意的是，這兩節經文和馬太福音十四章耶穌在海上行走的經文共用一些特別的原文字詞，可幫助我們在研讀這兩節經文時，更能明白作者馬太所要傳遞給我們的信息。

### 完全順從上帝的旨意

上面提到約書亞如何完全順服並遵行上帝的話，十一個門徒也學到了這門功課。「十一個門徒往加利利去」(太二十八 16a)。顯然他們聽從了耶穌的吩咐。<sup>13</sup> 門徒有各種藉口可以不去見耶穌，雖然他們回去加利利，但耶穌要他們上山去見祂，他們卻下海去釣魚(約二十一 3)，回去重操舊業——打魚幹活。這是他們最熟練最有把握的事，是舊境界，舊領域。他們對邁向新境界有恐懼感，不敢去面對。但經文告訴我們，最後他們決定無論如何還是要去見耶穌。儘管他們掙扎，最後還是完全順從耶穌的吩咐，不只是去加利利，還到所約定的山上與主會面。

<sup>13</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 744.

這正是耶穌在類似的情況下所作的——完全服從上帝。記得那個晚上祂被逮捕之前，在客西馬尼園有很大的掙扎，因為十字架這條路祂從來沒有走過。聖經形容祂憂愁起來，極其憂傷，對門徒說：「我心裡甚是憂傷，幾乎要死。」然後，祂俯伏在地上祈禱，「我父阿，倘若可行，求你叫這杯離開我。然而，不要照

我的意思，只要照你的意思。」接著，祂第二次禱告：「我父阿，這杯若不能離開我，必要我喝，就願你的旨意成全。」要順

服！要邁向新境界，不免會恐懼驚慌和掙扎，讓我們學習這些門徒，放下自己的意願，順服上帝的話。宣教的成功秘訣是決定完全順從上帝的旨意。

### 有持久的靈修禱告生活

「到了耶穌約定的山上」(太二十八 16b)。耶穌並沒有告訴門徒那座山的名，可能這是一座無名的小山，但絕對是門徒非常熟悉的老地方。<sup>14</sup> 在那裡他們曾經常與耶穌在一起，耶穌經常把他們帶到那裡去祈禱。馬太福音十四章 22 節記載耶穌餵飽五千人之後，就獨自上山去禱告。這是祂的禱告山，相信祂常常帶門徒到這座山上去禱告。

每次聖經裡提到在山上相會都具有重要意義。上帝在西乃山與摩西相會，向他頒佈十誡(出十九 3)。耶穌在山上徹夜禱告之後才揀選十二門徒(太三 31~14；路六 12~13)。耶穌在山上向信徒頒佈登山寶訓，揭示天國的國度憲章(太五至七章)。耶穌在山上改變形象，揭發祂的真正身份(太十七 1~8)。耶穌也在山上預告末世要發生的事(太二十四章)。<sup>15</sup> 最重要的是耶穌在山上有自己安靜靈修禱告的時間。祂經常在大事發生之前，到山上祈禱，與父神親近。

生活在快節奏的當今社會，人們習慣快餐心態，講求效率，包括我們的靈修生活。可惜靈修生活是沒有捷徑的。馬可福音描繪的耶穌像一個工作狂，祂完成一項任務，就立即轉移到下一個

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<sup>14</sup> Morris, *Matthew*, 744.

<sup>15</sup> D. E. Hiebert, "An Expository Study of Matthew 28:16 - 20," *BSac* 149 (1992): 341.

任務，從不休息。祂往往通宵達旦地工作，甚至常連飯都沒吃。然而，祂從來沒有省略靈修生活：「天未亮的時候，耶穌起來，

到曠野地方去，在那裡禱告」(可一 35)。沒有捷徑，連上帝的兒子也不例外。

教會從事宣教，經常會要求邁向新境界，所以宣教者更需要經常有安靜的時間與主單獨相會。主必將重要的計劃或異象向他啟示，就如當時復活的主向門徒頒佈大使命一樣，先決條件是要上山與主相會，與主親近。在靈修禱告的時候，上帝會把祂的心意向尋求的人闡明。

### 承認上帝的主權

「他們見了耶穌就拜祂」(太二十八 17a)。按聖經的記載，過去門徒跟從耶穌三年多，就只有一次拜過耶穌(太十四 33)，<sup>16</sup> 當時門徒們在船上，海上起了大風浪，耶穌在海面上行走，一上船，風浪就停住了。門徒們就拜祂，說：祢真是上帝的兒子(太十四 33)。門徒拜耶穌表示他們承認主耶穌是上帝，也承認祂的主權。這也正是耶穌親自所示範的。

當耶穌在曠野受魔鬼試探時，被帶到一個高山上，將萬國榮華都指給祂看，「你若俯伏拜我，我就把這一切都賜給你。」耶穌回答說：「撒旦，退去吧！因為經上記這說：當拜主你的上帝，

單要事奉祂。」(太四 8~10)。耶穌只承認上帝的主權，不會因財富，名譽，權力而跪拜撒旦。

可惜有些基督徒在他們的生活中有其他的主，崇拜別的偶像，當他們面臨新境界時所作的決定常是建立在經濟利益的基礎上，或是在榮譽上，看哪一個事工會帶來比較好的收入或是帶來好的名望；當選擇配偶時，要看對方是否能對自己提供經濟保障？把物質，事業，名利，榮譽，權利等等拿來當偶像，來決定自己的

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<sup>16</sup> M. Eugene Boring, *The Gospel of Matthew: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections* (NIB 8; Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 502.

抉擇。這是錯的心態。願教會和信徒在邁向宣教新境界的時候，單拜主耶穌，承認並接受祂的主權。

## 承認自己的軟弱和有限

我們必須承認自己的局限性，謙虛尋求上帝的憐憫和恩典。「然

而，還有人疑惑」(太二十八 17b)。有些人可能不明白這句話的意思。其實「有人」(οἱ) 這個字，在原文是第三人稱，複數代名詞，意思是「他們」。是指所有在場的門徒在疑惑，而不是「有些人」在疑惑。那麼，難道他們是對耶穌還心存疑惑嗎？用邏輯

來分析，不難推想到，按照約翰福音的記載，耶穌復活後，在此之前已經向門徒們顯現過，也與他們交談過，他們已經完全信服這位復活的耶穌是上帝的兒子，怎麼還會對祂疑惑呢？而且，如果他們還在懷疑耶穌的話，怎麼有可能會願意來山上會見祂，又跪下拜祂呢？

其實這個原文單詞「疑惑」(δισταζω) 可作「猶豫不決」(vacillation)解釋，<sup>17</sup> 整本聖經只用過兩次，第一次就是馬太福音十四章 31 節，當彼得仿效耶穌在水面上行走，但因看到了風大而害怕，開始下沉，耶穌遂伸出手拉住彼得，說：「你這小信的人哪，為什麼疑惑呢？」彼得並不是懷疑耶穌，否則他就不會冒著

生命危險跳入水中。耶穌所指的是彼得對自己的猶疑和困惑，畢竟人類不是可在海上行走的動物，這怎麼可能呢？彼得是對海上行走這種新境界有所疑惑。這也正是門徒們在山上與主會面的心情；他們不是對耶穌有懷疑，否則他們不會來加利利見祂並且拜祂。但他們對自己有一些猶豫。<sup>18</sup> 因為有過去屢次失敗的經歷，他們懷疑自己的光景和能力是否可以勝任耶穌期待他們邁進新境界所要承擔的責任。

但儘管他們的瑕疵和不配，他們畢竟帶著自己的本象來見耶穌了。換句話說，他們來加利利山上與主相會，是帶著他們對自己能力的疑惑，然而他們畢竟真誠的來到主的面前，要來尋求祂

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<sup>17</sup> Boring, *Matthew*, 328.

<sup>18</sup> Morris, *Matthew*, 744–45.

的憐憫和恩典。耶穌看出他們內心坦誠的掙扎，所以不但沒有責備他們，反而接納他們的本象，接著就向他們宣告自己已擁有天下所有的權柄，也委託給他們這偉大的宣教使命。

## 結語

以上所介紹的聖經人物，雖然是在不同的時代領受上帝的宣教使命，也向不同的群體宣講上帝的信息。但他們有個共同點，就是在各自的領域裡，都在邁向宣教的新境界。但願他們的經歷能成為今天教會從事宣教的借鏡和榜樣。

### 傳福音和宣教有何區別？

過去許多教會對傳福音(evangelism) 和宣教(mission) 的區別都搞不清，甚至有些傳道人認為每一個基督徒都是宣教士。當今歸正教會的出名神學家約翰派珀(John Piper) 發表言論說，如果教會連傳福音和宣教都分不清，那麼教會的宣教將會失敗。按照他的解釋，傳福音是基督徒向親人朋友或任何人講述福音的內容，而宣教乃是牽涉到文化、語言、族群等等的層面，必須是刻意而有策略地去學習各種方法，途徑，以使一些福音沒有傳到的地方能聽到福音，教會被建立。<sup>19</sup>

有人用很簡單的比喻講出傳福音和宣教的區別，傳福音如士兵在打仗，面對的是一個或一些敵人，他拿槍去殺這些敵人。宣教如軍官在作戰，面對的是一個或多個敵國，他必需了解整個戰局和敵軍的情報，並使用戰略去征服或消滅敵軍。

但二十一世紀因科技和互聯網的飛速發展，已經把世界縮成一個普世小鄉村(Global Village)。宣教和傳福音也已經越來越難

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<sup>19</sup> John Piper, "Why Is Differentiating Between Evangelism and Missions Important?," published 17 August 2009, accessed 7 July 2017], <http://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/why-is-differentiating-between-evangelism-and-missions-important>.

區分了。怪不得天主教教皇弗蘭西斯提倡所有的信徒都應該是個宣教的門徒(Missionary Disciple)。<sup>20</sup>

## 教會宣教邁進新境界

近代成長率最高的教會多重視門徒訓練，尤以小組式教會更為顯著。Kevin De Young 與 Greg Gilbert 在「教會的使命：社會公義與大使命的意義」專文裡這樣發表：教會的使命，乃是靠聖靈的能力帶領人成為耶穌基督的門徒，使父神上帝得榮耀。” The mission of the church—… is to make disciples of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit to the glory of God the Father.<sup>21</sup>

許多近代聖經學者與教會領袖都認為教會裡所有的事工及活動都應該是不同形態的門徒訓練項目。出名的聖經學者 Dr. Michael Wilkins 在他的名著「跟從主——門徒訓練的聖經神學」裡強調說：「既然真基督徒都是門徒，教會的事工就可以視為門

徒訓練，而教會裡的各種事工都應該被視為門徒訓練的專業化或不同的層面或階段。」(Since all true Christians are disciples, the ministry of the church may be seen in its broadest sense as

‘discipleship.’ Various ministries within the church should be seen as specialization, aspects, or stages of discipleship training.)<sup>22</sup>

可惜有不少教會對門徒訓練都有所誤解，他們以為門徒訓練的目的只是教導弟兄姊妹學習彼此相愛，互相服事，廣傳福音，帶人歸主，成為主的門徒。殊不知門徒訓練的最終目的乃是訓練

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<sup>20</sup> Pope Francis, “The Joy of the Gospel,” *Apostolic Exhortations* (24 Nov 2013): n.p. [cited 7 July 2017]. Online [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_eso\\_rtazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_eso_rtazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html).

<sup>21</sup> Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, “What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission” (Wheaton: Good News/Crossway, 2011), Kindle location 265.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 42.

門徒從事普世宣教(徒一 8)，使每一個門徒都成為宣教士，以完成大使命。

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對許多教會和信徒來說，讓教會每一個信徒都成為門徒，而每一個門徒都成為宣教士，這個理念有點新鮮，可以說是邁進一個「新境界」，是過去教會所忽視的，這也是神學院在教導門徒訓練課程所必須重視的一環。也惟有這樣的調整和執行，教會才能有效地完成大使命的託付。

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<sup>23</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York: Harper One, 2006), xi.





# **TRANSIT, TRANSIENT, TRANSITION: HOW THE LEXINGTON CHINESE CHRISTIAN CHURCH BECAME AN INSTRUMENT OF CONVERSION**

黃許柳麗 JULIET LEE UYTANLET



This essay attempts to present how the Lexington Chinese Christian Church became an instrument for conversion for the transient Chinese people who were in transit and in transition. The author attended the LCCC from 2007 –2009. She conducted interviews and participant observation during the summer of 2011. It is necessary to first get an overview of the Chinese in Diaspora and a brief history of the Chinese in America. My aim is to discover the correlation of societal factors and migration with conversion to Christianity by engaging with conversion theories in sociology.

## **The Chinese People in Transit**

The Chinese people have long been in transit with trade along the Silk Road during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220), as well as continuous

migration internally and externally until the present.<sup>1</sup> Chinese migration to different parts of the world is not only caused by trade, but from past history, many left China because of famine, poverty, wars, and political instability. These push factors are the major reasons for the widespread Chinese Diaspora. Da Chen (Ta Chen) writes that there are five “driving forces” that led to Chinese migration in the nineteenth century: (1) population increase; (2) drought, famine, and wars; (3) nature of environment like living near the sea; (4) physical and mental abilities to endure hardship; (5) wage issues.<sup>2</sup>

In the nineteenth century, many Chinese people were seeking greener pastures as they struggled to find better fortunes and a better future for their families. The Coolie Trade was a dark episode in Chinese history with many being promised good wages as contract workers but ended up as slaves. Russell Conwell narrates the tragedies of these coolies during the nineteenth century. The first group of coolies were three hundred men shipped from the port of Macau to Peru in 1847. Of these, only one hundred and seventy men survived the one hundred days journey and worked in the fields of Callao, Peru.<sup>3</sup> The Chinese people give the word “coolie” a new meaning, a transliteration of Putonghua *kǔlì* 苦力, or “bitter strength.”<sup>4</sup>

Min Zhou classifies Chinese emigration based on historical periods: *huashang*-dominated migration, *huagong*-dominated migration, and Post World War II migration. The *huashang*-dominated migration dates back to pre-colonial times up until the mid-nineteenth century. The word *huashang* 華商 refers to traders, merchants, and artisans for such were the majority of Chinese emigrants. During this time, the Chinese people migrated mostly to Southeast Asian countries. Anthony Reid calls the

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<sup>1</sup> Ye Yiliang, “Introductory Essay: Outline of the Political Relations between Iran and China” in *Aspects of the Maritime Silk Road: From the Persian Gulf to the East China Sea*, ed. Ralph Kauz (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 3. See also, Joshua J. Mark, “Silk Road,” *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, published on 28 March 2014, accessed 24 June 2017, [http://www.ancient.eu/Silk\\_Road/](http://www.ancient.eu/Silk_Road/).

<sup>2</sup> Da Chen, “Chinese Migrations, With Special Reference to Labor Conditions” in *Bulletin No. 340, 5–12*, United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1923. See also Juliet Lee Uytanlet, *The Hybrid Tsinoy*, Oregon: Pickwick, 222–23.

<sup>3</sup> Russell H. Conwell, *Why and How: Why the Chinese Emigrate, and the Means They Adopt for the Purpose of Reaching America; with Sketches of Travel, Amusing Incidents, Social Customs* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1871), 82–83.

<sup>4</sup> Uytanlet, *Hybrid Tsinoy*, 78, 225–29.

period between 1740–1840 the “Chinese century” where almost one million Chinese relocated to Southeast Asia. The international large-scale migration did not happen until the nineteenth century which coincides with the *huagong*-dominated migration (1850 until World War II). The *huagong* 華工 refers to the contract laborers. This group went to Southeast Asia to work for Western colonists while a smaller group went to Hawaii, the South Pacific, and the Americas. These *huagong* were controlled by highly organized agencies that prevented them from associating with existing Chinese communities in places they worked. They were often in isolation and kept in plantations.<sup>5</sup>

At the peak years (1851–1875), 350,000 laborers arrived in British colonies in the Malay peninsula, 250,000 in the Dutch East Indies, and 45,000 in the Spanish-ruled Philippines. Vietnam also attracted a considerable number; between 1923 and 1951, 1.2 million Chinese arrived in Vietnam to work as contract laborers (of whom 850,000 returned to China).<sup>6</sup>

The Post World War II emigration declined with the geopolitical situation in East Asia. However, the movement of Chinese people was mostly from Hong Kong and Taiwan to North America or from Southeast Asia to Hong Kong and Taiwan. When China opened its doors to the world, it revived Chinese emigration. In the 1990s, about 180,000 Chinese migrated annually. They prefer to migrate to Asia’s NICs (newly industrialized countries) or to Australia, Canada, the United States, and other European countries. From 1995–2005, it was estimated that 200,000 to 300,000 migrated annually.<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that those who migrate may not necessarily immigrate but only left China for several years for studies, work, or other reasons and intend to return to their own country.

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<sup>5</sup> Before the colonial Coolie Trade, the *huagong* were financed through the credit-ticket system or labor contracts by the *huashang* class. Min Zhou, *Contemporary Chinese America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 23–33.

<sup>6</sup> Zhou, *Contemporary Chinese*, 32.

<sup>7</sup> Zhou, *Contemporary Chinese*, 38.

*Wrestling with Terms and Numbers*

With contemporary globalization, travel and trade have led many to be in transit, become transient, and always in transition. The population data of Overseas Chinese is very difficult to determine. The number varies. There are estimates of 57 million by Henry He and 60 million according to Woods and Yeh.<sup>8</sup> However, the Overseas Community Affairs Council estimates in 2015 that there are 43 million ethnic Chinese living beyond China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau.<sup>9</sup> The Chinese people is then the largest group dispersed in the world, having the largest world population of 1.39 billion in China in 2015.<sup>10</sup> Wang Gungwu wrote in 1993 that Taiwan and Hong Kong should not be included in the category Chinese Diaspora or Overseas Chinese.<sup>11</sup> Hence for clarity of terms, the Chinese Diaspora excludes Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao. The term Overseas Chinese *huaqiao* 華僑 should not include these territories also.

Wang clarifies that the Chinese in Taiwan and Hong Kong must not be classified as “Overseas Chinese” or *huáqiáo* even though they are not situated in the mainland. The Taipei government totally rejected the idea of calling their people *huáqiáo*. The term *huáqiáo* can be traced back to the first decade of the twentieth century when it referred to Chinese citizens residing outside China territories, under foreign governments or “regarded by a series of Chinese governments.” People in Hong Kong and Macau may have been under foreign rule but they do not see themselves as *Huáqiáo*. The People’s Republic of China employed the

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<sup>8</sup> Henry He, *Dictionary of the Political Thought of the People’s Republic of China* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 161. Paul Woods and Allen Yeh, “The Chinese Diaspora Church and Cross-Cultural Mission” in *Scattered and Gathered: A Global Compendium of Diaspora Missiology* (ed. Sadiri Joy Tira and Tetsunao Yamamori; Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2016), 384.

<sup>9</sup> Overseas Community Affairs Council, “Number of Chinese Overseas,” updated on March 17, 2017, accessed on June 29, 2017, <http://www.ocac.gov.tw/OCAC/Eng/Pages/VDetail.aspx?nodeid=414&pid=336264>.

<sup>10</sup> The United Nations’ data on world population 2015 for the following countries are: China – 1.39 billion; Hong Kong – 7 million; Macao – 600,000; Taiwan – 23 million. United Nations, “World Population Prospects 2017, accessed 29 June 2017, <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>.

<sup>11</sup> Wang Gungwu did not include Macao since its sovereignty was transferred back to China only in December 20, 1999. Wang Gungwu, “Greater China and the Chinese Overseas,” *The China Quarterly* 136 (1993): 927.

term *tóngbāo* 同胞 or compatriots to people in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan.<sup>12</sup>

The fact is the term Overseas Chinese *huaqiao* may no longer be an accurate term to refer to all Chinese Diaspora since the term originally referred to Chinese immigrants. According to Wang Gungwu, Tan Chee Beng, and Lara Chen Tien-shi, the term *huaqiao* is reserved for those Chinese people with Chinese nationality, be it either that of the People's Republic of China or the Republic of China, who live in foreign countries as permanent residents.<sup>13</sup> Chen describes *huaren* 華人 as Chinese people who already acquired foreign nationalities as they settled in their host countries. Tan differs in saying that

*Huaren* is normally used when referring to Chinese irrespective of nationalities, such as *quanqiu huaren* or “Chinese worldwide,” but also specifically to Chinese of other nationalities (not of China) as is usually implied in the term *haiwai huaren*. In fact *huaren* is now used worldwide, even in China at least when referring to the Chinese worldwide, that is *quanqiu huaren*.<sup>14</sup>

What about the children of these immigrants who also hold Chinese nationalities? Should they be called *hua-yi* 華裔 of Chinese descent or *huaren*? How about students, migrant workers? To make matters more complicated, these terms have different meaning for different scholars. However, for this research, I will follow Wang's use of the term *huaqiao* to refer specifically to Chinese immigrants living as permanent residents in foreign countries, and Tan's use of the term *huaren* to pertain to Chinese worldwide (or what Wickberg calls international Chinese living beyond China and the three territories).<sup>15</sup> I will classify students and migrant

<sup>12</sup>Uytanlet, *Hybrid Tsinoyes*, 76 n. 9. See also Wang Gungwu, “Dilemmas of Place and Practice” in *Cosmopolitan Capitalists: Hong Kong and the Chinese Diaspora at the End of the Twentieth Century* (ed. Gary G. Hamilton; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 120–21.

<sup>13</sup>Wang, “Greater China,” 927. Tan Chee Beng, “Introduction” and Lara Chen Tien-shi, “Stateless or Belonging to Taiwan or PRC?” in *Routledge Handbook of Chinese Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2013), 2–3, 311. Overseas Chinese do not include tourists, students, diplomats, or temporary workers.

<sup>14</sup>Tan, “Introduction,” 3. Chen, “Stateless or Belonging to Taiwan or PRC,” 311. All three scholars agree that there are complexity and ambiguity with these terms.

<sup>15</sup>Edgar Wickberg, “Anti-Sinicism and Chinese Identity Options in the Philippines” in *Essential Outsiders: Chinese and Jews in the Modern Transformation of Southeast Asia*

workers as *huaren*. Jeanne Wu classifies children of the immigrants whether they have foreign or Chinese nationalities as *hua-yi* Chinese descent.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, a *huaqiao* is a *huaren* but not a *hua-yi*. A *huaren* can be both a *huaqiao* and a *hua-yi*. A *hua-yi* cannot be a *huaqiao* but is a *huaren*. As we wrestle with terms and numbers, we need to be reminded of Wang's warning that in studying the Chinese Overseas or the Chinese Diaspora, one should not essentialize or homogenize all Chinese from all parts of the world, but one needs to study them recognizing their local environments.<sup>17</sup> It is necessary to study the *huaren* from both the global and most especially their local socio-cultural and socio-political situation.

### The Chinese in America

The United States Census Bureau reveals that in 2010, the number of Chinese in America reached four million out of the three hundred million total population of the country. It is the largest Asian group with the Filipinos (3.4 million) and the Indians (3.1 million), at second and third, respectively.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the Chinese emigration to the United States was not an easy journey. The early immigrants arrived in Hawaii and the United States mainland during the mid-nineteenth hundred as contract laborers for the plantations, mines, and railways. They intended to be sojourners and wanted to return to China. At the height of the Gold Rush, the Chinese also sought gold and glory, but instead, many experienced restrictions, discrimination, and exclusion. In the 1870s, the cheap Chinese labor also known as coolie labor resulted in conflict between the Chinese workers and the "white settlers." This led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, banning Chinese descent or nationals from setting foot on American soil. Zhou writes that there are still immigrants entering the country though the numbers dwindle and hit the lowest of 5,000 in the 1930s. This law was repealed in 1943 but it took two decades for the numbers of Chinese

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*and Central Europe* (ed. Daniel Chirot and Anthony Reid; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 176–177; Uytanlet, *Hybrid Tsinoys*, 14, 192.

<sup>16</sup>Jeanne Wu, *Mission through Diaspora: The Case of the Chinese Church in the USA* (London: Langham Partnership, 2016), 24.

<sup>17</sup>Hong Liu, *The Chinese Overseas, Vol. 1* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2006), 331–332.

<sup>18</sup>Elizabeth M. Hoeffel, et al, "Asian Population 2010: US Census Briefs," Table 5, US Census Bureau, issued March 2012, 14, accessed 30 June 2017, <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-11.pdf>.

immigrants to increase.<sup>19</sup> We then can concur that the population growth from 1860 to 1960 depended largely on biological reproduction and not on an influx of new migrants. However, as immigration tightened, the Chinese community during this time became a bachelor society that affected the growth and development of the Chinese community.<sup>20</sup>

The Chinese in America can be classified according to their immigration documents, nativity, or ethnicity. Their documents can be American citizens, immigrants, foreign students, migrant workers, or illegal immigrants. The second and third generations are ABCs (American Born Chinese).<sup>21</sup> Samuel Law talks about the ARC (American Raised Chinese), who are similar to the “1.5 Korean” (Koreans born in Korea but raised in America).<sup>22</sup> The new immigrants are often called the FOBs or Fresh Off the Boat. They can be further categorized according to their country of origin or nativity. They may come from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, or some other Southeast Asian nations. They can also be classified according to what languages they speak such as Cantonese, Shanghainese, or Fuzhounese. Lastly, ethnicity can be an identifier, whether one is Han, Mongol, or Tibetan.

It cannot be denied that there are illegal Chinese immigrants in the country. After the highly publicized Golden Venture human smuggling of 1993, Xiaojian Zhao criticized how studies categorized all Chinese illegal immigrants as being from China and that they enter either by human smuggling or trafficking.<sup>23</sup> The Department of Homeland Security assessed 120,000 unauthorized Chinese residents in 2009. Compare the number with more than six million Mexicans, 270,000 Filipinos, and

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<sup>19</sup>Zhou, *Contemporary Chinese America*, 44–45.

<sup>20</sup>Zhou argues that even though the exclusion act was repealed in 1943; the War Brides Act of 1945 allowed thousands of women to enter the country; and when Chinese nationals were allowed to seek political asylum as communism took over China in 1949, the annual quota for Chinese immigrants remained at 105 for the next two decades. Hence, the men still outnumbered the women with a ratio of more than two to one. These factors contributed to the slow growth of population through birth rates which led to a low percentage of second and third generation Chinese in America in comparison with the Italians, Japanese, and Jews (*Contemporary Chinese America*, 44–46).

<sup>21</sup>Zhou, *Contemporary Chinese America*, 43.

<sup>22</sup>Samuel Law, “A Tale of Two Cities: The Critical Role of ‘Feeder Cities’ of the Chinese Diaspora in North America and their Ongoing Needs,” 8. This is a paper presented at the EMS Conference for Diaspora Missiology, TEDS, Chicago, 26 February 2011.

<sup>23</sup>Xiaojian Zhao, *The New Chinese America* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 25.



200,000 Koreans. An unauthorized resident refers to “all foreign-born non-citizens who are not legal residents. Most unauthorized residents either entered the United States without inspection or were admitted temporarily and stayed past the date they were required to leave.”<sup>24</sup> It must be noted that the unauthorized residents also include those who are in the process of changing their visa status. Therefore, not all illegal immigrants are “illegal” in that sense. An appropriate term would be unauthorized residents or without status.

### *The Transient Chinese Students*

There are many legal foreign students from China in American colleges and universities. Many of these are younger and younger, studying in secondary, undergraduate, and graduate programs as opposed to the earlier generations when most students were older and had come for advanced degrees. Allan Goodman, President and Chief Officer of Institute of International Education writes,

There are over 34,000 Chinese students in American high schools, and many others coming for summer camps and in “bridge” programs, as more Chinese parents send their children to the U.S. as a pathway to American colleges and universities. And admissions preparation and recruitment for high-performing Chinese students continues to be big business.<sup>25</sup>

Back in December 26, 1978, China sent fifty students to study in America after almost thirty years of closing itself from the world. This was after the death of Mao Zedong.<sup>26</sup> From fifty students in 1978, the number of Chinese students enrolled in American universities increased to 65,000 in 2002. In 2010, the number of Chinese students reached 100,000 and

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<sup>24</sup>Michael Hoefler, Nancy Rytina, and Bryan C. Baker, “Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2009,” Department of Homeland Security, 1, 4, accessed 26 June 2011, [http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois\\_ill\\_pe\\_2009.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois_ill_pe_2009.pdf).

<sup>25</sup>Allan Goodman, “China’s Role in International Education by the Numbers,” *Huffington Post*, published on 14 November 2016, accessed on July 3, 2017, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/58261332e4b02b1f5257a10a>.

<sup>26</sup>T. K. Chu, “150 Years of Chinese Students in America,” *Harvard China Review* 5, no. 1 (2014): 7–26.

most of them are self-funded.<sup>27</sup> These Chinese students are part of the international students that generated \$18B income for the United States in 2008 through their tuition fees.<sup>28</sup> In 2017, Brooke Larmer writes,

Roughly 370,000 students from the mainland are enrolled in American high schools and universities, six times more than a decade ago. Their financial impact — \$11.4 billion was contributed to the American economy in 2015, according to the Department of Commerce — has turned education into one of America’s top “exports” to China.<sup>29</sup>

Larmer refers to these Chinese students as the Parachute Generation. Zhou explains that they are called “parachute kids ” because they are literally “dropped off” in the United States to go to school. They are a selected group of young children aged 8–17 who go to the United States to seek better education with the assumption that they will eventually go to prestigious universities and have a better future. Most of these children live with relatives, friends, or unrelated caretakers. Nevertheless, there are risks with such “transnational living” such as its effects on the parent-child relationship and family dynamics.<sup>30</sup> This is important information that will aid in understanding the Chinese in America as opposed to mere stereotyping. Moreover, this sets the stage for the role of the Lexington Chinese Christian Church among the transient Chinese students in Lexington, Kentucky.

### *The Lexington Chinese Christian Church*

The first Chinese church was established in 1853 in San Francisco by William Speer, a Presbyterian medical missionary to China. Initially, four Chinese Christians joined. They had converted in China prior to their arrival in America. Other denominations eventually followed and established their own Chinese churches as extensions of their missions in China. Their goal was to “Christianize the heathen” and send them back

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<sup>27</sup> The “Chinese students” is inclusive of those in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other Southeast Asian nations.

<sup>28</sup> People’s Daily Online, “Self-funded Chinese students now ‘engine’ for US higher ed,” published 9 October 2010, accessed 25 June 2011, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90782/7160289.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Brooke Larmer, “The Parachute Generation,” *The New York Times Magazine*, published 2 February 2017, accessed 3 July 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/02/magazine/the-parachute-generation.html>.

<sup>30</sup> Zhou, *Contemporary Chinese America*, 203, 207–13.

to China. The number of converts was very small when compared to the total population. Hence, one may say that the early mission in reaching the Chinese was not effective. There was the perception that Christianity is a “white man’s religion” because white Americans form the clergy while Chinese could only serve as assistants; this had a negative effect. Nevertheless, in spite of social, political and economic difficulties, Chinese Christians eventually gained both financial and leadership independence within the various denominations. This saw the rise of non-denominational churches which were started by Chinese immigrants themselves, unlike the early mission which were started by various American denominations. In 1952, there were 46 denominational churches, five were interdenominational, and 14 were independent. Many Chinese students formed campus Bible study groups from which new churches sprang. Most new churches from the 1950s onwards were formed by independent churches.<sup>31</sup> In an interview with Law in 2011, he claimed that most Chinese churches in the 1950s were already English speaking. After 1965, with the influx of many immigrants, the Chinese churches were at a loss on how to evangelize these people. They sought the help of missionaries in Taiwan to help minister to these Mandarin speaking immigrants.

From afar, the Lexington Chinese Christian Church (LCCC) can be mistaken for an American church because of its building’s architectural design. It is located at 4030 Lexington Road, Nicholasville, Kentucky. It is built in a five-acre land along state highway 27. The building was constructed in 1993 with a two-story edifice and a total of 8,000 square feet.<sup>32</sup> With a cross on top of its steeple painted white along with its façade, these convey the message of purity, separation or sacred space. The red bricks of the building present its durability, simplicity and efficiency. The two big glass windows and two glass doors show its transparency and hospitality. They also speak of social leveling that invites people of all walks of life to come. There are Chinese characters on the façade that read, 萊城華人基督教會 or Lexington Chinese Christian Church. The Chinese characters give one an idea that the church is for “foreign” Chinese people.

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<sup>31</sup> Fenggang Yang, *Chinese Christians in America* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1999), 5–9.

<sup>32</sup> Lexington Chinese Christian Church, <http://www.lcccky.org/index.asp>, accessed 26 June 2011.

This banner also gives the impression of the exclusivity of the group and its alienation of others. Conversely, the banner can also be an open invitation to all Chinese people of diverse languages, nativity, cultures, political adherence, and even religions.

Inside the main sanctuary, there are no ornaments except the pulpit with a carved cross and the flowers displayed in front of it. There are no stained-glass windows, only three plain windows on each side. There are two rows and a total of twenty pews, with three ceiling fans above each row. When asked about the church's plain design, members responded that its simplicity is actually attractive to many Chinese people. The structure has confirmed its cultural heritage since Chinese people uphold values such as frugality, simplicity, practicality, and hard work. The architecture speaks of the Chinese pragmatist and utilitarian characteristics.

The LCCC is a relatively young church. It is a non-denominational Mandarin speaking church. The worship service is bilingual; an interpreter stands next to the preacher and translates the message either from Mandarin to English or vice versa. Not all Chinese churches in the United States practice this. For instance, the Cincinnati Chinese Church uses three languages in their worship service. The speaker preaches in Mandarin and the interpreter translates the message into Cantonese. One has to use earphones to listen to the message in English as someone in the sound booth translates it. This contrast clearly shows how the use of languages can be a modifier for classifying a church's demographics. One-third of the members in the Cincinnati Chinese Church are Cantonese. In LCCC, 60% are Mandarin speakers from China and 30% from Taiwan and Hong Kong. The remaining 10% are ethnic Chinese from Southeast Asian countries or Caucasians married to Chinese.<sup>33</sup>

Elder Christa Wong Bingham recalls how she first came to Lexington in 1976 after graduating from Berea College. She remembers joining a Bible study group composed of Chinese people at the Baptist Student Center (BSC) on the campus of the University of Kentucky (UK). There were 15 to 20 people attending, including children. The Bible study group started in the early 1970s with a few people initially meeting at the Christian Student Fellowship (CSF) center on the UK campus. Robert Pan, who then worked at IBM in Lexington, and George Chin, an

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<sup>33</sup>Law, "A Tale of Two Cities," 7.

ophthalmologist, were the first few members who brought their families along. There were a few students also. Later the group moved to BSC because CSF needed the space for their own activities. At that time, the people who attended the Bible study group went to different American churches for worship. Pan and Chin attended First Alliance Church in Lexington. In 1987, the members started the first Sunday worship service at First Alliance Church. They stayed at First Alliance Church until their very own church building was completed in 1993. This explains why the by-laws of the LCCC was adapted from that of First Alliance Church.

In 2011, Rev. Samuel Law served as their part-time pastor. They also have a part-time secretary who worked ten hours per week. They have an average attendance of 130–140 adults, 40 youth, and 40 children. The youth are mostly second or third generation who speak English more than Mandarin. The children have the option of attending Chinese Language classes before the worship service on Sunday morning which coincides with the Adult Sunday School class. The church elders and lay leaders are key people in running the church and actively serving the congregation. In their polity, the elders have the last say in the decision making. Their webpage states that their mission centers on evangelism and focuses specifically on the Chinese in Lexington.

Lord Jesus gave us the great commission to share the gospel with all nations. We believe God has a special purpose for establishing LCCC in Lexington. We believe God has given us a special mission to witness and share the gospel good news with the “Lexington Chinese Community.” Hence, as a team we endeavor to encourage, exalt and help brothers and sisters to become a witness and messenger of the gospel of Jesus. We plan, organize, carry out all the church’s evangelical outreach activities and programs; such as evangelical crusades, new student welcome party, seekers class and discussion groups, provide cell group with reach out training materials and recreational fellowship gatherings (ball game, picnic) etc. With the help of God, the power and leading of the Holy Spirit, we believe LCCC will be fruitful and God’s name glorified.<sup>34</sup>

It is fitting to focus on evangelism since the Chinese in Lexington number around 2,000 in year 2000, and since then increased to about 3,000

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<sup>34</sup>Lexington Chinese Christian Church, <http://www.lcccky.org/mission.asp>, accessed 26 June 2011.

in 2012. However, there is only one Chinese church in Lexington, Kentucky and the regular attendees does not exceed 140.<sup>35</sup> Ninety-five percent of the Chinese in Lexington have yet to be reached with the good news of the gospel.

*Transit, Transient, and Transition*

As of 2011, LCCC had 140 regular attendees. Incidentally, records show that the church had about the same number of regular attendees back in 1997. Law argues that the numbers do not mean stagnancy or failure. The fact is in 2011, the church baptized 19 new believers, and in 2012, 12 people. Many of these new converts were students from China. There are other factors that contributed to the maintenance of church numbers or what seems to be “stagnancy.” First, many of the members of the church are transient. About 25 to 30% are “floating” population, they leave the place after graduation or the end of their contract. The median time living in the city for LCCC is three years. Many of the members of LCCC are students of the University of Kentucky or are employed at the university, in nearby hospitals or at Lexmark. More than 60% of the members hold doctorate degrees in various fields like medicine, biological sciences, and engineering.

According to Law, less than ten people work in restaurants, service oriented jobs, or the Toyota plant in Georgetown. With the high percentage of professionals, the city can only hire a limited number of people. Therefore, the second factor is the need to find a “permanent job” elsewhere which contributes to their transient status in Kentucky. The third factor is the children or second generation going off to colleges or universities outside Lexington.<sup>36</sup> In a conversation with Law, he stated how the ABCs are leaving Kentucky to go elsewhere for college or occupations. His wife Esther shares the pressure of being a parent longing to see their children succeed in college and find a good profession. The myth of model minority seems to override filial piety in this case. However, filial piety actually is still the core of all these actions. The parents desire honor more than having their children live with them or even take care of them in their old age. To have their children studying in prestigious

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<sup>35</sup>Law, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 4–10, 24–25. See also Tables A and B below.

<sup>36</sup>Law, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 4–10, 24–25.

schools or working in big companies is something of which they can be proud of or feel honored.

### **Conversion Theories and Realities**

The Chinese are a diverse group of people with different political adherences, cultures, economic conditions, languages and religions. Consequently, their conversion process also varies. Meredith McGuire defines conversion as the transformation of one's self understanding of where he or she is in society into the new belonging or identity that he or she has found.<sup>37</sup> It is a personal and individual decision, expression, and experience. Likewise, there is not one conversion method that applies to all or not one strategy that works for all.

Fenggang Yang discards three common assumptions made by people with regards to why Chinese immigrants turn to Christianity. First, people assume that Chinese immigrants turn to Christianity upon arriving in America because of material advantages. They are called "Rice Christians" or "rice-bowl Christians." They do not have a genuine conversion but rather seek to join the church to receive assistance, help, or other advantages. Interestingly, Yang discovered that the church that he studied did not even have a social ministry to start with. Further, the majority of the members were well-educated professionals living in middle class suburbs and were financially well-off.

The second assumption is that the Chinese immigrants seek "assimilation to the dominant culture of the host society." The premise of this assumption is that the immigrant will seek to become more like the Americans. Since 86% of Americans claim to have Christian faith, it is wise to be a Christian then. Yang argues that if turning to Christianity is to simply become more accepted in America then it is better for the educated professionals to remain non-religious. For such are the people in the secularized companies and government offices today. The fact is Chinese immigrants risk their profession by converting to Christianity as they work in such environments. Moreover, if assimilation is the goal then it is better for them to join a non-ethnic church. Consequently, many Chinese drive 20 to 40 minutes to join a Chinese church every Sunday.

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<sup>37</sup>Meredith F. McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context* (Fifth Edition; Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2008), 73.

Lastly, if the Chinese want to become mainstream Americans, it is best for them to join mainline churches. Conversely, these people choose evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity, making themselves a minority in the religious sense.

The third assumption is that joining a Chinese church meets their ethnic needs. Yang argues that it would be best they join associations and cultural centers instead. He also argues that the Chinese are diverse in language and even culture.<sup>38</sup> Yang presents all these arguments to rebuff the assumptions on Chinese immigrants' conversion to evangelical Christianity.

Rice is the staple food for the southern Chinese. The Fujianese greeting is actually not 你好? (*nǐ hao*) or "How are you?" but 吃飽了嗎? (*chī bǎole ma*) or "Have you eaten?" In Minnanhua, they say, *dī tsiáh bē* or *tsiáh bē* (have you eaten)? After experiencing famine, people asked one another whether they have eaten. Being well fed is a sign of good life. Law points to the fact that back in China during the times of early mission work, many people did become Christians because of rice. At present, many of the new immigrants whether students or professionals may be financially well-off but they will still need some form of help during the period of their transition as they adjust to their new environment.

Andrew Abel similarly has the same results in his research with Law and Yang. In the respective churches they conducted their research, they found its members to be well educated and financially well-off to be Rice-Bowl Christians. However, Abel discovers that the Chinese are not Rice-Bowl Christians but he coined the word "Punch-Bowl Christians." Just like in a party, people socialize and converse around the punch bowl. The Chinese seek identity and community more than material needs. He argues that even with the "favor fishing" or church people doing favors to new immigrants in the hope of building friendship and doing evangelism, the favors do not significantly change the people's financial circumstance. Moreover, the Chinese join the church to find social networks, interaction, and even rituals. Abel's findings seem to be in opposition to Yang's rebuttal on his third false assumption on Chinese conversion, mainly that

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<sup>38</sup>Fenggang Yang, "Chinese Conversion to Evangelical Christianity: The Importance of Social and Cultural Contexts," *Sociology of Religion* 59, no. 3 (1998): 239–45.



joining the church is to meet ethnic needs.<sup>39</sup> Yet the fact remains that extending help and making friends are good ministry opportunities to reach out to the Chinese in need of help as they go through transitions. Yang is right to say that we cannot make generalizations and say that all Chinese come to Christ because of “rice,” whether in the form of financial, material, or social assistance. In the same way, we cannot deny there are those who intentionally seek to take advantage of such help and that there are those who, through such help, become Christians.

Chinatowns are obvious physical markers of segregation. As Zhao presents, after the Second World War, many Chinese left Chinatowns and assimilated into mainstream American society; but the reality is that the majority of the Chinese remained in Chinatowns. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 659,596 Chinese in the New York Metropolitan areas including six Chinatowns.<sup>40</sup> That is 17% of the total Chinese population in America living in one area. Further, in Law’s research, many of the Chinese in Lexington tend to live in the same neighborhood and send their children to the same school.<sup>41</sup> Yang’s second argument shows how the Chinese tend to cluster more than diffuse or assimilate into mainstream society. This supports Geertz’ s primordial theory or primordial attachments wherein people tend to join together by virtue of “givens” like blood ties or kinship, race, language, customs, or religions.<sup>42</sup> This line of argument is closely linked to the third assumption on ethnic needs. With the primordial attachments, Chinese will seek to find fellow Chinese for community and socialization. However, in places where the church is the only available social space they do not seem to have other choices.

Yang may not agree with the theory of Abel and Law concerning “Punch-Bowl Christians” who see the church as a space, not just for sacred activity, but also for social network, community, and surrogate family. Nevertheless, their studies show that the Chinese conversion is a radical

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<sup>39</sup> Andrew Abel, “Favor Fishing and Punch-Bowl Christians: Ritual and Conversion in a Chinese Protestant Church,” *Sociology of Religion* 67, no. 2 (2006): 172.

<sup>40</sup> United States Census Bureau, [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable?\\_bm=y&-context=adp&-qr\\_name=ACS\\_2008\\_1YR\\_G00\\_DP5&-ds\\_name=ACS\\_2008\\_1YR\\_G00\\_&-tree\\_id=308&-redoLog=true&-\\_caller=geoselect&-geo\\_id=33000US408&-form at=&-\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable?_bm=y&-context=adp&-qr_name=ACS_2008_1YR_G00_DP5&-ds_name=ACS_2008_1YR_G00_&-tree_id=308&-redoLog=true&-_caller=geoselect&-geo_id=33000US408&-form at=&-_lang=en), accessed 28 June 2011.

<sup>41</sup> Law, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 6.

<sup>42</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (N.Y.: Basic Books, 2000), 259.

conversion of self with intellectual and affectual triggers. Conversely, one can also argue that curiosity is a trigger factor. Coming from an atheist background, being in transition, or going through anomie, there is a high probability for one to search for meaning in life or for help. Christianity can be just the right answer to their quest. Further, I would argue that coercion can also be a trigger; their strong desire to be a part of a community provides the pressure to be converted.

## Conclusion

The Chinese in America are one of the many ethnic groups in the country. Their existence and thriving population is evidence of America's pull factor as the ultimate fulfillment of one's dream. The influx of new immigrants after the changes in law resulted in new challenges for the Chinese Christian community. New opportunities to serve and to witness become a driving force for the church. These lead to more opportunities for evangelism and bible study ministries and new churches. Interestingly, the basic need of man for love, acceptance, and belonging become the major trigger points for many of the new immigrants to accept Christianity as they enter anomie as a result of change and transition. Rapid social change can be a high threatening situation. Finding community and belonging in religion is highly probable.<sup>43</sup>

At Easter 2010, the LCCC received four newly baptized members, and all of them claimed to be atheists prior to becoming Christians. Three are students at the University of Kentucky. All confirmed that their growth in faith and knowledge on God and Jesus came from the cell groups they had joined. The LCCC has eleven cell groups. They have four groups for Chinese from China and two Taiwanese groups, one for senior citizens, one for English speakers, one for the youth group, and two for UK students. All of the converts are deeply touched by the members' love and kindness in helping them when they first arrived in Lexington or when they experienced problems. One convert was touched and deeply moved by the testimonies which lead him to commit to attend church every Sunday. These stories affirm man's desire to seek meaning in life and the desire for community and support. These stories pose the conversion possibilities when Christians reach out to other people with the love of Christ. This is

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<sup>43</sup>McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context*, 34–37.

where the LCCC is able to be a helping hand and even an agent for possible conversion to Christianity. Moreover, the somewhat “maintenance” church attendance number throughout the years does not necessarily mean stagnancy but a thriving community.

Table A: Lexington Chinese Christian Church Demographics

<b>Demographics</b>	<b>Lexington Chinese Christian Church - LCCC</b>
Population	Fayette County: 280,000 in 2008 Fayette County Chinese: 2,022
Number of Chinese Churches	1
Church Attendance	Present: 140 1997: 140
Distribution	90 adults, 15 youth, 35 children 30% seniors, 50% families, 20% students (some married, some single)
Background Distribution (adult population)	60% mainland China 30% Taiwan and Hong Kong 10% other ethnic Chinese immigrants/Caucasian 1 ABC (Samuel Law)
Percentage holding/pursuing doctorates	more than 60%
Floating Population (graduation, relocation)	25 – 30%
Median time living in city	3 years

(Law, “A Tale of Two Cities,” 24)

Table B: Comparison of Church Ministry Demographics Ministry/Spirituality

	<b>Lexington Chinese Christian Church</b>
Staffing	5 elders, 1 youth director, 1 secretary (part-time), 24 deacons (no pastor for longer than half the church's lifespan)
Ministries	1 service (bilingual), 1 youth service, 2 adult SS classes, ministry K-5, 6-8, 9-12
Small Groups	11
Outreach Service attendance	150 – 300% average
Last outreach meeting decisions	100
Average Baptisms/year	15 – 20
Median years since conversion (est)	Less than 10

(Law, "A Tale of Two Cities," 25)



# BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION



## 聖經文學的分析與解經： 以雅各書一章 1 至 12 節為例

陳凱英 *Susan Tan*



在釋經典範進入新歷史時期的現今世代，在持守傳統釋經方法的同時，加增文學分析方法進一步強化聖經文本的詮釋，已成為眾多釋經學者的取向。

<sup>1</sup> 本文旨在提供不懂原文的學習者，<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 近代釋經取向及典範的轉移為眾多釋經學者接納：(1) 奧斯邦在《基督教釋經手冊》導論中提到聖經的詮釋—從經文到處境、從原初的意義到處境化應用(或對今日教會的重要性)—乃是「螺旋式」(spiral)(奧斯邦 2002, 16)；(2) 朗文在總結近代研經趨勢寫道：「文學研究法已成為最熱門的研經法…在詮釋學上，我們已進入新的典範轉移(paradigm shift)，取代傳統挖掘經文來源的批判法—遠離歷史分析法而就文學分析法。參黃朱倫，評梁家麟，《我與誰親嘴—華人雅歌靈解研究》，《建道學刊》19 (2003)：129；郭秀娟，《認識聖經文學》(台北：校園書房，2001)，17。

<sup>2</sup> 本文修改於筆者教牧學博士進階釋經課程的專文。原專文作為筆者《寫作入門》教材的輔助教學資料。這裡僅藉菲聖院慶六十週年集結講師專文出版的機會分享它。



透過釋經工具書、<sup>3</sup> 聖經電子軟件或光碟等對鑰節，<sup>4</sup> 或鑰字的研究找尋適切的語意，<sup>5</sup> 和與不同譯本互相參照，<sup>6</sup> 以及聖經批判學的考證，加以修正翻譯上的問題，還回原型，重構新文本，以致確實能按照正義分解真理的道，助益異文化的研究者熟練使用母語文化，進行不同文化的分析研究。<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> 釋經工具書使用。對沒有聖經原文基礎的學習者，或在研究能力不足的情況下，可以透過工具書做簡易的資料收集，再比較或參照聖經譯本中作者的翻譯，以及聖經註釋書學者們的研究，進行基本的鑰字研究入門學習。這裡以新約為例，舊約則查考相關的希伯來文工具書。步驟如下：步驟一，從所要研究的那段經文中找出鑰節；步驟二，再從鑰節中篩選出需要研究的鑰字；步驟三，通過《中英希逐字對照新約聖經》找尋鑰字的編號；步驟四，藉由編號在《新約希臘文中文辭典》中收集相關資料(包括鑰字的原意、語法功能、同字根的字、不同書卷對該字的翻譯)，重要的是根據研究的需要做切合實際的篩選；步驟五，對所收集到的鑰字資料進行分析研究的工夫(包括歸納分類，對特定的類型做分析、比較、評論和總結)，並參照聖經譯本和註釋書學者們的研究尋找最適切的語意；步驟六，將上一個步驟的研究結果，回應「步驟二」，確認鑰字在鑰節及上下文之間的語意關係。具體例文詳見：筆者，〈寫作入門〉(授課講義，菲律濱聖經神學院，菲律濱，2013年6月)，51-53。

<sup>4</sup> 鑰字研究的步驟，在學習者細讀艾德勒和範多倫《如何閱讀一本書》的基礎上，根據書中閱讀的第四層次「主題閱讀」中五個步驟(參艾德勒和範多倫，305-34)：第一個步驟找相關章節一即是檢視各作品，找出相關的章節；第二個步驟設定共識—從相關的章節中找出關鍵的字詞(包括同義詞、歧義詞、詞組、熟語等)，並與各作者建立共識，分析他們的用法，發現作者的主旨；第三個步驟釐清問題—建立不偏不倚的主旨(需要解決的問題)，其中大部份都能在作者的說明中找到答案；第四個步驟界定議題—摒棄爭議的問題，盡可能確保議題是作者們所共同參與的，並整合出相關的議題；第五個步驟分析討論—設定假設問題，並對所設的主題作客觀性、追根究底的分析研究，以及能從檢視過的書中找出支持的根據(參艾德勒和範多倫，320-23)。艾德勒和範多倫，《如何閱讀一本書》，郝明義和朱衣譯(台北：台灣商務，2011)，305-34。具體例文詳見：筆者，〈寫作入門〉，44-51。

<sup>5</sup> 鑰字研究主要是針對與經文的中心論題\中心詞、論證\敘述及結論，有內在關聯的重要字詞，透過對它在原文的意思、語法功能，和聖經作者的使用等的研究，找出最恰當的語意，而能夠比較客觀地了解句子\段落\整本書卷的中心論題，也能更清楚明白作者著書的目的和動機，有效地提高學習者對歷史、文化、地理、神學處境等的認知，促使對經文的解釋也能更接近原文的意思。

<sup>6</sup> 聖經中譯本互相參照，以雅各書一章8~11節為例。在此段經文中，對「卑微」和「富足」的字詞研究，可影響到經文第十二節的劃分：

新和合本 卑微的弟兄升高，就該喜樂；富足的降卑，也該如此；

現代中文 貧窮的弟兄蒙上帝提升，應該高興；富有的人被貶低，也該這樣。

呂振中 讓做弟兄者誇耀吧！卑微的要因他的崇高而誇耀；富足的也要因自己的降卑而誇耀。

當代聖經 若有卑微的弟兄被提升，當然要快樂；但若是富有的弟兄被貶抑，也要抱著同樣的態度。

新譯本 卑微的弟兄應當以高升為榮；富足的也不應該以降卑為辱。

<sup>7</sup> 參格蘭·奧斯邦，《基督教釋經手冊》，劉良淑譯(台北：校園書房，2002)，63。

於此，本文重點放在「經文文學的分析與解經」，而忽略經文信息在現今處境的應用部份，並對經文背景僅概略與主題相關的內容。誠然，關於此段落的解經部份「語意解經」中的希臘文及原意的資料，多自來源於聖經電子軟件和光碟版：The Word Bible Software 和聖經工具，<sup>8</sup> 其研究的方法參見：註腳 3「釋經工具書使用」、註腳 4「鑰字研究的步驟」、註腳 6「聖經譯本互相參照」等其他註腳的說明。研究的結論直接用於「語意解經」對經文的分析，故行文中未再贅述它。

## 經文背景

經文背景部份僅扼要簡述此段經文分析與解經相關的重點內容，包括本書卷的結構，文本的文學特點及作者著書的動機。

### 書卷結構

雅各書在新約分類上被劃歸普通書信類，它具備了議論和說理之議論文體的文學特徵。筆者從文本的視角劃分它的結構，由開頭(一 1~12)、正文(一 13~五 11)、結尾(五 12~20)，這三部份構成。本文僅對開頭部份(一 1~12)，即整本書卷的導論進行相關的文學分析與解經。

#### (一) 引論中的中心論題

在開頭部份，如果忽略信首第一句問安的話語(1 節)，它的文學體裁明顯是議論文的形式，經文結構如下所示：

- (1) 立論 在試煉中歡喜體認考驗(2 節)
- (2) 演繹 在試煉中信心臻於完全(3~4 節)  
在試煉中得智慧的方法(5~7 節)  
在試煉中順服以致高升(8~11 節)
- (3) 結論 經過試煉承受應許冠冕(12 節)

<sup>8</sup> Costas Stergiou, *The Word Bible Software*. Online: <http://www.theword.net>; 啟創, 雅各書 (香港: 啟創電腦分析有限公司, 1998), 《聖經工具》。

## (二) 本論中的六個分題

- (1) 論試探與各樣恩賞(一 13~27)
- (2) 論不偏待人與律法(二 1~13)
- (3) 論信心與行為合一(二 14~26)
- (4) 論口舌之爭與智慧(三 1~18)
- (5) 論與世為友與悔改(四 1~17)
- (6) 論收斂財富與審判(五 1~11)

## (三) 結論中的禱告類型

- (1) 論個人的禱告—受苦與喜樂(五 12~13)
- (2) 論團體的代禱—病痛與犯罪(五 14~16)
- (3) 論義人的祈求—國家與人民(五 17~20)

## 文學特點

書卷結構大綱顯示出總議題鮮明，分論題針對性強。作者在論證過程中所提出的論據，理論根據都非常清楚。比如：有屬靈的原則(參一 3、5、12，二 8)，生活實踐中的規則(參一 11，三 11)，自然科學定律(參三 12，五 7)，引用舊約成功偉人的典範(二 21、25)等等；舉例的取材適切又多樣化(參一 6、11、23~24)。在文學上的表現手法有詩歌、箴言、諺語等形式。論證方法多種形式，有正反對比論證、引申論證、因果論證、分層論證、比喻論證、引用論證、舉例論證等。修辭手法優秀，尤其對詩體的造詣極為高深。其語言風格揉合舊約先知文學(參二 20，四 4、8~9)，和智慧文學的風格(一 5、16~17)。<sup>9</sup> 在教訓方面，有些論述反映了耶穌

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<sup>9</sup> Walter A. Elwell 和 Robert W. Yarbrough，《新約透析：歷史與神學的探討》，李愛明譯(香港：國際聖經協會，2000)，354-55。

的教導(參三 10~12 比較太七 15~20；參五 2~3 比較六 19~20；五 12 比較五 33~37)，精闢地闡述了基督徒的信仰實踐生活方式。

綜合上述，從文章的文學體裁及論證風格和材料的截取上，一方面可窺見到作者與讀者的歷史處境、文化背景、風俗習慣，以及社會意識形態都十分接近，源於他們有著共同的宗教文化教育背景，對舊約和先知的教訓都非常熟悉(參一 1)，<sup>10</sup> 另一方面也說明讀者十分熟識這些類型的體裁風格，<sup>11</sup> 對作者文學上的表達及其語意的認知感懷深切，而能強化對經文信息的理解及接納，並能產生共鳴以致收到較高的果效。

### 著書動機

書卷導論首句：「你們遭遇各種試煉的時候，都要看為喜樂」(一 2)，顯然是引起作者撰寫本書的動機。作者提出讀者處在各色各樣的試煉中要喜樂的議題，說明讀者所受到的試煉都相同，遭遇試煉的場所就在他們的團體，試煉的事項也是發自他們的內部，與外界無關。作者對本論六個分題的論述和最後的結論，無可置疑都支持了這樣的推測。

作者著書的目的，從他立論的各類主題及論證的過程中，字裡行間處處流露出牧者對讀者的關顧、引導及勸勉；包括神學上、教義上及信仰生活實踐的各個方面，可窺見到作者極其盼望落在各種試煉中的讀者能仰望上帝的恩賞，靠屬天的智慧，在信仰生活的實踐中勝過試驗，承受上帝所應許賜予的生命冠冕。這就是作者在導論的尾句所提出的終極目的：「他經過考驗之後，必得著生命的冠冕」(一 12)。

<sup>10</sup> 誠如作者在信首的問候語：「作上帝和主耶穌基督的僕人雅各，向散居各地的十二支派問安！」(雅一 1)。讀者是承受應許的亞伯拉罕之後裔。從舊約聖卷可以了解到他們的宗教信仰與文化教育緊密相關，宗教活動是他們生活中不可缺少的內容。

<sup>11</sup> 猶太人是上帝的選民，他們的宗教與文化教育、社會活動、家庭生活緊緊連在一起，是他們生命活動的一個重要的組成部份。新約聖經作者在文學修辭表達方法也十分接近，比如彼得和雅各所引用猶太比喻如出一轍：「他的美榮，都像草上的花；草必枯乾，花必凋謝」(彼前一 24)；「他如同草上的花…草必枯乾；花必凋謝，美容就消沒了」(雅一 10~11)。

## 經文結構

正如筆者在前面背景所交代的，此段經文是雅各書的導論部份，其語意結構及分析詳見下面的分述。經文大多摘自《研讀版聖經——新譯本》，其中的第八節源自和合本，而第四、十及十一節為筆者考源後所做的修改。

<sup>12</sup>

### 語意析義

此段經文雖為雅各書的導論部份，但它依然是獨立的篇章，其結構包含議論文體的三個基本要素：引論、本論、結論。語意結構略述如下。

#### (一)引論(一-2)

第二節，作者在文章的一開頭就開門見山，直截了當地向讀者提出他勸勉的中心論題——「在試煉中歡喜體認考驗」。這正是本書卷的中心論點。作者要求他的讀者，在試煉中要甘心情願去忍受所遭遇的試煉，並在試煉中要歡歡喜喜去體驗上帝的信實、認識祂的美善，以致最終得享祂的恩福。

(論點：提出問題)

#### (二)本論(一-3~11)

作者在這一大大段落裡，立論三點並加以演繹。即是：作者通過對信心的磨練、智慧的尋求、降卑得高升的論述，指教讀者在信心的根基上，運用屬靈的智慧和原則去經歷擺在面前的試煉，為應許的冠冕打贏這場屬靈的戰爭。(內容：分析論證)

##### 1. 闡析在試煉中信心臻於完全(3-4 節)

第三及四節，作者以讀者的信心曾經歷過考驗為論證的根據

(即論據)，闡述在試煉中恆守信道，可促進屬靈生命的成熟、真理知識及恩賜裝備得以完全。

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<sup>12</sup> 對此三節經文的修改，詳見內文中相關的解經部份。原新譯本經文：雅各書一章 4 節，「但忍耐要堅持到底，使你們可以完全，毫無缺乏」；第 10 節 a，「富足的也不應該以降卑為辱」；第 11 節 d，「富足的人也必在他的奔波經營中這樣衰落」。

## 2. 闡析在試煉中得智慧的方法(5~7 節)

第五至八節，作者在這一立論中針對讀者中缺少智慧應對試

煉的普遍現象，指導他們從上帝獲取智慧的方法。並藉信心者和疑惑者之禱告的對比，幫助讀者確實憑信心得到屬天的智慧。

## 3. 闡析在試煉中順服以致高升(8~11 節)

第八至十一節，作者在這一論題中要求卑微和富足的弟兄，

皆當以謙卑為懷，奪冠為榮，接受試煉的挑戰。並用比喻、例證及比照，闡析謙卑順服可帶來高升得榮耀的功效。

### (三) 結論

作者以期望讀者能通過考驗，而能得到主所應許的冠冕作結論，顯然是對前面所提論點的答覆。第二節，提出問題：「你們遭遇

各種試煉的時候，都要看為喜樂」；第十二節，解答問題：「因為他經過考驗之後，必得著生命的冠冕」。作者特別指出「這冠冕是主應許給愛祂的人的」。儘管冠冕是應許給每一位信徒的，但

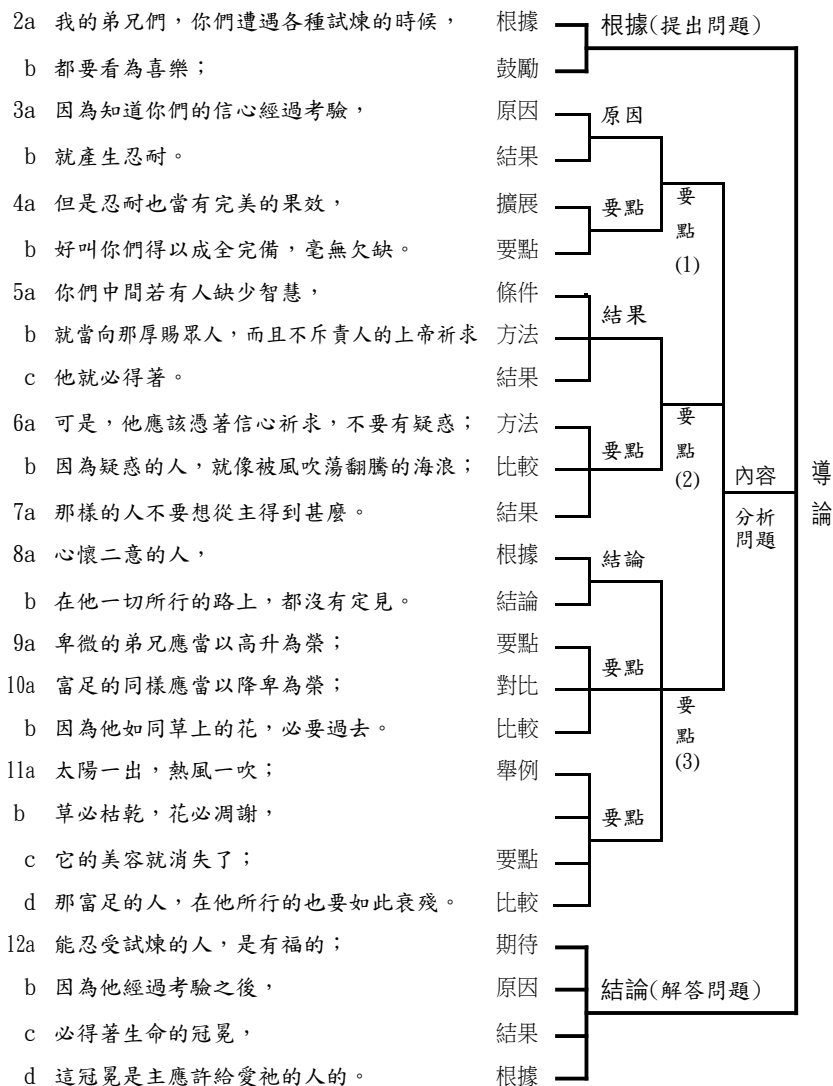
這是一個帶應許的條件句子。故而，那些在試煉中經不起考驗的人，無法享受上帝在將來要賜給愛祂的人之榮耀和尊貴。(結論：解答問題)

### 語意結構

經文的語意結構如下圖所示：<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 婁斯(Robert Lowth)將平行句之間的語意分成三類，即同義平行、反義平行和綜合平行；James Kugel 改進了婁斯平行句性質的理解與分類，他認為每一個平行的句子不是以「文法結構」為句子的基本單位，而是以「語義結構」為句子的基本單位；黃朱倫根據 Kugel 的見解發展了一套從語意關係角度探討平行體的解經法，這套解經法是以語義結構單位為基礎來分析平行句中的語意關係，同時他也參考了許多語言學家發表的語意結構分析理論(包括 Cotterall-Turner, Daniel Fuller, R. E. Longacre, Beekman-Callow, Vern S. Poythress 和 Larson)，他以 Beekman-Callow 的語意關係為基礎，並以其他體係為參考和補充，來探討詩歌中平行句之間的語意關係。參黃朱倫，《雅歌》，天道聖經註釋(香港：天道書樓，1997)，39 43。



## 文學分析與解經

作者在文章的句首，直接拋出他立論的主題，並透過三個分論點的演繹，導出與主題呼應的結論。這種表現手法既給予讀者對所論述的事物有定向，又為本論的展開鋪設了明確的道路。

## 立論：在試煉中歡喜經歷考驗

一 2a 我的弟兄們，

b 你們遭遇各種試煉的時候，都要看為喜樂。

「我的弟兄們」，這是作者繼問安後的第一句話。「弟兄們」，此片語在本書卷中出現十五次之多。<sup>14</sup> 參照第一節，問候語句：「作上帝和主耶穌基督僕人的雅各請散住十二個支派之人的

安」。從字義和語意上分析，作者強調他與讀者之間的四層關係：

一是，就盟約關係而論，他們同是舊約上帝的子民，可稱為弟兄；<sup>15</sup> 一是，就救恩論得救贖關係，他們同是新約被基督稱為弟兄(來二 11)；一是，從血緣關係來看，他們同是亞伯拉罕的後裔(二 21)；一是，從牧者與群羊的關係可知，他們同為基督的肢體。除此以外，從新約的角度看「僕人與弟兄」，也是呈現平行關係。因主耶穌與信徒為主僕關係，但祂又稱信徒是朋友(約十五 15)，也稱信徒為弟兄。

「我的弟兄們」從語意上來看，具有權威性，誠如作者在第一節所做的自我介紹：「作上帝和主耶穌基督僕人的雅各」。這種雙重身份的表述，頗具時代感。其特殊性在於初代教會，仍然以舊約聖卷為教會的經典，作者的表達方法和風格，具有濃厚的先知、箴言及智慧文學的格調；其意義深遠乃基於它的特殊性促成讀者較易接納信息的權威，以及樂意對作者的教導作出正確的回應。

「你們遭遇各種試煉的時候，都要看為喜樂」。「試煉」，原文含有「試煉、磨煉、試驗、考驗、試探、誘惑、迷惑」等意思。作褒義詞可用譯作「試煉」(參 2 節及 12 節)；作貶義詞可用譯作「試探」(參 13 節及 14 節)。<sup>16</sup> 「各種試煉」直譯可作：「各色各

<sup>14</sup> 參和合本，其中：「我的弟兄們」使用了八次(一 2，二 1、14，三 1、10、12，五 12、19)；「我親愛的弟兄們」用過三次(一 16、19，二 5)；「弟兄們」用了四次(四 11，五 7、9、10)。

<sup>15</sup> 「兄弟」，參 Walter Bauer，〈《新約希臘文中文辭典》〉，王正中編，戴德理譯(台灣：浸宣，民國 75)，11。

<sup>16</sup> 參筆者，〈寫作入門〉，44 52。



樣的試煉」，和合本譯為「百般試煉」。綜觀書卷內容，讀者遭遇到的試煉不是單一的，乃是多種類型，多種樣式的問題。比如：有罪的試探(一 13~27)、用勢利眼論斷並偏待窮人與富人(二 1~13)、沒有行為的假信心(二 14~26)、與世俗同流合污的權利之爭(三 1~四 10)、惡意毀謗論斷弟兄(四 11~17)、富足人剝削僱工積儂錢財(五 1~11)等等。

「都要看為喜樂」，「喜樂」，原文在本句子中指諸般的喜樂，相對於「各種的試煉」。作者命令讀者「都要看為喜樂」的背後，是各色各樣的試煉已經呈現在他們的信仰生活當中了。如何幫助他們的信心在實際生活中經得起考驗？這是作者在文章開頭就點出書卷焦點議題的最大理由。

可見，作者是以「喜樂」為主導，掀開處理會堂(教會)裡面所出現的問題，從正面積極地挑戰並激勵讀者，要以甘心喜樂的心態來接受他的勸勉，正確處理擺在他們面前需要學習的功課——「把信仰實踐與社會、教會及家庭的具體應用相結合，讓信心在實際生活的磨練中成長、完備，合乎上帝的心意」，為奪冠冕修直道路。

## 本論：闡釋三論點

作者在這一大大段落裡，通過對信心的磨練、智慧的尋求、降卑得高升的論述，指教讀者在信心的根基上，運用屬靈的智慧和原則去經歷擺在面前的試煉，為應許的冠冕打贏這場屬靈的戰爭。

### (一)闡析在試煉中信心臻於完全(3~4 節)

#### 1. 文學分析

第三及四節，在文學上顯示出智慧文學的特色。它的文學表達是詩歌體，但又揉合了箴言的風格。若以詩歌體的角度論它的文學形式結構，顯然是倒轉式的平行關係；若以箴言處理，兩節經文形成進階式的交錯平行句子。

箴言的最大特點，在於它不但是一種規戒的言詞，而且每句都是有其完全獨立的意義。兩組箴言的高潮落在其平行句的交叉點上是：「忍耐」。

3 節 A 因為知道你們的信心經過考驗，就產生忍耐。

4 節 A' 但是忍耐也當有完美的果效，好叫你們得以成全完備，毫無欠缺。

作者以讀者的信心曾經歷過考驗為訓誨的根據，並以此為信條的理論基礎，教導讀者信心的一般真理：「信心經過考驗就產生忍耐」，敦促在試煉中的讀者，帶著盼望：「好叫你們成全完備，毫無欠缺」，去忍受試煉，讓信心在實踐信仰的生活中得到升華：

「信心經過考驗」，其屬靈生命也在成長的過程中邁向成熟，真理知識及恩賜的裝備也完善起來。這正是「忍耐也當有果效」的最具現實意義的寫照。

## 2. 語意解經

正如文學的分析，此段經文既清楚又直接地指出讀者在試煉中，要靠信心去經歷考驗，讓靈命生長成熟，在信仰的旅程上，毫無缺乏。

一 3a 因為知道你們的信心經過考驗，  
b 就產生忍耐。

「知道」，原文是動詞，指從經驗中獲得理解上的認知；「考驗」，原文是中性名詞，在新約僅見兩次，都是指「信心經過試驗」(另參彼前一7)，被證明是真實的，是純全的，沒有絲毫的摻

雜。因而，它不是在描寫一個過程，乃是揭示試驗後的結果——讀者的信心曾經受過試驗，親自嘗試過信心的滋味。作者以此為他論述信心必然帶來屬靈果效的依據，提出「忍耐」是「信心經過試驗」的產物，繼續發展信心的論題。

一 4a 但是忍耐也當有完美的果效，  
b 好叫你們成全完備，毫無欠缺。

第四節 a，直譯可作：「但忍耐要恆心持守到底」。參照上下文，作者要讀者繼續持守先前「已經過試驗的信心」，讓信心所做的工夫發出完全的功效，即是第四節 b 所述的：「好叫你們成全完備，毫無欠缺」。其中，「完備」是形容詞，原文為論及性質或品

質各方面都滿足條件的、完全的；道德含意，參見帖撒羅尼迦前書五章 23 節的用法，指人品毫无瑕疵缺陷的完全。故而，後半句第四節 b 也可譯作：「使你們成熟、完全、毫無缺乏」。語意上，相應地指靈命的成熟、真理知識的完全、服事技能上沒有欠缺。

作者在這裡指出上帝的完備恩賞，可讓讀者的靈命在試煉的洗禮中成長，並達到完全成熟的境地。聖經人物中最典型的榜樣莫如約伯，他知道上帝允許試煉臨到他身上，絕非偶然，為要驗證他在靈性上的成熟(伯二十三 10)。作者正是希望讀者的信心，以及對上帝的認識如同約伯一般，忍受得起考驗。

## (二)闡析在試煉中得智慧的方法(5~7 節)

### 1. 文學分析

第五至七節，在其文學上的表現，明顯是智慧文學中的詩歌體形式。即是：「得智慧」的訓誨詩歌。它的詩歌體特色，包括：(一)平行句之間有強化、比較、遞進、對照；(二)行文之首有設問、明喻、對比等文學上的修辭。它的形式結構排列如下：

- 5 節    A    你們中間若有人缺少智慧，  
          B 就當向那厚賜眾人，而且不斥責人的上帝祈求，  
          C    他就必得著。
- 6 節        B'  可是，他應該憑著信心祈求，不要有疑惑；  
          A'  因為疑惑的人，就像被風吹蕩翻騰的海浪。
- 7 節        那樣的人，不要想從主得到甚麼。

首行 A，作者以假設帶出「缺少智慧的人」，尾行 A'，用明喻襯托出「得不著智慧的人」；B 行，缺少智慧的人「向上帝祈求」，B' 行，他「用信心去求」；其高潮落在 C 上：「他就必得

著」。這中心語句與上下文之間的關係，呈現了一個完整的「向上帝求智慧」的神學概念。

## 2. 語意解經

第五至七節經文，它的文學形式是假設條件句式的結構。第五與七節是第六節的條件子句，三節經文互為關聯，不可分割。誠如上文的描述，作者呈現給讀者的是向上帝求智慧的神學概念，對有著濃厚舊約背景的猶太讀者而言，具有雙重的教育意義：一是，指導讀者從上帝獲取智慧，去應對屬靈的試煉；一是，幫助讀者更進一步去認識並體驗上帝的美善。

- 一 5a 你們中間若有人缺少智慧，
- b 就當向那厚賜眾人，而且不斥責人的上帝祈求，
- c 他就必得著。

「智慧」，原文指有知識的智慧，根據接後的經文，它是指上帝的智慧，當人親近上帝就可以領受屬靈的智慧。<sup>17</sup> 第五節是一個假設條件與事實吻合的假設句。作者在這裡命令讀者中缺少智慧的人要向上帝祈求，必然會從上帝領受所當得的智慧。從上文下理的關係來看，除了前面所提到的，那些有「信心」的知識(從經驗來的知識)，和後面「卑微和富足的人」(得榮耀之前，應先有順服的謙卑)，誠然也包括了本章落入試探的人(一 13~15；參一 17)，還有第三章所提到的缺乏分辨真假智慧能力的人(三 15、

17)。如果從上帝國度的角度來看，屬靈的智慧可以幫助信徒，分辨屬靈的事或屬世的事，也增強對主旨意的認識與遵行。

由此，作者的命令是針對全體讀者，無人例外，每個人都要親近上帝。因為：「各樣美好的賞賜，和各樣完備的恩賜」，都源自上帝(參 17 節)。唯有從上帝而來的智慧，才能行走出上帝的旨意，信心才真正經得起考驗，才可能贏取應許的冠冕。故而，

<sup>17</sup> 智慧」原文為銀行用詞，指知識的實際應用。參 Archibald Robertson，《雅各書》，活泉新約希臘文解經(卷九)，詹正義編譯(美國：活泉，1997)，269。和合本譯作：「智慧」，或「學問、大智、聰明」等。

這裡的「智慧」，還包括了上帝的一切恩賞與恩賜，誠然聖靈也包括在內了。

作者不單發出「求智慧」的命令，更且教導「得智慧」的方法。在第五節 b，他特別論述上帝美善的性情，原因大致有兩方面。一方面是對前面第四節經文的追加說明，<sup>18</sup> 另一個方面是讀者具有濃厚的舊約律法背景：「人若遵行，就必因此活著」(利十八 5；參加三 12；羅十 5)，所以作者刻意教導他們對上帝性情的認識(參 17 節)，及親身去體驗上帝的恩典。

「厚」，原文是副詞，僅一次出現在這裡。其意思可為「慷慨地」或「誠懇地」。作者指出上帝本性中慷慨、真實、懇切的屬性，是樂意將祂豐盛的智慧賜給凡求告祂的人，就如作者的教導：「他就必得著」。比較主耶穌教導門徒的禱告：「你們祈求，就給你們；尋找，就尋見；叩門，就給你們開門」(太七 7)。得上帝智慧的秘訣，就是親近祂，尋求祂。

- 一 6a 可是，他應該憑著信心祈求，不要有疑惑；
- b 因為疑惑的人，就像被風吹蕩翻騰的海浪。

「信心」與「疑惑」是此段經文中最重要的兩個詞，是向上帝求「得智慧」的條件。「疑惑」，原文含有「疑心」、「猶豫」等意思。「不要有疑惑」，意即不能有一丁點的疑心。作者教導讀者要全然地仰望、用真實的信心向上帝祈求智慧。

「因為疑惑的人，就像被風吹蕩翻騰的海浪」，此句與第七節構成平行句。作者以明喻的修辭手法，引進了現實生活中的自然現象，讓讀者去體會畫面上所蘊含的相對真理，使原本抽象的語言概念——「疑惑的人」，用事物形象化地呈現出來——「海浪

隨風蕩漾」。巧妙地把行文承載的「符號」，轉換為處境的現實「情景」，而融入了讀者的思潮，讓讀者直接去領悟其中的真諦，強調了得智慧必須用信心去求，這樣的一個事實。作者認為

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<sup>18</sup> 第四節提到：「使你們成全、完備，毫無欠缺」。信徒屬靈生命要達到如此完美的境地，唯有從上帝的恩賞中得屬天的智慧，去明白及遵行上帝的旨意。

讀者只有把禱告建立在信心的根基上，而且沒有絲毫的懷疑，他的禱告才能蒙上帝的垂聽。

作者指導讀者禱告的方法，有如耶穌教導門徒的禱告，即便只要有芥菜子般大小的信心，他/她的禱告也必蒙垂聽(參太十七 20，二十一 21)。信心的禱告必然帶出蒙垂聽的果效，這正是新約作者的普遍教導：「人非有信，就不能得上帝的喜悅。因為到上

帝面前來的人，必須信有上帝，且信祂賞賜那尋求祂的人」(來十一 6，和合本)。

- 一 7a 那樣的人，  
不要想從主得到甚麼。

「那樣的人」，即指上節經文中「疑惑的人」；「甚麼」，參照上文之間的關係，應指「智慧」。作者透過第六節的對比，導入假設條件中的第二個子句：「疑惑的人，別想從主得到絲毫的智慧」。

這裡的「主」是一個非常重要的字，原文與前面第五節的

「上帝」不同詞。作者在本書卷中，將這兩個詞的用法分得清清楚楚：θεός (上帝)用於「父」位，κύριος (主)用在「子」位。這對初代教會皈依基督教的猶太人來說，意義重大。由舊約可知，在他們的神學觀念裡，θεός 是他們的上帝，也是他們的君王，國家、家庭及個人生活中一切的活動，都圍繞著祂，以祂為中心。

而 κύριος (主)是新約用詞，詞義多種，從上下文的關係來看，這裡僅指「耶穌基督」。使徒約翰卻將蘊藏在這兩個詞裡的語意，闡述出來：「律法是藉著摩西頒布的，恩典和真理卻是藉著耶穌基督而來的」(約一 17)。上帝一切的恩惠，都是藉著基督豐富地賜給凡求告祂名的新約信徒。

(三)闡析在試煉中順服以致高升(8~11 節)

1. 文學分析

第八至十一節，在文學上的表達方式如同第五至七節，修辭

手法別具一格。作者將箴言的訓誨注入字裡行間，並在行文中藉著比喻、對比、諺語及其比照，形象地將「自高必然衰敗」的真理解明。它從反面揭示出「謙卑帶來高升得榮」的主題，達到規勸的目的。其平行結構排列如下：<sup>19</sup>

8 節 A 心懷二意的人，在他一切所行的路上，都沒有定見。

9 節 B 卑微的弟兄應當以高升為榮；

10 節 C 富足的同樣應當以降卑為榮；

C' 因為他如同草上的花，必要過去。

11 節 B' 太陽一出，熱風一吹；草必枯乾，花必凋謝，  
它的美容就消失了；

A' 那富足的人，在他所行的也要如此衰殘。

此段經文的六個語句中，呈現「首問尾答」，中夾「二喻一諺」的美妙組合。它展現出作者極佳的文學修養，和精湛的修辭

技巧。上半部份由一個問題及兩組隱喻的對比句構成；下半部份卻由兩個比喻，及夾帶作為增補的諺語建構；高潮是落在 CC'。因 C' 是個比喻，其功能在於加強 C 的語意，並且烘托出 C 來。故而，作者闡析的焦點就是：「富足的弟兄應以降卑為榮」。B 和 B'，它們意蘊真理規則，語言功能都是為 C 作嫁 (B' 和 C' 是同義平行，並且 B' 將 C' 的意象和意義形象地表明出來)。可見，首句 A「心懷二意的人」，跟尾句 A' 的「那富足的人」，所指的應是同一類人。在語句結構上，A 和 A' 顯然呈現首尾遙相呼應的平行特徵：句首提問(即提出論據)，句尾解答(即歸納結論)。在文體

<sup>19</sup> B 和 C 為同義平行，參見語意解經部份。

上表現出議論文形式的特點：引論(8 節)、<sup>20</sup> 本論(9~11 節 ab)、結論(11 節 c)。同時，也突出顯明勸戒歸正的智慧文學的特色。

## 2. 語意解經

第八至十一節，第八節是此段的論據，作者以此為理論基礎，闡釋無論是卑微的弟兄，抑或是富足的弟兄，都當以謙卑為懷，著眼奪冠為榮。但是，作者論卑微者只用一個句子，其它句子卻都是針對富足者的。其中最大的原因應與歷史處境，及猶太人的貧富觀有關係。<sup>21</sup>

### 一 8a 心懷二意的人，

在他一切所行的路上，都沒有定見。

「心懷二意」，此詞僅在雅書出現兩次(另參四 8)。原文為複合詞，直譯：「兩個靈魂」，指雙重的心意。<sup>22</sup> 它含有「懷疑」、「猶豫」等意思。「一切」原文可解作「凡事」。「路」，直譯可作「道路」，含有進展的意思(包括路綫、路程，也用於行動、取向或意向等意)。此字與「心懷二意」搭配使用，顯然是將人的「行動以及意向」都包括在裡面了，比較第四章八節的用法，<sup>23</sup> 其觀念是清楚的，和合本的譯文更接近原文，故這第八節經文採用和合本的。

在語句的結構上，它以下的經文結合成一個整體。作者以此為理論基礎，論證卑微與富足的弟兄理當以「降卑為榮，奪冠為標」(參一 12)，效法基督的樣式，得勝試煉。

<sup>20</sup> 第八節經文新譯本為：「因為三心兩意的人，在他的一切道路上，都搖擺不定。」筆者選用和合本的翻譯，詳見接後的解經。若直譯可作：「心懷二意的人在凡事上都沒有主見」。

<sup>21</sup> 在使徒教會時期，當猶太人拒絕福音後，外邦窮人成為上帝最先眷顧的群體，並且因著恩典而在信上富足(路七 22；雅二 5)，而有錢人較難順服主的意旨。主曾作了這樣的比喻：「駱駝穿過針的眼，比財主進上帝的國，還容易」(參太十九 24；可十 23；路十八 25)。在猶太人的傳統觀念裡：「富足是上帝的祝福，貧窮乃上帝的責罰」。

<sup>22</sup> 參 Archibald Robertson，《雅各書》，272。

<sup>23</sup> 參雅各書四章 8 節：「你們親近上帝，上帝就必親近你們。有罪的人哪，要潔淨你們的手。心懷二意的人哪，要清潔你們的心」。



- 一 9 卑微的弟兄應當以高升為榮；
- 一 10 a 富足的同樣應當以降卑為榮。
  - b 因為他如同草上的花，必要過去。

「卑微」是形容詞，新約只出現八次，<sup>24</sup> 而且作喻意。<sup>25</sup> 它可指外在物質性的貧窮，也可指內在靈性上的謙虛。作者用了兩次(雅一 9，四 6)，其餘六次：一次用於與地位和階層相關以外(路一 52)，另四次均指心靈上的「卑微」(參太十一 29；羅十二 16；林後七 6，十 1；彼前五 5；雅一 9，四 6)。其中，保羅用了三次，在羅馬書裡他將「卑微的人」與「自以為聰明的人」相對論之；彼得也是將之與「驕傲的人」相對而談(參彼前五 5)。

此字與介詞連用：「在……裡面」。參照雅各書四章 6 節的

用法，是指謙卑的人，並與「驕傲的人」相對，跟保羅和彼得的用法相同。從經文的平行對比關係分析，這裡應指屬靈的卑微，即「在他心靈裡面的卑微」，並不僅僅指物質生活上的缺乏或貧困。正如作者在第二章五節的用法一樣。<sup>26</sup> 因而，作者勸勉讀者「應當以高升為榮」，也顯得較為合理。<sup>27</sup>

「富足」是形容詞，此字用於屬世財物，意指「富有的」、「富裕的」；作喻意，用於人，則指在信上的富足(參啟二 9，三 7)。作者在本書中用了五次。其中，有兩次是用於財物上的富足(二 6，五 1)，一次用於信仰思想上的富足(二 5，指大有信心)，另外兩次即是第十及十一節的「富足的弟兄」。

從句子的平行角度和文意的關係來看，富足的人應指兩方面的富足：屬靈與屬世的富足。前者，它與上節經文的「卑微的弟兄」相對，顯然，這裡的富足弟兄，應指那些自以為在信上富足，自高自大「驕傲的人」。同時，透過下面的比喻，可窺見到

<sup>24</sup> 啟創，《聖經工具》，雅各書，G5011。

<sup>25</sup> Walter Bauer，《新約希臘文中文辭典》，633。

<sup>26</sup> 雅各書二章 5 節：「上帝豈不是揀選了世上的貧窮人，叫他們在信上富足、並承受祂所應許給那些愛祂之人的國麼」(參一 12)。

<sup>27</sup> 屬靈上的謙卑蘊含著順服之意。一個順服的人，必蒙上帝的悅納。腓立比書第二章記載了基督謙卑順服的典範：祂自己卑微，而順服至死，乃升為至高(參腓二 5-11)。

這些富足的弟兄，在財富上也是富足的。新約書信中常見富足與錢財相提並論。彼得也將之與自高及錢財連用(提前六 17)，他的教導跟此節經文所載的信息十分接近。

另一方面，這裡的「降卑」與第九節的「卑微」，為同源字。這兩節經文從文字表達上明顯是對比句，其中：「卑微的弟兄」與「富足的弟兄」相對；「應當以高升為榮」與「應當以降卑為榮」(10 節)相對。然而論它們內涵的屬靈意義，儘管前者為反義對比，而後者則為同義平行，<sup>28</sup> 都是指屬靈上的謙虛順服。<sup>29</sup> 因此，這兩組語句結構比較的重點，應是它們語意的內涵，而不是外表文字的描寫。故而，它們的平行關係應是同義平行，而非反義平行。比較重點的確定，直接影響到此段經文的結構排列 (8~11 節)，及其分析。

由此，也可窺見到，作者在這兩節經文中給讀者指出兩條屬靈的原則：一是，針對物質貧乏、社會地位卑微的弟兄(五 6~12)，如果能在屬靈上謙卑順服，在主裡必得高升；一是，針對物質富裕並社會地位高尚的弟兄(參二 1~13，三 1，五 1~5)，理應效法基督的降卑，不志氣高大，乃俯就卑微的人，也必以他自己的降卑得著榮耀(參四 6)。誠如作者在第四章十節的教導：「務要在主面前自卑，主就必叫你們升高」。

「因為他如同草上的花，必要過去」，這第十節的下半句是個比喻，為上半節所設，「草花」作「他」(指富足人)的意象，且加強其語意。「草」，原希臘字在新約常指「青草」(參太六 30，十四 19；約六 10；啟九 4)；「花」，原指野花，喻為不能持

<sup>28</sup> 洛思(Robert Lowth)在十八世紀中葉提出「平行體」的概念，為現代希伯來詩歌的討論立下基礎。他提出三種主要平行體：同義平行，第一行表達的意思在第二行中重複表達，但手法不同；反義平行，第二行的內容與第一行在某程度上相反；綜合平行，第一句與第二句既不重複，也不相反，他把凡是這樣的一對詩行歸入此類，再把綜合平行分成子類別。雖然很多學者接受了洛思的基本立場，但也有些學者提出不同的看法或反對的意見。比如：魯賓遜(T. H. Robinson)和庫格爾(James Kugel)。參盧卡斯，《舊約文學與神學：詩篇與智慧文學》，文學釋經系列，紀榮神譯(香港：天道書樓，2010)，123 25；格蘭·奧斯邦(Grant R. Osborne)，《基督教釋經手冊》，237 45。

<sup>29</sup> 柏林認為語義平行是兩詩行含有「語義上的延續，思想上的發展」。參盧卡斯，《舊約文學與神學：詩篇與智慧文學》，131 32。

久的(參彼前一 24)，兩字聯合在一起使用，可解作「草花」。作者以「草上的花」藉喻「富足的弟兄」；以「必要過去」說明事物存留時間的短暫，告誡富足的弟兄：雖然他們目前的光景美如花，但終究如花般地必要消失，應把屬世的價值觀轉移到屬靈的價值觀上來，當「以降卑為榮」，討主的喜悅，得以高升。

一 11 a 太陽一出，熱風一吹；草必枯乾，花必凋謝；它的美容就消失了；

b 那富足的人，在他所行的也如此要衰殘。

第十一節是由四個動詞並列組合的猶太諺語，跟一個比喻構成。在文學上，它們之間的關係：前者既是後者的例證，又是後者的意象，彼此之間形成了鮮明的比照。

上半節連續使用了四個動詞：「升起」，「枯乾」，「凋謝」，「消逝」，將質本纖細、生命脆弱、美麗短暫的草花，

在驕陽熱風之下，草的枯乾，花的凋謝，美容的消逝之淒慘遭遇，描繪得淋漓盡致；下半句的比喻是承接上文，將具體事物「草花」的不幸遭遇，轉作抽象的「那富足的人」的意象，從而深刻地揭露出那心懷二意的富足人，所做的一切都不能存留，必然在試煉中衰殘。

「衰殘」，原文為將來時被動語態，指「把火焰撲滅」或「把燈吹熄」。參照第八節，此語意應指富足人心懷二意的行事方式及生活作風(參雅五 1~5)。故「那富足人所行的」，應指他事主藏私慾，既事奉主，又事奉瑪門，導致他所做的，不能被主所悅納。就如保羅的教導：「如果有人用金、銀、寶石、草、木、禾

稽，在這根基上建造，各人的工程將來必要顯露，因為那日子必把它顯明出來。有火要把它顯露出來，那火要考驗各人的工程是怎樣的」(林前三 12~13)。僅此論讀者，對他們來說也算得上是一個嚴厲的警告了。

「那富足的人，在他所行的，也如此要衰殘」，參照此段的首句：「心懷二意的人，在他一切所行的路上，都沒有定見」(8 節)，顯然，它是在回覆首句的問題。值得一提的，是這兩組中的

「他」為同一個希臘字；尾句的首字「那」，是定冠詞。在語意上，它特別指明「富足的人」不是別人，乃是「那個心懷二意，

行事沒有定見的人」。作者在結尾部份指出那富足的人，最終必因他三心二意事奉主，導致「衰殘」的必然結局。

### 結論：經過考驗承受應許冠冕(12 節)

這第十二節是整段經文的結論部份。在語句的結構上，它與首行經文形成呼應關係。一方面回覆了首句的問題，另一方面又為本論做了總結。

- 一 12 a 能忍受試煉的人，是有福的；
- b 因為他經過考驗之後，
- c 必得著生命的冠冕；
- d 這冠冕是主應許給愛祂的人的。

「能忍受試煉的人，是有福的」，參照第二節作者的呼籲：「我的弟兄們，你們遭遇各種試煉的時候，都要看為喜樂」，它們的語句結構呈平行關係。作者在文章伊始，要求落在試煉中的讀者要喜樂的原由，行筆至此，才有了答案：「因為他經過考驗之後，必得著生命的冠冕」。這是最具現實意義的寫照。

「有福的」，意即「蒙福的人」。他需具備兩個最基本的條件，才能獲得「生命的冠冕」。即是：第一，他必須「在試煉中通過考驗」，這顯然是回應本論中的第一論(參 3~4 節)。第二，他必須是「愛主的人」，這明顯是回應第二及第三論中那些投靠祂、尋求祂賜智慧(參 5~7 節)，及謙卑順服祂旨意的人(參 8~11 節)。由於此節經文是帶條件的應許句，故而這兩個條件缺一不可，唯有滿足主的要求，才有資格承受生命的冠冕。如果在試煉中經不起考驗而落敗，則就無法獲得上帝所應許賜予的冠冕。<sup>30</sup> 作者正是為此而立論著書，從實際生活上去指導讀者，盼望他們

<sup>30</sup> 作者精湛的修辭技巧，如正文中所見的頻頻使用對比、比喻、比照、格言等深化主題的修辭手法，除了可達到勸導、規正等作用外，另一個不可忽略的，就是在於能引起讀者的警惕，起到警戒的作用，避免在試煉中被淘汰。

能夠接受他的挑戰，甘心樂意迎戰試煉，結出信仰實踐的生命碩果。<sup>31</sup>

## 小結

綜合上述，作者在結論部份點出著書的終極目的，就是期望讀者：「在得冠冕的應許中歡喜忍受試煉」。為此，作者在本論演繹三個論點的過程，分別把宗教經驗、神學、教義作為論據，並針對性地運用例證，兼併不同的論證方法，加以分析、論述，揭示出真理的原則來，為正文的論證建立其理論基礎，預備讀者的心，為奪取冠冕打好屬靈的爭戰。

## 結語

總結本文對「聖經文學分析與解經」的研究。在聖經文學分析方面，筆者對此文本分析的手段是藉著文本本身的文學表現形式，<sup>32</sup>從文學的角度理解、分析文本的體裁及修辭的藝術形式，重點在文本結構上，研究一個事件，一個事件的關係。而在文本的解釋方面，則是在文本分析的基礎上，更細膩地分析文本結構中的一個語句，一個語句的關係，以及字詞的語意，符號的象徵、意象等修辭的效果，<sup>33</sup>詮釋它的歷史和神學處境、人文生活與神學信息的邏輯關係、文意所攜帶警世教人的信息，並導引信徒信仰生活實踐的應用。

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<sup>31</sup> 綜觀導論的字裡行間，處處流露出作者對讀者的試煉處境和屬靈生命成長的高度關注；作者深入淺出的教導所帶出的神學、教義及實踐信仰生活的真諦，體現出對讀者的眷顧和愛護，應該是最好的說明。

<sup>32</sup> 對聖經的文本而言，她源於上帝的默示，在上帝的啟示之下藉著人的工作所做成的作品，故此，她比普通的文本多了神學性。

<sup>33</sup> 近代釋經法的崛起，釋經的範式已從舊的範式，過度到在神學、教義、信仰生活實踐以外，同時也重視對語言、意義、傳播，及理解等語言處境的各個方面的研究，進一步加強了對聖經書卷文本歷史處境及牧養關顧的理解，和提高了對作者著書的動機和目的，以及給與讀者的教導及勸勉內容等的認識。而對聖經解釋學來說，還包括了聖經和神學的研究，研究的目的也不僅是要獲得正確解釋的原理，還包括知道整個解釋的過程，以及運用的方法和途徑。參楊牧谷，〈釋經學〉，《當代神學辭典》，1:492-93。

筆者盼望本文的研究，能夠幫助學習者更好地使用母語語文強化釋經能力，更好地應用在今日教會講台的宣講，或更有效地對信徒聖經知識的栽培，和屬靈生命的造就及信仰生活的實踐。



## 探討路加福音之嬰孩敘事的政治隱喻

呂向陽 SUNNY LU



### 引言

對於一些基督徒來說，耶穌的醫病、趕鬼、赦罪僅僅涉及個人的層面(個人靈魂的得救)與社會和政治無關。其實這種想法乃是一種「時代錯置」(anachronism)，並不符合古代人的想法和歷史的佐證。解釋聖經關涉到古代文化的範疇，包括古語言、古文獻、古代社會和歷史等知識。我們若將新約文獻放在其原初的社會背景與歷史處境中來解讀，可以避免在解釋文本時容易犯的時代錯置。

路加福音理當歸類於「希臘—羅馬」(Greco-Roman)的史學著作之列。福音書作者藉用了古代希臘—羅馬歷史人物傳記的語言



形式，報告了一份世界政治的同步事件。<sup>1</sup> 作者指出：只要人類的歷史沒有中斷，上帝對所有人的救贖與解放的承諾也就沒有停止，「救恩歷史」(Heilsgeschichte)一直會延續到耶穌基督的再來。我們在考察路加福音時，發現路加在編撰耶穌的「嬰孩敘事」(Infancy Narrative)時，<sup>2</sup> 隱藏著一種批判羅馬政權的聲音。讀者如果能夠站在第一世紀基督徒的社會與歷史處境，以同理心來解讀路加的嬰孩敘事，將會看見文本裏面處處瀰漫著政治批判的色彩，在這一新生王耶穌與羅馬的凱撒之間存在著一個無法解決的政治張力。

## 路加福音的創作背景

### 書卷作者

根據早期教會的傳統，保羅布道旅程的同伴路加(Luke)寫了路加福音和使徒行傳。<sup>3</sup> 比較路加福音和使徒行傳的序言部分，顯示出兩卷書的關係密切(路一 1~4；徒一 1~2)。事實上，路加福音乃是一卷匿名文獻，沒有附上作者的名字。有幾個證據指出路加福

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<sup>1</sup> 路加福音的開頭讓人聯想起某種歷史的敘事，有大量證據足以表明路加的作品屬於史學著作。通常認為路加福音一章 1~4 節，類似於希臘文學的序言和羅馬的歷史著作，暗示了路加正在創作一部歷史(包括路加福音和使徒行傳)。同時，又有大量證據足以表明路加福音和使徒行傳屬於文學著作。路加的家譜(路三 23~38)、以坐席為場景的教導(路五 27~39，十四 1~24)、旅途的敘述(路九 51~十九 48)、講論、戲劇的片段(路四 16~30)等等，都屬於史學著作的諸般元素。Warren Carter and Amy-Jill Levine, *The New Testament: Methods and Meanings* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013), 56; Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green and Marianne M. Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 152。

<sup>2</sup> 路加福音一章 5 節至二章 52 節稱為「嬰孩敘事」取自德文 (*Kindheitsgeschichte*)，內容記載了施洗約翰與耶穌的誕生故事。Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1977), 25。

<sup>3</sup> 「路加」這個名字，新約聖經一共出現三次(西四 14；門 24；提後四 11)，他被稱為保羅的同伴。路加從使徒行傳十六章開始出現，並一直陪著保羅，直到保羅完成所有旅程。保羅在提摩太後書提到路加：「獨有路加在我這裡」(提後四 11)，似乎可以推測路加乃是一路陪伴保羅到了羅馬。根據早期教會的傳統，認為路加—「所親愛的醫生」(西四 14)就是路加福音和使徒行傳的作者。

音屬於第二代基督徒的作品。<sup>4</sup> 路加福音的序言顯示作者並不是耶穌生平的見證人，因為作者知道「有許多人提筆作書，述說在

我們中間『已經實現的事』(πεπληροφορημένων)」(路一 1)，並且他所傳的福音『是照傳道的人從起初看見，又傳給我們的』(路

一 2)。作者提到了口述傳統與書面創作的關係，目的是為了讓讀者知道「口傳之道都是真實的」(κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν, 路一 4)。所以路加福音的作者並不是耶穌在世的見證人。

## 書卷讀者

路加的兩卷作品(路加福音和使徒行傳)乃是獻給一位「尊貴的提阿非羅」(κράτιστε Θεόφιλε, 和合本譯為「提阿非羅大人」)。從路加對他的尊稱來看(路一 3; 徒一 1)，此人似乎像是一位羅馬的官員(徒二十三 26, 二十四 2, 二十六 26)。<sup>5</sup> 路加的作品充分地考慮到了羅馬上層階級的讀者需求。雷文斯(David Ravens)認為，路加這兩卷作品的讀者乃是一個綜合性的基督徒羣體，這一個羣體包含了講希臘文的猶太人，以及敬畏上帝(God-fearers)的外邦人。<sup>6</sup> 因此，路加的受眾對象可能包括那些帝國精英階層的人士，至少他們瞭解帝國的政治手腕，以及效忠帝國所能獲得的經濟利益，路加呼籲這些社會上層菁英人士面對窮人時要表現出更多的同情與憐憫。<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> 關於路加福音的寫作背景，請參閱 François Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50* (trans. Christine M. Thomas; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 16-25; A. R. C. Leaney, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1958), 1-3; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (Leicester; England: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 13-23.

<sup>5</sup> 希臘文 κράτιστε「大人/尊貴的」通常用來指稱那些羅馬帝國的政治精英，如猶太巡撫腓力斯(徒二十三 26)和非斯都(徒二十六 25)。Bovon, *Luke 1*, 22-23.

<sup>6</sup> David Ravens, *Luke and the Restoration of Israel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 12-16.

<sup>7</sup> 路加福音表現出一種強烈地偏向窮人的政治態度。路加在論「福與禍」的耶穌語錄(logion)中，抬高了窮人的身份，貶低了富人的地位(路六 20-25)；在無知財主的比喻(路十二 13-21)、不義管家的比喻(路十六 1-13)、拉撒路的故事(路十六 19-31)當中，路加對有錢人和他們的財富作出了諸多的批評。B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels* (London: Macmillan, 1924), 529-62.

## 寫作時間

路加福音極有可能在第一世紀後期已經完成。第二世紀中期的護教士遊斯丁(Justin Martyr, 100–165 B.C.)已經提到了這一卷作品。另一個佐證是馬吉安(Marcion, 85–160 B.C.)，他根據路加福音和保羅書信建立了一份所謂的「正典」(Canon)。<sup>8</sup> 葛德·泰森(Gerd Theissen)提出一個有趣的看法，路加福音可能是在羅馬皇帝多米田(Domitian, A.D. 51–96)死後不久成書，路加以尊主頌(Magnificat)作為開始：「(上帝)叫有權柄的失位，叫卑賤的升高」(路一 52)。馬利亞這一句話隱含了羅馬皇帝失位的一次政治危機。<sup>9</sup> 在什麼時候，貴族會喜歡這種革命的語調？當然是在羅馬貴族都恨之入骨的多米田被弒以後，議會在他死後判他「永受咒詛」(*damnatio memoriae*)。可以想像，只有在那些日子裏，即使基督徒作者也可以公然因為「有權柄的失位」而歡欣鼓舞。

## 寫作地點

路加在哪裡撰寫他的作品？使徒行傳二十八章 16~31 節提供了線索，保羅和他同伴行程的最後軌跡是在羅馬。羅馬是當時地中海世界的中心。猶太歷史學家約瑟夫(Titus Flavius Josephus, A.D. 37–100)也是在羅馬寫成他的鉅著《猶太古史》和《猶太戰記》。他與路加的思想相近，約瑟夫的兩卷著作也是為猶太人的信仰來辯護的。<sup>10</sup> 路加希望自己的作品能夠在地中海世界被廣泛接受，顯然包含了社會上層的菁英人士和社會下層的窮苦大眾，而羅馬正是一個很好的寫作地點。路加告訴我們：耶穌誕生的故事就發生在羅馬皇帝奧古斯都統治時期(路二 1)；在凱撒提比留在位第十五年，施洗約翰開始出來傳悔改的道，為耶穌宣揚上帝國的福音預備道路(路三 1)。使徒行傳的結尾是在羅馬，保羅和「我們」(徒二十八 16~31)在羅馬放膽傳講上帝國，並教導主耶穌基督。

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<sup>8</sup> 關於新約正典的討論，參米勒爾，《新約導論》，蕭維元譯(香港：浸信會出版社，2012)，33–39。

<sup>9</sup> Gerd Theissen, *The New Testament: History, Literature, Religion* (New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 109–110.

<sup>10</sup> Gerd Theissen, *Gospel Writing and Church Politics: A Socio-rhetorical Approach* (Hong Kong: CUHK, 2001), 102.

督的事情，沒有人禁止。路加關注的焦點在於救恩歷史如何展開與實現，以及上帝對人類的拯救，如何從猶太人的開始一直伸展到整個羅馬世界。

## 文學形式的政治隱喻

路加福音一至二章隱藏了兩個國度的故事，包括撒母耳記的以色列王國之開創篇和但以理書的上帝國度之終結篇。路加使用這兩個故事作為一種政治隱喻，藉著以色列王國之開創和上帝國度之終結這兩個主題，隱喻了羅馬帝國即將遭遇一次重大的政治危機，上帝國度正在嬰孩耶穌的誕生中來臨。

### 以色列王國之開創篇

第一個國度的故事引自撒母耳記。像莎士比亞的劇本總是從一對配角開始，同樣路加也向讀者引見伊利莎白和撒迦利亞，而他們即將成為施洗約翰的父母。伊利莎白和撒迦利亞的敘事類似於哈拿和以利加拿，而施洗約翰誕生的事件，同樣可以回溯到相關的歷史記載。<sup>11</sup> 我們發現這新舊兩則故事都發生在聖殿中(撒上一 9~18；路一 8~23)；對照撒母耳從小就在聖殿裡服侍上帝，約翰也是自小被聖靈充滿；兩個故事都說到孩子淡酒濃酒都不喝(路一 15；撒上一 8~15)；兩位嬰孩(施洗約翰和撒母耳)都具備了先知的功能(撒上三 21，九 19)；並且兩位嬰孩的將來都與以色列的國度有關，撒母耳膏立了以色列最初的兩位王(掃羅與大衛)，施洗約翰則是為那一位新生王耶穌預備道路。<sup>12</sup> 撒母耳的出現帶來了上帝對以色列的審判與拯救，這些事落在了掃羅和大衛的身上。撒母耳警告掃羅，上帝要棄絕他改立大衛為王。同樣，施洗約翰的出現也對照著審判與拯救，施洗約翰警告以色列人，如果不悔改

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<sup>11</sup> 如同撒母耳記上哈拿與以利迦拿的故事，這一次在聖殿裡的不是母親(伊利莎白)而是父親撒迦利亞，他自己就是祭司(路一 5)。撒迦利亞按著班次在聖殿執行祭司職務時，天使(代替了以利的角色)向他預言，他的妻子伊利莎白將要生一個兒子，這一個嬰孩就是日後耶穌的先驅施洗約翰。賴特(N. T. Wright)，《新約與神的子民》，左心泰譯(台北：校園書房，2013)，485。

<sup>12</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *A Coming Christ in Advent: Essays on the Gospel Narratives Preparing for the Birth of Jesus Matthew 1 and Luke 1* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1988), 56.

將要面臨審判(路三 7~14)，並且預言另一位能力比他更大的(耶穌)，將會帶來更新(路三 16~17)。賴特的觀察十分合理，路加這一個劇本背後隱藏著某種令人不安的反動手法：

路加沒有提到羅馬皇帝、皇室進場的盛大儀式、或是希臘文明中的號角聲——他只提到希律王統治的時期，有一對敬虔的猶太老夫夫妻，他們渴望有自己的孩子。然而……路加引用了撒母耳記上

(以色列王國的開創)，這個以希臘化方式所寫的偉大歷史記錄，有一個單純的開始，卻暗藏著一個將要顛覆一切的意圖。<sup>13</sup>

撒母耳與大衛的故事對於第一世紀的猶太人和那些敬畏上帝的外邦人耳熟能詳，從路加福音讀出以色列王國之開創篇，無疑提醒第一世紀的讀者一個重要的歷史事實：大衛的國度正在來臨之中，正如天使向馬利亞所預言的：

你要懷孕生子，要給他取名叫耶穌，他將要為大，稱為至高者的兒子；主上帝要把他祖大衛的王位給他。他要做雅各家的王，直到永遠；他的國沒有窮盡。(路一 31-33)

這一個預言回應了撒母耳記下七章 13~16 節，上帝對大衛的應許：「你的家和你的國，必在我面前永遠堅立，你的國位也必堅定，直到永遠」。馬利亞在尊主頌裡暗示上帝在大衛的後裔中

興起了一位君王。撒迦利亞的頌歌，則是預言了以色列的拯救，指向了上帝對大衛應許的救贖：

主以色列的上帝是應當稱頌的，因他眷顧祂的百姓，為他們施行救贖。在他僕人大衛的家中，為我們興起了拯救的角……(路一 68-79)

在這段詩歌裡，預言了上帝將要解放以色列人脫離一切仇敵的手，實現祂向亞伯拉罕所起的誓言。這些預言都在耶穌的誕生

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<sup>13</sup> 路加想要帶領讀者回到哈拿和以利加拿的故事(撒上一 1~二 11)，在這兩則故事裡，都各有一個更大的計劃要實現，內含著以色列受審和救贖的信息。關於路加福音和撒母耳記上的對比，賴特看到兩個故事之間的平行。首先是關於審判的信息，撒母耳宣告耶和華對以利家的審判，施洗約翰也同樣對以色列人宣告即將來臨的審判；關於救贖的信息，撒母耳膏立大衛作王，施洗約翰為耶穌洗禮，並宣告耶穌的能力比他更大。在這些情節中，施洗約翰扮演了撒母耳的角色，耶穌則扮演了大衛的角色。賴特(N. T. Wright)，《新約與神的子民》，485-87。

中應驗了。毫無疑問，生活在第一世紀的猶太人正是在羅馬帝國的殖民統治之下，路加關於嬰孩耶穌的降生乃是針對羅馬人說的。

## 上帝國度之終結篇

第二個國度的故事引自但以理書。但以理書中人子的異象(但以理書第七章)對於第一世紀的猶太人來說，乃是一個重要的彌賽亞盼望：

我在夜間的異象中觀看，見有一位像人子的，駕著天雲而來，被領到亙古常在者面前；得了權柄、榮耀、國度，使各方、各國、各族的人都侍奉他。他的權柄是永遠的，他的國必不敗壞。（但七 13-14）

但以理的「異象」涉及以色列的救贖與全人類的未來：人子獲得永遠的權柄，他要救贖以色列的子民，他要統治全世界，引進一個永恆的和平的國度。<sup>14</sup> 更加最重的是，但以理書中的天使迦百列負責解釋耶路撒冷和聖殿的毀滅、連同受膏者的異象：「為你本國之民和你聖城，已約定了七十個七，要止住罪過，除

淨罪惡，贖盡罪孽，引進永義，封住異象和預言，並膏至聖者」（但九 24、26-27）。<sup>15</sup> 這些描述都影響了路加的看法。路加有意使用但以理的「終末論」(eschatology)來描繪耶穌的誕生，包括：

(1)路加記錄了天使傳遞信息(路一 11、26)，這一位天使名字叫作加百列(路一 19)，乃是侍立在上帝寶座前的天使；<sup>16</sup> (2)撒迦利亞的頌歌稱施洗約翰為「至高者的先知」(路一 76)，天使給馬利亞

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<sup>14</sup> 對比路加和但以理的敘述，這兩段經文有平行的地方：兩個異象都是指向將來要發生的事；異象中的人子和嬰孩耶穌，兩人所扮演的角色都是以色列的上帝之代理者。我們據此推測路加使用了但以理作為故事的其中一個模式。關於但以理書第七章中的異象，參閱：John J. Collins, "The Son of Man in First-Century Judaism," *NTS* 38 (1992): 448-66; James Muilenberg, "The Son of Man in Daniel and the Ethiopic Apocalypse of Enoch," *JBL* 79 (1960): 197-209; Harold H. Rowley, *The Servant of the Lord* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 3-88; Julian Morgenstern, "The 'Son of Man' of Daniel 7:13: A New Interpretation," *JBL* 80 (1961): 65.

<sup>15</sup> 路加可能按照希臘文的但以理書九章 24 節來理解「受膏者/基督」這一個詞。路加將律法書、先知書直到聖卷編織起來，作為嬰孩敘事的宏大背景。Raymond E. Brown, *Coming Christ*, 45.

<sup>16</sup> 路加的天使，也就是那一位在但以理書的終末場景中出現的天使迦百列，他的工作就是解釋關於末世的七十個七一以異象的場景描述上帝的最終計劃。Leaney, *Luke*, 43-44.

的預言稱耶穌為「至高者的兒子」(路一 32)，而這一個稱號，頻繁地出現在但以理的天啟夢境和異象裡面(但四 17、24~26、32、34，七 18、22、25、27)；(3)由天使來傳遞從天上來的信息並解釋異象，乃是天啟文學(apocalyptic literary)的手法。<sup>17</sup> 這三點對應了但以理書的文學方法。路加希望讀者可以從耶穌的誕生故事中講到上帝對以色列和萬民的最終計劃，正如西面(Simeon)在耶路撒冷的聖殿的預言：

因為我的眼睛已經看見你的救恩，就是你在萬民面前所預備的，是照亮外邦人的光，又是你民以色列的榮耀。(路二 29~32)

布朗提醒讀者，應當從終末論的場景來欣賞路加的嬰孩敘事。<sup>18</sup> 我們在福音書傳統中看到，人子耶穌同樣預言了耶路撒冷的戰爭與聖殿的毀滅(可十三 1~2；太二十四 1~2；路二十一 5~6)；作為以色列的救贖者與救世主(σωτήρ)，人子耶穌同樣被賜予一個永遠的國度。

### 關於國度的政治隱喻

路加福音之嬰孩敘事的文學形式，帶有強烈的政治批判色彩，透過對應以色列國度的開始與世界歷史的終結，隱喻了羅馬帝國統治世界的政治危機即將來臨。在第二聖殿時期，猶太人對於「國

度」有不同的理解。約瑟夫聲稱，以色列的上帝現在興起維斯帕先(Vespasian)作全世界的統治者。昆蘭團體的釋經書(《哈巴谷書註釋》)解釋說：「上帝不會藉列國之手毀滅他的子民；上帝會藉選民之手對列國施行審判。」<sup>19</sup> 路加以充滿社會革命味道的尊主

頌開始了耶穌的生平：

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<sup>17</sup> Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots in Jewish Eschatology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 7–267.

<sup>18</sup> 布朗(R. E. Brown)認為，但以理書乃是與路加福音關於天使(迦百列)帶來啟示最為相近的一卷作品。Raymond E. Brown, *Coming Christ in Advent*, 59.

<sup>19</sup> 賴特(N. T. Wright)，《耶穌與神的勝利》，邱昭文譯(台北：校園書房，2014)，269。

我心尊主為大……他叫有權柄的失位，叫卑賤的升高……他扶助  
了他的僕人以色列，不忘記施憐憫，正如他對我們的列祖說過，憐憫  
亞伯拉罕和他的後裔，直到永遠。（路一 46-55）

這首頌歌正是某些猶太人感到即將而來的社會逆轉的政治宣言：以色列的上帝從前應許亞伯拉罕和大衛的承諾，現在正藉著這一位快要誕生的嬰孩開展祂的拯救行動。<sup>20</sup> 結果，上帝將亞基帕王推下寶座(徒十二 21~23)；希律·亞基帕也不得不承認，保羅幾乎使他皈信基督教了(徒二十六 28)。因此，上帝並沒有將以色列人交在羅馬皇帝的手中(約瑟夫的敘事)；也沒有在以色列人當中分別出一些人作為特殊的選民(昆蘭團體的敘事)；上帝的拯救計劃乃是藉著這一位即將來臨的小小嬰孩耶穌來達成祂的救恩。按照路加的救恩歷史觀，耶路撒冷是救恩的中心，耶穌基督則是歷史的中心。<sup>21</sup> 路加刻意把耶穌描繪成一位大衛式的君王，他要拯救以色列子民脫離仇敵的手(路七 71)，他要實現天使的預言帶來以色列的復活與解放(路二 14)，他也是外邦世界的救世主(路二 32)。這些記載暗示路加的宣教策略具有革命性與顛覆性。

## 時間的政治隱喻

關於耶穌誕生的日子，路加為讀者提供了三個線索。首先，是在大希律統治時期：「在希律作猶太王的時候，亞比雅班裏有一個

祭司，名叫撒迦利亞」（路一 5）。「猶太王」這一個稱號乃是羅馬元老院接受安東尼(Antony)的請求，賦予大希律的一個頭銜。<sup>22</sup> 很很有可能，耶穌誕生的日子是在大希律剛剛去世不久，即公元前四年左右。<sup>23</sup> 其次，路加又告訴我們，耶穌誕生時恰逢羅馬帝國

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<sup>20</sup> 路加認為，耶穌的來臨乃是深深根植於上帝與亞伯拉罕的古老之約，並應許有一位彌賽亞在大衛的後裔中降生，他的使命完全符合上帝的應許與目的，透過耶穌的復活與升天，最終表明上帝對耶穌自己的神聖辯護。Achtemeier, et al., *Introducing the New Testament*, 150.

<sup>21</sup> 路加福音用以色列期盼彌賽亞的到來為始，使徒行傳則以外邦人接受耶穌，神的福音傳到地極(帝國的羅馬)為終。Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 18-22.

<sup>22</sup> 參閱 Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 14.14.4。

<sup>23</sup> 大希律作猶太王，在位近三十幾年(37-4 B.C.)。大希律死於公元前 4 年左右，按照耶穌三十歲出來傳教的算法，耶穌公開事工的時間應當是在公元 28-29 年。Leaney, *Luke*, 33.



皇帝的一個政治諭令：「在那些日子，凱撒奧古斯都降旨，叫全國人民都登記戶籍」(路二 1)。路加似乎認為這一個登記戶籍是一

次全國性的事件。古代文獻顯示，奧古斯都曾經命令各地行省實行人口統計，至少在埃及這種慣常性的人口統計十分盛行，但是，從未有過單次的全國性諭令。所以，有些學者置疑路加這一次登記戶籍的歷史性。<sup>24</sup> 最後，路加又補充說：「這第一次登

記戶籍是在居裏扭作敘利亞總督的時候行的」(αὕτη ἀπογραφὴ πρώτη ἐγένετο ἡγεμονεύοντος τῆς Συρίας Κυρηνίου)(路二 2)。猶太歷史學家約瑟

夫曾經記載居裏扭作敘利亞總督期間有過一次登記戶籍。<sup>25</sup> 根據歷史材料推算，大希律是在公元前四年去世，在這一年居裏扭還沒有當上敘利亞行省的總督。公元六年居裏扭擔任帝國行省的官員，他被委派到敘利亞去指導當地及巴勒斯坦的登記戶籍，並清算近來被免除職務的希律留下的財產，之後由亞基老接替希律作為猶太地的分封王。所以，倘若第一次登記戶籍是在居裏扭的監管之下進行的，那麼時間是在公元六~七年左右了，也就是在耶穌誕生數年之後的事。有些學者置疑，是不是路加犯了一個時代錯置的錯誤？<sup>26</sup>

如何解釋路加提供的這三個時間的參考點，我們的看法是：路加將耶穌的誕生與三個政治事件聯係起來，具有時間上的政治

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<sup>24</sup>事實上，路加關於人口普查的記載並非歷史性的，而是政治性的。因為在羅馬帝制時期並沒有發生過全國範圍內的人口普查。一般來說，人口普查只需要在本地(而非家族來源地)註冊即可。公元 6 年左右在猶太地曾經發生過一次登記戶籍，也就是在希律死的日子。這一次人口普查引起一次反叛羅馬的衝突，使徒行傳五章 37 節提到：加利利的猶大在登記戶籍的時候出現，引誘眾人跟隨他，他也滅亡，附從他的人全部散了，歸於無有。因此，路加的人口普查事件不是歷史性的，而是政治性的，為了說明耶穌要帶來的新國度絕不是通過暴力才能促成的。Carter and Levine, *Methods and Meanings*, 59.

<sup>25</sup>根據約瑟夫的記載，巴勒斯坦曾經有過一次登記戶籍，時間是在公元 6-7 年之間，那是在居裏扭作敘利亞總督、科普扭(Coponius)作猶太地代理人，亞基老被罷免權力不久，之後巴勒斯坦直接劃歸羅馬政府管理。這期間發生過一次巴勒斯坦的登記戶籍事件。約瑟夫在作品中寫道：「居裏扭曾任總督，乃是凱撒派他前往敘利亞核算人民的財產，並賣掉亞基老的官邸。」(Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 17.13.5;

18.1.1; 18.2.1)；另參約瑟夫，《約瑟夫著作精選》，保羅·梅爾編譯(北京：北京大學出版社，2004)，272-76。

<sup>26</sup>在希律死後和亞基老被罷黜職位時，都興起過猶太人彌賽亞的運動，在這兩次時機中神聖的期盼並沒有成功，而是羅馬皇帝勝出。路加作品可能寫作於希律死後不久，他把耶穌誕生與亞基老之後的居裏扭的登記戶籍聯係起來。Bovon, *Luke 1*, 84.

隱喻，暗示這一位大衛式的君王和救世主的降臨，乃是為了挑戰當時世界的主宰—羅馬帝國的統治。在羅馬帝政時期，「登記戶籍」(ἀπογράφω τὴν οἰκουμένην)是帝國統治與掌控的手段，

現代讀者很容易會忽視古代登記戶籍背後的權力要求。在古代世界裏，帝國的統治者往往藉著登記戶籍來統計人口的數目，為了更好地控制人口，包括食物分配和收入，作為戰爭動員與平時的納稅政策，藉此滿足帝國菁英階層奢華剝削的生活。然而，這種戶籍登記乃是一個行省的人口統計，並不包括住在這個行省裡面的羅馬公民。<sup>27</sup> 路加把耶穌的誕生放在居裏扭作敘利亞總督的時候，似乎暗示登記戶籍乃是一次羅馬皇帝行使其權力的手段(一次帝國行省的登記戶籍)，在這樣的歷史背景下編排另一位君王的降生，背後有其政治的意圖。<sup>28</sup> 路加的嬰孩敘事在時間上符合了某種政治需求—凱撒奧古斯都降旨全國人民登記戶籍(路二 1)。然而，不是政治要挾了救世主的誕生，而是上帝全盤的拯救計劃放在這一個全國範圍內的政令中，作為一種政治上的反諷，羅馬帝國想要藉著一次全國的登記戶籍宣示自己的主權，萬萬沒想到這一次政令迎來了一位真正的君王和救世主。耶穌作為大衛式的君王誕生在羅馬當局舉行人口普查之際，令人想起上帝的旨意不但存心與羅馬作對，而且威脅要改革羅馬世界。

除此之外，路加似乎有意透過耶穌的誕生，與公元六年左右一次因為登記戶籍而引發的革命事件聯係在一起，令讀者不斷地回憶起那對於不公義的政治壓迫的反抗。約瑟夫記載了另一個與登記戶籍相關的歷史事件，就是在公元六年一場奮銳黨人(或稱為

<sup>27</sup> 古代碑文告訴我們，在一個羅馬行省裡，會重複地進行登記戶籍，但是同一時間並不會在其他行省也進行登記戶籍。為了在敘利亞進行登記戶籍，羅馬人會利用猶太人強烈的支派和家族觀念，命令他們到自己的家鄉登記。尤西比烏的《教會歷史》(*Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.20)告訴我們，即使到了多米田統治時期，耶穌家庭的成員仍然在伯利恆有自己的土地。

<sup>28</sup> 正如卡特所說，這段期間是否如路加所說，曾舉行人口普查仍有爭議。但對瞭解耶穌誕生的故事來說，這是相當重要的線索。曾有解經家表示路加福音二章 1-3 節提到的人口普查，顯示君王和上帝聯手合作把約瑟和馬利亞帶到伯利恆產子。但這是相互對比較勁，而非聯手合作。華倫·卡特(Warren Carter)，《羅馬帝國與新約聖經》，顧華德譯(新北市：聖經資源中心，2016)，59。

激進黨)對羅馬的反叛。這一個事件與使徒行傳的記載吻合。<sup>29</sup> 路加知道這一個事件，也就是加利利的猶大，引誘眾人服從他，他也滅亡，附從他的人也都四散了(徒五 37)。路加知道，登記戶籍往往引發政治的反抗，所以他暗暗地將耶穌的誕生與公元六~七年登記戶籍的事件聯係在一起，而這一次事件在以色列的歷史中不斷地回溯至奮銳黨運動的興起。根據福音書的記載，在耶穌出來傳教的日子，他吸引了一些奮銳黨人(路六 16；徒一 13)，在耶穌的身上綜合了猶太愛國主義與彌賽亞的信念(路二 11，十六 13，二十二 37，二十三 19)。<sup>30</sup> 在天使給予馬利亞的預言中，這一位嬰孩將要繼承大衛的王位，作雅各家的王(路一 30~33)。在撒迦利亞的頌歌中，他看到了即將來臨的拯救乃是出自大衛的家，而施洗約翰的誕生正是為救世主預備道路(路一 68~79)。所以，耶穌作為救世主，他的誕生當然要比照外邦世界的君王，尤其是統治地中海世界的羅馬皇帝，以及他在巴勒斯坦的代理人。

## 地理的政治隱喻

在四卷福音書中，只有路加提到孩童耶穌與聖殿的關聯，其他三卷福音書都是記載耶穌出來宣教時才上耶路撒冷(馬可和馬太記載一次耶穌到耶路撒冷，約翰記載耶穌三次在耶路撒冷過節)。我們認為，路加敘述耶穌的誕生，在地理的編排上同樣具有政治隱喻的功能。

耶穌的故鄉加利利是一個猶太革命的發源地，猶太人抗議羅馬帝國的徵稅引發了多次反叛運動。公元六年的猶大所領導的抗稅運動就是在加利利發起的。馬太告訴我們，在希律作王的時候，耶穌生在猶太的伯利恆(太二 1)。路加則詳細地記錄了發生在伯利恆的「聖誕故事」(Christmas)。伯利恆，也就是大衛的城

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<sup>29</sup> 按照約瑟夫的記載，奮銳黨人的運動乃是由一次登記戶籍激起的。路加將耶穌的誕生與另一個事件—奮銳黨運動的興起聯係起來，暗示了這一位嬰孩的誕生將帶來一次革命性的變革，但是耶穌要帶來的是真正的普世和平，而不是強爭暴掠。Bovon, *Luke 1*, 83.

<sup>30</sup> Leaney, *Luke*, 47.

和大衛家族的發源地，亦是他受膏為王的地方(撒上十六 1, 十七 12; 路二 4、10~11)。牧羊人的出現更是叫人想起以色列歷史上那一位開國之君大衛也曾經是一位牧羊人。大衛的故鄉和牧羊人拜訪客店，這一切情景都暗示這一位誕生在馬槽的嬰孩耶穌，乃是大衛式的牧羊人和君王。<sup>31</sup> 因此，伯利恆的客店和曠野的牧羊人，絲毫沒有減少政治的色彩，相反，這些場景讓人想到了大衛和以色列王國，正如天使對牧羊人的宣告和天軍的讚美：

不要懼怕！因為我報給你們大喜的信息，是給萬民的：今天在大衛的城裡，為你們生了救主，就是主基督。你們要看見一個嬰孩，包著布，臥在馬槽裡，那就是給你們的記號。忽然，有一大隊天兵同那天使讚美神說：在至高之處榮耀歸於神！在地上和平歸於他所喜悅的人。  
(路二 10-14)

在路加福音裡，當耶穌榮進聖城之時，他的跟隨者將「地上的平安」(路二 14)轉變為「在天上和平」(路十九 38)，以此影射羅馬帝國的殖民統治並不能帶來和平。耶穌誕生的地點伯利恆，客店和馬槽只是一種舞台上的背景，一種障眼法，背後隱藏著一種政治的動機—那些生活在第一世紀的猶太人一眼就認出這一個地方的政治色彩，它關涉全體以色列的得救。

路加的嬰孩敘事有三個場景設置在耶路撒冷的聖殿。首先，在故事的開頭，施洗約翰的父親撒迦利亞在聖殿供職，在一次執行祭司職務時，他從天使那裏獲知一個嬰孩出世的異象(路一 8~23)。在故事的結尾，耶穌的父母把他帶到了耶路撒冷的聖殿，按照摩西律法的要求，在滿了潔淨的日子把孩子獻給主(路二 22~38)。在耶穌的童年(十二歲)，全家再次上耶路撒冷去，並且在聖殿當中發生了一個令人驚歎的場景。孩童耶穌與一班猶太教師坐在一起，邊聽邊問(路二 41~50)，當耶穌的父母找到他時，耶穌的回答「難道你們不知道我應當住在我父的家中嗎？」(路二 49)，一句話這讓人聯想到了耶穌與上帝(父)之間的關係。<sup>32</sup> 路加

<sup>31</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (ABC; London: Yale University Press, 1985), 395-96.

<sup>32</sup> Leaney, *Luke*, 109、114.

為何要多次記錄耶穌與聖殿的關聯？原來在猶太傳統裡，聖殿代表了上帝在祂子民中間的居所，錫安(耶路撒冷)被視為上帝歸回的惟一聖地。邁爾斯(C. Meyers)提供了一個重要的聖殿概念：從觀念上說，聖殿是古代以色列之上帝的居所……耶路撒冷聖殿的

象徵特點……建基於一系列的特徵之中，它形成了一種觀念，這神聖區域乃是位於宇宙的中心，位於天與地交會之際，因此，它

乃是上帝掌管宇宙的地方。<sup>33</sup> 我們不能忽略了路加對聖殿的興趣，

因為聖殿具有極大的政治意義。聖殿與王權的象徵是分不開的，大衛與所羅門建造聖殿不是一個單一的宗教事件，而是包括了政治和宗教的動機。第一聖殿不僅是所羅門王權的裝飾，也是其合法統治的關鍵所在。重建的第二聖殿象徵了某種程度的自治。公元前一六四年馬加比潔淨聖殿，為哈斯摩尼王朝的建立鋪了路。大希律重建聖殿，也是他自稱為以色列王的關鍵因素。巴柯巴(Bar-Kochba)鑄造了刻畫聖殿正面的錢幣。哈德良皇帝原本打算在聖殿裡頭蓋一座異教的廟宇，而猶太的革命者一心想著要重建那真正的聖殿。<sup>34</sup> 在以色列的歷史上，耶路撒冷的聖殿充滿了政治權力的色彩。耶穌似乎並不認可耶路撒冷聖殿的合法性，也不認可羅馬帝國的宗教統戰政策。<sup>35</sup> 耶穌潔淨聖殿的象徵(可二十一 15~17；太二十一 12~13；路十九 45~46；約二 13~22)，和對於聖殿被毀的預言(可十三 1~2；太二十四 1~2；路二十一 5~6)，是彼此相關的。耶穌認為，現存的聖殿必須被拆掉，將位置讓給上帝以美好的方式重新設立的聖殿。<sup>36</sup> 凡此種種跡象表明，在耶穌與聖殿之間隱藏著某種政治的衝突。雖然路加的嬰孩敘事中尚未表現出這種衝突，但是路加一早就留下了伏筆，耶穌對聖殿的理

<sup>33</sup> Carol Meyers, "Temple, Jerusalem" in *ABD* 6:350 - 69.

<sup>34</sup> 關於耶路撒冷與聖殿在第二聖殿時期的猶太教中的重要地位，相關討論參賴特(N. T. Wright)，《耶穌與神的勝利》，536。

<sup>35</sup> 聖殿在耶穌時代與在耶利米時代一樣，已經變成那些訴求暴力的國家主義分子的護身符，保證了耶和華將為以色列採取行動，並為他抵禦外敵。因此，聖殿在猶太教的功用除了是宗教的，也是政治的核心象徵。賴特(N. T. Wright)，《耶穌與神的勝利》，536、548。

<sup>36</sup> 葛德·泰森(Gerd Theißen)，《用新眼光看耶穌和保羅：基督宗教的根基與建築師》，南與北文化出版社等譯(台北：南與北文化出版社，2014)，126-27。關於耶穌潔淨聖殿的討論，參閱 E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 61-76.

解(我父的家)與耶路撒冷的祭司團體和羅馬執政官對聖殿的理解，埋藏著巨大的衝突。

加利利、伯利恆和耶路撒冷的聖殿，無一不在提醒讀者關於耶穌的誕生，並不是人類歷史中一個偶然的事件，乃是上帝拯救人類之全盤計劃的關鍵要素，耶穌乃是大衛家族的後裔(路二 4)，他誕生在伯利恆意味著耶穌順理成章地做王。耶穌的家鄉拿撒勒所在的加利利，亦是猶太人反抗壓迫與暴政的象徵。在新約的福音書中，路加所記錄的地理位置帶有濃厚的政治色彩，加利利令人想起猶太人的革命，伯利恆則追憶至大衛的家鄉，耶路撒冷的聖殿歷來都是猶太人與異教帝國的衝突之焦點。

## 結語

歡快的聖誕故事令人留戀忘懷。假如沒有了路加的聖誕故事，那麼，每一年聖誕節將失去一個很好的傳福音的素材，主日學小朋友也沒有機會扮演約瑟和馬利亞在伯利恆的經歷、以及曠野之牧羊人的故事了。但是又有多少人真正瞭解耶穌誕生的真義呢？重讀路加的嬰孩敘事是必要的，因為我們常常將這個故事放在每一年的聖誕節(12月25日)，忽略了這一個故事應該與人類的歷史，尤其是政治史緊密地聯係在一起。路加的聖誕故事意味著，上帝已經開始了一項事業，更準確地說，透過這一位新生的嬰孩耶穌，上帝已經開始拯救祂的百姓脫離一切政治權力的控制和剝削。<sup>37</sup> 對於福音書的原初讀者來說，引頸期盼彌賽亞的到來，本身就是一種政治不正確的態度，因為它帶有破壞羅馬社會穩定的嫌疑。第一世紀基督徒羣體面臨一種政治的張力，他們要在羅馬皇帝奧古斯都和救世主耶穌之間選擇一位效忠的對象；在羅馬和平與上帝所賜的平安之間只有一種安身立命的生存方式；要麼在羅馬帝國的意識形態，要麼在宣講上帝國度，這兩造之間選擇一種真正得以委身並且全心投入的永久事業。凡是讀過路加福音的

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<sup>37</sup> 上帝子民的解放涉及殘酷的壓迫和苦難，他們的吶喊基於一種信念，有一天他們可以自由地回應上帝的主權。Richard A. Horsley, "Liberating Narrative and Liberating Understanding: The Christmas Story," in *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics*, ed. N. K. Gottwald and R. A. Horsley (London: SPCK, 1993), 164.

人，都會不由自主地將他們心中對帝國主義的仇恨，轉成對以色列的救贖主的期盼。這就是路加福音的政治策略和修辭手法，可以說，路加的文學是革命性的和顛覆性的，是一切生活在羅馬帝制之下的窮人和富人的福音。

## AN OT THEOLOGY OF CREATION CARE<sup>1</sup>

邵晨光 JOSEPH TOO SHAO



Creation is an important aspect of OT theology, and in fact, of the entire Bible. “In the beginning, God creates the heaven and earth” (Gen 1:1), is not only an informative, but also a theological statement. The idea that the Lord God is the Creator and his handiwork can be seen in his creation is a significant statement. God will surely be pleased as the people care for creation, since in the first place he is both the *divine owner* and *divine giver*. The theology of creation care stems from creation theology as God is the Creator.

Systematic theology or dogmatic theology links redemptive theology with the sin of humanity (Gen 3). The system of the God-Man -Salvation paradigm comes naturally with the fall of man. Human beings, created in the image of God, and their cultural mandate are seldom emphasized in the development of theological ideas. Creation (“in the beginning”) functions not only as the heading of the book of Genesis, but also of the OT. Creation is also the beginning of the Bible, both the Hebrew and

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<sup>1</sup> This was first presented at the gathering of Asian theologians at the plenary session of ACTS, on behalf of the Korean Evangelical Theological Society in October 2013.



Christian Bible. It is the theological context for the understanding of the message of the whole Bible. Creation, as the starting point of biblical theology will definitely allow us to better understand the design of God in his redemption.

In the eschaton, it ends with the creation of a new heaven and earth (Rev 21–22). Creation certainly can be the starting point of theology. The doctrine of creation will not only appeal to every serious student of the Bible, but will also help resolve the ecological crisis that we are facing today. We need to rethink and derive a biblical theology of creation that reflects the ethos of the Bible. Theology of creation care is part of creation theology.

In this paper, we will attempt to articulate an OT theology of creation care. We shall use the Hebrew canon: Torah, Prophets and Writings as our organizing methodology. The themes within the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings will be explored in relationship to creation care.

### **Creation Care in the Torah**

Genesis 1 and 2 are the most celebrated texts in the presentation of creation theology. These two creation accounts help us form the understanding of creation and its relationship with creation care. In the Hebrew Bible, there are two accounts with different emphases for many important ideas and matters. The first creation account focuses on the cosmic creation (Gen 1:1–2:3), whereas the second creation account centers on the detailed creation of man and woman (Gen 2:4–25). In the first account, man and woman are created and given a cultural mandate on the final six days in the cosmic world. In the second creation account, a detailed and separate account of how God creates man and woman is described.

#### *Creation is Good*

The world that God created is “very good” (טב דאמ ברוט, Gen 1:31). This is not only the concluding remark of the first creation account, it is also a description of God who enjoys his creation. The heaven and earth has a beginning. God is there even at the very beginning.<sup>2</sup> From the perspective of the Creator, everything is beautiful and good (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25,

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<sup>2</sup>The translation of some recent versions to “when God creates the heaven and earth,” is not only forced upon the Hebrew, but theologically compromising. This would mean that at one point in time, God is not in control of the world.

31).<sup>3</sup> The creator has created time (night and day; 1:3–5), space (heaven, earth and sea; 1:6–10), vegetation (plants and trees; 1:11–13), luminaries (the greater and the lesser lights; 1:14–19), living creatures (birds, fish, livestock and wild animals; 1:20–25), and human beings (1:26–31). Creation is good because it comes from the design of the good and benevolent God. This is a huge contrast to the Ancient Near Eastern accounts where chaos and malevolence characterize their creation stories.

In Genesis 1, God simply speaks and the things come into being. The word אָרַב is a special verb used exclusively by the Lord God. It is used especially with God as the *prime mover*. The Babylonian god such as Marduk has to argue and negotiate with other gods. In contrast, too, with the Canaanite myths, the Lord God of Israel does not need to combat other gods and threats of chaos. The theology of the word, the utterance of the Creator that he creates the world out of nothing, is an important concept in God's creation.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Creation of Man and Woman*

The creation of man and woman is the climax of his creation in Genesis 1. The creator has created man and woman in his “image” (בְּצַל) and “likeness” (תּוֹמַר). The terms are relational, rather than primarily ontological. The “image” and “likeness” come from God, and do have a specific function to play in the visible world of God. Human beings, as made “in” heaven, are the heavenly image bearers, serving as representatives of the divine.<sup>5</sup>

In Genesis 1, from the cosmic view of creation, man and woman are created on the sixth day, when everything is prepared and readied for them to stay. The human being is the center of his creation in Genesis 2. Moreover, God shows his intimate relationship with the human being. Compared with the *Enuma Elish*, the human being is an afterthought of

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<sup>3</sup> Rolf Rendtorff, because of his western theological thought, stated that in the first creation account when God created humans, the verdict of “good” is absent (*The Canonical Hebrew Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament* [Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2005], 16).

<sup>4</sup> The use of the verb אָרַב as creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) is an important doctrine in creation. John Walton argues for the *functional* interpretation of the verb, rather than *material* activity of the verb (*The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* [Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009], 36–43). On the other hand, though not doubting the “creation out of nothing” interpretation, John Goldingay attributed the first explicit utterance of the concept in the 2nd century A.D. and explicitly written in 2 Maccabees 7:28 (*Old Testament Theology. Vol 1: Israel's Gospel* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010], 77–78).

<sup>5</sup> William Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel: A Theological Survey of the Old Testament* (2nd edition; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 16.

the gods. In *Atrahasis*, human beings were created from dead gods. In the second creation account in Genesis 2:4–25, God forms man from dust, and woman from a rib of the man. The verb “form” (2:7 ;רצ׳) vividly portrays the designer God carefully molding man from dust, like a potter molding clay. God breathes life into him and finds man lonely without a helper. The detailed description of God’s creation of man and woman, just like Genesis 1, points back to the creator. Human beings are formed from the ground and will return to the ground. In the first account of creation (1:1– 2:3), the entire created world functions around the male and female. In the second account of creation (2:4–25), mankind is the epicenter of the story.

### *Role in Creation Care*

Having been made in the image and likeness of God, human beings are given a cultural mandate to “be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth, and subdue it. They are to rule over the fish of the sea and birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Gen 1:28). The responsibility of human beings with this mandate should be examined carefully through the lenses of the divine gift of image and likeness. In the second creation account, man is placed in the garden and with a specific role to work and to take care of it (2:15). Man is given a role of a responsible care-giver. God is the owner of the garden, and human beings are given a privilege to rule and care for the garden. This theology of work for human beings even in the garden of Eden, with given freewill, stems from God’s action in placing man there to work it and keep it.

#### 1. Human being as a Servant-Leader

The verbs “subdue” (שׁבַּב) and “rule” (הָרָה) may give a false notion of excessive force of control (Gen 1:28). The wider context of the command comes from God who is the creator and owner of creatures. It is he who gives the human being the authority to be a representative to enforce his rule on earth. The role of ruling is definitely not an authorization to exploit God’s creation, but to appreciate, protect and even care for it. Man and woman have to play an important role that they were created to do. With God’s image and likeness, they are to be the servant-leaders for the environment. As a servant, they take care of the creatures because God demands they exercise this role. In Genesis 2:15, as the gardener in God’s created world, he has to listen and obey his Creator. In the second account of creation, God just places the human being there to work it and do the caring work, without even discussing with the human being. As a leader

commanded to do the cultural mandate, they are given the responsibility to lead and ensure that all of God's creations are in good hands. It is true that he is commanded to "subdue" and to "rule" over it. The human being, nevertheless, has delegated authority, since this power and authority derives from the sovereign God. Hence, the "subdue" and "rule" should be properly interpreted in the caring context that God originally intended for the cultural mandate.

## 2. Human being as a Shepherd-King

The roles to "subdue" and "rule" are not given to any other species, but to the human being alone. God has passed on to human hands "a delegated form of kingly authority over the whole of creation."<sup>6</sup> As representing God the King, his royal role needs to show his generosity and benevolent attitude toward God's creation. In the Ancient Near East, kings were the shepherds of the people. As shepherds, though they seem to be the leaders, they are caring for the sheep under them. The role of being a shepherd is not only assumed, but is carried out by the royalty with action as they shepherd their people. So as the shepherd-kings, human beings need to understand their caring role and shepherding responsibility. Man and woman are to care for God's creation and not to take advantage of them. This is an important concept and a basis for creation care.

In Genesis 2:15, the assigned role of the human being in the garden is to work (דָּבַעַ) and to keep (רָמַשׁ) it. Likewise, the duties are not given to any other species. All the resources in the garden are entrusted to the human being under the guidance of the Creator. As a shepherd-king representing the Divine King, he follows orders. Human beings are placed in the garden, because this is God's garden. With his royal authority, the man is to name (בָּשָׂא...אָרַק) the living creatures. All the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field are under his care. His dual roles of receiving commands from the Divine King, as a *receiver* of orders, and enforcing the caring aspect for the creatures, as a *care-giver* are equally important. Man should not depart from these two roles.

### *Sabbath Rest as a Blessing*

On the seventh day, God rested from his work and blessed the seventh day as holy (Gen 2:2-3). It is created with a divine purpose in mind. The idea of *Sabbath rest* is included in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 6 with different

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<sup>6</sup>Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 121.

emphases. In Exodus 20, the reason for Sabbath rest is to worship God, whereas in Deuteronomy 5, the reason is to rest. The Sabbath “points forward and upward to a final reconciliation between humans, creation and ultimately God.”<sup>7</sup>

### 1. A Time to Worship

The purpose of the Sabbath is stated in Exodus 20:9–11 as part of the Ten Words of God to his people. The motive clause of the Sabbath rest is to worship the Lord because he has rested and he blessed this day (Exod 20:11). The Sabbath is a sign in the Sinaitic Covenant, calling the people to worship him at a specific time (Exod 31:13, 16–17). This is a special calling for the people of God to set aside time from their regular labor, so as to worship God.<sup>8</sup> It is a special relationship for the people to respond to God through worship. It was a sign of grace from God so that the people are to reflect on their calling as they conduct their lives before God.

The idea of God resting on the seventh day is the normal meaning applicable to the whole Bible. The discussion of “cessation from work,” or its variant forms of meaning of “rest” all point to the idea of “resting.” But the idea of God resting (שָׁבַט) on the seventh day does not mean that he stops caring for us. In the Ancient Near East, when a god “rested,” it is usually in a temple. This means that the deity is in his enthroned room, ready to “perform” duties. In the first creation account, God “rested” in the sense of entering his “cosmos temple” where he is taking charge of the whole world.<sup>9</sup>

Creation care includes the spirituality of the people of God, that is, the care of the souls of God’s people. By reflecting on one’s life before God, the special calling to the people of God in Exodus is applicable also to the calling of spiritual descendants of Abraham who worship the Lord in truth and spirit. Hence, worship is part of creation care.

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<sup>7</sup> Christopher Fung, “Sabbath: A Biblical Understanding of Creation Care,” *ERT* 32 (2008): 325.

<sup>8</sup> Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), 167.

<sup>9</sup> John Walton argues for the functional order of the creation doctrine in Genesis. Whereas he tried to resolve some of the issues of creation, his arguments for God’s “rest” is quite creative in arguing of God as the sustainer of the world. See especially his argument in his book *The Lost World of Genesis One* [Downers Grove: IVP, 2009], 71–76, 118–23).

## 2. A Time to Rest

In the reiteration of the Ten Words to the new context of a younger generation on Sabbath rest in Deuteronomy 5:12–15, the reason of Sabbath rest is that “your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to observe the Sabbath day” (Deut 5:14 –15). It is quite interesting that both male and female servants can rest because the people of God decide to rest. The Sabbath rest also included animals and aliens according to Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, the latter citing “ox” and “donkey” which were domesticated animals that worked regularly. The animals such as ox and donkey are defined in a latter explanation in Exodus (Exod 23:12).

Creation care is to be analyzed in the concept of rest given to all of creation. Rest is inclusive. All creatures such as son and daughter, male and female servants, aliens and even animals are included in the plan of God for them to rest. If the people of God rest, all of them can benefit from the rest.

### *Caring as a Responsibility*

In Deuteronomy, creation care comes in two aspects. One aspect is to care for the unfortunate ones in their community. Since the land belongs to the Lord, the people of God have to care for their brothers and sisters, especially for the widows, orphans, aliens and poor people in their midst (Deut 15:7–11, 10:19). While they harvest, they should leave some gleanings for the aliens, the fatherless and the widows (24:19–22). This oft-repeated reminder for the four types of persons in the book of Deuteronomy deserves attention. It shows that caring is a responsibility of the people of God.

The second aspect is the caring of the animals and trees. Animals may have a day of rest if their master rests on the Sabbath (5:14; Exod 20:10; 23:12) . Wild animals have a chance to eat on a sabbath year (23:11). The ox has a right to tread out the grain (Deut 25:4). Human beings are to help the animals, even if it belongs to their enemies (22:1–4; Exod. 23:4– 5). The baby goat or even birds have a right to live (Deut 14:11, 22:6–7). In case of war, the people are asked to be careful with fruit trees, for they can eat their fruit (20:19–20). The caring of the people of God definitely extends to the animals and trees.

Since the land flowing with milk and honey with its produce and its inhabitants belongs to God, there is no “legitimate justification for the abuse of the land, the abuse of the poor, or the abuse of the domestic or wild creature.”<sup>10</sup> This means that as the people of God, they are expected to show their concern for others in society, including domestic and wild animals. Creation care, in Deuteronomy, is inclusive and extensive.

### **Creation Care in the Prophets**

In the prophetic literature, the people and nature are bound up together as one. When mankind sins against God, nature is affected. Redemption from God for the human being will also benefit nature.

#### *The Lord Cares*

In the book of Jonah, as Jonah flees from God’s presence, God’s creation comes in to show the power of the Creator. Jonah worships the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land. The Almighty God shows his power in the wind (Jon 1:4, 12). He provided a great fish in the sea (1:17; 2:10). He also provided a vine and a worm in the ground (4:6–7). Whereas Jonah is inactive and sleeping in the ship, God shows forth his majestic power in the air, land, and the sea. When calamity occurs, it affects both human and animals. In the OT worldview, the people and the animals can affect one another. Hence, as the Ninevites come before God for repentance, the domestic animals join in (3:5–9). The Lord indeed cares for both the people and the animals (4:11). This reveals the Lord’s sovereignty in demonstrating his grace to all. The Creator-God is also the compassionate and caring God (1:9; 4:2).

#### *The Lord Restores*

Human sinfulness causes God not only to punish human beings, but he also destroys the crops of the land. In the OT, human beings and nature are integrated. Because of the sinfulness of the people, grain, new wine and oil are taken away (Joel 1:10). God’s pity on his people comes because of their repentance to God. God restores to them grain, new wine and oil (2:19, 24). The oracle of salvation is addressed to the land (2:21), wild animals (2:22), and the people of Zion (2:23).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Sandra L. Richter, “Environmental Law in Deuteronomy: One Lens on Biblical Theology of Creation Care,” *BBR* 20 (2010): 375.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Too Shao and Rosa Ching Shao, *Joel, Nahum & Malachi* (Asia Bible Commentary; Manila: Asia Theological Association, 2013), 27–28.

## Creation Care in the Writings

In the writings, the creation faith that comes through the Psalter can be our guide. All his creation, heavens and earth, sea and land, rivers and the mountains including everything that lives in them must praise the Lord (Ps 96:11–13; 98:7–9). This means that all of them, animate and inanimate creation, witness and praise his divine grace. They all respond to God’s awesome majesty and affectionate care for them. This is the theological basis of creation care.

In the metaphor language of the Psalter, it seems that God’s creation is movable. As praise to God for his glory is the duty of human beings, the sun rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other (19:5). The land (i.e., Lebanon) skips like a calf (29:6). The earth shakes before God (68:8). Nature responds to God’s salvific action by fleeing, jumping and even trembling (114:3–7).

### *The Lord Provides*

Psalm 104 is the most extended exposition of God’s creation in the Psalter. It is the most appropriate psalm to address creation care. God as the creator provides for the needs of nature. In Psalm 104, God is the creator of heaven (104:1–4), creator of earth (104:5–23), creator of sea (104:24–26), and giver of life (104:27–35).

In relation to creation care, let us focus on the world of ecology in God’s creative acts on earth. He is the one who creates the earth and the water (104:5–9). The provision of water is central to the fecundity and life of the earth (104:10–13). The wild animals in the land and the birds in the skies are all satisfied with his provision. Likewise, the domestic animals and human beings are satisfied with his food (104:14–16). The Creator also provides a home (104:17–18), and cycles of time for the creatures (104:19–23).

As caring Creator of the sea, it becomes both a proper habitat (104:24–25), and also a means of transportation (104:26). The imageries of sea and its usage needs to be carefully studied as we deal with creation care. The sea and its environment should be managed carefully. If it will be a good habitat for the fish and other sea creatures, the transportation of ships need to be well regulated. Oil spills and garbage management need to be controlled.

The orderliness and purposefulness of God’s creation is emphasized in Psalm 104, in contrast to Genesis 1 and 2 wherein human beings are the



central focus in God's creation. The world that God creates is very orderly. God provides water to quench the thirst of the animals.

Well-nourished trees will be a good habitation for the birds (104:10–13). The usable water will benefit the ground that will yield food for both animals and human beings. His creation is purposeful. He provides plants for animals, bread and wine for human beings (104:14–16). This is a perfect ecosystem that the Lord provides water, habitation and food for all the living creatures.<sup>12</sup> God's creatures, human beings and animals, share the world together. In other words, human beings are not the central exclusive figure in the whole, but an integral part of the whole. As such he needs to be aware of the world he lives in, and be a responsible member in the world that God created.

Creation care, therefore, in the eyes of the Psalmist, is not only essential but important. We cannot neglect the ecosystem. It is human beings who will be suffering if we do not care for the ecology of the world. If God cares for the ecosystem, we should care for them. If God cares for the birds of the sky, the wild and domestic animals, we should care for them, too.

### *The Lord Blesses*

The abundance or the insufficiency of agricultural produce is very much related to creation care. God cares for the produce of the lands by enriching the land. Humans, as the recipients of God's grace, need to respond by caring for his land. With these bountiful blessings, human beings and all of his creations praise the Lord (Ps 65:11–13).

The gifts of God's creation include material things from the ground (65:4). He takes care of the earth (65:9–13).<sup>13</sup> The God of blessings cares for the land and waters it (65:9). He drenches the furrow (65:10). With his blessings, carts overflow with abundance (Ps 65:11). The pastures are green (65:12). Both the animals and human beings are happy because of the provision of food (65:13).

Creation care starts with the blessings of God. With proper care of the land and water, produce from the land is the bounty that comes from God. In Psalm 65, human beings are not only recipients of his bountiful blessing, they participate and reap the harvest. The land is not just a gift, but a place

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<sup>12</sup>Shirley Ho and Feng Yi Lin, *Psalms 73–150* (Asia Bible Commentary; Manila: Asia Theological Association, 2013), 117–19.

<sup>13</sup>Federico G. Villanueva and Joseph Too Shao, *Psalms 1–72* (Asia Bible Commentary; Manila: Asia Theological Association, 2013), 288–90.

to work. Without proper caring of the environment, whereby, land and water are polluted, a good harvest might be problematic. In the world of the Psalter, the world is integrated. Proper care of the ecology is not only a gift from God, it is also a human responsibility.

In our environmental crisis today, we may need to look carefully at Psalm 65:9b, “the streams of God are filled with water.” Indeed, this is his blessing to the whole world, it is not only for the land of Israel. But as we face water crises, contamination and pollution of water attributed to human faults, let us be vigilant of his God-given gifts of creation to us. Without clean water, even our harvests might be polluted with unwanted ingredients.

### **Conclusion**

The theology of creation care starts with the Creator who creates a perfect and good world for humans to be servant-leaders and shepherd-kings. It is a privilege for human beings to be given this responsibility. The Lord cares for both humans and the environment.

In the prophetic literature, people and nature coexist. The sinfulness of human beings affect nature. If God cares for nature, should we not care for nature? In the writings, the people and the environment constitute an ecosystem. Human beings need to appreciate and care for the environment and ecology that God has given to us.



# “GO OUT OF THE MIDST OF HER, MY PEOPLE!”: READING THE ORACLES AGAINST BABYLON IN JEREMIAH 50–51

馬麥克 MICHAEL MALESSA



Although it is difficult to determine which texts in the OT are popular among evangelical Christians it is a safe assumption that the oracles against the nations in Jeremiah 46–51 are not among them. They are not often preached about or discussed in bible studies. How many readers become tired of reading them in their cursory reading of God’s word? These texts are worth reading, nevertheless. This paper will explore some features of the oracles against Babylon which enhance the reading experience of this part of God’s word.

## The Oracles against Babylon as Poetry

The oracles against Babylon are a literary unit in itself within the book of Jeremiah. As Jack Lundbom points out, there is a frame in the form of an *inclusio* around these chapters.<sup>1</sup> Being written in prophetic poetry it is worthwhile to explore these oracles as poetry.

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<sup>1</sup> Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52* (AB 21C; New York, NY: Doubleday, 2004), 365.

The most prominent poetic feature in the Hebrew Bible<sup>2</sup> and related literature of the Ancient Near East is parallelism. Parallelism can be described as a network of connections created by correspondences – similarities and differences – between two or more poetic lines. The connections are most obvious on the semantic level. But they go beyond that to the level of grammar and even sound. While the semantic connections are visible to readers of translations, grammatical connections are only discernible to those who can read Hebrew. A beautiful example of parallelism both on the semantic and the grammatical level is found in Psalm 2:1–2.<sup>3</sup>

*lammah rageshu haggoyim*  
 Why do the nations rage  
*ule 'ummim yehgu riq*  
 and the peoples plot in vain?  
*yityatsevu malkhe erets*  
 The kings of the earth set themselves,  
*werogezim nosedu yahad*  
 and the rulers take counsel together  
*'al YHWH we'al meshiho.*  
 against the Lord and his anointed.

In these two verses, we find the following features of parallelism. On the semantic level the verbal forms *rageshu* “they rage” and *yehgu* “they plot” and the nouns *haggoyim* “the nations” and *le'ummim* “the peoples” correspond with each other in the couplet in verse 1. In the triplet in verse 2 the verbal forms *yityatsevu* “they set themselves” and *nosedu* “they take counsel” and the nouns *malkhe erets* “kings of the earth” and *rogezim* “rulers” are parallel. On the grammatical level, it can be noted that the verbal form *rageshu* “they rage” in the first line of verse 1 is a suffix conjugation form (one of the two main paradigms of the finite verb in

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<sup>2</sup>The term Hebrew Bible refers to the collection of Jewish canonical writings which is equivalent to the OT of the protestant canon.

<sup>3</sup>In this paper, the general purpose style of the Society for Biblical Literature is used for transliterating Hebrew. The consonants *alef* and the *'ayin* are both rendered with ' in the middle of a word. Word-initial *alef* is not indicated; the consonants *he* and *het* are both rendered with *h*. All translations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise stated.

Hebrew) which contrasts with the prefix conjugation form *yehgu* “they plot” in the second line (from the other main paradigm). The same applies to the triplet in verse 2, but in reversed order. In the first line, we first find the prefix conjugation form *yiyatsevu* “they set themselves” and then in the second line the suffix conjugation form *nosedu* “they take counsel.” The verbal forms in these four lines are therefore arranged chiasmically. Beyond the variation in the form of the verbs it can be observed that the noun phrase *malkhe erets* which consists of two words corresponds with the single word *rogezim*. As a result, room is created for the adverb *yahad* “together” in the second line.

While parallelism can occur in prose texts (e.g., Gen 1:27; and quite often in direct speech in narratives, e.g., Exod 19:3; Num 11:12; 2 Sam 20:1), poetry in the Hebrew Bible is characterized by a high density of parallelism. The oracle against Babylon in Jeremiah 50–51 displays this characteristic of poetry in various forms as, for example, in 50:39.

*lakhen yeshevu tsiyyim et iyyim*

Therefore wild beasts shall dwell with hyenas in

Babylon,<sup>4</sup> *weyashevu vah benot ya'anah*

and ostriches shall dwell in her.

*welo teshev 'od lanetsah*

She shall never again have people,

*welo tishkon 'ad dor wador*

nor be inhabited for all generations.

In these two couplets the verbal forms *yeshevu* “they shall dwell ” and *weyashevu* “they shall dwell” in lines 1 and 2 and *teshev* “she shall have people [i.e., be inhabited] and *tishkon* “she shall be inhabited” in lines 3 and 4 correspond with each other and the subjects *tsiyyim et iyyim* “wild beast with hyenas” and *benot ya'anah* “ostriches” in the first couplet and the temporal adverbial phrases *'od lanetsah* “never” (the negation *lo* preceding the verb *teshev* in the Hebrew text) and *'ad dor wador* “for all generations” in the second couplet.<sup>5</sup> However, it needs to be stated that the correspondences between parallel lines in the oracles against Babylon

<sup>4</sup>The prepositional phrase “in Babylon” is added in the ESV for clarity.

<sup>5</sup>The verb forms *yeshevu* and *weyashevu* are both derived from the root *YŠB* Qal “to sit.” This is not ideal in terms of parallelism because variation or difference is only achieved by using different grammatical forms.

in Jeremiah 50–51 are often not as close as in this example. Yet the text has the flow of parallelism that is characteristic of Hebrew poetry.

Beyond parallelism the poetry in Jeremiah 50–51 displays sound plays and wordplays in a number of places. Although wordplays and sound plays are not a necessary ingredient of Hebrew poetry their presence embellishes texts. When being noticed by the reader or hearer they enrich the reading experience.<sup>6</sup> Just as parallelism on the grammatical level sound plays and wordplays can only be observed in the Hebrew text. Examples of these poetic features can be found in the following verses:

50:21

*harov wehaharem 'aharehem ne'um YHWH*

Kill, and devote them to destruction, declares the Lord.

The first three words all contain the consonants *het* and *resh*. This poetic feature which is called literary consonance is clearly discernible when the text is read aloud as it was common in antiquity.

Two sound plays in 50:30 and 50:34 are mentioned by Fischer. The nouns *vahureha* “her young men” and *birhevotaha* “in her squares” contain the consonants *bet*, *het*, and *resh* (50:30a).

50:30a

*laken yippelu vahureha birhovotaha*

Therefore her young men shall fall in her squares

The infinitive *hargia'* “to give rest” and the finite verb form *hirgizu* “to give unrest” both contain the consonants *he*, *resh* and *gimel* in the same order (Jer 50:34b). The similarity in sounds of these verb forms highlights the contrast in meaning.

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<sup>6</sup> While it may be assumed that in ancient times biblical texts were written aloud sometimes with a group of listeners as audience from now on this paper will only refer to the reader as recipient of the text.

50:34

*riv yariv et rivam*

He will surely plead their cause,

*lema'an hirgia' et ha'arets*

that he may give rest to the earth,

*wehigiz leyocheve bavel*

but unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon.

The parallelism in 50:39 has already been discussed above. However, these two verses contain sound plays that are worth exploring.

50:39–40

*lakhen yeshevu tsiyyim et iyyim*

Therefore wild beasts shall dwell with hyenas in Babylon,

*weyashevu vah benot ya'anah*

and ostriches shall dwell in her.

*welo teshev 'od lanetsah*

She shall never again have people,

*welo tishkon 'ad dor wador*

nor be inhabited for all generations.

*kemahpekhat elohim et sedom we'et 'amora*

As when God overthrew Sodom and

Gomorrah *we'et shekeneha ne'um YHWH*

and their neighboring cities, declares the Lord,

*lo yeshev sham ish*

so no man shall dwell there,

*welo yagur bah ben adam*

and no son of man shall sojourn in her.

In the first line, we find the rhyme pair *tsiyyim* and *iyyim*, while in the second line the consonant *bet* pronounced as the English letter *b* in the time of Jeremiah is found in a cluster occurring in the three consecutive words *yashevu vah benot*. In the last couplet, the consonant *shin* is prominent occurring in the three words *yeshev sham ish* in the first line. In the second line the consonant *bet* is employed twice in the words *bah ben adam*.



Jer 51:2

*weshilahti lebavel zarim wezeruha*

and I will send to Babylon winnowers, and they shall winnow her,

*wivoqegu et artsah*

and they shall empty her land

This verse contains a word play in the first line where the word *zarim* “strangers” sounds similar to the following verb form *zeruha* “they will winnow her” – a metaphor meaning “they will scatter her inhabitants.” Both words contain the consonants *zayin* and *resh* thus creating both alliteration and consonance.<sup>7</sup>

The last example of sound plays and wordplays is 51:30 which consists of three couplets with two lines in parallelism each. The second couplet reads as follow:

*nashetah gevuratam*

their strength has failed;

*hayu lenashim*

they have become women

The second line *hayu lenashim* “they become women” is also used in 50:37 in a similar form. It is the reversal of the expression *heyu la'anashim* in 1 Samuel 4:9 (which literally means “become men”) which is used to admonish warriors to be courageous in battle (cf. the rhetorical question *halo ish attah* “are you not a man?” in 1 Sam 26:15). Here in Jeremiah 51:30 the noun *nashim* contains the same consonants *nun* and *shin* as the verbal form *nashetah* in the first line. We thus have an example of consonance again.

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<sup>7</sup> This interpretation follows the vocalization of the traditional Masoretic Hebrew text. This reading is accepted by Georg Fischer, *Jeremia 26–52* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2005), 592, 600; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52*, 430, 433. Some English versions like the ESV, NRSV and the NAB (including the Revised Edition of 2011) read the consonantal skeleton of the Hebrew text which is much older than the vocalization of the medieval Masoretic text as *zorim* meaning “winnowers.” Other translations like the NIV and the Jewish Publication Society Tanakh Translation follow the Masoretic text. One argument for following the Masoretic text is the literary link of this verse with Jeremiah 51:51, “For foreigners came to the holy places of the house of Yahweh,” which would otherwise be lost.

In summary, it can be stated that oracles against Babylon are a good example of prophetic poetry with its nice flow of lines in parallelism with examples of wordplays and sound plays.

### *Forms of Reader Engagement*

In itself a poetic text with its flow of parallel lines, figurative language and wordplays and sound plays is already an engaging text because the reader is engaged in its reception by appreciating its poetic beauty. The oracles against Babylon contain two more elements that require an active reader.

One of them is a frequent feature of prophetic poetry in Jeremiah: changes of perspective, i.e., a change of speaker and addressee.<sup>8</sup> For showing how complex and engaging for the reader this feature is one can refer to Jeremiah 50:2–17 because in this section the perspective changes a number of times. An unidentified speaker addresses an unidentified audience and refers to Babylon in the 3rd person (50:2–3). The topic is then changed to Israel who is referred to in the 3rd person (50:4), with God being the speaker. Then the voice of the Israelites in exile is quoted as they set out to return to Zion (50:5b). The perspective returns to the previous voice (50:6). The Israelites are referred to in the 3rd person again as in 50:4–5a. The speaker can again be identified as God because of the expression “my people.” In 50:8 the imperatives address the Israelites directly while in 50:11–12 God (“my inheritance”) speaks to the Babylonians. The perspective switches back to the 3rd person for Babylon in 50:13. From 50:14 on the soldiers who attack Babylon are addressed.

This short overview shows how flexible and alert a reader of the oracles against Babylon needs to be because the changes of perspective are not explicitly indicated in the text. Who is speaking and who is addressed can only be deduced from the contents and the grammatical forms. The text therefore requires an active reader.

The other feature of reader engagement that is discussed in this section is found in 51:1 and 51:41 and is only discernible in Hebrew. In these two verses we encounter the phenomenon of *atbash* in which in a Hebrew word the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is replaced with the last one, the second letter of the alphabet with the second to last, the third with the third

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<sup>8</sup> Georg Fischer, *Jeremia: Der Stand der theologischen Diskussion* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007), 78; idem, *Jeremia 1–25* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2005), 54–55.

to last, etc. Thus, the expression *lev qamay* meaning “the heart of the ones standing up against me” in 51:1 stands for *kasdim* “Chaldea ” and *Sheshakh* in 51:41 stands for *Bavel*, the Hebrew name of Babylon. When coming across these expressions the reader needs to stop and think about their deeper meaning. But in addition to this reader engagement, the cipher *lev qamay* in 51:1 also adds to the meaning of the text as through it Babylon is characterized as a country that opposes God.

*Literary Links with other parts of the Book of Jeremiah*

Another element that enriches the reading of Jeremiah 50–51 are literary links of this section of Jeremiah with other texts in the same book. A large number of these texts are found in chapters 2, 4, 6, 10, 25 and 31.<sup>9</sup> These chapters are foundational to the book. Jeremiah 2 opens the book by presenting the charge against Judah as forgetful of the Lord and unfaithful to him. Chapters 4 and 6 mainly speak of the coming judgment, a nation coming from the north and destroying the kingdom of Judah. The prose text Jeremiah 25 closes the first part of the book. Although a number of shorter texts in chapters 3, 12, 16 and 23 already speak of the future restoration of Judah after judgment and the return from exile, chapter 31 being part of the so-called Book of Consolation (Jer 30–31) highlights this restoration in a series of seven poems that form the centerpiece of the book. Therefore, the oracles against Babylon are structurally important on the level of composition of the book by displaying these links.

Given the great number of literary links in chapters 50–51 to other parts of the book it does make sense to concentrate on the more important ones. The most obvious one is probably the reference to the “people from the north”: “For out of the north a nation has come up against her” (50:3a). This motif is repeated three times in the oracles against Babylon (50:9; 50:41; 51:48) making clear that the enemy will come from the north to attack the city. This motif reflects the frequent announcements of an enemy coming from the north against Judah and Jerusalem in the earlier sections of the book, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, a people is coming from the north country, a great nation is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth’” (6:22).<sup>10</sup> Other parts of Jeremiah 50:3 have links to 2:15. Two

<sup>9</sup>Fischer, *Jeremia 26–52*, 632.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Jer 1:13–14; 4:6; 6:1; 10:22; 13:20; 25:9.

clauses in both verses are close parallels (lines 2 and 3 in Jer 50:3 and lines 3 and 4 in Jer 2:15 in the overview below). The noun *shammah* which is translated in the ESV with “desolation” in 50:3 and “waste” in 2:15, verbal forms derived from the same root *ŠYT* and a statement of the absence of inhabitants (Hebrew *yoshev*) occur in both verses:<sup>11</sup>

50:3

For out of the north a nation has come up against her,  
which shall make her land a desolation, and none  
shall dwell in it;  
both man and beast shall flee away.

2:15

The lions have roared against him;  
they have roared loudly.  
They have made his land a waste;  
his cities are in ruins without inhabitant.

There is thus a striking correspondence between the fate of Babylon in Jer 50:3 and the fate of Jerusalem in 2:15. Both cities are attacked by an enemy from the north; both will be completely destroyed being left without inhabitants. This correspondence on the literary level is reflected also on the theological level which will be discussed in the following section of the paper.

Another remarkable link is found in 50:13, “Because of the wrath of the Lord she shall not be inhabited but shall be an utter desolation; everyone who passes by Babylon shall be appalled, and hiss because of all her wounds.” The second part is an exact parallel to 19:8 which speaks about Jerusalem, “And I will make this city a horror, a thing to be hissed at. Everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss because of all its wounds” except for the obvious and necessary difference “by Babylon” for “by it.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>It is unfortunate that the link is obscured in the ESV by the different translations for the Hebrew noun *shammah* “waste, appalment.” The NIV may be better here, but is guilty of obscuring literary links in other places. Making links like this visible to the reader is an indication of the quality of a translation.

<sup>12</sup>Similar motifs in Jeremiah are found in 18:16; 25:9; 25:18; 29:18; 51:37. Another exact parallel to 50:13 and 19:8 is 1 Kings 9:8.

An almost verbatim quote from an earlier text in Jeremiah is found in 51:37, “and Babylon shall become a heap of ruins, the haunt of jackals, a horror and a hissing, without inhabitant.” Except for the verb at the beginning of the verse the first half of 51:37 in Hebrew is identical with the first half of 9:10, “I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a lair of jackals, and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant. ” Even the second parts show close parallels with the nouns *shammah* “horror” in 51:37 and *shemamah* “desolation” in 9:10 and the noun *yoshev* “inhabitant” with different negatives in both verses.

In 50:27 and 8:12 it is the noun phrase *et peqqudatam* “the time of their punishment” that characterizes the coming divine visitation as judgment for both Judah and Babylon:

50:27

Woe to them, for their day has come,  
the time of their punishment.

8:12

when I punish them, they shall be overthrown, says the Lord.<sup>13</sup>

All literary links that were discussed so far make clear that Babylon will face the same as Judah and Jerusalem had to face before at the hands of the Babylonians in the context of King Nebuchadnezzar’s campaign against the kingdom of Judah under king Zedekiah which lead to the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.

Two more literary links will be discussed that connect the oracles against Babylon with previous texts in Jeremiah and by doing so point the reader back to these important texts. In 50:7 and 50:17, the verb *akhal* (“to eat” or “to devour”) is used metaphorically for the destruction the enemies – especially the Babylonians and Assyrians – brought over Judah.

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<sup>13</sup> Again, the ESV obscures the link by not translating the same Hebrew phrase in the same way. A similar phrase *shenat peqqudatam* “the year of their punishment” is used in Jeremiah 23:12.

50:7

All who found them have devoured them,  
and their enemies have said, “We are not guilty,  
for they have sinned against the LORD,  
their habitation of righteousness, the LORD, the hope of their fathers.”

50:17

Israel is a hunted sheep  
driven away by lions.  
First the king of Assyria devoured him,  
and now at last Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has gnawed his bones.

This metaphorical use of the verb *akhal* (“to eat”) is already found in 2:3 and 30:16.

2:3

Israel was holy to the LORD,  
the firstfruits of his harvest.  
All who ate of it incurred guilt;  
disaster came upon them, declares the LORD.

30:16

Therefore all who devour you shall be devoured,  
and all your foes, every one of them, shall go into captivity;  
those who plunder you shall be plundered, and all who  
prey on you I will make a prey.

Both references are found in important texts in the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah 2 contains the first accusations against Judah; and Jeremiah 30 is a part of the Book of Consolation (Jer 30–31) which focuses on the theme of restoration for Judah.

In a similar way, the description of the Judeans as crying while they are returning from exile to the Promised Land in 50:4 refers back to 31:9 which is part of the centerpiece of the book about the promised restoration of Judah after judgment.

50:4

In those days and in that time, declares the Lord,  
the people of Israel and the people of Judah shall come together  
weeping as they come, and they shall seek the Lord their God

31:9

With weeping they shall come,  
and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back...

This selection of literary links shows that it enhances the reading experience when the reader pays attention to them. Links like these can add an idea – in this particular case the idea that Babylon will face the same fate as Jerusalem before. While the literary links express this idea implicitly it is also expressed explicitly as will be discussed in the following section. The other group of literary links that was discussed above serves the purpose referring the reader back to previous texts in the book with the result that the importance of the thought is emphasized.

### **Theological aspects of the oracles against Babylon**

Besides the poetic qualities of the oracles against Babylon with their vivid description of the judgment that is to come over Babylon Jeremiah 50–51 is also a theologically rich text. Selected aspects of the theology of the oracles against Babylon will be discussed in the last section of this paper.

#### *The Nature of the Punishment and the Just Judge*

For describing the nature of the judgment, a number of words and expressions are used that show that the judgment of Babylon is an exact retaliation of what the Babylonians did to Judah and Jerusalem as divine judgment. The verb *ŠLM* in the Pi'el stem “recompense, reward” is used in four verses (Jer 50:29; 51:6, 24, 56): The verb *NQM* in the Niphal “avenge oneself” stem is used twice (50:15; 51:36) and the noun *neqamah* “vengeance” which is derived from the same root is used even five times (50:15, 28; 51:6, 11, 36). In three verses the fact that God repays Babylon for her deeds is made explicit: “do to her as she has done” (50:15), “do to her according to all that she has done” (50:29) and finally “ I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea before your very eyes for all the evil that they have done in Zion, declares the Lord” (51:24). This

shows that the judgment that God announces to bring over Babylon corresponds closely to the crime. That the punishment should correspond to the crime and reflect it is an important principle of Ancient Near Eastern judicial systems.<sup>14</sup>

God judges Babylon for a valid reason as the crime of Babylon is described as evil (see 51:24 above) and a sin against God (50:14, “for she has sinned against the Lord”) . He is thus depicted as a just judge who does not punish arbitrarily but for a reason and with appropriate measure.

#### *God’s continuous relationship with Israel*

Some references in the oracles against Babylon indicate God’s continuous relationship with his people. Although according to 6:30 and 7:29 God had rejected and forsaken his people in judgment his relationship with them is not yet over. This is already implicitly stated in the announcement of the return of Israel from exile in 50:4– 5. The “people of Israel and the people of Judah” would not get a chance to return from exile if God would not allow that and be committed to them. Yet in two verses the continuous relationship is clearly stated. In 50:6 and in 51:45 God calls Israel “my people.” The term “my people” is used in 50:6 with reference to the past when Judah went astray being unfaithful to God and was therefore judged by God. This is in line with many other references in Jeremiah where the term “my people” points to God’s authority over Israel as the God who had led them out of Egypt, reaffirmed his relationship with Israel (Exod 6:6-8) and is entitled to hold Israel accountable to him within the covenant relationship.<sup>15</sup> However, in 51:45 it is used with reference to the present: “Go out of the midst of her [i.e., Babylon], my people!” Judah (Israel) is thus still “my people” to God. His relationship with Israel has not fundamentally changed despite sin and unfaithfulness, despite judgment and exile.

The continuous relationship of God with his people is also indicated in 51:5 with an impressive metaphor: “ For Israel and Judah are not widowed of their God” (NAB) . Israel is not deserted or abandoned by God. He clearly states the opposite here.

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<sup>14</sup>This principle lies also in the background of the retaliation law (*lex talionis*) in Exodus 21:24–25.

<sup>15</sup>Exodus 3:7 makes clear that even before the exodus Israel was God’s people.



While so far the relationship of God with Israel was concerned even the temple in Jerusalem comes into focus. In 7:8–15 God was very critical of the trust of the people in the mere existence of the temple in Jerusalem and accused the people of having made it into a “den of robbers” (7:11). However, when God judges Babylon he does so as “vengeance for his temple” (50:28; 51:11). The phrase “his temple” clearly indicates God’s ongoing commitment to Jerusalem as the city that he had chosen (cf. 1 Kgs 8:44; 8:48; 11:13). Despite having brought judgment over the temple God continues to view the sanctuary in Jerusalem as “his temple.” It becomes very clear that God’s story with Israel is not yet over.

### *Who is God?*

The Hebrew Bible is a good way to get to know God. In the way he interacts with humans and how he is described in the texts his character is revealed. The oracles against Babylon show that God not only judges his own people but also other nations. He is thus indeed the “judge of all the earth” (Gen 18:25). More explicitly God is described with the words “Their redeemer is strong” (Jer 50:34).<sup>16</sup> God bears the same title in Isa 41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17 (always with an attached possessive pronoun as in Jer 50:34).<sup>17</sup> As redeemer God assumes the role of someone whose obligation it is to help his kin.<sup>18</sup> The expression “redeemer” highlights God’s willingness to save his people. But it is also a “clear allusion” to the greatest event of salvation in the history of Israel, the exodus from Egypt.<sup>19</sup> The word *go’el* “redeemer” and the verb *ga’al* “to redeem” (Exod 6:6; 15:13) are derived from the same root *G’L*.

An important aspect of God’s character is unfolded in 50:44: “For who is like me? Who will summon me? What shepherd can stand before me?” God’s uniqueness and his sovereignty is stressed here in the context of the judgment of Babylon. The same topic of God’s sovereignty can be found in 51:12: “for the LORD has both planned and done what he spoke

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<sup>16</sup>Another word play can be found here. The same Hebrew root is used in the words “hold fast” in 50:33 and “strong” in 50:34. The use of the same root creates “an implied contrast between the strong Assyrian and Babylonian captors, and Israel’s Redeemer, who is strong(er)” (Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52*, 416).

<sup>17</sup>References are taken from Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52*, 416.

<sup>18</sup>Fischer, *Jeremia 26–52*, 587.

<sup>19</sup>Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52*, 416.

concerning the inhabitants of Babylon.” Planning something and implementing those plans is evidence of power and sovereignty.<sup>20</sup>

### **Summary**

This short study of the oracles against Babylon could discuss only selected aspects of these rich texts. Besides parallelism – the most important feature of poetic texts in the Hebrew Bible – the texts display poetic beauty with plays with words and sound. We find different ways of reader engagement with changes of addressees, ciphers, and links to previous texts in Jeremiah. And lastly the oracles against Babylon contain important theological ideas like the correspondence of crime and punishment, the continued relationship between God and his people, God as redeemer and the uniqueness and power of God. The oracles against Babylon are thus truly worth studying.

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<sup>20</sup>The same idea is found in Jeremiah 30:24 which constitutes another literary link within Jeremiah.



## PERSECUTION OF EARLY CHRISTIANS AND THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS FOR TODAY

劉保成 ANTHONY HAO



Jesus made it clear that there is a cost for those who choose to be his disciples. In Luke 9:23, Jesus states the cost begins with self-denial and taking up one's cross. This involves setting aside self-centeredness and self-gratification. It also means accepting hardship and persecution, even giving up one's life. It is only at this point the individual can truly follow after him. Jesus made no illusion that the Christian life would be easy or stress-free. In fact, he warned of coming trials and tribulations (John 16:33).

The recipients of the Epistle to the Hebrews no doubt must have been aware and had counted the cost of their faith in Jesus. These Jewish believers were bold and daring in earlier times when called up to sacrifice self-interests for the cause of Christ (Heb 10:32–35). But somehow, they could not sustain their fervency. Soon they saw among their numbers those who had quietly withdrawn from the community and others who had abandoned their faith (10:25). What used to be an enthusiastic and passionate group of disciples are now cowed in fear and doubt. What made

the change? It was very likely that intensified and relentless persecution from fellow Jews had shaken their commitment and forced these Christians to reconsider what they truly believe.

Similarly, believers today may have started strong in faith. They are committed to follow and bear witness for Christ. They might have given up much worldly comfort and enticement. But when thrust before scoffers, mockers, revilers, and threatened with physical harm and abandonment especially by close human relations, it was too much a burden. Today, Jewish believers continue to experience such testing of faith. They encounter varied forms of persecutions from fellow Jews as they turn to Jesus as their Messiah. Establishing the circumstance of Hebrews may help believers today understand the calling and extent of their testing and trials.

When times of persecution arise, it shakes one's faith to the core. No longer is it enough to know what one believes but more importantly why one believes. No longer is the community of believers seen as a social center but also the spiritual center for strength and accountability. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls all believers to a deeper and more intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the writer challenges the readers to consider the superiority of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross over any ritual or regulation. This message of the Epistle to the Hebrews becomes that anchor that secures and strengthens believers in their times of persecution.

### **Persecution and the Message of Hebrews**

From a pastoral point of view, the writer's purpose for the epistle to the Hebrews may be to "strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble" (Heb 12:12). The spiritual hands and feet of the Jewish believers were weak and feeble. It may have been brought about by beatings and maltreatments received from fellow Jews.

The writer did not explicitly refer to Jews as the perpetrator of Christian persecution. However, the extensive contrast between Judaism and Christianity in Hebrews, as well as stern warnings against reverting back to Judaism, indicates that the pressure, if not strong antagonism, was coming from within Jewish circles. This may explain why attacks against believers as recorded in the Gospels, Acts and the epistles did not appear

to be “Roman government-sanctioned, systematic attempts” to purge Christianity. From the start, efforts to suppress Christians were done locally as an intra-Jewish dissension. It is more likely that believers faced stronger pressure from families, relatives and local community leaders than the Roman or other governing bodies. It was only when Christianity became predominantly Gentile in the second century, and Jewish influence waned with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, that the Roman authorities took notice of Christians and their impact on Roman governance. The circumstance of the epistle to the Hebrews occurred during the period of intra-Jewish struggle.

### *Attacks on Jesus*

Jewish opposition to Christianity must have started with insults and derisions on the person of Jesus. Efforts by the Jewish leadership to portray Jesus as a Sabbath-breaker, rabble-rouser, eventually as magician and deceiver were at work during his life and ministry. Soon the attacks focused on Jesus’ background and personal life. Insults of being an illegitimate child and living a sinful life sought to discredit him. It was likely that these verbal assaults on the person of Jesus continued, if not intensified, during the early church. Antagonists could also bring up the fact that Jesus experienced the most horrific form of execution under the charge of being a rebel who incites others against Rome. This by far would have effectively discouraged seekers and potential converts for fear of being associated with a criminal.

Christians, both Jews and Gentile, would be hard pressed to respond to slander against Jesus. They would be subject to the same ridicule and insults for claiming such a character as their God and Savior. Non-believing family members would deeply resent the shame Christians bring into the family. Concerns would grow on the impact to their community standing. Added pressure from within the family would further estrange the relationships. In many cases, Jewish Christians were disavowed by their family for their faith. Some were even thrown out altogether. For cultures that have close-knit family structures, such as the Jews, this could be as close to a death sentence as any penalty. One would have no identity, no support, no protection and no future recourse. It is not surprising that family pressures have kept many Jews from following Jesus. And those

who chose to become Christians either did so secretly or courageously faced intense persecution.

The message of the Epistle to the Hebrews to these struggling believers is to draw near to Jesus rather than be drawn away. Not minimizing their hardships, the writer warned of even more tribulation to come. Instead, the exhortation was to consider Jesus more and realize he is truly the Son of God. The writer refuted any slander and misrepresentation concerning Jesus by presenting him as superior over all. He is greater than those the Jewish people hold in high regard: the angels, Moses, Joshua and the Aaronic priesthood. The greatness of Jesus rests on his character and his saving work on behalf of man. He is worthy of worship and loyalty even through the most difficult of human oppression.

### *Atonement Doubted*

Following attacks on the person of Jesus, the early Christians would have experienced challenge on the view of atonement. Christians believe that sins are forgiven on the basis of Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross. But if Jesus is who the opposition portrayed him to be, then critics could charge his claim to have atoned for man's sins must be false as well. They could argue that the Christians' hope for forgiveness of their sins is in vain. Furthermore, since Christians had disregarded the sacrificial system and the Aaronic priesthood, they would have no other means for atonement. For the devout Jews, Christians are in a precarious position insofar as their spiritual state is concerned.

How can Christians know for sure their sins have been atoned for? They don't have the regular sacrifices prescribed in the Law to assure them. All they can count on is the person of Jesus and his promise that their sins are forgiven through his sacrifice on the cross. If believers wavered in their faith in Jesus, they had nothing else to hold on to. The old covenant sacrifices may become more reassuring for them. Some Jewish believers would even hold on to both Jesus and the old covenant system.

The writer of Hebrews must be aware of pressures on believers to return to the rituals and regulations of the old covenant. The message of the epistle is that Jesus' sacrifice is superior to the old covenant. In him, believers find the perfect priesthood and the perfect offering for sin. Jesus had in fact done away with the old system. There is now a new and living way through him. The writer warned against shrinking back since doing

so in effect is a rejection of what Jesus has to offer. To continue in the old covenant is to repudiate the new covenant. Believers need to stay faithful in their confession. Jesus' sacrifice is all-sufficient for the atonement of their sins.

### *Social Ostracism*

The most serious form of persecution the Jewish community inflicted on Jewish Christians was social ostracism. By withdrawing their fellowship and goodwill, Jews abandoned their fellow countrymen to the ways of the Gentiles. Whatever protection being associated with Judaism offers was no longer available. Jewish Christians were without a culture and identity. They were vulnerable to those who seek to take advantage of them. In some cases, other Jews incited others to do them harm.

Being ostracized from the community may be the most challenging for those who considered Christianity. The struggle goes beyond a sense of loneliness and detachment for rejection and abandonment may mean death for some who could not survive in a hostile environment. For this reason, there were those who no longer associated with other Christians. The same can be said for those who no longer offer hospitality to fellow believers. They could not bear being cast out of the very institution that offered them security and stability.

To those who experienced considerable suffering, the writer to the Hebrews offers both consolation and warning. The epistle reminds Jewish Christians they are numbered with a distinguished group of faithful men and women honored by God and who received their just reward. They also have a faithful Savior who persevered in obedience. Believers are to emulate them, not giving up their faith and the new community they are a part of. They are to continue to demonstrate acts of kindness and love toward one another. To do otherwise is to incur God's displeasure and discipline. The message of Hebrews is to keep the faith, for God is faithful and will surely reward.

## **Challenges to Faith Today**

The circumstances of believers today may be different from those of the recipients of the Epistle to the Hebrews. However, there are common aspects especially with regards to challenges to faith. Like the early



Christians in Hebrews, family and those in close relations still discourage and denounce believers for their faith in Christ. Social ostracism is still practiced in different contexts to isolate and pressure Christians. The cost of faith is the same today as it was during the first century.

The person of Jesus is still a point of contention today. Most people acknowledge him as a great teacher and moral leader who is greatly admired. But once the issue of his divinity is brought up debate ensues. Everyone would agree on Jesus' teaching from the Sermon of the Mount but quite a few would reject his authority as the Son of God. The passion and suffering of Jesus create sympathy and outrage but few would confess their need for a Savior. Though Jesus' background is not an issue for many today, this lack of understanding of who Jesus is prevents these same individuals from putting complete trust in him. When the historical record of Jesus in the Gospels is questioned, most would not object or take on the challenge. As long as Jesus is referred to in generalities, there would be no arguments. However, as the specifics of Jesus' life and teaching are brought up, people get upset.

When Christians talk about God's love, they are applauded. But when they refer to Jesus as the only way to heaven, they are condemned. To maintain this exclusive view is perceived as bigoted and arrogant. When Christians insist on salvation through Jesus alone, they are called unloving and unkind. Christians face strong pressure to compromise with other beliefs. There is a determined effort to make Christianity more compatible with other religions. It is argued that Christians can worship Jesus and believe in other religions. Believers are pressed to be "tolerant" of other beliefs. Those who have difficulty with confrontation would find these views acceptable. They would change their conviction rather than be in disagreement with others.

Christians today also experience different forms of social ostracism. When they dare profess their faith and take their stand at home or work, they are at times shunned, ignored, ridiculed and even criticized. Christians who came from Jewish or Moslem families encounter severe persecution for their new faith. They experience situations not too different from those of the early Christians. Verbal and physical attacks are not uncommon. These Christians are considered disgraceful and bring shame on the whole family. Efforts would at first be exerted to force a change of conviction. But if all else fail, they may be thrown out of the family

altogether. Sometimes believers have to flee from their community, even country, to find safe haven from those opposed to them. They are forced to fend for themselves without help from those relatives and old friends. Christians from other non-Christian backgrounds may not be persecuted just because of their new faith. But conflicts arise when there are cultural norms or practices inconsistent with biblical teachings. Chinese Christians have to contend over ancestor worship and animistic practices. Refusal to participate communicates disrespect towards family and elders. Soon, Christianity is condemned as divisive and corrupting.

Believers today encounter significant pressure to compromise, if not give up, their faith. For many, the Christian life can be a lonely and difficult journey. Without help, they may lose their confidence over their convictions. It is easy to wane in their passion for and interest in the Gospel message. They can forget or not value their new identity with the people of God. These lethargic and disheartened believers need powerful words of exhortation regarding their faith. They also need to be warned not to fall away for there is no alternative to faith in Christ. The epistle to the Hebrews was written for such a group of people, for such a time as this.

### **Message of Hebrews for Today**

One of the key themes of the epistle to the Hebrews is faith. It is the essential aspect that nurtures and matures the Christian life. Without faith, the believer withers and falters. But when faith is built up, then one's life is vibrant and dynamic. The writer of Hebrews seeks to instill such passion with his words of exhortation and warning. The writer is well aware of the external pressures weighing down on the recipients. But he is confident that even faith can overcome such hardship and persecution.

#### *Christ is Superior*

Central to the writer's message is the superiority of Jesus Christ. He was far above all that men exalt. He is greater both in character and in deed. He was the reigning Son of God, and he works on man's behalf. Any attempt to either bring others to Christ's level or to bring Christ down to man's level will diminish faith. This distortion is contemptible, as well as harmful. The writer reminds believers to fix their eyes on Jesus where faith begins and faith is perfected. The reason many fall short is because they

have turned their eyes away from him. They may have been attracted by man's efforts and craftiness. Somehow Christ and his works on man's behalf may not look sufficient. But there is only one way and it is through Christ.

The call to persevere in faith begins with an exalted view of Christ. Believers need to have a lofty understanding of who Christ is. They need to reflect and meditate on what Christ had done. This is rendered imperative with the constant barrage of slander and lies concerning Christ from the world. Their intent is to diminish Christ in everyone's eyes. But believers need to see through these distortions and be able to live by the truth. Their faith rises and falls on their understanding of their Savior.

### *Christ's Work is Sufficient*

Faith is also built up when believers depend fully on Christ's work. Christ is not just the perfect high priest for man, but he presented the perfect offering before God. Christ's sacrifice was rendered sufficient that no other offering was necessary. All that is needed is to enter into Christ's rest when one fully depends on him. To return to the old sacrifice and covenant system is to spite the work of Christ. It is also a rejection of the only way back to God.

Depending on the old covenant gives a false assurance that comes from self-effort. It also prevents the believer from moving forward in faith with Christ. Any effort by man to "make complete" what Christ has done bear the same result. It acts to diminish Christ and exalts man and his deeds. The writer to the Hebrews exhorts believers to lay aside any encumbrance and the sin that so easily entangles. Man's efforts and man's pride in his abilities can encumber and entangle faith. Anything short of complete dependence on Christ's redeeming work is incompatible with faith. The believer's faith rises and falls on their dependence on their Savior.

### *Surrounded by a Cloud of Witnesses*

Nothing can be so discouraging than to realize one is struggling alone. It can lead one to question one's faith. It makes one wonder whether the suffering is worth it at all. It may ultimately cause one to give up for lack of endurance. The writer of Hebrews exhorts believers to persevere for they do not suffer alone. Christians have the example of the persevering saints of old. Their lives are testaments to God's sustaining grace for them

and those who trust in him. Believers are to read and take to heart their boldness and confidence in God. Faith is strengthened when it is affirmed by the perseverance of those having similar convictions.

However, the most potent source of encouragement for believers in the midst of their suffering is the perseverance of Jesus himself. He is their ultimate example and source of inspiration. Jesus offers himself not only as man's atonement for their sins but also as the perfecter of their faith. Believers have the confidence of their Savior's nurture and sustenance through the darkest moments of life. Jesus does that because he himself went through those same hardships and tribulations. Believers do not go through life alone. They need not give in to the false assurance of man's religions. They do not have to give up when rejected by those closest to them. Through it all, they have Jesus with them.

### *Warnings for Today*

The writer to the Hebrews exhorts the faithful to persevere. At the same time, he warns those who falter of the serious consequences at hand. These "warning passages" are meant to reawaken slumbering believers concerning their faith. Believers are to reexamine the content and value of their faith so as to persevere. The warnings counter the tendency to neglect and drift from the truth. However, there is a more serious side to these passages. Warnings are given by the writer addressing those who never had truly believed and would reject faith altogether. There is no other way of salvation. What awaits them is the wrath of God. Everyone should guard against such an unbelieving heart.

When experiencing immense hardship and suffering, many may tend to neglect and drift away from the faith. It takes strong and stern words to bring back the wayward. They serve to implore believers not to give up and to shore up faith. To those who have turned away from Christ, they need to hear what consequences await them. The writer yearns that the sobering warning may bring them back to a living relationship with Christ.

## **Recommended Works**

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**“THE LORD WILL PROVIDE” OR  
“WE SHOULD OBEY”?  
AN INQUIRY INTO THE MAIN THEME OF  
GENESIS 22:1–19 USING A  
NARRATIVE ANALYSIS APPROACH**

陳維堯 SAMUEL TAN



**Statement of the Problem**

“Our God is the Jehovah Jireh, the LORD is our Provider. Therefore, ask from him and he will provide for you.” That is what a preacher says to his congregation as he explains Genesis 22:1–19. This interpretation is based on Genesis 22:14 where the KJV translates, “And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah Jireh.”

This is not an uncommon interpretation of the passage. Sidney Greidanus writes, “You see, the point of the story for Israel is that the LORD provides a lamb for a burnt offering.”<sup>1</sup> Claus Westermann contends that the naming of the place as יהוה ירהי is the goal of the narrative. Westermann writes, “The narrative as a whole is to be understood with reference to this goal. The drama takes its beginning from God, and finds

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<sup>1</sup> Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 210.



its resolution in God...when one refers the praise to Abraham, one has not understood the narrative.”<sup>2</sup> Walter Brueggemann asserts that the statement *God will provide* is structurally central, “‘God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.’ There can be little doubt of the cruciality of this statement on structural grounds.”<sup>3</sup>

However, some commentators like Bruce Waltke and David Cotter see verse 14 as a trivial part of the story and gloss over it in explaining Genesis 22.<sup>4</sup> Laurence Turner does not even explain the verse in his commentary.<sup>5</sup>

So is Genesis 22:1–19 about the Lord’s provision? If the theme of the text is “the LORD is our Provider,” then an application could be: “Trust God to provide for our needs.” But if the text has a different theme, the application would also be different. For example, if the theme is about Abraham’s obedience, then an application could be: “Obey God even if he asks us to give up our most loved possession.”

What is the theme of the text? This paper seeks to obtain the theme of Genesis 22:1–19 using a narrative critical approach. According to David Gunn, narrative criticism means

interpreting the existing text in terms primarily of its own story world...Here meaning is to be found by close reading that identifies formal and conventional structures of the narrative, determines plot, develops characterization, distinguishes point of view, exposes language play, and relates all to some overarching, encapsulating theme.<sup>6</sup>

Since this paper seeks to determine the overarching theme of the narrative in Genesis 22:1–19, a narrative critical approach will be used. The paper aims to achieve this by analyzing the five fundamental aspects of a narrative.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12–36* (trans. John J. Scullion S. J.; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), 364.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (IBC 1; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 186–88.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 308; David W. Cotter, *Genesis* (BO 1; Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 155.

<sup>5</sup> Laurence A. Turner, *Genesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 97–100.

<sup>6</sup> David M. Gunn, “Narrative Criticism,” in *To Each Its Own Meaning* (ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 201.

<sup>7</sup> The five fundamental aspects are based on Shimon Bar-Efrat’s book *Narrative Art in the Bible*. They are: (1) the characters, (2) the narrator, (3) the time, (4) the plot, and (5)

the stylistic devices, particularly repetition and word order. Though the five aspects are taken from Shimon Bar-Efrat’s book, the analysis of each aspect of the narrative will also use other sources.

Before the year 2000, analyses of Genesis 22:1–19 have generally been through the conventional critical methods. Some scholars used both source criticism and form criticism to analyze the text (John Skinner, *Genesis* [ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1980], 327–32; E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* [AB1; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1986], 161–66; Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* [trans. Mark E. Biddle; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997], 233–40). They viewed the source of the text as largely E and the form of the text as a cult legend of child sacrifice. Other scholars used form criticism only, examining the form and the setting of the text (George W. Coats, *Genesis with an Introduction to Narrative Literature* [FOTL 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 157–62; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12–36* [trans. John J. Scullion, S. J.; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985], 351–65). Many commentators did not discuss the historical-critical issues and focused more on the literary-grammatical context, theological significance and practical application of the text (H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* [2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1942], 1:616–37; Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* [TOTC; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1967], 142–44; Stuart Briscoe, *Genesis* [Mastering the Old Testament 1; Dallas: Word Publishing, 1987], 188–95; Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis* [New York: Schocken Books, 1966], 150–54; J. Gerald Janzen, *Abraham and All the Families of the Earth: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis 12–50* [ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 77–82; John H. Walton, *Genesis* [NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001], 507–21). But many others used both the historical-critical method and literary-grammatical analysis to understand the meaning of the text (Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* [rev. ed.; OTL; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972], 237–45; Franz Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis* [trans. Sophia Taylor; 2 vols. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Klock & Klock Publishers, 1978], 1:84–92; G. Ch. Aalders, *Genesis* [trans. William Heynen; 2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981], 44–52; Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 185–94; Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988], 391–404; Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 16–50* [WBC 2; Dallas: Word Books, 1994], 96–118; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50* [NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 97–117). In spite of the abundance of commentaries on Genesis before the year 2000, there is little use of narrative criticism in these commentaries.

But since the year 2000, commentators have been incorporating narrative criticism into their commentaries. John Hartley examined the characters of Genesis 22:1–19 and noted the repeated words (*Genesis* [NIBC 1; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000], 205–206). He also examined the plot of the story, and divided the story into eight sections. In the same year, Laurence A. Turner analyzed the repetitions in the passage, the pace of time, the plot of the narrative as well as the characters of the passage (*Genesis* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 99–100). A year later, Bruce K. Waltke analyzed the plot of the story and its characters in relation to the plot (*Genesis* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001], 301–02). He also paid attention to stylistic devices like key words and blanks. In 2003, David W. Cotter covered the five fundamental aspects of a narrative: the characters, the plot, the narrator’s point of view, the pace of time, and the stylistic devices (*Genesis* [Berit Olam 1; Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2003], 146–47). Yet Cotter discussed these fundamental aspects with only one short paragraph for every aspect; hence, the discussion resulted in five short paragraphs that filled less than one-and-a-half pages. In contrast to Cotter who referred to all the five aspects, Kenneth A. Mathews mentioned only the use of repetitions to signify movements in the story (*Genesis 11:27–50:26* [NAC

## The Aspects of the Narrative

To find the main theme of Genesis 22:1–19, several concerns about the fundamental aspects of a narrative will be addressed:

### *Characters: Who are the Characters in Relation to the Plot?*

First, we will look at the characters. Jean Louis Ska writes, “Biblical narratives are not really interested in the study of characters as such. Dramatic action is what matters, and characters are normally ‘aspects’ of a plot.”<sup>8</sup> Hence, one way to categorize characters is on the basis of their importance to the plot.

The *protagonist* is the one who is most indispensable to the plot. He brings forward the course of events. Secondary characters like *antagonists* and *agents* have secondary roles because they are less important to the plot. They are merely instruments at the service of the plot. There are also the *walk-ons*, who are passive and whose presence has little bearing on the resolution of the plot. They are usually considered as part of the setting rather than of the action.<sup>9</sup> Knowing the primary as well as secondary characters can aid us in determining the theme of the narrative.

### 1. Protagonist

In Genesis 22:1–19, Abraham is the one who brings forward the course of events. He is present from the start of the narrative till the end.

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1B; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005], 287). Mathews emphasized the evidence of repetitions as giving the passage a coherent storyline and therefore as the creation of one author. Sidney Greidanus (*Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 196–98) diagrammed the plot line of the passage as a single plot. He also took note of the pace of time in the narrative and the use of repetitions in the passage to emphasize key concepts.

From a survey of 26 commentaries on Genesis (mentioned above), only Cotter offers a narrative analysis of Genesis 22:1–19 using the five fundamental aspects of a narrative. That one, however, briefly paid attention to each of the aspects. Furthermore, no scholar used all the five aspects to determine the encapsulating theme of the text. In view of this absence, this thesis aims to employ a narrative analysis to determine the theme of Genesis 22:1–19 by analyzing the five aspects.

<sup>8</sup> Jean Louis Ska, “*Our Fathers Have Told Us*”: *Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives* (SubBi 13; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1990), 94.

<sup>9</sup> Ska, *Our Fathers*, 86–87.

Hence, he is the protagonist.<sup>10</sup> Being the protagonist, the character of Abraham is round:<sup>11</sup>

- In verse 2, God describes Abraham as a loving father.
- In verse 3, Abraham’s actions demonstrate his obedience. Adele Berlin writes concerning verse 3, “This string of short clauses of similar syntax, in which the verbs predominate, conveys the feeling that Abraham is deliberately and obediently carrying out his orders.”<sup>12</sup>
- From Abraham’s answer to Isaac in verse 8, we can see his “delicacy”<sup>13</sup> because he tries to avoid hurting his son.
- And in verse 12, Abraham is characterized by the angel as one who fears God.

## 2. Antagonists and Agents

God is a secondary character in this narrative because after he appeared to Abraham in verses 1 to 2, he disappears from the scene and is only referred to later by other characters (vv. 3, 8, 9, 12, 14–18). He is important to the plot because he challenged Abraham to sacrifice his son. Thus, he is the antagonist.<sup>14</sup> But he is not the main character because after giving Abraham the test, God does not take an active role in verses 3–10, 13–14, and 19.<sup>15</sup>

Isaac is another secondary character. Although Isaac plays an important role as Abraham’s most cherished one that is to be sacrificed,

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<sup>10</sup>Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible* (rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 72.

<sup>11</sup>Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 23.

<sup>12</sup>Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 39.

<sup>13</sup>Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (trans. Dorothea Shefer-Vanson; BLS 17; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), 76.

<sup>14</sup>Richard Pratt Jr. writes, “Antagonists may be evil or good; they may intend harm or benefit to the protagonist. But in one way or another, the antagonist represents the opposite side of dramatic tension in the story” (*He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student’s Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 1990) 144).

<sup>15</sup>Pratt warns against the tendency to identify God as the protagonist in every narrative of the Bible. He writes, “This is certainly true in a metaphysical sense; these stories reflect His good purposes and sovereign will at work. But God is not always in the foreground. Old Testament stories usually have human protagonists” (*He Gave Us Stories*, 142). In Genesis 22:1–19, Abraham is the human protagonist while God is a secondary character as the antagonist.

he does not move the events forward. Isaac is not even mentioned at the end of the narrative when Abraham returns to his servants and dwells in Beersheba.

The angel of the LORD is also a secondary character since he only appears starting verse 11. The angel functions as the agent that God used to stop Abraham from killing his son (vv. 11–12), and as the mouthpiece of God in blessing Abraham (v. 16). Although the angel is instrumental in bringing the conflict to a resolution, his role is only towards the latter part of the narrative.

### 3. Walk-ons

The two servants, though mentioned three times (vv. 3, 5, 19), are the walk-ons. They are completely passive as they are taken (v. 3), talked to (v. 5), and returned to by Abraham (v. 19). Even if they are removed from the narrative, there is little difference in the plot: God can still test Abraham, Abraham can still attempt to sacrifice Isaac, the angel can still stop Abraham, and the LORD can still bless Abraham. The two servants are more of part of the setting than of the action.

### 4. Conclusion concerning the Characters

By looking at the characters, we have seen that Abraham is the protagonist who moves forward the course of events. He is there in the beginning of the narrative when God spoke to him. He is there in the middle as he carried out God's command. He is there towards the end when the LORD blessed him. He is there at the end when dwelt in Beersheba. God, on the other hand, is the antagonist, a secondary character who tested Abraham.<sup>16</sup> God is important to the plot but he does not move forward the course of events. He even disappears at the end.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup>It is similar to the story of Job. Satan tested Job; yet we do not conclude that Satan is the protagonist of the Job narrative.

<sup>17</sup>Structuralists use an actantial model to clarify the roles among characters in a narrative (Terence J. Keegan, *Interpreting the Bible: A Popular Introduction to Hermeneutics* [New York: Paulist Press, 1985], 59). The number of roles or actants are established to be as three pairs of two: subject and object; sender and receiver; helper and opponent. The subject is the one who acts on the object. The sender is the one who instigates the action, while the receiver is the one who benefits from it. Lastly, a helper assists the subject to accomplish the action, while an opponent hinders the subject from accomplishing the action (Louis Hébert, "The Actantial Model," *Signo* (2001), n.p. [cited 24 May 2017]. Online: <http://www.signosemio.com/greimas/actantial-model.asp>).

From these observations of the characters, we can conclude that the theme of Genesis 22:1–19 is not God’s provision but Abraham’s obedience because Abraham is the protagonist. As Pratt Jr. has written, “This story focuses especially on Abraham...The actions of God, the angel, Isaac, and the lads find their point of reference in him.”<sup>18</sup>

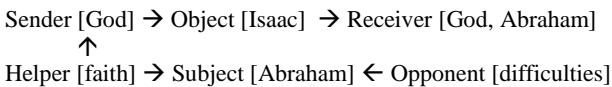
*Narrator: Which Point of View was Taken by the Narrator?*

The second aspect we will examine is the narrator. According to Shimon Bar-Efrat, the best way to approach the narrator is by examining the point of view from which he observes the events.<sup>19</sup> The narrator can tell the narrative as someone outside the story or he can adopt the point of view of one of the characters and see through the character’s eyes. These points of views are also called *focalizations* because they can be compared to the camera of a film shooting a scene.<sup>20</sup>

*External focalization* is when we have an outside observation of events. In this case, the narrator says less than what the character knows just as the eye of the camera in a film does not tell us the thoughts and motives of the characters. *Internal focalization* is when we accompany a character such that we see and hear what the character perceives. In this case, the narrator says only what the character knows similar to a camera filming

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In Genesis 22:1–19, the sender is God for he initiated the sacrifice of Isaac by commanding Abraham to do so (v. 1). The receiver is also God because as a result of the incident, God verified that Abraham fears him (v. 12). “Sender elements are often receiver elements as well,” writes Hébert. However, Abraham is also a receiver for he benefited from the test as he receives blessings from God (vv. 17–18). The subject is Abraham while the object is Isaac because Abraham is told to offer Isaac (v. 2). The helper that assists in accomplishing the action is the faith of Abraham while the opponent is represented by all the difficulties of the task of sacrificing. Below is a visual representation of the actantial model:



From the visual representation above, we can see that the subject is Abraham while the sender is God. Thus, whether we do a narrative analysis of the characters in relation to the plot or a structural analysis using the actantial model, Abraham turns out to be the main character while God is a secondary character.

<sup>18</sup>Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories*, 146.

<sup>19</sup>Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 14.

<sup>20</sup>G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse* (London: Oxford, 1980), 186.

from a character's perspective. There is a third focalization called the *zero focalization* when the narrator "zeroes in" on the characters and reveals their inner thoughts and motivations. This point of view is not exactly internal because the narrator says more than what the characters know. Bar-Efrat refers to this as the omniscient narrator who is familiar with the internal workings of the characters and displays their innermost thoughts to us.<sup>21</sup>

### 1. Zero Focalization (Verse 1a)

The first part of verse 1 writes, "After these things, God tested Abraham." Here, the narrator uses zero focalization. The narrator reveals that the intention of God is to test Abraham. Abraham does not know this but the reader knows because the 'omniscient' narrator has revealed it to the reader.

### 2. External Focalization (Verses 1b to 12)

From the latter part of verse 1 until verse 12, the focalization is external. The narrator presents the story from an external observer's viewpoint, without indicating the feelings of the characters.

After giving the reader God's test (vv. 1–2), the narrator does not reveal how Abraham felt. Is he surprised that a supposedly loving God asks him to sacrifice his son? Is he angry because God wants to take his only son away from him? Or is he sad that he will lose his beloved son? We are not told. The narrator only tells us what Abraham did to prepare for the journey (v. 3).

From an external observer's point of view, we can hear Abraham telling his servants to stay with the donkey while he and his son continue (vv. 4–6). We can also hear the conversation between Abraham and Isaac in verses 7 to 8. But after Abraham answers Isaac that God will provide the lamb (v. 8), we do not hear the thoughts in Isaac's mind. Did Isaac stop wondering about the missing sheep after Abraham's answer? The narrator does not reveal it to us.

The narrator tells us that as Abraham and Isaac reach the place of sacrifice, Abraham builds the altar, arranges the wood, binds Isaac, places him on the wood, and takes the knife (vv. 9–10). The narrator, however,

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<sup>21</sup>Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 17.

does not tell us what Abraham was thinking as he was doing those things. And from verses 11 to 12, when the narrator tells us that the angel of the LORD forbids Abraham from doing any harm to Isaac, we are not told how Abraham felt.

So from verses 1b to 12, the narrator presented the narrative from an external observer’s viewpoint, not saying how the character felt or what the character thought.

### 3. Internal Focalization (Verse 13a)

In the first part of verse 13, we have an internal focalization as the narrator used the word הנהו (“and behold”). Alter cites that the particle הנהו often indicates a shift in perspective from the narrator’s point of view to the perspective of one of the characters.<sup>22</sup> Thus in verse 13a, the point of view shifted from the outside-observer to the perspective of Abraham, who saw the ram caught in the thicket.

### 4. External Focalization (Verses 13b to 19)

After the internal focalization in verse 13a, the narrator returns to external focalization. The narrator does not tell us what is going on in Abraham’s mind as he takes the ram and offers it in place of his son (v. 13b). The narrator also does not inform us how Abraham feels as the LORD blesses him (vv. 14–18). When Abraham returns to his servants (v. 19), the narrator does not disclose to us his emotions.

### 5. Conclusion concerning the Narrator

In Genesis 22:1–19, the narrator mostly uses external focalization except in verse 1a where zero focalization is used and in verse 13a where internal focalization is used.

Why did the narrator use zero focalization in verse 1a? Adele Berlin suggests that the narrator lets the reader know the whole thing is a test so that the reader can accept God’s seemingly unreasonable actions. She writes, “*Without* this knowledge, we would be puzzled and/or incensed; *with* this knowledge we accept God’s actions, knowing that he does not really intend them to be carried out.”<sup>23</sup> Having known that God is just testing Abraham, the reader does not struggle anymore with the character

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<sup>22</sup> Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 54.

<sup>23</sup> Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 54.



of God. Instead, the reader wonders whether Abraham will pass the test or not. Thus, the zero focalization shows that the narrative is about Abraham's obedience.

Why did the narrator use internal focalization in verse 13a? Robert Chisholm Jr. proposes that the narrator uses this construction to heighten the dramatic effect by assuming a character's perspective and thereby inviting the reader to experience as the character did.<sup>24</sup> As Abraham was surprised by the ram, the narrator wants the reader to be surprised, too.

One may try to argue that the internal focalization supports the view that the passage is about God being the provider since Abraham was surprised by the provision of God. Indeed, Abraham may have been surprised by the ram which God provided. Nonetheless, Abraham's surprise means that he obeyed even *without expecting* God's provision. Provision, in this narrative, is secondary to obedience. Abraham obeyed although he does not expect God to provide; hence, the provision came as a surprise.

The focalizations in the text do not support the view that the passage is about God being our provider. Instead, they show that the passage is about Abraham's obedience to God's test.

### *Time: How Was the Story Paced?*

The third fundamental aspect is time. Time is important because narratives tell stories that happened in time; time is also necessary to narrate the story. *Narration time* is the time required to tell the story. It is objective because it advances in a straight line without delays or accelerations. Thus, the speed of narration time is constant. *Narrated time* is the time within the narrative. It is subjective because it expands or contracts depending on circumstances. The speed of narrated time varies frequently because in narratives the author does not weave a continuous fabric of life in its entirety but rather selects the most important points and omits what is trivial.<sup>25</sup> Thus, narrated time is oftentimes faster, sometimes slower, and in conversations is close to narration time. In this paper, we will examine how the speed of narrated time compares with the speed of narration time.

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<sup>24</sup>Robert Chisholm Jr., "A Rhetorical Use of Point of View in Old Testament Narrative," *BSac* 159 (2002): 405.

<sup>25</sup>Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 141–47.

1. Verses 1b to 2 (Close to)

The action begins in verse 1b because verse 1a is what Adele Berlin calls an abstract.<sup>26</sup> Verse 1a says, “After these things, God tested Abraham.” In a nutshell, verse 1a tells us that the story is about God testing Abraham. From 1b to 2, the speed of narrated time is close to that of narration time since the scene is a dialogue between God and Abraham.

2. Verse 3 (Faster)

Between verses 2 and 3 is what Ska defines as an ellipsis wherein the narrative skips over a moment in time.<sup>27</sup> We are not told what happened during the stretch of time when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son until the next day. In verse 3, the movements of Abraham – rising early, saddling the donkey, taking his servants and his son, cutting the wood, and setting out – surely took a longer time than the time to narrate them. Thus, we say that narrated time is faster than narration time.

3. Verses 4 to 8 (Close to)

In verses 4 to 6, the speed of narrated time is close to that of narration time because verse 5 is mainly conversational while the actions depicted in verses 4 and 6 (lifting one’s eyes, taking the wood, placing it on Isaac, taking the fire and the knife) do not take a much longer time than the narration time. Verses 7 to 8 narrate to us the conversation between Abraham and Isaac; hence, the speed of narrated time is close to that of narration time.

4. Verse 9 (Faster)

In verse 9, the speed of narrated time is faster than that of narration time as the actions done by Abraham – building the altar, arranging the wood, binding Isaac, and placing him on the altar – certainly took a longer time than the time to narrate them.

5. Verse 10 (Slower)

When we reach verse 10, the speed of narrated time becomes slower. The description of Abraham stretching out his hand and taking the knife plus the intention ‘to slay his son’ altogether took a longer time to read

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<sup>26</sup>Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 102.

<sup>27</sup>Ska, *Our Fathers*, 13.

than the actual event happening. Hence, the speed of narrated time becomes slower than that of narration time. Bar-Efrat sees this situation as the narrator's device to focus the reader's attention on that action, which is the climax of the narrative.<sup>28</sup>

6. Verses 11 to 13a (Close to)

After the climax in verse 10, the narrated time resumes its pace of being close to narration time. Verses 11 to 12 are conversational. In 13a, the speed of narrated time is close to that of narration time as lifting one's eyes and looking does not take a long time to do so. However, in verse 13 when it depicts that the ram was "caught in the thicket by its horns," this is what Bar-Efrat refers to as a 'stopping of time.'<sup>29</sup>

7. Verse 13b (Faster)

In the latter part of verse 13, the speed of narrated time becomes faster than that of narration time as the narrator tells us that Abraham went over to the ram, took it, and offered it in place of Isaac.

8. Verse 14 (Close to)

In verse 14, the speed of narrated time is close to that of narration time as Abraham names the place. But there is another stopping of time when the narrator explains the etiology of the phrase הארי הוהי רהב ("On the mountain of the Lord, it will be provided").<sup>30</sup>

9. Verses 15 to 18 (Close to)

From verses 15 to 18, the speed of narrated time is close to that of narration time because these verses form part of a conversation.

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<sup>28</sup>Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 150.

<sup>29</sup>Bar Efrat writes, "Depictions cause narrated time to stop, since they describe a situation rather than an event. Although we remain within the world of the plot, because the depictions present a picture of the way people, places, things, etc. look, they hold up the progress of the action; and while we are looking at that picture, time stops within the narrative" (*Narrative Art*, 146).

<sup>30</sup>Bar-Efrat writes, "Every explanation given by the narrator unlike those by one of the characters causes the flow of time to stop...By introducing interpretations and explanations the narrator is placed at a distance from the flow of events, above time, and it is from this point, not from within, that he or she views occurrences" (*Narrative Art*, 146).

10. Verse 19 (A Lot Faster)

In verse 19, as the narrative concludes, we can see that the speed of narrated time becomes a lot faster. The return to the servants and the travel to Beersheba will take at least three days (v. 4) but was only mentioned in a few words. This shows that the tension is already gone.

11. Conclusion concerning the Time

Comparison of Narrated Time to Narration Time									
1c-2	3	4-8	9	10	11-13a	13b	14	15-18	19
Close to	Faster	Close to	Faster	<i>Slower</i>	Close to	Faster	Close to	Close to	A lot faster

Above is a summary of the speed of narrated time in comparison to that of narration time. The narrative begins with the speed of narrated time close to the speed of narration time (vv. 1b-2). Then as the narrative progresses, the speed of narrated time either becomes faster (vv. 3, 9) or stays close to that of narration time (vv. 4-8). As the narrative reaches verse 10, the speed of narrated time becomes slower, signaling the climax of the story. After the climax, the speed of narrated time goes back to being close to (vv. 1-13a, 14-18) or faster (v. 13b). The narrative concludes with the speed of narrated time a lot faster (v. 19) than that of narration time.

Looking at the speed of narrated time, the climax of the story is in verse 10 when Abraham was about to kill his son as a sign of obedience to God. Hence, an analysis of the speed of narrated time shows that the narrative is about Abraham’s obedience.

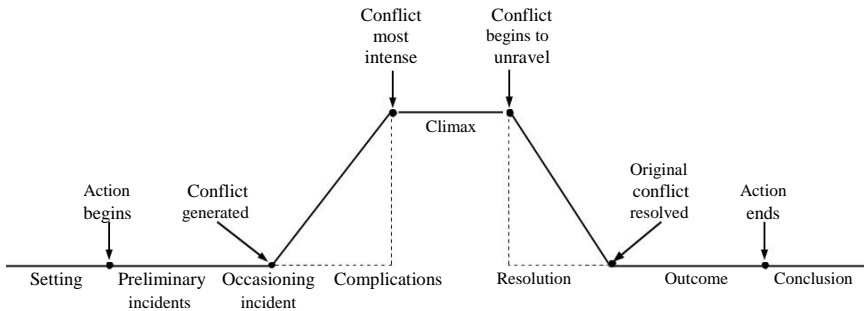
*Plot: What is the Plot of the Story?*

The fourth aspect of a narrative is its plot. The plot can be defined as an orderly system of events, arranged in temporal sequence. Whereas in real life several incidents can occur arbitrarily, the plot of a narrative is constructed as a meaningful chain of events where any incident not fitting the plot is omitted.<sup>31</sup>

As such, the incidents in the narrative can be diagrammed into a plot line that answers the question, “What is the conflict in the story and how is it resolved?” The plot line of a narrative can have some form of the

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<sup>31</sup>Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 93.

following components: a setting, preliminary incidents, an occasioning incident that generates the conflict, rising tension until it reaches a climax, the turn in the narrative to the beginning of a resolution, the full resolution, an outcome, and a conclusion. Tremper Longman III provides a good diagram of the plot line of a narrative.<sup>32</sup>



Knowing that the climax of the story is in verse 10, we can diagram the plot line as:

Setting	Preliminary incidents	Occasioning incident	Complications	Resolution	Outcome	Conclusion
(v. 1a)	(v. 1b)	(v. 2)	(vv. 3-9)	(vv. 11-14)	(vv. 15-18)	(v. 19)

### 1. Setting (v. 1a)

The setting of the story is found in verse 1a, where it reads, “After these things, God tested Abraham.” The place is not mentioned in the text. Nevertheless, from Genesis 21:34, we can deduce that Abraham was probably in Philistine land. Neither is the time clear because the text only says, “After these things.” How much time has passed? The answer is not given. This is an example of what Yairah Amit calls “vague references to time.”<sup>33</sup>

### 2. Preliminary Incidents (v. 1b)

The preliminary incident is found in the latter part of verse 1. The action in the narrative began when God calls Abraham. The preliminary

<sup>32</sup>Longman, *Literary Approaches*, 92.

<sup>33</sup>Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 107.

incidents are very short because God immediately tells Abraham his purpose for calling him. This purpose turns out to be the occasioning incident.

### 3. Occasioning Incident (v. 2)

The occasioning incident is found in verse 2, when God tells Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. God’s command can be divided into three parts indicated by the three imperatives: (1) take Isaac, (2) go to Moriah, and (3) offer him. As soon as God tells Abraham these things, the conflict is generated. There is no conflict between the characters. There is, however, what Robert Chisholm, Jr. calls an internal conflict.<sup>34</sup> Abraham fears God (v. 12) so he wants to obey, which implies he has to kill his son. But Abraham also loves his son (vv. 2, 12) and does not want to kill him.

### 4. Complications (vv. 3–9)

In verses 3 to 9, the narrative slowly brings the reader to the climax as the possibility of Abraham fulfilling God’s command becomes more probable. In verse 3, though Abraham has taken his son, he is still far from the place of sacrifice. But in verse 4, Abraham can already see the place from afar so the tension rises. Then in verse 9, Abraham and Isaac arrive at the place of sacrifice, i.e., Abraham has fulfilled the second part. The tension rises again as Abraham tries to fulfill the third part by building the altar, arranging the wood, binding Isaac, and placing him on the altar. At the end of verse 9, the likelihood of Abraham fulfilling all parts of God’s command is very high and the tension spikes.

### 5. Climax (v. 10)

The tension reaches its pinnacle in verse 10, the climax of the narrative. As Abraham reaches out his hand and takes the knife to kill his son, the probability of Abraham NOT fulfilling God’s command amounts almost to zero.

### 6. Resolution (vv. 11–14)

At the height of the tension, the turning point comes when the angel of the LORD calls Abraham and tells him to stop (vv. 11–12). From here, the tension declines rapidly as the narrative comes to a full resolution.

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<sup>34</sup>Chisholm, *Interpreting the Historical Books*, 33.

Abraham sees the ram, sacrifices it instead of his son, and names the place (vv. 13–14). At the end of verse 14, the original conflict is resolved.

#### 7. Outcome (vv. 15–18)

As a result of Abraham's determination to not let his son hinder him from obeying God (v. 16), God blesses him (vv. 17–18).

#### 8. Conclusion (v. 19)

The narrative ends with Abraham returning to his servants, and all of them going to Beersheba and residing there. Richard Pratt Jr. sees this as a circular pattern where the ending of the story returns to a situation akin to the beginning. He writes, "We sense that the story has ended largely because we have returned to a situation similar to the beginning."<sup>35</sup>

#### 9. Conclusion concerning the Plot

As we look at the plot of Genesis 22:1–19, the theme seems to be Abraham's obedience, not God's provision. In the setting, the narrator tells us that God is testing *Abraham's obedience*. In the occasioning incident, the conflict generated is internal: whether Abraham out of fear of God *will obey* him or out of love for his son will disobey God. There is no indication that the conflict is about whether God will provide or not.

As the narrative progresses in the complications, the tension rises as hindrances to *Abraham's obedience* are removed one by one. At the climax, Abraham reaches out his hand to get the knife as an act of *obedience* to God. At the resolution, the angel tells Abraham to stop because the angel has confirmed that *Abraham fears God*. The outcome of the narrative also points to Abraham's *obedience*: God blesses Abraham because *Abraham obeyed* God. The blessing results from Abraham's obedience, not from God's provision.

The narrative concludes with Abraham, not with God. After having been proven *obedient*, Abraham returns to a similar situation as he was in the beginning of the narrative. God is not even mentioned in the conclusion. Hence, from the setting to the conclusion, we can see that the plot revolves around Abraham's obedience to God's command, how he overcomes the hindrances and the blessings he receives after passing the test of God.

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<sup>35</sup>Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories*, 185.

*Style: How are Repetitions Used in the Story?*

The last aspect we will look into is style, specifically repetitions. In writing English prose, we avoid using the same words or phrases repeatedly. We constantly seek for synonyms as we write. In ancient Hebrew prose, however, repetition is part of the rhetoric of writing. The repetition of a word or phrase can function to structure the story, construct a theme, or emphasize a certain point.<sup>36</sup> According to Shimon Bar-Efrat, “The repetition of words is a stylistic feature often found in biblical narrative.”<sup>37</sup>

1. Repeated Words

The narrative in Genesis 22:1–19 has some words that are repeated meaningfully:

יָנָה (“*Here I am*”) – 3x: vv. 1, 7, and 11.

All three occurrences of the word are spoken by Abraham as a response to a call. Each time, Abraham is called by a different person: God, Isaac, and the angel.

The first time the word occurred is in the beginning of the narrative when God called and Abraham replied, “יָנָה.” Abraham’s answer shows his availability to listen to what God will tell him. The second time the word occurred is when Isaac called his father to ask about the missing lamb and Abraham answered, “יָנָה.” Abraham’s answer shows his availability to listen to his son. Tod Linafelt felt a tension between Abraham’s availability to God and to Isaac. He writes that Abraham “responds ‘Here I am’ to both God and Isaac, and yet he cannot be fully ‘there,’ fully present to both.”<sup>38</sup>

This tension is resolved only at the third occurrence of the word when the angel called and Abraham responded, “יָנָה.” When the angel told Abraham the good news that he does not need to kill his son, Abraham is no longer caught between the two opposing demands on his loyalty. Thus, the word יָנָה acquires a new tone with each repetition.

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<sup>36</sup>Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, 148.

<sup>37</sup>Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 211.

<sup>38</sup>Tod Linafelt, “Prolegomena to Meaning, Or, What is ‘Literary’ about the Torah?” *TS* 69 (2008): 76.



ידיחי (“*your only one*”) – 3x: vv. 2, 12, and 16.

The word ידיחי is mentioned 3 times, each time showing the gravity of the test for Abraham. The first time the word occurred is when God told Abraham to offer his son as a sacrifice. In verse 2, God reminds Abraham that Isaac is “ידיחי”; thus, offering him would mean not having any heir from Sarah anymore. The second time the word occurred is when the angel said that Abraham feared God because he did not withhold “ידיחי.” This shows the severity of the test such that obeying God in this test meant fearing him. The last occurrence is when God blessed Abraham on account of not withholding “ידיחי.” Again, this points to the seriousness of the test such that passing the test results in much blessing.

## 2. Repeated Phrases

The narrative does not only repeat words but phrases as well:

רשא מיהלאה ול רמא רשא (“*that God said to him*”) – 2x: vv. 3 and 9.

This phrase tells us that Abraham is obedient to God. In verse 2, God tells Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that he will tell him. In the following verse, Abraham sets out for the place “מיהלאה ול רמא רשא.” This shows Abraham’s submission to God as he did what God said to him. In verse 9, we can see that Abraham arrives at the place “מיהלאה ול רמא רשא.” Here we see again Abraham deliberately obeying God, and accomplishing the task God has assigned him to do.

אריו ויניע תא מהרבא אשיו (“*and Abraham lifted his eyes and saw*”) – 2x: vv. 4, 13.

In verses 4 and 13, the narrator tells us that “אריו ויניע תא מהרבא אשיו.” Ska sees the lifting of Abraham’s eyes as underlining the special relationship between the character (Abraham) and the objects seen (the mountain and the ram), and occurring at decisive moments of the plot.<sup>39</sup> In the first lifting of his eyes (v. 4), Abraham sees the place of sacrifice (mountain). At that moment, he has to make the decision of continuing or not. Verse 5 tells us that he chooses to continue. In the second lifting of the eyes (v.13a), Abraham sees the substituted victim (ram) that will enable him to continue making the burnt offering, though with a different object for sacrifice.

<sup>39</sup>Ska, *Our Fathers*, 72.

ודחי מהינש וכליו (“*and the two of them walked together*”) – 2x: vv. 6 and 8.

This phrase recurring after the interposition of other words is what Shimon Bar-Efrat calls a *resumption*, which serves to create continuity with the principal thought.<sup>40</sup> After this phrase is mentioned in verse 6, Isaac asks the question about the lamb. Abraham’s answer, if bereft of wisdom, can bring about a breakdown of the relationship between the two. But after Abraham gives the answer, the narrator tells us in verse 8 that “ודחי מהינש וכליו.” This means that Isaac’s question about the lamb did not disrupt the close relationship between the two.

### 3. Word Appearing Twice Successively

There is also a word that appeared twice consecutively. The word is: מהרבא מהרבא (“*Abraham, Abraham*”) – verse 11.

In verse 11, we read of the angel of the LORD calling Abraham’s name twice. According to Shimon Bar-Efrat, the same word appearing twice successively generally expresses a strong emotion.<sup>41</sup> In verse 11, the angel has to be emphatic in calling Abraham because prior to verse 11, Abraham is about to kill his son. If the angel had been less forceful, Abraham might not have heard the angel calling, and thereby might have killed Isaac.

### 4. Conclusion concerning the Style

From the repeated words and phrases, we can see that the repeated words point to the main character Abraham who said, “Here I am” (יננה), “lifted his eyes” (ויניע תא מהרבא אשיו), and “walked together with his son” (ודחי מהינש וכליו). Despite the severity (ךדיחה) of the test, Abraham obeyed God and went to the place that God told him about (מיהלאה ול רמא רשא) in order to sacrifice Isaac. Therefore, Abraham had to be called emphatically (מהרבא מהרבא) in order to be stopped from committing the terrible deed.

## Conclusion/Implication

After analyzing Genesis 22:1–19 using the five fundamental aspects of a narrative, we have seen that all five aspects point to Abraham as the main character of the narrative and his obedience to the test as the main theme

<sup>40</sup> Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 215–16.

<sup>41</sup> Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 216.

of the narrative. Concerning the characters, we have established that the protagonist is Abraham. The narrative began with Abraham when God told him *the test*, continued with him as he tried to fulfill *the test*, and ended with him dwelling in Beersheba after passing *the test*. God is an important character because he is the instigator of the test; but he is left out in the conclusion because he is not the main character.

In analyzing the point of view of the narrator, we have observed that the narrator used zero focalization in verse 1a, which revealed to us that the intention of God was *to test* Abraham. In studying the pacing of time, we have seen that speed of narrated time is slower than that of narration time in verse 10 when Abraham was about to kill Isaac. This device of slowing down the narrated time focuses on the action of Abraham attempting to complete the final step of *the test* and signals the climax of the narrative.

From the study of the plot, we have seen that the occasioning incident is when God gave Abraham the three steps of *the test*. In the complications section, the tension rises as Abraham tries to carry out each step of *the test*. The climax came when Abraham was about to execute the last step of *the test*. When the angel of the LORD realized that Abraham was determined to fulfill *the test*, he stopped Abraham from killing his son; thus, bringing the narrative to a resolution. Abraham does not need to offer his son anymore because he has passed *the test*. This passing of *the test* resulted in Abraham's abundant blessings. The narrative concludes with Abraham returning to a situation similar to what he had before *the test*.

And from looking at the repetitions in the narrative, we have affirmed Abraham's main role as repeated words and phrases in the narrative point to him. In summary, based on the analysis of the five aspects of the narrative, the main theme of Genesis 22:1–19 is the testing of Abraham rather than the provision of God.

So if the main theme of Genesis 22:1–19 is Abraham's obedience and not God's provision, how does this theme apply to the Philippine context? The Philippines, being a developing country, still has many people in its population below the poverty line. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, the poverty incidence among Filipinos in 2015 is 21.6%.<sup>42</sup> This

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<sup>42</sup>Philippine Statistics Authority, "Poverty incidence among Filipinos registered at 21.6% in 2015," accessed 18 May 2017, <https://psa.gov.ph/poverty-press-releases>.

means that at least 1 out of every 5 Filipinos lives below the poverty threshold.

Because of the large number of poor people in the Philippines, a prosperity gospel that promotes God’s provision for one’s needs appeals to the masses. Religious groups like the El Shaddai, which declares that God will bless the person who lifts up his wallet, have drawn large crowds of followers. Due to this situation, making God’s provision as the main theme of Genesis 22:1–19 is very enticing.

However, using the methodology demonstrated in this paper, we have established that the main theme of the passage is not God’s provision but Abraham’s obedience. Hence, there is a call for pastors and scholars to be judicious in interpreting and teaching this passage to Filipinos. Emphasizing only the provision of God may lead the Filipinos to believe in a prosperity theology deprived of obedience to God.

The provision of God is to be taught in the context of obedience to God. For example, many proverbs in Scripture teach us about the value of diligence in attaining wealth (e.g., Prov 10:4; 12:24; 12:27; 13:4; 21:5). Thus, teaching about wealth attainment has to be taught in the context of obedience to God’s instruction to be diligent, not just in the context of raising up one’s wallet to the sky. The LORD provided for Abraham as Abraham obeyed God. The LORD blessed Abraham as Abraham obeyed God. Accordingly, God will also provide for us and bless us in the context of our obedience to him.



## THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE EGYPTIAN GODS TO THE PLAGUES UPON EGYPT

許書義 PHILIP SU GI TY CO



The Exodus is one of the great events, if not the greatest, in the history of the nation of Israel. The institution of the Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread as lasting ordinances (Exod 12:14, 17) serves as a reminder to the nation of the Lord' s deliverance from the bondage of Egypt.<sup>1</sup> Part of the events that led to the deliverance are the plagues that Yahweh sent upon Egypt. This paper will briefly discuss the perspectives taken by different interpreters on the plagues and the purposes of the plagues. The rest of the paper will dwell on one of the purposes—to disgrace the deities of Egypt. This paper will attempt to identify the possible Egyptian deities in relation to the plagues.

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<sup>1</sup> The events surrounding the Exodus become the milestone in the nation's history wherein Yahweh and his servants would refer to time and again to emphasize the deliverance of Yahweh in the past as a motivation to trust and obey him. Unfortunately, Israel failed in many instances. Yahweh, in fact, identified himself as the "LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt" (Exod 20:2; 29:46; Lev 11:45; 19:36; 22:33; 23:43; 25:38, 42, 55; 26:13, 45; Num 15:41; Deut 5:6; 1 Sam 10:18; Ps 81:10; Amos 2:10; 3:1; Mic 6:4).

## Perspectives on the Plagues

John Davies in his fine commentary on Exodus said that “there are really only three possible ways of approaching the phenomenon of the ten plagues.”<sup>2</sup> One can dismiss the plagues as being a purely fanciful myth or literary creations. A second viewpoint is that these were merely natural occurrences that were given theological interpretations by the author of Exodus. The third approach to the plagues is that these were separate miracles. A variation of the second viewpoint is to see the plagues as a combination of natural phenomena with supernatural intensification.

### *Myth or Literary Creation*

The viewpoint that the plagues narrative is a myth or a literary creation shows no concern for the historicity of the biblical text. Eduard Meyer may be the first to espouse the view that the plagues narrative was the free creation of the author of Exodus.<sup>3</sup> J. Coert Rylaarsdam and J. Edgar Park built upon his work and claimed that the plagues narrative was artificially assembled by different authors—in this instance, J, E, and P—because no tradition contained all ten plagues. For them, the “significance and value of this total complex is symbolic rather than historical.”<sup>4</sup> This view was taken to an extreme end by John van Seters:

the plagues narrative is a literary creation by the Yahwist that made use of the varied traditions of Hebrew prophecy, both the legends and the classical prophets, as well as the common Near Eastern and biblical curse tradition. There is no primary and secondary material, no ancient oral tradition behind the text. The plagues narrative did not exist as a specific tradition before the Yahwist’s work and is, therefore, no older than the exilic period.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> John J. Davies, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in the Book of Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), 84–85.

<sup>3</sup> Eduard Meyer, *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme: alttestamentliche Untersuchungen* (Halle a.S.: Max Niemeyer, 1906; Evanston, IL: American Theological Library Association, 1989), microfiche, 31.

<sup>4</sup> See the short discussion in J. Coert Rylaarsdam and J. Edgar Park, “The Book of Exodus,” in *The Interpreter’s Bible* (ed. George Arthur Buttrick, et al.; vol. 1; New York: Abingdon, 1952), 838–39.

<sup>5</sup> John Van Seters, “The Plagues of Egypt: Ancient Tradition or Literary Invention?,” *ZAW* 98 (1986): 38.

Currid comments that “such a position is difficult, if not impossible, to sustain in light of the overall historical credibility of the Exodus record... To give credence to such a radical, out-of-hand reconstruction... of history would be harmful and dangerous.”<sup>6</sup>

### *Natural Phenomena*

Some view that the plagues were merely natural phenomena of Egypt and there was nothing supernatural about their appearance or disappearance. Stieglitz, in a short article, tried to prove through textual evidence that similar plagues occurred frequently in the ancient Near East.<sup>7</sup> W. M. Flinders Petrie popularized this view when he presented the plagues as the consequences of seasonal changes that followed the cycle of the inundation of the Nile River.

The river turned to blood, with the fish dying, was the unwholesome stagnant Nile just at the lowest before the inundation, when it is red and swarming with organisms. The Egyptians have to resort to wells and cisterns at this time in the earlier part of June. The frogs abound after the inundation has come in July. The plagues of insects, murrain, and boils, belong to the hot summer and damp unwholesome autumn. The hail and rain came in January... The locusts come in spring, over the green crops about February. The sand storms bring a thick darkness that may be felt, in March, at the break of the hot winds. And the last plague, the death of the firstborn, was at the Exodus in April. An appeal based upon the troubles of these events, would be naturally denied on the ground that such plagues were to be expected at those seasons.<sup>8</sup>

Greta Hort may have followed his study when she published a scholarly and detailed attempt to present the plagues as natural disasters.<sup>9</sup> According to her, the first six plagues can be explained in their sequential order in terms of Egypt's ecosystem. The first plague was the result of a

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<sup>6</sup> John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 108.

<sup>7</sup> Robert R. Stieglitz, “Ancient Records and the Exodus Plagues,” *BAR* 13 (1987): 46–49.

<sup>8</sup> W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Egypt and Israel*, new ed. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1910; reprint, New York: MacMillan Co., 1931), 35–36.

<sup>9</sup> See Greta Hort, “The Plagues of Egypt [2 Parts],” *ZAW* 69 (1957): 84–103, 70 (1958): 48–59.



high inundation of the Nile that made the river red with sediment. Concurrent excessive precipitation brought flagellates and their bacteria from the high mountain lakes which resulted in the death of the fish, the stench of the water, and its being undrinkable (Exod 7:21). The vast amount of dead fish would have been caught in the reeds or deposited along the banks of the Nile. This caused the pollution of the water forcing the frogs to leave their normal biotope and seek refuge on dry land. Since the frogs would have come into contact with the decomposing bodies of the fish, they were liable to contract diseases which they carried with them onto the dry land. Soon the frogs died and thereafter the gnats or mosquitoes and flies multiplied and fed off their dead bodies. The insects in turn carried disease to the land animals and eventually to humans which account for the death of the livestock and the boils.

A second sequence of plagues is related to atmospheric and climatic conditions in Egypt. Hail and thunderstorm, though not frequent, do occur there from time to time. Then came the locusts as they were carried down the Nile valley by a strong north wind. The ninth plague, darkness, was a Libyan dust storm *khamisin*. The final plague, the death of the firstborn, was taken by Hort as the destruction of the firstfruits and not the slaying of the firstborn. Some suggest that this plague may be a reflection of the high infant-mortality rate in ancient Egypt.<sup>10</sup>

Terence E. Fretheim took a step further from seeing the plagues as simply natural occurrences when he suggests that

there is sufficient continuity with the natural to show that it is in fact creation that is adversely affected...these continuities really serve this purpose: to show that the elements of the natural order are *not* what they were created to be and do...It is a picture of creation gone berserk. The world is reverting to a state of chaos.<sup>11</sup>

A variation of this position is to take the plagues as natural occurrences utilized by Yahweh in an intensified manner. However, most interpreters argue that the commonplace occurrence of phenomena akin to the plagues of Egypt actually explains away the miraculous.

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<sup>10</sup>This is mentioned in Ziony Zevit, "Three Ways to Look at the Ten Plagues," *BibRev* 6 (June 1990): 20.

<sup>11</sup>Terence E. Fretheim, "The Plagues as Ecological Signs of Historical Disaster," *JBL* 110 (1991): 394.

This position has obvious weaknesses. The ecological explanation breaks down after the sixth plague. In addition, there is no real link between the plagues in the second series of sequence (7th to 10th plagues) as Hort envisioned them. Currid also noted that nowhere in the plagues is there a hint of one plague's having been the source of another plague. Only by mere speculation can one argue that the frogs were infected with disease and the disease was passed by the gnats and flies to livestock and man.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the tenth plague could not be taken as a destruction of the firstfruits as Hort suggested because the biblical text clearly indicates: "Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well" (Exod 11:5).<sup>13</sup> The firstfruits of Pharaoh could not have sat on the throne! The consequence of the destruction if this were the firstfruits could not have brought such devastating cry in Egypt: "Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead" (12:30). Moreover, the plague struck all firstborn males of whatever age, not just the newborn babies of the Egyptians, thereby rendering the view that it was a reflection of the infant-mortality rate improbable.

To explain the plagues as natural phenomena could not have accounted for the reactions of Pharaoh and the Egyptians at various stages of the plagues. The fact that the Egyptian magicians did the same things as Aaron did in the first two plagues by their secret arts but were unable to do so in the rest of the plagues betrays a natural occurrence explanation. The magicians acknowledged to Pharaoh: "This is the finger of God" (8:19). Robert Thomson says that "ordinary circumstances could affect and terrify Pharaoh, in the manner in which the plagues did, is simply incredible."<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Moses and Aaron needed not to confront Pharaoh about the demand from Yahweh accompanied by warnings for disobedience.

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<sup>12</sup>Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 106.

<sup>13</sup>All scriptural quotations are from the NIV unless otherwise noted.

<sup>14</sup>Robert Thomson, *The Plagues of Egypt and Their Relation to the Natural Phenomena of the Land* (London: Alexander Gardner, 1897), 10. The various reactions of Pharaoh are recorded in Exod 8:8, 25, 28; 9:27–28; 10:16–17, 24; 11:30–32.

*Separate Miracles*

The view that the plagues were natural occurrences has to see the commencement of the plagues simultaneous to the inundation of the Nile which occurs every year from June to October. Thomson, in a detailed discussion on the determination of the period of the year and the length of the time the plagues may have occurred and occupied, concluded that “the whole period covered by the plagues would not exceed two months, which commenced in the middle of February and closed with the middle (the 14th day) of April.”<sup>15</sup> This shows that the natural and supernatural did not unite in order to produce the plagues even though they may previously occur in Egypt.

Moreover, Joseph Free observed that the plagues were miraculous in at least five different ways: <sup>16</sup> (1) *Intensification* – while the inundation of the Nile, frogs, gnats, flies, death of livestock, hail, locusts, and darkness were all known in Egypt, these were intensified far beyond the ordinary occurrence (Exod 7:19, 21; 8:6, 17, 21, 24; 9:3, 24; 10:14, 23); (2) *Prediction* – the time was set for the arrival of the flies (8:23), the death of the livestock (9:5), the hail (9:18), and the locusts (10:4) and the removal of the frogs (8:10) and the hail (9:29) which sets them apart from purely natural occurrences; (3) *Discrimination* – certain plagues did not occur in the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived (8:22; 9:4, 26; 10:23; 11:7). It was likely that the Israelites were not affected by the sixth and eighth plagues; (4) *Orderliness* – the severity of the plagues seemed to increase until they ended with the death of the firstborn son; <sup>17</sup> and (5) *Moral Purpose* – the plagues were no freaks of nature but were acts of Yahweh designed to carry out moral lessons or divine purposes.

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<sup>15</sup>For the detailed discussion, see Thomson, *The Plagues*, 13–35. In summary, Thomson argues that the edict of Pharaoh (Exod 5:6–9) could not have been issued till after the water of the Nile subsided. The fact that the people were scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble (Exod 5:12), the root stump left after reaping barley by the sickle, suggests that the order must be given after the early barley harvest at the beginning of February.

<sup>16</sup>Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History*, ed. Howard F. Vos (rev. and expanded ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 84.

<sup>17</sup>Larry D. Fehl suggests the division of the plagues into three triads with the last plague standing alone in greatest severity (“The Plagues of Egypt” [Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1961], 31).

### *Purposes of the Plagues*

There were six purposes of Yahweh in using the plagues upon Egypt: (1) to deliver Israel from bondage; (2) to disclose his uniqueness; (3) to demonstrate his power; (4) to denounce Pharaoh; (5) to discredit the magicians of Egypt; and (6) to disgrace the gods of Egypt.

#### 1. To Deliver Israel from Bondage

The first and foremost purpose of the plagues was the deliverance of Israel from the bondage in Egypt. When Yahweh appeared to Moses in the burning bush, he revealed to him the plan “to rescue them (the Israelites) from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land” (Exod 3:8a, cf. 3:10, 16–17). How would he accomplish the deliverance? This was disclosed even before Moses went to see Pharaoh. “So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go” (3:20; cf. 6:1, 6–8; 7:3–5).

#### 2. To Disclose the Uniqueness of Yahweh

Aside from the purpose of delivering the Israelites out of Egypt, the plagues were also the answer to Pharaoh’s question: “Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go” (Exod 5:2). With the question and the decision, Pharaoh defied Yahweh’s command and the plagues that culminated in the death of the firstborn of Egypt was put in motion. Seymour observed that the announcement of each plague that begins the triads included the purpose for the plague (7:17; 8:22; 9:14).<sup>18</sup> These purposes showed some aspect of Yahweh’s character.

The first plague may have been designed to disclose that Yahweh was the real God and was worthy of consideration: “By this you will know that I am the LORD” (7:17a). The fourth plague may have been designed to show that Yahweh was a force in Egypt: “so that you will know that I, the LORD, am in this land” (8:22b). Finally, the seventh plague may have been designed to portray the incomparability of Yahweh in all the earth: “so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth” (9:14b). The

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<sup>18</sup>David Bruce Seymour, “A Study of the Significance of the Tenth Plague” (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984), 9.

removal of the second and seventh plagues were also accompanied by purposes: “so that you may know there is no one like the LORD our God” and “so you may know that the earth is the LORD’s” (8:10b; 9:29b). This shows a progression from Yahweh being God, to Yahweh being the sovereign God in the land of Egypt, to Yahweh being the incomparable God over all the earth. Yahweh is incomparable in power and is known in his solidarity with the needy and the marginalized people of Israel.<sup>19</sup>

The disclosure of Yahweh was not reserved to Pharaoh only but also to the Israelites for generations to come: “that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am the LORD” (10:2; cf. 6:7). Yahweh was revealing himself to both the pagan world and to his chosen people through the plagues so that they may know him and submit to his authority.

### 3. To Demonstrate the Power of Yahweh

The plagues certainly were a great demonstration of the power of Yahweh. The purpose was clearly stated in Exodus 9:15–16, “For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” Such a demonstration resulted in greater glory to Yahweh as other nations heard of what he did to the powerful nation of Egypt (cf. Josh 2:10; 9:9). It was also “to encourage Israel to trust in Yahweh...and to arouse a deaf Pharaoh to hear and obey the word of God.”<sup>20</sup> A God of such awesome power is surely able, not only to deliver his people, but also to care for them.

### 4. To Denounce Pharaoh

The plagues began a drama between Yahweh and Pharaoh, a struggle for power, control, and sovereignty. The refusal of Pharaoh to let God’s firstborn son, Israel, go to worship Yahweh was Pharaoh’s way of saying

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<sup>19</sup> Walter Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (ed. Leander E. Keck et al.; vol. 1; Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 759.

<sup>20</sup> Wm. J. McRae, “The Finger of God: An Exposition of Exodus 7–10,” *Emmaus Journal* 4 (winter 1995): 165.

he was in charge (Exod 4:23; 5:2). However, Yahweh was going to show the impotency of Pharaoh as he brought judgment upon him (4:23; 7:4; 11:1). As the plagues progressed, we see Pharaoh growing weaker and weaker. His power was in jeopardy and he was fast losing his grip on his power.<sup>21</sup> As will be discussed later, Pharaoh was considered one of the gods by the Egyptians. He was the sole ruler over the people. It was his duty to maintain *ma'at*, “justice, order, and goodness.” When he failed to maintain order, his impotency as god and ruler was demonstrated. He was subject to the same frustrations, anxieties, pain, and sufferings of any man. He was forced to call upon Moses and Aaron for relief from his great distress. What a humiliation!<sup>22</sup>

Fretheim believed that “the theological grounding for the plagues is an understanding of the moral order, created by God for the sake of justice and well-being in the world.”<sup>23</sup> Thus when the plagues were sent upon Egypt, it was Pharaoh who became the object of Yahweh’s judgment because his moral order was bankrupt. “Pharaoh has been subverting God’s creational work, so the consequences are oppressive, pervasive, public, prolonged, depersonalizing, heart-rending, and cosmic because such has been the effect on Egypt’s sins upon Israel.”<sup>24</sup>

##### 5. To Discredit the Magicians of Egypt

That the plagues have anything to do with the magicians of Egypt should not be overlooked. Davies noted that “wise men, sorcerers, magicians and priests comprised an important professional class in Egypt and were very much a part of Egyptian bureaucracy.”<sup>25</sup> It was the reason why Pharaoh, faced with the miraculous power of Moses and Aaron, summoned the magicians to discredit Moses and Aaron and to demonstrate the power of the gods of Egypt (7:11). Moses included the role of the magicians in the plagues narrative to discredit their limited power in the face of Yahweh’s power. Their staffs also became serpents. They were able to counterfeit the work of Yahweh in the first two plagues. However, Aaron’s staff swallowed their staffs (7:12). They were unable to produce

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<sup>21</sup> Brueggemann, “Exodus,” 738.

<sup>22</sup> McRae, “Finger of God,” 165.

<sup>23</sup> Fretheim, “Plagues,” 394.

<sup>24</sup> Fretheim, “Plagues,” 395.

<sup>25</sup> Davies, *Moses*, 88–89.

gnats and were forced to acknowledge the power of Yahweh (8:18–19). They could not stand the boils (9:11). Finally, even Pharaoh’s officials urged Pharaoh to let the people go because Egypt lay in ruins and clearly none of the magicians could function in such a way as to turn the tide of calamity (10:7). The inability of the magicians to reproduce most of the plagues pointed to the lack of power of the Egyptian gods whom they represented.<sup>26</sup> This leads us to the next purpose.

#### 6. To Disgrace the Deities of Egypt

The Egyptians believed that behind the power of Pharaoh and the magicians were the gods of Egypt. Therefore, when Yahweh judged pharaoh and Egypt, he was also bringing judgment and disgrace upon the Egyptian gods. The plagues were not so much the hostility between Moses and Pharaoh, or between Moses and the Egyptian magicians, or between Israel and Egypt. They were the hostilities between Yahweh and the gods of Egypt, “For the biblical writer the episode was a matter of theology. It was a question of who was the one true God, who was sovereign over the operation of the universe, and whose will was to come to pass in heaven and on earth.”<sup>27</sup> There should be no question that Moses and the Israelites understood the plagues in this manner.<sup>28</sup> Yahweh declared in Exodus 12:12, “On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD.” The Book of Numbers reports that when the Israelites left Egypt, the Egyptians “were burying all their

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<sup>26</sup>Nahum M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 80.

<sup>27</sup>Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 86.

<sup>28</sup>Victor P. Hamilton cautions the readers that “the biblical text gives no indication that the plagues are to be associated with Egyptian religion and deities. The similarities may, therefore, be only coincidental” (*Handbook on the Pentateuch* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982], 166). John H. Sailhamer also says there is no “indication that the author assumes his readers are familiar with the theology of Egyptian religion... Thus this series of plagues need not intend any more than the general but all-important point that...God...is superior to the powers of the nations” (*The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992], 253). However, both the Israelites and the Egyptians during the time of the plagues must have understood the implications of the plagues. Certainly, the Egyptians could relate the plagues to their gods.

firstborn, whom the LORD had struck down among them; for the LORD had brought judgment on their gods” (33:4).

The plagues no doubt revealed the impotence of the Egyptian gods to protect their worshipers. Jacob made this insightful comment: “As the struggle between God and Pharaoh actually concerned the superiority of the true God over the Egyptian deities, all mention of them must have been intentionally deferred to this moment. They possessed no reality and so the *Torah* could not have condescended to recognize them, but here at the final blow their powerlessness should be clearly demonstrated. ”<sup>29</sup> Seymour suggested that they could have caused widespread chaos in the Egyptian religious *cultus* as purification became impossible for sacrifice to be made.<sup>30</sup>

### The Egyptian Gods and the Plagues

The question arises whether Exodus 12:12 ought to be interpreted to mean that each of the ten plagues attacked a specific god of the Egyptian pantheon<sup>31</sup> or the attack was made on the final blow.<sup>32</sup> Certainly the comments of Hamilton and Sailhamer are valid.<sup>33</sup> However, this writer is convinced that the polemical attack upon the Egyptian gods, if not understood by the readers, was clearly understood by the Egyptians who were willing to attribute the plagues to God. This paper will follow most interpreters who see a clear relationship between the Egyptian gods and some of the plagues while other plagues seem unaccounted for (the third, fourth, sixth, and eighth).<sup>34</sup> The difficulty of a unified list among these interpreters is a reflection of the difficulty in analyzing the Egyptian

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<sup>29</sup>Benno Jacob, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus* (trans. Walter Jacob and Yaakov Elman; Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1992), 312.

<sup>30</sup>See his discussion in Seymour, “Tenth Plague,” 10–11.

<sup>31</sup>Those who advocated this view include Davies, *Moses*, 86–141; McRae, “Finger of God,” 164; John D. Hannah, “Exodus,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament* (ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck; Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 120.

<sup>32</sup>This seems to be the position of John I. Durham (*Exodus* [WBC 3; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987], 154).

<sup>33</sup>Refer to note 28.

<sup>34</sup>Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 113; Zevit, “Ten Plagues,” 21; Hamilton, *Pentateuch*, 165–66; and George A. F. Knight, *Theology as Narration: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 58–85.



religion. The Egyptians were just about the most polytheistic people known from the ancient world. The confusing situation in describing their gods is a product of “syncretism in which one god may assume the name and attributes of two or three gods.”<sup>35</sup> The following is an attempt to identify and describe the gods possibly related to each of the plagues realizing that the references to the Egyptian gods need not be explicit.<sup>36</sup>

#### 1. The First Plague—Nile Turned to Blood (Exod 7:14–24)

The first plague was directed upon the water of the Nile River which was changed into blood. Egypt was aptly known as “the gift of the Nile.” Thomson noted that “Egypt is the Nile, or that the Nile is Egypt, since not only its prosperity, but its very existence depends upon the river. The ancient inhabitants of the country themselves recognized this, and in the deification of the forces of nature, the Nile had a foremost place in their pantheon, and was worshiped as a principal deity.”<sup>37</sup>

The Egyptians recognized that life was possible in their land only because of the existence of the Nile. The *Hymn to the Nile* deriving from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties (1350–1100 B.C.), which may have originated back to the Middle Kingdom (2100–1700 B.C.) celebrated their gratitude.

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<sup>35</sup>Davies, *Moses*, 86.

<sup>36</sup>The following resources on the Egyptian gods are consulted and the readers can find more extensive treatment in them. James P. Allen, “The Celestial Realm,” *Ancient Egypt* (ed., David P. Silverman; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 114–31; Robert A. Armour, *Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1986); Marjorie Leach, *Guide to the Gods* (ed. Michael Owen Jones and Frances Cattermole-Tally; Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1992); Manfred Lurker, *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt: An Illustrated Dictionary* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980); Dimitri Meeks and Christine Favard-Meeks, *Daily Life of the Egyptian Gods*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); Robert K. Ritner, “The Cult of the Dead,” *Ancient Egypt* (ed., David P. Silverman; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 132–47; David P. Silverman, “The Lord of the Two Lands,” *Ancient Egypt* (ed., David P. Silverman; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 106–13; Emily Teeter, “The Life of Ritual,” *Ancient Egypt* (ed., David P. Silverman; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 148–65; Angela P. Thomas, *Egyptian Gods and Myths* (Aylesbury, England: Shire Publications, 1986); Barbara Watterson, *The Gods of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1984).

<sup>37</sup>Thomson, *Plagues of Egypt*, 10.

Hail to thee, O Nile, that issues from the earth and comes to keep Egypt alive!...He that waters the meadows which Re created, in order to keep every kid alive. He that makes to drink the desert and the place distant *from water: that is his dew* coming down (from) heaven...If he is sluggish, then nostrils are stopped up, and everybody is poor. If there be (thus) a cutting down in the food-offerings of the gods, then a million men perish among mortals, covetousness is practised, the entire land *is in a fury*, and great and small *are on the execution-block*...

When the Nile floods, offering is made to thee, oxen are sacrificed to thee, great oblations are made to thee, birds are fattened for thee, lions are hunted for thee in the desert, fire is provided for thee. And offering is made to every (other) god, as is done for the Nile, with *prime* incense, oxen, cattle, birds, and flame.<sup>38</sup>

It was appropriate that the first plague should be directed at the very lifeline of Egypt. It was not only a blow against Egypt's water supply but against the gods which were directly or indirectly associated with this river and its productivity. One such god was Khnum. He was considered the guardian of the Nile sources. Khnum was one of the creator-gods and a potter, who molded the souls and bodies of all living things from the clay of the earth, and gave them the breath of life. His symbol was the flat-horned ram and he was depicted as a ram-headed man who wore the White Crown on his head. Khnum was originally a water-god, and as such he was shown with water flowing over his outstretched hands and wearing a jug on his head above his horns.

Hapi, the Nile god, was portrayed as a bearded man with female breasts and a hanging stomach. All of these features indicate fertility and his ability to nourish the land through the Nile's annual floods. Just as Egypt was divided into two parts (the north and the south) so was Hapi's domain, the Nile. As a god of the northern Nile, Hapi was depicted wearing papyrus plants, a symbol of Lower Egypt, on his head. In this form, he was called "Hap -Meht." The Nile god of Upper Egypt was "Hap-Reset" and wore lotus plants (a symbol of the south) on his head. When an artist was attempting to portray Hapi as a god of the entire Nile, he held both lotus and papyrus plants in his hands or two vases. His followers worshiped him even above Re, the sun-god. After all, without the sun the Egyptians would

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<sup>38</sup>James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (3rd ed.; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 372–73.

have lived in darkness, but without the Nile the Egyptians would have perished. Hapi was responsible for watering the meadows and bringing the dew. But most importantly he brought the fertile inundation. He provided food and water for nourishment and for offerings to the gods.

Another god associated with the Nile was Osiris, the god of the Underworld. The Nile was considered his bloodstream. In light of this belief, it is appropriate indeed that the Lord should turn the Nile to blood!<sup>39</sup> In the myth of Osiris, he is symbolized in his death the yearly drought and in his miraculous rebirth the periodic flooding of the Nile and the growth of grain. He was a god-king who was believed to have given Egypt civilization. His rivalry with his brother Seth, the god of storms and the desert, was symbolic of the eternal war between the fertile lands of the Nile Valley and the barren desert lands just beyond. The pharaoh of Egypt was called Horus, while his deceased father was the new Osiris. Osiris was represented as a bearded man wearing white mummy wrappings, the atef crown and holding the symbols of supreme power, the flail and crook. His skin is green to represent vegetation or red to represent the earth.

The consequence of the Nile's turning to blood were the death of the fish, a staple of the Egyptian diet, and the rendering of the water undrinkable. The people were unable to eat or drink from the river. Therefore, the Nile and its gods could no longer supply the people's needs nor bring life and fertility to the land. This plague was a demonstration that true sustenance can only come from Yahweh and not from the impotent deities of Egypt.

## 2. The Second Plague—Frogs (Exod 7:25–8:15)

The second plague was also directed against the Egyptian gods. The Egyptians regarded the frog as a symbol of divine power and a representation of fertility.<sup>40</sup> When the water of the Nile receded after the inundation, frogs quickly inhabited many pools and ponds. This manifestation was believed to be an indication that the gods who controlled the Nile and made the land fertile had completed their work. So the Egyptians deified the frog and made the theophany of the goddess Heket a frog. As a result, Heket became a primordial goddess with the

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<sup>39</sup> Davies, *Moses*, 94.

<sup>40</sup> Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 110.

head of a frog. She was the wife of Khnum. He fashioned human bodies on his potter's wheel and she blew the breath of life into them and assisted as midwife at their births. She also had the responsibility to control the reproduction of frogs by protecting the frog-eating crocodiles.<sup>41</sup>

Ironically, what was regarded as desirable to the Egyptians became loathsome to them as a result of this plague. The frogs came up and covered the land bringing distress and torment to everyone in every place. Heket could not control or repel Yahweh's overpowering regeneration of the frogs!

### 3. The Third Plague—Gnats (Exod 8:16–19)

The third plague came without warning as the dust of the ground became gnats. The term גַּחֲלִיץ is not clear in meaning although it likely refers to gnats, a small usually biting dipteran flies.<sup>42</sup> Other suggestions are vermin, lice, or maggots. It is not clear against what specific deities this particular plague was directed. However, the magicians were unable to produce the gnats in their attempt to duplicate the feat of Aaron as they did in the first two plagues. This failure certainly reflected the failure of the gods that the magicians represented as they acknowledged to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God."

Currid suggests that this plague and the next one, flies, may have been directed against the Egyptian self-generated god of resurrection, Khepri, who was symbolized by the flying beetle.<sup>43</sup> Khepri was specifically the god of the rising sun. He would roll the sun along the sky, much as the dung beetle, *kheprer*, rolls a ball of dung in front of him. This ball of dung is what it lays its eggs in. The beetle larvae eat the ball of dung after they hatch. The Egyptians would see the beetle roll a ball of dung into a hole and leave. Later, when many dung beetles emerged from the hole, it would seem as though they created themselves. The scarab, or dung beetle, was then considered symbolic of the sun-god propelling the sphere of the sun

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<sup>41</sup>Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 110.

<sup>42</sup>Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown–Driver–Briggs–Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic (BDB)* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), s.v. "487 גַּחֲלִיץ"; and *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed., s.v. "gnat," 498.

<sup>43</sup>Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 111. He was following Knight who speculated that the insect in question in the fourth plague was in fact a beetle. Knight, *Theology as Narration*, 63.

through the sky. Khepri was usually depicted as a human with a beetle on his head, or sometimes with the beetle as his head.

#### 4. The Fourth Plague—Flies (Exod 8:20–32)

This plague came with a warning to Pharaoh with a twist—Goshen where the Israelites lived will be immuned to show that Yahweh was in the land. Davies mentioned that the flies may have been a dogfly, blood-sucking gadfly, or the Ichneuman fly, which deposits its egg on other living things upon which its larvae can feed. He further noted that the Ichneuman fly was regarded as the manifestation of the god Uatchit.<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately, there is no way to identify this god as the sources consulted never mentioned this god.

Though the plague may not be directed against a specific god, it clearly pointed out the power of Yahweh to redeem his people. This fact contrasted the impotency of Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt to redeem their worshipers.

#### 5. The Fifth Plague—Death of Livestock (Exod 9:1–7)

The fifth plague brought about the death of the Egyptians' livestock out in the field—on their horses, donkeys, camels, cattle, and sheep and goats. Again the miraculous hand of Yahweh made a distinction between the livestock of Israel and that of Egypt. Such a plague brought about grave economic loss in the land. There is no basis to accept the observation of Charles F. Aling that the animals are listed in order of their importance as he took the general term for “livestock” to be cattle. But his following observation is valid: “We would be hard pressed to discover a horse or ass deity in any way prominent in Egyptian worship. Whether such gods existed at all is a matter of conjecture, and there was certainly no camel deity.”<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately, he concludes that it is best not to view this plague as an attack on specific deities.

Incidentally, a number of bulls and cows were considered sacred in Egypt. The most prominent was the Apis bull, who was the herald of Ptah, with the cult center at Memphis. There was a great mass burial of Apis bulls, the Serapeum, located there. He was primarily a deity of fertility. When

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<sup>44</sup>Davies, *Moses*, 106.

<sup>45</sup>Charles F. Aling, *Egypt and Bible History: From Earliest Times to 1000 B.C.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 107.

an Apis died, it was the duty of the priests of Ptah's temple to search for a young calf who would succeed him. The sacred bull was supposed to have been recognized by twenty-eight distinctive marks that identified him as deity. When a bull was found, he and his mother were taken to Ptah's temple, brought out for festivals and then, at the end of the bull's life, possibly ritually sacrificed and shared in a communal meal. Upon the death of a bull, mourning rituals were held along with a full funeral, and a search was made for another bull-calf, to replace the deceased.<sup>46</sup> Apis was represented as a bull crowned with the solar disk and uraeus-serpent.

Other sacred bulls were the Mnevis, the herald of Re at Heliopolis; and Buchis, herald of Monthu at Armant.<sup>47</sup> The Mnevis bull was thought of as the living soul of the sun-god, Re. "Buchis bull was renowned for his strength and ferocity; he was probably black, although the colour of his hair was said to change every hour of the day."<sup>48</sup>

Another deity whose worship would have been affected by this plague was Hathor, a very old goddess of Egypt worshiped as a cow deity from earliest times. She was variously depicted as a cow, as a woman with the head of a cow, or as a woman who wore the stylized cow-horns which held in them the solar disk. Hathor was the sky-goddess, the goddess of joy, motherhood, and love. She was considered the protectress of pregnant women and a midwife. She was the patron of all women, no matter what their circumstances in life were. As the goddess of music and dancing her symbol was the sistrum. As a fertility goddess and a goddess of moisture, Hathor was associated with the inundation of the Nile. In this aspect she was associated with the Dog -star Sothis whose rising above the horizon heralded the annual flooding of the Nile.

As the livestock animals provided the basic necessities to the people and were destroyed, this plague again demonstrated the sovereignty of Yahweh over all things. Even the sacred animals that embodies the gods of Egypt were not spared from the judgment.

## 6. The Sixth Plague—Boils (Exod 9:8–12)

The Egyptians were constantly aware of the possibility of infectious diseases and sores. Thus, they worshiped the lion-headed goddess,

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<sup>46</sup>For an elaborate discussion of the ritual, see Meeks, *Egyptian Gods*, 136–40.

<sup>47</sup>Thomas, *Gods and Myths*, 16.

<sup>48</sup>Watterson, *Gods of Ancient Egypt*, 191.

Sekhmet. She was created by the enraged Eye of Re. Re created her as a weapon of vengeance to destroy men for their wicked ways and disobedience to him. This fierce goddess was the mistress of war and strife. Having once unleashed her power for the destruction of mankind, the Egyptians feared a repeat performance by Sekhmet. They developed an elaborate ritual in the hope that she could be appeased. This ritual revolved around more than 700 statues of the goddess. The ancient Egyptian priests were required to perform a ritual before a different one of these statues each morning and each afternoon of every single day of every single year. Only by the strictest adherence to this never-ending ritual could the ancient Egyptians be assured of their ability to placate Sekhmet. Thus, she was also the mistress of healing who drove away sickness.

Another possible god responsible for healing was Amon-Re, a composite deity invented by the priests of Amon as an attempt to link the New Kingdom (Dynasty XVIII- XX) worship of Amon with the older solar cult of the god Re. He was the patron deity of the city of Thebes. A Dynasty XIX manuscript contains poetical praise to Amon-Re with one stanza where the god is treated as a divine physician and magical healer.<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately, this proof text is from a later date than the exodus. Davies also suggested Serapis and Imhotep as the gods charged with the responsibility of healing.<sup>50</sup> The problem with this identification is that both gods were also of later development. Serapis is a Ptolemaic period god, devised by the Greeks from Osiris and Apis. Supposedly the consort of Isis, he was also the physician and helper of distressed worshippers. Imhotep, the vizier of Djoser, a pharaoh of the Dynasty III, was fully deified about two thousand years after his death although no record of a special ritual of deification was found. It may have been during the Persian period after 525 B.C. that Imhotep was granted full divinity and was recognized as a god of medicine.<sup>51</sup>

Incidentally, the goddess Sekhmet and any other gods concerned were impotent to act in behalf of the Egyptians when Yahweh sent festering boils on men and animals to the point that even the magicians of Pharaoh could no longer stand the plague. The group of people who were supposed

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<sup>49</sup>For the text, see *ANET*, 369.

<sup>50</sup>Davies, *Moses*, 116.

<sup>51</sup>Armour, *Ancient Egypt*, 134.

to have access to the power of the gods were themselves affected by the pain of the judgment and were scrambling for survival.

#### 7. The Seventh Plague—Hailstorm (Exod 9:13–35)

It was in this plague that Yahweh specifically warned Pharaoh that he would send the full force of the plague against Egypt. The hailstorm was the worst that had ever fallen upon the land (vv. 18, 24). Any man or animal out in the field were killed except those in Goshen. The flax and barley that had ripened were destroyed. It was also the first time that Pharaoh confessed, “This time I have sinned, the LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong” (v. 27).

The catastrophe was a mockery of the Egyptian deities including Nut, Shu, Tefnut, Geb, Isis, Osiris, Seth, and Min. Nut was the personification of the vault of heaven, the goddess of the sky, the daughter of Shu and Tefnut, the sister and wife of Geb, and the mother of Osiris, Seth, Isis, and Nephthys. The goddess was typically portrayed as a woman who wore on her head a vase of water. Many times she was shown as a woman whose hands and feet touch the ground so that her body forms a semi-circle. As such she represents the heavens. Her arms and legs represent the four pillars on which the sky rests. She is held up by her father Shu, the god of the air. Her husband, Geb (the earth god), lies on the ground reclining on one elbow and his knees in the air. In this position he depicts the hills and valleys of the land. It was said that when Shu raised Nut (the sky) above Geb (the earth), he brought an end to chaos and if he ever left this position, chaos would return.

Shu was the god of the air or atmosphere. He was associated with the heat of the sunlight and the dryness of the air. He was invoked in antiquity to give a good wind to boats and metaphorically to “lift up” the spirits of the deceased in order that they might rise to the afterlife. Shu is generally shown as a man with a single ostrich feather (the hieroglyph of his name, “shu”) on his head; he is sometimes shown as a lion along with his sister and wife, Tefnut. Tefnut was the goddess of moisture and clouds, the sister and wife of Shu, the mother of Geb and Nut. She was depicted as a woman with the head of a lioness, which was her sacred animal.

Geb was the god of the earth. Even so, he guided the dead to heaven and gave them meat and drink. It is interesting to note that while in most cultures the deity associated with the earth and its bounty is a woman



(“Mother Earth,” Demeter of the Greeks, etc.), the Egyptians chose a male for this role. He is usually shown as a man wearing either the crown of the North or of the South. Added is either the atef crown or a goose. The goose was a sacred animal to Geb, as such he was sometimes called “The Great Cackler.” It was said that his laughter was the source of earthquakes. Other images show him lying underneath his wife (Nut) and his father (Shu). He is shown either as a dark or green skinned man (the colors of life, the soil of the Nile and vegetation, respectively) with leaves on his skin.

Isis was the sister and wife of Osiris and the mother of Horus the Child. As the wife of Osiris, Isis assisted her husband during his earthly reign. In the Pyramid Texts, allusions are made that indicate that Isis foresaw her husband’s murder. Following his death at the hand of Seth, Isis tirelessly searched for his body so that he may be properly buried and may rest in peace in the Underworld. Through her magic, she brought Osiris back to life so that he could impregnate her with their son Horus. Isis protected Horus during his childhood from his uncle Seth who wished to murder him. It was her hope that he might one day grow up to avenge his father’s murder.

Isis was a vital link between the gods and mankind. The pharaoh, as the living Horus, was her son. She was often depicted as a female figure with arms outstretched and placed around the figure of Osiris; or as a mother suckling her son, Horus. At times she was depicted as a woman wearing a vulture head-dress and the solar disk between a pair of horns (which is sometimes underneath the symbol of her name, the throne). In the Book of the Dead, Isis was regarded as the giver of life and food to the dead. She may also be one of the judges of the dead. Isis was also a great magician and is famous for the use of her magical skills. For example, she created the first cobra and used its venomous bite to coerce Re into revealing his secret name. As the goddess of life, she grinds, spins flax, and weaves cloth.

Osiris, in one of his aspects, was worshiped as a god of vegetation, and more especially as a corn-god, who made the earth bring forth its produce in due season. He symbolized the yearly drought in his death and the periodic flooding of the Nile and the growth of grain in his miraculous rebirth. Several festivals during the year were held in Egypt, in celebration of Osiris. One, held in November, celebrated his beauty. Another, called the “Fall of the Nile” was a time of mourning. As the Nile receded, the

Egyptians went to the shore to give gifts and show their grief over his death. When the Nile began to flood again, another festival honoring Osiris was held whereby small shrines were cast into the river and the priests poured sweet water in the Nile, declaring that the god was found again. Additionally, Osiris was also the god of the dead, and the god of the resurrection into eternal life, ruler, protector, and judge of the deceased.

Early in Egyptian history, Seth was spoken of as the god of wind and storms. He was even known as the Lord of Upper Egypt, Horus being the Lord of Lower Egypt. Seth was best known for murdering his brother Osiris and attempting to kill his nephew Horus; Horus, however, managed to survive and grew up to avenge his father's death by establishing his rule over all Egypt, castrating Seth, and casting him out into the lonely desert for all time. Seth was thus regarded as the god of the deserts. He was represented by a big -eared imaginary animal with red hair resembling a donkey or maybe an aardvark. In the 19th Dynasty there was a resurgence of respect for Seth, and he was seen as a great god once more, the god who benevolently restrained the forces of the desert and protected Egypt from foreigners.

Min was worshiped by men as a fertility god, a giver of sexual powers. He was also seen as a rain god that promoted the fertility of nature, especially in the growing of grain. During the Min festival that celebrated the beginning of the planting season, pharaohs ceremonially hoe the ground and water the fields under the supervision of Min. Likewise at the Min festival that marked the beginning of the harvest season, the pharaoh was seen reaping the grain. His sacred animal was a white bull and his special plant was the long lettuce.

#### 8. The Eighth Plague—Locusts (Exod 10:1–20)

Locusts were a particularly difficult problem in ancient Egypt. They occurred quite regularly in Egypt. However, this plague was no ordinary invasion of locusts but a mass invasion. “Never before had there been such a plague of locusts, nor will there ever be again. They covered all the ground until it was black. They devoured all that was left after the hail— everything growing in the fields and the fruit on the trees. Nothing green remained on tree or plant in all the land of Egypt” (vv. 14b–15).

The gods related to these plagues were some of the same gods related to the preceding plagues—Geb, Osiris, Isis, and Seth. Even the wind is at

the disposal of Yahweh and not the gods of Egypt. According to Currid, the ancient Egyptians worshiped the minor deity Senehem, who was the divine protector against ravages from pests.<sup>52</sup> If this was indeed true, the plague again demonstrated Yahweh's sovereign power over the Egyptian god.

#### 9. The Ninth Plague—Darkness (Exod 10:21–29)

This plague of thick darkness lasted for three days. Attempts to explain this plague as the common sandstorm known as *khamzin* (Hort) or an eclipse of the sun (Knight) could not be sustained by the fact that the darkness was “so thick as to suggest palpability...as to require people to feel their way about.”<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, Israel was spared from darkness which would be impossible under an eclipse. How God brought about such darkness is a mystery to us.

This plague to a large degree struck at the very heart of Egyptian worship and humbled one of her greatest gods, Re. Re was the sun-god and the father of Shu and Tefnut. His name is thought to mean “creative power,” and as a proper name “Creator.” Very early in Egyptian history, Re was identified with Horus, who as a falcon-god represented the loftiness of the skies. He was represented as a hawk-headed man or as a hawk with a solar disk encircled by a uraeus on his head. The plague was a disgrace to Re and Khepri, the god of the rising sun (see Plague 3).

Another prominent god related to this plague is Atum, one of the most ancient gods in Egypt and who was part of the Heliopolitan cosmology. Originally an earth god, he became associated with Re, the sun-god. Specifically, he was considered to be the setting sun. In later times, he became associated with Ptah and eventually Osiris. According to the priests of Heliopolis, Atum was the first being to emerge from the waters of Nun at the time of creation. Originally, he was a serpent in Nun and would return to that form at the end of time. However, Atum was depicted in art as a man wearing the Double Crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. As such, he was the first living man-god conceived of by the ancient Egyptians. Until then, their gods were all forms of animals.

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<sup>52</sup>Currid, *Ancient Egypt*, 112. No other source was found to describe this god though.

<sup>53</sup>Hort, *Plagues of Egypt*, 52–54; Knight, *Theology as Narration*, 80; Durham, *Exodus*, 141.

One other possible solar deity is Horus, the falcon-headed god. Horus was among the most important gods of Egypt, particularly because the pharaoh was supposed to be his earthly embodiment. Kings would eventually take the name of Horus as one of their own. At the same time, the pharaohs were the followers of Re and so Horus became associated with the sun as well. To the people this solar deity became identified as the son of Osiris. Attempts to resolve the conflicts between these different gods in different parts of Egypt resulted in at least fifteen distinct forms of Horus. They can be divided fairly easily into two groups, solar and Osirian, based on the parentage of the particular form of Horus. If he was said to be the son of Isis, he was Osirian; otherwise he was a solar deity. The solar Horus was called the son of Atum, or Re, or Geb and Nut variously.

While the other plagues brought about the destruction of properties and lives, pain and discomfort, this plague brought about the total immobilization of the Egyptians. The darkness certainly would be understood as a failure of the sun among the Egyptians, whether it was real or phenomenological. None of their solar deities functioned as they were supposed to be without ceasing as their *Universalist Hymn to the Sun* expresses.<sup>54</sup>

#### 10. The Tenth Plague—Death of the Firstborn (Exod 11:1–12:36)

The final blow was certainly the culmination of all judgment from Yahweh upon Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt. It was this plague that finally led Pharaoh to succumb to the demand of Yahweh to let the Israelites leave Egypt and worship Yahweh. There were no reports of death of human beings in the previous plagues until Yahweh stuck down all the firstborn in Egypt from the royalty to the marginalized people as well as the livestock. The loud wailing in Egypt not only signified the loss of a son or a precious animal, but also the incapability of the many gods of Egypt to respond and protect them from such tragedy. These included the gods discussed in relation to the previous plagues—Hathor (the goddess of joy, motherhood, fertility); Apis, Buchis, and Mnevis (all sacred bulls); Isis (the goddess of life); Min (the god of fertility); and Osiris (the god of the dead, and the god of the resurrection into eternal life,

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<sup>54</sup> ANET, 367–68.

ruler, protector, and judge of the deceased). In addition, we may include Bes and Tauret.

Bes was the god of music and dance, the god of war and slaughter, and a destroying force of nature. He was also a protector of children. Bes was usually portrayed as a dwarf with a large head. He is bearded with his tongue sticking out. He has a flat nose, bushy eyebrows and hair, large projecting ears. Around his body, he wears the skin of an animal and its tail hangs down behind him and touches the ground.

Tauret was a pre-dynastic hippopotamus-goddess of pregnant women and childbirth. She was the protectress of pregnant woman and infants and also the protectress of rebirth into the afterlife. She was also a mother-goddess who wore the solar disk and cow's horns to symbolize how she helped in the daily rebirth of the sun. Tauret was portrayed as a pregnant female hippopotamus with large human breasts, the hind legs of a lion and the tail of a crocodile.

However, the most significant recipient of the attack was Egypt's living god, the pharaoh. The fundamental concept of Egyptian kingship is "that Pharaoh was of divine essence, a god incarnate; and this view can be traced back as far as texts and symbols take us. It is wrong to speak of a deification of Pharaoh. His divinity was not proclaimed at a certain moment."<sup>55</sup> He in fact was the manifestation of the god Horus and he became the god Osiris when he died. At the same time that the dead pharaoh was becoming Osiris, his living firstborn son was becoming the god Horus. This was thought to be perpetual as long as there were pharaohs and sons. Following the Horus-Osiris myth, the living pharaoh was to assure that his father made the transition to Osiris successfully by performing all the rites correctly. These rites were meant to bring Osiris back to life as the god of the Underworld. If Horus had not fulfilled his role, Osiris would have remained locked in his sleep. The primary duty of succeeding the deceased Pharaoh as Horus belonged to the firstborn son. As a result, when Yahweh struck the firstborn son of Pharaoh, he broke the myth for there will be no "Horus" to bring Pharaoh back to life when he dies.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society & Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 5.

<sup>56</sup>For the fuller discussion, see Seymour, *Tenth Plague*, 24–46.

In addition, it was the primary duty of pharaoh to maintain order, justice, and goodness, or *ma'at*. In other words, the pharaoh had to keep order within Egypt and hold Egypt's enemies at bay. This plague, however, proved conclusively that Pharaoh was impotent to even protect his own firstborn son, much more the rest of Egypt.

### Conclusion

This paper has maintained that the plagues upon Egypt were separate miraculous acts of Yahweh to deliver Israel from bondage, to disclose his uniqueness or incomparability, to demonstrate his sovereign power, to denounce Pharaoh, to discredit the magicians of Egypt, and to disgrace the gods of Egypt. It may be difficult, if not impossible, to describe exactly the particular gods of Egypt against which a particular plague was intended. Some of the gods may be more obvious to identify while other gods have to be speculated. What has been presented in this paper are some of the gods which the writer sees as most probable ones that were related to a particular plague. Others—Serapis, Anubis, Selket, Imhotep, Amon-Re, Sepek, Neith—were not included for lack of better correspondence or because they seemed to be a later development in the Egyptian religious concept. Whatever list of gods one comes up with, the plagues should have shown to both the Egyptians and the Israelites of that generation that the gods of Egypt were impotent in protecting their worshipers and powerless in resisting the judgments of Yahweh. With every plague, the land of Egypt was polluted and rendered chaotic, the people scrambled for survival, Pharaoh was losing his grip of control, and the confidence in the gods of Egypt was vanishing into thin air.



# THE TEXT AND THE INTERPRETER: ORIGEN'S EXEGETICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS BASED ON HIS COMMENTARY ON JOHN

黃俊儒 SAMSON UYTANLET



There has been a growing appreciation of Origen's exegetical methods in the last few decades.<sup>1</sup> This is a positive development not only because Origen has been incorrectly stereotyped as an allegorist whose interpretive method is irrational and arbitrary, but also because our lack of appreciation for his contributions to biblical hermeneutics only deprive us the opportunity to glean from his works and learn from him. Origen was not only a prolific writer, he was also one of the most influential Christian theologian and exegete during the earlier centuries. Antonia Tripolitis identifies five areas covered by Origen's writings: (1) exegetical works including *scholia* or brief notes on various passages, homilies, and commentaries; (2) critical works like the Hexapla (the earliest known polyglot parallel Bible); (3) Christian apologetics against paganism; (4)

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<sup>1</sup> Paul B. Decock, "Origen's Theological and Mystical Approach to the Scriptures in the Introduction to His Commentary on John's Gospel," *In die Skriflig* 45, nos. 2/3 (2011): 674.



dogmatic works; and (5) practical works on prayer and martyrdom.<sup>2</sup> His commentary on the Fourth Gospel is his first written commentary.<sup>3</sup> This work was produced upon the request of Ambrose, his benefactor (cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.23), as a response to the gnostics.<sup>4</sup> Origen's commentary on John provides invaluable information for studying Gnosticism, the history of exegesis, the history of interpretation, and patristic spirituality.<sup>5</sup> More importantly, Origen expresses his views concerning the role of the interpreter and the nature of the biblical texts in this work.

In this essay, I will examine the surviving portions of Origen's commentary on John with the aim of understanding his exegetical assumptions. Origen's commentary reveals his understanding of his role as an interpreter and his basic presuppositions concerning the Bible as Scripture. These are presented in his discussion of: (1) the Gospel's definition, (2) the relationship between the two testaments, (3) divine inspiration, and (4) the sacredness of the Scripture.

### The "Gospel" according to Origen

Modern discussion concerning the nature of the canonical gospels often centers on literary issues such as genre. Larry W. Hurtado explains the twofold purpose of this discussion: (1) it provides a better understanding of the place of the Gospel in the literary history of early Christianity and the Greco-Roman world, and (2) it leads to a more intelligent interpretation of the Gospels as their literary features are illuminated by

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<sup>2</sup> Antonia Tripolitis, *Origen: A Critical Reading* (Theology and Religion 8; New York: Peter Lang, 1985), 11–12.

<sup>3</sup> For more details about the date of Origen's work, see Stephen E. Waers, "Wisdom Christology and Monarchianism in Origen's Commentary on John," *GOTR* 60, no. 3 (2015): 96–97.

<sup>4</sup> Ambrose was a Valentinian before he met Origen, but he found in Origen an antidote against gnosticism (cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.18.1). Apparently, a wealthy man, he built a scriptorium for Origen (Ronald E. Heine, *Origen: Scholarship in the Service of the Church* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010], 90).

<sup>5</sup> Ronald E. Heine's translation of Origen's commentary on John is used in this article. See Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John Books 1–10* (trans. Ronald E. Heine; FC 80; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1993); and idem, *Commentary on the Gospel of John Books 13–32* (trans. Ronald E. Heine; FC 89; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1993). FC 80:3.

comparison with their literary background.<sup>6</sup> Stephen C. Barton affirms the usefulness of such discipline, nonetheless, he laments: “What is sometimes lacking, however, is an adequate appreciation of the Gospels as texts which form part of a *canon believed by Christians to be revelatory* – the canon of Christian Scripture which helps to sustain the faith, life and worship of the church.”<sup>7</sup> This dichotomy between literature/scripture is something that cannot be found in the writings of the fathers.

Modern critical commentaries typically begin with an introduction that discuss issues like authorship, date, and place of writing, identity of audience, and other pertinent historical details regarding the recipients, purpose of writing, and theological themes. Origen’s *Commentary on John* also begins with an introduction. His concern, however, was to lay out his own interpretive assumptions regarding the Fourth Gospel.

#### *Exegetes and Levites: An Analogy*

As an exegete and expositor, Origen compares his task to the ministry of the Levites and priests. In the same way that the Levites and priests devote themselves to God’s work by ministering to the rest of Israel’s tribes as the ones who present their firstfruits (*Comm. Jo.* 1.9–10), Origen saw himself as one who devoted himself to God’s work by ministering to God’s people (cf. 1.9, 12). This devotion, he claims, is seen in his careful examination of “the firstfruits of the Scriptures,” namely, the Gospels (1.20).

Origen distinguishes between firstfruits (*aparchē*) and firstling (*prōtogenēma*) to distinguish between the OT (the law of Moses and the writings of the prophets) and the NT. He believes that the firstling is offered prior to the firstfruits (1.13). Such distinction is a philological hairsplitter.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, his purpose for this differentiation is conspicuous, namely, (1) to highlight the chronological primacy of the law

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<sup>6</sup>Larry W. Hurtado, “Gospel (Genre),” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight; Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 276.

<sup>7</sup>Stephen C. Barton, “Introduction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Gospels* (ed. Stephen C. Barton; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1–2. Similarly, Jeremy M. Bergen bemoans the failure of the historical critical method to train the ear of the readers of the Bible (“Origen on the Authorial Intention of Scripture,” *Conrad Grebel Review* 23, no. 3 [2005]: 85).

<sup>8</sup>Philo uses the terms synonymously (*Spec. Laws* 2.179), so Origen’s distinction is unnecessary (FC 80:34 n. 17).

and the prophets, and (2) to emphasize the importance of the NT witness concerning Christ. Origen claims that just as the firstling is offered before the firstfruits, the law of Moses comes before the Gospel for this purpose: “For the perfect Word has blossomed forth after all the fruits of the prophets up to the time of the Lord Jesus” (1.14).

*The “Gospel”: A Definition*

The canonical gospels and the epistles are considered “Gospel” by Origen (cf. 1.19).<sup>9</sup> This is because the evangelists’ accounts were not recorded only for the purpose of narrating the acts of Jesus. For Origen, both the Gospels and Paul’s Epistles have didactic purpose, hence he concludes, “Since the gospel is characterized also by hortatory discourse to confirm the things concerning Jesus, we shall not hesitate to say that the things written by apostles are, in a certain way, gospel” (1.18). This is true of the epistles of Paul, Peter, and the other NT writers who “present the sojourn of Christ and prepare for his coming and produce it in the souls of those who are willing to receive the Word of God” (1.26). Origen defines the “Gospel” thus:

The gospel, therefore, is a discourse containing a report of things which, with good reason, make the hearer glad whenever he accepts what is reported, because they are beneficial. Such a discourse is no less gospel should it also be examined with reference to the hearer’s attitude. The gospel is either a discourse which contains the presence of a good for the believer, or a discourse which announces that an awaited good is present. (1.27)

Unless one assumes that the OT does not contain “the presence of a good [beneficial] for the believer, or a discourse which announces that an awaited good is present,” this definition naturally raises the question whether the OT should be considered Gospel. Origen, however, denies that the OT should be considered “Gospel.” Although the OT contains accounts beneficial for the believers, “the Law and the prophets did not contain the proclamation which belongs to the definition of the gospel

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<sup>9</sup>Origen preempts critiques against his claim that the law and the prophets are to be considered firstling while the Gospels are to be considered firstfruits. He assumes that some would contest “that the Acts and the Epistles of the apostles were brought forth after the Gospels” (1.15), making his argument of firstling vis-à-vis firstfruits untenable.

since he who explained the mysteries in them had not yet come” (1.33). He acknowledges that the “gospel thought” is already present in the OT, but it is the coming of Christ and the work of the Spirit that made the difference. He claims, “the newness of the Spirit removed [the readers] from ‘the antiquity of the letter ’” (1.36; cf. Rom 7:6) . There is no guarantee, however, that everyone who reads the scriptures would be able to understand them because of these two factors: the nature of the readers (cf. *Comm. Jo.* 20.46–54) and the nature of the Gospels as writings containing mysteries (1.39). Heine points out that Origen’s spiritual exegesis was rooted in his view of the Scripture, namely, that the Holy Spirit is the ultimate author of the Scripture.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to note that Origen did not think less of the OT. His discussion about the “Gospel,” nonetheless, betrays his high regard for Jesus and the Spirit, especially with regard to the role they played in the proper understanding of the Scripture. Origen believes that it was Christ who removed the obscurities of the OT to hand down its correct interpretation to the apostles (1.34; cf. 28.6). Moreover, he sees the OT and NT sharing some basic characteristics. First, Christ is present both in the OT and NT. He argues that Christ “came spiritually even before he came in the body”; he came to “the perfect,” namely, the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets “who contemplated the glory of Christ” (1.37). Furthermore, the “law” and the “gospel ” both point to spiritual truths; just as the “law” contains “the shadow of things to come,” so the “gospel” points to “ the mysteries of Christ” (1.39).<sup>11</sup> Hence, for Origen, the Gospels *should be understood both in their literal and spiritual sense* (1.40–43). Although he distinguishes between the literal and spiritual sense, he sees them as complementary. In other words, there is *duality without dichotomy*. The physical and spiritual are distinguishable but inseparable.

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<sup>10</sup>FC 80:12.

<sup>11</sup>Decock explains Origen’s theological vision of the Scripture, “[The Scripture] must be understood as symbols in that they point beyond themselves and lead to the invisible God. The OT announces the future but not yet the present Logos, and therefore it must be interpreted in light of the NT. However, the NT itself is only the temporal gospel, in contradistinction with the eternal gospel (Rev 14:16)” (“Theological and Mystical Approach,” 679). The eschatological fulfillment of God’s work brings this process of revelation to its completion.

*The “Carnal” and “Spiritual” Senses of the Gospel*

Tripolitis observes that Origen’s commentaries exhibit a “blend of grammatical, textual, linguistic, historical expositions and philosophical and theological observations.”<sup>12</sup> Origen affirms the importance of understanding the literal sense of the Scripture. Thus, he took seriously the task of determining the true text of the Scripture.<sup>13</sup> Aside from philological studies, “explanations from history, geography, medicine, grammar, or even facts about history, whether true or alleged,” provide the contents for Origen’s literal interpretation.<sup>14</sup> The literal sense is foundational for understanding the spiritual sense. This interrelationship between the literal and allegorical meaning is illustrated in the other writings of Origen (e.g., *Princ.* 4.2.9; 3.4.6; *Comm. ser. Matt.* 10.14–15; 15.1).

Alluding to 1 Corinthians 2:16, Origen stresses the necessity of having “the mind of Christ” in understanding the Scripture (*Comm. Jo.* 1.23–24). The “carnal sense” is enough for the “carnal human,” but the “spiritual human” should move to the “spiritual sense” (1.43). For Origen, however, the “carnal sense” of the Scripture is not enough especially for those who had set their minds on bearing spiritual fruit (*Comm. Jo.* 1.43). The “spiritual meaning” is necessary to produce the moral inclinations of the interpreter. Understanding the literal meaning is only the first step in achieving this goal. Since the sacred writings are essentially spiritual, the main duty of the interpreter is to arrive at the spiritual understanding of the Scripture. The task of the exegete is to “get to the spirit and transmit it to others.” Origen’s commentary on John was written because of his benefactor’s request (1.9; 6.6; cf. 5.1; 28.2), and there is clearly an apologetic aim in writing it (5.8). More importantly, his expositions of John’s Gospel consistently show his conviction that the message of this Gospel should result in the formation of character of its readers.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Tripolitis, *Origen*, 109.

<sup>13</sup>Origen was undoubtedly one of the earliest textual critics (cf. Tripolitis, *Origen*, 108). Jean Daniélou discusses Origen’s distinction between *hexetasis* and *hermēneia* (cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.15). The former includes issues concerning texts and canon; the latter focuses on the understanding of both the literal and spiritual meaning of the Scripture (*Origen* [trans. Walter Mitchell; New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955], 133).

<sup>14</sup>Henri Crouzel, *Origen* (trans. A. S. Worrall; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 61.

<sup>15</sup>The educational aim of philosophers like Plato and Aristotle is the development virtue. Decock demonstrates the platonic influence on Origen, hence his emphasis on character formation is expected (“Theological and Mystical Approach,” 673).

### *The Gospel and Scriptural Authority*

Questions may be raised regarding Origen's interpretive approaches, and some may even question his theological stances on certain issues,<sup>16</sup> yet Ronald E. Heine describes him as an interpreter this way: "No one has ever questioned Origen's integrity. Faith and life, spirituality and moral action, were inseparable aspects of his life."<sup>17</sup> One of Origen's greatest contributions to biblical exegesis is his emphasis on the authority of the Scripture. Bergen writes, "Origen is a helpful guide because he pushes us to think about the intrinsic connection between what a text is, what it is for, and how it is to be interpreted."<sup>18</sup>

Origen distinguishes between the two testaments; the old foreshadows the new. This distinction is not because he thought less of the OT, but because of his high regard of Christ and the Spirit. The spiritual presence of Christ in the OT makes it a necessary preparation for the physical presence of Christ in the NT. Noteworthy is how he brought this dualistic perception (material/spiritual) of Christ in his exegesis of the Scripture, and how, despite this dualistic understanding of exegesis, the spiritual and literal meanings were deemed inseparable. Nonetheless, Origen's perception of the "Gospel," (i.e., OT is not "Gospel," NT is "Gospel") posits questions regarding his views concerning the relationship between the two testaments.

### **The Relationship between the Two Testaments**

Although Origen claims that the OT cannot be considered "Gospel" (*Comm. Jo.* 1.17), he affirms that the "gospel thought" is already present in the OT (1.36). Origen's understanding of the "Gospel" may be summarized in three stages:

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<sup>16</sup>Although he was considered a defender of orthodoxy while he was still alive, he was condemned as a heretic after his death (Bart D. Ehrman, Gordon D. Fee, and Michael W. Holmes, *The Text of the Fourth Gospel in the Writings of Origen* [SBLNTGF 3; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992], 1–2).

<sup>17</sup>Ronald E. Heine, "Origen and a Hermeneutic of Spirituality," *SCJ* 14 (2011): 68.

<sup>18</sup>Bergen, "Authorial Intention," 95.

Pre-Incarnate Christ revealed the “mysteries” to the prophets	Incarnate Christ revealed the “mysteries” to the apostles	Spirit of Christ reveals the “mysteries” to the “spiritual person” for the purpose of “bearing spiritual fruit”
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On several occasions, Origen directly addressed the teachings of Heracleon and the heterodox to declare their teachings incorrect.<sup>19</sup> On three of these occasions, he discussed how they have erred in their understanding of the relationship between the two testaments by focusing particularly on the nature and function of OT prophecies and their relation to Jesus and the Gospel.<sup>20</sup>

*Contra Heterodox who Undermined the OT Prophets*

First, Origen describes the heterodox as those “ who claim to believe in the Christ and do not accept that his sojourn was announced beforehand by the prophets because they invent another [God] besides the creator as the result of their beliefs, attempt to subvert the prophets’ testimonies about Christ” (2.199). They claimed that the Christ did not need the prior witnesses of the prophets; for in the same way that Moses was believed simply on the basis of his words and works (Acts 2:22; cf. 7:22), so the words and works of Jesus should be enough to elicit faith (*Comm. Jo.*

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<sup>19</sup>Against Heracleon (e.g., *Comm. Jo.* 2.100–104, 137–39; 6.13–14, 92, 108–18, 126, 153, 194–203, 306–307; 10.48, 58–59, 117–18, 210–15, 223, 248–50, 261–62; 13.51–74, 91–97, 102–104, 114–22, 47–50, 164, 172, 187–92, 200–202, 226–27, 247–49, 271–72, 294, 299–300, 322–24, 336–37, 341, 349–51, 363, 416–26; 19.89–90, 124–26; 20.54, 168– 70, 198–202, 211–19, 252–55, 258–62); against the “heterodox” or the Gnostics (e.g., 1.82; 2.171, 199; 5.8; 6.116; 10.204; 13.6, 48, 76, 81, 98, 101, 106, 163, 195; 19.12, 27; 20.50, 166).

<sup>20</sup>Another facet to this relationship has to do with typology (see Daniélou, *Origen*, 140). Daniélou explains further that the questions which Origen’s Christian contemporaries were facing, namely, questions regarding the relationship between the two testaments, partly explains Origen’s method of spiritual exegesis. On one front, Origen had to address the extremely literal approach of his Jewish contemporaries who, because of their devotion to the “letter of the prophecies,” expected the OT prophecies to be fulfilled literally. On another front, Origen had to address the distorted view of the gnostics who, although they did not venture to doubt the divine origin of the Scripture, minimized its authority by teaching that it originated from a demiurge, namely, the Jewish God of the OT. Origen’s *Commentary on John* appears to be a rebuttal against the teachings of the second group (140–42). Daniélou mentions a third group, the Christians who, because they have interpreted the OT literally, believed that the Creator is a cruel God (143).

2.200) and prophecies about Jesus are not necessary (2.201).<sup>21</sup> Although Origen does not deny that Jesus' teachings and miracles can draw people to believe in him, he explains that faith can be elicited in various ways (2.202); prophecy is one way (2.203), miracle is another (2.204). The combination of both has far greater result than any one of them, thus he concludes, "For the prophecy which is now being examined with the miracles is more powerful for persuasion than the miracles which took place at that time, even preventing disbelief in them by those who investigate them" (2.204). Furthermore, he compares the OT prophets to the NT disciples in that both recipients of God's "gift," namely, to be witnesses of Jesus in their generation (2.207). Hence, Origen concludes that prophecies are important inasmuch as they point forward to the earthly life of Jesus and because prophecy, too, is "inspired by the Holy Spirit" (2.208).<sup>22</sup>

*Contra Heraclion Concerning the Baptist's Discourse*

Second, in response to Heraclion who claimed that only John 1:15–17 is spoken by the Baptist and 1:18 is spoken by a disciple of Jesus, Origen suggests that vv. 15–18 is spoken by the Baptist (*Comm. Jo.* 6.13–14).<sup>23</sup> He argues that if the Baptist was a recipient of God's revelation concerning Jesus in John 1:16–17, then there is no reason not to assume that he

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<sup>21</sup>Origen had earlier explained that the heterodox attribute the two testaments to two gods (cf. *Comm. Jo.* 1.82). Heine explains that two heterodox views about God emerge from Origen's commentary on John: (1) the Gnostics, namely, those who distinguish between the creator God of the OT and the Father of Jesus, and who hold that the former is an inferior God; and (2) the Monarchians (cf. Tertullian, *Prax.* 3), namely, those who, in fear of proclaiming two deities hold that there is no essential difference between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (FC 89:21). Origen's response against the first group who reject the OT because of their belief that it was produced by the demiurge creator (Daniélou, *Origen*, 140).

<sup>22</sup>One of the ramifications of this assumption is that the divine message goes beyond what the literal meaning of the biblical text can supply. Hence, it is the responsibility of the exegete to seek out this spiritual meaning (cf. Tripolitis, *Origen*, 36–37; Karen Jo Torjesen, "The Alexandrian Tradition of the Inspired Interpreter," in *Origeniana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition* [BETL 164; ed. L. Perrone; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003], 290). Nonetheless, "inspiration" involves the Spirit's role in enlightening the prophets and the apostles, making even the literal sense significant (*Princ.* 4.2.7–8). Cf. Kuyama, "Searching Spirit," 434–35.

<sup>23</sup>Many modern translations stop at the end of John 1:15 (e.g., NASB, NIV, NRSV). It should be noted that John's Christology is not affected by where one closes the Baptist's discourse. Origen had an axe to grind, however. His arguments are polemically driven, and the locus of which is not Christ but the OT prophets.



received God's revelation concerning Jesus expressed in 1:18 (*Comm. Jo.* 6.14). He also points to Jesus' statement concerning Abraham who looked forward for the coming of Jesus (cf. John 8:56; cf. vv. 52–55), implying that Abraham, too, was a recipient of God's revelation concerning Jesus (*Comm. Jo.* 6.15; cf. 2.208). He concludes that the apostles were not the first to receive such revelation because like Abraham, the OT prophets were also given such "gift":

As we said in our preceding discussion, both statements, "And of his fullness we have all received," and the phrase, "Grace for grace," reveal that prophets too have received their gift from the fullness of Christ, and that they have received the second grace for the former, for they too, being led by the Spirit, arrived at the vision of truth after they were initiated in types. (6.15)

Robert J. Hauck points out, "The debate over prophecy was the debate over the source of inspiration, and ultimately, over the source of the spiritual power necessary to evade the restraining forces of human life, and to succeed in coming to the knowledge of divine truth."<sup>24</sup> Moreover, for Origen, the OT prophets were not mere recipients of God's revelation; they also received the ability to comprehend it (6.16–17). Citing Proverbs 16:23 to support his argument, he reasons that if "a wise [human] shall understand the words from his own mouth, and shall bear knowledge on his lips," one must either impetuously slander the prophets as fools or accept that they understand their own prophecies (*Comm. Jo.* 6.21, 25). He continues by mentioning Moses, Joshua, Isaiah, and Ezekiel as examples of OT figures who had "succeeded in ascending to the sublimity of the Word" (6.16; cf. 6.22–23). Thus, he summarizes his main argument: "those who have been perfected in former generations have known no less than the things which were revealed to the apostles by Christ, since the one who also taught the apostles revealed the unspeakable mysteries of religion to them" (6.24). To cite an example, Origen points to the "mystery" that the Gentiles, with the Jews, are co-heirs of the promise of Jesus (cf. Eph 3:6). He claims that the prophets understood this mystery even though

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<sup>24</sup>Robert J. Hauck, *The More Divine Proof: Prophecy and Inspiration in Celsus and Origen* (American Academy of Religion Academy Series 69; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 137.

they do not have the privilege of the apostles to see its fulfillment (*Comm. Jo.* 6.27–28).

Origen anticipates possible criticism against his view because the apostles, who had the privilege of seeing the prophecies fulfilled, were in a better position to comprehend God’s revelation. He argues that it is possible to understand the word “revealed” in two ways: (1) a thing is revealed when it is understood, and (2) a thing is revealed when the fulfillment is seen (6.26). The former describes the nature of revelation received by the prophets, and the latter describes that of the apostles (cf. 6.28).<sup>25</sup> After much discussion, Origen explains why he had to belabor the point:

We have spent time, however, examining these matters at greater length because some, in the fantasy of glorifying Christ’s sojourn, say that the apostles were much wiser than the fathers and the prophets, and have fashioned another God who is greater. Others, not daring to go as far as this in their argument, because of the unexamined nature of their teachings, minimize the gift given to the fathers and the prophets from God through Christ, through whom “all things were made.” If all things were made through him, however, it is clear that both the good things which were revealed to them, and their actions, symbols of the holy mysteries of godliness, were included. (6.31)

*Contra Heracleon who Called the OT Prophets “Noise”*

Third, in response to Heracleon who derided the OT prophets, Origen considered the Baptist as “the voice” and the whole prophetic order as “the noise.” Origen deems this comment slanderous (6.108). He reasons that no one prepares for battle if the battle trumpet produced an uncertain sound (cf. 1 Cor 14:8). Moreover, if the prophetic voice is nothing but “noise,” they would be comparable to the “clanging cymbal,” that is, one who has knowledge without love (cf. 13:1–3). If this is true, however, Jesus would not have commended them (*Comm. Jo.* 6.109–10). Jesus affirmed that Moses and the prophets testify about him (6.109; cf. John 5:39, 46); and

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<sup>25</sup>Cf. Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Oration and Panegyric on Origen* 15. Torjesen notes that the Alexandrian allegorical exegesis is based on the premise that the prophets had profound understanding of the divine that is too rich to be mediated through ordinary language; hence the prophets encoded the profounder understanding in narratives of ordinary affairs (“Alexandrian Tradition,” 290).

his confirmation simply shows that the prophets did not produce unintelligible sound, as Heracleon claimed, but the prophecies they have resonated forth are evidence that they foresaw and proclaimed the truth about Jesus.

### *The Relationship between the Two Testaments*

One of the issues which Origen addressed in response to Heracleon and the heterodox has to do with the relationship between the two testaments. His rebuttals betray his understanding of this relationship, particularly in the area of prophecy and fulfillment. Origen holds to the equality of the two testaments.<sup>26</sup> This is based on three assumptions: (1) the prophets were recipients of God's revelation as they were inspired by the Spirit (*Comm. Jo.* 2.207–208); (2) the prophets comprehended their prophecies inasmuch as the apostles comprehended the things they proclaimed (6.22–23); and (3) Jesus' affirmation of the OT as prophecies about him underscores the prophet's authority. Furthermore, Origen emphasizes that the teachings of Jesus and the apostles were continuations of the mysteries recorded in the writings of the prophets (6.25). If the apostles had any advantage over the prophets, it is only in their perception of the "self-evident truth through the completed event" (6.28). Christ serves as the pivotal point of God's revelation. The OT looks forward to Christ as much as the NT looks back to him. There is no reason to give priority to one testament because both contain testimonies of Christ and the spiritual truths God was conveying.

Origen's idea of inspiration raises some questions concerning the extent of the prophets' comprehension of their prophecies, and definitive answers to these questions may remain elusive. Nonetheless, there is something about Origen's conviction that is worth highlighting, namely, that the Scripture is divinely inspired and therefore it conveys a divine message. Crouzel sums it up: "To be sure, this conception of inspiration reminds us of something that we are at times liable to forget, that the Bible is a book through which God speaks to us."<sup>27</sup>

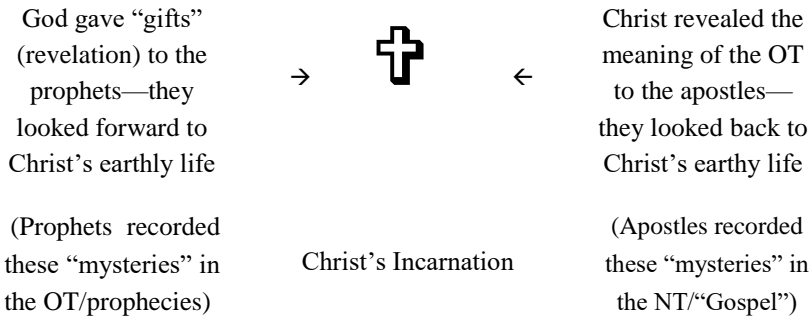
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<sup>26</sup>Wai-Shing Chau, *The Letter and the Spirit: A History of Interpretation from Origen to Luther* (Theology and Religion 167; New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 20.

<sup>27</sup>Crouzel, *Origen*, 71.

## The Gospels as Inspired Narratives

Origen’s emphasis on the OT prophet’s full comprehension of their prophecies suggests that he viewed their ministry to be complementary to that of the NT apostles. The OT prophecies about Christ and the NT “Gospel ” which recounts his life and teachings place him at the pivotal point of this complementary relationship between the two testaments. The OT points forward to Christ, and the NT looks back to him. God gave the same “gift” (i.e., revelation/understanding of revelation) to the prophets of the OT and the apostles in the NT. Thus, it can be summarized:



Origen acknowledges the NT writers as recorders of the life and teachings of Jesus (*Comm. Jo.* 1.15–18). For him, historical events serve as the basis of historical accounts, and through inspiration, certain events were recorded because they have hortatory value (cf. 1.26). Problems arise when certain accounts contain contradicting or inconsistent details. Joseph O’Leary notes, “Origen sees the Gospels as directly inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that any historical information they contain must be literally exact. If a fact is described in two or three different ways, Origen is forced to see in it two or three separate facts.”<sup>28</sup> Hence Origen suggests that there are three different healings of blind men at Jericho, and Jesus was anointed at Bethany three times. This tendency is best summarized in Origen’s statement, “For those whose records differ have not, as some think,

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<sup>28</sup>Joseph S. O’Leary, “Platonic Dissolution of History in Origen’s *Commentary on John* X 5–34,” in *Studia Patristica* 46 (ed. J. Baun, et al.; Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 242. Origen’s insistence that John 1:28 should read “in Bethabara” instead of “in Bethany” illustrates his attempt to harmonize historical knowledge and the Gospel accounts (Hutton, Jeremy M. “‘Bethany beyond the Jordan’ in Text, Tradition, and Historical Geography.” *Bib* 89, no. 3 [2008]: 305–28).

reported about the same things, as if they remembered inaccurately each of the things which were said or happened” (6.172). There are two other ways by which Origen handled the “discrepancies” in the Gospels’ accounts, namely, by considering the two different accounts as complementary or by stressing the spiritual meaning of these accounts.

### *Harmoniously Different Accounts*

Origen considers some inconsistent records as apparently contradicting yet historically complementary accounts. His attempt to harmonize the accounts of the different Gospels is seen in his exposition of John the Baptist’s ministry (John 1:19–34). Origen explains the necessity of considering the accounts in the other Gospels.

Since we think it is necessary to compare texts from the Gospels which resemble the words under consideration, and to do this for each passage to the end (of our work) to demonstrate the harmony in the things which seem to clash, and to explain the things which are similar in each individual passage, let us do this here too. (*Comm. Jo.* 6.127)

These two examples illustrate Origen’s attempt towards harmonizing the Gospels’ accounts. First, Origen observes the evangelists’ abridgement of OT quotations as typical patterns in the NT (6.128–31). He notes that John placed Isaiah’s prophecy in the mouth of the Baptist while Mark included it at the beginning of his narrative (Isa 40:3; John 1:23; Mark 1:1–3). He also observes that John did not combine two OT quotations the way Mark did (John 1:23; Mark 1:2–3; cf. Isa 40:3; Mal 3:1). Despite these variations, however, Origen detects the similar manner by which the two evangelists abridge the OT quotations, albeit in different places and with different quotations (*Comm. Jo.* 6.131).

Origen observes Luke’s practice of abridging OT quotations as well (6.135–38). He notes that the Third Evangelist provides “his own personal viewpoint” (6.135) when he cites Isaiah 40:3 following his account of the Baptist’s ministry (cf. Luke 3:2–4). Origen notices that despite Luke’s addition of Isaiah 40:4–5 in his quotation (Luke 3:5–6), Luke, like Mark, had abbreviated Isaiah’s statement, “Make straight the paths of our God” (40:3; cf. Luke 3:4; Mark 1:3). Origen concludes, “These observations are useful as an indication of the fact that the evangelists abbreviate the prophetic words” (*Comm. Jo.* 6.138). Origen does not elaborate the

reasons for these abbreviations. Nonetheless, the differences in the accounts of Mark, Luke, and John are explained, not as contradicting accounts, but as part of the inspired writers' attempt to convey a divine message through the Baptist's story from various perspectives (cf. 6.135).

Second, Origen reconstructs the Baptist's encounters with the Jews and their religious leaders by piecing together the various Gospel accounts. He notes that John's record about the Pharisees' question concerning John the Baptist's identity was bypassed in Matthew's account (John 1:24; cf. Matt 3:5–12). He also compares the accounts of the first two evangelists by pointing out that only Matthew recounts the incident wherein Jesus rebuked the Pharisees as the Judeans came confessing their sins and were baptized by John (Mark 1:5; cf. Matt 3:5–6). Origen explains that this inconsistency shows that as the Pharisees came to John for baptism, they did not confess their sins like the Judeans, hence Jesus rebuked them (*Comm. Jo.* 6.139).

Origen finds warrant for this theory by observing the dissimilarity in Jesus' statement concerning the fruit(s) of repentance in the accounts of Matthew and Luke. In Luke's account, Jesus addressed the crowd, not just the Pharisees and Sadducees (3:8; cf. Matt 3:7). Origen explains the need to discuss the discrepancy, "And because what was said to [the Pharisees and Sadducees] was similar to what was said to the crowds, we had to consider a comparison of the statements and their precise meaning. The natural sequence demanded that we consider more than what was present" (*Comm. Jo.* 6.147). In Matthew, the Pharisees and Sadducees were told to "produce fruit (singular)" (3:8); in Luke, however, the crowd was called to "produce fruits (plural)" (3:8). Origen explains that the plural "fruits" which the crowd was expected to produce refer to all kinds of fruits, while the singular "fruit" which the Pharisees and Sadducees were expected to bear refers to the "fruit *par excellence*," namely, faith in the Son (*Comm. Jo.* 6.141). Origen distinguishes the crowd from the religious leaders by suggesting that the latter are no longer beginners in their spiritual journey for they have been contemplating about good deeds for a significant amount of time already (6.141–42). Nonetheless, they have not been producing the right kind of fruit, instead they have "false fruit" (6.143; cf. Hos 10:13). This is because faith in the Son, the basis by which the right fruit is produced, remained missing.

Origen concludes with a reconstruction of the story of Jesus’ encounter with the people who came to John for baptism and were called “a brood of vipers.” He claims to have solved the problem of inconsistent accounts (6.151–52) by showing that these varying accounts only provide us with the much-needed details to see what really happened. In short, the varying accounts in the Gospels only allow us to see the bigger picture, and to see the event from different perspectives.

*“Spiritual Meaning” of Seemingly Inconsistent Accounts*

Origen observed the seemingly inconsistent accounts in the gospels, particularly the order of the accounts. The order may be summarized as follows:

John	Matthew	Mark	Luke
	Temptation (4:1–11)	Temptation (1:13)	Temptation (4:1–13)
	Jesus heard about John, withdrew to Galilee (4:12)	Jesus heard about John, withdrew to Galilee (1:14)	Went to Galilee; taught in their synagogues (4:14–15)
		Preached the kingdom (1:15)	
		Disciples called (1:16–18)	
Miracle at Cana (2:1–11)			
			Synagogue at Nazareth (4:21–30)
To Capernaum with disciples, mother, and brothers (2:12)	From Nazareth to Capernaum (4:13–16)	To Capernaum; taught in the synagogue (1:21)	To Capernaum; taught in the synagogue (4:31)
	Preached the kingdom (4:17)		

Origen sees the differences in the Gospel accounts as an opportunity to expound on the spiritual meaning of the texts.<sup>29</sup> Examining the

<sup>29</sup>Contradictions in the literal meaning of the Gospel accounts serve as “providential pointers” to the spiritual meaning of these texts (Ehrman, *Text of the Fourth Gospel*, 7).

inconsistencies is part of the literal interpretation of the Gospel accounts. His exposition of the beginning of Jesus' ministry illustrates this (*Comm. Jo.* 10.1–66). Using Jesus' trip to Capernaum as the pivot point for his historical analysis (John 2:12; cf. Matt 4:13; Mark 1:21; Luke 4:31), Origen highlights the variations in the four Gospel accounts particularly the discrepancies in the chronology of Matthew and Mark (*Comm. Jo.* 10.3; cf. 10.4–9).

Origen pays particular attention to Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom (*Comm. Jo.* 10.5–6). In Matthew's account, this occurred *after* the trip to Capernaum (4:17); in Mark, this happened *before* the trip to Capernaum (1:15). Moreover, Jesus' temptation lasted forty days (cf. Matt 4:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2) but he went to Capernaum on the sixth day after the wedding at Cana (John 2:1). Origen clarifies the necessity to solve this problem of inconsistent accounts: “[We must, however, set before the reader] that the truth of these accounts lies in the spiritual meanings, [because] if the discrepancy is not solved, [many] dismiss credence in the Gospels as not true, or not written by a divine spirit, or not successfully recorded” (*Comm. Jo.* 10.10).

Origen explains the reasons for the variety of the Gospel accounts by telling a parable (10.15–17). He stresses that although the same Spirit reveals the truth to the Gospel writers, we had to “assume that each one individually reports what he sees in the Spirit about God, his words, and his manifestations to the saints” (10.15). He explains that it is possible for four historians, who were spatially and temporally separated from one another, to write about the similar events from various perspectives (10.15–17). God and his work, however, are not to be limited to space and time (10.17).<sup>30</sup> He thus concludes:

In the case of these four narrators, therefore, whom I have assumed, who wanted to teach us by a type the things they had seen in their mind, if they should be wise, the meaning of their historical accounts would be found to be harmonious once it was understood. We must conceive that

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O'Leary notes that contradictions require the interpreter to go beyond the literal sense (“Platonic Dissolution,” 242).

<sup>30</sup>For Origen, the real agreement of the Gospels lies in their spiritual meaning, not in the harmony of their historical records (*Comm. Jo.* 10.27). Tripolitis observes that for Origen, every scripture has spiritual meaning but not all has literal/historical meaning. One must investigate the extent to which the literal meaning can be used (*Origen*, 36–37).



it is this way also in the case of the four evangelists who made full use of many things done and said in accordance with the prodigious and incredible power of Jesus. In some places they have interwoven in Scripture something made clear to them in a purely intellectual manner, with language as though it were something perceptible to the sense. But I do not condemn, I suppose, the fact they have also made some minor changes in what happened so far as history is concerned, with a view to the usefulness of the mystical object of [those matters]. Consequently, they have related what happened in [this] place as though it happened in another, or what happened at this time as though at another time, and they have composed what is reported in this manner with a degree of distortion. For their intention was to speak the truth spiritually and materially at the same time where that was possible but, where it was not possible in both ways, to prefer the spiritual over the material. The spiritual truth is often preserved in the material falsehood, so to speak. (10.18–20)

### *The Gospels as Inspired Narratives*

For Origen, historical accuracy is closely tied to divine inspiration. There are instances when he sees multiple events behind comparable accounts. In other instances, he either attempts to harmonize the seemingly contradicting accounts or admits that some accounts are historically incorrect. He stresses, however, that although there may be “material falsehood” or “distortions” in some Gospel accounts, *it is because the evangelists’ intention was not to present history but spiritual truths.*<sup>31</sup> It is important to stress that Origen’s method of spiritual interpretation is not an attempt to cover up for the discrepancies of the Gospel accounts; in fact, he admits on several occasions that there are historical inaccuracies in these records. His emphasis on this method of interpretation, however, is evidence of his conviction that the Gospels, and in fact, the two testaments, are the means by which God communicates his message to humans. Spiritual interpretation is necessary, not to explain away the difficulties of the biblical records, *but because he considers the Bible as sacred Scripture.*

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<sup>31</sup>O’Leary describes Origen’s movement from literal to figurative interpretation: “This questioning has an affinity with Platonic dialectic, the discipline that enables one ‘to ask and answer questions in a more scientific way’ (*Rep.* 534d) and that pushes beyond the contradictory perspectives on the empirical world, purifying the mind and raising its gaze to the lucid vision of truth” (“Platonic Dissolution,” 241).

## The Bible as Sacred Scripture

The narrative in John's Gospel serves a didactic purpose.<sup>32</sup> This can be said of the whole Scripture. Heine observes that Origen viewed the Scripture as a "metanarrative." This structure is related to ancient Greek commentators' understanding of the *skopos* or the goal of the Scripture. He writes further, "That metanarrative is the story of salvation, principally who Christ is and how salvation has come through him. Origen believes the communication of this metanarrative is the first and most important goal of the Holy Spirit in Scripture. He believes that the Holy Spirit is the author of all Scripture and, therefore, this metanarrative can be found running throughout Scripture."<sup>33</sup> Knowledge of the literal meaning of the Scripture is the necessary first step to get to its spiritual meaning. Decock remarks that this knowledge, in Origen's view, must be subservient to one purpose, namely, to guide readers towards love of God (cf. *Comm. Cant.* Prologue 2) and towards salvation.<sup>34</sup>

Origen's *Commentary on John* reveals his view of the Bible as sacred writing. One may deduce Origen's basic belief about the Scripture from this work, namely, (1) the Scripture (OT and NT) is one, (2) accurate interpretation of Scripture is not an end in itself, and (3) the obscurities of the Scripture should impel the readers to seek its spiritual meaning.

### *The Scripture is One*

Origen assumes that the two testaments share the same purpose and function. He elaborates his idea of oneness of Scripture in his discussion of Ecclesiastes 12:12. Origen's exposition of Ecclesiastes 12:12 in his commentary on John is clearly a digression. It is unfortunate, however, that the surviving portion of Book 5 in this commentary does not provide any clear hint as to which portion of John's Gospel was being discussed. He cites John 21:25 in passing (*Comm. Jo.* 5.3), but it seems too early for an exposition of the last chapter of the Fourth Gospel here. Nonetheless, this section provides us with good materials in understanding Origen's view of the oneness of Scripture.

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<sup>32</sup>Crouzel, *Origen*, 65.

<sup>33</sup>Heine, "Hermeneutic of Spirituality," 72.

<sup>34</sup>Decock, "Theological and Mystical Approach," 673.

He also claims that the statement, “My son, beware of making many books; there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh,” contains a spiritual meaning. Origen admits that the literal sense of this statement makes him a blatant transgressor (*Comm. Jo.* 5.1). He opines that there are two literal senses to this statement: (1) one must not *own* many books, and (2) one must not *write* many books. Either way, the production of books is implicitly prohibited. This places him in a quandary for he had an obligation to Ambrose that he needed to fulfill (5.2). He notes that Paul, Peter, and John did not write “many books” (5.3); for fear that he would disobey God by obeying Ambrose, he felt the need to explain the necessity of his work by showing the spiritual meaning of this text (5.4).

Origen contends that if Solomon, who was credited for writing many proverbs, had written, “In a multitude of words you will not escape sin, but you will be wise if you restrain your lips” (Prov 10:19; cf. 1 Kgs 4:32), then he must be a great sinner because writing many proverbs required him to be loquacious. Origen justifies that verbosity is sometimes necessary and not sinful. He explains, “For how can teaching accomplish anything without a multitude of words, understood in the simpler sense, since even wisdom herself declares to the perishing, ‘I stretched out words, and you did not heed’” (Prov 1:24 [LXX]; *Comm. Jo.* 5.3). Moreover, Paul was said to have taught until midnight (cf. Acts 20:7–10), and presumably with the use of many words (*Comm. Jo.* 5.5). It is only logical to assume that both Solomon and Paul have transgressed greatly (cf. Prov 10:19).

Origen, however, refuses to concede that Solomon and Paul had sinned by using a lot of words. He explicates:

The complete Word of God which was in the beginning with God is not multitude of Words, for it is not words. It is a single Word consisting of several ideas, each of which is a part of the whole Word...Consequently, according to this understanding, we would say that he who utters anything hostile to the religion is loquacious, but he who speaks the things of truth, even if he says everything so as to leave out nothing, always speaks the one Word. (*Comm. Jo.* 5.5; cf. 5.8)

Origen also points to Jesus’ statement that the Scriptures testify about him (John 5:39). Although the passage mentions “Scriptures” (plural),

Origen stresses, these are part of one book (*Comm. Jo.* 5.6).<sup>35</sup> Thus he justifies the need to produce the commentary (5.8).

Origen's aim for writing these things is clearly an attempt to defend the necessity of fulfilling Ambrose's request. Nonetheless, his discussion demonstrates his view of the sacred writings, namely, that they can be considered one book (cf. 5.7), sharing common doctrine (10.175). Throughout his commentary on John, Origen consistently refers to the two portions of the Scripture as the OT (e.g., 1.17, 36, 80, 85; 5.8; 6.117; 10.174, 175, 178, 188; 32.7) and the NT (e.g., 1.19, 25, 36, 64, 80, 228; 2.197; 5.8; 10.175, 188; 20.297; 32.7). There are hints in this commentary that debates regarding the canon continued while he was producing this commentary.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, Origen acknowledges a bipartite canon of Scripture which he considered authoritative.

### *The Scripture as a Means to an End*

The thirteenth book of Origen's commentary provides the second part of his discussion on the story of the Samaritan woman (13.1). He continues his discussion by suggesting that Jesus' second reply to the Samaritan woman (John 4:13–14) is his way of urging her to ask for the living water (*Comm. Jo.* 13.3–4); the woman did not respond correctly to his first invitation (cf. John 4:10–12). Origen explains that the water which does not satisfy is “a representation of the opinion of the heterodox who busy themselves concerning the divine Scriptures” (*Comm. Jo.* 13.6; cf. 13.7). Origen demonstrates the twofold literal meaning of “thirst” and “hunger” (13.8–14): (1) the need for food and drink when a person is becoming weak and dehydrated (e.g., Exod 16:1–4), and (2) the poor person's constant need for provisions (e.g., 1 Cor 4:11). He explains that Jesus' statement concerning the fountain that springs to eternal life (John 4:14) is the clearest indicator that Jesus is referring to something more than physical thirst (*Comm. Jo.* 13.14). The “profundity of doctrines” can only satisfy a person's thirst for truth temporarily (13.15–16).

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<sup>35</sup>In *Comm. Jo.* 7.7, Origen observes that the Bible consistently refers to divine writings or those related to life as “book” (e.g., Exod 32:31–32; Ps 68:29; Isa 29:11–12; Rev 5:1–5; 3:7; 10:10) and the writings related to judgment as “books” (e.g., Dan 7:10).

<sup>36</sup>For instance, Origen mentions that there are those who insist that the book of Enoch should be part of the collection of sacred writings (*Comm. Jo.* 6.217), and there are those who reject the epistle of James despite it being in circulation (19.152; cf. 20.66). FC 89:220 n. 68.

The Scripture, according to Origen, is only the means by which its readers achieve the end, namely, true knowledge of Jesus (13.26–39). He likens the Scripture to the fountain of Jacob from which both humans and animals drank (13.31; cf. John 4:6, 12). Those who drank from it, however, were only temporarily satisfied (4:13). Origen does not despise this “well,” but he suggests that the Scripture, “even when perceived accurately, are only very elementary rudiments of and very brief introductions to all knowledge” ( *Comm. Jo.* 13.30). The knowledge of the Scripture’s contents is not the sole goal of studying it. Accurate interpretation is only the necessary process for one to reach the end of such knowledge: “The Scripture, therefore, are introductions, called the fountain of Jacob. Once they have now been accurately understood, one must go up from them to Jesus, that he may freely give us the fountain of water that leaps into eternal life” (13.37). Bergen remarks:

For what larger process is Scripture merely an introduction? For Origen, it is the spiritual progress of soul, which entails but is not exhausted by the reading of Scripture. Thus, John 4 may not be only about the exegesis of Scripture but about the formation of a soul that can make a certain kind of use of Scripture.”<sup>37</sup>

### *The Scripture is “Veiled” for a Reason*

Heine asserts that many ancient commentators had observed the obscurity of the texts they expound (e.g., commentators of Aristotle, Galen’s commentary on Hippocrates). These obscurities may result from “the material itself being unclear or from the improper preparation or incompetence of the interpreter.”<sup>38</sup> Likewise, the Gospels contain obscurities that commentators have difficulty explaining. Origen assumes that the Spirit is the real author of the Scripture, hence, only the Spirit can guide the interpreter towards accurate interpretation.<sup>39</sup> However, for Origen, the Spirit does not only enable one to understand, he also prevents the Scripture from being understood. Kuyama summarizes the reason that the Spirit places stumbling blocks, hindrances, impossibilities, “[The]

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<sup>37</sup>Bergen, “Authorial Intention,” 90.

<sup>38</sup>Heine, “Hermeneutic of Spirituality,” 70.

<sup>39</sup>The Spirit shares this same role with Jesus who dispenses spiritual knowledge (cf. Daniélou, *Origen*, 160, 173). Hence, the interpreter needs to have “the mind of Christ” (*Comm. Jo.* 1.23–24; cf. 1 Cor 2:16).

Holy Spirit prevents the readers from unquestioningly following the conventional understanding of the text, leading each along a different path to the divine, and enabling him to seek ceaselessly various approaches to the biblical text and meanings.”<sup>40</sup>

### **The Text and the Interpreter: Purpose of Biblical Interpretation**

An examination of Origen’s commentary on John with a particular focus on his definition of the “Gospel,” his understanding of the relationship between the two testaments, his concept of divine inspiration, and his view of the Bible as Scripture reveals Origen’s basic presupposition of the nature of the biblical text and the role of its interpreter. It is difficult for us who are untrained with the allegorical method to fully appreciate Origen’s exposition of the biblical texts. In fact, in many instances, there are good reasons not to agree with his conclusions. Nonetheless, his views concerning the nature of the biblical texts and the role of the interpreter are worth emphasizing.

First, Origen stresses the role of Christ and the Spirit in biblical interpretation. Origen’s perception of the Gospel, his distinction between the two testaments, and his understanding of their relationship underscore the centrality of Christ. For Origen, Christ is not only the *content* of the Scripture, but he provides the readers with spiritual understanding. Origen consistently emphasized the authority of the Scripture. For him, accurate literal interpretation is necessary to reach correct spiritual interpretation, and correct spiritual interpretation is necessary for one to live a life of devotion to God. Biblical interpretation is not an end in itself, but only a means to an end. The goal of interpretation, therefore, is not merely gaining biblical knowledge, but also acquiring biblical insight to live a life of devotion to God.

Secondly, Origen likens the role of the biblical interpreter to Levites and priests who are devoted to the service of God and his people. For Origen, biblical scholarship is inseparable from pastoral service. Biblical interpretation, therefore, is not merely an academic exercise. Biblical

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<sup>40</sup> Michichiko Kuyama, “The Searching Spirit: The Hermeneutical Principle in the Preface of Origen’s *Commentary on the Gospel of John*,” in *Origeniana Sexta: Origen and the Bible* (BETL 118; ed. Gilles Dorival and Alain Le Boulluec; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995), 435. Cf. *Princ.* 4.2.9.

scholarship and pastoral ministry are not mutually exclusive. His response against Heracleon and the heterodox groups also attest to his pastoral concern for God's flock making sure they hold on to the teachings of the Scripture; and as a theologian, his concern for orthodoxy. Just as the prophets and apostles are ministers who served God and his people in their respective generations (cf. *Comm. Jo.* 2.207), Origen sees his work as part of his service to God and God's people in his generation.

CHURCH HISTORY  
AND THEOLOGY





## CALVIN AND THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

余民利 DENNIS BENTLEY YAM



Preaching today has become a challenging task. It has been observed that faithful biblical preaching is not as rigorous as in the past. It has been observed that the state of preaching in many churches in North America and Asia has become pragmatic. The pulpit ministry has been influenced by the moralism, pragmatism, and consumerism prevalent in secular society.<sup>1</sup> What has gone wrong with preaching today? Michael Horton observes, “I recently heard a sermon that ended with the appeal, ‘Are you going to accomplish great things for God?’...Calling us to accomplish great things for God is part of the hype that constantly burns out millions of professing Christians.”<sup>2</sup> Karl Dahlfred, a missionary serving in

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth Tucker describes the consumerism and marketing strategies of megachurches as analogous to Walmart superstores gobbling up small businesses. Ruth A. Tucker, *Left Behind in a Megachurch World: How God Works through Ordinary Churches* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 35–40.

<sup>2</sup> Michael S. Horton, *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 210–11. See also Michael S. Horton, “Are Churches Secularizing America?,” *Modern Reformation* 17 (2008), <http://www.modern>

Thailand, points out a similarity between Buddhists and too many present-day Christians: “Thai Buddhists believe that the point of every religion in the world (including Christianity) is to teach people to be good. And if they listened to the sermons in many churches on Sunday morning, their belief would be confirmed.”<sup>3</sup>

Many preachers of the Word emphasize the idea that believers have to do more to be accepted and more blessed by God.<sup>4</sup> Many members of their congregations have been swallowed up by the performance trap of works righteousness and legalism. Instead of saturating our lives with the gospel of grace, too many of us pursue an unhealthy spiritual regimen that Jerry Bridges describes succinctly: “We are all legalistic by nature, that is, we innately think so much performance by us earns so much blessing from God.”<sup>5</sup> There are believers who think that if they miss their devotion or quiet time or forget to share the gospel, their day will be miserable. They have the notion that God is capricious and ready to punish every fault they commit.

God is truly good to all. He deals with us with his grace that abounds and keeps on flowing. The reason why we are accepted and reconciled to him is Christ, not our works. When we place our trust in the Lord, we are united to him. The only way we can begin to understand this amazing expression of grace is to see the depth of our sinfulness. When we cry out to the Lord, “Woe is me!” we recognize that we cannot do anything to gain God’s favor apart from Christ. Like Isaiah, who had a vision of God’s holiness (Isa 6), we cry out from the depth of our rebelliousness and disobedience, longing to see his goodness in us. Calvin described the relationship between God and man in the *Institutes*: “Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves...Again, it is certain that

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reformation.org/default.php?page=articledisplay&var1=ArtRead &var2=917&var3=main, accessed 16 December 2013; Dwight E. Stevenson, “Eleven Ways of Preaching a Non-Sermon,” *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (July 1975): 19–28.

<sup>3</sup> Karl Dahlfred, “Unbiblical Preaching - Part 2: Moralistic Preaching,” <http://www.dahlfred.com/blogs/gleanings-from-the-field/378-unbiblical-preaching-part-2-moralistic-preaching>, accessed 27 March 2014.

<sup>4</sup> An example of a moralistic sermon based on Genesis 24: Todd M. Kinde, “Searching for a Spouse,” in *Nelson’s Annual Preacher’s Sourcebook* (ed. Robert J. Morgan and Joshua D. Rowe; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 44–45.

<sup>5</sup> Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace: Living Confidently in God’s Unfailing Love* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2008), 16.

man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinize himself."<sup>6</sup> Unless we recognize this relationship, we are far from him. In the end, we live daily by the grace God has shown us through his Son (Rom 6).

## Law and Gospel

In his commentary on the Gospel of John, Calvin defined the gospel as "the glad and delightful message of the grace exhibited to us in Christ, in order to instruct us, by despising the world and its fading riches and pleasures, to desire with our whole heart, and to embrace when offered to us, this invaluable blessing."<sup>7</sup> The gospel is good news to sinners because God has taken the initiative to reconcile them to himself. The gospel proclaims that God has redeemed sinners in the person and work of Christ. According to D. A. Carson, "The gospel is the great news of what God has graciously done in Jesus Christ, especially in his atoning death and vindicating resurrection, his ascension, session, and high priestly ministry, to reconcile sinful human beings to himself, justifying them by the penal substitute of his Son, and regenerating and sanctifying them by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, who is given to them as the down payment of their ultimate inheritance. God will save them if they repent and trust in Jesus."<sup>8</sup> Without the gospel, we are under the wrath of God's judgment, because we are still enslaved by the sin that has resulted in our condemnation. Added to that is the burden of the law. The history of Israel's failure to please Yahweh points to the uselessness of law-keeping. Since we know that we cannot perfectly obey it, God has shown us another way, inviting us turn to Christ as our redeemer. As Greg Gilbert appropriately puts it: "First the bad news: God is your Judge, and you have sinned against him. And then the gospel: but Jesus has died so that sinners may be forgiven of their sins if they will repent and believe in him."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (2 vols.; ed. John T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), I.1.1, 2, 1:35–37.

<sup>7</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* (trans. William Pringle; 2 vols.; 1847 reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 1:11.

<sup>8</sup> D. A. Carson, "The Hole in the Gospel," *Themelios* 38, no. 3 (2013): 354.

<sup>9</sup> Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 36.

Philip Melancthon was one of the originators of the Protestant understanding of what is generally called the third or didactic use of the law.<sup>10</sup> Essentially, this means that the law serves as a guide for the believer's daily life and sanctification. Rather than condemning the believer, it helps him to live a life of gratitude. John Leith summarizes Calvin's understanding of this relationship: "The grace of the gospel is the gift of salvation when men failed to obey the law...The gospel however, relieves only the rigor, not the claim, of the law. The gospel means that man's salvation does not depend upon obedience and that man now has an additional motive for obeying the law, namely, gratitude for the gift of the gospel."<sup>11</sup>

Calvin readily agreed that the law is useful to the believer: "The third and principal use, which pertains more closely to the proper use of the law, finds its place among believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already lives and reigns."<sup>12</sup> The law is written in the hearts of believers to spur them to advance in their knowledge of God and stir them to obedience. Calvin continued: "In this way the saints must press on; for, however eagerly they may in accordance with the Spirit strive toward God's righteousness, the listless flesh always so burdens them that they do not proceed with due readiness. The law is to the flesh like a whip to an idle and balky ass, to arouse it to work. Even for a spiritual man not yet free of the weight of the flesh the law remains a constant sting that will not let him stand still."<sup>13</sup> For Calvin, without the knowledge of the Redeemer, the law is burdensome, but with the Redeemer, it is a joy. According to him, David "in the law...apprehended the Mediator, without whom there is no delight or sweetness."<sup>14</sup>

According to the apostle Paul, the goal of the law is Christ (Rom 10:4). The law serves to bring sinners to the gospel of Christ; however, both the

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<sup>10</sup>François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (trans. Philip Mairet; London: Collins, 1963; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 200. See also B. A. Gerrish, "The Place of Calvin in Christian Theology" in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin* (ed. Donald K. McKim; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 297–98.

<sup>11</sup>John H. Leith, "Creation and Redemption: Law and Gospel in the Theology of John Calvin" in *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism* (ed. Richard C. Gamble; New York: Garland, 1992), 19.

<sup>12</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, II.7.12, 1: 360. See also Leith, "Creation and Redemption," 20–21.

<sup>13</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, II.7.12, 1: 361.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

law and the gospel are for the whole of life. Will Metzger puts it aptly: “Calvin explains that the law is a preparation for the gospel. Its function is to call the conscience into judgment and alarm it with fear...The law sends us to the gospel so that we may be justified. The gospel sends us to the law to find out what our duty is now that we are justified.”<sup>15</sup> It is necessary, then, to understand the role of the gospel in the believer’s life. According to Packer and Parrett, “[W]e are mistaken if we suppose that once we are Christians we should move on from the Gospel to other, supposedly more profound or sophisticated things.”<sup>16</sup> In recent years, there has been much emphasis on gospel-centered or Christ-centered teaching. In Reformed circles, book after book has been published to address this significant topic.<sup>17</sup> We believe that the gospel should be central to the life of the individual, the family, and the church.

### Gospel Ministry

Calvin’s view of the atonement did not hinder his proclamation of the gospel. Even though God had decreed to elect only a few to eternal life, the world still needed to hear the message of salvation. According to Joel Beeke, “Calvin never allowed election to limit the free offer of the gospel. He taught that since no one knows who are elect, preachers must operate on the principle that God wills all to be saved.”<sup>18</sup> Though God had a special love for the elect, Calvin did not exclude God’s love toward the

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<sup>15</sup>Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel Wholly by Grace Communicated Truthfully and Lovingly* (4th ed.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 110.

<sup>16</sup>J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 108.

<sup>17</sup>Examples of books on the centrality of the gospel in life and ministry: William P. Farley, *Gospel-Powered Parenting: How the Gospel Shapes and Transforms Parenting* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009); Jack Klumpenhouwer, *Show Them Jesus: Teaching the Gospel to Kids* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2014); Elyse M. Fitzpatrick and Jessica Thompson, *Give Them Grace: Dazzling Your Kids with the Love of Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); Michael Horton, *The Gospel-Driven Life: Being Good News People in a Bad News World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009); Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010); *Together for the Gospel: Preaching the Cross* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007); Mike Cospser, *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church’s Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013); Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness: Filling the Gap between Gospel Passion and the Pursuit of Godliness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

<sup>18</sup>Joel Beeke, “Calvin’s Evangelism,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 15 (2004): 83.

whole of humanity. The notion of common grace is both prevalent and pervasive in his writings. This shows the fullness of God's grace as expressed to all sinners alike. God bestows his grace on both the righteous and the evil.

Although it is well known that Calvin was an astute theologian, very few believers today know him as a person with a pastoral heart. He was a preacher who spoke to the hearts of God's people through thousands of sermons during his years in Geneva. Through his faithful preaching of the Word, he brought transformation to the people of that city. In his sermons, he showed his great skill as an expositor, but he also included insightful applications that brought the text to bear on the daily lives of his listeners.

However, it is less known that Calvin was also a missionary.<sup>19</sup> Because he had been driven away from his homeland, he fled to Geneva to bring the gospel to its people. According to Frank James, "Calvin was missions-minded because he understood the transformational character of the gospel. He understood that when God saves a person, it makes a profound difference in that person's life and in the lives of others. If Calvin is taken as a model, Reformed theology ought to produce not only the best theologians. But also the best pastors and missionaries. These convictions reveal the true Calvin behind the image."<sup>20</sup> Bernard Cottret describes Calvin as having an "extraordinary" vocation:

What understanding did Calvin have of his mission? In comparing himself to the prophet Jonah when he decided to remain in Strasbourg, Calvin in part answered this question. Jonah was the man with an irresistible calling, with a tormenting vocation that hemmed him in, pressed him, and badgered him even when he was cast into the sea...Missionary activity is basic to Christianity. It does not only aim at distant lands or the "Fridays" of the Pacific; it also looks to the immediate neighborhood. The Protestant Reformation aimed at a

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<sup>19</sup>Derek Thomas, "John Calvin and Missions," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 1, no. 2 (2009): 214.

<sup>20</sup>Frank A. James III, "Calvin the Evangelist," *Reformed Quarterly* 19, nos. 2/3 (2001), <http://rq.rts.edu/fall01/james.html>, accessed 10 November 2014.

complete transformation of the sense of community; Calvin in Strasbourg or Geneva was also a missionary, an envoy.<sup>21</sup>

Calvin never tired of pointing out and emphasizing the necessity of preaching the gospel to all, without prejudice or exception. This is what God wills and what he desires. Joel Beeke makes a keen observation about Calvin's evangelistic method:

For Calvin, evangelism involved a continual, authoritative call to the believer to exercise faith and repentance in the crucified and risen Christ. This summons is a whole-life commitment. Evangelism means presenting Christ so that people, by the power of the Spirit, may come to God in Christ. But it also means presenting Christ so that the believer may serve Christ as Lord in the fellowship of his church and in the world. Evangelism demands building up believers in the most holy faith according to the five key tenets of the Reformation: Scripture alone, grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, the glory of God alone.<sup>22</sup>

According to Beeke, Calvin made sure that the gospel was preached to the citizens of Geneva. He was also involved in mission work in France as well as to the natives of Brazil.<sup>23</sup>

The caricature of Calvinism as dampening missions or even being anti-missions is untenable.<sup>24</sup> Kenneth Stewart argues against this wrongheaded notion, observing that the Reformed tradition has included many well-known missionaries and evangelists: David Brainerd, William Carey, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards, to name a few. Even

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<sup>21</sup>Bernard Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography*, trans. M. Wallace McDonald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 136, 137–38. See also T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1975), 57–58.

<sup>22</sup>Beeke, "Calvin's Evangelism," 74.

<sup>23</sup>Beeke, "Calvin's Evangelism," 78–79. See also Michael A. G. Haykin, "Calvin's Missionary Influence in France," *Reformation and Revival* 10, no. 4 (2001): 35–37; W. Stanford Reid, "Calvin's Geneva: A Missionary Centre," *Reformed Theological Review* 42, no. 3 (1983): 65–66; David B. Calhoun, "John Calvin: Missionary Hero or Missionary Failure?," *Presbyterion: Covenant Seminary Review* 5, no. 1 (1979): 27–28; Antonio Carlos Barro, "Election, Predestination and the Mission of God" in *John Calvin and Evangelical Theology: Legacy and Prospect* (ed. Sung Wook Chung; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 193–94; Michael Horton, *Calvin on the Christian Life: Glorifying and Enjoying God Forever* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 207–209.

<sup>24</sup>David Mathis, "Introduction: God and the Daily Grind" in *With Calvin in the Theater of God: The Glory of Christ and Everyday Life* (ed. John Piper and David Mathis; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 23–24.



though Calvin held to the doctrine of particular atonement, he showed urgency to proclaim the gospel because his concern was for the salvation of the lost. Stewart concludes forcefully: “Late-twentieth-century prognosticators about an assumed dampening effect of Calvinism on missions have...made their pronouncements rashly. Alarmist statements, made in these last decades in the face of the current resurgence of interest in Reformed theology, surely ought to give way to more careful assessments if missions history is to be trusted. If it is true that *all* branches of the Christian family might have done more for missions, then it is also true that this branch has been ‘in missionary harness’ as long as any expression of Protestantism.”<sup>25</sup>

History shows that traditional Reformed churches have not neglected evangelism and mission. Gospel proclamation has always been central to the Reformed faith. Thus, as ministers of the gospel, our only warrant is to obey the explicit command of God to preach the gospel to all men and women.

### A High View of Scripture

The Westminster Confession of Faith’s view of Scripture can be summarized in four characteristics: its necessity, perspicuity, clarity, and sufficiency.<sup>26</sup> The Westminster Divines took their high view of Scripture in part from Calvin. For him, the Bible was God’s Word revealed to human beings in written form; it was God speaking to us.<sup>27</sup> Since it was from God, he viewed its authority as all-encompassing:

[S]o Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God. This, therefore, is a special gift, where God, to instruct the church,

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<sup>25</sup> Kenneth J. Stewart, *Ten Myths About Calvinism: Recovering the Breadth of the Reformed Tradition* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 147; italics in the original.

<sup>26</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith, I.3–10.

<sup>27</sup> Wulfert de Greef, “Calvin’s Understanding and Interpretation of the Bible,” in *John Calvin’s Impact on Society, 1509–2009*, 67–71. See also Donald K. McKim, “Calvin’s View of Scripture” in *Readings in Calvin’s Theology*, 59; H. Henry Meeter, *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism* (6th ed.; revised by Paul A. Marshall; Grand Rapids: Baker and CRC Publications, 1990), 28. John Murray argues that Calvin had a high view of the Scriptures, holding that they were inerrant. John Murray, “Calvin’s Doctrine of Scripture” in *Studies in Theology*, 158.

not merely uses mute teachers but also opens his own most hallowed lips. Not only does he teach the elect to look upon a god, but also shows himself as the God upon whom they are to look. He has from the beginning maintained this plan for his church, so that besides these common proofs he also put forth his Word, which is a more direct and more certain mark whereby he is to be recognized.<sup>28</sup>

For Calvin, the Scriptures point us to Christ as our Mediator, at the same time helping us to understand God's creation, which he described as the "most glorious theater." He further explains, "Scripture adorns with unmistakable marks and tokens the one true God, in that he has created and governs the universe, in order that he may not be mixed up with the throng of false gods. Therefore, however fitting it may be for man seriously to turn his eyes to contemplate God's works, since he has been placed in this most glorious theater to be a spectator of them, it is fitting that he prick up his ears to the Word, the better to profit."<sup>29</sup>

Calvin's understanding of the Word drove him to faithful exegesis and proclamation, so that the people of God might be conformed to the image of Christ. According to John Murray, "[W]e find in Calvin himself no sense of incongruity between Scripture as being itself the truth of God and Christ as truth incarnate, nor even between an inerrant Scripture and Christ as the focal point of revelation...[H]e was faithful to the testimony of Jesus as God's last and eternal testimony to us."<sup>30</sup> We embrace the Word, for "inasmuch as all divinely uttered revelations are correctly designated by the term 'word of God,' so this substantial Word is properly placed at the highest level, as the wellspring of all oracles. Unchangeable, the Word abides everlastingly one and the same with God, and is God himself."<sup>31</sup> Since Christ is the Eternal Word (Logos), who is full of grace and truth, we embrace him as the "the fountain from which all of us must draw."<sup>32</sup>

In sum, Calvin was faithful in his study of the Word because of its supernatural nature. It drove him to carefully exegete, preach, and proclaim the truth of the gospel. In the same way, we hold a high view of

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<sup>28</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, I.6.1, 1:70.

<sup>29</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, I.6.2, 1:72.

<sup>30</sup> John Murray, "Calvin and the Authority of Scripture" in *Studies in Theology*, 178, 180.

<sup>31</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, I.13.7, 1: 130.

<sup>32</sup> Calvin, *Commentary on John*, 1: 30; on John 1:14.

Scripture because in it God has revealed himself to us. As the Westminster Confession of Faith states, the Bible is to be regarded as our only “rule of faith and life.”<sup>33</sup>

### Gospel Clarity

The goal of the Christian life is to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29; cf. Col 1:15). Thus, every believer is exhorted to imitate Christ (1 Cor 11:1) and follow his footsteps (1 Pet 2:21). For Calvin, the pattern of the Christian life is one of cross-bearing. According to Ronald Wallace,

The main feature in the pattern of the life of Christ to which we are to be conformed in our own Christian life is the Cross. The life of Jesus from His infancy was marked by cross-bearing, and involved Him in a straining towards His cross. It is primarily in the pattern which he worked out in submitting to His death and resurrection that Christ’s sanctification is meant to be the outward pattern of our sanctification. Indeed, Calvin can say that in submitting to His cross Jesus submitted to what was simply God’s ordinary way of dealing with His people in this matter of sanctification. It is therefore principally in His bearing His cross and patient submission to His suffering that Christ as our Head is to us a “mirror of sanctity” and the example we are to imitate.<sup>34</sup>

However, Calvin cautioned against “aping” Christ: “It deserves our attention that Christ says that he *gave an example*; for we are not at liberty to take all his actions, without reserve, as subjects of imitation.”<sup>35</sup> Wallace explains: “We must remember that we have to conform to Christ not in those actions that are the outcome of His majesty and the expression of His divine nature...but rather in faith and patience and obedience—the qualities that are connected with self-denial and cross-bearing.”<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, we must clarify the nature of gospel proclamation. We must remember that the gospel is a message which is to be proclaimed (Rom 1:16, 8:15; 1 Cor 15:1–8). Peter Jensen puts this clearly: “The achievement of the gospel is that people come to know God through

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<sup>33</sup>Westminster Confession of Faith, I.2.

<sup>34</sup>Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 43–44.

<sup>35</sup>Calvin, *Commentary on John*, 2:48; on John 13:15; italics in the original. See also Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 42.

<sup>36</sup>Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 42.

informative and hortatory words about him. Whatever else the gospel is, it is verbal, an announcement by way of speech. Hence the gospel is preached, heralded or proclaimed; that is what one does with a gospel.”<sup>37</sup> God gave us his revealed Word to show us that the gospel is good news for sinful humanity. It is in the gospel that we see Christ and his righteousness. Since we are unable to attain the righteousness that God requires of us, we are commanded to trust Christ and his work on the cross. Luther called this an “alien righteousness,” for it cannot be produced from ourselves but is received by faith alone.

According to Calvin, we know the gospel as it is revealed in Christ. In his commentary on Romans 1:3, he wrote: “This is a remarkable passage, by which we are taught that the whole gospel is included in Christ, so that if any removes one step from Christ, he withdraws himself from the gospel. For since he is the living and express image of the Father, it is no wonder, that he alone is set before us as one to whom our whole faith is to be directed and in whom it is to center. It is then a definition of the gospel, by which Paul expresses what is summarily comprehended in it.”<sup>38</sup> Without the gospel, no salvation is available to sinful humanity. Calvin explained further:

Two things must be found in Christ, in order that we may obtain salvation in him, even divinity and humanity. His divinity possesses power, righteousness, life, which by his humanity are conveyed to us. Hence the Apostle has expressly mentioned both in the Summary he gives of the gospel, that Christ was manifested in the flesh — and that in it he declared himself to be the Son of God. So John says; after having declared that the Word was made flesh, he adds, that in that flesh there was a glory as of the only-begotten Son of God. (John 1:14.)<sup>39</sup>

The gospel is good news for the world today. This is why preachers like the apostle Paul, Calvin, and those who have followed in their footsteps

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<sup>37</sup>Peter Jensen, *The Revelation of God* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 35. See also Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 95.

<sup>38</sup>John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (trans. John Owen; 1853; reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), 26; on Romans 1:3.

<sup>39</sup>Calvin, *Romans*, 27.

never tire of proclaiming the wonderful news of salvation found in Christ.<sup>40</sup>

### Preaching the Gospel

In some pulpits today, instead of proclaiming God's Word, the preacher gives mere advice or "how to" sermons. The absolute truths of Holy Scripture are reduced to nothing more than moral principles. Instead of showing the character of God, these sermons have become little more than exercises in casuistry. God is reduced to a cosmic counselor: "God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when he is needed to resolve a problem."<sup>41</sup> For Calvin, preaching was speaking the Word of God as if God were present. Mark Beach presents a sobering view of Calvin's preaching: "The gospel is not merely an 'invitation to fellowship with Christ,' it is a vehicle by which Christ is communicated to us. That is to say, it is the instrument through which Christ is offered to us, with all of his 'heavenly benefits,' his merits, righteousness, wisdom, and grace—all these 'without exception.' Christ's ministers preach the Word, and in this way Christ 'gives His sacramental presence in the midst of His Church, imparts to men the grace which the Word promises, and establishes His Kingdom over the hearts of His hearers.'"<sup>42</sup>

Calvin understood the preacher's words expounding Scripture as God's Word. This is where the people of God hear God talking to them. Whenever the Word of God is preached, God's people are edified and exhorted to obey his commands, resulting in purity of life. Richard Muller comments: "As a preacher Calvin continually sought to emphasize to his hearers the need for God's Word as a light to life's path. He recognized that the revelation of God embodied in Scripture was more than a simple deposit of knowledge. In the reading and exposition of Scripture and in the hearing of the preached Word, God is daily revealed to the human heart as

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<sup>40</sup> William B. Barclay and Ligon Duncan, *Gospel Clarity: Challenging the New Perspective on Paul* (Carlisle, PA: EP Books, 2010), 40–47.

<sup>41</sup> Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 163.

<sup>42</sup> J. Mark Beach, "The Real Presence of Christ in the Preaching of the Gospel: Luther and Calvin on the Nature of Preaching," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 10 (1999): 94; quotation is from Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, 84.

Creator, Ruler, Redeemer, Father. Scripture, as God's Word, is a present revelation, an effective Word directed toward the faithful."<sup>43</sup>

Preaching is not to be neglected in the church, for it is the means whereby the Holy Spirit kindles and strengthens the faith of God's people. Muller adds, "Calvin establishes the closest possible relation between the words of the preacher, the Word of God, and the work of the Spirit without exalting the human instrument beyond his station. Preaching makes the Word of God present to faith because God has so willed."<sup>44</sup> But preaching the Word also means preaching the gospel. When preaching becomes mere advice, the people of God find it burdensome. Instead of the proclamation of the grace-giving Word, preaching becomes the publication of the terms of the law. Believers are exhorted to produce change out of their own effort, rather than being reminded that "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor 5:17). The preaching of the gospel frees us from this legalism and leads us to look upon Christ, who through his obedience pleased the Father. Calvin explained this better: "To be lifted up means to be placed in a lofty and elevated situation, so as to be exhibited to the view of all. This was done by the preaching of the Gospel; for the explanation of it which some give, as referring to the cross, neither agrees with the context nor is applicable to the present subject. The simple meaning of the words therefore is, that, by the preaching of the Gospel, Christ was to be raised on high, like a standard to which the eyes of all would be directed, as Isaiah had foretold (Isaiah 2:2)."<sup>45</sup>

Citing 1 Timothy 2:6, Calvin stressed the sermon's setting forth of Christ as the right time to call sinners to God: "Let us, therefore, learn that, wherever the gospel is preached, it is as if God himself came into the midst of us, and solemnly and expressly besought us, that we may not wander in darkness, as if we knew not where to go, and that those who refuse to obey may be rendered inexcusable."<sup>46</sup> Steven Doe quotes from Calvin's letter to Edward Seymour, the Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector of England for several years during the time when King Edward VI was a minor, describing the kind of preaching Calvin longed to see in the churches:

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<sup>43</sup>Richard A. Muller, "The Foundation of Calvin's Theology: Scripture as Revealing God's Word," *Duke Divinity School Review* 44 (1979): 14–15.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Calvin, *John*, 90; on John 3:14.

<sup>46</sup>Calvin, *Gospels*, 3:105; on Matthew 24:14.

All these considerations [problems particular to pre-Elizabethan England] ought not to hinder the ordinance of Jesus Christ from having free course in the preaching of the Gospel. Now, this preaching ought not to be lifeless but lively, to teach, to exhort, to reprove, as Saint Paul says in speaking thereof to Timothy (2 Tim. iii). So indeed, that if an unbeliever enter, he may be so effectually arrested and convinced, as to give glory to God, as Paul says in another passage (1 Cor. xiv). You are also aware, Monseigneur, how he speaks of the lively power and energy with which they ought to speak, who would approve themselves as good and faithful ministers of God, who must not make a parade of rhetoric, only to gain esteem for themselves; but that the Spirit of God ought to sound forth by their voice, so as to work with mighty energy. Whatever may be the amount of danger to be feared, that ought not to hinder the Spirit of God from having liberty and free course in those to whom he has given grace for the edifying of the Church.<sup>47</sup>

Finally, with the Great Commission in mind, we look to Christ's command: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:18–20). Calvin has this to say: "Here Christ, by removing the distinction, makes the Gentiles equal to the Jews, and admits both, indiscriminately to a participation in the covenant. Such is also the import of the term: go out; for the prophets under the law had limits assigned to them, but now, the wall of partition having been broken down (Eph 2:14), the Lord commands the ministers of the gospel to go to a distance, in order to spread the doctrine of salvation in every part of the world."<sup>48</sup>

## Summary

To preach the whole counsel of God is a task that every preacher must place foremost in his ministry. However, it is a sad fact today that many preachers neglect the careful study of God's Word. Instead, many of them are busy with meetings and other church activities. T. David Gordon

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<sup>47</sup> John Calvin, "To Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, October 22, 1548" in *Calvin's Selected Works* (7 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 5:190; quoted in Steven Doe, "The Voice from the Pulpit: John Calvin and Preaching," *Ordained Servant* 17 (2008): 61–62.

<sup>48</sup> Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists*, 3:316; on Matthew 28:19.

reveals in a soul-searching way why preaching is in a crisis: “[T]o hear [the Word preached is] an act of conscience, which is bound to obey God. But the conscience is *not* bound to obey the minister; the minister is only to be obeyed insofar as he *demonstrates* to the hearer what *God’s* will is. Therefore, there is no religious use in a sermon that merely discloses the *minister’s* opinion, but does not disclose the opinion of God.”<sup>49</sup>

Calvin showed his diligence in the office of the pastor through his theological and pastoral regimen. His sacramental view of the preached Word gripped his heart while he stood as God’s representative in the pulpit. Rather than merely preaching sermons, he proclaimed the gospel wherever he went. His gospel ministry included evangelism as well as the sending out of missionaries. Whenever the Word is preached, it offers the grace of God to all sinners, as God desires the salvation of all.

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<sup>49</sup>T. David Gordon, *Why Johnny Can’t Preach: The Media Have Shaped the Messengers* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 18–19; italics in the original.





## “COULD THEY BE MADE TO SEE?”: THE EDUCATIONAL LEGACY OF XIAMEN TO THE PHILIPPINES

蕭信心 JEAN UY UAYAN



In 1834, Rev. Dr. David Abeel III 雅裨理 (1804–1846) wrote a book entitled *Journal of a Residence in China and the Neighboring Countries, from 1829–1833*.<sup>1</sup> In it, he used extracts of another work by C. W. King that was published in 1828.<sup>2</sup> King had resided in Manila, thus the title of his work was *Remarks on the Philippines, and on their Capital Manila*. King’s book is one long *laudatio* regarding the land and its wealth, the description of the people (including the Chinese residents), however, was far less positive. Noting that the people were subject to the Roman Catholic priests, Abeel stated: “The city of Manilla [sic]...would be a most advantageous post for missions. Let every Christian pray that the power of

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<sup>1</sup> David Abeel, *Journal of a Residence in China and the Neighboring Countries from 1829 to 1833* (New York: Leavitt, Lord and Co., 1834).

<sup>2</sup> The title of the small volume, published in 1828, is *Remarks on the Philippines, and on their Capital Manila*. See “Miscellanies,” *The Chinese Repository*, Vol. 2, from May 1833 to April 1834 (2nd ed.; Canton: Printed for the Proprietors, 1834), 350–55.

the Beast may be destroyed, and the scepter of Jesus be extended over these perishing souls.”<sup>3</sup>

Eight years later, Abeel would re-enter China through Xiamen, still harboring deep passion for the Chinese souls. When Rev. Philip Wilson Pitcher wrote about Abeel, he said that Abeel “stood on these shores face to face with eight or ten millions of superstitious idolaters. Like a solid wall of adamant, darkness, ignorance and evil seemed to completely envelope the nation. The blindness of generations was upon the people! Could they be made to see?”<sup>4</sup>

He was referring to the spiritual blindness of the Chinese in Xiamen, China, then known as “Amoy” to the foreigners. Preaching the Word was the most direct and influential means of evangelization, of opening the eyes of the Chinese. Needless to say, the “eyes” of the soul also needed to be enlightened and physical blindness also needed to be addressed. Thus evangelism, nurturing the mind through education and literature, and healing of the body served as the three arms complementing the mouth as faculties that helped spread the gospel in Xiamen.<sup>5</sup> The Chinese in the Philippines and in Fujian would be “made to see” through the missionary enterprises of preaching, printing, medical services and education, but this article will focus on the last aspect.

Early on, the plight of women and children caught the attention of Abeel because they were even more acutely afflicted by such blindness and evil. Abeel wrote a chapter on this topic in his *Journal*, reporting that “infanticide is almost exclusively limited to the female sex; and the condition of that class of the community, when spared, is an evidence as well as one cause of the real barbarity and misery of the nation.”<sup>6</sup> Quoting a Chinese writer without naming the source, he further wrote that the women were to “rise, run, work, eat little, spend little, be silent, keep out

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<sup>3</sup> Abeel, *Journal*, 353–360.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Wilson Pitcher, *In and About Amoy: Some Historical and Other Facts Connected with One of the First Open Ports in China*, second edition (Shanghai: The Methodist Publishing House in China, 1912), 230. Pitcher was a member of the American Reformed Church Mission in Xiamen and was at one time the principal of Union Middle School 尋源中學堂 (307).

<sup>5</sup> See Philip Wilson Pitcher, *Fifty Years in Amoy or, a History of the Amoy Mission, China, Founded February 24, 1842* (New York: Reformed Church in America, 1893); Gerald Francis de Jong from *The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America*, no. 22 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> Abeel, *Journal*, 129.

of sight, obey, bear, and rather bleed, starve, and die, than dare to complain.”<sup>7</sup>

On his way back home, he presented a pamphlet entitled “Appeal to Christian Ladies in behalf of Female Education in China” to many audiences. Abeel’s report back in his homeland that women in China were pleading for “female men” to come and share Christianity with them especially touched the heart of Sarah Platt (Haines) Doremus (1802–1877), the “Mother of American Missions.” She organized the Society for Promoting Female Education in China and the Far East in July 1834, the very first women’s foreign missionary society to support independent mission work in foreign lands.<sup>8</sup> She also founded the Women’s Union Missionary Society in 1860 but it was not totally successful.<sup>9</sup> These early societies led to the formal establishment of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) Women’s Board of Foreign Missions in 1875. This Board greatly supported the RCA educational ministry in Xiamen.

With this moving force in the home front complementing the thrust of mission work in Xiamen, the RCA can be recognized as one of the earliest groups to work for the salvation and education of Chinese women and children. This is attested by Talmage during the General Conference of Missionaries of 1877 when the topic of “Woman’s Work for Woman” and “Relation of Protestant Missions to Education” elicited much lively discussions among the delegates. He noted that “in connection with all the churches in Amoy there are, and have been for many years (almost from the beginning), classes for the instruction of women conducted by the

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<sup>7</sup> Abeel, *Journal*, 129–130.

<sup>8</sup> Donald J. Bruggink and Kim N. Baker, “Reformed Church in America: Women in and for Mission” in *By Grace Alone: Stories of the Reformed Church in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 148. Also annotated in the citation of *Society for Promoting Female Education in the East Annual Report* in the Missionary Periodical Database, accessed 3 September 2015, <http://divdl.library.yale.edu/missionperiodicals/viewdetail.aspx?id=718>; “June 12, 1804: David Abeel: Born to Lead Women to New Birth,” in *Christian History Timeline*, accessed 9 August 2006, <http://chi.gospelcom.net/DAILYF/2003/06/daily-06-12-2003.shtml>. In a period of about twenty years, the organizations she led sent about 1,000 missionaries to all parts of the world. See “January 22, 1877: “Mother of Missions” Doremus Died from a Spill,” *Christian History Timeline*, accessed September 4, 2015, <http://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/mother-of-mission-doremus-died-from-a-spill-11630585.html>.

<sup>9</sup> This was because Rufus Anderson of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions opposed the idea of a women’s organization. See Dana L. Robert, “Doremus, Sarah Platt (Haines),” in *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (ed. Gerald H. Anderson; New York: Macmillan Reference, 1998), 183–84.

ladies of the missions.”<sup>10</sup> This trailblazing impetus bore fruit in the informal (through learning how to read) and formal education of children and women, especially young girls, the focal group in this study.

Protestant missionaries quickly launched Christian education work inside the Treaty ports that opened China to the West in 1842. Peter Tze Ming Ng listed the earliest schools as: a girls’ school in 1844 established by the British Educational Society for Eastern Women; the Ying Wah Boys’ School 英華書院 in 1845 in Xiamen, by the London Missionary Society; the Ningbo Boys’ Academy in 1845, by the American Presbyterian Mission; and a boys’ school in 1848 in Fuzhou, by the American Methodist Mission. By 1875 there were 350 Protestant schools in China, mostly in the primary level, with 6000 students. Ng considers the state of Protestant education in China as “growing rather slowly throughout the 19th century,” facing problems such as missionaries’ pre-occupation with evangelism, lack of support from the missions and their home base, and absence of a “well-established educational policy” among the different mission bodies.<sup>11</sup> However, if one studies the history of the Amoy mission in relation to educational work, a more positive picture than what was portrayed by Ng comes to light.

This chapter will first introduce RCA mission and education in Xiamen, then focus on the education of girls in Xiamen (and subsequently in Gulangyu 鼓浪嶼 or in Hokkien, Kolongsu), and the lasting legacy of this mission work impacting the establishment of Filipino-Chinese Protestant church schools in the Philippines. It will attempt to discover the web of influence starting in Xiamen that extended to the Philippines during the late 19th century and until the middle of the 20th century.

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<sup>10</sup>Talmage was responding to the presentation of Martha (Foster) Crawford’s essay “Woman’s Work for Woman.” Martha (1830–1909) and her husband Tarleton Perry Crawford (1821–1902) were missionaries sent by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. See *Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China Held at Shanghai, May 10–24, 1877* (Shanghai: Presbyterian Mission Press, 1878), 147–60.

<sup>11</sup>Peter Tze Ming Ng, *Chinese Christianity: An Interplay between Global and Local Perspectives*, Religion in Chinese Societies Vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 47–48. Unfortunately, Ng does not cite any source for his statement. Charles Silvester Horne mentions a “boys’ school having been successfully worked for some time” when a girls’ school was established in Gulangyu in 1854. See *The Story of the L.M.S.* (London: London Missionary Society, 1908), 329.

## RCA Mission and Education in Xiamen

Protestant mission in South Fujian, China was initiated by the missionaries of the RCA and the American Episcopal Church on February 24, 1842.<sup>12</sup> It was Rev. David Abeel of the RCA who laid the foundation for this work in Gulangyu, a small island about half a mile south of the much larger island of Xiamen.<sup>13</sup> Although he did not baptize any convert, yet many who were later baptized had their first impression of Christianity and their first instructions from Abeel. His name was “fragrant, not only among Europeans and Americans, but also among the Chinese.”<sup>14</sup> Abeel’s pioneer vision was caught by the missionaries that followed him to Xiamen.

The three pioneering missions that worked in the Amoy Mission were the Reformed Church in America 美國歸正教會, also known as the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church (initiated work in 1842), the London Missionary Society 倫敦傳道會 (LMS, 1844), and the English Presbyterian Mission 英國長老會 (EPM, 1850). From these three pioneering missions, approximately 30 other mission agencies were established throughout China in less than thirty years.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>There were other missionaries who didn’t stay long in Xiamen: Bishop Dr. William Jones Boone (1811–1864) of the American Episcopal Church arrived in Xiamen with Dr. Abeel; while the American Presbyterian Church (North) was represented for a while longer by James Curtis Hepburn (1815–1911), M. D., from 1843 to 1845, and by Rev. John Lloyd (1813–1848) from 1844 to 1848. See Pitcher, *Fifty Years*, 92.

<sup>13</sup>De Jong, *Reformed Church*, 15. Although Abeel belonged to the RCA, his mission affiliation was originally with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, hence, some sources credit the ABCFM as initiating the work in Xiamen. The relationship between RCA and ABCFM was amicably dissolved in 1857 and the Board of Foreign Missions of RCA took charge of the Amoy station. *General Synod’s Report on Foreign Missions Adopted June, 1857 with an Appeal to the Churches by the Corresponding Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Ref. Prot. Dutch Church* (New York: Board of Publication of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, 1857), 16. See a short biography of Abeel in Alexander Wylie, *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a List of their Publications, and Obituary Notices of the Deceased. With Copious Indexes* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1867), 72–75.

<sup>14</sup>This is what Talmage testified regarding his impression of his predecessor David Abeel, as recorded in Fagg, *Forty Years*, 38–39.

<sup>15</sup>See G. Thompson Brown, *Earthen Vessels and Transcendent Power: American Presbyterians in China, 1837–1952* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 26. Pitcher gave the translation for LMS as 自由教 and for EPM as 大英長老教 in *In and About Amoy*, 311. The translations in the text are found in 杰拉德·F·德庸著, 楊麗·葉克豪譯, *美國歸正*

But to Xiamen several distinctions can be acknowledged, according to Philip Wilson Pitcher (1856–1915):<sup>16</sup>

- Two converts (Ong Hok Kui 王福貴 and Lau Un Sia 劉殷舍) after only four years (on April 5, 1846) of mission work
- The first woman baptized in Fujian (Ng Si Sin 黃氏新 in July 1849)
- The first Protestant church building in Fujian and the whole of China, built on Sin-koe-a 新街仔 (“Little New Street”) called First Church of Amoy 廈門第一基督教會 or Sinkoe Chapel 新街堂會
- The first Protestant evangelist-martyr (U Teng An 余定安)
- The first native ordained pastors (Iap Han Chiong 葉漢章 and Lo Tau/Lo Ka Gu 羅暉/羅嘉漁)
- The first *Anglo Chinese Manual with Romanized Colloquial in the Amoy Dialect* 翻譯英華廈腔語彙 by Rev. Elihu Doty (1809–1864) printed in 1855
- The first church union movement (Classis of Amoy 廈門大會 formed on April 2, 1862)
- The first mission comity arrangement in China
- The first Christian day school
- The first school for girls

Pitcher’s book *In and About Amoy* reported that a Christian day school was established by Rev. Lyman Burt Peet (1809–1878) in 1845, the year that Abeel left China, at Liau-a-au (寮仔后 Liaozaihou). In less than a year he was transferred to Fuzhou and Rev. Elihu Doty 羅啻 (1809–1864) and his first wife, Clarissa Dolly Ackley (1806 –1845), were placed in charge.<sup>17</sup> This school lasted only a few months due to Clarissa’s untimely death on October 5, 1845. Pitcher continues to write that “Mrs. Wm. [William]

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*教在廈門 1842–1951 The Reformed Church in China 1842–1951* (台北市: 龍圖騰文化, 2013), 37. Henceforth, this will be cited in this article as “De Jong/Chinese.”

<sup>16</sup>Pitcher, *In and About Amoy*, 232–240; De Jong/Chinese, 45, 58, 60, 90, 91; see De Jong’s excellent treatment on the union movement and comity arrangement on pages 62–77.

<sup>17</sup>Pitcher, *In and About Amoy*, 231, 240. Ackley was equipped with Chinese knowledge, but she succumbed to diarrhea and constant indigestion. See “My Dear Amelia: The Doty Letters from Amoy, Christian Parenthood, the Heathen Chinese, and the Missionary Enterprise,” by Ting Man Tsao, accessed 27 January 2015, [http://www.nines.org/print\\_exhibit/601](http://www.nines.org/print_exhibit/601). Pitcher does not give the Chinese name of Liau-a-au but it is a “Temple of the Sea” close by the well-known American trading company Russell and Company in Xiamen. Dr. Chris White supplied the Chinese name to the author.

Young [楊威廉牧師娘, of the London Missionary Society] opened the FIRST SCHOOL FOR GIRLS with twelve pupils at her house Liau-a-au about the same time. Thus, was inaugurated in this district, as early as 1847, a work for girls and women that has grown in importance and strength during the intervening years.”<sup>18</sup>

According to de Jong, “the reasons for the limited concern with formal education of children during the early period were several; these include a shortage of personnel and teaching materials and a lack of interest among Chinese parents. There also was the fact that the missionaries themselves had mixed opinions at this time about dividing their time between preaching and teaching.”<sup>19</sup> At first there were missionaries whose opinion was that schools would engage their attention so much as to divert them from the main goal of proclaiming the gospel. However, by 1856, this view had been supplanted by another—although preaching the gospel must remain the “first and great work” of the missionaries, it was nevertheless “very important that the children of church members be gathered into a Christian school.”<sup>20</sup>

This became the guiding principle for future mission work in South Fujian, and this principle also became the reason why the same pattern was replicated in the Philippines, albeit not by mission agencies, and in other Southeast Asian countries in succeeding generations. Before exploring this replication in the Philippines, let us consider the presentation given by de Jong regarding the development of RCA work in education in South Fujian. He viewed this in three periods, starting with a general survey from 1842 to 1951, but focusing on two periods for the educational progress from the years 1863–1900 and 1900–1937.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>The emphasis (uppercase letters) is from Pitcher, *In and About Amoy*, 241. The maiden and Chinese name of Mrs. Young has not been found in the sources available to the author.

<sup>19</sup>De Jong, *Reformed Church*, 34–35. They were missionaries of the London Missionary Society.

<sup>20</sup>*Christian Intelligencer* (May 29, 1856), 189, quoted by De Jong, *Reformed Church*, 35.

<sup>21</sup>The information in this section is mostly derived from De Jong, *Reformed Church*, 120–26.



## 1. Education and Evangelization, 1863–1900

Primary day schools and schools for women were established during this period. According to de Jong, the missionaries in Fujian paid more attention to elementary institutions since this life stage is the ideal time to infuse the young minds of children with the gospel and Christian values. The goal was to establish a day school for each church that the missionaries founded. Two were established in the 1850s, a second one in the next decade, and another one in the 1880s. By 1900 ten co-educational day schools had been established among the eleven churches, thus showing that growth was slow but steady. Funding for these schools was mainly supplied by the Women’s Board of Foreign Mission of the RCA.

One of the greatest achievements of this educational arm of mission was the education of girls and women. It was desired that young girls could also attend the church day schools, but due to the Chinese traditional mindset and fear for the safety of the young girls, a girls’ school with dormitory facility was not established until 1870; it is known today as the Yu De Nü Zi Zhong Xue Xiao 毓德女子中學校, or Yude, for short. A fuller discussion on this school will be given in succeeding pages of this article.

De Jong considers this period significant for establishing many girls’ and boys’ schools and standardizing the elementary curriculum. According to him, girls’ schools were started by Alice Kip Van Dyck 栗山大牧師娘 (served 1886–1896) at Sio-khe (小溪) in 1888, by Elizabeth Maria Cappon 凱本姑娘 (served 1891–1909; b. 1858) at Changchow (長洲) in 1895, and by Nellie Zwemer 尋雅麗姑娘 (served 1891–1930) and Lily N. Duryee 理清蓮姑娘 (served 1894–1937; d. 1950) at Tong-an (同安) in 1896.<sup>22</sup> The girls learned to read and write Chinese characters, and speak the *Hokkien* dialect, along with the study of Scripture and Bible history and other secular courses (geography, arithmetic, art, music and the sciences).<sup>23</sup> The religious studies involved memorizing Bible passages, Jesus’ parables and miracles, many of the Psalms, reading the *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and attending “inquiry sessions” regarding the Heidelberg

<sup>22</sup> See detailed chart in De Jong/Chinese, 473–77.

<sup>23</sup> *Fortieth Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America 1872*, 17, accessed September 24, 2015, [http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/world\\_annual\\_report/15/](http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/world_annual_report/15/).

Catechism. The academic program covered six years with two terms each year, from mid-September to mid-January and from mid-February to mid-June. In the early stage of this period, some of the teachers were non-Christian products of the traditional Chinese system who relied too heavily on rote learning. In later years, graduates of the RCA schools entered the teaching profession, thus easing and improving the situation. At the end of this period, these schools were becoming self-supporting and the missionaries were writing and supplying a variety of textbooks for the schools.

## 2. Educational Developments, 1900–1937

What de Jong writes concerning this period will be essentially summarized.<sup>24</sup> The number of schools and enrolments increased significantly and education became more self-supporting as the Chinese churches enlarged contributions and school tuitions were raised. The three mission bodies in Xiamen continued to cooperate well in matters of education. In terms of curriculum, the schools introduced more Western learning in response to China’s so-called “awakening.” Schools continued to pursue the special mission of providing Christian education for the children. Still, the fact remained that evangelization was the more primary focus and resources and energy were not diverted but kept in balance between the two departments.

By 1930 the mission schools extended operations from the primary, through middle school and up to the theological seminary levels. Primary schools were the most essential, and in China during this period, it was believed that primary schooling was the only education the vast majority of young people would ever receive. Only a small percentage acquired higher learning.

The mission policy was to establish a day school wherever there was an organized church or when there was assurance that ten people would enroll and a certain amount of funding would be subscribed locally. The norm was four to six grades for day schools and eight grades for boarding schools. The latter had more foreign supervision and better facilities. The standard of primary schools steadily improved after 1900. Some church consistories also sent special committees to visit schools and submit

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<sup>24</sup>De Jong, *Reformed Church*, 208–10.

reports regarding their standards. More teachers were drawn from the middle schools; they were more exposed to the “new learning” and had undergone training courses. However, the lack of teachers constantly plagued these schools, especially acute among the girls’ schools. Another policy that was pursued, in line with the policy of the Fukien Educational Association, was a common program of study and uniform examinations.<sup>25</sup>

### The Legacy of Iok Tek

One of the schools that de Jong gave special attention to is Yude, or what I shall call Iok Tek throughout the rest of this article. He remarked that this school set the pace for girls’ institutions.<sup>26</sup> Iok Tek is the Hokkien name that the alumnae fondly use for the school that was originally named Pei De Xue Tang 培德學堂 (literally, “Character-development School”) that was established in Xiamen near the Second Amoy Church 廈門第二基督教會. It was renamed Tian Wei Nü Xue Tang 田尾女學堂, after it was relocated in 1879 to Tian Wei in Gulangyu. The building was constructed with the help of the Women’s Board. In 1910 the school was renamed Yu De Nü Xue Xiao 毓德女學校 and in 1930 the name was again changed to Yu De Nü Zi Zhong Xue Xiao 毓德女子中學校.<sup>27</sup> The Anglicized name is Iok Tek Amoy Girls’ Middle School. Iok/毓 means “bring up, train, educate” and Tek/德 means “virtue, morals,” a very fitting name for the goal of this school and what it later accomplished.

Pitcher gave more details in another book, *Fifty Years in Amoy*, as follows: “The first native teacher employed was an old man named Hap Liong peh, and a matron, also, was employed to care for the girls. The first

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<sup>25</sup>Lewis Hudous, “Fukien” in *The China Mission Yearbook 1917 (Eighth Edition)*, ed. E. C. Lobenstine and the China Continuation Committee (Shanghai: The Christian Literature Society for China, 1917), 111.

<sup>26</sup>De Jong, *Reformed Church*, 214.

<sup>27</sup>De Jong/Chinese, 291, 293; Zhuang Ke Chang 莊克昌, “Sizai Fuwu Yude Nuzhong Huigu 四載服務毓德女中回顧 (Reminiscing Four Generations of Service at Yude Nuzhong)” in *Yude Muxiao Baizhounian Jiniankan 毓德母校百週年紀念刊 (Commemorative publication of the centennial anniversary of alma mater Iok Tek)* (Manila: Lüfei Yude Xiaoyouhui 旅菲毓德校友會 Philippine Iok Tek Alumni Association, [1970]), 3. This publication will henceforth be cited as *Jiniankan*.

female teacher was Mrs. Lo (widow of pastor Lo).<sup>28</sup> Mrs. Talmage had charge of the school till 1872.”<sup>29</sup> He also quoted Mary Talmage as saying:

Since the establishment of this institution many girls have passed through it who are now scattered through the country congregations. They are the great joy of our work and the bright hope of the future. Some of them have become teachers, many of them preachers’ wives, and nearly all made public profession of their love for the Saviour. The school is crowded at present (1892), having fifty girls on the roll. The training of these we feel to be the most important work, deserving all the time and care we are capable of giving.<sup>30</sup>

Helen Messler Van Doren 萬多倫姑娘 (1841–1919) served as the first principal from 1872 until 1876; she reported that it was the only girls’ school not only in Xiamen but the whole region.<sup>31</sup> At the closing exercises in 1876 she wrote to the Women’s Board that “The parents seemed much pleased, and were very thankful for what had been done for their daughters.” Further, “It shows that Chinese girls can be taught to think for themselves if sufficient care and training be given them” and “shows what can be done, and we trust that it is only the beginning of a glorious work, which shall yet be accomplished by the daughters of this people.” The oldest pupil was so advanced she would be put in charge the following school year, and the previously employed native teacher could be dismissed. Lastly, she reported that “Since this school was opened six

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<sup>28</sup>Pastor Lo Tau 羅罩 was one of the first native pastors ordained on March 29, 1863. *Thirty-second Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America 1864*, 14, accessed October 15, 2015, [http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=world\\_annual\\_report](http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=world_annual_report).

<sup>29</sup>Pitcher, *Fifty Years in Amoy*, 189. Unfortunately, he did not give the Chinese names of these teachers or of Pastor Lo. The “Mrs. Talmage” that he referred to would most likely be the second wife of John Van Nest Talmage—Mary Eliza Van Deventer Talmage 打馬字第二任牧師娘瑪麗 (1837–1912)—who served 47 years in Xiamen. The first wife, Abby F. Woodruff 打馬字第一任牧師娘 阿比 died in 1862. The “Pastor Lo” would be Luo Jiayu 羅嘉漁, the first pastor of Sinkoe Chapel 新街堂會 or Xinjie Church in Xiamen.

<sup>30</sup>Pitcher, *Fifty Years*, 190–92.

<sup>31</sup>*First Annual Report of the Women’s Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America for the Year Ending April 30, 1875* (New York: Rogers and Sherwood, 1875), 9. “Survey of the Missions. The Amoy Mission. China,” report from Amoy dated February 6, 1879 in *The Acts and Proceedings of the Regular Session of the General Synod, Reformed Church in America, The Church, 1879*, accessed 7 May 2015, <http://www.books.google.ca>. See also *The Van Doorn Family in Holland and America 1088–1908*, accessed 7 May 2015, <http://www.mocavo.com/The Van Doorn>.

years ago [1870] fifty-seven pupils have been in attendance at different times. Sixteen have been received into the church.”<sup>32</sup>

The daughter of John Van Nest Talmage – Mary Elizabeth “Molly” Talmage 打馬字馬利亞 (1855–1932) – took over from Van Doren and served as head for nearly forty years; her elder sister Katherine Murray “Kitty” Talmage 打馬字清吉 (1853–1938) was also a teacher there. These sisters were fondly called *toa koniu* 大姑娘 (Katherine) and *ji koniu* 二姑娘 (Mary) by everyone, the names meaning “eldest daughter” and “second daughter” respectively. By 1899, the student population had increased from the initial twelve to seventy-six, with ages ranging from eight to twenty-one. A year later, a much bigger building was constructed, and the first one was remodeled and used as a boys’ elementary school.

By the fiftieth anniversary of Iok Tek in 1920, a five-building complex (including Boys’ Primary, Women’s Bible School and Talmage College) was erected and the student population had increased from 384 to 438, two-thirds of whom were day students.<sup>33</sup> The school was developing into a high school. The principal was a foreigner and there were fourteen Chinese female teachers (all graduates of the school) and four Chinese male teachers.

The success of this school can be measured by the accomplishments of its graduates as shown in the 1913 and 1922 *Annual Reports of the Board of Foreign Missions*. The alumnae became the future school teachers and administrators, Bible women, doctors, pastors’ wives, and matrons of hospitals and orphanages in China and other Southeast Asian countries.<sup>34</sup> Many of them pursued higher degrees in distinguished higher institutions in China and in the United States; others taught in the mission

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<sup>32</sup>All quotations are from *Second Annual Report of the Women’s Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America for the Year Ending April 30th, 1876* (New York: Board of Publication of the Reformed Church in America, 1876), 8, accessed 30 August 2015, [http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/foreign\\_annual\\_report/2/](http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/foreign_annual_report/2/).

<sup>33</sup>*Eighty-eighth Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America 1920*, x, accessed 77 September 2015, [http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1067&context=world\\_annual\\_report](http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1067&context=world_annual_report). See photo in De Jong/Chinese, 291.

<sup>34</sup>*Eighty-first Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America 1913*, 36, accessed 30 August 2015, [http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1058&context=world\\_annual\\_report](http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1058&context=world_annual_report).

and other schools in Xiamen.<sup>35</sup> It was significantly mentioned in the 1922 *Annual Report* that there was one graduate, named only as “Mrs. Sy,” who went to Shanghai for higher studies, then to the Philippines for more English studies, and who has now returned as a faculty member.<sup>36</sup> This connection with the Philippines shall now be explored more deeply in the final section of this article.

## Church Schools in the Philippines

In order to fully understand the legacy of Iok Tek in the Philippines, it is necessary to discuss the situation of overseas Chinese in this nation, the history and development of the educational system in the Chinese community, and the establishment of church schools among the Chinese in this community.

### *Overseas Chinese in the Philippines*

The Chinese were coming to the Philippines to trade even before the Spanish Colonization period (1521–1898). The Hokkien Chinese from Fujian were the majority of the overseas traders between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries. They were very successful, even without official oversight or protection from China, gradually forming merchant communities in Southeast Asia, and specifically in Manila, where the Spanish found around 150 when they first arrived. Their successful trade even contributed to the Chinese economy but the community remained small and kept a low profile. According to Wang Gung-wu, they had to live by their wits, cultivate the fine art of risk-taking, and count on their

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<sup>35</sup> *Eighty-sixth Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America*, 1918, 11, accessed 30 August 2015, [http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1065&context=world\\_annual\\_report](http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1065&context=world_annual_report).

<sup>36</sup> *Ninetieth Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America 1922*, 19, accessed 17 September 2015, [http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1069&context=world\\_annual\\_report](http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1069&context=world_annual_report). In the course of writing my dissertation I came across the record that this lady was Mrs. Sih Eng Su/Xue YongShu 薛永黍, Sih being a variant spelling for Sy. She assisted the Presbyterian missionaries who worked in Cebu City during their visitations, acting as interpreter. Her husband was one of the founding members of Cebu Gospel Church 宿務基督教會. She served actively in many capacities. See Jean Uayan, “A Study of the Emergence and Early Development of Selected Protestant Chinese Churches in the Philippines” (Ph.D. diss., Asia Graduate School of Theology, 2007), 146–47.

family-village system and strong local Hokkien loyalties.<sup>37</sup> The majority of them were literate, but education of the young was rather informal and related to business needs (accounting, writing letters), or many of the children were sent back to China for schooling.<sup>38</sup> Eufronio M. Alip provides this information regarding the education of these Chinese:

The education of the Chinese in the Philippines, like their conversion to Christianity, was in the hands of the Christian missionaries during the Spanish regime. The Chinese parents sent their children to such schools as San Juan de Letran College and Ateneo Municipal in Manila. In these schools Chinese students studied the subjects and courses regularly prescribed for Spanish and Filipino students...The Chinese students who did not choose to study in the mission schools obtained their education, if at all, through the traditional tutorial [*sic*] method. They were taught by their elders how to read in their original Chinese dialects, and how to write in Chinese character.<sup>39</sup>

### *Education of Chinese in the Philippines*

Most of the Chinese-established schools in Southeast Asia emerged during the late nineteenth century. The first such school in the Philippines — the Anglo Chinese School 中西學校 (ACS, now known as Tiong Se Academy 中西學院) — was set up in the Chinese Consulate that was opened on

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<sup>37</sup> See Chapter Four of *China and the Chinese Overseas*, Ethnic Studies Series (Singapore: Times Media Private Limited, Eastern Universities Press by Marshall Cavendish, 1991), 87–111. For a full treatment of the Chinese in the Philippines, see Chapter Three in my dissertation entitled “A Study on the Emergence and Early Development of Selected Protestant Chinese Churches in the Philippines (Ph.D. diss., Asia Graduate School of Theology, 2007).

<sup>38</sup> See Wang Fu Min 王福民, “Jiushi Nianlai de Huaqiao Jiaoyu” 九十年來的華僑教育 (Education of overseas Chinese these past ninety years), in *Feilübin Huaqiao Shanju Gongsuo Jiushi Zhounian Jinian 菲律賓華僑善舉公所九十週年紀念 90th Anniversary Yearbook of the Philippine-Chinese Charitable Association 1877–1967* (Manila: Philippine-Chinese Charitable Association, 1968), 98–123. Henceforth cited as *90th Anniversary Yearbook*.

<sup>39</sup> Eufronio M. Alip, *Ten Centuries of Philippine-Chinese Relations (Historical, Political, Social, Economic)* (Manila: Alip and Sons, 1959), 123–24. The first schools in Malaysia and Singapore were established in 1819 and 1849, respectively. See Chia Oai Peng, “Chinese Education in Southeast Asia,” in *Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora*, ed. by Chee-Beng Tan, Routledge Handbook Series (London: Routledge, 2013), 446–457, accessed September 26, 2015, file:///F:/MyWorks/Routledge%20Handbook%20of%20the%20Chinese%20Diaspora%20-%20Chee-Beng%20Tan%20-%20Google%20Books.html.

April 15, 1899 by the first Chinese Consul in the country.<sup>40</sup> Chen Qian Shan 陳謙善, also known as Don Carlos Palanca Tan Chuey-liong and his son Chen Gang/Tan Kong 陳綱 (aka Engracio Palanca), the first Chinese Consul in the country, were the prime movers of this “voluntary private school” or yiwusishu 義務私塾.<sup>41</sup> There was no standard curriculum and English was not taught during the first years. By 1910 the student number had increased to more than a hundred. In the provinces, the Chinese Commercial School (now Iloilo Central Commercial High School) 怡郎華商中學 was established in Iloilo in 1912; the Chung Hua School 中華學校 was established in September 1915 in Cebu City (today it is known as Cebu Eastern College 宿務東方學院). By 1935, there were 58 schools in the country; today there are more than 125.<sup>42</sup>

### *Early Church Schools in the Philippines*

Of the 125 Chinese established schools in the Philippines that belong to the Association of Chinese-Filipino Schools in the Philippines, 19 are established by Protestants.<sup>43</sup> There are 8 church schools that are not part of this Association. The first church-related school in the Philippines is the St. Stephen’s Chinese Girls’ School or Shenggonghui Nūzi Xuexiao 聖公會女子學校, known today as St. Stephen’s High School 聖公會中學, established on July 22, 1917.

In reality, a boys’ night school had been established as St. Stephen’s Chinese Mission (SSCM, known today as St. Stephen’s Parish) in 1905, called St. Stephen’s Night School, but it lasted only until 1909. It immediately attracted forty-seven boys in the first few months of operation. One of the teachers who contributed to the success of this school was Soat-

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<sup>40</sup>Wang Fu Min, 98.

<sup>41</sup>Edgar Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life 1850–1898* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), vi; *90th Anniversary Yearbook*, 99; Alip, *Ten Centuries*, 124–125.

<sup>42</sup>Alip, *Ten Centuries*, 126. See Gengyun Ershizai, *Qiandao Wanyuanchun: Feilibin Huawen Xuexiao Lianhehui Qingzhu Chengli Ershi Zhounian TeKan 耕耘二十載，千島萬園春：菲律賓華文學校聯合會慶祝成立二十週年特刊 1993–2013* (Twenty Years of Hard Work, A Thousand Islands with Gardens of Spring: Twentieth Anniversary Special Publication of the Association of Chinese-Filipino Schools in the Philippines) (Manila: Association of Chinese-Filipino Schools in the Philippines, [2013]), 216–325 for brief histories of these schools. Henceforth cited as *Twenty Years*.

<sup>43</sup>*Twenty Years*, 221, 223, 229.



hoag Yin. He was brought up in the Presbyterian Church of South Formosa, educated at the Methodist School in Fuzhou and had taught in a prestigious school in Xiamen. He came to the Philippines in 1902 as a partner in the firm of S. C. Choy and Co., worked as a custom broker and also taught in the night school for the United States government. He began attending SSCM and was in the second confirmation class of Rev. Hobart Earl Studley/Shi HeLi 施和力牧師 (1871–1961).<sup>44</sup> When the night school opened, Yin decided to teach there, but before starting, he went back to Fuzhou and married a well-educated Christian. They returned on July 18, 1906. While her husband helped the school, Mrs. Yin volunteered as organist at SSCM. Bishop Charles Henry Brent 蘭德主教 (1862–1929, term of service 1901–1917) even encouraged Yin to prepare for ordination but he felt it was not his calling.<sup>45</sup>

In January 1906, SSCM established a day school, and both schools started to charge fees. This greatly affected attendance in the day school and it became unsustainable. Another factor leading to the failure of this school was the competition from the Anglo Chinese School. However, the principal (from 1911–1914) of ACS was a Chinese Presbyterian minister named Rev. Yang NaiFu/Yu Nai Hu 楊迺甫牧師. Rev. Yang formerly ministered at the Pechuia Church 白水營堂, a fruit of the missionaries of the RPDC and EPM. He was also involved in education in Gulangyu and Xiamen. Being a member of SSCM, he invited Studley to help teach in the English department of ACS. He later became the principal of the boys’

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<sup>44</sup> Studley was formerly a missionary of the RCA, and had served at Xiamen from 1896 until he left for the Philippines in 1903, but his wife was an Episcopalian. See more on Studley in De Jong, *Reformed Church*, 79, 113, 169, 249.

<sup>45</sup> The early history of SSCM-established schools can be found in my dissertation, 121–22. The sources that I used were Hobart Studley, “Report to the Cathedral Mission St. Stephen’s for Chinese for the Year Ending December 1905,” *Journal of the Annual Convocation of the Missionary District of the Philippine Islands* (1905): 30; Charles Henry Brent, Manila to Dr. John W. Wood, New York, May 20, 1907, RG76–13. St. Andrew’s Seminary Archives, Quezon City, Philippines; Hobart Earl Studley to Kimber, June 29, 1907, RG76–13; in Mark Douglas Norbeck, “Protestant Episcopal Church in the City of Manila, Philippine Islands from 1898–1918: An Institutional History,” (M.A. thesis, The University of Texas at El Paso, 1992), 259–260; Bi Chin Y. Uy/Huang Yao Mei/Zhen 黃姚美真, “Chinese Education in Philippine Society: An Analysis of Its Structure and Implications,” (Ed. D. diss., Philippine Women’s University, 1969), 2–5 and *Anglo Chinese School Golden Jubilee Book: 1899–1949* (Manila, 1949). For a brief history of Tiong Se Academy, see *Wikipedia*, s.v. “Tiong Se Academy,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiong\\_Se\\_Academy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiong_Se_Academy).

school and was one of the founders of the Girls' School.<sup>46</sup> In succeeding decades more church schools were established in Manila and throughout the country. One in particular, the Hope Christian High School 嘉南中學 (henceforth HCHS), would be directly related to Iok Tek. This school was established by the United Evangelical Church of the Philippines 菲律賓中華基督教會, a church where many members are Iok Tek alumnae.

### Iok Tek Legacy in the Philippines

In September 1970, a special publication entitled *Yüde Muxiao Baizhounian Jiniankan* 毓德母校百週年紀念刊 (*Commemorative publication of the centennial anniversary of alma mater Iok Tek*) was published in the Philippines. It was done by the Philippine Alumni Association of Iok Tek 旅菲毓德校友會, and according to Julia L. Tan 陳李錦英 (1907–1993), the number of these alumnae was around four hundred.<sup>47</sup> It was Principal Shao Qing Yuan 邵慶元校長 (1895–1951), high school principal from 1930–1938, who conceived of creating this association. It was formally organized on October 26, 1936.<sup>48</sup>

After leaving Hope Christian High School, Julia Tan went on to found another school on July 5, 1950 called Grace Christian High School 靈惠中學, known today as Grace Christian College 菲律賓基督教靈惠學院. On the web-page of Grace Christian Church of the Philippines 菲律賓靈惠基督教會, it reads:

This church-school model was based on the founders' desire for the school to have a spiritual “church-home” for its students, parents, and community – in a seven-day-a-week Christian education-filled environ-

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<sup>46</sup> *Wikipedia*, s.v. “Tiong Se Academy.”

<sup>47</sup> [Chen] Li Jin Ying [陳]李錦英 (Julia L. Tan), “Lüfei Yude Xiaoyouhui yu Muxiao 旅菲毓德校友會與母校 (Philippine Iok Tek Alumni Association and its *Alma Mater*)” in *Jiniankan*, 4–5. The English name does not appear in the publication, hence, I provided my own translation from the Chinese.

<sup>48</sup> Editorial team, “Yüde Muxiao Chuangli Bainian de Huigu 毓德母校創立百年的回顧 (Reminiscing a Hundred Years of our *Alma Mater* Yude)” in *Jiniankan*, frontispiece. The granddaughter of Shao Qing Yuan, Tan Shao Hui Cheng 陳邵蕙卿 (b. 1918) was one of the editors and a prime mover of the Association. She also studied at Iok Tek from elementary to high school level and later became a teacher at HCHS until her retirement. She also taught *Hokkien* at BSOP for many years.

ment. This model was rooted in Mrs. Julia Tan's training under foreign missionaries in her hometown of Xiamen, China, which led her to adopt two slogans for Grace Christian High School and Church:

- (a) The school is the church's mission field; and the church is the school's spiritual home
- (b) Separate administration-united harvest field.<sup>49</sup>

This truly reflects the educational philosophy of Iok Tek and is a clear evidence of the replication of Iok Tek that took place in the Philippines.

RCA missionary Rev. Joseph Esther 伊樹德牧師 (1911–1982) who served in China from 1946–1949, wrote in *Jiniankan* that “in Manila, many of the wise and able leaders of the churches and good teachers of the schools were graduates of Iok Tek.”<sup>50</sup> Esther moved to Manila after leaving China, and at one time was acting principal, then Head of the English Department of HCHS, ending his service in 1975.<sup>51</sup> Mrs. Julia L. Tan, who was once elementary school principal of Iok Tek, was the first principal of HCHS from 1946–1950. Esther further wrote that HCHS and Iok Tek had a very close relationship. One of the long-serving teachers of Iok Tek, Tena Holkeboer/Fu Yi Mu guniang 福懿慕姑娘 (1895–1965) became a teacher and administrator at Hope and served for ten years.<sup>52</sup> Many of the teachers at HCHS were also graduates of Iok Tek.

Esther's wife, Marion Genevieve Boot Esther 伊樹德師母保馬利安 (b. 1913) was the third daughter of Rev. Harry Boot, RCA missionary in Xiamen from 1903–1940. She recalls sitting under the tutelage of the Talmage sisters. At age six, she attended the fiftieth anniversary of Iok Tek, and strongly felt the great influence of Iok Tek on overseas Chinese

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<sup>49</sup>Paul Lee Tan, *Historical Highlights of Grace Christian Church* (Quezon City: Grace Christian Church, 2012), 1, accessed 27 June 2015, <http://gccp.org.ph/about/ourstory>.

<sup>50</sup>Joseph R. Esther 伊樹德, “Zai Haiwai Qinghe Yude de Jingshen 在海外慶賀毓德的精神 (Praising the Spirit of Yude from Overseas),” trans. Yi Hui 以惠, in *Jiniankan*, 6.

<sup>51</sup>Joseph and Marion Esther served in the Philippines from 1951–1975. They were instrumental in molding the lives of the students at HCHS and also in planting many Chinese churches outside Manila.

<sup>52</sup>Holkeboer served at Iok Tek from 1920–1948, not only as teacher, but as acting principal on many occasions. When I interviewed many church leaders while writing my dissertation, those who were alumnae of Iok Tek fondly called her “Tiger Lady” because in Hokkien, her surname was Hok 福 which sounded quite similar to Ho 虎, the word for tiger. For her terms of service in China and the Philippines, see De Jong/Chinese, 476–77. A short biography can be found in Anne C. Kwantes, *She Has Done a Beautiful Thing for Me: Portraits of Christian Women in Asia* (Manila: OMF Literature, 2005), 175–298.

as well as in HCHS. She states, “I can definitely say that the good spirit of Iok Tek School has come to Hope through our senior teachers Tena Holkeboer and Christina Wang 王淑禧 (1902–1966). They are our beloved friends, and although they have been called to heaven, their influence in HCHS continues to be seen anytime and anywhere.”<sup>53</sup>

In November 1936, Edna Knapp Beekman 麥淑禧 (1888–1975) and Principal Hong Rui Xue 洪瑞雪 (d. 1966) traveled from Gulangyu to visit the alumnae in Cebu City.<sup>54</sup> During the inaugural meeting there were thirteen alumnae in attendance. The Second World War disrupted their gatherings until meetings resumed in 1948. During this year members of the Cebu Gospel Church established the Kian Kee School or Suwu Jianji Zhongxue 宿務建基中學 (now Philippine Christian Gospel School). Two of the principals and many of the teachers of this school, including my own mother Sun Ti Uy Uayan 蕭黃舜治, were Iok Tek alumnae.<sup>55</sup> The love of learning was instilled so deeply in my mother that she didn’t want to return to the Philippines when the Second World War broke out. Had it not been for my grandfather’s stern and insistent telegrams telling her to come home, she would have stayed on at Iok Tek to continue high school studies.<sup>56</sup> During the 1960s and 70s, I still remember attending such

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<sup>53</sup>Marion Boot Esther, “Qingzhu Baizhounian Zhihe Yude Xiaoyou Xianci 慶祝百周年致賀毓德校友獻辭 (Greetings to the Iok Tek Alumni during its Centennial Celebration),” trans. Yi Hui 以惠, in *Jiniankan*, 6, my translation. Christina Wang was also an alumna of Iok Tek and became the principal of HCHS from 1950–1966.

<sup>54</sup>Beekman served in Iok Tek from 1914–1951. Hong Rui Xue served as principal from 1911 to 1921, and was involved with Iok Tek until 1953. See De Jong/Chinese, 475 and *Jiniankan*, 2, 17.

<sup>55</sup>The principals were Huang Bao Ying 黃寶英 (from 1948–1950) and Huang Hui Ci 黃惠慈 (from 1950–1957). There were many other prominent personalities like Principal Huang Bao Yu 黃寶玉 (from 1966–1970) of Hope Christian High School, Principal Julia L. Tan 陳李錦英 (from 1954–1992) of Grace Christian High School 靈惠中學, Principal Lin Ya Xiu 林雅秀 of St. Stephen’s High School 聖公會中學. See He Lin Shu Jiao 何林淑嬌, “Muxiao Baizhounian Huiyilu 母校百周年回憶錄 (A Memoir on the Centennial of My Alma Mater)” in *Jiniankan*, 13 and *Gengyun Ershizai, Qiantao Wanyuanchun: Feilubin Huawen Xuexiao Lianhehui Qingzhu Chengli Ershi Zhounian TeKan 耕耘二十載，千島萬園春：菲律賓華文學校聯合會慶祝成立二十週年特刊 1993–2013* (Twenty Years of Hard Work, A Thousand Islands with Gardens of Spring: Twentieth Anniversary Special Publication of the Association of Chinese-Filipino Schools in the Philippines) (Manila: Association of Chinese-Filipino Schools in the Philippines, [2013]), 221, 223, 239, 290.

<sup>56</sup>Sun Ti Uy Uayan, *Remembering My Father* (trans. Jean Uayan; Cebu City, n.d.).

alumnae gatherings with my mother when I was young. Many of those who attended the meeting were my Chinese teachers in Kian Kee. Although I did not study at Iok Tek, I feel a connection to this great institution because of my mother and my beloved Chinese teachers at Kian Kee.

On October 17, 1949, the Communist soldiers took Xiamen and Gulangyu. News of this event and the heavy damage inflicted upon Iok Tek shocked and saddened the alumnae scattered within and beyond China. Although there was a “honeymoon period” which made the missionaries think that they need not pack up and leave, the situation quickly deteriorated by 1950. On August 18, 1951, the 109-year history of the Reformed church mission at Xiamen came to an end.<sup>57</sup> Today, Iok Tek is no longer in existence (although several institutions have occupied the site) but as Joseph Esther rightly stated, “its influence has been extended and lengthened through its students and their children and grandchildren. The labor of its founders, supporters, teachers, and all the faithful hard work, has not been in vain.”<sup>58</sup>



Abby F. Woodruff 打馬字第一任牧師娘 阿比 (d. 1862) and John Van Nest Talmage 打馬字牧師 (1819–1892)  
Source: Courtesy of Russell Gasero of the Reformed Church in America



Elizabeth Maria Cappon (b. 1858; served 1891–1909)  
Source: Courtesy of Russell Gasero of the Reformed Church in America

<sup>57</sup>For the last days of the Amoy Mission, see De Jong, *Reformed Church*, 315–38.

<sup>58</sup>Joseph Esther, in *Jiniankan*, 6 (my translation).



Left: Group of women missionaries of the American Reformed Church, English Presbyterian Mission and London Missionary Society, Xiamen missionfield. Back row (from left): Miss Alexander (Mrs. Beattie), Mary Ewing, Helen Lecky, Theodora Noltenius, Miss Benham (LMS). Second row: Miss ? Miller, Jessie Johnston, **Mollie Talmage**,

**Mrs. Talmage (widow of Dr John Talmage), Katherine Talmage, Miss M.C. Morrison, Miss E.M. Cappon.** Front row: Jeannie Ewing, Catherine Usher and Margaret Ross. A set of group photographs taken in the Amoy [Xiamen] mission field ca. 1890-1910. Groups include missionaries from the American (Dutch) Reformed Church, the London Missionary Society, and English Presbyterian Mission. The Xiamen mission field included Xiamen, Chuan-chow [Quanzhou 泉州], Chang-chow [Zhangzhou 漳州], Chang-pu [Zhangpu 漳浦] and Sio-ke [Xiao Xi 小溪] districts. Accessed June 30, 2015,



Above: Old Building of Iok Tek Amoy Girls' Middle School  
*Source: Dr. Chris White*

<http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15799coll123/id/48431>

Right: Edna Knapp Beekman 麥淑禧 (1888–1975)  
*Source: Jiniankan, 17.*





Julia L. Tan 陳李錦英 (1895–1965)

Source: *Jiniankan*, 17.



Shao Qing Yuan 邵慶元 (b. 1895)

Source: *Jiniankan*, 17.



Joseph Esther 伊樹德牧師 (1911–1982) and Marion Genevieve Boot Esther  
伊樹德師母保馬利安 (b. 1913)

Source: *Courtesy of Russell Gasero of the Reformed Church in America*



Tena Holkeboer/Fu Yi Mu 福懿慕 (1895–1965)  
and Christina Wang 王淑禧

Source: *Jiniankan*, 20.



The first meeting of the Cebu Chapter of  
Philippine Alumni Association of Iok Tek with  
Edna Beekman (first row, third from right) and  
Hong Rui Xue 洪瑞雪 (first row, third from  
left) Source: *Jiniankan*, 24.





Iok Tek alumni in the Philippines gather to celebrate the 100th anniversary of their school. Photo taken on September 26, 1970, in front of the United Evangelical Church of the Philippines beside Hope Christian High School.

*Source: Courtesy of Dr. Chris White.*





Cebu City Iok Tek alumnae attending the Chinese New Year gathering on February 7, 1970. My mother, Sun Ti Uy Uayan is on the left in the third row.

*Source: Jiniankan, 25.*

**“WHAT IS THE OLD TESTAMENT ABOUT?”:  
EDUARD BÖHL’S  
HISTORICO-CHRISTOLOGICAL  
READING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

吳羅伯特 THOMAS R. V. FORSTER



Throughout its history, Christianity has affirmed the OT as an integral part of the Church’s Canon of Holy Scripture. Questions remain, however, as to how precisely the OT is to be interpreted. What is its focus? Is it the people of Israel, the covenant, or the millennium? With variations, theologians have traditionally maintained that the OT prophecies find their culmination in the arrival of Christ. With the dawn of higher criticism, this age-old belief was increasingly called into question by some, and was in turn defended by others. Among the latter was Eduard Böhl (1836–1903). Böhl suggested a historico-Christological reading of the OT, which bundles various rays of light, all contributing to some very clear contours of the coming Messiah and his mission. He maintained that the OT is historical in content, thus defending its historicity; it is Christological in focus, thus advocating a particular kind of hermeneutics; it speaks of a divine-human Messiah, thus highlighting a prophetic and typological understanding of the Hebrew Bible; and finally, it depicts the two stages of Christ in his suffering and exaltation, thus foreshadowing his salvific

mission. Böhl's proposed reading of Christ in his two natures and two stages in the OT is not novel in its basic orientation, but there are some genuinely novel elements in his *Verheissungstheologie* ("theology of promise").

Thus, we will here be looking at Eduard Böhl's historico-Christological reading of the OT. In what follows, we will be looking at the following aspects. First, given the obscurity Böhl has fallen into, I will give a very brief introduction of this forgotten theologian.<sup>1</sup> Second, I will focus on his constructive account of the Old covenant's message, his historico-Christological interpretation of the OT. Finally, I will assess Böhl's OT Christology. In all this, we will see how Böhl built on the legacy of the Reformation in order to understand the OT, while developing some new insights as to how it ought to be read in the church. It is a proposal that still deserves to be heard and considered in earnest today.

### Böhl's Life in Outline

Nineteenth century continental theology is usually associated with Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) and Albrecht Ritschl (1822–1889), and hence with classic liberal Protestantism. On the other side of the theological divide there was the Dutch Neo-Calvinist school of Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), a sharp reaction to liberalism. Yet, the theological realm of that era included a further school, headed by Hermann Friedrich Kohlbrügge (1803–1875), which here deserves our attention. The Kohlbrügge school founded their theological method upon the "Older Testament," and coming from this angle, they re-read and applied the documents of the Reformation for their time. The most important scholarly representative of this school is Eduard Böhl. Eduard Böhl was born in

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<sup>1</sup> As of this writing (2017), there have been some very few accounts of Böhl's life and or theology. A very short but comprehensive historical writing is Willem Balke's *Eduard Böhl, Hoogleraar te Wenen en schoonzoon van dr. H. F. Kohlbrugge* ("Eduard Böhl, Lecturer and son-in-law of Dr. H.F. Kohlbrügge"; Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2001). In my own work, I attempt to provide both a historical and systematic account of his life and theology (*Eduard Böhl's [1836–1903] Concept for a Re-Emergence of Reformation Thought* [New York: Peter Lang, 2009]). Finally, Meine Veldman highlights Böhl's theology by contrasting it with that of one of his contemporaries, the influential German theologian Albrecht Ritschl (*God Speaks. Revelation, Justification, and Regeneration in the Theology of Eduard Böhl and His Critique of Albrecht Ritschl* [Toronto: By Faith Alone Publishing, 2009]).

Hamburg on November 18, 1836. He was born into a German-Dutch family, and raised a Lutheran. Having been born into a family of wealth, young Böhl was destined to study law, but ultimately, he decided to study theology, first in Halle, and then in Erlangen. Of lasting importance to his personal development were the acquaintances he made during his time in Halle. There, he got to know Hermann Friedrich Kohlbrügge (1803–1875), a Dutchman of German descent, who had founded a Reformed church in Elberfeld in 1847. Under his influence, Böhl would eventually join the Reformed fold.<sup>2</sup> After a stint at the University of Basel, Switzerland, Böhl would be appointed to the Protestant faculty of Vienna, Austria, in 1864, at which he would labor for no less than thirty-five years. In this capacity, he would prove influential in various fields. He republished the *Second Helvetic Confession* for his own time, he maintained close contacts with Reformed churches throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he edited a church newspaper, and due to his influence at the General Synod of the Austrian Church, the Synod declared its adherence to both the *Heidelberg Catechism* and the *Second Helvetic Confession*. In all of these activities, one can see how Böhl's one main motive was to strengthen the Reformed Church in Austria-Hungary, by giving back to the church (as he understood it) a sense of its Reformed identity and church order.

Despite these varied activities, in this paper we will focus exclusively on Böhl's perspective on the OT, because he was first and foremost a biblical scholar who only later in life ventured into dogmatic theology. Hence, it does not come as a surprise that the study of the OT was to remain Böhl's first love throughout his life. Suffice it to say at this point that the basic character of Böhl's reading of the OT (1) presupposed the divine inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. Further, in all of his writings, Böhl (2) put forth the OT as a reliable historical source, (3) he believed the paradise narrative to be of historical value, and finally, (4) Böhl denied the existence of different sources in the paradise narrative. Immediately, one thing becomes clear: the theological *Zeitgeist* was against such

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<sup>2</sup>Moving on to Erlangen, a bastion of Lutheran orthodoxy, Böhl studied under Johann Ch. K. von Hofmann (1810–1877), and he felt most drawn to Franz Delitzsch, under whom he studied the Talmud and rabbinic literature. Franz Delitzsch (1813–1890) was one of the most influential German exegetes of the 19th century. He is to be distinguished from his son Friedrich Delitzsch (1850–1922), who made a name for himself in the field of Assyriology.

conservative propositions as Böhl's. However dated Böhl's hermeneutics may appear at first glance, he nonetheless believed that his views were an alternative to the critical reading of the OT of his time. Let us then examine his historico-Christological reading of the OT in detail.

### **Böhl's Historico-Christological Interpretation of the OT<sup>3</sup>**

#### *Böhl's Conviction of the Bible's Coherence*

This section will describe in detail Böhl's perspective of the Bible's coherence, focusing especially on his reading of Genesis 3:15 as the first messianic prophecy as the hermeneutic guide to the OT, opening up to a historico-Christological reading of the entire OT. Böhl's motto, his compass on this journey unto which he wanted to embark was Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Böhl understood "today" as referring to the NT period, whereas "yesterday" referred to the time span of the OT. If this interpretation of Böhl's is justified, then there obviously must be some interconnectedness between the Old and the New Testaments. In order to achieve this, Böhl used a four-pronged approach to demonstrate that Christ could indeed be found in the "Older Testament." He saw this evidenced in (1) the New Testament's use of the Old Testament, as well as hinted at in (2) extracanonical Jewish literature. Interestingly, he bolstered up his position by pointing forward to (3) the Muslim use of Deuteronomy 18:15, which showed that there was a messianic understanding inherent in that very passage. Finally, and most importantly, underlying his position was his belief of (4) the prophetic nature underlying both Testaments. As Paul had written to the church in Rome "the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (cf. Rom 16:20), Böhl understood Paul as referring back to a promise of a prophetic nature, rooted in the first biblical deliverance promise in Genesis 3:15, the so-called *Protevangelium*. Since this OT

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<sup>3</sup>Böhl set out his historico-Christological reading of the Old Testament in primarily two publications: his first academic writing was his *Zwölf Messianische Psalmen erklärt: Nebst einer grundlegenden christologischen Einleitung* ("Twelve Messianic Psalms explained, with a fundamental Christological Introduction"; Basel: Bahnmeier's Verlag, 1862). In *Christologie des Alten Testaments oder Auslegung der wichtigsten Messianischen Weissagungen* ("Christology of the Old Testament or Interpretation of the most important messianic predictions"; Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1882), Böhl had expanded this theme and brought it to fruition two decades later.

passage was of the utmost important for Böhl's understanding of both Testaments and ultimately, for his entire theology, we will have to turn our attention to this divine pronouncement in detail.

*Genesis 3:15 as the First Messianic Prophecy*

In order to understand Böhl's reading of the OT better, one has to appreciate his insights into the passage recorded in Genesis 3:15. This has traditionally been regarded as the first messianic prophecy. God addressing the serpent, it reads, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed" (Gen 3:15). As the serpent has been identified as Satan, so the serpent's seed obviously describes his "spiritual offspring." But who would be identified as the woman's seed? Is it to be understood individually or collectively? Böhl believed that the immediate context favored a single person, for after having given birth to a son, Eve exclaimed, הוהי תא שיא יתינג (Gen 4:1). The NIV in common with other translations renders this passage as "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." Böhl contended that the translation of תא to "with help of" was faulty. His translation read: *Ich habe erlangt einen Mann, den Jehova* ("I have acquired a man, Jehovah").<sup>4</sup> Thus, Eve's offspring would not only be "human" (Gen 3:15), but somehow also "divine" (Gen 4:1). Further, Böhl identified the woman's seed (Christ) as having a special calling: he would fight against both the serpent and his offspring, and in the course of it, the serpent would bruise the heel of the woman's seed, but thereafter the fatally wounded, by drawing up all his energies, would crush the serpent's head. In particular this last struggle of the woman's seed was extremely important to Böhl:

The phrase "you will strike his heel" thus describes the moment of suffering for the woman's seed, whereas the other phrase "He will crush your head" describes the moment of glorification, of victory.

*First suffering, then glorification.*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Eduard Böhl, *Christologie des Alten Testaments* (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1883), 57. In support of his own translation, Böhl referred to the Hexapla of Origen, Luther, and Helvicus.

<sup>5</sup> Böhl, *Christologie*, 61, italics mine.

This scheme “first suffering, then glorification” was fundamental to Böhl’s interpretation of other passages of Scripture and particularly of the OT. Salvation would come at a high price. The Redeemer himself would ensure his people’s salvation but at the loss of his own life. In sum, what we then have seen from Böhl’s reading of Genesis 3 are some very clear contours of both the coming Messiah and how salvation would be achieved. First, as for Christ, one can see his person in his human and divine natures (as “the woman’s seed” and “Jehovah”) are announced; and second, his two states of suffering/death and resurrection (characterized by Böhl’s repeated formula *zuerst Leiden, dann Verherrlichung* [“first suffering, then glorification”]). In short, the *Protevangeliem* and the rest of Genesis 3 effectively contain *in nuce* information on the person and the fate of the Messiah. Böhl then went about applying these insights of this passage to the rest of the OT. We will do this in the next section.

#### *Genesis 3:15 as the Hermeneutical Guide to the OT*

For Böhl, the first messianic prophecy in Genesis 3:15 and the supplementary explanation of it in 4:1 as outlined in the section above underpinned the entire message of the Hebrew canon. While its full realization came ultimately in the revelation of the Messiah in the NT,<sup>6</sup> the pronouncement did have repercussions for the generations before the promised Redeemer would come into the flesh, and those would always follow this very same pattern. “The woman’s seed” and “Jehovah” were according to Böhl the two names, which were used to denote the coming Savior, for just as the former underlined the Redeemer’s human offspring, so the latter highlighted his divine origin. Böhl asserted that the *Protevangeliem* repeatedly came to life in basically two ways. First, the first messianic pronouncement came to life in manifold reproductions<sup>7</sup> in numerous individuals. These in their particular life situations and their daily struggles anticipated the “woman’s seed” and thus foreshadowed Christ. Their contemporaries could see in these individuals how one day the Redeemer would endure the same or at least a similar fate. Second, the *Protevangeliem* was also related to the many predictions uttered by

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<sup>6</sup> And from there, new light was shed back onto the Old Testament, as Peter alluded to in 1 Peter 1:10–11.

<sup>7</sup> This is the technical term, which Böhl used repeatedly to describe the types of Christ in the history of Israel.

various OT prophets. These did not require any human type on earth; rather they spoke of the coming Jehovah, and hence highlighted the Savior's divine origin. The old hope of the coming Redeemer was exemplified in those prophecies which spoke of the coming of Jehovah to his people or to his temple. Böhl was convinced that the promise of a Savior in Genesis 3:15 came to life in this twofold unfolding of the first messianic prophecy. They were likened to two distinct rays of light that illuminated the darkness of olden times, but then found their ultimate merging into one in Christ. Based on Genesis 3:15, Böhl held that the OT as a whole ought to be read through the lens of this twofold way. So, we will now turn our attention to his account of the human-divine Messiah of the OT, who would first suffer, and then be glorified.

*Böhl's Historico-Christological Reading of the OT*

Böhl believed that God's promise of a coming Savior would constantly make its way into the foreground of the history of salvation as both reproductions in numerous individuals, as well as in many uttered predictions. In fact, every ongoing prophetic utterance looked back to Genesis 3:15, just as the sum of all the prophecies ultimately pointed forward to its consummation in the promised Redeemer in the NT. In the course of the prophecy's unfolding, the name of the promised one would be gradually disclosed. The realisation of the prophecy would not be a replica of the original promise, but nonetheless would still be recognisable as its fulfilment. Böhl understood the nature of salvation history as twofold: the narratives in Holy Writ were to be understood as both history and prophecy, or more accurately, as the prophetic outworking of Genesis 3:15 in the history of Israel, and ultimately, for the eternal benefit of all peoples. Böhl distinguished three stages of salvation in the history of Israel: (1) the reproduction of the Edenic promise during the time of the patriarchs, (2) the reproduction of the Edenic promise under the kings David and Solomon, and (3) the subsequent prophetic time. To these three we will now turn.



## 1. The Reproduction of the Edenic Promise from Adam to Abraham.

The reproduction of the Edenic promise during the time of the patriarchs led from Adam, to Abel, Seth,<sup>8</sup> Noah, Shem, down to the father of faith: Abraham. To Böhl's mind, the time of the patriarchs was the classical era, for during this time the divine promise reproduced itself most vividly in Abraham, Isaac and Judah. Abram, the future father of many nations and hence the father of faith, was a reproduction in the following ways: By God's calling, Abram is taken out of his country, his family and his father's house and led to a new land to be a counterbalance to the prevailing paganism (cf. Jos 24:2), just as the woman's seed steps in as opposed to the serpent's seed. A son is promised him from his barren wife (cf. Gen 11:30), an unreasonable promise to both him and the first couple who heard about their offspring being miraculously the "woman's seed." Abraham then hoped the promised heir would be Ishmael, but God rejected the Egyptian maid's son, just as he rejected Cain. Though led to a new land, it was not a time of triumph, for Abraham had now to wait long for the birth of his son, and was not alone in waiting, for Adam likewise had to practice patience for 130 years until Seth was born. Finally, with Isaac's coming, it would be revealed to the father of faith in what way his seed would serve for the accomplishment of salvation.

Just like his father Abraham, Isaac, the son of the promise was unmistakably a reproduction of the divine promise, for he was to be the firstborn among many brethren, just as would be the Savior (cf. Rom 8:29), his birth being miraculous much as the woman's seed was.<sup>9</sup> As there was enmity between the woman's and the serpent's seed, so after his birth, Isaac was persecuted by Ishmael. Once an adult, Isaac was called to be sacrificed, which Böhl saw as corresponding to the bruising of the

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<sup>8</sup> Though both Adam and Eve had understood the grace given them despite their transgression, yet they had not comprehended that salvation was not to come immediately. On the contrary, they were to experience the curse of their transgression in an utmost way, their first-born Cain committing the crime of fratricide. This incident highlighted vividly the coming struggle and the initial defeat of the woman's seed under the serpent's. However, the woman's seed was raised up again by the birth of their next son Seth and thus, the promise was secured. But not for long, for the Sethites intermarried with the descendants of Cain. Böhl thus understood the passage in Gen 6:1 which speaks of the sons of God as referring to the Sethites (cf. Eduard Böhl, *Zwölf Messianische Psalmen*, XIX).

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 11:13 mentions Sarah's barrenness and Paul (Rom 4:19) pointed to the "dead" bodies of both Abraham and Sarah.

woman's seed's heel. *Zuerst Leiden, dann Verherrlichung*, so in receiving back his son, Abraham had a picture of the ensuing resurrection of the Redeemer. As this sacrifice was to take place on Moriah, so his blessing "in your seed all nations will be blessed" (cf. Gen 22:18) would issue forth from that place. All this, the delay of the Redeemer, the miraculous birth, the same death and resurrection (at the same place) were the reasons why Abraham his father saw in all these events the day of Christ (cf. John 8:56). God made a covenant with Terah's son, and to ensure his possession of the land of Canaan, gave him the sign of circumcision, changed his name to "Abraham," and hence the father of a new people was born. He was tested in giving up his only son, something God himself in his perfect time would do. Whereas the obedient Abraham appeared here in Genesis 22 as following in God's footsteps in offering up his son, so the enduring Isaac was more an example of the suffering Christ.

The descendants of the patriarchs increased, but only one of them would be appointed the heir by their father Jacob. It turned out to be Judah (Gen 49:8 –12). Jacob's fourth son was a reproduction in many ways. First, the name given him was like that of Isaac's and the woman's seed a distinguished one, in that Leah in her struggle of faith exclaimed, "Now I will praise him," namely God. Second, this son, born in faith, shared the same characteristics with the promised Savior in Genesis 3:15, for Judah was compared to a lion. Thus, he would also go through both stages of *zuerst Leiden, dann Verherrlichung*, for he was a counterbalance to a world that increasingly was hostile towards his brethren and so he resembled both his ancestors Abraham and Isaac. His suffering can be seen in his rallying his brethren and protecting them, as he did with lion's courage as he stood surety for Benjamin before both Jacob his father and before Joseph. He was thus the spiritual leader among his brethren. Third, as a result of his incessant fighting on behalf of his brethren, they would praise him, and "neither should the scepter depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until comes Shiloh, and the homage of nations shall be his." (Gen 49:10). Fourth, Böhl saw the meaning of this phrase as prophesying a royal line in Judah until Shiloh would come, Shiloh being an ancient name for the Redeemer that was in use in Jacob's family.

According to Böhl, the coming of Shiloh was not only known within the boundary of blossoming Israel, but its echo was also to be found within

the wider family from which the patriarchs hailed. Abraham was an Aramean (cf. Deut 26:5) and so was Balaam who by the instigation of the hostile Moabite king Balak prophesied about Shiloh to the surrounding nations;<sup>10</sup> within Israel, Moses foretold about a coming prophet who would come “from among your own brothers.” Ever since Balaam’s prophecy, Israel longed incessantly for a king, irrespective of his offspring, until finally it received what it demanded so adamantly in Saul, the son of Kish, a Benjaminite. The ascendancy of kingship in the history of Israel thus opened the door to the second stage.

## 2. The Reproduction of the Edenic Promise from David to Solomon.

As Shiloh was to hail from Judah, a Benjaminite as king could by its very nature not be the heir. Because of his disobedience and despite his rightful anointing and acclamation, Saul was soon to be replaced as king by a young shepherd in whose life circumstances one could see many traces of the future Savior’s fate.<sup>11</sup> Just like Abram, this adolescent was directly called by God. From his anointing as the new king of Israel, young

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<sup>10</sup>As Balaam was especially confined only to speak what he was commanded by God, Böhl believed this prophecy to be of heightened importance. Balaam’s prophetic utterance “The people rise like a lioness; they rouse themselves like a lion” (Num 23:24) essentially resembled the previously pronounced one in Genesis 49:9. The prophet further foretold “a star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the sons of tumult” (24:17; cf. Gen 49:8–12). This scepter then, the star rising out of Israel (= the woman’s seed), takes up warfare against its enemies the Moabites and its neighboring peoples (= the serpent’s seed). Ultimately, this scepter would be a person, for the LXX translated **טבש** (“scepter”) at this point by *ἄνθρωπος*, indicating the anticipation of an individual. Lastly, a Pseudo-Messiah during the time of the Roman emperor Hadrian (A.D. 117–138) gave himself the name of “Bar Kochba” (the “Son of the star”) to legitimate his revolt against Rome and to rally his people around himself, without doubt a reference to the passage in Numbers 24:17.

<sup>11</sup>Had the reproductions during the time of the patriarchs been all pointing back to the Edenic promise in Gen 3:15, so those of the second era would have the same point of contact, but would usher in a broadening understanding of the coming king. As the historical books of the Old Testament give us an impression of the past, Böhl believed the psalms record the quintessence of the events the author(s) went through. He singled out 12 psalms (16, 22, 69, 40, 21, 2, 118, 8, 45, 72, 110, 41) in their alleged order of composition of which he believed they portrayed the coming Savior. His conviction of their messianic reading rested on their christological use in the New Testament, as well as their reception in Jewish tradition. Regarding their authorship, Böhl held all 12 to be of Davidic origin, and by the Spirit’s guidance, the one voice to be heard in each verse of these psalms was the Redeemer’s.

David had to endure numerous hardships, having to experience persecution by the previously anointed king of Israel who had sunk to the level of the serpent's seed. As the woman's seed, David often had to face such dire times alone, just as Abram, Noah or Judah faced a hostile world on their own. As the fate of the future one was *zuerst Leiden*, so this was not spared from the king according to the promise. David expressed his agony during those days in Psalms 16, 22, 69, and 40. Given the incessant persecution David had to endure, he constantly had to remind himself that as the Lord's anointed he was persecuted because of Israel's sin of having rejected God and chosen a king who was not according to the promise. Because David felt the repercussions of his people's sin in a truly tangible way, he complained that "troubles without number surround me, my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see" (40:12). *Zuerst Leiden, dann Verherrlichung*, so David's sufferings would finally have an end and his rejoicing was immortalized in Psalms 2, 21, and 118. He conquered Jebus and was enthroned as the next king of Israel, having been "granted eternal blessings" (21:6), something which Abraham was to be for the nations (Gen 12:3). By his God's help, David carried away victory after victory, and lastly, the Ark of the Covenant was brought to him. As a result of the successful bringing of the Ark to the new capital, David wrote movingly that now, finally, "the stone the builders rejected has become the cap stone" (118:22). David's task fulfilled, he now lived to see *Verherrlichung*. The God of the promise then sent word by the prophet Nathan, announcing to the aging king an everlasting kingdom to his offspring who would build the House of God (2 Sam 7). Just as Abraham's offspring would be the line of blessing, so also David's (cf. Gen 22). Understandably, David sang of his son in several psalms (Pss 8, 45, 72, 110, 41) praising God.

At the birth of his son Solomon, David bursts into adoration and praise, looks up to heaven and exclaims, "Jehovah, our Lord, how majestic is your name throughout the entire earth, which has transferred your majesty upon the Heavens" (8:2).<sup>12</sup> This future king would be granted "glory and

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<sup>12</sup> According to this reading, the earth has (received something) which is so glorious that it is even "celebrated in Heaven." Of this passage, Delitzsch wrote, "It may be interpreted: O Thou whose laying of Thy glory is upon the heavens, i.e., Thou who hast chosen this as the place on which Thou hast laid Thy glory (Hengst.)." He further pointed to translations which were in accordance with this rendering, such as Jerome, the Syriac version with the Targum and Symmachus. Cf. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old*

honour” and “everything is put under his feet” (8:5–6). So, as to be expected, a great festive day is this king’s day of marriage. Solomon is bound in wedlock to Pharaoh’s daughter (45:10), and David further sings of his son’s domain (72:8–14), which would be a reign of peace. But just as his father David, so Solomon, too had to endure *zuerst Leiden*. Solomon’s half-brother Adonijah made aspirations for the throne (1 Kgs 1), thus representing the serpent’s seed. David then composed a psalm of assurance for his son, for “the Lord is at your right hand” (110:5). It was likewise a poem of consolation, for Abiathar the high -priest aided Adonijah in his rebellion. The king so wanted to reassure his son that God had sworn and not changed his mind that Solomon is “a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek” (110:4), for the promised king out of Judah was to combine both the kingly and the priestly order. Albeit these affirmations, Solomon would still have to take his seat on the throne, for the endangered heir had to be anointed beyond the city walls, next to the brook Gihon from where “he will drink” (110:7) and only then will he lift up his head. Lastly, pondering his son’s fate, David remembered what he himself went through, when he was betrayed in a similar way by Joab, who was close to the royal family, who “ate from the same bread” (41:9) and who despised the righteous heir, for he had no regard for the weak (41:1). Ultimately though, Solomon would like his father be firmly established on the throne, hence *dann Verherrlichung*.

Böhl was convinced that in these two Israelite monarchs the coming king was foreshadowed in many different ways, both literal and spiritual.<sup>13</sup>

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*Testament* (10 vols.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996. Reprint from the English edition originally published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1866–1891), 5:92.

<sup>13</sup>The Messiah would be zealous for the things of God (Ps 69:10), thus also raising opposition against his person. Like his ancestor, he would identify with his people and so bemoan the “sins which have overtaken him” (40:12). His life would end violently, for his hands and feet would be pierced (22:16), but like both David and Abraham, he was assured that God would not abandon his body to Hell and decay (16:10). After being brought back to life, he would receive an eternal blessing (21:6), and the anointed one he was, he would also be openly declared to be the Son of God (2:7), the capstone which had formerly been rejected (118:22). He did not achieve all this by physical force, for his attire was one of humility: Just as his forefather David had humbled himself by dancing before the Ark, so too would the coming king (cf. Zech 9:9). No wonder then that his birth was a glorious one, for his splendour was celebrated all over the heavens (8:2), for he would be given glory and honour, everything would be laid under his feet (8:5–6), so that he would silence the ultimate foe and avenger (8:2). His domain would be one of peace (72:8–14) and had his

Thus, this period in Israelite history gave the people some very clear contours of the coming king. Whereas “the beloved one” (David) endured suffering to achieve atonement on behalf of his people, “the peaceful one” (Solomon), exemplified in his diplomacy with the surrounding nations Shiloh’s reign of peace. It was ultimately David who came to be seen as the prototype of the coming one. As Abraham in earlier times had been associated with Canaan, so the people’s hope was drawn to David and Zion. Unfortunately, a huge fall took place after the passing of the first three kings of Israel, initiated by Solomon’s apostasy, resulting in the fracture of the kingdom and leading up to Israel’s exile. This led to the third period.

### 3. The prophetic time.

As the national sovereignty of the Israelite monarchy was crumbling and finally collapsed, so the reproductions, too ceased. In like manner, the faith of many was staggering. Nonetheless, the promise was taken up in the many predictions uttered by the various prophets. These did not require any human type, but rather along the lines of Genesis 4:1 they spoke of the coming Jehovah, and hence highlighted the Savior’s divine origin. As Jehovah was closely linked to David, the people were called to repentance and to look out for a king like David who would rule from Zion as of old, thus the prophets’ message was essentially retrospective.<sup>14</sup> This third period then was spearheaded by the prophets Elijah and Elisha in Israel (who left no writings of their own), whereas the later emissaries of Jehovah recorded their messages. The pre-exilic prophets called Israel back to the

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father Solomon been enthralled by a foreigner, so he too would draw peoples to himself from beyond the borders of Israel (45:10). He was assured about his position at the right hand of God (110:5), he was a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (110:4), but more was disclosed: Like Solomon, he would have to drink beyond the city walls (110:7), and like David, he would experience the pain of somebody defecting from him who hitherto used to share his bread with him (41:9), because this person had no regard for his weakness (41:1).

<sup>14</sup>Of the nature of the prophets’ message, Böhl wrote, “The prophets are destined to preserve for the people of Israel the heritage they have been given and to repeatedly impress upon their minds the right understanding thereof. They are the divinely-appointed expositors of the already given Word of God. *We cannot expect something totally new from them, but only a rejuvenation of something old. They are by no means the originators of the Messianic hope, for to be such they could not assume as much as they do*” (cf. *Christologie des Alten Testaments*, 182, italics mine).

God who had promised them a Redeemer, and as their message went largely unheeded, it became increasingly clear that danger loomed large by the hand of the Assyrians. Even in such sinister times Judah was not to despair, for a coming king had been promised, and Isaiah's task was to make his contemporaries aware of this. This task of the "evangelist among the prophets" (so Augustine and Jerome) was a hard one: There was no sign of repentance nor regard for the earlier uttered hope of the future Savior. He thus opened his proclamation by drawing attention to Micah's earlier pronounced prophecy about "Zion being established on the top of the mountains" (Isa 2:2) . His message always took on the following contours: the people's sin was at the root of the problem, it would be dealt with by God, in that he himself would achieve salvation. Isaiah was now to proclaim this to his people during the last days of the kingdom of Judah (chapters 1–39), but his message was also directed for the time Judah would be in exile (chapters 40 –66). Apart from that, it was given to the last of the pre -exilic prophets to portray the enlarging contours of the coming one in many-faceted colors, all of which had been given Israel as a deposit for the dark times to come. By making use of the earlier uttered prophecies, the exilic prophets, such as Ezekiel and Daniel, kept the hope of restoration to their native country alive. With Israel 's return to Zion (though much reduced in numbers) a new day dawned, and more insight was given to the returnees than Daniel's prophecy. The age-old promise reproduced itself in the Davidic descendant Zerubbabel ("the chosen signet ring," Hag 2:23), who thus represented the Messiah coming home from Babel. The task of the governor of Judah's was to rebuild the temple and not to lose heart, for God would "once more shake heaven and earth" (Hag 2:6). The first time this happened, Israel fled from God (Exod 19:18), and had demanded a mediator in order to speak to him. By the rising and falling of successive kingdoms, the same would happen to the nations. They would draw near to the temple, join the God of Israel and hence would "fill this temple with glory" (Hag 2:7). Thus, the fulfillment of the promise was drawing near, for David's son was back and the temple was being rebuilt. Next to Haggai, the other post-exilic prophets Zechariah and Malachi brought David's son and Zion into focus. The latter would predict prior to the Messiah's coming a herald who would prepare the way of the long-proclaimed woman's seed (Mal 3:1). The scene was set for the long-awaited Redeemer of Israel.

## Assessment of Böhl's Christological Interpretation of the OT

Having thus described Böhl's overall proposal of a historico-Christological reading of the OT, we will in this final section attempt to assess his underlying convictions, which ultimately triggered his particular approach to the Hebrew Scriptures. We will go about assessing his views by first, highlighting his views on the Inspiration of the Scriptures; and second, by analyzing his proposal in the context of the historical interpretation of the OT.

### *Böhl's Views on the Inspiration of the Scriptures*<sup>15</sup>

We will focus here on four issues: (1) Böhl's point of departure, (2) the giving of God's Word, (3) the salvific nature of Scripture, which then in turn will highlight his (4) rejection of historical criticism.

#### 1. Böhl's point of departure.

Böhl's point of departure can be highlighted as *Deus dixit* ("God has spoken"). This alone shows his apologetic approach in theology, for Böhl held his times to be rampant with unbelief, and so he stressed first of all God's self-communication.<sup>16</sup> From the beginning of the world, the God of Israel had revealed himself in history to certain individuals, such as Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Shem and the three patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.<sup>17</sup> During the time of the Egyptian slavery, the descendants of the forefathers of Israel were in danger of losing that word spoken to their

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<sup>15</sup>Böhl elaborated extensively on his views on the Scripture, its inspiration, *et al.*, in his Dutch book *Prolegomena voor eene Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* ("Prolegomena for Reformed Dogmatics"; Amsterdam: Scheffer, 1892). Beyond that, much information can be gleaned from his German writing *Dogmatik: Darstellung der Christlichen Glaubenslehre auf reformirt-kirchlicher Grundlage* ("Dogmatics: A Presentation of the Christian Faith based on Reformed-Ecclesial Foundations"; Amsterdam: Von Scheffer & Co., 1887).

<sup>16</sup> Nowhere else does this become more apparent than in his *Prolegomena*. Characteristically, the articles 5 and 6, "on the living God" (*Over den levenden God*, 31–35) and "God's speaking" (*Het spreken Gods*, 35–43), respectively, precede article 7 "on the inspiration" (*De Inspiratie*, 43–58). Cf. Eduard Böhl, *Prolegomena voor eene Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (Amsterdam: Scheffer, 1892). Similarly, in his *Dogmatik*, Böhl first elaborated on article 68 "Of the effects of the Holy Spirit in general" (*Von den Wirkungen des Heiligen Geistes im Allgemeinen*, 435–39) before he spoke of "The doctrine of the Word of God" in article 69 (*Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes*, 439–54).

<sup>17</sup>Böhl, *Dogmatik*, 441.



ancestors. God intervened and prevented that by sending Moses who then wrote the Law, which in turn was handed down through the centuries. To Böhl's mind, God had used Moses with whom the literary production was set in motion, and so his importance for the codification process of the Biblical books was unique. Böhl held together with both the Synagogue and the Ancient church that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch,<sup>18</sup> and here, too, he defended this zealously. From the time of Moses onwards, the thread of the written word did not tear off, as this tradition was continued, for the prophets took on that task and expounded those earlier written words of Moses, or they were given more revelations. In all this, it becomes apparent how strongly Böhl stressed the importance of Moses for both the OT (and ultimately also for the NT), and the overall importance of the written Word. God had spoken, and that meant that his Word was to be heeded precisely. How then had God's Word been given?

## 2. The giving of God's Word.

Böhl believed that in the lives of both the psalmists and prophets there was a constant interaction between the writers and the Holy Spirit. Not one word proceeded from their pen, which the Spirit did not intend to become Holy Writ. Böhl deemed it important to stress that their writings, and not the writers themselves were inspired, for there were moments when both the prophets and the apostles were not under the influence of the Spirit. Hence, even though their personality was important, their product would outshine them:

The work of art is of greater significance here than the artist, in his work the artist has triumphed over himself. The holy men of God truly lived not only to produce their prophecies, but also to write them down. This work of theirs is unforgotten and endures forever although their image is

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<sup>18</sup>Writing on Deuteronomy, Böhl listed a number of reasons why he believed that Moses was the author and editor of the Pentateuch. Cf. Eduard Böhl, *Zum Gesetz und zum Zeugnis: Eine Abwehr wider die neu-kritische Schriftforschung im Alten Testament* ("To the Law and to the Testimony: A Refutation of the new critical Scripture research of the Old Testament"; Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1883), 218–19. This writing dealt with introductory matters, and can be seen as a complementary publication to Böhl's *Christologie des Alten Testaments* (1882).

subject to oblivion. These prophets shine brightly as the stars in Heaven  
– through their writings.<sup>19</sup>

As there was a reciprocal action in poetry and prophecy between the Spirit of God and that of the human authors, Böhl believed that it was a real struggle for the latter, and it came only to its end as the divine author of Scripture through his chosen vessels led the codification of the oral tradition to its closure (e.g., Luke 1:1–4).<sup>20</sup> Böhl did not see this as degrading them in any way, for their writings would be used for instructing generations to come in godliness (cf. 2 Tim 3:15–16). Even though the writers generally did not compose their writings with the express intent of producing Holy Writ, Moses may have been one possible exception to this rule. As for the interaction between the Spirit of God and the writers' spirit, Böhl deemed it impossible to reconstruct, and so he refrained from giving a deeper explanation as to how this had come about:

We cannot reconstruct [the manner of] the relationship that existed between the Holy Spirit and the spirit of the authors. In the same way, however, that the Holy Spirit testifies with our spirit (Rom 8:16), how He further inspires the disciples of Jesus to say what needs to be said before judges in form and content (Matt 10:19, 20) – in the same way He is active in their writing and directs their focus in their study of the original sources; yeah, He gives them the words to be written so that we can really assume a verbal inspiration with our older theologians.<sup>21</sup>

Böhl advocated a verbal inspiration of the Bible, though to his mind, there was nothing mechanical by way of this process, for properly understood, this meant for Böhl two things: negatively, and in contradistinction to some older dogmaticians, the authors could not be termed *calami Dei* (“of God’s pen”) anymore;<sup>22</sup> and positively, it meant that Böhl affirmed his

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<sup>19</sup>Böhl, *Dogmatik*, 443.

<sup>20</sup>Böhl compared this action of inscripturation to the building of the tabernacle by the hand of Bezaleel who had been supernaturally gifted by God for this task (Ex 31:2). Böhl, *Dogmatik*, 444.

<sup>21</sup>Böhl, *Dogmatik*, 445.

<sup>22</sup>Among those who had a ‘wooden’ understanding of inspiration, Böhl mentioned the Lutheran theologians Johannes Andreas Quenstedt (1617–1688) and David Hollaz (1648–1713), both proponents of Lutheran orthodoxy. The latter has to be distinguished from his son (1679–1743) and grandson (1704–1771) who were both namesakes of their father and

fundamental agreement with numerous theologians of the past on a verbal inspiration. However, he advocated a more lively conception of the inspiration of Scripture. The most one can say is that Böhl's views on the inspiration of Scripture are best captured as being simultaneously both *von oben* and *von unten* ("from above" and "from below"). As for *von oben*, the Spirit was first involved in the writers' education and their growth in faith; he further gave them insight into spiritual matters, so that they could judge their times as they were less susceptible to the spirit of their age. This also included a close reading of earlier parts of Scripture, in particular the Pentateuch.<sup>23</sup> In addition to that, the same Spirit also guided the writers in the material they sifted which then would make up Holy Scripture. At the same time, so Böhl was convinced, Scripture is simultaneously also *von unten*, for the writers' individuality is by no means suppressed, and so their writings bear their authors' indistinguishable marks due to their education and personality.<sup>24</sup> Hence, it would be wrong to reduce their activity merely to a dictation of God's revelations, and yet, to Böhl's mind, this process was best termed *inspiratio verbalis*. In all this, the Scriptures spoke of Christ, and that was their main aim, which leads us to the very nature of Scripture.

### 3. The salvific nature of Scripture.

Even though Böhl held to a high view of the Scriptures, being both *von oben* and *von unten*, this did not prompt him to develop some sort of inerrancy doctrine of the Bible. He did not even offer any epistemological starting point from which he ventured into developing any *Schriftbeweis* ("proof of Scripture"). In his *Dogmatik*, Böhl dedicated only sixteen pages to the doctrine of Scripture,<sup>25</sup> and interestingly enough, this chapter is found in section four under the heading 'Soteriology'. Böhl understood Scripture as a vehicle to purport knowledge of the Savior, albeit without neglecting its historical character. Of importance to him were (apart from the inspiration of Scripture) the Canon of Scripture, as well as the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Böhl spoke merely of the sufficiency and

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grandfather, respectively. Cf. Böhl, *Prolegomena voor eene Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (Amsterdam: Scheffer, 1892), 46.

<sup>23</sup> Böhl, *Prolegomena*, 50.

<sup>24</sup> Böhl, *Prolegomena*, 51.

<sup>25</sup> Böhl, *Dogmatik*, 439–54.

perspicuity of the Bible. He explicitly rejected the notion of an outer authority of whatever sort, which would control or even establish Scripture.<sup>26</sup> He rather believed in the priority of faith as a condition for perceiving the unity of the Old and New Testaments.

#### 4. Rejection of historical criticism.

The characteristic features of Böhl's doctrine of Scripture – God's revelation to select individuals in history, its codification as both God's Word (*von oben*) and man's word (*von unten*), and the salvific nature of Scripture – did not square with prevailing assumptions about Scripture and its interpretation. Böhl deemed the presuppositions of most of his contemporary theologians to be deficient on the following grounds: first, most theologians of his era failed to recognize that God had spoken to man, holding rather that there were, properly speaking, neither miracles nor prophecies; second, this required a thoroughgoing historical-critical "reinterpretation" of the biblical authors' identities. Neither God nor some historically identifiable prophets and apostles were speaking anymore in Scripture, but a host of *personae incognitae* ("unknown persons"). Finally, as this collection of ancient Near Eastern books could not be perceived to be a divine revelation in human history, it could at the very best be seen as an account of some subjective religious convictions. At worst, it could not be seen as an authoritative Word of God, nor as a genuine product of history. With this, we will then in closing turn our attention to analysing Böhl's proposal in the context of the historical interpretation of the OT.

#### *Analysis of Böhl's Proposal in the Context of the Historical Interpretation of the OT*

We have seen how Böhl made a strong case for a reading of the OT, which was simultaneously historical *and* christological. Böhl's program is more appreciated if we do not stop here, but set him into the comprehensive context of church history, for that is the way Böhl himself understood his

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<sup>26</sup>"It is a totally unjustifiable desire to wish for something firmer on which the exclusive value of the canonical books is founded. The Roman Catholic Church assumes that by its service the canon was transmitted through the ages. We, however, renounce such a service for in the first place the church in the Roman Catholic sense has no such mandate, but only the Holy Spirit – He will lead you in the entire truth (John 16:13)." Cf. Böhl, *Dogmatik*, 450.

theological proposal. As Böhl saw it, the christological reading of the OT was often deficient from the very beginning of the church's existence. Because of many church fathers' lack of knowledge of the Hebrew language, and in order to have enough ground to refute the Jews, the OT was forced into a christological corset. The first one who developed some sort of system in interpreting the OT was Origen (185–254) who differentiated between a literal, an ethical and a pneumatological/ allegorical exegesis. It was the allegorical one, which often saw Christ directly in the passages at hand, and it was the one ultimately carried on by the following generations of church leaders. Already in the ancient church, one could see these three trends in interpreting the OT: (1) the direct-messianic one, (2) the mediating approach, and (3) the historical reading. In the ancient church, Augustine (354–430) contended for the direct-messianic one, Chrysostom (ca. 347–407) represented the mediating approach and finally Diodore of Tarsus (†ca. 394) advocated a historical reading of the OT in which only few passages pointed to Christ.<sup>27</sup> The Middle Ages did not bring much relief in this respect, for most attention was given to the Song of Songs, and it was understood as an allegory to Christ, the groom of the soul. The three aforementioned readings made its comeback during the time of the Reformation. Amongst a direct-messianic approach to the OT along the lines of Augustine, Böhl identified Luther, and especially a number of Lutheran theologians, such as Abraham Calovius (1612–1686), Salomo Glassius (1593 –1656), Sebastian Schmidt (1617–1696) and Johann Heinrich Michaelis (1668– 1738), and among the Reformed, Calvin's successor in Geneva, Theodore Beza (1519–1605). The mediating approach (likened to that of Chrysostom's) was inaugurated anew by Luther's closest collaborator Philip Melancthon (1497–1560), and came to full bloom in Calvin whose hermeneutics in turn became the model of Reformed exegesis.<sup>28</sup> The

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<sup>27</sup>Diodore's pupil Theodore of Mopsuestia was even condemned at the II. Council of Constantinople (553) since he was understood to have denied that Christ had been announced by the prophets, a condemnation to which Böhl gave his consent (cf. Böhl, *Christologie des Alten Testaments*, 35).

<sup>28</sup>At this point, one remark of Böhl's should be observed for it is telling as to his sources for both his hermeneutics and dogmatics: "This more historical view of the christological passages has been consistently applied first by *Calvin, the greatest dogmatician of the Reformation century. However, in the exegesis of the Old Testament we must ascribe priority to Luther.*" Cf. Böhl, *Christologie des Alten Testaments*, 33, italics mine.

resurrection of the historical reading was advocated by the Socinians, Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) and the rationalists whose exegesis came close to Diodore’s. Böhl’s intent was therefore to combine anew a direct-messianic with a historical reading of the OT, for he was convinced that both would elucidate the meaning of the OT:

We hold firmly to the direct-messianic interpretation of Augustine, Luther, also to that of Hengstenberg, but at the same time we also affirm the historical interpretation of Diodore of Tarsus, Grotius and von Hofmann. *We seek a new mediating way between two extremes and hope to follow it through more consistently than our predecessors, the older reformed expositors.*<sup>29</sup>

It was such a reading, which Böhl wanted to promote within the church regardless of its denominational background.<sup>30</sup> For him, the OT was about Christ, and one is fondly reminded of the saying of Luther’s (though in a different context): *Alles, was Christum treibet* (“Everything that promotes Christ”) a saying which could have flowed from Böhl’s pen as well – while writing on the OT.

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<sup>29</sup>Böhl, *Christologie*, 42, emphasis mine. Böhl had been strongly influenced by both Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg (1802–1869), as well as by Johann Ch. K. von Hofmann (1810–1877), whose best insights he attempted to combine. By making this last statement of attempting to follow a new mediating approach more consistently than some older Reformed exegetes, Böhl was indicating the Reformed manner of ascribing one part of a passage to Christ, another to its author (e.g., David), something he regarded as not doing justice to Scripture.

<sup>30</sup>Böhl dedicated his *Christologie des Altes Testamentes* to both churches of the Reformation in Austria, and in order to highlight its importance, he published it at the commemoration of the centennial of the patent of tolerance (1882). The Protestant church in Austria (now as well as then) is a united church, made up of the *Evangelische Kirchen Augsburgischen Bekenntnisses* (AB) [Lutheran] and *Helvetischen Bekenntnisses* (HB) [Reformed].



PASTORAL CARE AND  
LEADERSHIP





## DOING MEMBER CARE AMONG CHINESE MISSIONARIES

邵莊秀美 ROSA C. SHAO



In June 2016, the Biblical Seminary of the Philippines (BSOP) held the very first member care conference at her campus, spearheaded in partnership with the Narramore Christian Foundation. The focus of the said conference was on ‘*Member Care* for Asian Missionaries.’ During the promotional months prior to the conference, I tried inviting the pastors and leaders from a large Filipino-Chinese evangelical church with missionaries serving locally and abroad for many years. I requested they send their representatives to participate in this important *member care* learning conference. Immediately, I was told by one of the associate pastors, “You have to coordinate with another of our co-workers, pastor so-and-so, because he is in-charge of caring for our church members.” Then and there, I realized that even our very own ministers of God’s people and workers, are confused by what is meant by *member care*. This is somewhat surprising since this church was one of the top three oldest churches in the Philippines, with an extensive history of church planting and ties with many other mission organizations, in both big and small scale

of partnerships. One would think that the term *member care* would need no clarification with leaders from such a seasoned church. So it seems *member care* is still a very new concept in many local churches in Asia. This calls for a careful and more comprehensive work on its terminology, for all entities involved in the sending, the receiving and the training of missionaries, whose overall wellness could determine the blooming or the breaking of God's ministries.

### Looking at the Member Care Situation

What the above associate pastor was referring to as 'member care' was shepherding one's flock, a pastoral ministry or pastoral responsibility for members within the church. However, *doing member care* bears a more specific sense for this article. It refers to attending to the needs and welfare of a group of missionary personnel (both the missionaries in the field, with their immediate families) and their support network.

The term *member care* was rarely used in the 80s. Two terms emerged in the 90s, *missionary care* and *member care*, and often became synonymous in usage. Soon, other terminologies in line with helping missionaries to serve more effectively and assisting in their transitional stages arose, such as missionary fellowship, member care network, and many more.

#### *Definition of Member Care*

Kelly O'Donnell, in his book *Doing Member Care Well*, defines member care as follows: "Member care is the ongoing investment of resources by mission agencies, churches, and other mission organizations for the nurture and development of missionary personnel. It focuses on everyone in missions (missionaries, support staff, children, and families) and does so over the course of the missionary life cycle, from recruitment through retirement."<sup>1</sup>

While developing a course on missionaries' member care at Asbury University, Ronald L. Koteskey points out that the Global Member Care Network has summarized *member care* as: "Doing whatever it takes,

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<sup>1</sup> Kelly S. O' Donnell, "Introduction: To the Ends of the Earth, To the Ends of the Age" in *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from Around the World* (ed. Kelly S. O' Donnell; Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2002), 4.

within reason, to ensure that our workers are cared for and supported by their agency, field leadership, and sending church. It is the ongoing preparation, equipping, and empowering of missionaries for effective and sustainable life, ministry and work.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed the same author, Koteskey, also mentions how Jesus himself does *member care* with his disciples as he always stays with them and empowers them with his talks and his walks, during the three years of personal ministry among them and with them.

If we were really looking for the best model of member care to emulate, then, Jesus truly demonstrates how to do member care in a team setting, or “team care.” The term ‘team care’ is mentioned by Doug Franklin, “Team care requires direct communication, value for individual and sacrifice.”<sup>3</sup> Our Lord Jesus calls people into ministry and sends them out near and far to do his Great Commission. So it is assuring to hear him saying, “I am the good Shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me” (John 10:14). More so, Jesus continues on to say: “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand” (10:28–29). In fact, Jesus, the Master Teacher even sets an example of washing his disciples’ feet, showing an act of member care service for every follower to continue doing so for one another.

The late Rev. Wesley K. Shao, my father -in-law, shepherded Chinese-Filipino churches during his earthly years of faithful ministry: 10 years in Davao, 25 years at the biggest church in Manila, and over 10 years more when he retired from serving one church and became a much sought-after Sunday worship speaker in many Chinese -Filipino churches in the Metro-Manila area. One of his repeated lines of Christ’s ever faithfulness to his believers consists of a group of passages that point to Jesus’ ways of doing member care for them. Most specifically, let us pay attention to these wordings in these passages “*to the end* .” These are as follows: (1) John 13:1, “Having loved his own who were in the world, he *loved them to the*

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<sup>2</sup>Ronald L. Koteskey, *Missionary Member Care: An Introduction* (Wilmore, KY: Go InterNational, 2013), 21, accessed 14 August 2016, <http://www.globalmembercare.com/index.php?id=34>.

<sup>3</sup>Doug Franklin, *The Jesus Model for Team Care*. Leader Treks Youth Ministry, (online chat on 7 October 2016), accessed 20 March 2017, <https://www.leadertreks.org/jesus-model-team-care/>

end”; (2) 1 Corinthians 1:8, “ He will also *keep you firm to the end*, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ ”; (3) Hebrews 7:25, “Therefore he is able to *save completely* (forever/*to the end*) those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”

*Deliberation on Two Asian Cases to Compare and Contrast Member Care* Perhaps, as we focus on doing missionaries *member care* for our Asian workers, specifically the Chinese missionaries, a true-to-life story of each of these two selected Chinese missionaries can serve as a catalyst for deriving the best practice in doing *member care* for God’s servants like them, in their specific cultural and missional context.

### 1. The Case of Angel C.

Angel C. came from a Buddhist family. She was the first to become a believer as a young adult in her family, when a team of gospel outreach from an evangelical church went to their hometown to share the Gospel of Jesus. It was not easy for her to live as a follower of Jesus because her siblings ridiculed her and her elder brothers even punished her by not giving her food because she believes Jesus would provide for her. Nonetheless, her younger sister soon came to accept Jesus, following Angel C.’ s faith. Gradually, both sisters are able to influence their siblings with their authentic Christian living and almost all of their siblings turned to Jesus’ saving grace. In fact, some of their siblings even serve as church leaders in the Christian school.

The Lord of the harvest eventually called Angel C. to dedicate herself to full-time ministry and so she entered seminary training. When she started her theological education, most of her siblings were not yet believers. It caused her to endure ridicules from her own family members; later on, in God’s time, everyone in her family came to the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

During seminary studies, Angel C. had had many opportunities to visit and even tape some short messages for the radio broadcast center, located just across the seminary. No wonder, after graduation from theological studies, she enjoyed serving at that Christian radio broadcast center, specifically, targeting the large population in Mainland China (when the bamboo gate was still closed). Over the years she also served in other

various ministries: from broadcasting, to becoming a missionary -educator in a provincial Christian school, and also pastoring a provincial church in the southern part of the Philippines where she was born. Up to this point in her life, Angel C. was regarded by her home church as a local missionary, sent to the mission field for Christian education. Yet, deep in her heart, she was so burdened to serve as a missionary to her ancestral homeland, China. Finally, in her mid -life years, she did go as an overseas missionary to that big land of China, with great passion and commitment to return back, each time she came home for a brief stay in the Philippines.

Angel C. was born with a delightful appearance, and most people could see the beautiful smile radiating from her face. Yet somehow, there seems to be a shadow of sadness, of timidity, and of gospel longings inside her that convinced her to serve as a missionary in China, until her death. This was actually her lifelong desire: to serve in China till the day she would die. However, during that time, it was not easy to realize such a wish. Somehow, it was fitting for her to return to the Philippines. A small local church, other than her home church invited her to serve with them in her retiring years.

What about any *member care* that could be extended to her? Yes, the senior pastor and his wife have always been her confidants and counselors whenever she traveled to the city to meet them (maybe, once every year). She had her siblings too, to pray for her, and her batch-mates from seminary days (who are equally busy with their ministries). The seminary faculty and professors would find time to talk with her whenever she came to campus. Toward her later years, she got her wish to move back to China to serve as a missionary. She left a suitcase of personal items with a seminary faculty for safekeeping. Furthermore, there was a time when she really contemplated getting married to a Chinese man (whose wife either died or had divorced him). At that time she had a spiritual lady in China in whom she would confide and seek guidance from. The marriage never pushed through, although she had learned to love the man.

Sadly, in retrospect she would see herself as a failure. This seem to be based on her sense of past wrongdoings and also her unfulfilled dream to minister and to die in China as a missionary. As she recounted such deep longings, she found herself in deep depression and almost could not function in ministry. The small congregation embraced her and nursed her back to renewed spiritual health. Ultimately, she fulfilled her wish to serve

in China and after some time, she died in her physical sickness, in that big land, where she had meant to serve till her death. She died in her late 60s.

## 2. The Case of Angel P.

The family that Angel P. grew up in was a good Christian home with a legacy of three to four generations of God-fearing ancestors. Angel P.'s parents as well as her uncles and aunties from both her parents' sides are serving either as deacons and/or deaconesses, and elders of the church. Her siblings are all involved in the church ministry and all of them have studied in a Christian school. In short, Angel P. is surrounded by clouds of Christian witnesses as well as vivid examples of how blessed it is to serve God according to one's spiritual gifts. As a vibrant Christian youth, growing and mingling with other vibrant believers in her church groups, various fellowships and even in a church choir, Angel P. has gathered a large support network of many Christian friends. She is a computer expert when it comes to technology as she works at her parents' business enterprise. When she first joined a short-term mission trip as sponsored by her mission-minded church, it suddenly dawned upon her that she could reach the unreached people with the latest technological knowhow and skills she possessed. God continues to expand Angel P.'s ministry horizon as she uses her technological talent for God's kingdom, in places where the brave dare not go, especially to those Gospel-inaccessible places in the southern part of the Philippines.

Angel P. set aside time to be equipped and graduated in the area of ministerial service from a local seminary. Her involvement in enhancing the technological knowhow of the remote place in the rural area is expanding and she feels God is calling her to pursue this as a full-time task. Angel P. has always been surrounded by her supportive peers and loving family members; thus, she could gather a group of committed prayer warriors as God continues to move her into the strategic places of missionary work. She had to overcome the reticence of her family, who has been so concerned and anxious in releasing their daughter for an extended stay away from home, over river and across mountain, to a far-away island, where the Gospel is not openly welcomed. By God's grace and with many prayers, the family sent her off, entrusting her to the mighty and protective hands of God.

The work of Angel P. not only continues to grow and flourish, but also reaches the pinnacle of ministry success. With the whole church rallying behind her, the church bulletin would announce the progress of her mission endeavor and the needs of her expanding involvement: from purely education to livelihood enterprise and now into semi-open evangelism. Short-term mission groups and visits from the church mission board, and even seminary mission exposure teams would choose her place to learn and attempt to evangelize indirectly with livelihood programs and cultural appreciation activities. From time to time, when the church holds her annual mission conference, Angel P. would fly from the south to her home church, to share how God has worked sovereignly among these people. She has been wearing the attire of the native people among whom she has lived for the past 10 to 15 years. To date, Angel P. has won the hearts of the people there, in this creative access field, where the people addressed her with esteemed honor as one of their own, *bapa* Angel P. (a native term for *madam*), a highly respectable greeting or title. In fact, the *datu* or the chief of the land received her as his god-daughter, treating her like one of his own children. Her own family, well-to-do and generously supportive of her ministry, even donated funds to improve the living quarters and the development of the livelihood programs there. She is now being tapped to head up an international missionary organization, as God has given her a bigger role to play for the proclamation of his kingdom.

*Group Discussion on the Above Two Cases of Local Missionary Venture*

Kindly take a good look into the two different family backgrounds of these two local missionary endeavors presented. Both of these Angels have the same ethnicity (Chinese) and calling from God to be his missionary. Yet both have very different upbringings and resources needed for the task of being God's missionary or messenger, to bring his Good News to the lost ones. Fill in the chart below and compare/contrast them according to the items listed on the left end of the chart.



Any benefit seen	For Angel C.	For Angel P.
1. Clear calling		
2. Family support		
3. Personality aspect		
4. Church support		
5. Ministry exposure		
6. Community		
7. Others		

Any deficit seen	For Angel C.	For Angel P.
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		

### Lessons Suggested from Research on Member Care

Looking into the reasons for attrition in the missionary work, William Taylor in his book, *Too Valuable to Lose*, included the results from the surveys done between 1994 to 1996, on *Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*. This is called the ReMAP or Reducing Missionary Attrition Project, under the sponsorship of the World Evangelical Fellowship.<sup>4</sup>

A closer look into the top seven most important reasons why missionaries leave their agency, revealed that the top overall weighted reasons point to unpreventable ones in the old sending countries (OSC) and personal ones for the new sending countries (NSC).

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<sup>4</sup> Peter W. Brierley, “Missionary Attrition: The ReMAP Research Report,” in *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition* (ed. William D. Taylor; Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 91.

Table 1. Overall weighted reasons for leaving the agency

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Overall %</b>	<b>OSC %</b>	<b>NSC %</b>
Unpreventable	24	29	16
Personal	25	21	32
Marriage/Family	13	17	9
Society	12	10	15
Work-related	10	8	12
Team	9	8	10
Cultural	5	5	5
Other	2	2	1
Total (weighted)	13,302	8,270	5,032

*Best Practice Considerations Based on a Comprehensive Model of Member Care*

O'Donnell, together with Dave Pollock, and some initial help from Marjory Foyle, developed the basic Member Care Model (also known as 5-2-5 Model of Member Care for Missionaries). It consists of five permeable spheres that flow into and influence each other as shown in Figure 1 below. Two foundational spheres are at the core: master care and self/mutual care. The emphasis on the flow of care cannot be overemphasized. In each sphere, a summary of best practices and principles related to the overall “flow of care” needed for staff longevity are as follows: the flow of Christ, the flow of community, the flow of commitment, the flow of caregivers, and the flow of connections. Further, it should be noted that the flow of care under each sphere can be initiated either by oneself or the other. It should always be a two-way street.

As noted in this Figure 1 model, we see the five levels of care: *Master care* – spiritual care, wherein the missionary is cared for by God through his or her walk and devotional life with him; *Self and mutual care* – missionaries are equipped to care for themselves spiritually and receive care from fellow missionaries; *Sender care* – care by the sending church and organization; *Specialist care* – areas or domains of care where specialists are needed; and *Network care* – where international member

care networks assist in providing resources available for missionaries and personnel involved.<sup>5</sup>

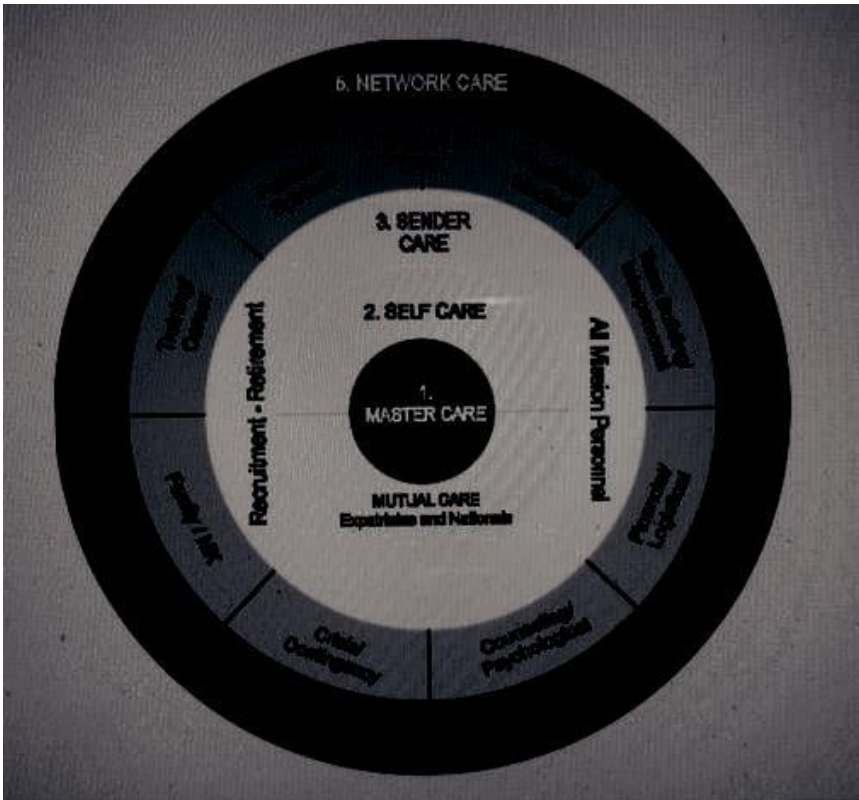


Figure 1. The Best Practice of Member Care.  
© 2000 Kelly O'Donnell and Dave Pollock

Kelly O'Donnell's extensive and all-embracing model of best practice of member care touches all areas of member care. It is designed to show that member care is an ongoing process from recruitment to retirement for any missionary and missionary personnel. It puts God at the very center of extending care into each area; all areas of care are supposed to be accessible to each other at any point in time. I specially marvel at how O'Donnell's wide range of specialist care calls for eight specific types of

<sup>5</sup> Rosa C. Shao, *Member Care in Mission in Expanding Horizons: Theological Reflections* (ed. Joseph T. Shao, Rosa C. Shao, and Jean U. Uayan; Valenzuela, Metro Manila: BSOP, 2010), 169.

professional care. Eight specialist domains of care—these can be understood and remembered under the rubric “**PP**actical **TT**ools **FF**or **CC**are.” These are: **P**astoral/spiritual care; **P**hysical/medical care; **T**raining/career care; **T**eambuilding/interpersonal; **F**amily/MKs; **F**inancial/logistical; **C**risis/contingency; and **C**ounseling/psychological care.<sup>6</sup> These are so well thought of and comprehensive enough to warrant this model to be the best practice for member care.

However, how many missionaries are seriously tapping into this uniquely planned out resources under the pastoral/spiritual care? To use the very words of O’Donnell, this special care from specialists is professional, personal, and practical—“equippers” of member care.<sup>7</sup> From my observation, the missionaries who would need such specialist care most, rarely, or hardly ever volunteer themselves to avail of this special care. The reasons for such may vary from personal inhibition, lack of education or organizational encouragement. To seek specialist care, for instance, in the area of psychological concern may bear a stigma of lack of emotional wellness, thus, adding more stress to the ones seeking such help. Furthermore, the Chinese family values face-saving with emphasis on honor and shame, as confirmed by the study committee from member care consultation.<sup>8</sup>

With the growing numbers of diverse member care practitioners, and colleagues connecting with counterparts in other countries, disciplines, and networking with sectors for mutual learning, a global steady development in member care practice is seen. This calls for update features toward the newly expanded model for global member care. In September 2016, Kelly O’Donnell and Michèle O’Donnell presented the new *Missio Dei* model (MC-MD) at the Middle East Member Care Consultation. It is designed to further shape and support the globalizing field of member care, which has been developing its global presence and relevance. It

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<sup>6</sup>Kelly S. O’Donnell, “Touring the Terrain: An International Sampler of Member Care Books” in *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from Around the World* (ed., Kelly S. O’Donnell; Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2002), 552.

<sup>7</sup>Kelly O’Donnell, “Going Global A Member Care Model for Best Practice,” *Mission Frontiers* (2002), accessed 13 March 2017, <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/going-global>.

<sup>8</sup>P. Ho, B. Ng and L. H. Wang, ed. “Summary Report of Chinese Member Care Consultation,” 3. Chinese Member Care Consultation: Best Practices of Chinese Member, 13 December 2016, Chiang Mai, Thailand.

emphasizes the *Missio Dei* context for member care. The term Global Member Care (GMC) emerges and its impact is interdisciplinary, international, and multi-sectoral. Two added spheres are now in place. These are: a) the sixth sphere, Sector Care, that includes the sectors of mission/aid (primary), humanitarian, health, and human resources; and b) the seventh sphere, Humanity Care, that reflects the growing interests and involvements in well-being for all people. The seventh sphere or Humanity Care surrounds the other six spheres and is itself contained within the *missio Dei*, that is, the overall work of God in the world through Divine, secular, ecclesiastical, missiological, means.<sup>9</sup> The latest expansion of the global member care model (MC-MD) says a lot about many possibilities of global networking and global contributions in support of the church's worldwide mission effort. This entailed the cooperative and supportive service of mission personnel, the sending agencies and also the mission organization.

Below is the Figure 2, a representation of the new *Missio Dei* model (MC-MD). Basically, it keeps the first five spheres from the original model developed in 1999–2000.

To briefly point out the first five spheres, together with a more detailed explanation for the added two spheres, we see the following:<sup>10</sup>

### **Sphere 1. Master Care: *The Flow of Christ***

Our relationship with Christ is fundamental to our well-being and work effectiveness. Member care resources strengthen our relationship to the Lord and help us to encourage others in the Lord.

### **Sphere 2. Self and Mutual Care: *The Flow of Community***

Self-care is basic to good health. Self-awareness, monitoring one's needs, a commitment to personal development, and seeking help when needed are signs of maturity. Likewise, quality relationships with family and friends are necessary...with those in one's home and host cultures.

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<sup>9</sup> Kelly O'Donnell and Michèle O'Donnell, "Introducing the Global Member Care: The *Missio Dei* Model (MC-MD)" in *Global Member Care. Vol. 2: Crossing Sectors for Serving Humanity* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), accessed 14 March 2016, <https://sites.google.com/site/globalmca/home/-vol-2-contents>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

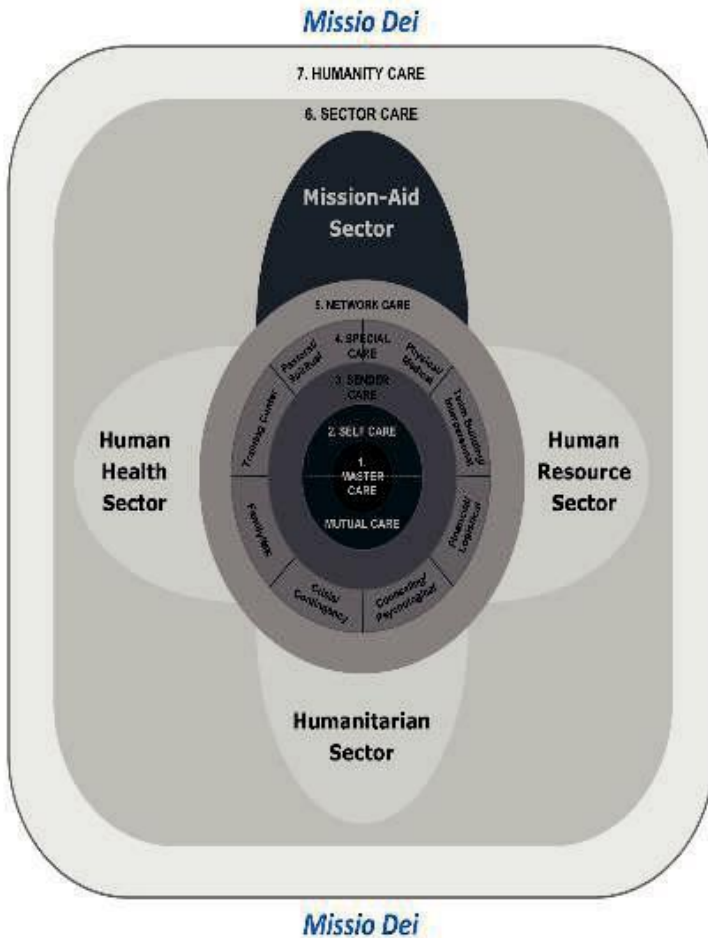


Figure 2. The New *Missio Dei* Model

**Sphere 3. Sender Care: *The Flow of Commitment***

An organization’s staff is its most important resource. As such, sending groups—both churches and agencies—are committed to work together to support and develop their personnel throughout the worker life cycle. They demonstrate this commitment by the way they invest themselves.

**Sphere 4. Special Care: *The Flow of Caregivers***

Specialist care is to be done by properly qualified people, usually in conjunction with sending groups. The goal is not just care, but empowerment—to help personnel develop the resiliency and capacities needed to sacrifice and minister to others.

**Sphere 5. Network Care: *The Flow of Connections***

Member care providers are committed to relate and work together, stay updated on events and developments, and share consolidated learning from their member care practice. They are involved in not just providing their services, but in actively “knitting a net” to link resources with areas of need.

**Sphere 6. Sector Care: *The Flow of Common Ground***

People with member care responsibility stay in touch with sectors that are relevant for their work. They are willing to cross into new areas to find common ground—emphases, projects, disciplines, and fields within related sectors—for mutual learning, exchanging resources, and developing skills. Crossing sectors includes a continuum of involvement which is carefully considered in view of one’s primary focus in member care: being informed by, integrating with, and/or immersing in a given sector or part of a sector.

**Sphere 7. Humanity Care: *The Flow of Common Good***

There is a tremendous need to address major problems affecting the well-being of people and the planet. Both member care and mission provide many opportunities for strategic involvement—at local to global levels—by Christian colleagues who can leverage their character, competencies, and compassion. Those with member care responsibility in particular are encouraged to connect and contribute in our globalizing world in new ways for the common good while maintaining the focus on supporting the health, resiliency, and effectiveness of the diversity of mission personnel and their sending groups.

Moreover, the same proponents of this best practice member care have made three important adjustments to the five spheres from the original model. These are:

- a. “Specialist Care” is now “Special Care” (sphere four) in order to emphasize the various skills needed to support workers by both specialists *and* others with member care responsibilities such as field and team leaders;
- b. the need for supportive input for sending groups (sphere three), member care providers (sphere four), and member care networks (sphere five) themselves, in addition to the main focus on mission workers; and
- c. the reality that many Christian workers are not necessarily sent out by a sending group like a church/agency and they too need member care including support teams and local resources to back them up.

### *Best Practice to Modify Self-care toward Personal Growth*

In my article on *Member Care in Mission*, I noted that “the top four preventable reasons for missionary attrition were those designated personal, marriage/family, society, and work-related.”<sup>11</sup> With issues under family, pastoral and spiritual care, not only is individual counseling needed for missionaries, we may need to work at the very core issue of personality development. This entails not only the understanding of one’s personality make-up, along with a closer look into one’s upbringing amid the stages of one’s bio-psycho-socio-spiritual development.

#### 1. Findings from the Chinese Member Care Consultation

From the recently concluded Chinese Member Care Consultation, focusing on Asian Missionaries (specifically among Chinese missionaries), held in Chiang Mai, Thailand in August 2016, a summary report of the deliberation and discussion from participants, speakers and organizers materialized. The Well International initiated the convention for the Chinese Member Care Consultation. It helps to bring together member care personnel who work with Chinese members to share experiences in working with and caring for Chinese Christian cross-cultural workers. The main purpose of said consultation is to document and develop best practices for member care of Chinese workers. There are all together 25

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<sup>11</sup>Shao, “Member Care in Mission,” 164.



participants; among them are cross-cultural workers, mental health professionals, member care personnel, TCK consultants, cross-cultural trainers and field leaders, from US, Australia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Mainland China, Sweden, and Ethiopia.<sup>12</sup>

As the organizers of said conference formed a working committee to study and summarize the findings from experts who could be either active participants in the mission field, or heads of mission organization working with their own missionaries, one significant element formed the starting point of their concluding results. The first and foremost vital step to be taken is to distinguish distinctive Chinese groups according to their unique characteristics. The need to pay attention to the missionary's cultural background cannot be overemphasized. Thus, before anything else, the initial item this working committee begins to analyze is the personal characteristics and cultural background of these Chinese missionaries. With the globalized and multi-cultural world that our Chinese missionaries now find themselves in, it is an important observation, to start by looking at what kinds of Chinese missionaries they are. For this recent Thailand consultation, there are three kinds or categories of Chinese missionaries defined or designated. These are: (1) English-speaking overseas Chinese (e.g., Singaporean, Malaysian, North American, and Australian); (2) Chinese-speaking Chinese outside Mainland China (Taiwan and Hong Kong); and (3) Chinese from Mainland China.

By starting with the personal characteristics of the missionary in focus, it is where the persona, or where the self-care lies. This working committee sees the need to recognize how cultural backgrounds and geographical as well as social environments play a part in shaping the unique characteristics of these three different groups of Chinese missionaries. On the other hand, the committee clarified some commonalities, stating, "it is also noticeable that most Chinese workers share similar characteristics and face similar challenges in their thought patterns, emotional reactions, and behavioral conduct."<sup>13</sup> So from what is presented below, we can see the unique characteristics and challenges faced by the English-speaking overseas Chinese missionaries, most of which are applicable to the Chinese-speaking Chinese missionaries beyond Mainland China, and

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<sup>12</sup>Ho, "Summary Report," 2.

<sup>13</sup>Ho, "Summary Report," 3-6.

Chinese missionaries in Mainland China. There are also additional specific traits and tests, faced only by the last two groups.

<p><b>English-speaking Overseas Chinese Workers</b></p>	<p><b>Chinese-speaking Chinese workers beyond Mainland China</b></p>	<p><b>Chinese workers From Mainland China</b></p>
<p><u>Characteristics common to all 3 groups</u></p> <p>Harmonious relationships                      Honor and shame                      Face-saving                      Respect for authority                      Indirect communication                      Emotional suppression                      Self-sacrifice                      Hardworking                      Endurance                      Blurred boundaries                      Meeting others’ expectations                      Ethnocentrism                      Collectivism                      Importance of education                      Respect for the elderly                      Filial piety                      Family honor</p>	<p><u>More characteristics</u></p> <p>Performance and result driven                      Competitiveness                      A fast-paced lifestyle                      First-time missionaries in their 40s                      Tendency to work according to principles and structures</p> <p><u>Others show the following characteristics:</u></p> <p>The loner                      Spouses as non-supported workers                      Sending church is also the mission agency                      Conflicting authority between the local church and mission agency</p>	<p><u>More characteristics</u></p> <p>Security conscious                      Pioneering spirit                      Pragmatic outlook                      Relation-oriented— Relationships are everything                      Hierarchical leadership                      Imbalance of ministry and family responsibilities                      Only child from one-child family                      Variations of educational level and available resources                      Non-status-quo younger generation</p>
<p><u>Challenges common to all 3 groups</u></p> <p>Communication problems                      Work patterns                      Meeting other’s expectations                      Team dynamics                      Attrition</p>	<p><u>More challenges</u></p> <p>Language barrier                      TCK education                      Role of wife                      Limited financial resources                      Tension between sending church and mission agency</p>	<p><u>More challenges</u></p> <p>Security in creative access                      Sending structures                      pioneering stage                      Workers’ calling unclear                      Family                      Language barrier</p>

Aside from the summary report given, there are also some recommendations that come from the consultation working committee. These are as follows:

a. For the Chinese Workers

Have clear expectations regarding the selection and screening process. Have a balanced view on the theology of suffering. Learn self-awareness and self-care. Have clear and healthy boundaries. Build strong marriage and parent-child relationships. Parents need to know that their kids are third culture kids (TCKs) and to learn how to care for them. Seek help and support, and help others to seek help and support. Learn cross-cultural communication skills. Maintain emotional well-being. Develop cultural sensitivity and competence. Learn conflict management and resolution. Develop a strong support system both in your home country and on the mission field. Keep a vibrant spiritual life throughout your life.

b. For Sending Churches

Learn to do member care and receive training in member care. Partner with mission agencies in selection and screening. Visit members on the mission field. Establish a holistic approach to member care that covers the members' entire life span. Examples of such instances are, care for members' elderly parents, care of young adult TCKs in the home country, support for members' personal and professional development, suitable housing arrangements for members during home assignments and when they return home.

c. For Mission Agencies Selection and Screening

Not to rush new members out to the field but to take time to screen, prepare and train new members. Develop a careful selection and screening process, including spiritual maturity, health and psychological assessment. Partner with mental health professionals and agencies in psychological assessment.

### Member Care Practitioners

Implement the 5 -3-5 model 2 on Member Care for both adult members and their young family members.<sup>14</sup> Use the member's heart language in providing member care like debriefing. Visit members on the mission field and care for their extended family in their home country. Set up guidelines and protocols for crisis management. Help members develop a strong support system both in their home country and on the mission field. Encourage personal and professional development. Design a good home assignment plan to ensure sufficient time for rest, family, sharing, fundraising, lifelong learning or skill upgrading.

### TCK Care and Education

Provide transition debriefing and support, especially when transitioning back to their native country. Provide education support for workers' children. For instance, help parents make long term education plans for their kids and develop suitable learning materials and education models, recruit TCK teachers, help in mother-tongue studies and set up a TCK education fund.

### Under Training

Training in how to raise support is a very natural need. Other training in working in multi-cultural team, in Self-care training and in Member Care training is also helpful. Teach and walk with new sending agencies from Mainland China to explore how to develop a good sending structure.

### Partnership and Networking

Clarify distinctive roles and responsibilities for the sending church and mission agency. Identify, network, and partner with available Chinese member care resources and networks. If available and appropriate, partner with local churches wherein the Christian community may provide member care for members on the mission field.

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<sup>14</sup>The 5-3-5 member care model refers to the 5 levels of care including master care, self and mutual care, sender care, specialist care and network care. The 3 phases include pre-field, on field and re-entry care. And the 5 areas of needs include spiritual, physical, actualization, relational and emotional needs.

d. Other Recommendations

Disseminate this report to influential Chinese church and mission leaders. Make this report available to international agencies that prepare Chinese workers and sending agencies. Organize consultations and conferences for churches and mission leaders to learn to do member care and discuss member care issues.

2. From a Closer Look into Self- Care Components

In line with O'Donnell's best practice for member care model I hope to re-focus on the area pertaining to self-care. This is care for one's self and from relationships within the home, the expatriate and the national communities. O'Donnell called this the "backbone" of member care. It is precisely the responsibility of individuals to provide for their own wellness.

It is crucial to have a clear calling as God's worker. This basic core of the missionary's calling from God must be secured, like an anchor that grips upon Christ's solid rock. From the Word of God, we know that our natural disposition is to be at enmity with God (Rom 8:6-7) . We are created in God's image, yet because of the fall of Adam, we are born into this world in a state of degeneration. Yet in Christ, by faith alone, we are counted righteous and even being adopted as children of God. Our original sin is nailed on the cross as Christ paid our penalty of death (6:1-2). Still, we have maladaptive impulses that our upbringing and background have influenced us to seek sinful patterns in meeting our needs. The process toward sanctification after salvation in Christ is a daily battle of living under the control of the Holy Spirit, or under our carnally imposed disposition. A Christian counseling theologian states "becoming a Christian (regeneration) moves a person from the process of degeneration to the process of sanctification."<sup>15</sup> Everyone comes to Christ, each at his/her own level of degeneration. Thus, two persons may come to the saving grace of Christ at the same time, nonetheless, the process of regeneration, that is, their renewal by the prompting and leading of the Holy Spirit may not be at the same level of spiritual growth or sanctification.

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<sup>15</sup> William T. Kirwan, *Biblical Concepts for Christian Counseling: A Case for Integrating Psychology and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 89-90.

Here is an illustration of two persons, Person A and Person B, as each one of them becomes a Christian, their different environmental influences and forces from their upbringing, will cause them to adjust to their new-found life quite differently or at a dissimilar level. In the figure below, both Persons A and B have attained new life in Christ under the Holy Spirit. However, Person A is regenerated but his psychological, emotional and spiritual adjustment stands considerably lower than Person B. Member care extended to Person A and to Person B will indeed produce some significant psycho-spiritual growth for them; but may not produce the same outcome for both, due to their different states of psychological adjustment.

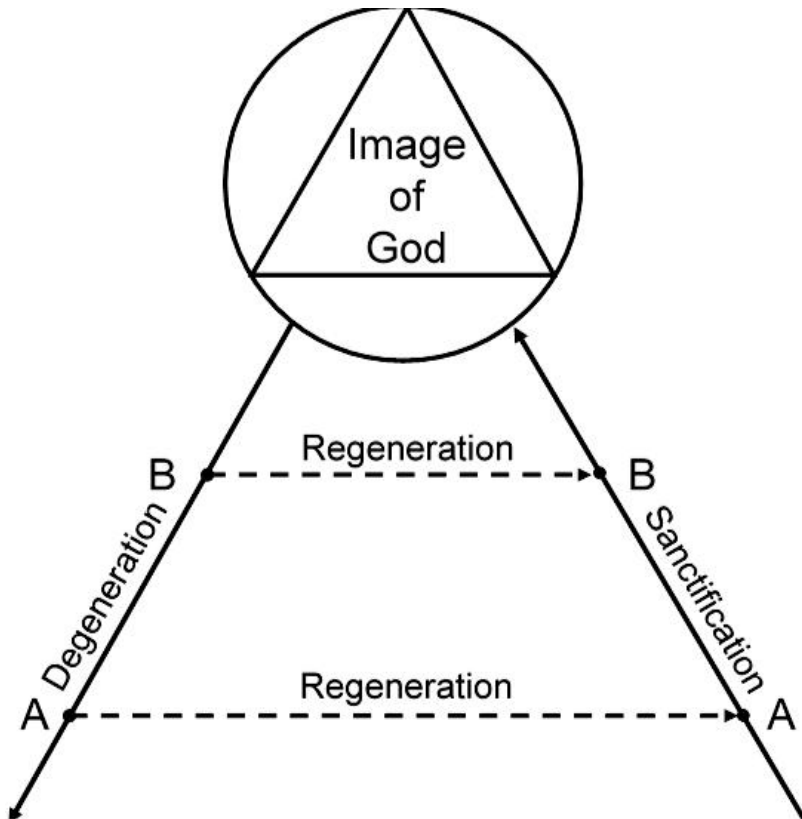


Figure 3. Degeneration-Regeneration-Sanctification  
 Source: Kirwan, 1984, p. 89

Therefore, it is urgently vital, to pay serious attention in the area of Self-Care, foremost, on the personal calling of the missionary. This entails the devotional life of the missionary and his calling. Following the Best Practice Model of Member Care that O'Donnell initially presents, and the MC-MD as revised by both Kelly O' Donnell and Michèle O'Donnell, I hope to enlarge the Self-Care concern. This is not to replace these two best practice models under member care that elucidate many of the important needs by expert practitioners. I simply hope to contribute a part in re-iterating the importance of starting at the core or the backbone of member care. Thus, re-focusing on the Self-Care, let us not forget that each 5 or 7 spheres are permeable; take a cross-sectional look at Self-Care components in Figure 4 below.



Figure 4. Proposed Best Practice Focusing on Self- Care Components

At first glance, we see God at the very heart of Self-Care. Herein lies the very basic root of member care relation. This is the overall superb Master Care, placed central and extending into the successive progress and developments of Self-Care, as the missionary worker continues to branch out into other spheres. It is a challenge under Self-Care, especially for Chinese and other Asian missionaries as studies have shown, their high value for self-sacrifice with a propensity to be guilty-prone toward attending to their own welfare.

The first component for Self-Care is to have a clear **calling** of the *missionary* from **God**. Serving God full-time and in a cross-cultural setting in this globalized world is not easy. Just like the faithful spiritual giants like Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, and Jeremiah, we see that difficult and testing times may sway the missionary's heart to grow cold and even give up. A personal calling, firm and secure in God's Word and work, can keep the missionary sailing on, even on stormy seas. This is attained when the missionary worker's daily walk with the Lord is consistently maintained. Henry Martin, a missionary to India and Persia once said: "The spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions. The nearer we get to him, the more intensely missionary we become."

The second component touches on the missionary's nuclear *family*. Most of the daily **cares** (worries—personal or family issues) can potentially take the missionary out from the field when these issues collide with the missionary endeavor. The personal support, initial as well as intimate understanding and bonding of the missionary with each family member should not be ignored or its impact disregarded. In fact, the familial relationship is of significant influence on the continuation or the departure of the missionary. At times, the support or non-support of a missionary spouse can either make or break the missionary's passion for the vision set by the Master. The missionary worker must guard the wellness of his family members, not neglecting spending time with them, both quality and quantity.

Then comes the third component, which is the relational component of the *church*, wherein spiritual leaders like the pastors and the mission leaders or board members must **commit** to embrace and empower the missionary in all areas of the task. Personal mentoring of the missionary under a more mature and seasoned pastor or practitioner can make a big difference, as iron sharpens iron. This area could determine the duration



of the missionary service, enhanced when the church is able to continue **committing to** provide the means and resources at every stage of the missionary work. Many times, when the missionary worker leaves his home, the church, be it home church or affiliate church, serves as a home away from home for the missionary. The church as the body of Christ, must function as such, when brothers and sisters in the Lord live out the greatest commandment, to love God above all; and to one another in words and deeds.

The fourth component lies within the realm of the *mission organization*, taking care of **communicating** with the entities involved in **contractual obligations** including the missionary's retreat, home service assignments, benefits and even retirement plans. At times, the attrition of a missionary happens when the mission sending agency and church mission committee do not seem to be working in harmony. Tension arises from these entities as to who is in control, and the missionary's priority of compliance. Thus, the late John Stott led the Lausanne committee in suggesting: "[I]ndependence of the church is bad, cooperation with the church is better, service as an arm of the church is best."<sup>16</sup>

The component cannot really be restricted to the *community* where the missionaries are serving because it is wide and borderless. Rather, there remains the significant impact of globalization and post-modernity has been penetrating every aspect of human life. There are lots of networking and **coordinating**, going on behind, and within the context of the missionary work. In fact, under this sphere, we can even include the **Sector Care** and the **Humanity Care**. Thus, this sphere can even touch on the culture, the subculture and even cross-cultural interaction within our fast pacing global and local connections. Herein we are overwhelmed with the latest so-called *glo-cal* reality, affecting almost every being on earth. Our Chinese missionaries need all the best care from each sphere of influence, touching base with each other, and that continues to broaden and expand, along with the rest of the other spheres.

In conclusion, I want to stress that all the spheres in the life and ministry of a Chinese missionary will surely affect the person. The missionary faces the ebb and flow of so many forces within each of these

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<sup>16</sup>Ivan Liew, ed., *Churches & Mission Agencies Together: A Relational Model for Partnership Practice* (US: Condeo Press, 2017), 42–43.

spheres that influence the quality of member care. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance for all the member care entities to help the Chinese missionary face each challenging task, keenly aware of the fluctuation of the resources at his/her disposal. Most important of all, the best practice is to help the missionary face himself/herself—learning to serve *dying to self, yet living for Christ alone*.



## FOUR VARIABLES OF LEADERSHIP

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The secular world is very much concerned with leadership. Yet there is an increasing crisis of leadership in the Chinese Churches in the Philippines. Most senior pastors or lead pastors of these churches are over 60 years of age but the churches hardly find the right successors. People in these churches are concerned about the apparent dearth of leadership in the younger generation.

There is a Chinese saying: “Rather be a cock’s head than a cow’s tail,” which means, “I would rather have a low but independent position than to hold a high position under the control of others.”<sup>1</sup> This saying reveals a major characteristic of Chinese culture. Every Chinese prefers to be a leader than to be led.

But how does one identify a great leader? In their book *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*, W. Bennis and B. Nanus demonstrates how the top leaders embodied four major areas of competency: (1) attention

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<sup>1</sup> S. C. Liang, *A New Practical Chinese-English Dictionary* (Taipei: The Far East, 1972), 236.

through vision, (2) meaning through communication, (3) trust through positioning, and (4) the deployment of self. These areas of competency once learned and practiced will enable one to be an effective leader.<sup>2</sup>

### Four Variables of Leadership

#### *Attention through Vision*

Father Theodore Hesburgh said it well, “The very essence of leadership is [that] you have to have a vision. It’s got to be a vision you articulate clearly and forcefully on every occasion. You can ’t blow an uncertain trumpet.”<sup>3</sup> Without vision, there is little or no sense of purpose in an organization. Efforts drift aimlessly.

In the Scriptures, the word “vision” is commonly used of an ecstatic experience in which godly people with an awareness of God receive a special word from him, such as: Jacob (Gen 46:2, 3), David (1 Chr 21:16), Isaiah (Isa 6:1–8), Daniel (Dan 8), Ezekiel (Ezek 37), Ananias (Acts 9:10), Cornelius (10:3–6), Peter (10:10–16), Paul (16:9; 18:9; 23:11; 2 Cor 12:1–4), and John the apostle (Revelation).

Visions in the Scriptures may come in one’s waking moment (Dan 10:7; Acts 9:3–9). They can come by day (Acts 10:3, 9–16; cf. Num 24:4, 16) or by night (Gen 46:2). But most commonly, visions come under conditions of dreaming (Num 12:6; Job 4:13; Dan 4:9). Not only judges, prophets, and kings had visions, but so did ordinary farmers and housewives. Charles M. Stuart points out that “the objects of vision, diverse and in some instances strange as they are, have usually their points of contact with experiences of the daily life.”<sup>4</sup>

The King James Version of Proverbs 29:18 reads: “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” Most current executives would agree with this verse. Vigorous leadership is always inspired by vision. However, the New International Version renders the verse, “Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint.” The Hebrew word for vision in this popular verse is *hazon* which refers to a prophetic vision. Frank Gaebelin states that “the prophetic ministry was usually in response to the calamitous periods,

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<sup>2</sup>W. Bennis and B. Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).

<sup>3</sup>Mentioned in T. Peters, *Thriving on Chaos* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 483.

<sup>4</sup>Charles M. Stuart, “Vision,” *ISBE* 3057.

calling the people back to God.” He also maintains that the meaning “cast off restraint” is assumed for *yippara* (“perish” in the KJV), based on Exodus 32:25.<sup>5</sup>

Leighton Ford points out, “Vision is the very stuff of the leadership—the ability to see in a way that compels others to pay attention.”<sup>6</sup> He cites Charles Swindoll who wrote, “vision is spawned by faith, sustained by hope, sparked by imagination and strengthened by enthusiasm.”<sup>7</sup> He therefore identified the leader as a “seer.” Moses was a seer in this sense.

By faith, Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter ...He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. (Heb 11:24–27, NIV)

Moses and other men and women of faith listed in Hebrews 11 “were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them from a distance” (Heb. 11:13) . Their lives and actions were totally influenced by this faith, this vision. As a result, people around them were also affected by this faith, this vision. This vision is the “foresight” needed for effective leadership.

The seer is the organizer of an organization, the idea person, the dreamer, the possibility thinker. The leader devotes time and attention to seeing what could be, and then shares these dreams with his or her followers. Without vision, there is little reason for the subjects to follow the leader. And without the subjects being willing to follow, there is no leadership.

The leader is someone who can look down the road into the future, and who can challenge his or her followers to walk in a specific direction, seeking certain goals, objectives, and dreams.

### *Meaning through Communication*

There are many definitions of communication. One of the broadest defines it as any information-sharing activity. In this paper, communication is

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<sup>5</sup> Frank E. Gaebelin, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (5 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 5:1116.

<sup>6</sup> Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 99.

<sup>7</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, *Acts Vol. II* (Fullerton: Insight for Living, 1979), 100.

defined as a dynamic process in which a person consciously or unconsciously affects the cognition of another through materials or agencies used in symbolic ways.<sup>8</sup>

The Bible indicates that communication is important and basic to the Christian faith. The act of creation and dialogue with human beings show that communication is one of God's attributes. After a time of the Holy Spirit's hovering over the disorderly chaos, a series of "God said...God said..." followed by a series of "and it was so...and it was so..." with a series of God's approvals of "it was good...it was good," happened to the earth, and the present earth came into existence. "For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm" (Ps 33:9, NIV). God's speaking is God's Word which was the revelation of the whole will and mind of God. God, the self-sufficient Being who does not need other beings, created human beings and nature and entered into dialogue with them. The act of creation and dialogue with human beings show that communication is one of God's attributes.

In Genesis 3, God called to the man "Where are you?" when he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day. God wanted to communicate with Adam and Eve. But Adam and Eve hid themselves from God for they had sinned. Thus, communication between God and the human race was broken. As revealed in Romans 5:12, the result of broken communication with God was the spread of death to the human race.

Human sin destroyed not only the communication between God and humans, but also the communication between human beings. In the Old Testament, God called out the prophets and sent them among his people. Galatians 4:4 tells us that when the time had come, God sent his Son. Christ's incarnation is the ultimate demonstration of God's will to communicate with humans. The apostle John stated in John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (NIV), and John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (NIV). In the event of Christ's incarnation, God became human and came to live among humans in order to restore communication with human beings. This act of God is a source of hope

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<sup>8</sup> K. E. Andersen, *Introduction to Communication Theory and Practice* (Menlo Park, CA: Cummings, 1972).

and life for the human race who was destined to perish as a result of broken communication with God.

Communication skills are important to leadership. When God commanded Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, Moses said to the Lord, “O Lord, I have never been eloquent neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue” (Exod 4:10, NIV). Moses’ excuse for leadership was that he was poor in communication. Brevard S. Childs comments, “The emphasis on the use of the word as the trade mark of the prophet reflects a major theme of the classical prophets...In the classical prophets, wisdom saying in the style of a disputational speech are also frequent.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, the Lord assured Moses repeatedly, “Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say” (Exod. 4:12, NIV) and “I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do” (Exod. 4:15). Later Moses was described as “mighty in words” (Acts 7:22, AV). Usually, the fears created by poor communication skills keep many Christians from using their talents. Furthermore, if goals, direction, and other information are not skillfully communicated to the group, it will create a climate of suspicion, distrust, and questioning of the leadership ability. The people will be asking, “What is going on?”

In recent years, modern leadership theory has emphasized the importance of effective communication. James MacGregor Burns points out, “The leader’s fundamental act is to induce people to be aware or conscious of what they feel—to feel their true needs so strongly, to define their values so meaningfully, that they can be moved to purposeful action.”<sup>10</sup> Lee Iacocca’s *Autobiography* had dominated the bestsellers list for two years in the past. Iacocca, the ex-Chrysler president who created a new vision at Chrysler and mobilized the work force behind that vision, said, “The only way you can motivate people is to communicate with them.”<sup>11</sup> In his book *On Leadership*, John W. Gardner pointed out that communication is at the very heart of the leader-follower or leader-constituent relationship. He considers communication “a single, all purpose instrument of leadership.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 374.

<sup>10</sup>J. M. Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 44.

<sup>11</sup>Lee Iacocca, *An Autobiography* (New York: Bantam, 1984), 53.

<sup>12</sup>John W. Gardner, *On Leadership* (New York: The Free, 1990), 85, 166.



A good leader should also be a good communicator. A good leader must not only be able to see but also to communicate the whole picture to his or her followers.

David L. McKenna writes, “Unless ‘meaning’ is conveyed through communication, no amount of time spent in participatory leadership will suffice.”<sup>13</sup> Words alone do not communicate. It is the meaning of the word which must be understood for the message to be received. When there is no meeting of meanings there has been no communication. Gerald L. Wilson, Alan M. Hanz, and Michael S. Hanna write: “Communication is effective when you create in the mind of someone else the idea you wanted to create. Communication is not effective when the receiver gets a meaning different from the one you intended.”<sup>14</sup>

Everett Rogers and Rekha Rogers note that “communication is a thread that holds the various parts of an organization together.”<sup>15</sup> Communication is the lifeblood of an organization. When communication stops, organized activity paralyzes. Max DePree makes the following insightful observation:

A corporation’s values are its life’s blood. Without effective communication, actively practiced, without the art of scrutiny, those values will disappear in a sea of trivial memos and impertinent reports. There may be no single thing more important in our efforts to achieve meaningful work and fulfilling relationships than to learn and practice the art of communication.<sup>16</sup>

According to Tom Peters, today’s effective leader must become a compulsive listener. He writes:

Today’s successful leaders will work diligently to engage others in their cause. Oddly enough, the best way, by far, to engage others is by listening—seriously listening—to them. If talking and giving orders was

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<sup>13</sup> David L. McKenna, *Megatruth: The Church in the Age of Information* (San Bernardino, CA: Here’s Life, 1986), 165.

<sup>14</sup> G. L. Wilson, A. M. Hanz, and M. S. Hanna, *Interpersonal Growth Through Communication* (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1985), 11.

<sup>15</sup> E. M. Rogers and R. A. Rogers, *Communication in Organizations* (New York: The Free Press, 1976), 7.

<sup>16</sup> Max DePree, *Leadership Jazz* (New York: Dell, 1992), 108.

the administrative model of the last fifty years, listening (to lots of people near the action), is the model of the 1980s and beyond.<sup>17</sup>

Donald Weiss, CEO of Self-Management Communications, Inc., made similar observation, he writes:

Identifying with what other people think or feel begins by listening to them. If others perceive you to be a listener, they will tell you what they think or feel...It's [*Listen is*] the way in which you take in the big picture of a person. To become an effective leader, you have to listen to people.<sup>18</sup>

### *Trust through Positioning*

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word “trust, ” when used as a noun, can refer to an assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something. It also refers to one in whom confidence is placed. As a verb, it can mean “to place confidence in,” “to rely on the truthfulness or accuracy of,” or “to hope or expect confidently.” In this essay, trust refers to “one in which confidence is placed; and dependence on something future or contingent.”<sup>19</sup> In this paper, I am using the term “positioning” in the sense of “putting in proper position.”<sup>20</sup> Positioning is the set of actions necessary to implement the vision of the leader. It is the niche the leader establishes.

Trust is the binding glue between a leader and his/her followers. People must trust a leader before they will follow a leader. Ted W. Engstrom writes, “People, to be led, must have a basic trust in their leader. They must feel they are secure in his hands because he is utterly reliable and trustworthy.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Peters, *Thriving on Chaos*, 524.

<sup>18</sup>Donald H. Weiss, *Becoming an Effective Leader* (New York: American Management Association, 1993), 16.

<sup>19</sup>F. C. Mish, et al., ed., *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1987), 1268.

<sup>20</sup>Mish, *Webster's*, 917.

<sup>21</sup>Ted W. Engstrom, *The Making of a Christian Leader* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 190.

Confucius remarked, “ If someone is not trustworthy, I know he cannot deal with himself and the world. It is like a cart without a yoke and a carriage without a harness. How then can a car move smoothly?”<sup>22</sup>

In describing the relationship between himself and his believers, Jesus compared it to the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep in John 10:1–18. He said,

I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice (John 10:1–5, NIV).

The custom among Palestinian shepherds to assign names to their sheep has continued up to the present time. Leon Morris points out, “The Eastern shepherd often has an individual call for each of his sheep...The sheep know their shepherd and they recognize the call he gives his own.”<sup>23</sup> Morris noted that the recognition of the shepherd’s voice denotes that the sheep hear the shepherd’s voice with understanding and appreciation. The sheep follow, we are told, because they know their shepherd’s voice. The sheep trust their shepherd. On the contrary, strangers, even when dressed in the shepherd’s clothing and attempting to imitate his call, succeed only in making the sheep run away. The sheep will take no notice of strangers because they do not trust them. A good leader is like a good shepherd who earns the trust of his sheep. There is trust between the leader and the led.

Trust is a two-way street. A leader must trust those with whom he works, and in return they trust him as their leader. Trust dispels fear and suspicion. It allows the leader to delegate responsibility. Towns writes, “A leader who trusts others on the team will delegate to them. Non-delegation is non-trust.”<sup>24</sup> The popular leadership delegation example is found in

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<sup>22</sup>Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission, *The Discourses and Sayings of Confucius* (trans. Hung Ming Ku; Taipei: Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission, 1982), 35. Henceforth, OCAC.

<sup>23</sup>Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 56.

<sup>24</sup>E. Towns, *The 8 Laws of Leadership* (Lynchburg, VA: Church Growth Institute, 1992), 76.

Exodus 18. After Moses led Israel out of Egypt, he was spending so much time and energy hearing the Hebrews' disputes that he could not get to other important work. Moses tried to solve problems all by himself. He was in the process of physical and psychological decline caused by inordinate stress. Fortunately, Jethro, the priest of Midian and father-in-law of Moses, gave Moses some sound advice:

But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, and fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all time, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you (Exod 18:21–22, NIV).

Moses listened to Jethro and did everything he said (Exod 18:24–26). Thus, Moses' leadership was shared by his people. Trusting his men relieved Moses from exhaustion. J. O. Sanders wrote, "Moses could doubtless have done the task better than the seventy men whom he selected, but had he persisted in doing so, he would soon have been only a memory."<sup>25</sup> In fact, a leader is one who accomplishes a given task through people and gives them the credit. A leader should trust his or her people as being capable of accomplishing the given task even if the risk seems great.

A disciple of Confucius remarked, "A wise man, as a ruler, first obtains the confidence of the people before he puts them to hard work—which otherwise would be regarded by the people as oppression."<sup>26</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower had these words: "In order to be a leader a man must have followers. And to have followers, a man must have their confidence."<sup>27</sup>

In his book *Lincoln on Leadership*, Donald T. Phillips points out that trust is one of the exceedingly important qualities of leadership because it so strongly affects followers. He writes, "Most individuals need to trust others, especially their boss."<sup>28</sup> K. O. Gangel and S. O. Canine state,

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<sup>25</sup>J. O. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody, 1967), 130.

<sup>26</sup>OCAC, 138.

<sup>27</sup>Quoted in F. A. Manske, Jr., *Secret of Effective Leadership* (Memphis, TN: Leadership Education & Development, 1987), 32.

<sup>28</sup>Donald T. Phillips, *Lincoln on Leadership* (New York: Warner, 1992), 54.

“Once they lose initial trust, people begin hesitating to say what they really mean. They misread each other’s messages, impute improper motives, and over-generalize their complaints. Hostility arises, and communication seems all but dead.”<sup>29</sup>

There is another Chinese saying: “Do not employ a person one distrusts, but one must trust the person he employs.”<sup>30</sup> Trust is very important because it strongly affects followers. James Kouzes and Barry Posner saw trust was a major element of enabling others to act.<sup>31</sup> Bennis and Nanus stress, “Trust is the emotional glue that binds followers and leaders together.”<sup>32</sup> Stephen Covey stated that trust determines the quality of the relationship between people.<sup>33</sup> John Maxwell said, “It is wonderful when the people believe in the leader. It is more wonderful when the leader believes in the people. When both are reality, trust is the result.”<sup>34</sup> Again, Bennis said, “Leaders who trust their co-worker are, in turn, trusted by them. Trust, of course, cannot be acquired, but can only be given. Leadership without mutual trust is a contradiction in terms.”<sup>35</sup> A leader without trust is able to do only a little, like a weak and vulnerable creature that struts about for a time, accomplishing little and is soon displaced.

### *The Deployment of Self*

Psychoanalytic literature abounds with discussion of the self. Psychologists like Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Gordon Allport, Victor Frankl, Erick Fromm, and others believe that there is in all persons a self that is the core of being. In this paper, “self” refers to conscious and unconscious mental representations that pertain to one’s own person.

Effective leadership is the healthy and creative deployment of one’s self. Leaders know their strengths and weaknesses, and their worth and limitations. By definition, the “deployment of self” refers to the extension

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<sup>29</sup>K. O. Gangel and S. L. Canine, *Communication and Conflict Management* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 35.

<sup>30</sup>Liang, *Chinese-English Dictionary*, 718.

<sup>31</sup>James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987), 39.

<sup>32</sup>Bennis and Nanus, *Leaders*, 153.

<sup>33</sup>Stephen R. Covey, *Principle-Centered Leadership* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 170.

<sup>34</sup>John C. Maxwell, *Maxwell 2-in-1: Developing the Leader Within You - Developing the Leaders Around You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 67.

<sup>35</sup>W. Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1989), 140.

of oneself as an innovative learner thereby making the organization into a learning one. Effective leaders did a number of things to develop their skills and increase the knowledge gained from experiencing success and failure.

Goethe was quoted as saying, “If you treat an individual as he is, he will stay that way, but if you treat him as he were what he could be, he would become what he could be.”<sup>36</sup> Effective leadership should result in the creative and healthy deployment of self through positive self-regard and the Wallenda factor. Everyone has a self-image, whether they realize it or not. They see themselves in some way—clever, aggressive, honest, gentle, lazy, or slow etc. Engstrom writes, “A good leader not only will become aware of his self-image, but will know his peculiar strengths and attempt to increase his effective use of them for the good of the group.”<sup>37</sup> According to Paul Brouwer, the self-concept is important because everything people do, say, hear, feel, or perceive, is influenced by how they see themselves. The more realistic one’s view of self, the more guaranteed is personal effectiveness. He concludes:

The difference between strong people and weak people may not be a difference in ability, for many clerks have keen intelligence; or in drive, for many ambitious people get nowhere; or in opportunity, for somehow, strong people make opportunity. No, the difference lies in self-concept. How much do I value my life? What do I want to do with it? What must I do to be myself? Strong people have emerged with clear-cut answers to such questions; weak people equivocate and temporize and never dare.<sup>38</sup>

“Positive Self-Regard” is not a crowing self-importance or egoistic self-centeredness. Nor is it what is ordinarily meant by a “narcissistic character.”

Positive self-regard is the result of a leader recognizing his or her strengths and weaknesses; capitalizing on the strengths and compensating for the weaknesses; and matching strengths with the task to be done. It consists of three major components: knowledge of one’s strength, the capacity to nurture and develop those strengths, and the ability to discern

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<sup>36</sup>Kevin A. Miller, “What is Vision, Anyway?,” *Leadership* 15, no. 3 (1994): 25.

<sup>37</sup>Engstrom, *The Making of a Christian Leader*, 88.

<sup>38</sup>P. J. Brouwer, “The Power to See Ourselves” in *Executive Success* (ed. E. G. C. Collins; New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1983), 28.

the fit between one's strengths and weaknesses and the organization's needs. Bennis and Nanus call it "self-respect."<sup>39</sup>

The deployment of self through positive self-regard and the Wallenda factor is a power of its own. On the contrary, a leader with a negative view of self—seeing himself or herself as deficient, inadequate, unworthy; seeing himself or herself with a defect—will then regard himself or herself as undesirable and worthless and reject himself or herself. Engstrom made the following observation:

A person with low self-esteem has many difficulties. This is especially so for a leader, because his view of others reflects how he sees himself. If he does not feel good about himself as a human being, he will not be an inner-directed individual, but will constantly have to be bolstered and motivated by people around him.<sup>40</sup>

Manske similarly declares, "Just success comes to those who constantly hold positive mental images in their minds, failure comes to those who are preoccupied with negative thoughts. The latter has become known as 'the Wallenda factor.'"<sup>41</sup>

Men and women are all created in the image of God (Gen 1:26–27; Eph 4:24). The doctrine of the image of God in people is of the greatest importance in theology, for that image is the expression of that which is most distinctive in people and in their relation to God. This creation of people in God's image is what distinguishes them from animals, in which the divine image does not appear.

The concept expressed in the Latin expression *imago Dei* lies at the heart of our gospel. Everyone has worth to God, and from their God-given worth comes their dignity. The Bible says that God has "crowned [them] with glory and honor" (Ps 8:5, NIV). N. M. Sarna writes,

The idea of man "in the image of God" must inevitably include within the scope of its meaning all those faculties and gifts of character that distinguish man from the beast and that are needed for the fulfillment of his task on earth, namely, intellect, free will, self-awareness, consciousness of the existence of the others, conscience, responsibility

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<sup>39</sup> Bennis and Nanus, *Leaders*, 57–62.

<sup>40</sup> Engstrom, *The Making of a Christian Leader*, 85.

<sup>41</sup> Manske, *Secret of Effective Leadership*, 56.

and self-control. Moreover, being created “in the image of God” implies that human life is infinitely precious.<sup>42</sup>

J. Barton Payne notes that the “image” affects the entire pattern of human life. He writes,

It bestows upon man his value in the eyes of God, and it thus became the factor that insured his divinely ordained protection, against both beast and fellow human (Gen. 9:5–6). Again, it was man’s position as distinctive from that of the lower forms of life because of his association with God.<sup>43</sup>

Human beings are the ones whom God created for his glory. They are creatures in whom God has breathed his breath of life. Certainly human beings are not gods, nor can they develop themselves into gods, yet they were created in God’s image and after God’s likeness. In addition, God assigned the major responsibility of administering his creation to Adam and Eve (Gen 1:28). C. W. Ellison (1985) notes that significant responsibilities were not normally delegated unless the one charged was highly valued.<sup>44</sup>

According to Steele, humans are God’s unique and special creations, and as such they must hold a high view of personhood. This does not imply self-aggrandizement, as some who are overly concerned with self-esteem might think. Steele stresses, “While we must not deny the importance of the self, we are called to give the self away.”<sup>45</sup> Charles Hodge writes, “Christian humility does not consist in denying what there is of good in us; but in an abiding sense of ill-desert, and in the consciousness that what we have of good is due to the grace of God.”<sup>46</sup> A similar comment is made by Ellison:

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<sup>42</sup>N. M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken, 1966), 15–16.

<sup>43</sup>J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 226.

<sup>44</sup>C. W. Ellison, “Self-esteem” in *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology* (ed. David G. Benner; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 1045–1047.

<sup>45</sup>Steele, *On the Way*, 110.

<sup>46</sup>Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 317.



True humility is compatible with healthy self-esteem. Appropriate self-worth involves to see one's strength and weaknesses, to admit and confess sins, but to still feel positive. True humility and positive self-esteem are based on accuracy rather than on feelings of superiority (pride) or feelings of inferiority (false humility). The greatest example of true humility and positive self-esteem is Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:3-8). Christ was clearly sinless and therefore truly humble, but also asserted who he was without apology. Scripture does not allow the conclusion that he was arrogant or that he belittled himself. Because of his worth, his servanthood and sacrifice have redemptive meaning. The Bible suggests that God's people are to have the same servant attitude as Christ, and implies that we are expected to properly love ourselves, as Christ did (Mark 12:31).<sup>47</sup>

The apostle Paul said, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor 15:10, NIV). That is, divine grace had made Paul what he was—an apostle—, latecomer as he was to the apostleship. According to C. K. Barrett, Paul's career as a persecutor serves to bring out more clearly what is true of all Christians—his dependence on the goodness of God.<sup>48</sup>

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the four variables—attention through vision, meaning through communication, trust through positioning, and the deployment of self—related to effective leadership as pointed out by Bennis and Nanus will help leaders empower and inspire their followers to become agents of change.

In the fourth century B. C., Sun Tzu, a Chinese military philosopher said, "A poor leader: the people fear; a good leader: the people love; [and] a great leader: the people say 'we did it ourselves.'"<sup>49</sup> The above quotation shows how important leadership is. There can be the climate of fear or a place abounding in optimism.

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<sup>47</sup>Ellison, "Self-esteem," 1047.

<sup>48</sup>C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (2nd ed.; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1971), 464.

<sup>49</sup>Quoted in D. Tjosvold and M. M. Tjosvold, *The Emerging Leader* (New York: Lexington, 1993), 1.

榮耀歸於上帝！  
*To God be all glory!*



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