

# Perichoresis

THE JOURNAL OF  
EMANUEL UNIVERSITY OF ORADEA

VOLUME 4  
ISSUE 1  
2006

This issue was published by

*The Centre for Reformation Studies AND  
The Seminar of Theological Research*

EMANUEL UNIVERSITY  
PUBLISHING HOUSE

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## PERICHORESIS

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PUBLISHED BY

Editura Universității Emanuel/  
Emanuel University Publishing House  
Str. Nufărului Nr. 87  
410597 Oradea, Bihor  
România/Romania

and

PRINTED FOR EMANUEL UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING HOUSE BY

S.C. ROPRINT S.R.L.  
Str. Horea Nr. 82  
400275 Cluj-Napoca, Cluj  
Tel/Fax: +40-264-432384  
Email: [roprintcluj@xnet.ro](mailto:roprintcluj@xnet.ro)  
România/Romania

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# Witness to the Gospel in *Academe*: Adolf Schlatter as a Teacher of the Church

ROBERT W. YARBROUGH

*Trinity Evangelical Divinity School*

Adolf Schlatter (1852-1938) had a genius for calling theologians to pastoral responsibility and pastors to theological responsibility. He did this mainly by the fresh glimpses his work afforded of Scripture. James Dunn furnishes a starting point for analyzing this two-fold genius. Reflecting on his study of Schlatter's Romans commentary in conjunction with years of personal study of Romans itself, Dunn writes:

... what has impressed me most about Schlatter' work is his ability to penetrate deeply into Paul's thought, to recognize the interconnections within the complexity of his argument and to bring out with greatest empathy the profundity of his theological insight – a far cry from the superficiality of so many modern commentators who sport on the surface of the text and often seem content only to draw attention to its most superficial features.<sup>1</sup>

This quote, with its mention of theological insight, suggests a primary aspect of Schlatter's heritage that deserves the attention of any Christian who lectures in a university setting: he did not forget the gospel of Jesus Christ in his academic labors.

## Faithfulness Despite the Modern Situation

It is notoriously the case that the preponderant drift of New Testament scholarship since the Enlightenment has been to-

ward open skepticism of the core claims of the canonical writings of the New Testament. The 20<sup>th</sup> century's most influential New Testament scholar, Rudolf Bultmann, flatly denied the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead and applied a starkly naturalistic worldview to the New Testament writings. Biblical scholarship is still widely acknowledged to be in a postmeltdown situation as a result of Bultmann-caliber skepticism towards the New Testament's veracity, with discussion bogged down in a morass of theories about interpretation and meaning – assuming there is any. Over a decade ago J. Christiaan Beker commented on the explosion of hermeneutical debate, observing that amidst the heat of “reader response criticism, literary criticism, narrative criticism, feminist hermeneutics, deconstruction theory, and many more”, the light of the New Testament's message goes unaddressed. “It's not clear to me”, Beker states, what these theories “contribute to the *content* of the New Testament message. The more hermeneutics we have, the less authority the New Testament seems to have. It's as if the authority of the New Testament has evaporated in the minefield of theories.”<sup>2</sup> Things have not improved much since.

Schlatter did not succumb to the siren song of post-gospel biblical scholarship, that curious spectacle of learned figures assiduously studying Scripture and industriously lecturing on it to tomorrow's pastors and professors – all the while rejecting the very claims that animate Scripture's writers: Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again. I have often had students ask me why scholars devote their lives to studying the Bible if they don't believe it. Albert Schweitzer's remark that hate as well as love can write a life of Jesus should be borne in mind.<sup>3</sup> But that is not usually the best explanatory angle. One ex-Bultmannian, Eta Linnemann, has testified that in her skepticism, and in teaching others her own disbelief, “I was deeply convinced that I was rendering a service to God... and contributing to the proclamation of the gospel.”<sup>4</sup> But she

has since renounced her former views and calls others to faith in Christ and Scripture instead of systematic doubt toward them. Schlatter's life work echoes even as it obviously predates this call. "Schlatter saw his mission as one of restoring to biblical scholarship the ability to see the presence and work of God within history", Stephen Dintaman has written in one of the few North American studies devoted to this famous Swiss *Neutestamentler*.<sup>5</sup> Franz Mußner comments that "Schlatter teaches something that other exegetes do not: *obedience to the text*."<sup>6</sup>

It is not as if unbelief never tempted Schlatter. As a youth he wrestled with the issue of Christian faith, and for a time his parents were justly concerned that their son's university training was steering him away from the commitment to Jesus that marked his childhood home. Nearing the end of high school in the *Gymnasium* in St. Gallen, Switzerland, Schlatter was even enticed by his language teacher to forsake theological studies as planned in favor of linguistics, in which Schlatter showed high promise. He had made his decision, he thought, but then

... a remark by my older sister took on decisive importance. I gave as a reason for my change of plans the fact that the study of theology was dangerous and could easily shake one's faith. "What makes you think", she shot back, "that studying would force you into unbelief?" My flippant comeback was only feigned bravado. Her query did me the service of casting bright light on the dishonest sophistry of my argument. I felt that if I did withdraw in cowardly fashion from theological study, I would not be saving the faith but most decidedly giving it up.<sup>7</sup>

The importance Schlatter came to attach to this exchange is revealing. Over 60 years later he wrote:

I see no second moment in my life where any decision played such a crucial role for my soul as that instant in which I cast off as

hypocrisy the rejection of theological study for the alleged protection of faith. To those who ask me to name the day of my conversion, I am inclined to answer that my conversion was my resolution to study theology.<sup>8</sup>

Through his study, both as a student and then for decade after decade as a professor, Schlatter bucked the trend of scholarship priding itself on the tenuousness of its ties with historic Christianity. Schlatter remained a committed believer, a too-rare example of a minister of the gospel as well as a German university professor. Many of his colleagues scorned this as anachronistic and an embarrassment to the academy. Those who shared Schlatter's knowledge of the one he preached, however, counted his fidelity to the gospel as the foundation of the methodology he developed.

#### Teaching Method

Much could be said about Schlatter's teaching; to my knowledge there is no article even in German that attempts systematic reflection on *how* Schlatter went about his phenomenal 100 semesters of classroom work. Theodor Schrenk, who had him as a high school teacher in Berne, Switzerland, when Schlatter first began university lecturing and taught high school on the side, recalls that Schlatter said he had no pedagogical theory. Schlatter told his young charges that he had, however, taken a university class on the history of pedagogy. In Schlatter's words, which his *Gymnasium* students greeted with laughter:

Now [as] a philosopher [the course instructor] had to recount that history according to the conventions of "science." So he began at the very remotest spot, in China, tarried long with the Greeks, and by the time we finally got to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the semester was over. That wasn't much help to me.<sup>9</sup>

But one thing stands out: in contrast to then-prevalent Prussian model of pedagogy in which professors dictated and



students furiously scribbled the pronouncements they would later be forced to regurgitate for their state exams, Schlatter sought to draw students in and teach them to make their own independent decisions rather than to learn the viewpoint of their teacher. Schrenk recalls that Schlatter wielded “no iron scepter... The only rule was the thorough reading of the text. What we then did with the text in our own lives – this he left without comment to our own decision. He did not box us into some system but opened up the apostolic word to us.”<sup>10</sup> Schrenk goes on in the same passage to give thanks to God that as a teenager he had a teacher who exuded freedom, who trusted the word of Jesus to do its work, who “in light of the person and work of Christ did not command, “You must believe!” but rather issued the joyful invitation, “You may believe!”

But not only that. In Neuer’s words, occasionally quoting Schlatter here,

Schlatter’s central concern can in large measure be summarized by saying that he wished to lead students to a direct encounter with the object of knowledge itself. Schlatter’s conviction was that *biblical exegesis* had the high calling of assisting others to encounter the truth revealed in the Bible and thereby to encounter with the God who reveals himself. The act of listening, fundamental to all knowledge of Scripture, should ultimately serve the outcome “that we *hear God in Scripture*.” The same outlook applied in his *systematics lectures*: they too aimed primarily not at the fluff of current dogmatic or ethical opinion but at actual knowledge of God’s essence, will, and work.<sup>11</sup>

The kind of teacher someone is depends heavily on personality factors. This is obviously more true of teaching than many occupations. A couple of incidents from Schlatter’s life that show us who he was will therefore serve to illustrate his pedagogical outlook and approach. In 1903 he wrote to his sixteen year old daughter who was apparently asking questions ty-

pical of college age youth: Why go to church? Isn't predestination fatalism? What about the Trinity? And what about prayer in my room, she apparently wanted to know, now that I have a roommate here as I am studying away from home<sup>12</sup> and feel self-conscious about my quiet time? Her father Schlatter replies:

... this is a deep concern for you, and I give no command, just counsel. Commands can damage the tender truthfulness and purity of the internal life, and that is the very thing we must protect at all costs. We do not want to become contrived, artificial figures; we want to commune with our Lord truly and uprightly. That is why even those closest to us can share merely counsel in such things and nothing more. And so my suggestion is that you not let yourself be robbed of your quiet moments just because you no longer have your room to yourself, but that you go ahead and kneel without second guessing yourself in any way. Of course you will want to avoid any theatrical or dramatic bearing, but you know full well how to do that.<sup>13</sup>

To his daughter's apparent request for a proof ("Beweis") of the Trinity, not for herself but for someone like a Muslim who is hostile to the doctrine. Schlatter responds:

See here, divine things cannot be proven ["man kann nicht... beweisen"] by someone who lacks personal experience and exposure weaving together principles or concepts and forming so-called syllogisms. To prove means to make someone certain of something; that does not occur through words, not even through Bible passages, as long as they remain words that are foreign to my own personal life. Rather God does the convincing ["den Erweis führt"] for himself by acting upon us and making his reality in his giving and working visible to us. For that reason you never approach the Trinity as if you could prove to it to someone who denies Christ, who wants no knowledge of him as the Son who lives in the Father, and therefore also has nothing good to say about the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is only proved by our learning

to trust in Jesus and thereby experiencing in our own being how flesh and spirit distinguish themselves in us, and that there is something in man that does not stem from self-seeking and natural evil desire but from God's good gift in us. You only prove the Trinity to a Muslim by converting him to Christ. What you can do without this is at the most to remove from his soul mistrustful thoughts and perverse objections that hinder him.<sup>14</sup>

Schlatter's teaching method, we may conclude, involved careful explanation, gentleness toward the questioner, concern for persons, effective bridging, and wisdom in the limits of rational explanation. It involves not only these qualities but certain personality traits like intensity, spontaneity, and a combination of joy in and profound reverence for, even fear of, the Lord who animated him as he spoke.<sup>15</sup> Schlatter sought to give people the means to make their own decisions, not make their decisions or distill their beliefs for them.<sup>16</sup>

### Personal Humility

Schlatter also did not forget the gospel in terms of personal graces. This is not to suggest that Schlatter was or viewed himself as a man of high holiness; on the contrary, he was quite aware, e.g., of the besetting sin of being less than charitable to certain colleagues, though this was a bent that became less pronounced as he advanced in years.<sup>17</sup> But the virtue of humility, to take a major Christian character trait, does fairly shine from the annals of primary and secondary sources that make up the Schlatter corpus. Some specific instances.

Firstly, after publication of the first volume of Schlatter's New Testament theology, one might have expected giddy jubilation or proud complacency. But Schlatter wrote to his friend Wilhelm Lütgert: "How can one talk of being finished when it comes to consideration of the content of the entire New Testament?"<sup>18</sup> This is not the proud chatter of a self-important scholar content with his newest book. Biographer Werner Neuer speaks of a depressed state of letdown that one observes in the

wake of completion of many of Schlatter's writing projects.<sup>19</sup> An example would be Schlatter's comment following publication of and impressive sales figures for his small autobiography *Erlebtes*: "... a few pages are strengthening and powerful, but overall what dominates is the distressing pall that descends whenever a mere human makes himself the object of inspection and presentation."<sup>20</sup>

Secondly, late in life Schlatter expressed uncertainty about whether his differentiated approach to exegesis, on the one hand, and dogmatics, on the other, might not have been a concession to the spirit of the age. He referred here to the fact that his two-volume New Testament theology, the fruit of four decades of exegesis, appeared in separate volumes from his systematic theology. Perhaps, he pondered, he should have followed the approach of Calvin in the *Institutes*, or of J. C. K. von Hofmann in *Der Schriftbeweis*, in combining "the exegetical and the dogmatic discussion in *one* integrated presentation."<sup>21</sup> It is as refreshing as it is unusual to see a scholar of stature late in life humbling questioning the wisdom of his earlier years.

Thirdly, one of the most moving insights into the modest regard Schlatter had for his scholarship, his humility, comes to light in the case of his volume called simply *Metaphysik*. He penned it in the early days of World War I at the request of a Hungarian pastor (among others) as an aid to understanding and interpreting his dogmatics. It was in a state of near depression that he handed it to co-editor of the monograph series in which it was slated to appear, Wilhelm Lütgert. Lütgert was impressed, so much so that he called on Schlatter to expand it beyond metaphysics into a more broad and complete philosophical presentation. But Schlatter was already sunk deep in grief, first at the battlefield loss of his son, then at the deaths of scores of students in the murderous trenches, and finally at the specter of the unanswerable riddles which, he says, he invited in as guests in the course of pondering and composing his me-

taphysics. And so he replied to Lütgert with the following tremulous words:

Since I am here again [in Tübingen following summer holidays], I am paralyzed by the weight of loneliness, the pressure of war, the lack of motivation usually associated with teaching, the memory of the untold dozens who have taken even some small portion of my life's work to the grave with them. I am nauseated by the trifles of scholarly historical pursuits and attainments in view of the present distress that summons to action. And as for theology, entrance into faith's mysteries, I am completely incapacitated... My *Metaphysik* will never become a book. I now close my eyes in shame at the criminal act of writing the frightful series of books that have come from my pen [Ich schließe schon jetzt schamvoll das Auge vor der schrecklichen Reihe von Büchern, die ich verbrochen habe.].<sup>22</sup>

Proof of the earnestness of Schlatter's vow is seen in the fact that while he did bounce back to write dozens of books after penning these sorrowful lines, he never returned to *Metaphysik*, which appeared for the first time as a posthumous publication edited by Werner Neuer in 1987.<sup>23</sup>

The above examples suffice to throw light on the gospel virtue of humility, of brokenness, of a profound disenchantment with the things of this world, especially things that could fuel fatal pride. Such brokenness by itself is not, of course, a characteristic sufficient to prove that someone is true to the gospel. But as part of the larger whole of Schlatter's gospel-centred life and service, his evident humility is one of the many fascinating aspects of his life – and challenging dimensions of his example.

#### Methodological Restraint

Schlatter's genius lay partially but substantially in the fact that he did not neglect the work of the gospel in his personal life. This deference to Scripture's saving message shows itself in

any number of other ways – accessibility to students and laity, consistent involvement in practical ministry, devotion to wife and children over the span of many decades – but it did not have only personal effect. It also affected the way he went about his public scholarly labors. We may speak of a gospel-generated, God-fearing restraint in Schlatter's work that honors revealed Scripture where it sheds clear light but declines to speak where Scripture is silent.

He alludes to this restraint, this reluctance to elevate the human over the divine, in writing to his son Theodor about volume one of his New Testament theology. The subject matter is the life and teaching of Christ. This topic was, of course, of highest personal and emotional importance to Schlatter. But he felt compelled to adopt a tone of relative distance and reserve rather than overheated fervor in his presentation. This was because he wanted *Jesus'* proclamation to come to the fore and not first of all human interpretation of it. And so he wrote to Theodor:

Not everyone will understand, I suspect, how I came to present Jesus so dryly, so calmly and seemingly coldly. When I wrote I often felt a strong urge: Write passionately, with all the fire of your soul! But I was always restrained by the thought: Don't push yourself so much into the foreground that you conceal the Lord; write not for yourself, with your colours and intrusions. But let him, the way he was, let him speak.<sup>24</sup>

We may contrast Schlatter's attitude with that of William Wrede. Wrede defined "the quintessence of historical understanding" as "being able to take control of [bemächtigen] the phenomena"<sup>25</sup> by use of critical methods and their underlying assumptions. In the same vein Rudolf Bultmann roundly criticized volume one of Schlatter's New Testament theology. He charged Schlatter with self-deception in thinking that he could actually discern what the sources contain. Bultmann complains that in Schlatter's treatment "the cultural time-condi-

tionedness of the concepts presented by the New Testament are nowhere made clear... We cannot take up for ourselves the [New Testament's conceptions]; rather, precisely because they are based on an alien form of thought, we comprehend the religious dimension of them only when we have understood them [in their time-conditionedness] and then distill the eternal substance out of the [temporal] shell."<sup>26</sup>

Wrede and Bultmann, like many of their predecessors and heirs, exercise methodological restraint primarily with respect to the Christian doctrines and perspectives that confessional Christendom has tended to associate with the Scriptures. They restrain themselves from seeing Christian doctrines in those Scriptures, explicating them rather according to the gospel of some form of modernity. Schlatter resists such an unjust and unwise course, not by ignoring such ideologies but by becoming cognizant of their inadequacies and then working out plausible alternatives. Works like his history of philosophy, his ethics, his dogmatics, and his dozens of shorter popular treatises and sermons illustrate his considerable success on this score. They suggest why Gerhard Kittel in the dedication of the ten-volume New Testament dictionary named for him wrote of "the thanks which the Church and theology and especially New Testament scholarship owe to [Schlatter's] life work."<sup>27</sup>

#### Commitment to (the Gospel of) Grace's Restoration of Nature

Schlatter is, we have suggested above, true to the gospel in his attitude and mode of operation. His whole life's work testifies to his broader explicit loyalty to the gospel in terms of the message of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the utter dependence of all humans on God's saving work in Christ for salvation. But he is likewise true to the gospel imperative to love God with the mind in a full-orbed, biblically grounded sense. This is the other, and very important, side of the coin of

fidelity to the full gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a side brought out forcefully by Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. One of the important points Noll makes is that loving God in Christ does not only involve loving and spreading the gospel of redemption proper, the saving message of salvation through Christ's death and resurrection which people must receive with repentance and faith to be saved. It also involves, especially for those entrusted with the calling and training, rigorous, humble, yet unflinching investigation of the world God has created in light of the redemption he is bringing to pass. Noll writes:

In the end, the question of Christian thinking is a deeply spiritual question. What sort of God will we worship? With this question we return to the most important matter concerning the life of the mind. The Gospel of John tells us that the Word who was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of a glorious grace and truth, was also the Word through whom all things – all phenomena in nature, all capacities for fruitful human interaction, all the kinds of beauty – were made. To honour that Word as he deserves to be honoured, evangelicals must know both Christ and what he has made.<sup>28</sup>

Standing behind Noll's affirmation is what Albert E. Wolters has called a reformational worldview, an integrated approach to all reality that refuses to split reality into "sacred" and "secular" spheres. God is Lord over, and manifest in, the world he has made, and not just in the gospel message addressed to sinners in that world.

Many Christian approaches to systematic thought, Wolters notes, promote a split or dualistic view of reality, so that "grace includes something in addition to nature, with the result that salvation is something basically 'non-creational', supercreational, or even antireational."<sup>29</sup> An example of such thinking would be found in Karl Barth, for whom in the words of Diogenes Allen "there are no concepts or categories availa-



ble to our reason which enable us to gain knowledge of God's existence or nature."<sup>30</sup> Noll shows that older dispensationalist theology was creation-negating in much the same way; "for all of its virtues in defending the faith, [it] failed to give proper attention to the world."<sup>31</sup> Some strains of confessional Presbyterianism are probably also guilty of this, preferring an ahistorical creedalism to a living faith generated dynamically out of Scripture appropriated in simultaneous interaction with both the covenant community and the world where believers are called to be salt and light.

But wherever grace, or Christ, or redemption, or whatever summary term is used to denote the epitome of Christian salvation, is conceived of as somehow in contradistinction from, or antithesis to, the created order, we have a nonreformational worldview. In contrast, where the outlook "grace restores nature" prevails, we have the integrated approach bequeathed to the church by such thinkers as Irenaeus, Augustine, Tyndale, and Calvin.<sup>32</sup> And many would argue, of course, that the view is the most faithful representation of Scripture itself.

In its worth noting that mainline Protestantism in the United States, dominated by nonreformational Kantian beliefs like those constantly surrounding Schlatter, proved itself totally unsuited for intellectual engagement with modernity and was utterly routed in confrontation with academic modernism in the middle years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is a story compellingly told by Douglas Sloan in his *Faith and Knowledge: Mainline Protestantism and American Higher Education*.<sup>33</sup> It is worth noting here because the doyens of Protestant liberal learning – Sloan centres on the brothers Niebuhr and Paul Tillich – are textbook examples of dualistic rather than reformational thinkers. Their two-tiered approach is nicely summarized by Sloan as follows:

This is the view that on the one side there are truths of knowledge as these are given predominantly by science and discursive,

empirical reason. On the other side are the truths of faith, religious experience, morality, meaning, and value. The latter are seen as grounded not in knowledge but variously in feeling, ethical action, communal convention, folk tradition, or unfathomable mystical experience.<sup>34</sup>

Schlatter's approach was reformational, not dualistic. As Dinteman points out:

[F]or Schlatter the redemptive life-act of the Christ is intended to create new life, and for grace to be creative it must be mediated to us through history and human experience, and must in turn take root in our life-act and become creative of a new history that takes form in a human community.<sup>35</sup>

For those seeking fidelity not only to the great *solas* of the Reformation but also to the *semper reformanda* ("ever reforming") impulse that those *solas* imply, Schlatter's critical yet positive approach to the faith-knowledge problem resulting in grace transforming nature rather than evading or denying it is a lodestar for ongoing study and action.

### Conclusion

We began this paper by suggesting that Schlatter did not forget the gospel of Jesus Christ in his academic labours. In this Christian academicians today can take heart, perhaps like the disciples must have taken heart during Jesus' earthly days: despite years of carefully crafted challenges to Jesus' public voice, our Gospels record that he always came out on top when his detractors tried their tricks. Christ is incomparably greater than Schlatter, but there is an analogy: Schlatter was never silenced by an imposing intellectual atmosphere that drove most biblical scholarship and dogmatics of his era into postures that were disastrous for authentic Christian confession. His work, his strategy, and, if this paper is correct, his gospel faith and character remain suggestive for us as we

think of refining our own public witness in whatever venue has been granted us.

I close with this snapshot from Schlatter in his mid-40s. In a dispute involving the Berlin faculty where Schlatter was teaching in 1895, the annual German Protestant convention issued a statement criticizing university theologians for their hostility to confessional Christian belief. Schlatter signed this measured but pointed protest statement. When attacked by university colleagues in the Berlin papers for his stance, the charge being that siding with conservative Christians against the university endangered the freedom of theological science, Schlatter was quick to reply. At issue, he shot back, was not science's freedom but the open unbelief of the church's ostensible teachers. The question was simple: who was Jesus? Schlatter expressed joy to be able to identify with common believers. "If colleagues force the decision between faith in Christ and their 'science', between the faculty and the church, the church being those who do not deny Christ, then in my view the apostolic word still applies today: 'I regard it all as refuse'."<sup>36</sup> Schlatter concluded: "As long as God's grace guides me, I will join the church in kneeling before the slumbering child in the manger and the God-forsaken figure on the cross, confessing: My Lord and my God."<sup>37</sup> To some this may sound like melodrama. But to any who lament the decline of gospel faith in the Western world, whether in the form of the desolating effects of scholarly movements or of the insipid nominalism and traditionalism and sentimentalism afflicting too many Bible-believing churches, Schlatter's determination to live out Christ's lordship precisely as an academician and churchman combined is a summons to both scholarship and faith.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *ExpT* 100 (1988-89), 206.

<sup>2</sup> *The Princeton Spire* (Fall 1994), 13f.

<sup>3</sup> *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, trans. by W. Montgomery (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1948), 4-5.

<sup>4</sup> Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible*, trans. by Robert W. Yarbrough (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 17.

<sup>5</sup> Dintemann, *Creative Grace* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 158.

<sup>6</sup> Foreword to Schlatter, *Der Brief des Jakobus* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1985<sup>3</sup>), VIII, Mußner's emphasis.

<sup>7</sup> Schlatter, *Rückblick auf meine Lebensarbeit* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1977<sup>2</sup>), 36.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 36f.

<sup>9</sup> Schrenk, "In der Schulstube in Bern", in *Adolf Schlatter zum Gedenken: In dankbarer Erinnerung an den Freund Bethels*, Sonderdrucke des Monatsblattes *Beth-El*, ed. by C. Ronicke, vol. 20 (Bethel bei Bielefeld: Verlagshandlung der Anstalt Bethel, 1938), 19f.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 21.

<sup>11</sup> Neuer, *Adolf Schlatter. Ein Leben für Theologie und Kirche* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1996), 280.

<sup>12</sup> Schlatter's son Theodor states that the daughter in question (Schlatter had three) is his oldest, Hedwig (1887-1946), who at the time was studying in French-speaking Switzerland ("Ein Nachwort zu diesem Heft", in *Adolf Schlatter zum Gedenken*, 42).

<sup>13</sup> "Antwort auf Fragen", in *Adolf Schlatter zum Gedenken*, 12. The letter is dated 21 August 1903.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 13.

<sup>15</sup> Schrenk, "In der Schulstube in Bern", in *idem*, 20f.

<sup>16</sup> See Neuer, *Adolf Schlatter. Ein Leben für Theologie und Kirche*, 390, and his cautious, gracious advice to daughter Ruth about marriage.

<sup>17</sup> On Schlatter's awareness of this weakness see *ibid.* 204, 271f., 509.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 343. The letter is dated 10 July 1909.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 388. Neuer speaks of "die... nach Abschluß großer Werke bei ihm zu beobachtende Unzufriedenheit."

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 453.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 347. Cf. Schlatter, *Rückblick auf meine Lebensarbeit*, 232f.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 388f. The letter is dated 18 October 1915.

<sup>23</sup> *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, Beiheft 7.

<sup>24</sup> Neuer, *Adolf Schlatter. Ein Leben für Theologie und Kirche*, 335. The letter is dated 23 December 1908.

<sup>25</sup> Wrede, in R. Morgan, *The Nature of New Testament Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1973), 110.

<sup>26</sup> Neuer, *Adolf Schlatter. Ein Leben für Theologie und Kirche*, 339f.

<sup>27</sup> "Preface", *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), ix.

<sup>28</sup> Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids/Leicester, England: Eerdmans/Inter-Varsity, 1994), 253.

<sup>29</sup> Albert E. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basis for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 11.

<sup>30</sup> Diogenes Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 246.

<sup>31</sup> Noll, *Scandal*, 132.

<sup>32</sup> Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Douglas Sloan, *Faith and Knowledge: Mainline Protestantism and American Higher Education* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox), 1994.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* ix.

<sup>35</sup> Dinteman, *Creative Grace*, 153.

<sup>36</sup> Neuer, *Adolf Schlatter*, 319.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 319.



# Doing Theology with Ludwig Crocius

CORNELIU C. SIMUȚ

*Emanuel University of Oradea*

This paper is a presentation of the first few pages of the “Introduction to Sacred Theology” from Ludwig Crocius’ *The Constitution of Sacred Theology* (1635). The main concern for Crocius in this introductory section is the way one should study theology. Even if he wrote almost four hundred years ago, his advice should be taken seriously by all those who share at least a bit of interest in getting acquainted to a serious study of theology.

## The Definition of Theology

Crocius begins his discussion about theology with an introduction to what he calls “sacred theology” and the foundation of theological studies (*ratione studii theologicī*). The starting point for the introduction is a concise definition of theology which displays the main points of what Crocius intends to approach in this section. Thus, theology should be thought of as an organized enterprise which is fundamentally a concept (*idem theologiae methodicae*). For Crocius, systematic theology is closely related to the doctrines of Christian faith, which are not to be considered as a dry set of rules but as a reality that changes the life of individuals in the sense that they can provide salvation. The doctrines of Christian faith are salvific (*salutaria fidei dogmata*) and they are intrinsically linked to the concept of systematic theology. To be sure, systematic theology plays a threefold role in connection to the salvific doctrines of faith.

Firstly, systematic theology explains the doctrines of faith; secondly, it confirms or strengthens them and thirdly, it defends them. It is important to notice at this point that systematic theology reveals the way we should comprehend the essence of God and also the ways God works (*animo suo comprehensurus... Deo feliciter operaturus*).<sup>1</sup>

What follows is a brief list of things which may be said to be the outcome of systematic theology. For Crocius, systematic theology has four specific results. Firstly, it establishes and presents the purpose of theology in a holy way (*scopum sancte praestituat & intendat*). Secondly, it strongly exposes the impediments or the dangers of theology (*impedimenta fortiter tollat*). Thirdly, it carefully chooses and uses the means of theology (*media prudenter eligat & adhibeat*). Fourthly, it passionately desires to explore the results of theological studies (*effecta denique huius divini studii calide desideret*). In the end, Crocius argues, systematic theology has the fundamental purpose of lifting up the soul from earthly things (*ut animus a terrenis... elevetur*).<sup>2</sup> It is vital to underscore here that this final purpose is not intended only for the soul of the person who studies theology but also for others (*ad hoc veluti alis subvectus*).<sup>3</sup>

The next step for Crocius is to present a short note which is a graphical depiction of theology. Thus, the theologian is a traveller (*viator*) who is constantly marching on the road of theology (*iter igressurus*). As he begins his trip on this path, the theologian should be aware from the start that he is not walking chaotically but he is advised to consider the limits of its journey (*principio de certa meta cogitat*). Travelling on the road of theology does not seem to be the easiest task in the world. Thus, the theologian is warned he will encounter dry lands (*declinatis aviis*) and far-off hindrances (*remotis impedimentis*). Likewise, the theologian should be fully aware that he will be stepping on a road which is filled with dangers, so he should be adequately prepared for anything. Crocius' advice for the theologian is that he should not proceed without ordaining



and establishing the means of his journey (*media itineraria ordinat ac dirigit*). Theology, however, cannot be pursued by anybody but only by those travellers who dare venture on this road of perils (*ita & theologiae nostrae, quae viatorum est*). As far as the theologian is concerned, he should strive to do at least four things. Firstly, he should be able to guide himself in the process of studying theology (*studiosus sic sibi currendum ducat*). Secondly, he should never lose sight of the purpose and limit of theology, which he must constantly have before his eyes (*ut in scopum, metamq; sibi praefixam perpetuo prospiciat*). Thirdly, the theologian should be able to put aside and take over the obstacles and hindrances that he may encounter while studying theology (*sublatis obstaculis atq. impedimentis*). Fourthly, he should choose and use the means (*media*) of theology with utmost care (*circumspecte eligat & usurpet*) because they can lead to dangers (*periculo ducentia*). Crocius also underlines that these means of theology should be considered correctly and without mistakes (*recta & sine errore*).<sup>4</sup>

### The Purpose of Theology

It has been shown before that Crocius' definition of theology includes four distinctive aspects which he intends to discuss in his introduction: the purpose, the impediments, the means and the results of theology. As far as the first aspect is concerned, Crocius writes that the purpose of theology is objective or fixed (*scopus sive finis theologiae studiosi est objectivus aut formalis*), in the sense that theology has a precise goal. Thus, the purpose of theology has two facets. Firstly, it is general (*generalis*), and secondly, it is special (*specialis*). The general purpose of theology consists of the fact that God should be presented to everybody or in a community fashion (*communiter debet esse propositus, nempe Deus*). Besides this community knowledge of God, the general purpose of theology particularly includes the knowledge of Jesus Christ, who was sent by God. According to Crocius, it is compulsory that Jesus Christ should be

known very well and in the correct way (... *Deus quem misit, Jesus Christus, recte cognoscendus, riteq. colendus*).<sup>5</sup> Regarding the special purpose of theology, it is argued by Crocius that the study of theology presupposes above all that God should be served. In other words, to study theology means to serve God (*hic vero est specialis, quem hic vel ille theologiae studiosus potissimum spectat nempe servire Deo*). The service of God, however, is clearly defined by Crocius from the standpoint of edification. Whoever studies theology should be fully aware that he must serve God, which means he must be concerned with the edification of people. Thus, the service of God has a double significance: didactic and spiritual. Crocius writes that God is served through the edification of the youth in school (*ad aedificationem vel juventutis in schola*), and of the adults in the church (*vel adultiorum in ecclesia*). To strengthen this point, Crocius uses the pastoral Johannine imagery of the shephard who takes care of his sheep and lambs. Thus, the youth should be edified in school and the adults in the church in a pastoral manner, just as a shephard watches over his sheep and lambs (*vel ovium agnorumq;*). It is crucial to notice here that neither category must ever be lost sight of. The edification must be done to the benefit of both the youth and the adults in the same time (*vel ovium agnorumq; utrobique simul*).<sup>6</sup>

Crocius underlines the fact that the purpose of theology is threefold. In this respect, the study of theology has firstly the goal to make us aware that we must glorify and follow God alone above all things (*principio solus Deus... summe intendendus & consecrandus est*). To love God this way implies to leave aside all other things which we might love apart from God himself (*abdicatis & omissis omnium aliarum rerum inordinatis affectibus*). Crocius is aware that we need the things of the world but these should never be appreciated more than God. To be sure, God must be loved above all things, while the things of the world may indeed be pursued only after our love for God has been firmly established. Thus, the purpose of the-

ology is to make us love God firstly and above all, then to appreciate the things of the world (*ut hunc... diligas supra omnia, caetera vero in ordine ad ipsum*).<sup>7</sup>

The second aspect of the study of theology is to strive for this supreme goal (*ad quem summum finem accedit alter*) with the specific intention of learning the knowledge of certain necessary things (*ut instruamur necessaria rerum cognitione*). Crocius clarifies that we must learn these necessary things because they help us understand and skilfully explain heavenly doctrines (*quae facit ad intelligendam & dextere explicandam doctrinam coelestem*). Likewise, by learning these necessary things, we are also able to lead a part of the kingdom of Christ (*gubernandam partem regni Christi*), which may well be a hint to the local church.<sup>8</sup>

The study of theology has also a third dimension which is closely connected to the course of our Christian life. In this particular case, the purpose of theology is to improve the unfolding of the life of every Christian in a wholistic way to the well-being of the entire Christian community (*tertius ut in communi vitae Christianae curriculo...*). Crocius explains that this can be done at two levels: firstly by controlling our habits (... *mores regamus*) and by stopping our covetousness and bad desires (*cupiditates & affectus nostros frenemus*). On the other hand, the purpose of theology is to help us transform all our infirmities in Christian virtues, which is of course beneficial to us (*aliorumque nos vicissim infirmitates ferre possimus, nostroque exemplo, Christianis virtutibus*). Thus, Crocius highlights that the study of theology should lead to a wide range of Christian virtues such as modesty (*modestia*), faith (*fide*), hope (*spe*), love (*charitate*), compassion (*mansuetudine*), gentleness (*humanitate*), kindness (*beneficentia*), thankfulness (*gratitudine*), righteousness (*justitia*), and purity (*candore*). All these must be accompanied by a language which is used moderately (*moderatoque linguae usu*) so that it has a good and godly effect on everybody (*ad pi-um & bonum publicum*).<sup>9</sup>

For Crocius is not enough to study theology as a discipline. He plainly admits theology may be studied for a variety of reasons and it is vital to study theology with the right attitude. Crocius distinguishes two approaches to theology from the perspective of the attitude of the theologian. Firstly, he mentions the proper attitude which is necessary for the study of theology. Thus, it is crucial to strive repeatedly for acquiring the goal of studying theology. Those who constantly and repeatedly do their best to study theology will soon discover how to kindle their interest in the knowledge of the dignity of theology. In other words, those who have the correct attitude towards theology will undoubtedly learn to appreciate the value of theology (*qui fines crebro ferioq; cogitati sua dignitate excitant discentes...*). Likewise, they will also hasten the hope of great rewards or they can hope for seeing concrete results or great rewards in their own lives if they strive to approach theology in a proper manner (... & *spe ingentium praemiorum urgent...*). Crocius seems convinced that the study of theology, when performed adequately, helps those involved in such an endeavour work hard as well as conquer difficulties (... *ad praestandam diligentiam & vincendum difficultates*). At any rate, theology should not be taken lightly and Crocius is very straightforward in underlining this truth. Anyone who has an honest desire to study theology should be aware from the very start that pursuing theological studies on a regular basis is not an easy task, and theology itself is interwoven with frequent difficulties although these appear to be divinely permitted (... *difficultates, cum quibus divine hoc studium conjugitur*).<sup>10</sup>

Secondly, Crocius insists on the improper attitude which may be adopted by some in studying theology. Thus, the holy goals of theology can be ignored with utmost negligence or they can even be rejected shamelessly; however, some people do exactly like this when they consider the study of theology (... *hos fines supine praeterunt aut proterve rejiciunt*). Those who share this absolutely improper attitude to theology should be

warned that in doing so, they transform the study of theology into an instrument of their own pleasure and wickedness (... *hoc studiu alio transferunt illudque faciunt vel instrumentum voluptatis & nequitiae*). Bad things surely do not stop here and Crocius is very realistic when it comes to assess the motives which lie behind the motivation of some of those who study theology. Thus, some people might indeed pursue theological studies because they either want to control and dominate others or they intend to become rich or even to glorify themselves (... *hoc studiu alio transferunt illudque faciunt... vel dominatus, vel divitiarum & honorum*). All those who study theology with this sort of evil attitude in mind or want to benefit from it in a selfish way do nothing but impiously profanate “this most sacred theology” (... *hi rem sanctissimam nefarie profanant*). The impact of faulty attitudes on the study of theology is most serious. As such, Crocius explains, those who apprehend theology for their own sinful ends may also eventually affect Christian wisdom itself (*Christiana sapientia absunt*).<sup>11</sup>

In the end, however, to study theology is to serve God both in the church and in school (... *Deo servire studiosus theologiae potest aut in ecclesia aut in schola*). This is certainly in line with Erasmus of Rotterdam, as Crocius openly admits. Then, he actually underlines that the theologian should be interested in following both these aspects for the sake of applying the spiritual gifts (... *aut pro donorum mensura utrobique & velle quidem debet*). Spiritual gifts are different and Crocius is keenly aware of this specifically Christian reality; consequently, he states that some have the gift of being pastors in the church while others have the gift of acting like teachers in school (*cum enim alii sint pastores in ecclesia, alii doctores in schola...*). Regardless whether the theologian is either a pastor of the church or the teacher of the school or even both, it is absolutely necessary that he should think carefully, discuss things maturely, and take decisions in a holy way (...*necesse est, ut studiosus theologiae prudenter cogitet, mature deliberet, & sancte praestituat, an*

*aliquando in ecclesia, an in schola, an in utraq;).* In this context, Crocius writes that it is vitally important that the theologian should eventually desire to serve God himself as a calling (*Deo sese vocanti servire velit*). Theology cannot be taught and the purpose of theology cannot be adequately fulfilled without taking into account the reality of spiritual gifts and the instruments of doctrine, which are both absolutely necessary in the process of teaching theology (*ac perinde etiam alia atque alia dona & doctrinae instrumenta in docente requiruntur*).<sup>12</sup>

### The Impediments of Theology

The second aspect which Crocius mentioned in his definition of theology is closely related to the impediments of theology. It should be noted that, for Crocius, it is extremely important that the theologian should above all pursue the purpose of studying theology in a holy way (*qui hunc sibi scopum in studio theologiae sancte praestituat*). This is the necessary condition for the firm identification of the impediments of theology. Crocius is very plain when he writes that whoever studies theology following its designated purpose with the proper attitude will be able to clearly expose the impediments of theology with the help of God (... *impedimenta fortiter tollat, divina fretus gratia*). It is highlighted that, in general, these impediments of theology are ungodliness, laziness, and confusion (*qualia fere sunt, impietas, socordia, confusio*).<sup>13</sup>

Before offering a definition of each of these impediments, Crocius stresses four difficulties which might be encountered by those who study theology. The first difficulty could arise in connection to the things which are approached in theological studies, or the content of theology (*principio obstat quidem nonnullis ex parte rei tractande, difficultas*). This difficulty, however, is not so serious that it cannot be overcome. Actually, theologians can easily leave this difficulty aside if they work hard and spare no effort (*sed haec non est tanta quin eam superare possint, qui operae & labori non pepercerint*). So, the content of

theology can be improved if those interested in this subject are serious enough to dedicate themselves to this task by learning constantly. Crocius is convinced that the most successful in this respect are especially those who started to take delight in good learning from an early age (*praefertim quibus ab incunte aetate recta institutione frui contigerit*). In other words, the sooner one immerses himself or herself in learning earnestly, the better for the final outcome of his or her theological studies. At this point, it is crucial to note that, for Crocius, good learning comes through the advice of teachers, who can inculcate the legitimate reason for learning in the minds of their students (*si modo ex consilio praeceptorum legitima studiorum ratio ineatur*). Crocius plainly admits that he shares this opinion about learning with Georg Calixt, the famous Lutheran divine.<sup>14</sup>

The second difficulty mentioned by Crocius is linked to the method of theology (*secundo obstat nonnullis ex parte modi*). The problem with the method consists of the fact that theology can either be treated too broadly or too narrowly. At this point, Crocius admits he is influenced by Lucas Trelcatius the Younger, the Reformed theologian from Leiden.<sup>15</sup>

The third difficulty concerns the instruments of theology, which could be a problem if they lack to a great extent when it comes to approach the things of theology (*tertio obstat multis ex parte instrumentorum quibus res tractanda est inopia multiplex*). In this, Crocius follows the suggestions of Johannes Brenz, the well-known Lutheran theologian.<sup>16</sup>

He also mentions a fourth problem, which could be caused by those who learn theology. Without further details, Crocius advises them to pay heed at all the problems that could hinder their advancement in theological studies (*quarto denique obstant his multo periculosius ex parte discentium, quae hoc aphorismo tollenda suadeo*).<sup>17</sup>

At this point, Crocius resumes his discussion about the impediments of theology, and he firstly approaches the issue of ungodliness (*impietas*). He explains that ungodliness consists

of negligence as well as a bad style of life (*impietas est in neglectu precum & vita mala*). Crocius is keenly aware that one of the most important aspects of Christian testimony is the question of wisdom (*gravissimum hac de re testimonium est ipsius sapientiae*). What sort of wisdom should be sought by those who study theology (*quamvero sapientiam*)? Certainly not a wisdom which is earthly, inferior and secular (*non terrenam, infernam & secularem*). The theologian should be in a constant quest for the wisdom of God, which is heavenly and divine (*sed supernam, sed divinam*). It is vital for the theologian to get hold of the wisdom of God because this means to follow in the footsteps of Christ. Crocius underlines the fact that our Saviour himself affirmed the necessity of seeking divine wisdom (*et servator noster disertim ait*). In line with Johann Alstädt,<sup>18</sup> Crocius notes it is possible that ungodly people should be eminently versed in theological affairs although their knowledge of theology is not essentially theological (*tametsi enim... impii quidam homines egregie videntur callere* τα. qeol ogwmena; *revera tamen illa cognitio rerum theologicarum est* αqeo| oga). This explanation is quite clear to Crocius who seems to be utterly convinced that it is impossible for true theological knowledge to live in a nontheological heart (*quia fieri not potest, ut cognitio vere theologica habitet in corde non theologo*).<sup>19</sup> In other words, an ungodly man who does not know God according to the Christian faith cannot acquire true theological knowledge although he could be able to master the contents of Christian theology. It is most likely that Crocius wanted to hint at the fact that an ungodly man can indeed know theology very well without knowing God himself.

*This paper was presented at the International Reformed Theological Institute doctoral conference at Hydepark, Doorn, the Netherlands, May 17 and 18, 2005.*



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Crocius, *Syntagma Sacrae Theologiae* (Bremen: Typis Bertholdi Villeriani, 1635), hereafter referred to as *Syntagma*, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Crocius, *Syntagma*, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Crocius, *Syntagma*, 1. Crocius writes: “Ideam theologiae methodicae, cujus adminiculo salutaria fidei dogmata explicantur, confirmantur, defenduntur, animo suo comprehensurus & secundum eam Deo feliciter operaturus, ante omnia suum sibi scopum sancte praestituit & intendat, impedimenta fortiter tollat, media prudenter eligat & adhibeat, effecta deniq. Huius divini studii calide desideret, ut animus a terrenis ad hoc veluti alis subvectus eleveetur.”

<sup>4</sup> Crocius, *Syntagma*, 1. For details, see the entire text: “Quemadmodum enim viator, iter igressurus, principio de certa meta cogitat, deinde vero declinatis aviis & remotis impedimentis, ad ea media itineraria ordinat ac dirigit: ita & theologiae nostrae, quae viatorum est, studiosus sic sibi currendum ducat, ut in scopum metamq; sibi praefixam perpetuo prospiciat & sublatis obstaculis atq. impedimentis, media ad eam recta & sine errore atq; periculo ducentia circumspecte eligat & usurpet.”

<sup>5</sup> Crocius, *Syntagma*, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Crocius, *Syntagma*, 2. To quote Crocius: “Scopus sive theologiae studiosi est objectivus aut formalis. Ille est generalis qui omnibus theologiae studiosis communiter debet esse propositus, nempe Deus, quem misit, Jesus Christus, recte cognoscendus, riteq. colendus. Hic vero est specialis, quem hic vel ille theologiae studiosus potissimum spectat, nempe, servire Deo ad aedificationem vel juventutis in schola, vel adultiorum in ecclesia, vel ovium agnorumq. utrobique simul.”

<sup>7</sup> Crocius, *Syntagma*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Crocius, *Syntagma*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Crocius, *Syntagma*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Crocius, *Syntagma*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Crocius, *Syntagma*, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Crocius, *Syntagma*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Crocius, *Syntagma*, 3.

<sup>14</sup> “... ut recte arbitratur doctissimus D. Georgius Calixtum Professor Theologus Helmstadiensis, praefatione in Epitomen Theologiae.” Crocius, *Syntagma*, 3. Georg Calixt or Callisen (1586-1656) was a Lutheran theologian and professor of theology in Helmstedt. His book, to which Crocius makes reference, is *Epitome theologiae moralis* (1634).

<sup>15</sup> “... de qua vide eximium Theologum Lucam Trelcatium”. Crocius, *Syntagma*, 3. Lucas Trelcatius the Younger (1573-1607) was a Reformed preacher and professor of theology in Leiden. As Crocius himself notes, Trelca-

tius wrote *Scholastica et methodica locorum communium s. theologiae institutio* (1604).

<sup>16</sup> Crocius, *Syntagma*, 3. Johannes Brenz (1499-1570) preached mainly in Southern Germany, and was called to reform the University of Tübingen.

<sup>17</sup> Crocius, *Syntagma*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Johann Heinrich Alstädt or Alstedius (1588-1638) was a Reformed theologian and professor of theology at Herborn and Weissenburg (Alba Iulia) in Transylvania.

<sup>19</sup> Crocius, *Syntagma*, 4.

# Temple? What Temple? Eschatology in the Book of Chronicles

JOHN K. STAFFORD

*University of Manitoba*

## Introduction

Research in the Old Testament books of 1 and 2 Chronicles has continued unabated since the seminal critical work of Wellhausen, Keil and Delitzsch, and Curtis and Madsen in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>1</sup> Wellhausen believed the best Chronicles could offer was insight into the emergence of a post-Exilic Judaizing culture whose better-known characteristics could be easily observed in the New Testament. This view went largely unchallenged, with notable exceptions in Barnes,<sup>2</sup> and Keil and Delitzsch. For Wellhausen, Chronicles presented no serious objective history for the scholar to investigate since the author, or authors, had produced such a heavily tendentious reworking of the Deuteronomistic history found in Samuel-Kings. Though the Chronicler was clearly familiar with the Pentateuch, and stood within its tradition, the crisis of the Exile necessitated a dramatic reappraisal of the ancient traditions which had spoken in terms of national security, Yahwistic worship, and the inviolability of Israelite institutions. These pillars of Israelite identity had, of course, been severely shaken by the destruction of the Temple, and the deportations to Babylon. The hard textual data of Chronicles published by Curtis and Madsen served to emphasise further the Chronicler's textual dependency on Samuel-Kings and, as a consequence, his

role as editor and creative narrator of his sources. Still, it was always recognised that the Chronicler had access to sources no longer available, and various attempts were made to probe the nature and extent of the Chronicler's source citations.<sup>3</sup> It had been generally accepted that where the Chronicler added new material not found in his canonical sources, he was inventing it since it could be easily demonstrated that in quoting his known sources he often deviated from them. This conveyed the impression that the Chronicler manipulated his sources whenever he desired for the sake of his own *Tendenz*, and therefore could not be relied upon as a credible witness in any pseudo-scientific approach to historical inquiry of the post-Exilic period. In the extreme then, the Chronicler was reckoned to have fabricated sources where none existed. However, Werner Lemke<sup>4</sup> showed conclusively that the Chronicler's canonical sources were often much closer to the text form of the Dead Sea Scrolls than the Masoretic text. This was further confirmed by Leslie Allen's LXX research in Chronicles.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it was no longer safe to assume that in each case where the Chronicler appeared to be manipulating his sources, this was actually what was happening. It was now possible to conclude that he may have had a different text form before him.

This was an important step forward because it opened the way for a more sympathetic reading of Chronicles as a credible historical source. Nevertheless, the tendentious changes made by the Chronicler to many of his known sources could not simply be explained by different recensions of his texts. For example, the inclusion or deletion of major sections of thematic material clearly available to the Chronicler made the nature of his historiography increasingly complex, and so demanded a more sophisticated approach to his overall purpose(s) in writing. As a result, the distinctive religious and theological features of Chronicles became more apparent, and it was now clear that the Chronicler wrote history in ways very similar to his contemporaries in the ancient world. Therefore

the modern canons of historical skepticism could not be rigorously applied since what was presented in 1 and 2 Chronicles was the convergence of history, theology, and narratology. If anything, the Chronicler's work shed light on the biases of modern historical investigation. None of the biblical writers present themselves as recorders of raw data from which they are ideologically detached. As such, Wellhausen's quest for a kind of "pure" history was not attainable – indeed, the moment he investigated the Chronicler, he did so from the point of view of personal commitment and interest in the texts themselves. This, of course, was exactly what the Chronicler did, and with which Wellhausen found fault.

From about 1960 on, a very large number of papers appeared which explored the characteristic features of Chronicles' historiography and theology, and numerous attempts were made to develop a profile of the Chronicler as a theologian, as well as a member of the socio-political elite during the period of reconstruction,<sup>6</sup> identified with Ezra-Nehemiah,<sup>7</sup> and the prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Characteristic *motifs* identified in Chronicles included the central role of the Temple and its worship, the heroic status of Solomon (when compared with the portrayal of the Deuteronomist), the unique doctrines of election and immediate retribution, and the diminished role of the prophetic office. Sara Japhet, Hugh Williamson, and the late Raymond Dillard<sup>8</sup> are among the contemporary scholars who have made Chronicles research a very sophisticated discipline. As John Kleinig observes, the new agenda for Chronicles has noticeably shifted the emphasis from a preoccupation with historicity and sources, to that of literary, and theological analysis.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, it may be argued that the evolution of Chronicles research is a showcase for the best and most judicious methods for biblical research as a multidisciplinary project, while still retaining the stimulus for testing fresh insight.

### A Test Case

One classic theme of Chronicles is its idealised emphasis on the role of the Temple and its worship. Solomon is the guarantor of Temple ministry. The eternality of the Temple is clearly emphasised by the Chronicler in the ways he quotes Samuel-Kings. David even wears the ephod. The divine promise to the Davidic line has the discipline clause removed at 1 Chr 17:13b. The Temple cult is idealised, as are the reigns of David and Solomon – this is shown in the minute detail by which the Chronicler described Temple activities and their significance for him.

Another major theme that has been the subject of debate is the eschatological dimension of Chronicles and the author's attitude towards the future. Otto Plöger,<sup>10</sup> Hugh Williamson,<sup>11</sup> and William Stinespring<sup>12</sup> have each drawn attention to this aspect of Chronicles, while drawing different conclusions.

It is the purpose of this paper to bring together these themes, and test the idea that the Temple existed in the theological vision of the Chronicler as an eschatological Temple, because the status of the Second Temple with which he was almost certainly familiar was incomparably inferior to the Solomonic Temple in both construction and constitution. Therefore, the Chronicler construed the original Temple to be the sole paradigm for the divine/human encounter because it was the singular object with which the eternal promises to the Davidic line had been associated. For the Chronicler, the crisis of the Exile confirmed the deep failure of a pan-Israel witness to national thought in relation to Israel's purpose in the world, most notably perceived in its worship, and therefore its eschatological vision. As Plöger remarks, "... only where there has been steady, unclouded regard for the importance of Israel in relation to other nations is an eschatological perspective ever visible from time to time."<sup>13</sup> The three concepts were crucial if Israel was to remain a theocratic island among the nations. What is most striking, assuming the Chronicler wrote during

the time of the Second Temple, is the complete absence of any mention or allusion to the Second Temple. If the Chronicler was fixated upon the status of the Temple, it appears he could not have envisaged a transformation of the Second Temple into anything like the Solomonic Temple simply by way of building improvements, or through a return to liturgical idealism. This must have been impossible in any case, since the Davidic line was now diffuse. Since the loss of the Solomonic Temple, there was only one other Temple that could satisfy the logic of the divine promise to David, namely the eschatological Temple. This result is not impossible to contemplate because the Solomonic Temple had a singular role and function in the permanent ideal of a theocratic kingdom in a manner analogous to the temporary structure of the Tabernacle. If the Second Temple met the needs of social cohesion, and the reestablishment of a (Sadducean) elite during the period of reconstruction, it nonetheless fell short of the eschatological vision that lay at the heart of Israelite historiography and national consciousness, at least from the point of view of the Chronicler. Thus, despite prophetic urging to the contrary, the Second Temple could lay no final claim to the Chronicler's loyalty because it did not conform indeed, could not conform, to the eschatological vision that had been uniquely established between David and the Temple, and brought to its zenith in the reign of Solomon.

With this hypothesis in view, the discussion will now review some trends in Second Temple research, and options in the Chronicler's eschatology. The results will be synthesised to help resolve the claim that the Chronicler had no serious interest as an apologist for the life of the Second Temple *per se*.

### Eschatology in Chronicles

Recognition of the Chronicler's understanding of the future has often been located in the mutually inclusive roles of David and Solomon as the initiator and builder of the Jerusalem Tem-

ple respectively. Williamson has made this linkage indispensable in his critique of Plöger's eschatology. For Plöger, the incipient Samaritan schism gave added significance to the post-Exilic situation of Jerusalem, demarcated by the varying attitudes that prevailed towards the legacy of David, resulting finally in the radicalising of prophetic eschatology into apocalyptic as the seed bed of militant activism. Plöger succinctly marks the boundaries of his discussion.

... sociological and structural change meant no more and no less than the end of the prophetic, i.e., historical, eschatology; it was now superfluous. For the change which had now taken place in the Jerusalem community, the transformation of the of the nation into a community resembling a church, a change which made it possible to remedy defects and expunge errors, although it also meant that the structure of the new community was no longer subject to the variations of historical change, made men realize that the prophetic eschatology, which had the nation at its centre, could no longer be maintained in the traditional sense; it had lost its point. The goal of earlier eschatological expectation, the winding-up of the nation on the lines of the plan of Yahweh proclaimed by the prophets, was in principle already attained in a community founded exclusively on cult and law; the only justification for the maintenance of eschatological hopes was that they confirmed what was, in fact already the case... The gradual decline of eschatological expectation, which was regarded as superseded rather than crushed, undoubtedly made a substantial contribution to the secularization of certain influential groups within the priesthood.<sup>14</sup>

In Plöger's scheme, the Chronicler became the preeminent apologist for a theocratic community whose identity was now defined in socio-political terms via the priestly strata of post-Exilic Israel, and "... its increasingly aimless attitude."<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the Chronicler's neglect of the future is most clearly exemplified in his fixation on the Temple and cult. On the one hand, this may be construed as the idealising of the past, sui-



table for erecting a social construct that attempted to provide a degree of continuity between the historic Israel and its fragile beginnings in the post-Exilic world centred on Jerusalem. The Chronicler was not, in this view, creating a future, but reliving a glorious past for a generation that had no memory save the Deuteronomistic History of Samuel-Kings which offered no hope for a Davidic restoration in light of the depiction of David and Solomon. Thus prophetic eschatology simply came to an end, having been defeated by the processes of history.

Both Williamson and Japhet have adopted alternative positions, noting the subtle divergence of the Chronicler from his source in 2 Sam 7:14b which is omitted at 1 Chr 17:1, and again at 1 Chr 28:7 where the “sons” become specified in the person of Solomon. Williamson prefers to describe the Chronicler’s vision as a “royalist” hope, rather than messianic and thus offers a less fragmented view of the theocratic community than Plöger suggests. The crucial platform for the Chronicler comprised the complementary pillars of dynasty and Temple. Yet even if each was apparently exhausted, according to Plöger, that tradition still supplied the parameters of promise and covenant which defined and restrained the nation as the kingdom of Yahweh. There is no question that the Chronicler’s interests in the completion of the Solomonic Temple represented a central feature of his work. At this point, the entire purpose of Solomon had been fulfilled because his work of Temple building completed the contingent aspects of the eternal covenant with David. The Chronicler’s omission of the later stages of Solomon’s reign so severely assessed in Samuel-Kings, was therefore not fatal to his eschatological program which was defined not simply in terms of the covenant faithfulness of David’s children, but of that faithfulness with respect to the imaginary locus of the kingdom of God, the Temple. Therefore, no national vision of the future could be legitimate in the eyes of the Chronicler which separated the Temple from the Davidic Covenant. While Becker may be cor-

rect in saying that “Yahweh’s kingship... is not tied to its earthly representatives”<sup>16</sup> neither does it appear to be expressed apart from it.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, Becker asserts “... a genuine messianic expectation...”<sup>18</sup> which only began to make itself felt in the first and second centuries B. C. E. Becker’s developmental model of messianism is useful, but heavily dependent on the assumption of a failed program of Hasmonean power which is transformed into “... a new outgrowth of anti-Hasmonean, anti-Roman, and anti-Herodian tendencies.”<sup>19</sup> Becker described this as “real messianism”,<sup>20</sup> which marked a shift from the “restorative monarchism of the exilic and early post-Exilic period.”<sup>21</sup> So while there seemed to be a need to account for the attributions of kingship explicit in the New Testament and the new emphasis upon the fulfilment of the Scriptures, the centrality of the Temple formed the imaginative core that fixed the theocratic identity of Jerusalem and gave rise to the political incongruity that Jerusalem could continue to be the centre of divine will. It is extremely difficult to conclude that the centuries of political and religious fixation around the eternality of David, and the Temple, ever dissipated. Rather the evidence suggests a heightening of messianic sensibilities and conflicts. According to Becker, “The messianism of ‘late Judaism’... must not be judged by the measure of New Testament fulfilment.”<sup>22</sup> But why not? If the Chronicler created a historiographic horizon within which history and theology merged, and if the biblical authors’ primary interest is theology, there is every reason to assess their writing and theology along a historical continuum. It was only time that separated the two worlds, and the latter was self-consciously dependent on the former. A mere escalation of key Old Testament texts might at least serve to entertain the apparent super-human identity of the Messiah in the New Testament. The very early acclamation of Jesus as the Christ suggests that for some at least, the identification had some grounds. The point here is that while discontinuities occur in any historical trend

line, what emerges from them is not *sui generis*. The engagement of Jesus with the Scriptures, his regular association with the Temple and its purposes suggests a closer examination of its relationship between messianism<sup>23</sup> and the future. This means tracing the status of the Temple from the Chronicler to Qumran, and the reflections of Rabbinic traditions in the Mishnah and Talmud.

### Some Remarks on the Second Temple

Williamson has convincingly demonstrated the Chronicler's goal of establishing the closest continuity of Solomon's Temple with the patriarchal origins of the Tabernacle, and also the location of Jerusalem. These stood at the centre of Israelite unity at a time of political fragmentation. Thus according to Williamson, the Chronicler's Temple was a focus of unity by demonstrating its detailed association with Moses, and the cultic traditions of the nation from its very beginnings.<sup>24</sup> In a similar vein, Ezra's Temple was also continuous with the first, but to establish exclusivity, and community identity.

The whole drift of the work [Ezra] is to use continuity as a means of excluding some who might have a rightful claim to participation, whether they are members of the Judean community... or those who came from the northern part of the land. The contrast could scarcely be more marked.<sup>25</sup>

Stinespring reaches a similar conclusion and identifies the necessity of maintaining the linkage between Temple and Davidic Covenant to "... set the proper eschatological pattern."<sup>26</sup> The imaginary David of Stinespring's construction may therefore be linked to an eschatological imagery of Temple since no Temple resembling the grandeur of Solomon's actually existed. That the Temple represented the visual centrepiece of the Chronicler's theology and with David the unifying principle that must define Israel's future, seems well enough established.<sup>27</sup>

However, the problem of the Chronicler's attitude to the Second Temple is not thereby resolved. If the Chronicler was an apologist for that Temple, he has managed to achieve this without actually even alluding to its existence. He has exalted and idealised Solomon's Temple, and created an environment for the reunification of Israel, a project which, as Williamson notes,<sup>28</sup> failed, and did not establish an obvious basis for any positive evaluation of the Second Temple. If the Temple constituted the locus of both imagination and reality that linked Israel's past to an uncertain future, why did the Chronicler fail to make that connection explicit? One possible response lies in a consideration of how the Temple functioned in the imagination of Israel.

Arguing from the standpoint that the Old Testament as a whole is almost exclusively a creation of the Second Temple period, Robert Carroll concludes that the social and historical conditions of the early Second Temple are inadequate to reconstruct an ideological schema of the period. This results in an *a priori* abandonment of any attempt at achieving some measure of coherence in Chronicles since it is not to be expected. But this is odd because even if the texts are old and fragmentary (Carroll uses the example of Lev 25–27), the editor, by definition, presumably thought the task of collation and redaction worth pursuing. So Carroll's lens is that of the restoration period, about which he claims little can be said with certainty, leaving the reader even less able to inquire about the social or religious strategies that lead to the selection of these particular texts for canonical inclusion. In effect, Carroll's suspicion simply substitutes one set of social constructs (or absence of them), with those of his own. So with all interpreters, he is caught up as a participant in the same hermeneutical problem he rather clearly identifies.

Whether a *Kulturkampf* is to be detected in the Second Temple period... is difficult to say. Difficult because we are at the point of

leaving the textual levels of meaning in order to make assertions about the real social world of the Second Temple and the steps in that switch from literary to “real” meaning are too many and contentious... Texts and theories are safer places to be than the real world because they are more easily manipulated by readers and theoreticians. But the gap between texts and the real world remains as unbridgeable as ever...<sup>29</sup>

In a similar vein, Carroll notes the paucity of evidence for the Second Temple in the prophets which he suggests does,

... not permit the modern reader of the Hebrew Bible to determine whether the first or second temple is being indicated... readers tend to apply anything said about the temple to the first temple without remarking the lack of any real information about the temple that would allow the reader to determine *which* temple is meant in the text. As far as the prophetic books are concerned the temple is at best a textual one, lacking specificity of detail and reference, and therefore may be either the first or the second temple. The referentiality of the text may not be that specific, so that the temple referred to is purely textual and fictional.<sup>30</sup>

Again Carroll sets up the question:

The term “temple” may refer to YHWH’s heavenly or earthly temple, to the first temple or to the second temple, or to a specific temple in the text, present to the text or even to a future temple. But without further specification of defining information, how is the reader of the text to determine which it is? How is the reader to decide that a specific temple is being referred to or that the temple in the text is not itself a textual construct? When is the temple in the text a real temple and when is it a textual temple?<sup>31</sup>

The key for Carroll’s scheme is the exceptions he makes with Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zechariah arising from the imaginative

possibility "... that there never was a *significant* Second Temple."<sup>32</sup> Malachi also needs to be included in this list.

If Ezekiel's temple and the Qumran temple scroll were produced and could exist in the Second Temple period, then we must accept the inevitable conclusion that the second temple was not widely accepted as the legitimate temple. In other words, we must think of the "second temple period" as a period of *contested* temple projects. In fact, we should be questioning the use of the phrase "second temple" to cover the Persian-Greco-Roman period.<sup>33</sup>

Clearly, there was a Second Temple, but its religious horizons are very difficult to establish. For Carroll, the work of Ezra-Nehemiah simply provided a particular privilege for one set of strategic interests which committed all later readers of the Bible to a particular hermeneutic of the Temple which never actually existed as a singular social reality even, or particularly, through the Maccabean and Herodian periods. Thus, Carroll's scheme posits a necessary level of suspicion over the survival of particular textual modalities around which there are hints of competing ideological possibilities that Ezra-Nehemiah itself points towards. Such a view can either be considered suspect in itself, or a stimulus to reconsider what light it might shed on collateral texts such as Chronicles.

#### The Chronicler's Temple as Part of a Continuum

It may be thought that Chronicles was an attempt either to support the existence and work of the Second Temple, or to defeat it by virtue of demonstrating its poverty in comparison to Solomon's Temple. In each case, the absence of any discussion of the Second Temple creates a vacuum which scholarly nature typically seeks to fill. This is not at all the best environment in which to create an intellectual construct which is devoid of verifiable historical moorings. It may be best to attempt to situate the Chronicler's view of the Temple in some sort of

continuum with other evidence. For example, it has already been noted that Williamson is of the view that the Chronicler's messianic program failed. But that failure may only be in relation to the limited achievements of Ezra-Nehemiah. C. C. Rowland, for example, points to the pseudepigraphic literature of 1 Enoch 14, the Sibylline Oracles, T. Levi 3:6, Jubilees, including a hint in Ps. Solomon 17:32f, and others<sup>34</sup> where unrestricted and unmediated access to the courts of heaven suggests a growing and radical divergence from the temporal Jerusalem cult. There are sufficient canonical texts which develop the notion of the temporary nature of the Temple. Solomon's prayer of dedication in 2 Chr 6:33, 35 (= 1 Kgs 8:27, 34, 39, 43, 45, 49) stresses the distinction and the linkage between heaven and the Temple by uniquely pointing to the inspired directions for the plan of the Temple (1 Chr 28:19) and the somewhat elusive remark of David that the "temple will not be for mortals but for the Lord God."<sup>35</sup> Thus, for example, the assurance of divine presence taken for granted in Jonah 2:7f appears to be rejected in Isaiah 66:1, where the idea of cultic permanence is discarded.

Thus says the Lord: Heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is my resting place? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things are mine, says the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look, to the humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at my word... Listen, an uproar from the city! A voice from the temple! The voice of the Lord, dealing retribution to his enemies!<sup>36</sup>

So there was a voice from the Temple, but the Temple had become an instrument of ruin as the intervening verses suggest. Amos 4 also echoes such sentiments albeit against the northern kingdom. In the case of the Chronicler, all mention of the decay of Solomon's cultic activity found in Samuel-Kings is absent. Our author must have been aware of two things: first, that the monarchy was itself a secondary institution and liable

to corruption, and second, that the cult whose origins lay in Moses, and was ideally preserved through the monarchy (cf. Hezekiah's Passover at 2 Chr 30), was just as vulnerable. The Chronicler's idealising of the Temple and cult during the period of restoration ran counter to the historical processes that had resulted in the Exile. The reestablishment of a theocratic kingdom, defined by an imaginary (Davidic) king, working in and through a harmonious priestly class could surely only be described as naïveté. No historical reconstruction that so obviously and deliberately avoided the historical trajectory of Israel could have survived as canonical unless it embodied an eschatological vision that was already implicit in the national consciousness, even if unsystematic. Ezekiel 47 and 48 had already spoken of a renewed Temple at the centre of an imaginary Jerusalem. The imagery is reminiscent of a new creation with the Temple at its centre. There is no way to correlate this Temple either with that of the Chronicler, or that depicted in Ezra 3 and 5:8. The Temple in Ezra is now also called "this house of God",<sup>37</sup> which suggests something less than the structure of historical imagination, and perhaps something more utilitarian.<sup>38</sup>

In the case of Chronicles, the major difficulty now is the attempt to validate an intellectual and theological horizon for its author rather than settle for the older program of historical verifiability. The "textual Temple" of Robert Carroll results in what may be called a "virtual Temple". There is some merit to this idea because it calls in question the easy acceptance of a singular post-Exilic Temple where the biblical evidence suggests major gaps in our understanding of the status of that Temple. The task of reading Samuel-Kings is not eased by the fact that many recent ideological reconstructions of Chronicles depend very heavily on the inferential analysis of a fragmentary body of texts. In fact, the aim of this paper has been to offer a speculative reason for the *absence* of data where one might have reasonably expected it. Calling to mind R. E. Cle-



ments' *God and Temple*, and the comprehensive mixture of beliefs found in Chronicles, Davies reminds us that,

It is not at all easy to discover what Jews of the Second Temple period believed... and we must be careful not to impose an artificial unity of belief on them. Nevertheless there are a number of texts in addition to Joel, from varied dates and backgrounds, which suggest that a belief in the divine presence in the Second Temple was much more widespread than is commonly allowed.<sup>39</sup>

However, this contention suffers from the same problem Davies has himself identified, that there was still a "doctrine of absence" held by some in the Second Temple period which was recalled in the later Mishnaic and Talmudic literature.<sup>40</sup> Malachi offered ethical and prophetic responses to the experience of absence that included a restored cult (Mal 4:4), but also hinted at the truth of divine absence (Mal 3:1). Notwithstanding the notable departures to be found in Isaiah 66:1 and elsewhere, the lack of coherence regarding the Second Temple in the Biblical corpus may be considered on a continuum with, for example, the attitude of the Qumran community. Thus, one section of the Temple Scroll (Column 29, 1-10) which depicts the purity of future (eschatological?) Temple worship reads,

... [and I] shall be for them eternally... with them for ever and eternally. And I shall sanctify my [sanc]tuary with my glory for I shall cause my glory to dwell upon it (?) until the day of blessing (?) on which I shall create (anew) my san[ctuary(?)] to prepare it for myself for all [t]ime according to the covenant which I made with Jacob at Bethel.

Davies considers this section from the Temple Scroll somewhat anomalous when compared to the typically negative attitude of Qumran to the Jerusalem Temple thus suggesting implied acceptance of the divine presence in the Second Temple. However, this merely begs the question of which Temple

the Scroll has in view. The text just outlined seems to point more towards an imagined eschatological Temple than the Second Temple. To some extent, Donald Murray anticipates this scenario by using a “revival” motif to explain goals of the Chronicler’s sense of “future.” However, he stops short by compelling the Chronicler to be a critic of his age, to which the purposes of a revival movement are aimed. So the Temple-centric ideology of the Chronicler, and his depiction of a utopian past in David and Solomon serve to refocus his rather indeterminate audience.

... in the motif as it is here in 2 Chron. 7:13–15, anticipating times when that utopian state of relationship has been lost through neglect of its essentials, YHWH sets out the conditions under which it may be restored. Subsequently, in the mouth of prophet or king, the motif will detail how, precisely in such times of neglect and decline, through revival of a temple-centred religious praxis springing out of deep commitment to YHWH, the community can regain the joys of that utopia. Accordingly, the reforming, or better “revivalist”, post-Solomonic kings demonstrate to the Chronicler’s envisaged readers that, in the midst of a present that disappointingly belies their heritage as the people of YHWH, the way to the future is back to the past. For the Davidic-Solomonic “past” of idyllic communion with YHWH is their highest hope for the future, and by reappropriating that “past” they may revive their present and transform their future.<sup>41</sup>

The weakness here surely is that the Chronicler must therefore be conceived as either naively out of touch with the truth of Israel’s past, or as a theological romantic. His idealising of the “Davidic-Solomonic ‘past’” as an exercise in romantic theology must always have been doomed to failure since it would have required a collective conspiracy of silence around the very sources the Chronicler himself used. In an earlier article, Murray contended that any such eschatological hope did not depend on a restoration of the Davidic dynasty.<sup>42</sup> The Second

Temple community therefore became the new locus of the idea of divine kingdom, and hence the emergence of a proto-Sadducean group that saw itself as guardians of the last remaining icon of divine presence in Israel was the final result of the Chronicler's idealistic depiction of Temple and cult.

#### A Tentative Solution

The textual evidence does not allow the reader to drive a wedge between the interests of cult and monarchy. This being so, there would seem to be no *prima facie* reason to exclude rumblings of Davidic expectation in Chronicles even if the term "messianism" is at this stage ill-defined and unacceptable. This is partly necessary to account for the emergence of various forms of messianism that surfaced in Israel, including the evidence of the New Testament. The centrality of King-Temple in Chronicles, surrounded by its cluster of theological sub-themes, means that, from that vantage point, the two core themes cannot be separated. To think of "Temple" is to think of "king;" to think of king is to call forth the long tradition that placed the decisions of the king alongside the integrity of the cult. The Chronicler could not have established that relationship more clearly. Therefore, these two crucial elements of the Chronicler's theology have to be held in tension.

When the Chronicler speaks of the Temple in the context of restoration society, he was speaking the tradition to an audience that had no tangible experience of it, assuming a mid-Persian period date. No one had seen the Temple, including the Chronicler. They could only visualise it, as Ezekiel had done long before, and in doing so, create an imaginative construct that was as rich and comprehensive theologically as imagination would allow. In the case of the Chronicler, the imagination was eschatologically focused, and had to be. There was a Second Temple, and it was not Solomonic. Consequently, there could be no guarantee of divine presence in a Temple which, beyond the Tabernacle, God had not promised

to inhabit. Only the Solomonic Temple could lay claim to that, and the Chronicler demonstrated that. In the extreme then, the First Temple was utterly *sui generis*. No building program could replicate it. But there was still the defining necessity of a Temple because Israel had constructed its identity around it as a response to its own theological constructs of reality. The prophetic instinct to rebuild was then entirely predictable, but not entirely satisfactory since the plans were, in effect, lost forever, and it was unclear that the same spirit that moved the original builders could also be recovered. Still, an Israel without a Temple was equally unthinkable.

Apart from the insistence of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, there was sufficient, if sporadic, evidence also in the prophets, for an attitude towards the Temple that really was futuristic. If then the Chronicler held forth a future hope rooted in Temple, there was only one other Temple available to him, namely, the eschatological Temple, whose temporal expression was completely unknowable, could not be defined in terms of physical dimensions or cultic accoutrements, and could only exist in the imagination of a mind turned to God in hope. It must therefore be Carroll's "textual" Temple.

Whatever Temple structure existed during the Chronicler's time, it mattered so little to him that he never disclosed any awareness or appreciation of it in any way. The Chronicler's excursion into Israel's past was as complex as it may be for any who undertake such a project. But his purposes lay beyond a moralistic re-assessment (per Murray) of his own time where the mere reflection of past glory could only have resulted in an even deeper sense of historic alienation. The Chronicler's view appears to have been the re-enfranchisement of Israelite theological vision in a context where it was impossible to recreate a political hope that attempted to merge king and Temple in the ancient manner, because it was already profoundly apparent that Israel's institutions in and of themselves were unable to sustain such a hope, even when a measure of political sove-

reignty could be salvaged. The Chronicler's history, for all its idealising of David and Solomon, was equally candid about the failures of the monarchy in general including, for example, the most Solomon-like king Hezekiah, who managed to avert his own death through sickness by humbling himself before God (2 Chr 32:26). Yet even Hezekiah's Passover (2 Chr 30), which is embedded in the Chronicler's larger account of the purification of the Temple (2 Chr 29-32), announces the final priestly (and Levitical) blessing and dismissal of the people which is heard by God in "... his holy dwelling in heaven" (2 Chr 30:27). Thus even at this point, the Chronicler demurs with respect to the idea of the presence of God in the sanctuary.

It is clearly not possible to do more than suggest an outline for the Chronicler and his purposes, yet it may be that he was one such person who, like the men of Issachar as they gathered to give allegiance to David at Hebron, "... who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do..." (1 Chr 12:32). In the final analysis, on this view of the matter, an eschatological Temple was all that was left, around which to create a vision for the future, and the Chronicler merely a voice to give expression to what might have been. In spatial terms therefore, the first Temple was the great unrepeatable event. The Temple of the future demanded a fresh evaluation of the actions of God in history, and anticipated a visionary structure that was now influenced and escalated by the eschatology of Ezekiel and Isaiah. Such a renewed understanding of the Temple would by analogy, demand an eschatological Person to fulfil it and conceivably, mediate, or even receive its worship.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1983); C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Book of Chronicles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n. d.); Edward L. Curtis and Albert A. Madsen,

*The Books of Chronicles*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1910).

<sup>2</sup> W. E. Barnes, "The Religious Standpoint of the Chronicler", *American Journal of Semitic Languages* 8 (1896–07), 14–120.

<sup>3</sup> For example, see H. R. Macy, "The Sources of the Books of Chronicles: A Reassessment", Ph.D. dissertation (Harvard University, 1975); A. Graeme Auld, "What Was the Main Source of the Books of Chronicles?" in *The Chronicler as Author*, ed. M. Patrick Graham, Steven L. McKenzie, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series no. 263 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 91–99; John K. Stafford, "The Reign of Manasseh in the Book of Chronicles", unpublished Th.M. Thesis (Winnipeg Theological Seminary, 1986); William M. Schniedewind, "The Source Citations of Manasseh: King Manasseh in History and Homily", *Vetus Testamentum* XLI/4 (1991), 450–61, and many others.

<sup>4</sup> Werner E. Lemke, "Synoptic Studies in the Chronicler's History", Ph.D. dissertation (Harvard, 1963); Werner E. Lemke, "The Synoptic Problem in the Chronicler's History", *Harvard Theological Review* 58 (1965), 349–63.

<sup>5</sup> Leslie C. Allen, *The Greek Chronicles. The Relation of the LXX of 1 and 2 Chronicles to the MT*, Vetus Testamentum Supplement. 25 and 27 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974).

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan E. Dyck, *The Theocratic Ideology of the Chronicler*, Biblical Interpretation Series 33 (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> A key aspect of Chronicles research was the attempt to determine the relationship between it and Ezra-Nehemiah. It is now much more widely believed that the books came from separate authors. Naturally, this has a significant bearing on the theology of each.

<sup>8</sup> Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought*, rev. ed., trans. Anna Barber (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997); H. G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); Raymond B. Dillard, "The Reign of Asa (2 Chronicles 14–16): An Example of the Chronicler's Theological Method", *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23 (1980), 207–18; Raymond B. Dillard, "Reward and Punishment in Chronicles: The Theology of Immediate Retribution", *Westminster Theological Journal* 46 (1984), 164–72.

<sup>9</sup> John W. Kleinig, "Recent Research in Chronicles", *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 2 (1994), 43.

<sup>10</sup> O. Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, trans. S. Rudman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968).

<sup>11</sup> H. G. M. Williamson, "Eschatology in Chronicles", *TynB* 28 (1977), 115–54.

<sup>12</sup> W. F. Stinespring, "Eschatology in Chronicles", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80 (1961), 209–19.

<sup>13</sup> Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 32.

<sup>14</sup> Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 43f.

<sup>15</sup> Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 45.

<sup>16</sup> Joachim Becker, *Messianic Expectation in the Old Testament*, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 82.

<sup>17</sup> The inscrutability and autonomy of God is perhaps more clearly seen in wisdom literature, and the pervasive influence of wisdom in the prophetic writings.

<sup>18</sup> Becker, *Messianic Expectation*, 83.

<sup>19</sup> Becker, *Messianic Expectation*, 87.

<sup>20</sup> Becker, *Messianic Expectation*, 87.

<sup>21</sup> Becker, *Messianic Expectation*, 87.

<sup>22</sup> Becker, *Messianic Expectation*, 87.

<sup>23</sup> Including the complexities of the name and its associations.

<sup>24</sup> H. G. M. Williamson, "The Temple in the Books of Chronicles", in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel*, ed. W. Horbury, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series no. 48 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 26f.

<sup>25</sup> Williamson, "The Temple in the Books of Chronicles", 30.

<sup>26</sup> Stinespring, "Eschatology in Chronicles", 213, Stinespring does however regard the Chronicler as a "resourceful author" (see 212), and in relation to the cost estimates of Solomon's Temple (1 Chr 22:14), "One writer has estimated the value of all this [the Temple] at five billion dollars, but it is actually inestimable in terms of ancient economics; it is something like the historical facts multiplied by a thousand. Even less could these figures apply to the modest little temple of the writer's own time; they can only be figurative or eschatological" (see 213).

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Roddy L. Braun, "Solomonic Apologetic in Chronicles", *JBL* 92 (1973), 503–16; Roddy L. Braun, "The Message of Chronicles: Rally Round the Temple", *Concordia Theological Monthly* 42 (1971), 502–14; Roddy L. Braun, "Solomon, the Chosen Temple Builder: The Significance of 1 Chronicles 22, 28, and 29 for the Theology of Chronicles", *JBL* 95 (1976), 581–90; Adrien-M Brunet, "La Theologie du Chroniste: Theocratie et Messianisme", *Sacra Pagina* 1 (1959), 384–97; André Caquot, "Peut-on Parler de Messianisme dans L'Oeuvre du Chroniste", *Revue de Theologie et de Philosophie* 16 (1966), 110–20; Steven L. McKenzie, "Why Didn't David Build the Temple. The History of a Biblical Tradition", in *Worship and the Hebrew Bible: Essays in Honor of John T. Willis*, ed. M. Patrick Graham, Rick R. Marrs and Steven L. McKenzie, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series no. 284 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 204–24; C. Meyers, "David as Temple Builder", in *Ancient Israelite Religion. Essays in Honour of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson, and S. D. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 357–76; M. Saebø, "Messianism in Chronicles? Some Remarks to the Old Testament Background of the

New Testament Christology”, *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 2 (1980), 85–109, and many more.

<sup>28</sup> Williamson, “The Temple in the Books of Chronicles”, 30.

<sup>29</sup> Robert P. Carroll, “Textual Strategies and Ideology in the Second Temple Period”, in *Second Temple Studies* 1, ed. Philip R. Davies, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series no. 117 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 124.

<sup>30</sup> Robert P. Carroll, “So What Do We *Know* About the Temple? The Temple in the Prophets”, in *Second Temple Studies* 2, ed. Kent H. Richards and Tamaras Eskanazi, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series no. 175 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 37.

<sup>31</sup> Carroll, “So What Do We *Know* About the Temple?”, 38.

<sup>32</sup> Carroll, “So What Do We *Know* About the Temple?”, 47.

<sup>33</sup> Carroll, “So What Do We *Know* About the Temple?”, 49.

<sup>34</sup> C. C. Rowland, “The Second Temple: Focus of Ideological Struggle?” in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel*, ed. W. Horbury, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series no. 48 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 178ff.

<sup>35</sup> 1 Chr 29:1, *ʾ-yhī ʾa/ hū hyl; yKi hr yBh; -d a l. al{yKi*

<sup>36</sup> Isaiah 66:1-2, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Ezra 6:17.

<sup>38</sup> It should also be mentioned however, that the idea of “dwelling place”, or “resting place”, is also found in Psalm 132:5, 8, 14 and other places, though in the case of Ezra, there may yet have been a reluctance to ascribe the full dignity of the Temple to a structure whose identity was not settled.

<sup>39</sup> G. I. Davies, “The Presence of God in the Second Temple and Rabbinic Doctrine”, in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel*, ed. W. Horbury, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series no. 48 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 33.

<sup>40</sup> *b. Yoma 21b* speaks of the ark, the fire, the Shekinah, the Holy Spirit, and the Urim and Thummim, present in Solomon’s Temple but absent in the Second. See Davies, “The Presence of God in the Second Temple”, 32, 36.

<sup>41</sup> Donald F. Murray, “Retribution and Revival: Theological Theory, Religious Praxis, and the Future in Chronicles”, *JSOT* 88 (June 2000), 96.

<sup>42</sup> Donald F. Murray, “Dynasty, People, and the Future: The Message of Chronicles”, *JSOT* 58 (1993), 89–92.



# **“A new song we raise”. On the First Martyrs of the Reformation and the Origin of Martin Luther’s First Hymn**

**T. H. M. AKERBOOM**

*University of Tilburg*

The first hymn Luther made, is, as generally assumed, the ballad from 1523 in which the martyrdom is sung of two monks from the Antwerp Augustinian monastery, Henricus Vos and Johannes van den Esschen. The title of the hymn is *Eyn new lied von den zween Merterern Christi, zu Brussel von den Sophisten zu Löwen verbrant* (“A new song of the two martyrs of Christ burned in Brussels by the Sophists of Louvain”). It is better known by the initial line *Ein neues Lied wir heben an* (“A new song we raise”). The tidings of the martyrdom of the two fellow Augustinian monks are the beginning of Luther’s poetical work, from which thirty-six hymns sprung and several adaptations of liturgical pieces.<sup>1</sup>

## **Report of the events**

On July 1, 1523, a large crowd gathered on the Grote Markt in front of the city hall of Brussels. Before eleven o’clock friars from the three other mendicant orders<sup>2</sup> arrived at the Grote Markt in solemn procession, bearing banners and being preceded by a cross. They took the places reserved for them. The professors of theology and the abbots also took their places on a platform in front of the city hall.

At eleven a young monk from the order of the Augustinian hermits is brought to the centre of the market. He is robed as a priest, and ascends the steps to the platform, on which there is also an altar. He kneels down. Behind him there stands a Franciscan friar, who faces the people and begins to preach. In the meantime the bishop strips the monk of his priestly attributes. The sermon and secularisation of the monk takes nearly an hour. After he has been deprived of his priest's robes the monk is returned to the city hall. Then two other monks are brought to the altar, and are dealt with similarly. They calmly accept what done to them. The inquisitor tries to have them repudiate their errors, but they refuse. With this, they are handed over to the secular powers. The councillors of warden Margarethe of Parma passed them on to the executioners to execute the death penalty.

Shortly thereafter the two, Henricus Vos and Johannes van den Esschen,<sup>3</sup> are dragged from the city hall and brought to a pyre in the middle of the market square. After they once more refused to recant, the fire is lit. They cry out that they are dying as Christians. While the flames mount they begin singing the *Credo* and the *Te Deum* antiphonally.

The two men who died on the pyre on the Grote Markt in Brussels on July 1, 1523, were the first martyrs of the Reformation.<sup>4</sup> They were suspected of *Lutherije* (Lutheran opinions). How did it happen that in such a short time there was a hot-bed of corruption in the Low Countries?

In 1513 Johannes van Mechelen, the prior of the Augustinian convent in Enkhuizen, sent several of his fellow monks to Antwerp to found a monastery there.<sup>5</sup> The Augustinian convent of Antwerp belonged, just as the mother convent, formally to the Cologne province of the Order of the Augustinian Hermits, but in fact authority was exercised by the vicar-general of the congregation of all observant convents of the four German provinces.

The Augustinian monastery in Wittenberg also belonged to the congregation of observant convents. Representatives of the congregation of observant convents met together every three years. In 1518 this gathering had been in Heidelberg, where Martin Luther had defended his theological views before his fellow Augustinian monks.

From the register of students at the University of Wittenberg it appears that some of the Augustinian convent in Antwerp had studied at this shortly founded university.<sup>6</sup> For Johannes of Staupitz, then vicar-general of the congregation of observant convents, had attached the "studium generale" (the official learned institution) of the congregation to the university of Wittenberg.<sup>7</sup> They attended Martin Luther's lectures among those of other fellow Augustinians. This explains why the Augustinian convent at Antwerp should be seen as a centre of *Lutherije* (Lutheran opinions). Like Luther, the Antwerp Augustinians campaigned against the sale of indulgences.

It is certain that the prior of the Augustinian convent in Antwerp, Jacobus Praepositus, very early came to share the views of his fellow Augustinian, Luther. He publicly espoused Luther's views, and received a response from many residents of Antwerp. He was particularly prominent in the preaching against indulgences at Antwerp. In a letter to Martin Luther, dated May 30, 1519, Erasmus says of Praepositus that he is almost the only one of the order of preachers who does not preach material gain, but Christ.<sup>8</sup> The theologians at Louvain, who November 7, 1519 had been the first to condemn Luther, tried to stem the tide.

On the basis of an edict of May 8, 1521, in which Charles V deemed Luther's views to be heresy and forbade them, at some point prior to April 23, 1522 (the point at which Emperor Charles V officially established the Inquisition in the Low Countries<sup>9</sup>), Praepositus was prosecuted. He was taken into custody and removed to Brussels, where he solemnly abjured his "errors".<sup>10</sup> He was moved to a monastery at Ypres, but

there he once again became suspect of heresy. He was arrested for the second time in July, 1522, but was able to escape and in the spring of 1523 fled to Wittenberg.

The ecclesiastical and secular authorities wished to firmly suppress the heresy in Antwerp. In the early morning of a day in July, 1522, all the monks from the Augustinian convent in Antwerp were seized and carted off in wagons to Vilvoorde, a little town north of Brussels. There they were interrogated by several professors from the University of Louvain. All but three were prepared to recant. These three were imprisoned at Vilvoorde. The others were permitted to return to their monastery, but had to publicly renounce their views. Despite this, the spirit of reform in the Augustinian convent in Antwerp was not extinguished. Some of the monks began to preach the new doctrine in public once again. In September and October, 1522, the whole monastery was cleared. On October 7 the church at the monastery was deconsecrated and the altars levelled. From letters it is clear that Adrian of Utrecht, a theologian of Louvain who by now had become Pope (from early 1522 to his death in the autumn of 1523), ratified the demolition of the monastery.<sup>11</sup>

The martyrdom of the two Augustinians from Antwerp was publicised in several pamphlets.<sup>12</sup> The first was *Der actus vnd handlung der degradation und verprennung der Christlichen dreyen Ritter vnd merterer Augustiner ordens geschehen zu Brussel. Anno M.D.XXIII* (The act of degradation and burning of the three Christian knights and martyrs of the Augustinian Order occurred in Brussels in the year 1523).<sup>13</sup> This pamphlet incorrectly speaks of three martyrs. The fate of the third Augustinian, Lambertus of Thorn, is not entirely certain. In a letter to Spalatinus dated July 22 or 23, 1523, Luther writes with great certainty that the third monk was executed on July 4, but on the same matter Erasmus writes only that he had heard rumours of the execution.<sup>14</sup> On January 19, 1524, Luther however sends Lambert a letter to encourage him. He writes that Lam-

bert does not need his comfort, because Christ suffers in him and strengthens him.<sup>15</sup> Apparently he remained in prison until his death in 1528.<sup>16</sup> A second historically important pamphlet, which was also translated into German, is entitled *Historia de duobus Augustinensibus, ob evangelii doctrinam exustis Bruxellae – M.D.XXIII. Articuli LXII. Per eosdem asserti* (“The history of two Augustinian monks who died because of the evangelical doctrine in Brussels – 1523”).<sup>17</sup> This *Historia* comprises two letters reporting the execution and reproducing the sixty-two theses for which the two Augustinians gave their lives, and finally contains an admonition to anyone who has disavowed his faith out of fear of persecution. The first letter is a report from an eyewitness who must have had close links with Louvain.<sup>18</sup> The second letter shows evidence that the person who sent it – possibly the writer of the first letter – was informed about plans that were being forged in the leading circles in Louvain.<sup>19</sup> The sixty-two doctrinal theses are critical of the measures which have been taken against Luther; they reject the absolute authority of the Church and argue that the Church is restrained by Scripture; they accept only three sacraments, namely baptism, Eucharist and confession; according to them, the Mass is not a sacrifice; they reject transubstantiation; it is not necessary that a believer confess all sins and do penance in order to receive forgiveness from God; all believers, even women, are priests; good works are a consequence, and not a condition, for justification; they deny purgatory and apparently challenge the canonisation of saints; according to them, vows are not binding; and finally, both Augustinians unleash considerable criticism on the clergy.

It is clear from this that both monks must have been serious and well-trained theologians. Erasmus writes of their martyrdom with great admiration. The executioner is asked if they recanted on the scaffold. The answer is negative.

### Martin Luther's response to the martyrdom of Vos and Van den Esschen

The execution of adherents of his views left a deep impression on Martin Luther. That can be seen in several letters and a pamphlet he had published, *Die artickel warumb die zwen Christliche Augustiner münch zu Brussel verprandt sind, sampt eynem sendbrieff an die Christen ym Holland und Brabant* ("The articles for which the two Christian Augustinian monks have been burned in Brussels, together with a Letter to the Christians in Holland and Brabant"). Luther must have learned of the circumstances of their martyrdom toward the end of July, 1523. He was well aware that others had undergone what his enemies wished to see happen to him. At the end of July, 1523, he wrote a letter to the Christians in the Low Countries: "Now the time has come again when we hear the voice of the turtledove and flowers sprout up in our land... We here [in Germany; D.A.] to date have not yet been worthy of becoming so costly and dignified an offering to Christ,<sup>20</sup> although many of us have not been without knowing persecution, and yet know it... Although the opponents of these saints make them out to be followers of Huss, Wycliffe and Luther and glory in their murder, that should not surprise us, but rather strengthen us, because the Cross of Christ must have its malingers. But our Judge is not far: He will pass another judgement, of that we are certain."<sup>21</sup>

That the execution made a deep impression on Luther can also be seen from the fact that it stimulated him to writing songs. The first song, "A new song we raise" (*Ein neues Lied wir heben an*), the title of which is *Eyn new lied von den zween Merterern Christi, zu Brussel von den Sophisten zu Löwen verbrant* ("A new song of the two martyrs of Christ burned in Brussels by the Sophists of Louvain"), is a ballad regarding the execution of the Augustinian monks in Brussels.

Eyn new lied von den zween Merterern Christi, zu Brussel von den Sophisten zu Louen verbrant.<sup>22</sup>

[1] Eyn newes lied wir heben an<sup>23</sup>  
des wald Gott<sup>24</sup>, unser herre,  
zu syngen, was got hat gethan  
zu seinem lob und ehre  
Zu brussel yn dem nidderland;  
wol durch zwen yunge knaben  
Hatt er seyn wunder macht bekant,  
die er mit seynen gaben  
So reichlich hat getzyret.

[2] Der erst recht wol<sup>25</sup> Johannes heyst  
so reych an Gottes hulden<sup>26</sup>  
Seynn bruder Henrich nach dem geyst,<sup>27</sup>  
eyn rechter Christ on schulden,<sup>28</sup>  
Vonn dysser welt gescheyden synd,  
sye hand die kron erworben<sup>29</sup>,  
Recht wie die frumen<sup>30</sup> gottes kind  
fur seyn wort synd gestorben.  
seyn Mertrer synd sye worden.

[3] Der alte feynd sye fangen liess  
erschreckt sye lang mit dreuen.<sup>31</sup>  
Das wort Gotts er sye leucken<sup>32</sup> hiess,  
mit list auch wolt sye teuben.<sup>33</sup>  
Von Löwen der Sophisten<sup>34</sup> viel  
mit yhrer kunst verloren<sup>35</sup>  
Versamlet er zu dysem spiel;  
der geyst sye macht zu thoren.  
Sie kundten nichts gewinnen.

[4] Sye sungen suss, sye sungen saur,<sup>36</sup>  
versuchten manche lyst;en;  
die knaben stunden wie eyn maur,  
verachten die Sophisten.  
Den alten feynd das seer verdross,

das er war überwunden  
Vonn solchen yungen, er so gross;  
er wart vol zorn; von stunden<sup>37</sup>  
gedacht sye zuverbrennen.

[5] Sie raubten yhn<sup>38</sup> das kloster kleyd,  
die weyh sye yhn auch namen.<sup>39</sup>  
Die knaben waren des<sup>40</sup> bereit;  
sie sprachen frölich Amen.  
Sie danckten yhrem vater Got,  
das sye loss solten werden  
des teufels larven spiel<sup>41</sup> und spot,<sup>42</sup>  
daryn durch falsche berden<sup>43</sup>  
die welt er gar betreuget.

[6] Das schickt Got durch seyn gnadt also,  
das sye recht priester worden<sup>44</sup>,  
Sich selbst yhm musten opffern do  
und gehn ym Christen orden,<sup>45</sup>  
Der welt gantz abgestorben seyn,  
die huch[e]ley ablegen,  
Zu hymel komen frey und reyn,  
die muncherey aussfegen  
Und menschen thandt<sup>46</sup> hie lassen.

[7] Man schreib yhn fur ein brieflein kleyn,  
das hies man sye selbst lesen.<sup>47</sup>  
Die stuck sye zeychten alle drein,  
was yhr glaub war gewesen.  
Der hochste[e] yrthumb<sup>48</sup> dyser war:  
Man mus allein got glauben;  
der mensch leugt und treugt ymer dar,  
dem soll man nichts vertrauen.  
Des musten sye verbrennen.

[8] Zwey grosse feur sye zundten an;  
die knaben sie her brachten.  
Es nam gross wunder yderman,



das sye solch peyn verachten.  
Mit freuden sye sych gaben dreyn,  
mit Gottes lob unnd syngen.  
Der muet wart den Sophisten klein  
fur dysen neuen dyngen,<sup>49</sup>  
da sych Gott liess so mercken.

***Der jüngere Liedschluss:***

[9] Der schympff<sup>50</sup> sie nu gereuen hat,  
sie woltens gern schon machen.<sup>51</sup>  
Sie thurn nicht rhumen sich der that;<sup>52</sup>  
sie bergen fast<sup>53</sup> die sachen.  
Die schand ym hertzen beysset sie  
und klagens yhrn genossen.  
Doch kan der geyst nicht schweigen hie:  
des Habels blut vergossen,  
es mus den Kain melden.<sup>54</sup>

[10] Die aschen will nicht lassen ab,  
sie steubt ynn allen landen.  
Die hilft keyn bach, loch, grub noch grab,  
sie macht den feynd zu schanden.  
Die er ym leben durch den mord  
zu schweygen hat gedrunge,  
Die mus er tod an allem ort  
mit aller stym und zungen  
Gar frolich lassen singen

***Der ältere Liedschluss:***

[11] Noch<sup>55</sup> lassen sy yr lügen nicht,  
den grossen mort zu schmucken.<sup>56</sup>  
sie geben fur eyn falsch geticht,<sup>57</sup>  
yhr gewissen thut sye drucken.  
Die heiligen Gotts auch nach dem todt  
von yhn gelestert werden.  
Sie sagen, in der letzten not

die knaben noch auff erden  
sych sollen han umbkeret.<sup>58</sup>

[12] Die lass man liegen ymer hyn,  
sie habens kleinen fromen.<sup>59</sup>  
Wir sollen dancken Got daryn;<sup>60</sup>  
seyn wort yst widderkommen.  
Der Sommer yst hart<sup>61</sup> fur der thur,  
der winter yst vergangen;  
die zarten blumen gehn erfur.  
Der das hat angefangen,  
der wirt es wol volenden.

A new song of the two martyrs of Christ burned in Brussels by  
the Sophists of Louvain<sup>62</sup>

[1] A new song here shall be begun -  
The Lord God help our singing!  
Of what our God himself hath done,  
Praise, honour to him bringing.  
At Brussels in the Netherlands  
By two boys, martyrs youthful  
He showed the wonders of his hands  
Whom he with favour truthful  
So richly hath adorned.

[2] The first right fitly John was named,  
So rich he in God's favour;  
His brother, Henry - one unblamed,  
Whose salt lost not its savour.  
From this world they are gone away,  
The diadem they've gained;  
Honest, like God's good children, they  
For his word life disdained,  
And have become his martyrs.

[3] The old arch-fiend did them immune  
With terrors did enwrap them.

He bade them God's dear Word abjure,  
With cunning he would trap them:  
From Louvain many sophists came,  
In their curst nets to take them,  
By him are gathered to the game:  
The Spirit fools doth make them -  
They could get nothing by it.

[4] Oh! they sang sweet, and they sang sour;  
Oh! they tried every double;  
The boys they stood firm as a tower,  
And mocked the sophists' trouble.  
The ancient foe it filled with hate  
That he was thus defeated  
By two such youngsters - he, so great!  
His wrath grew sevenfold heated,  
He laid his plans to burn them.

[5] Their cloister-garments off they tore,  
Took off their consecrations;  
All this the boys were ready for,  
They said Amen with patience.  
To God their Father they gave thanks  
That they would soon be rescued  
From Satan's scoffs and mumming pranks,  
With which, in falsehood masked,  
The world he so befooleth.

[6] Then gracious God did grant to them  
To pass true priesthood's border,  
And offer up themselves to him,  
And enter Christ's own order,  
Unto the world to die outright,  
With falsehood made a schism,  
And come to heaven all pure and white,  
To monkery be the besom,  
And leave men's toys behind them.

[7] They wrote for them a paper small,  
And made them read it over;  
The parts they showed them therein all  
Which their belief did cover.  
Their greatest fault was saying this:  
“In God we should trust solely;  
For man is always full of lies,  
We should distrust him wholly:”  
So they must burn to ashes.

[8] Two huge great fires they kindled then,  
The boys they carried to them;  
Great wonder seized on every man,  
For with contempt they view them.  
To all with joy they yielded quite,  
With singing and God-praising;  
The sophs had little appetite  
For these new things so dazing.  
Which God was thus revealing.

[9] They now repent the deed of blame,  
Would gladly gloze it over;  
They dare not glory in their shame,  
The facts almost they cover.  
In their hearts gnaweth infamy -  
They to their friends deplore it;  
The Spirit cannot silent be:  
Good Abel's blood out-poured  
Must still besmear Cain's forehead.

[10] Leave off their ashes never will;  
Into all lands they scatter;  
Stream, hole, ditch, grave - nought keeps them still  
With shame the foe they spatter.  
Those whom in life with bloody hand  
He drove to silence triple,  
When dead, he them in every land,  
In tongues of every people,

Must hear go gladly singing.

[11] But yet their lies they will not leave,  
To trim and dress the murther;  
The fable false which out they gave,  
Shows conscience grinds them further.  
God's holy ones, e'en after death,  
They still go on belying;  
They say that with their latest breath,  
The boys, in act of dying,  
Repented and recanted.

[12] Let them lie on for evermore –  
No refuge so is reared;  
For us, we thank our God therefore,  
His word has reappeared.  
Even at the door is summer nigh,  
The winter now is ended,  
The tender flowers come out and spy;  
His hand when once extended  
Withdraws not till he's finished.

This first song by Luther was not a hymn for liturgical use, but a ballad, written in response to the martyrdom of Henricus Vos and Johannes van den Esschen. It is an ode thanking and praising God for the martyrdom of the two monks.<sup>63</sup> The tone of this “new song” is joyful and optimistic. Luther describes the martyrdom of his fellow Augustinians, who were the first to be found worthy of giving their lives for the good cause. The song shows clear parallels with the martyrs' hymns from the first centuries of the Church. Then too it was not the intention of the writers to raise a monument for the martyrs, but to thank God and praise Him for the exemplars of loyalty and resolution that he had given to his Church. What is important for Luther in this ballad is the proclamation of the Gospel of God's grace in Christ Jesus.

Luther was deeply moved by their martyrdom. But rather than lamenting the sacrifice which they had had to make, he considered their faith unto death and martyrdom an honour. He was however angry at the rumours which were very quickly circulated by his enemies, that Henricus and Johannes had at the last moment forsworn their convictions and reconciled themselves with Rome. He wanted to have the martyrdom of these two men known, and the lies of his enemies exposed. Therefore he made use of a mass medium, the one most used in his day to spread important news. In an era without modern means of communication, in a time in which most people could neither read nor write, the popular song was the most frequently occurring form of mass communication. These ballads were printed on individual sheets of paper and sold everywhere. Travelling singers sung them in the markets, along the roadsides, and in pubs. Ballads made their way rapidly from city to city, and were quickly learned by heart.

There are two versions known of the song that Luther wrote in response to this event, namely one with twelve verses and one with ten. The version with twelve verses is found in the *Geystliche gesangbuchleyn*, the Wittenberg songbook of 1524, which was edited by Luther himself. What are the ninth and tenth verses in it are absent from the Erfurt *Enchiridion*, which also appeared in 1524. The printers in Erfurt must have worked from a loose-leaf edition of the song, because the title, with its identification of the event which the song is about and the name of the writer, is not present in the Wittenberg songbook of 1524.<sup>64</sup> Wilhelm Lucke is of the opinion that Luther intended to replace the eleventh and twelfth verses with the ninth and tenth, and that the printer included all four verses in error.<sup>65</sup> But assuming that this supposition is right, it seems strange that none of the later songbooks which appeared under Luther's authority correct this mistake.

Wilhelm Stapel seems to agree in part with Lucke when he writes that the tenth and twelfth verses both appear to be clo-

sing verses.<sup>66</sup> But in that case the tenth verse is the closing to the section on the failure of the plans of the sophists, and the twelfth regarding the lies that they are spreading. Because according to him every two verses in this song are coupled with each other and form one unit of thought, and because the tenth is an answer to the ninth and the twelfth to the eleventh, he believes that it cannot be argued that the ninth and tenth verses were added later. That becomes even clearer when one surveys the structure of the whole. The twelve verses form one entity. The song can be divided into three groups of four verses. The first part deals with the development of the conflict, through the verdict. The second deals with the death sentence and its execution, the third with the consequences. Each of these three larger units is constructed of smaller pairs of two verses each. The first group of the first section (the first and second verses) introduce the two heroes of the song; the second group (the third and fourth verses) describe their interrogation. The first group of the second section (the fifth and sixth verses) tell of the expulsion of the two young monks from the Augustinian order; the second group (the seventh and eighth verses) tell of the written confession of the two excommunicated men, and their condemnation to the stake. The first group of the third section (the ninth and tenth verses) tell of the failure of the attempt to trivialise the events; the second group (the eleventh and twelfth verses) tell of the failure of the attempt to justify the event through false assertions.

In the most recent critical edition of the song, Markus Jenny has placed the subtitles *Der jüngere Liedschluss* (the younger song ending) over the ninth and tenth verses and *Der ältere Liedschluss* (the older song ending) over the eleventh and twelfth.<sup>67</sup> The most serious objection to this is that there are no editions from which the eleventh and twelfth verses are missing, but only an edition with ten verses which is lacking the ninth and tenth verses. A further problem is that Jenny's subtitles suggest that there is a contrast between the content of the

ninth verse and the eleventh. Indeed, in the ninth verse the inquisitors wish to cover up their deed, and in the eleventh it is said that they are spreading lies about the matter, and in particular that they are asserting that the two martyrs ultimately still recanted. However, these two verses do not have to contradict one another per se, because both touch upon the bad conscience of the judges. On the one hand the judges seek to hide the course of events from public knowledge, and on the other they seek to discredit the martyrs and cast themselves in a better light: only when it was too late and the fire was already alight, did the heretics repent. A third objection is that in any case Luther had too good a feeling for language, that it is not probable that he would have abandoned the inclusion of the first and twelfth verses, in which the reader is expressly involved in the praise of God through the use of the first person plural, for a new closing verse which, from the perspective of the poet, would weaken the text.

The form which Luther used for his first song is a verse form of nine lines with the following syllable count: 8,7 / 8,7 / 8,7 / 8,7,7. The lines with eight syllables have masculine or strong rhyme, the lines with seven syllables have feminine or weak end rhyme. Luther leaves the final line of every verse unrhymed.<sup>68</sup>

The song is a ballad, a folk song about a historical event; in a time in which there were no newspapers or such, word of important events went from mouth to mouth in hearsay and song, in the markets and alleys. It is no longer a dance tune in the strict sense, but a song in which news was passed on.

The opening line, "A new song we raise" bears witness to Luther's intention to spread news in a song. But this popular motif is immediately followed by "that the Lord God gives / to sing what our God himself hath done." The news that Luther is telling in the song is a trustworthy report of the events which took place in Brussels. Word of the events had spread quickly by pamphlets. Luther began to "weep in his heart"



when he heard the news. He found that he should have been the first to die a martyr's death for the sake of the Gospel.<sup>69</sup>

Thus the first verse indicates the occasion for the song. It is a song in which “we” thank God for the fact that He has revealed his wonderful power through two young men in Brussels. The two are introduced in the second verse. They have given their lives for the word of God and received a martyr's crown.

The acting subject of the following three verses is the “old Enemy” and the theologians of Louvain (sophists) connected with him. In the third verse the “old Enemy” is brought onto the stage, having the monks taken prisoner, threatening them, and with wiles and deceit trying to get them to repudiate the Word of God. He brings in the “sophists” from Louvain in order to convince them with clever arguments. But the Holy Spirit makes fools of these theologians. They do not succeed in realising their schemes. The fourth verse describes how despite temptations and threats, the young men stand fast in their faith and scorn the theologians. It deeply vexes the “old Enemy” that these young men bested him. From that moment, he conceives the idea of having them burned. The fifth verse describes how they are stripped of their habit and degraded to secular status. The young men accept that. They thank God that they have been freed from the masquerade of the “old Enemy”, to whom the Louvain theologians have lent their services. The “old Enemy” is not further specified, but one may assume that Luther is thinking of the Devil. In the Gospel according to St. Matthew the Devil is identified with the “old Enemy” (Mat. 13:39) and in Luther's writings the Devil is related to terms as trick, hypocrisy, lie and deceit, masquerade, game and trap. In this song most of these words are present.

The sixth and seventh verses are the hinge in the song. The subject of the sixth verse is God, who through his grace makes the degraded priests into real priests, who offer themselves to Him as a sacrifice, and thus belong to the order of true Christi-

ans. Depriving them of their monk's robes and their degradation, as described in the fifth verse, stands against what is said here of the true priesthood and the order of Christians. After their monk's garb and priestly ordination is taken from them they become real priests by the grace of God, just as every true Christian is (the priesthood of all believers), who offer (sacrifice) themselves to God. They despise the world, take no part in its hypocrisy, mop the floor with that which (according to Luther) monkery stands for, namely an orientation to works, seeking justification on the basis of one's own good works and not by God's grace alone. In the seventh verse the martyrs are the subject. It describes how the sophists lay before them a brief declaration which sums up the (Lutheran) opinions for which they would give their lives. Their greatest error is that they teach that men must place their faith in God alone, and that man, after the Fall, is not to be an object of trust, being only able to lie and deceive. For these opinions they are condemned to the stake.

The sentence is executed at the beginning of the eighth verse. The inquisitor and the theologians of Louvain (sophists)<sup>70</sup> supporting him, place the young men on two pyres and ignite them. But this verse is not about them, as it might seem. Rather, the reaction of the spectators is: they experience it as a great wonder that the martyrs give no sign of the pain they must endure. They die while singing praises to God. That God reveals himself thus in these new things, this new manner of living and dying, namely that men can praise God even as they are being persecuted, causes the sophists' hearts to sink to their boots. Thus the acting subject is God, and therefore the sixth, seventh and eighth verses are a coherent whole.

While the inquisitors perform their acts openly in the third, fourth and fifth verses, in the ninth, tenth and eleventh verses the subject is primarily that they try to disguise their deed. The ninth verse tells how they come to regret what they have done and try to put the best gloss on the course of events. They dare

not stand up and take responsibility for their deed, and try to hide it. They are ashamed, and infamy gnaws at their hearts. But the Holy Spirit can not be silenced here: the blood of Abel cries out against Cain. Their deed can not remain hidden because, according to the tenth verse, the ash of the pyres blows to all lands. The enemy will be disgraced; nothing can stop it from happening. Now that they are dead, those who were silenced by murder sing everywhere in joy. Yet, we read in the eleventh verse, the theologians from Louvain cannot cease from trying to put the best face on their murder. They spread the false rumour that at the last moment the young men repudiated their views. That they slander God's saints even after their death oppresses their conscience.

The final verse begins by observing that we should ignore what has been described in the ninth, tenth and eleventh verses, as it has been of no advantage to the inquisitors. "We" must praise God for this tragic event, because through it God's word will be heard again. The closing of the song is, at first encounter, very surprising: "Summer stands before the door, / winter now is ended, / the tender flowers now appear. / That which is once begun / shall never be abandoned." The execution of the martyrs of Brussels was on July 1, 1523; "summer stands before the door". It was the eve of the feast of the Visitation of Mary, July 2. Luther, who grew up with the saints' calendar, from his years in the monastery was familiar with the liturgy for that feast. The first nocturne of the matins for the Visitation of Mary includes the reading from the Song of Songs: "For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land" (2:11-12).<sup>71</sup> Here we have the same theme that we discovered in *Eyn brieff an de Christen ym Nidderland* ("A Letter to the Christians in the Netherlands"). The circle is complete.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> There are many editions of Luther's hymns. The most recent one is *Luthers geistliche Lieder und Kirchengesänge*. Vollständige Neuedition in Ergänzung zu Band 35 der Weimarer Ausgabe bearbeitet von M. Jenny, Köln, 1985. (=Archiv zur Weimarer Ausgabe der Werke Martin Luthers. Band 4). Henceforth references are made to this edition as follows: AWA, Bd. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Besides the Augustinian Hermits the other three other mendicant orders are the Franciscan, the Dominican and the Carmelitan friars.

<sup>3</sup> The precise spelling of their last names can no longer be determined. In the report by Johannes Pascha, the prior of the Carmel at Mechlin, who was present at the execution as an inquisitor, one of the two martyrs was named Henricus Vos, who according to these notes seems to have come from 's-Hertogenbosch, and the other Johannes van den Esschen. P. Fredericq, *Corpus documentorum inquisitionis haereticae pravitatis Neerlandicae*, 's-Gravenhage, 1900. Deel IV, nr. 145. In the *Chronycke van Antwerpen* (see 19) it is reported that both came from 's-Hertogenbosch. Cf. here the note with P. Fredericq, *Corpus documentorum*, Deel IV, nr. 138. Elsewhere in the *Chronycke van Antwerpen* (see 22) it is said that one came from "de Kempen" and the other from Zeeland. P. Fredericq, *Corpus documentorum*, Deel IV, nr. 139. Combining this information points in the direction of 's-Hertogenbosch and its vicinity as the place from which Vos and Van den Esschen came. In that case, we must think of Zeeland not as the province, but the village with that name in the east of the province of North Brabant, in the neighbourhood of Uden. Cf. also L. J. A. van de Laar, "De opkomst van de reformatie in 's-Hertogenbosch c. 1525-1565", in *Archief voor de geschiedenis van de katholieke kerk in Nederland* 20 (1978), 115.

<sup>4</sup> For the following, see M. Gielis, "Érasme, Latomus et le martyre de deux augustins luthériens à Bruxelles en 1523", in J. Sperna Weiland and W. Th. M. Frijhoff (ed.), *Erasmus of Rotterdam. The Man and the Scholar*. Proceedings of the symposium held at the Erasmus University, Rotterdam, 9-11 November 1986. Leiden, 1988, 61-68; M. Gielis, "Augustijnergeloof en predikerengeloof. Het conflict tussen de reformatorische verkondiging van de Antwerpse augustijnen en de scholastieke leer van de Leuvense theologen (ca. 1520)", in *Jaarboek van de Provinciale Commissie voor Geschiedenis en Volkskunde*, Deel VI, 1996, 198-205; also published in *Lutherbulletin, Tijdschrift voor interconfessioneel Lutheronderzoek* 6 (1997), 46-57. See also J. Decavele, *De eerste protestanten in de Lage Landen. Geloof en heldenmoed*, Zwolle, 2004, 41-52. On martyrdom in Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in general see B. S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake. Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1999 (= Harvard Historical Studies 134).

<sup>5</sup> For the following, see Th. Kolde, *Die deutsche Augustiner-Congregation und Johann von Staupitz. Ein Beitrag zur Ordens- und Reformationgeschichte*, Go-

tha, 1879, 260-262; A. de Meyer, “Adriaan Florisz. van Utrecht in zijn contacten met de augustijnen”, in *Archief voor de geschiedenis van de katholieke kerk in Nederland* 2 (1960), 7-10; 60-62. Johannes de Essendia (Johannes van den Esschen) was also among the first seven monks who founded the Augustinian convent in Antwerp in 1513. See here H. Q. Janssen, *Jacobus Praepositus, Luthers leerling en vriend, geschetst in zijn lijden en strijden voor de hervormingszaak in Nederland en in Duitschland*, Amsterdam, 1866, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Johannes van Mechelen himself took the doctor’s degree in Wittenberg September 16, 1511. That he has attended Martin Luther’s lectures, is not likely. In 1516 Johannes consigned two monks from the Antwerp monastery, Nicolaus and Hadrianus, to study in Wittenberg. In 1517 again three monks were sent to Wittenberg, Johannes Aumann, Christophorus Blackhoffen and Johannes Umaus. In 1520 Cornelius Bester was sent. Jacobus Praepositus and Henricus of Zutphen were also “alumni” (graduate ex-students) of the Wittenberg “studium generale”. Cf. here J. Vercruysse, “Was haben die Sachsen und die Flamen gemeinsam?” in P. Freybe (ed.), *Wittenberg als Bildungszentrum 1502-2002. Lernen und Leben auf Luthers Grund und Boden*, Wittenberg, 2002, 9-32; here 12-13.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. here D. Gutierrez, *Geschichte des Augustinerordens*. Bd. 2. Die Augustiner vom Beginn der Reformation bis zur katholischen Restauration 1518-1648, Rome, 1975, 18-23.

<sup>8</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *Opus Epistolarum denuo recognitum et auctum per P. S. Allen*, Oxford, 1906-1958, Vol. III, nr. 980, 54-57.

<sup>9</sup> The warrant from Emperor Charles V empowering Frans van der Hulst as inquisitor for the duchy of Brabant and all his Dutch territories is found in P. Fredericq, *Corpus documentorum*, Deel IV, nr. 72 and 73. The bull of Pope Adrian VI in which he elevates Van der Hulst to the office of general papal inquisitor in the Low Lands of Emperor Charles V is dated June 1, 1523. See P. Fredericq, *Corpus documentorum*, Deel IV, nr. 136. Van der Hulst, who was a Councilor of Brabant, was a layman. The Pope grants him powers equal to those of episcopal and papal inquisitors on the condition that he take action against suspect members of the clerical estate only in consultation with two men of the Church, who are invested with ecclesiastical office or are doctors of theology (so-called sophists). He must refrain from pronouncing spiritual punishments, and for the degradation of heretical clergy from the clerical estate he must call on the aid of one bishop or two abbots or other holders of high church office.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. here the open letter from Jacobus Praepositus, in which he expatiates on what happened to him. P. Fredericq, *Corpus documentorum*, Deel IV, nr. 116. The text of his renunciation is to be found in P. Fredericq, *Corpus documentorum*, Deel IV, nr. 65, and contains thirty theses derived from the thought of Luther which are abjured.

<sup>11</sup> Luther had suspected the influence of Pope Adrian VI, at the least. He accuses the Pope of having canonised the medieval bishop Benno, while having burned the true saints Johannes and Henricus at Brussels. Martin Luther, *Wider den neuen Abgott und alten Teufel der zu Meissen soll erhoben werden*, 1524, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Weimar 1883, (WA) Bd. 15, 184, 33-35; see also 14-21.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Bernd Moeller, "Inquisition und Martyrium in Flugschriften der frühen Reformation in Deutschland", in *Ketzerverfolgung im 16. und frühen 17. Jahrhundert*, hrsg. von S. Seidel Menchi, Wiesbaden, 1992, 21-48.

<sup>13</sup> The text has been published in F. Pijper in *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, Deel VIII, 's-Gravenhage, 1911, 13-19.

<sup>14</sup> *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, Briefwechsel (WABr), Bd. 3, Nr. 635, 12-13. In a letter to Zwingli dated August 31, 1523, Erasmus writes that the rumour has reached him that the third Augustinian was also executed on the day after the Visitation of Mary (i.e., July 3, 1523). Desiderius Erasmus, *Opus Epistolarum*. Allen, Vol. V, nr. 1384, 2-7.

<sup>15</sup> *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, WABr, Bd. 3, Nr. 707.

<sup>16</sup> This assumption rests on a note dated September 15, 1528, in P. Fredericq, *Corpus documentorum*, Part V, nr. 371, in which a payment to the executioner of Brussels is described as being for digging a grave under the gallows on the Flotzenbergh for "Lambert the Augustinian, who died persisting in *Lutherije* [Lutheran opinions] without confession". The same account describes a payment to a carter for conveying the corpse there. Lambertus thus did not die on the scaffold. That Erasmus, in his letter to Carolus Utenhovius dated July 1, 1529, says that he "was killed in secret" might indicate that the rumour had reached him that Lambertus of Thorn had recently been killed in prison.

<sup>17</sup> Published by F. Pijper in: *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, Deel VIII, 33-54; the German translation is entitled: *Dye histori, so zwen Augustiner Ordens gemartert seyn tzu Bruxel. Dye Artickel darumb sie verbrent seyn mit yrer auszlegung vnd verklerung* [1523], in *op. cit.*, 65-114.

<sup>18</sup> The eyewitness speaks of "M.[agistri] N.[ostri] Lovanienses" (our Louvain masters). *Historia de duobus Augustinensibus*, in *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, Deel VIII, 35.

<sup>19</sup> *Historia de duobus Augustinensibus*, in *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, Deel VIII, 38.

<sup>20</sup> We encounter this thought already in a sermon by Luther given on March 24, 1523.

<sup>21</sup> Martin Luther, *Eyn brieff an die Christen ym Nidderland*, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, WA, Bd. 12, 77-80.

<sup>22</sup> The text is reproduced here as it was published by Markus Jenny, M. Jenny, *Luthers geistliche Lieder und Kirchengesänge*, AWA Bd. 4, 215-222.

<sup>23</sup> “Eyn newes lied wir heben an”: this line is often the beginning of popular songs in which events are being narrated to the people.

<sup>24</sup> “des wald Gott”: that God gives.

<sup>25</sup> “recht wol”: rightly.

<sup>26</sup> “Der erst recht wohl Johannes heyst,/ so reych an Gottes hulden”: the word “huld” is a term for the relation between a liege lord and a vassal. Seen from the perspective of the lord it means “favour” or “grace”; from the side of the vassal, “allegiance”. Luther is here playing with the name Johannes, because Johannes means “God is gracious”.

<sup>27</sup> “nach dem geyst” belongs with “seynn bruder”. One should read: Henricus, his brother in the spirit.

<sup>28</sup> “on schulden”: without sins, perfect.

<sup>29</sup> “sy hand die kron erworben”: they have won the crown of life; see Rev. 2:10.

<sup>30</sup> “frumen”: pious; for Luther, pious often means justified.

<sup>31</sup> “dreuen”: threaten.

<sup>32</sup> “leucken”: disavow.

<sup>33</sup> “teuben”: benumb, soothe to sleep.

<sup>34</sup> “Sophisten”: sophists, a derisory term for Scholastic theologians, who with the aid of their rhetorical tricks discuss all sorts of unimportant things.

<sup>35</sup> “mit yhrer kunst verloren”: with their useless rhetorical art.

<sup>36</sup> “Sye sungen suss, sye sungen saur”: they entice sweetly and they threaten.

<sup>37</sup> “von stunden”: from that moment.

<sup>38</sup> “yhn”: read “ihnen”.

<sup>39</sup> “die weyh sye yhn auch namen”: they degrade them to the status of laymen. That was customary in the burning of heretics who had received ordination as priests.

<sup>40</sup> “des”: for that.

<sup>41</sup> “larven spiel”: hiding themselves behind all sorts of masks; deceit.

<sup>42</sup> “spot”: contempt (from God).

<sup>43</sup> “falsche berden”: mendacious conduct.

<sup>44</sup> “recht priester worden”: the church has robbed them of their priestly rank; now they become priests as God intends; they offer themselves up to God.

<sup>45</sup> “Christen orden”: the community of true Christians. Here the “order of Christ” is clearly being opposed to the monastic order; because they have been cast away by the church they are now members of the true order.

<sup>46</sup> “menschen thandt”: fiddling around on the part of men. What is undoubtedly intended is the view rejected by Luther that by the performance of good works one can earn God’s grace.

<sup>47</sup> “Man schreib yhn fur ein brieflein kleyn,/ das hies man sye selbst lesen”: A short declaration was drawn up for them and read aloud to them. In it

were all the points in which they believed (i.e., the Lutheran views that they confessed).

<sup>48</sup> “yrthumb”: error, heresy. The heresy of which they were accused was that they believed in God alone and thought that man was radically lost in sin.

<sup>49</sup> “fur dysen neuen dyngen”: the new thing is that men can praise and glorify God even when they are being persecuted and suffering pain, that they can rejoice in the midst of suffering.

<sup>50</sup> “schympf”: joke, game.

<sup>51</sup> “schon machen”: undo.

<sup>52</sup> “Sie thurn nicht rhumen sich der that”: they dare not admit what they have done.

<sup>53</sup> “bergen fast”: bury deeply, keep very secret.

<sup>54</sup> “des Habels blut vergossen, / es mus den Kain melden”: the martyrs are compared with the justified Abel. The blood of Abel is an indictment against Cain.

<sup>55</sup> “Noch”: still, yet.

<sup>56</sup> “schmucken”: put the best construction on something.

<sup>57</sup> “falsch geticht”: fiction, lie. Refers to the rumour reported at the end of the verse, which was later spread by their torturers, that the two martyrs abjured their views with their last breath.

<sup>58</sup> “sych sollen han umbkeret”: they turned from their false ways; what is meant is that they recanted their views.

<sup>59</sup> “Die lass man liegen ymer hyn, / sie habens kleinen fromen”: nevertheless, let it be; they have had little advantage from it.

<sup>60</sup> “Wir sollen dancken Got daryn”: we must thank God in and because of this in itself tragic event.

<sup>61</sup> “hart”: almost.

<sup>62</sup> The standard English translation is quoted from *Luthers Works*, Vol. 53, Liturgy and Hymns. Philadelphia, 1965, 214-216. It is not a literal translation.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. here Luther, in a letter to Jakob Montanus dated July 26, 1523, *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, WABr, Bd. 3, Nr. 637, 9-11.

<sup>64</sup> See here R.W. Brednich, *Die Liedpublizistik im Flugblatt des 15. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, Baden-Baden, 1974, Band I, Abhandlung, 86-87.

<sup>65</sup> W. Lucke, *Die Lieder Luthers herausgegeben und eingeleitet*, Weimar, 1923, WA 35, 10-11; 94. In most cases, for his edition of Luther's songs in WA 35, Lucke follows the text as it is found in the *Geystliche gesangbuchleyn* (Wittenberg 1524). For the text of our song however he proceeds from the text of the Erfurt *Enchiridion* (1524). This lacks the ninth and tenth verses, according to the count of Markus Jenny in AWA. These two verses follow immediately, and are taken from the *Geystliche gesangbuchleyn* (Wittenberg



1524). O. Schlißke, *Handbuch der Lutherlieder*, Göttingen, 1948, 111-124, follows Lucke in this.

<sup>66</sup> For the following see W. Stapel, *Luthers Lieder und Gedichte*. Mit Einleitung und Erläuterungen, Stuttgart, 1950, 197-203.

<sup>67</sup> M. Jenny, *Luthers geistliche Lieder und Kirchengesänge*, AWA, Bd. 4.

<sup>68</sup> For the following see also T. H. M. Akerboom, “‘Nun frewt euch lieben Christen gmeyn’. Een spiegel van Luthers theologie”, in *Voor de achtste dag. Het Oude Testament in de eredienst*. Een bundel opstellen voor prof. Dr. J. P. Boendermaker ter gelegenheid van zijn 65<sup>e</sup> verjaardag onder redactie van K. van der Horst, D. Monshouwer en G. H. Westra. Kampen, 1990, 239-250.

<sup>69</sup> See Martin Luther, *Ausgewählte Werke*, Hg. von H. H. Borchert und G. Merz. 3. Aufl., München, 1950, Bd. 3, 378. (Erläuterungen bei “Sendbrief an die Christen im Niederland”).

<sup>70</sup> See note 9 for their presence and note 34 for the term.

<sup>71</sup> The same text is read as epistle in the Mass for the feast of the Visitation of Mary.



# A Summary of the Main Images of Jesus

GHEORGHE DOBRIN

*Emanuel University of Oradea*

The doctrine of the Person of Christ, or Christology, is one of the most important concerns of Christian theology. The various aspects of the Person of Christ are best seen by reviewing the titles that are applied to Him in the Bible.

## Jesus as the Lamb of God

The phrase “Lamb of God” is found in the NT only in the Gospel of John. There are two occurrences, the first in John 1:29 where John the Baptist is reported as saying of Jesus: “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” and the second in John 1:36 where the first half of the saying is repeated. “Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!” (1:29). These words of John the Baptist have caused scholars such problems as to prompt a deluge of countless thousands of words in an endeavour to define what John the Baptist or John the Evangelist meant by this sentence. On examination it is genuinely difficult to define exactly what was in the mind of the Baptist or of the Evangelist in speaking or penning these words.

The difficulties focus essentially on two aspects of the sentence, the actual expression “Lamb of God”, and the significance of “takes away the sin of the world”. Many of the commentators consulted deal with three or four possible sources for the expression “Lamb of God” but D. A. Carson<sup>1</sup> lists

ten possibilities and Leon Morris<sup>2</sup> suggests nine. We will discuss the suggestions of Carson and Morris.

***The Passover Lamb (or Paschal Lamb)***

There are some problems with it. For the Passover the animal used was not always a lamb. Indeed, the word used for the victim in the New Testament Greek is not *amnoj* but *pasca*.<sup>3</sup> Some would argue also that the Passover was not an expiatory sacrifice. While this is strictly true, Morris<sup>4</sup> will not accept its validity. He claims that all sacrifice was held to be expiatory, and specifically, the Passover was sometimes viewed in this way. Certainly, it is not difficult to equate the death of Christ with the efficacy of the blood of the Passover victim in protecting us from God's wrath.

***The Apocalyptic Lamb***

This concept is particularly shown in the Lamb of Revelation Chapter 5. This lamb is not a meek and mild lamb but the forceful conqueror, the Lamb with seven horns who has the right to open the scroll. Beasley-Murray expresses the view that "taking the relevant evidence into account, we conclude that there is little doubt as to what figure is in mind: the Baptist has in view the Lamb who leads the flock of God, and who delivers them from their foes and rules them in the kingdom of God".<sup>5</sup> The concept of the Apocalyptic lamb fits well the meaning of "remove" of the Greek word *airo*. It also sits easily with the tone of preaching of John the Baptist who clearly saw the Messiah coming to sweep aside God's enemies. Taken in the context of the Lamb who was slain but who would be victorious and remove the sin of the world, this idea has considerable attraction.

***The Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53)***

Some scholars believe that the Greek of John may have been translated from Aramaic and that the Aramaic *talya* is ambigu-

ous, meaning either lamb or servant/child. However, it is not easy to believe that so well known an expression as “the Servant of the Lord” should be unrecognized and should be translated by so difficult and unusual a phrase as “the Lamb of God”. F. F. Bruce describes the argument of misunderstanding the ambiguous Aramaic as “precarious”.<sup>6</sup> R. E. Brown suggests that there is no evidence in the synoptic gospels of John the Baptist having any such concept as the Suffering Servant. However, the Evangelist did have. A quote from the fourth Servant Song is employed elsewhere in John (12:38). Isaiah 53:7 describes the Servant: “He opened not the mouth, like a sheep that is led to the slaughter and like a lamb (amnoj) before its sharers”,<sup>7</sup> cf. Acts 8:32.

#### ***The Lamb Sacrificed Daily***

The lamb sacrificed daily morning and evening in the Temple. This is a picture, which would be very well known to the Baptist’s audience. As such it sits comfortably with the concept of sacrifice. However, there is no evidence that this daily sacrifice was ever called “the Lamb of God”.

#### ***The Lamb Supplied by God to Be Sacrificed in Place of Isaac (Gen. 22:8)***

This sacrifice was supplied by God and took Isaac’s place. However, there is no suggestion that it was to remove sin or, as Morris puts it “foreshadow the far-reaching atonement of which the Baptist speaks”.<sup>8</sup> At the same time we should not underestimate the position that the deliverance which Isaac experienced by the substitution of the ram had in the Jewish mind. It is hard to believe that John’s words would not have triggered some thought of this in his listeners.

#### ***The Scapegoat***

This is a very tempting suggestion. It fits perfectly with the idea of “taking away the sin of the world”. Nevertheless, it is

difficult to get past the undoubted fact that the animal in question was a goat, which symbolically carried away the sins of the people.

***The Lamb Led to Slaughter (Isaiah 53:7)***

This is of course close to the idea of the Suffering Servant in the same chapter. Again, to the Jewish mind trained in the Old Testament it is difficult to see how the connection would not be made on hearing the Words “Lamb of God”.

***The Gentle Lamb (Jeremiah 11 & 19)***

This is a difficult idea on which to comment. The concept of “lamb” is not developed in Jeremiah and here is no suggestion of it taking away sins.

***The Lamb as Guilt Offering***

References to this are found in Leviticus 14:12ff and Numbers 6:12. Morris objects that “neither a guilt-offering nor a sin-offering was characteristically a lamb. Since the victim was so often another animal (e.g., a ram), the allusion would be almost impossible to detect”.<sup>9</sup> However, it is surely difficult to comprehend that the Jewish mind would not connect the idea of lamb with guilt offering or sin offering when a lamb was certainly sometimes used for these and the connection would be indicated by the statement “takes away the sin of the world”.

***Lamb of God Means Little More Than Son of God***

The final suggestion of which little mention is made is found in D. A. Carson. It is hard to understand why such a difficult expression as Lamb of God would be substituted for the straightforward Son of God.

Among modern scholars one finds that some discuss the issues but state no preference e.g. Barclay. Others press for a particular interpretation, e.g. Barrett<sup>10</sup> (the Paschal Lamb),

Beasley-Murray<sup>11</sup> (the Apocalyptic Lamb) or Brown<sup>12</sup> (a combination of Suffering Servant and Paschal Lamb). With so many suggestions and with no consensus it is difficult to find certainly. One point perhaps should be clarified. Various commentators impose strict limits on what John the Baptist might have understood. We do well to remember the regard in which Jesus held John and clear understanding that he is classed as a prophet. However, while we can set aside a couple of the proposals, namely the Gentle Lamb of Jeremiah, and the suggestion that the expression simply equates with the Son of God where it is hard to see why an equation should be made, all of other suggestions have merit. Some of them have very forceful arguments to support them. All of them have points in their favour. The suggestion of the Apocalyptic Lamb and the Passover Lamb are powerful. There is no reason why both should not have been in the mind of the Evangelist. Steeped, as the Evangelist, the Baptist and the listeners would have been in Jewish teaching and tradition, it is easy to accept that their minds would have appreciated all the other ideas, which have been suggested. It seems to me that here can be two main thrusts – the concept of the conquering apocalyptic lamb and the paschal lamb with all the weight of sacrificial, expiatory thought behind it. While the details of many of these ideas may be difficult and open to some objection, it is essential to be flexible in our thinking to equate with the thought processes of those for whom this statement was pronounced. Without doubt their grasp of the background of daily sacrificial lambs, the scapegoat, the lamb substituted for Isaac, the guilt offering, the Suffering Servant and the lamb led to the slaughter, the Passover lamb would have enriched their understanding. It may therefore be better to see richness here in the concept, rather than a severe limitation of the truth to one theological idea.

### **Jesus as the Son of Man**

Though the title “Son of Man” is more prominent in the Synoptic Gospels than in the Gospel of John, the title does occur in several important passages in the Fourth Gospel (1:51; 3:13-14; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23, 34; 13:31). In a number of these instances the expression “Son of Man” is equivalent to the pronouns “I” or “me” when spoken by Jesus (e.g., 8:28 or 6:53 and 9:35). This is the same usage found in the Synoptic Gospels. Other occurrences of the phrase (1:51; 3:13-14; 6:62) are more indirect and might be understood as referring to someone other than Jesus except for the context. The Son of Man<sup>13</sup> concept in John is associated with revelation, crucifixion and eschatological authority.

### ***Revelation***

One of the most important aspects of the “Son of Man” theme found in John’s gospel is an emphasis on the descent and ascent of the Son of Man, which implies both preexistence and exaltation. Examples of this are in John 1:51; 3:13 and 6:62. In 1:51 Jesus spoke of angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man (rather than the ascent and descent of the Son of Man). Most interpreters agree that this is an allusion to Jacob’s ladder, which was “resting on the earth, with the top reaching to heaven, and angels of God... ascending and descending on it” (Genesis 28:12). In John 1:51 Jesus alluded to this incident in Jacob’s life, drawing a parallel between himself and Jacob as recipients of God’s revelation. Jesus thereby assured the disciples that they would receive divine confirmation that he really is the Messiah sent from God. No longer is Bethel the place of God revelation, as it was for Jacob. Now Jesus Himself is the “place” of God’s revelation,<sup>14</sup> just as later in John’s Gospel Jesus replaced the temple in Jerusalem (2:19-22) and Mount Gerizim in Samaria (4:20-24).

Jesus explained to Nicodemus, “No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of



Man” (3:13). The following verse speaks of Jesus’ return to heaven through crucifixion, resurrection and exaltation (“the Son of Man must be lifted up”, v. 14). This represents a further unfolding of the theme introduced in 1:51. Again the themes of divine revelation (to Nicodemus, but also to “everyone who believes”, 3:14) and Jesus forthcoming suffering, death, and exaltation are connected with the title “Son of Man”.

Jesus also spoke of His return to heaven: “What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before!” (6:62). Here the preexistence of Jesus is explicitly stated, consistent with the presentation of the preexistent Logos in the prologue (1:1-14). The concept of descent and ascent connected with the title “Son of Man” is central to John’s understanding of who Jesus is – the connecting link between earth and heaven (cf. 3:16). It is reflected in John’s presentation of the Incarnation (“the Word became flesh”, 1:14). It reflects Jesus’ own consciousness of having come from God and his returning to God (13:3). It is even possible to understand the entire Fourth Gospel as structured around the theme of Jesus’ descent (1:19-12:50) and ascent (13:1-21:23), with the turning point being the arrival of Jesus “hour” (12:20-36).

### ***Crucifixion/Glorification***

Related to the emphasis on descent and ascent connected with the Son of Man sayings in the Gospel are statements concerning the glorification of the Son of Man (12:31; 13:31). This glorification began on earth, but continues in eternity. It is John’s unique way of describing Jesus’ suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension with their ultimate consequences. The hour of Jesus’ glorification is the hour of His crucifixion, because for John the glory of the Cross has eclipsed its shame and humiliation. John’s concept of Jesus’ glory extends however beyond the Son of Man sayings.

Along the same lines are statements relating to the lifting up the Son of Man (3:14; 8:28; 12:32-34). It is clear that the “lifting

up” for John refers to Jesus’ crucifixion, because 12:33 explains, “He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die”. This also follows from the comparison with Moses lifting up the serpent (3:14) and Jesus’ statement to His Jewish opponents that they would lift up the Son of Man (8:28). More than Jesus’ crucifixion alone is in view, however, as 12:31 suggests. The glorification of the Son of Man involves not only His crucifixion but also His resurrection, ascension, and exaltation to “where he was before” (6:62).

### ***Judgment***

Other passages in the Gospel of John demonstrate the authority of the Son of Man. He has authority to give eternal life (3:14-15; 6:27) and to exercise judgment (5:25-27), a prerogative of God which indicates that the Son of Man is presented as not merely human, but divine.

### **Jesus as the Son of God**

The Johannine writings include considerable emphasis on the title “Son of God”. John 20:31 explicitly states that the purpose of the gospel is “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name”. In addition to the use of the title itself, there are numerous times when Jesus is called “the Son” without further qualification. In fact Jesus speaks of God as Father 106 times, and the usage is not restricted to any period of his ministry, or to any group of hearers. He also speaks of “My Father” 24 times, “Son of God” 29 times. The concept of sonship when applied to Jesus thus becomes one of the dominant themes of the Gospel of John.

For John, Jesus is the Son of God in a unique sense. Unlike Paul, John never uses the Greek word υἱός (“son”) to describe believers in their relationship to God. Instead, believers are referred to as “children of God” in both John’s gospel and his epistles τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ, John 1:12; 11:52; 1 John 3:1-2, 10; 5:2).

The phrase *tekna tou/ qeou* is reserved by John as a description of Jesus in his unique relationship to the Father. This is emphasized in John 3:16, 18 where Jesus is described as God's "one and only Son". Through the entire Gospel of John the uniqueness of Jesus' relationship to the Father is maintained.

### ***Sent into the World***

John emphasized that Jesus as the Son of God has been sent into the world by the Father. This is clearly stated in John 3:17 ("For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him") and is repeated in many other references. In one of those references Jesus commissioned His disciples, telling them, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you". The mission on which Jesus was sent from the Father was there-by transferred to the disciples, who were to continue it.

### ***Sent by the Father***

Just as Jesus spoke of being sent by the Father, he also spoke of his return to the Father. On the eve of Jesus' passion, John mentioned that Jesus knew it was time for him to leave this world and go to the Father (13:1). Many references to Jesus' departure from this world and return to the Father occur in his Farewell Discourse (chaps. 14-17). He promised that the disciples would perform miracles that would exceed his own because he was returning to the Father (14:12). He expected his disciples to rejoice over this return (14:28), and mentioned his return to the Father in connection with sending of the Spirit (16:10) and the completion of his earthly mission (16:28). After his resurrection Jesus announced to Mary, "I have not yet ascended to the Father" (20:17).

### ***Dependent on the Father***

Jesus as Son of God is always portrayed by John as dependent on the Father. This is clear from John 5:19: "The Son can do no-

thing by himself, he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does". The same dependence is emphasized in 5:30; 14:31 and 15:10. Related to this theme are statements that reflect the absolute unity of the Son and the Father (10:30; 14:11, 20; 17:11).

### ***Revealer of the Father***

As Son of God, Jesus is the revealer of the Father. This is first mentioned in the closing verse of the Prologue to John's gospel: "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known" (1:18). Like many of the other themes found in the Prologue, Jesus' role as revealer of the Father is reiterated throughout the Fourth Gospel. Jesus is said to be the only one who has ever seen the Father (6:46). When asked by the Pharisees, "Where is your Father?" Jesus replied, "If you knew me, you would know my Father also" (8:19). A similar reply is made to Philip's request, "Show us the Father" (14:8-9). Jesus answered, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father". Just as he is the revealer of the Father, in the preceding context Jesus affirms that he is the only way to the Father (14:6). Along the same lines Jesus also reveals the Father's words: "everything that I learned from the Father I have made known to you" (15:15). Jesus does not speak on his own authority; he speaks what the Father has commanded him (12:49). To his disciples Jesus added, "These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me" (14:24).

### ***Object of the Father's Love***

As Son of God, Jesus is the object of the Father's love. The Father's love for the Son leads him to place everything in Jesus' hands (3:35). The Father loves the Son and shows him everything he does (5:20). Jesus stated that the Father loves him because he was willingly laying down his life only to take it up

again (10:17). The loving relationship between the Father and the Son extends beyond the bounds of time and eternity. Jesus prayed that the disciples might see the glory given to him by the Father because the Father loved him before the creation of the world, that is, in eternity past (17:24). The relationship of love between the Father and Son also becomes the pattern for Father's love for the believers (17:23) and the believers' love each other (13:34-35).

### ***The Same Works of the Father***

Jesus' works are the same divine works of the Father. John is also determined to show that not only does Christ claim that he is the Son of God, but that others also bear witness and testimony to this (John the Baptist 1:34; Nathaniel 1:49; Martha 11:27). There are also recorded the incidents where his opponents were bringing a charge of blasphemy against him since he claimed equality with God as his Father (10:36). In this case, Jesus appeals to his works as evidence of his sonship (10:37).

### **Käsemann's Docetic Christ**

While John lays great stress on Christ as the Son of God, he also shows Jesus' human nature as well. He was as man in that he was tired and thirsty (4:6-7) and wept (11:35). It is at this point that claims have been made that the Gospel of John is docetic in character. The main proponent of this view was E. Käsemann. He claimed that the Fourth Gospel portrayed Jesus as more than human and was in fact docetic.

Docetism was a heresy, which claimed that Jesus only appeared to be a man. He only took on the form and therefore was not truly man in reality. For Käsemann, the community of John must have been somewhat isolated since it had deviated from the tradition in the rest of the New Testament. Its location was close to Palestine, probably Syria and the Gospel addressed to that community, as it existed at the end of the first century.

Käseman's book<sup>15</sup> was an analysis of John 17, which he saw as the basis and guide to the gospel. He saw "glorification" as the key word in ch. 17. Christ glory has been manifested, but it is also a future glory. This tension - matched by the tension between realized and futurist eschatology - is part of the NT tradition. John however, developed this tradition independently. "While Paul and the Synoptics also know the majesty of the earthly Jesus, in John the glory of Jesus determines his whole presentation so thoroughly from the very outset that the incorporation and position of the passion narrative becomes problematical... His solution was to press the features of Christ's victory upon the passion story".<sup>16</sup>

Käsemann acknowledged that in the Prologue it stated the Word became flesh, but maintains, "In what sense is he flesh who walks on water and through closed doors, who cannot be captured by the enemies, who at the well of Samaria is tired and desires to drink, yet has no need of drink and has food different from that which his disciples seek? He cannot be deceived by men, because he knows their innermost thoughts even before they speak".<sup>17</sup> He argues, "Does the statement 'The Word became flesh' really mean more than that he descended unto the world of man and there came into contact with earthly existence so that an encounter with him becomes possible? Is not this statement totally overshadowed by the confession we beheld his glory?"<sup>18</sup>

Käsemann did not deny that there are elements of lowliness in John's presentation of Christ but these represent "the absolute minimum of the costume designed for the one who dwelt for a little while among men, appearing as one of them, yet without himself being subjected to earthly conditions".<sup>19</sup> Ultimately, the Johannine Christ does not really change himself, but only his places. The world is for him only a point of transit and humiliation simply means being in exile. In his death, he returns victoriously "from the alien realm below to the Father who had sent him".<sup>20</sup>

The significance of the passion, for Käsemann, was not found in the bringing of life, for this has already come at the incarnation. In Christ's coming the end of the world has not merely come near, but is present and remains present continually. The key to the passion he found in *verb upagein* (to go away). The passion includes the idea of exaltation/glorification as Christ goes away from the world to his father. "Jesus' passion must be described as a triumphal procession in John instead of a *via dolorosa*. Lowliness in John is the nature of the situation of the earthly realm which Jesus entered. In entering it he himself is not being humbled. He retains the glory and majesty of the son until the cross. There once more he judges his judges as he always has done before".<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, Käsemann concluded that John understands the incarnation as a projection of the glory of Jesus' pre-existence and the passion as a return to the glory, which was his before the world, began. The Christological implications of all this are interpreted by Käsemann in the following way. "One can hardly fail to recognize the danger of his Christology of glory namely, the danger of docetism. It is present in a still naive, unreflected form and has not yet been recognized by the evangelist or his community".<sup>22</sup>

Käsemann's interpretation of Johannine theology has not been widely accepted. First, there is no evidence that the Johannine community was isolated from other Christian communities. If the community existed in Ephesus this would be impossible. The reason for such isolation, for Käsemann, is the deviant nature of its theology. Most scholars do view John's theology as distinctive, but this is not the same as saying it is deviant or heretical. R. E. Brown states, "I think that Käsemann has mistakenly gone beyond the evidence in judging (naive docetism) to be the Christology of the gospel itself, and he is anachronistic in applying the term docetism to the gospel".<sup>23</sup>

Is John 17 indeed “a summary of the Johannine discourses”? This is surely open to serious criticism both from those who regard John as a reliable record of Jesus’ ministry and teaching and those who argue that the gospel is the product of the community leaders and teachers compiled over a period of time in different editions. J. D. G. Dunn<sup>24</sup> claims that the Fourth Gospel is consciously anti-docetic. He sees 1:14 as the key statement. That the disciples beheld his glory is the key for John, but also the key is that “the Word became flesh”. In John, Dunn maintains “flesh” signifies human nature in absolute contrast and antithesis to God (1:13; 3:6; 6:63; 8:15). John 1:14, is a clear assertion of the historicity and reality of the Incarnation. Schnackenburg also affirms that “the Word became flesh” can only be understood as protest against all other religions of redemption in Hellenism and Gnosticism.<sup>25</sup>

We may conclude that John portrays Jesus in a twofold light without reflection or speculation. He is equal to God; he is indeed God in flesh; yet he is fully human. John provides some of the most important biblical materials for the later doctrine of the dual nature of Jesus, but John is not interested in such speculation. He reports a sound memory of the impact Jesus made without indulging in speculative questions.<sup>26</sup>

### Jesus as the Logos

The idea of Jesus as the Logos of God, which is to be the main focus of this thesis, is one of the most distinctive features of John’s Christology. It is unique to John and, within John, to the Prologue. In concentrating upon this concept it is useful to note that John uses the Greek word *logos* in four ways. First, it is a word spoken by one person to another (4:39). Second, *logos* has a theological usage where the *logoi* of Jesus impart health and life (4:50; 5:24) or are equal to the authority of Scripture (2:22; 8:9, 32). In Jesus the law is actualized. What the law is after is in Jesus and in his words, which He speaks. Third, the word stands for the sum total of Jesus teaching to be pro-



claimed by the church and believed and obeyed by those who hear it (8:31; 14:21, 24; 17:20). John does not use the term “gospel”. We find the term “truth” which means in the Gospel the eternal truth revealed by God to men, which may equally be expressed, in the Scripture or in the *logoi* of Jesus (18:37). Fourth, John applies the concept to the Christ four times and all in the Prologue (1:1 three times and once in 1:14). As *logoj*, Jesus is the Revealer of God (1:14, 18). He reveals life (v. 4), light (v. 5), grace, truth, glory (v. 14) and God (v. 18). It will become clear that all of these themes are important throughout John. Thus though John does not use the *logos* terminology, the *logos* theology is implicit throughout the Gospel. It will be demonstrated that this is a significant title of Christ as the fulfilment of Jewish hopes and as a pointer to his divinity.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 149.

<sup>2</sup> L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 127-129.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 22:7; See L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 144.

<sup>4</sup> L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 145.

<sup>5</sup> G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 1987, 24.

<sup>6</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 52.

<sup>7</sup> R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 60.

<sup>8</sup> L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 129.

<sup>9</sup> L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 129.

<sup>10</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Lamb of God*, NTS 1, 1954-55, 210-18.

<sup>11</sup> Beasley-Murray, *John*, 24-25.

<sup>12</sup> R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, 58-63.

<sup>13</sup> The Son of Man in John is thus not only a mediator in that he is the redeemer of men, but is also a mediator in an ontological sense, since he is related both to God and to men. See C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 61.

<sup>14</sup> The idea of mediation involves a further relation of Jesus Christ to men: he is a revealer. See C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 61.

<sup>15</sup> E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17* (London: SPCK, 1968).

<sup>16</sup> E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 7.

<sup>17</sup> E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 9.

<sup>18</sup> E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 9.

- <sup>19</sup> E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 10.  
<sup>20</sup> E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 10.  
<sup>21</sup> E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 18.  
<sup>22</sup> E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 26.  
<sup>23</sup> R. E. Brown, *Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist), 1979, 116.  
<sup>24</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM), 242-43.  
<sup>25</sup> R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John* (Burns & Oates, 1968-82), 268.  
<sup>26</sup> G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 1974), 289.

# **“When Heaven is Shut Up”. Ancient Near Eastern Backgrounds to the Concept of Natural Calamity**

AURELIAN BOTICA

*Emanuel University of Oradea*

## **Introduction**

In the following study we will attempt to survey a series of texts from the Bible and other Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) documents, in order to understand how the authors explained the occurrence of natural catastrophes (with a greater emphasis on non-biblical literature). In the first part of this study I will examine texts representative of Egyptian, Canaanite and Babylonian literature. We know that Baal (among others) was the Storm-God of Ugarit, and that he was in charge of crops, cattle, and even human fertility. We also know that the Egyptians viewed the Nile as being divine. In Egyptian reliefs, the planting and reaping of grain often found their symbolic representation in the form of the death, burial, and resurrection of Osiris. The connection between religion and agriculture was a well established fact in the ANE world. In the following pages we want to emphasize some of the specific ways in which the ancient people understood and expressed this belief in the last part we will analyze some of the more representative biblical texts on this theme. Our approach is to analyze each text in its own context, although we will also compare them with the non-biblical texts whenever possible. It is hoped that in this

way one will get a better understanding of the similarities and differences between the two world-views.

### Natural Calamities in Non-Biblical Literature

After reviewing a significant number of texts it has become apparent that the nature of *crisis* in the ancient world was multi-dimensional, and that the factors of *time*, *place*, *religion*, and *culture* often influenced the way in which people reacted to it. In fact, even within the boundaries of a specific religion people understood and reacted to a given crisis in different ways. In a sense, then, by arranging the data according to different categories we are not abusing, but rather doing justice to nature of the texts themselves.<sup>1</sup>

### *Egyptian Literature*

#### *Human Actions at the Root of the Crisis*

In the *Prophecies of Neferti* (court of king Amenemhet, 1990-1960 BC) we find an example of how a given royal administration explained the calamities which befell Egypt prior to that administration's rise to power.<sup>2</sup> The prophecy refers to war, civil unrest, economical problems, and – related to our topic – agriculture. Thus:

The sun is covered and does not shine for the people to see,... The river of Egypt is empty. One can cross the water on foot... its course has become a riverbank... Southwind will combat northwind, so that the sky will lack the single wind (no. 25-29)... Re separates himself (from) mankind (no. 48).

Finally, the author announces the salvation of Egypt in the form of “the Redeemer King,” obviously the king under whose auspices the prophecy was written. He will unite the “Two Mighty Ones, He will appease the Two Lords with what they desire.”<sup>3</sup> Although the prophecy lacks in specific details we are told that *human agency* is to blame for this disastrous situation. We can still surmise that the cause for it was a combination of

political, economical, and religious mistakes on the part of the former administration. What is worth noticing here is the fact that human behaviour can influence the divine world, which in turn will affect both society and the natural world.<sup>4</sup>

A second Egyptian prophecy comes from the time of the Middle Kingdom (2300-2050 BC). Thus, the oracle resembles in theme the first prophecy. A certain Ipu-wer “appeared at the palace and reported to the pharaoh the anarchy in the land.”<sup>5</sup>

Why really, women are dried up, and none can conceive. Khnum cannot fashion (mortals) because of the state of the land (ii, 2)... Why really, grain has perished on every side... Why really, magic is exposed. Go-spells and enfold-spells are made ineffectual because they are repeated by (ordinary) people (iii, 1).

The prophecy contains mostly descriptions of the turmoil that affects all life in Egypt. Again, *human behaviour* is the cause of this tragedy, which affected not only the political and religious spheres of life, but also nature itself. For the first time we encounter references to human infertility. Ironically, Khnum, “the potter god” who shaped children on his wheel, is himself a victim caught in this tragedy.<sup>6</sup>

#### ***Dealing with Unknown Causes***

The Famine Stela is an Egyptian inscription which deals with a seven-year long famine.<sup>7</sup> King Neterkhet was in mourning because Hapy, the deified Nile, “has failed to come in time, in a period of seven years.” At the king’s request, a priest inquires from “the sacred books kept in the temple’s ‘House of Life’” (belonging to Re), and reveals to the king the ritual he must perform in order to find the answer. After the ritual he falls asleep and the god Khun appears to him:

I am Khnum, your maker!... The shrine I dwell in has two lips; when I open up the well, I know Hapy hugs the field, a hug that fills each nose with life... I shall make Hapy gush for you... Plants

will grow weighed down by their fruit (19-21)... I woke up with speeding heart... In return for what you have done for me, I offer you... (23).

We do not know whether this was a well known ritual following a season of drought or just the recording of an isolated situation. But unlike the texts read above, here the reason for the drought is not revealed. The only information revealed to the reader is that the god Khnum had control over the Nile and that, following a proper ritual and an offering and dedication on behalf of Khnum, the god granted the request of the king.<sup>8</sup>

***The Crisis as “Disappearance of the God”***

“The most popular god of ancient Egypt was Osiris.”<sup>9</sup> As it was the case with other Egyptian deities, Osiris too was “identified with various forms of vegetation (trees and corn), with the field, with the overflowing Nile, and with the moon.”<sup>10</sup> What is relevant to our topic here is the notion of the *disappearance of the God*. Since the elements described above “have the idea of rebirth in common,” the myth of Osiris’ death and resurrection was intrinsically connected with the agricultural life in Egypt. Egyptian reliefs show corn sprouting out from the dead Osiris.<sup>11</sup> The Pyramid Texts show “that he was killed by Set at Netit, a village or district near Abydos.”<sup>12</sup> The texts witness the annual reenactment of this drama, which culminated with the resurrection of Osiris. Osiris’ death was also recorded on reliefs in the form of threshing barley in the field, while his burial was represented by “sowing the fields at the ceremony of ‘hacking the field’.”<sup>13</sup> We can assume that the rituals, mourning, and the other acts meant to insure his resurrection were largely symbolical. At the same time, their popularity among the people, as well as Osiris’ connection with the Nile and the crops, indicate that these were held to be effective means of dealing with “crisis” situations.

***Mesopotamian, Ugaritic, and Akkadian Literature***  
***Human Cause: Wrong Ritual, Neglect of Gods, and Other Sins***

In the *Plague Prayers of Mursili II*, we encounter a crisis that was very common in ANE, namely, the plagues.<sup>14</sup> In his “ritual” prayer, Mursili says: “O Storm god of Hatti... what is this that you have done? You have allowed a plague into Hatti (C i 1-18)” The texts continue with a list of favors the king did the Gods, yet with no visible effect on the plague. Finally, “it was ascertained through an oracle that the cause of the anger of the Storm-God of Hatti, my lord, was the fact that (although) the *damnassara*-deities (guarantors of the oath?) were in the temple... the Hittites on their own suddenly transgressed the word of the oath” (C iii 3-7). Essentially, the displeasure of the God was caused by an intentional breaking of an oath inside the divine temple.<sup>15</sup>

The drought could also be explained as the consequence of human neglect of the gods. In *The Exaltation of Innana* (Sumerian, dynasty of Sargon) the author portrays Innana as a terrifying warrior-God and the guardian of the dynasty. Although not directly responsible for vegetation, Innana can still control the well-being of the crops. But the regions where Innana was not worshipped should rather expect devastation. Hallo believes this may be an indirect allusion to what may happen to the regions still unconquered by Sargon. Nevertheless, “the mountain where homage is withheld from you vegetation is accursed. Its grand entrance you have reduced to ashes. Blood rises in its rivers for you, its people have nothing to drink.”<sup>16</sup> Neglecting to worship a god, or worshipping the wrong deity can affect the natural and thus the human realm.

Both Egyptian and Akkadian literature contain prophecies which announce the coming in the future of redeemer dynasty that will restore order. In this Akkadian text “a ruler will arise, he will rule for... years... the regular offerings for the Igigi-Gods which had ceased he will re-establish... the vegetation of

the winter will last through the summer... the offspring of domestic animals [will thrive.]<sup>17</sup> The document makes references to several dynasties. The evil dynasty neglected the gods and brought destruction upon the land. The future one will restore the offerings and the temples, and thus the entire land will prosper, including the crops and the cattle.

***The Disappearance of God: Divine Causation of Crisis***

In the Hittite world-view, “calamity manifested in some sector of the cosmos was an indication that the god or goddess responsible for it had become angry or had abandoned his or her post.”<sup>18</sup> In the *Wrath of Telipinu*, the storm-god became angry and “went off and took away grain, the fertility of the herds, growth(?), plenty(?), and satiety into the wilderness... Barley and wheat no longer grow. Cows, sheep, and humans no longer conceive” (A i 10-15). The human practitioner (of this ritual) burns a purificatory substance “over Telipinu on this side and that” in order to remove “his displeasure.” After an incantation urging Telipinu to “let go of anger” is recited, “Telipinu came back home and concerned himself for his land.” Finally, “the altars were reconciled with the Gods” and Telipinu restores the land, along with animal and human procreation.

A second Hittite text which dating from the period of the Hittite Old Kingdom depicts the chaos that “ensued for man and livestock” after the Storm-god left the land.<sup>19</sup> As he is met by “nine lesser gods” they inform him that “in the fallow land the [...] of things/words is/are weak.” Once he returns “his supremacy is proclaimed and sacrificial animals are assembled for a celebration.” We do not know whether texts such as this were used as a response to a “crisis” situation or were read annually at a particular festival. What remains certain is the fact that, at least in official literature, natural calamities were thought to originate in the divine realm. The corollary to this is the fact that the divine realm could be influenced by the human realm, by means of magic, prayer, sacrifice, and the like.



In the *Ba'lu Myth* we find again the idea of disappearance and return of the God.<sup>20</sup> Ilu, the head of the Ugaritic pantheon, allows Ba'lu to challenge and to defeat Yammu. This is followed by a second confrontation between Ba'lu and Motu where Ba'lu dies and, after a time in the underworld, returns to life. After Ba'lu dies Ilu descends from the throne and cries aloud: "Ba'lu is dead, what (is to become of) the people, the son of Dagan (is dead), what (is to become) of the hordes (of the earth)?<sup>21</sup> He also sends Anatu to Sapsu, the luminary of the Gods, to inform him that "dried up are the furrows of the fields, O Sapsu,... Ba'lu is neglecting the furrows of the plowland" (iii 22). Finally, in a dream Ilu understands that Ba'lu revived; thus "and if Mighty [Ba'lu] is alive, if... the lord of [the earth] exists (again)... the heavens will rain down oil, the wadis will run with honey" (iii 1-21).<sup>22</sup>

In the *Kirta Epic*, agricultural fertility has waned because of Kirta's illness (he was the son of Ilu, a semi-divine prince).<sup>23</sup> Titmanatu, the daughter of Kirta, says: "The ploughmen lifted (their) heads, on high those who work the grain, (For) bread was depleted [from] their bins, the wine was depleted from their skins, the oil was depleted from [their jars]."<sup>24</sup> Finally, we witness a similar theme in the *Aqatu Legend*.<sup>25</sup> Here, the man Dani'ilu intercedes before the gods and brings offerings in order to obtain a son. His son Aqatu enters a conflict with the goddess Anatu over a bow which belonged to Dani'ilu. As Aqatu dies at the hands of Anatu, "Dani'ilu the man of Rapa'u uttered a spell upon the clouds in the heat of the season, upon the rain that the clouds pour down on the summer fruits, upon the dew that falls on the grapes." Following this, "seven years Ba'lu failed, eight years he who rides upon the clouds: no dew, no showers, no upsurging of water from the deeps, no goodly voice of Ba'lu." (i 38-40).

Divine mistakes too can cause drought. In the Akkadian epic *Enmerkar and the Lobe of Aratae*, the lord of Arrata (a mountain city in the far East) challenges Enmerkar, the king of Uruk,

in order to bring him to submission. The goddess Innana brought a drought “on the land of Arrata” as a means of helping her husband Enmerkar.<sup>26</sup> As Arrata was parched by the drought Ishkur (Inanna’s brother) inadvertently saw it “fit to come by.” As the storm-god, Ishkur brought rains with him “and on Aratta’s parched flanks, in the midst of the mountains, wheat was sprouting of itself, and vines also were sprouting of themselves. The reason for the drought is again human misbehaviour in the form of a king mistreating the protégé of the goddess Innana (who had brought the drought in the first place). What seems more unusual here is the reason for the coming of the rain, namely, a mistake on the part of the Storm-god Ishkur. Nevertheless, the idea that human behaviour is partially responsible for the drought remains consistent with the accounts we have reviewed above.

***Preventing or Resolving the Crisis***

Numerous texts which refer to a given crisis prescribe solutions for dealing either with the present or with any other future crisis. In the *Ritual and Prayer to Ishtar of Niniveh*, the diviner performs a ritual in order to bring back the goddess into the temple. The text mentions singers, instruments and diviners in the context of performing the ritual. The diviner calls on Ishtar to return to the land of Hatti, which “again has been damaged”. Thus, “come away from these countries. For the king, the queen (and) the princes bring life, health, strength... and to the land of Hatti growth of crops, vines, cattle, sheep (and) humans.”<sup>27</sup> The text ends with a description of the ritual (among others, involving water, fire, bread, and oil) by which the diviner hopes to ensure the return of the goddess.

***Human illness*** was another incident that required the use of ritual. As part of the process of healing the “Great King,” the diviner inquires from the god whether somehow he or she “has been provoked [in connection with the illness of His Majesty]”.<sup>28</sup> The oracle contains a series of questions addressed to

the deity, in which the diviner suggests possible reasons that may have caused the displeasure of the god (one of which was the queen himself, but never the king!).<sup>29</sup> After each suggestion, the diviner performs a ritual concluded by the expression "if you, O God, are angry about this, let the extispicy be unfavourable... Unfavourable."

Diviners were used in Hatti for the prevention of future calamities as well. In a text which comes from the latter part of the Hittite Empire period the female diviner/exorcist anticipates certain possible calamities and seeks to prevent them by using the formula "Unfavourable!"<sup>30</sup> She always appeals for help to the Gods, sometimes invoking the protection of the city Gods against foreign Gods. One can enumerate among the "problems" anticipated here road accidents, epidemics among the troops, sickness, and, closer to our topic, bad weather (winter) and a plague which could affect the land of Hattusa. Similar concerns were expressed in Assyrian literature as well. In *Assurbanipal's Coronation Hymn*, the god Shamash is asked to bestow upon the king "rains from heaven and floods from the underground" and "years of abundance... and health and well-being."<sup>31</sup> In the *Hymn for Shamash*, the king tells the God: "Beneath you [kneel] the exorcists, to avert omens of evil, the diviners stand at attention before you." Another Akkadian composition describes a "righteous sufferer" who called to his god but "he did not answer," or to his goddess but "she did not raise her head."<sup>32</sup> His water-courses were blocked with mud and people "chased the harvest song from my field." Not even the exorcist and the diviner were able to help his situation. Finally, the prayers and rituals seemed to have worked and the poem ends on a positive note. In the mind of the sufferer, "who but Marduk revived him as was dying?... Marduk can restore to life from the grave."

### Natural Calamities in the Old Testament

The Old Testament makes reference to numerous situations which reveal the human incapacity to procreate, or famine, drought, and other calamities. We will arrange these references in two groups: one involving human infertility, and the second involving natural calamities of the land, i.e., drought and famine.

### *Human Infertility in the Old Testament*

The impossibility of having children was a formidable threat in the ancient world. Since children were essential to the survival of the family “as early as age five or six, both boys and girls might be assigned tasks of fuel gatherings, caring for younger children, picking up and watering garden vegetables, and assisting in food preparation.”<sup>33</sup> Children would also carry the family name and property into the future and ensure the survival of the larger social units like the village, the tribe, and the like. There are several examples that describe the anguish of mothers who were not able to have children. These are:

~hf'ba; tvaehrf rbD>l [; %lmybia] tybd. ~xr<l K d[B. hwhy>rc;[ rcq[-yK(

Gen 20:18

For indeed the Lord had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelec, because of Sarah, the wife of Abraham.

`hrq[] l xrw>Hmxr:ta, xTpVtr hale haWhf:-yK( hwhy>arVtr

Gen 29:31

When the Lord saw that Leah was hated He opened her womb. But Rachel was barren.

[dVtr htmrh ~tyBeIa, VabVtr VbvVtr hwhy>ynp.li Vwx]T,VVtr rqBb; VmKiV: hwhy>hrKzVtr ATvai hlx:ta, hqIa, wyT[] aiv. hwhymeyKi l aWmv. Amv:ta, arq.Ttr !Bf-dl,Ttr hlx; rh:Ttr ~ymVh; tAp qdt.li yhjtr

1 Sam 1:19-20

They rose early and worshipped before the Lord. Then they returned and went to their home at Ramah. There Elcanah knew Hanah, his wife, and the Lord remembered her. It happened that in due time Hanah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, for she [said]: "I requested him from the Lord."

All these events are organized around the themes of "bareness" and "miraculous birth" through the intervention of God. Out of the three narratives, only the story of Abraham and king Abimelech makes a moral claim to the rationale of the crisis. Observe, however, that king Abimelech took Sarah in his harem without knowing that she was Abraham's wife. According to Middle Assyrian laws, if the man "was not aware that she was married, he would be acquitted" of the crime of adultery.<sup>34</sup> But in Genesis his guilt is assumed from the fact that his wives were made barren by God.<sup>35</sup> So the theme of *bareness* is used here more as an object lesson for Abraham and perhaps for Abimelech, rather than as a proclamation of God as the controller of human fertility. Nevertheless, it is the Lord who has ultimate power of the human womb. The truth still remains that, unlike the world-view of ANE religions, according to the vision of the Old Testament *healing* is the divine prerogative of God and it requires no magic rituals. It is true that, in part, the solution comes in the form of human prayer. Yet it was at the urging of God that Abraham prayed. What is also unique here is that Abraham appealed to no ritual magic and the process did involve the steps usually taken by an exorcist.

The last two accounts make the same assumptions. Both Leah and Hannah are portrayed as innocent women who were mocked by their female rivals, but still remembered by God.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, however, both stories make an important theological claim: God will make sure that the lineage of his people Israel will continue in spite of the threat of infertility.

The universal theme that links all these specific events is the providential unfolding of the promise of God to bless the entire world through Abraham and his offspring. Both Leah and Hannah are the mothers of men who will play an important role in the future of Israel. Prima facie, the stories do not necessarily function as polemic attacks against the Canaanite fertility cults. Yet one cannot miss the striking differences that separate the two world-views. For the sake of our present purpose, we may conclude that unlike the other ANE accounts surveyed so far, the Bible solves the problem of infertility by simply appealing to the agency of divine promise and human prayer.<sup>37</sup> The cause of bareness is almost never mentioned. The moral dimension too, i.e., bareness as a result of sin or improper religious ritual, is either absent or different from the other ANE stories. God is not involved in any conflict that may cause his death and then his resurrection (as a means of ensuring human fertility of his worshippers). God faces no rival divinity and is not subject to the power of human magic. The motivation behind His response to open the wombs is born out of grace, no because of the constraints of magic or other rituals.

### *Natural Calamities and the Land*

Among other, the following texts refer to the role of God in causing or solving the problem of drought:

hwhy>ynP:-ta, dwd vQbyx hnv yr&pa; hnv ~ynlv vlv dwd ymBi b[r yhiw  
 ~ynl[bGh;-ta, tymhervaf-l [-ymDh; tyBel aww-l wav-la, hwhy>rmaVt  
 2 Sam 21:1

Now there was famine in the days of David for three years,  
 year after year. Then David sought the face of the Lord. The  
 Lord told him, "There is blood guild on Saul and his house  
 because of the death of the Gabaonites.

hZk; ~AqMh;-la, Wl lP(th)l Waj xy>yKi rjm hykyl-al (p>-ymv rcl[hB.

˘~M[ti: yKi !WbWjy>~taJxmW ^m,v:ta, WdAhw>  
1 Kgs 8:35

When the heaven will be shut up and there won't be any rain,  
because they have sinned against You, if they pray at this  
place and make confession to your Name and turn away from  
their sin, when you afflict them.

rvæ] l ærfli yhd æ/ hwhj>yx; baxa; l a, d[ l Gi ybwTmi yBiv.Th; WhYl æ rmaYt  
˘yrbd>ypil :-ai yKi rj m W j; Hl æh ~ymV/h; hYkYi~ai ymPl. yTidm[  
1 Kgs 17:1

Then Elijah the Tishbite, one of the inhabitants of Gilead, said  
to Ahab, “As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, before whom I  
stand, there shall be neither dew, nor rain these years, except  
by my word.”

%l ermæ le tyvj l Mh; hnVB; WhYl æ l a, hyh hwhj>rbdW ~yBir: ~ymij yhjw  
hmdah ynP:l [: rj m hnTaj>bxa;l a, hæche  
1 Kgs 18:1

After many days the Word of the Lord came to Elijah, on the  
third year, saying, “God, appear before Ahab, and I shall send  
rain to the face of the earth.”

vbq>brxy<rhm>~Vhmé ~ym:Wt Vnt> 1 Kgs 19:5

And the waters of the sea shall be dried out and the river will  
dry out and be parched.<sup>38</sup>

˘~l Khi Tname%l hyh hnAz hVai xcmW hyh aAl vAql mW ~ybbir>W[nM/Yk: Jer 3:3

The showers have been withheld and the spring rain has not  
come. But you have the forehead of a whore; you refuse to be  
ashamed.

Probably the text that is most important for our purposes here is 1 Ki 17:18. GOD commands Elijah to announce to king Ahab that no rain shall fall for the following three years. Although no cause is immediately given for this event, the reader can assume that Ahab and Jezebel's Baal religious deviance set them up against God. In this sense we can draw a parallel between this and other ANE accounts where inappropriate religious worship led to natural calamities. Here, however, God does not leave the land, as was the case with *The Storm God at Lih-zina*, or *The Ritual Prayer to Ishtar*. The God who is believed to have left the land is Baal. That is why Elijah urges them to "Cry aloud, for he is a God; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or perhaps he sleeps and must be awakened" (1 Ki 18:27).<sup>39</sup> It is possible that the author may have alluded to Baal's journey to the underworld when he referred to the "journey" or at "his sleeping."<sup>40</sup> But in contrast to the ANE texts reviewed above, the biblical author does not portray the drought as a result of Baal's absence. While Baal's absence is invoked here as a means of mockery, the real cause of the drought is God's judgment against Ahab and Jezebeel, which culminates here with the killing of Ahab's prophets.

The rest of the texts share a similar theme, namely, drought as a result of Israel or Egypt's sin. Isaiah's reference to Egypt is reminiscent of the *Famine Stela* we have analyzed above. In a subtle way, Isaiah pronounces an oracle of judgment on Egypt (and indirectly on the pro-Egypt party within the Israelite court of the eighth century) and attacks the truthfulness of Egyptian religion.<sup>41</sup> God, not Hapy, or Osiris, or Aten, controls all natural elements of which Nile is just an insignificant part. Nevertheless, the text assumes a moral/ethical cause for the natural catastrophe in Egypt, in the fact that Egypt mistreated the people of God. The same logic guides the arguments presented by 1 Ki 8:35 and Jer 3:2-3. The blood-guilt acquired by Saul's murder of the Gibeonites and the harlotry of Israel are the real causes of the drought. True, the droughts are brought



about by God, but the human agency of Saul and Israel is responsible for God’s withdrawing the rain. Again, we can draw a parallel between these and the texts listed above under the subtitle “Human Actions” (no. 1). The idea of divine displeasure is equally present in both contexts. David, just like the diviners who sought the causes of the drought on behalf of the king, approaches God and inquires about the drought as well. We are not told how exactly he received the message, but we know that the Lord finally reverses the course of nature after David is willing to bring justice to the Gibeonites.<sup>42</sup> Jeremiah 3, however, is different, in the sense that it does not describe a current event, but a future calamity that cannot be averted. The cause of drought here is *harlotry*; one can also recall the image of a “prostitute waiting by the roadside” in Genesis 38:14-16.<sup>43</sup> This image has reminiscences from the book of Hosea. The prophet called Israel a harlot who prostituted herself for wool, oil, bread, and wine. Since she believed Baal was the source of these staples God will “destroy her vines and her fig trees” (Hos 2:10-14). Jeremiah too announces to Judah that God will withhold the rain, one of the attributes possessed by the same Baal. The Scripture argues that the universe is guided by moral laws because it was created and held into existence by a moral God. The natural phenomena obey their Creator. He has no rivals and cannot be affected by human magic, spells and other ritual manipulation.

### Conclusion

Most of the texts that we have surveyed here refer to the disappearance of rain, and as a consequence to the dearth of grain, wine, oil, and the like. Many of them present different solutions for resolving the “narrative” crisis. We can even suggest that some of the texts were read at agricultural festivals, possibly in order that the gods will ensure an abundant crop in the months to come. Their underlying assumption was that “the operation of the universe required that each deity and hu-

man conscientiously perform his or her proper function within the whole.”<sup>44</sup> In our case, the proper “operation of the universe” was reflected in the regularity of the seasons and the fertility of the herds. Once the calamity happened the explanations could take diverse forms: worshipping the wrong gods, improper rituals, disregarding the needs of the gods, negligence of political and economic affairs, conflict among the gods or between humans and gods, displeasure of the gods, the impotence of the gods, or just mystery (see the theme of the “righteous sufferer”).

In contrast, the Scripture explains calamities as the result of the neglect or breaking of the covenant between Israel and God. The notion of neglect could take various forms. Jeremiah and Hosea presented it under the image of *adultery*. 2 Samuel referred to the killing of the Gibeonites, while Isaiah condemned Egypt for her *unjust treatment* of Israel. The ANE texts that we have analyzed above understand natural calamities in one of two ways: either as consequences of divine displeasure, or the result of a conflict among the gods.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, in the Scripture natural (or human) calamities may appear as a *mystery* through which God will be glorified (as in the case of Hannah and Leah’s barrenness), or they could be explained as God’s displeasure with the people. The Bible thus makes a claim that other ANE texts were unable to understand: whenever involved in a natural calamity, God is never the victim. This does not mean that ancient Israelites never thought of God as confronting and shaming their neighbours’ gods. Rather, in their mind God was above all other deities. In fact, as Isaiah and Jeremiah stated so forcefully, the gods and the idols of the nations are worthless, unreal, and will perish along with those who crafted and worshipped them (Isa 41:29; 44:9-19; Jer 10). God is also above such natural elements as rain, waters, storms, and the like. Nature never threatened God. The Scripture always draws a clear line of distinction between the natural and the divine realms, a distinction which appears rather

blurred in the texts of the ANE literature. In an idolatrous religion, magic gives a person a sense of power, especially when used to control or affect the divine involvement in the world. Contrary to many claims, idolatry is not a more eloquent form of religion, but rather its degradation and the result of demonic activity in the world (Deut 32:17, “They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded.”) The Scripture prohibits magic and ritual spells not because they threaten God. Rather, when the people of God use them, they accept the false world-view of idolatry and implicitly deny the unique claims that God has upon the people He created and redeemed.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For example, Egyptian texts from the time of Ramesses III describe Hapy (the Nile) as, on the one hand, being divine and as taking a course of action independent from other divinities, while on the other hand they portray Aten or Ptah as masters over nature, including the Nile itself. Naturally, the modern reader will find this contradictory. But in the ANE, people understood the divine world as a complex phenomenon, just as their experience of the natural world was complex. This is why presenting the religious views of ANE people as a logical and unified system will fail to do justice to their true nature.

<sup>2</sup> See Nili Shupak’s introduction of the “Prophecies of Neferti,” *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 1 of *Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, W. Hallo ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 106.

<sup>3</sup> “The two Mighty Ones are the two Goddesses, the vulture Goddess Nekhebet of Upper Egypt and the cobra Goddess Wadjet of Lower Egypt who preside over the double crown. These Goddesses, like the Two Lords Horus and Seth, symbolize the unified Kingdom;” see *Context of Scripture*, 109 (footnotes).

<sup>4</sup> One should not draw a clear line of distinction between the divine and the natural realms, since both the sun and the Nile – here represented as the affected natural elements – were conceived of as divine. Regarding the responsibility of the court to gather enough supplies for times of famine see the Joseph story in Genesis. For evidence outside the Bible see Piere Montet’s *Everyday Life in Egypt in the Days of Ramesses the Great* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 74.

<sup>5</sup> John A. Wilson, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, third ed. with supplement, J. B. Pritchard ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 1974), 441.

<sup>6</sup> Another text which depicts a similar situation is *A Hymn to the Nile* (Theban composition, 1350-1100 BC). If the Nile “is sluggish, then nostrils are stopped up, and everybody is poor. If there be a cutting down in the food offering of the Gods, then a million men perish among the mortals.” Although the focus of this text is different from the previous one, we can still find here the concept that human neglect (here of the sacrifices for the Gods) can lead to divine displeasure, which in turn will affect all human life. See J. Wilson, *ANET*, 372.

<sup>7</sup> Although scholars date this Ptolemy V, many believe the original account may go back as far as the Third Dynasty (2800 BC). See M. Lichstein, in Hallo, *Context of Scripture*, 130ff.

<sup>8</sup> In other Egyptian texts it is Aten, rather than Khnum, who controls the Nile. Thus in *The Great Hymn to Aten*: “You [Aten] made Hapy in the Duat (netherworld), You bring him when you will, to nourish the people;” see Hallo, *Context of Scripture*, 45.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel A. B. Mercer, *The Religion of Ancient Egypt* (London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1949), 97.

<sup>10</sup> M. Heerma Van Voss, *OSIRIS, Dictionary of Demons and Deities in the Bible*, sec. rev. ed., Karel Van der Toorn et al eds. (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> Mercer, *Religion*, fig. 22, 109. Mercer shows that Osiris “was often represented with face and hands colored green”, a symbol of his connection with vegetation (103).

<sup>12</sup> E. A. Wallis Budge, *From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt* (London: Oxford, 1934), 273. For a description of the festival of Sokaris, where Osiris’ death and resurrection was celebrated, see C. J. Bleeker, *Egyptian Festivals. Enactments of Religious Renewal* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 71.

<sup>13</sup> *Osiris in Dictionary of Demons and Deities*. Mercer, *Religion of Ancient Egypt*, 103, also shows that people made effigies of him, “in the form of a mummy, which they buried... in a field to insure a good crop.”

<sup>14</sup> This text comes from the end of the Hittite empire. Although plagues are different from famines, I have chosen texts such as these because they fall in the larger category of “crisis,” and thus reflect the ways people dealt with abnormal events.

<sup>15</sup> For other texts which express similar ideas see: *Ritual and Prayer to Ishtar* (Hallo, *Context of Scripture* 164), *Hittite Oracle Reports* (*Ibid.*, 205), *Ritual Against Pestilence* (*ANET*, 347), and the *Poem of the Righteous Sufferer* (Hallo, 488). Almost all these texts include ritual, divination, exorcism, and other means intended to discover the cause of the problem, or intended as a solution to bring the crisis to an end. Also, the victims usually begin their lamentations by recounting all the good things they performed on behalf of the Gods, whether these were personal achievements (like conquering and

annexing a land) or bringing offerings, building a temple, donating money to the temple, etc.

<sup>16</sup> Hallo, *Context of Scripture*, 519-20.

<sup>17</sup> *Anet in Akkadian Prophecies*, 606.

<sup>18</sup> Gary Beckman, *The Wrath of Telipinu, Context of Scripture*, 151. This text is an unmistakable example of the classic "myth and ritual" documents. In spite of much recent criticism, the fact remains that texts such as this contain descriptions of a ritual inserted within the larger narrative of the myth. In Beckman's words, "the remedy for this evil situation was the performance by both human and divine practitioners of an expiatory ritual which included a mythological account of the deity's displeasure, departure, and reconciliation."

<sup>19</sup> *Context of Scripture*, 172.

<sup>20</sup> J. C. de Moor is the principal exponent of the "seasonal" interpretation of the Baal Myth. Accordingly, a clear reference to "seasonal background of the myth" is found in section v. 1, where Goddess Atiratu refers to the time of rains and the time of snow, which are designated by the actions of Baal. For similar references see also the Table of Seasonal Pattern in Baal, 101-17, in *An Anthology of Religious Texts From Ugarit* (Leiden: Brill, 1987). For a more symbolical interpretation of the Baal Myth see Dennis Pardee, *The Ba'lu Myth in Canons of Scripture*, 242.

<sup>21</sup> The text then describes several sacrifices which Goddess Anatu brings following Ba'lu's death. This is another point of contention among scholars. Some interpret this as a list of actual sacrifices performed at the reenactment of the epic on Mt. Sapanu on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April. De Moor, *Anthology of Religious Texts*, 84, explains that "the macrocosmic size of the sacrifices mentioned in the myth could not be matched in reality, but the correspondence with the actual number is arresting: seven bulls, seven rams and again seven bulls for Ba'lu." On the other hand Pardee shows that "the total list is quite different from the repertory of sacrificial beasts characteristic of prose ritual texts," which were "actually practiced at Ugarit in ca. 1200 BC." See, *Context of Scripture*, 269.

<sup>22</sup> "Compare the biblical expression 'a land flowing with mild and honey' as a metaphorical description of the fertile, well-watered land of Israel", Ex. 3:8; Jer 11:5; Ez 20:6, etc." See De Moor, *Anthology*, 91.

<sup>23</sup> Pardee dates the Epic to early second millennium at Ras Shamra. "The absence of reference to Ugarit may indicate that the story had its origin elsewhere." The "reference to Tyre and Sidon indicates an origin not far from Phoenicia." See Hallo, *Context of Scripture*, 333.

<sup>24</sup> Compare with Hosea 2:5, where the author refers to *bread, wool, oil*, and *drink* (wine) as coming from Baal, but not from GOD. However, one should notice that in the Epic of Kirta not Baal, but rather Kirta's affliction causes the drought.

<sup>25</sup> There are two important details that distinguish this from the first story. The first one is the fact that Aqatu is not directly a God. But his special status is underlined by the fact that Ilu brought about his birth, so much so that Anatu had to ask for Ilu's permission to kill him. Second, not Aqatu's death *per se*, but Dani'ilu's curse brought about the drought. However, there is a common denominator between this and the other stories, namely that the (indirect) offspring of a god has died and drought came as an (indirect) result. The tablets containing this legend come from Ras Shamra; see Hallo, *Context of Scripture*, 343.

<sup>26</sup> Thorkild Jacobsen trans., *Context of Scripture*, 547.

<sup>27</sup> B. J. Collins translator; in Hallo, *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>28</sup> Hittite origin, see Beckman, *Excerpt from an Oracle Report*, in *ibid.*, 204.

<sup>29</sup> Other suggestions were moving cult objects from the temple, not paying proper attention to the dreams.

<sup>30</sup> R. H. Beal translator, *Context of Scripture*, 207.

<sup>31</sup> A. Livingstone translator (Middle Assyrian), *ibid.*, 473.

<sup>32</sup> B. Foster translator, *ibid.*, 486.

<sup>33</sup> *Families in Ancient Israel*, Leo G. Perdue et al (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1997), 27.

<sup>34</sup> Elaine Adler Goodfriend, *Adultery in Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols., D. N. Freedman gen. ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993), vol. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, WBC (Dallas, TX: Word, 1994), 76, makes the claim that "for Abimelech to realize that there were problems with his wives' conception suggests that Sarah had been a member of his household for weeks, if not for months, before he had the dream disclosing his sin to him." This, however, does not imply that she had sexual contact with the king. Another interesting fact here is that "childlessness is a penalty for some types of incest according to Lev 20:20-21," although the author makes it clear that Abimelech did not "come near her."

<sup>36</sup> "Remembering in the religious terminology of Israel and other North-Western Semitic societies referred to the benevolent treatment of an individual or a group by a God, often, as in this case, in response to a specific plea." See Kyle McCarter, *1 Samuel*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 62.

<sup>37</sup> This is not to say that prayer lacks from the other accounts. Still, most of them are either ritual texts or myths, and so they usually contain descriptions of rituals, magic, and other means of influencing the divine world.

<sup>38</sup> For the same theme see also Jer 51:36, Ez 30:12, Zach 10:11, 14:18.

<sup>39</sup> For references to a God on a journey see the *Storm God at Lihnina* above, and also S. B. Parker's "KTU 1.16, the Myth of the Absent God and 1 Kings 18", in UF 23: 283-296 (1989). Parker quotes the Telepinu story where "Telepinus walked away... went and lost himself... fatigue overcame him." After he was found he said, "[How dare] ye a[rouse me] from my sleep."

<sup>40</sup> J. A. Montgomery and S. H. Gehman, *Kings*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1967), believe that the reference to journey is in fact a euphemism for “going to relieve oneself” (see paraphrase of Rashi). Since the verb here is a *hapax legomenon* we cannot draw a definite conclusion. Rashi’s interpretation may be correct, but since the verb can also mean to be busy or to leave on a journey, the first interpretation is not warranted. Neither the Vulgate nor the LXX (crhmatizw, to engage in a business and thus be busy with somebody else) support Rashi’s reading. For a full range of scholarly positions see the *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. III, L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner eds. (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

<sup>41</sup> Hans Wilderberger, *Isaiah 13-27, Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997), 249, shows that, for the Egyptians, a natural catastrophe like this always had political and personal connotations, in the sense that they seemed unwilling to distinguish between natural phenomena and the religious and human realms. As such, a catastrophe in the natural realm threw into question the religious and political realms as well.

<sup>42</sup> McCarter, *II Samuel*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1984) believes that “seeking an audience with Yahweh involved, in this case, the obtaining of an oracle.” The context may also suggest that he did so by going to a cultic place, either in Jerusalem or in Gibeon.

<sup>43</sup> W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 114.

<sup>44</sup> Beckman, *The Wrath of Telipinu*, in *ibid.*, 151.

<sup>45</sup> An exception could be the curse of Dani’ilu upon the earth, although the real cause was Innana’s killing of his son, who was partly divine.

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THE PRICE OF AN ISSUE IS EUR 20, including postage and handling charges.

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THE JOURNAL OF EMANUEL UNIVERSITY OF ORADEA

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ISSN 1224-984X