

# Concordia Theological Quarterly

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Christian Identity in Pagan Thessalonica:  
The Imitation of Paul's Cruciform Life  
**Charles A. Gieschen**

The Narrative of Scripture and Justification  
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The Mystical Sense of Scripture according  
to Johann Jacob Rambach  
**Benjamin T. G. Mayes**

*Pro Deo et Patria*: Themes of the Cruciform  
Life in Dietrich Bonhoeffer  
**Eric R. Andrae**

# CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY

*Concordia Theological Quarterly*, a continuation of *The Springfielder*, is a theological journal of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, published for its ministerium by the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

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## An Old Journal under a New Cover

This issue, sporting a new cover designed by Colleen Bartzsch, gives us reasons to celebrate. First, after being two years behind in our publication schedule, CTQ is now current. Our readers have been pleasantly surprised by the receipt of 15 issues since December 2006, a few of which were two issues printed under one cover in order to save postage. Some of you have even suggested that our journal should now be named *Concordia Theological Monthly*! Although David Scaer previously mentioned the key persons who helped in this catch-up process (see CTQ 70 [July/October 2006]: 367), I again express our sincere appreciation for the dedicated work of Annette Gard (CTQ Administrative Assistant), Jason Braaten (CTQ Graduate Assistant in 2006–2007), and Peter Gregory (CTQ Graduate Assistant in 2007–2008). The exemplary quality and quantity of these issues, produced under a demanding schedule, is due to these three individuals.

A second reason to celebrate is because this journal has been blessed for many years by the editorial leadership and writing of David P. Scaer. As we begin our seventy-second year of publication, it is worthy to note that it has been almost four decades since Scaer first became Editor of this journal (see *The Springfielder* 33, no. 3 [December 1969]: 1). Over 30 years ago, he introduced both a new name (*The Springfielder* became *Concordia Theological Quarterly*) and a new cover (see his editorial in CTQ 41 [January 1977]: 1–2). The respect that CTQ enjoys among its readers as one of the most important journals in Lutheran theology is due, in large part, to Scaer's work. He has been a consistent advocate for letting this journal be "the theological voice" of our seminary to the wider church, an untiring editor in cultivating the right mix of writings for publication, and a prolific author of countless incisive articles that have appeared in these pages over the past four decades. We are thankful that he continues to serve as Editor.

We hope you enjoy the small changes in this issue and those that will follow. Do not, however, expect an issue each month: we are back to four issues a year, one every three months! Most of all, we pray that you will continue to be blessed and nurtured by the theology—especially the faithful witness to Jesus Christ—presented in this journal.

Charles A. Gieschen  
Associate Editor

## Christian Identity in Pagan Thessalonica: The Imitation of Paul's Cruciform Life

Charles A. Gieschen

What does a Christian look like in a pagan world? How does a Christian maintain his identity as one who is in Christ and believes in the one true Triune God while living in an increasingly pluralistic world where many gods are worshipped?<sup>1</sup> Today we can point to centuries of church history for scores of examples of Christians who maintained their distinctive identity in a pagan world. What about, however, the earliest Christians? To whom would Paul point the earliest converts from Greco-Roman cultic life in order to help them understand what it is like to be a Christian? To whom would he point them in order to understand how a Christian faithfully maintains his or her identity in a polytheistic setting?

In 1–2 Thessalonians, which are probably the earliest letters of Paul, the apostle points newly-converted Christians not to Old Testament examples like Joseph in pagan Egypt or Daniel in pagan Babylon but to himself as a living, breathing example of one who faithfully worships and serves Christ while surrounded by pagan deities and cultic activities issuing their siren calls. This may, at first sight, make twenty-first century interpreters uncomfortable, since it sounds like self-promotion rather than gospel proclamation. After all, is not our purpose to lift up Jesus Christ as savior and also as the example to be imitated? This study will demonstrate that a significant element of Paul's effort to shape Christian identity among these first congregations is found in his understanding of baptism as crucifixion with Christ and the presentation of his resulting cruciform life in Christ as a personal example to be imitated.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief discussion of the challenges of proclaiming Christ in a pluralistic world, see the statement of the Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, "Religious Pluralism and Knowledge of the True God: Fraternal Reflection and Discussion," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 66 (2002): 295–305.

<sup>2</sup> This study is part of my ongoing work on 1–2 Thessalonians for the Concordia Commentary series. For the "cruciform" language (but not all the theology with which Gorman uses this term), see Michael Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

### I. The Pagan Setting of Paul's Mission in Thessalonica

Since modern readers of Paul are often not sensitive to how much the pagan cults dominated life in a first-century Greco-Roman *polis* (city) like Thessalonica, we will introduce this subject first.<sup>3</sup> In his seminal 1985 article on the cults of Thessalonica, Karl Donfried summarizes the challenges posed by the specific religious and civic cults found in Thessalonica and how these may be reflected in specific content of Paul's epistles to these Christians.<sup>4</sup> Because the modern city of Thessaloniki is built over the ancient city, archaeological work on this city is limited. As those familiar with the layout of the *polis* know, temples in a high place to select gods were a fixture in the *polis*, along with an *agora* (marketplace), theatre, bathhouses, and a colonnaded *cardo maximus* (main street). The limited archaeological, epigraphic, and numismatic (coinage) evidence that we have from Thessalonica points to the presence of a number of religious cults. There was reverence for several Roman gods: Zeus, Heracles, the Dioscuri, Apollo, and Aphrodite. The Egyptian gods Isis, Serapis, and Osiris were also worshipped; a temple to Serapis was discovered in 1917 after a fire in the ancient temple sector of the city. Elements of the cult of Dionysus were possibly being absorbed into the practice of these Egyptian mystery cults. Of special note was the presence of the cult of Cabirus, a cult whose god promoted fertility and protected sailors. These cults offered liturgical rites and a social calendar that ordered life in the *polis*. The high-density paraenetic language about sexual chastity (1 Thess 4:1-9), as well as Paul's later exhortations against works of darkness and drunkenness (1 Thess 5:5-8), should be interpreted against this pagan backdrop.<sup>5</sup>

Paul also encountered civic cults in this city. The charge by the civic authorities in Thessalonica against Paul, Jason, and others recorded in Acts

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<sup>3</sup> For the *polis* as the center of ethics, see Wayne A. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 19-39. For the basic architectural plan of the *polis*, see John McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 37-90.

<sup>4</sup> Karl P. Donfried, "The Cults of Thessalonica and the Thessalonian Correspondence," *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985): 336-356; see also Holland L. Hendrix, "Thessalonica," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman et al., 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:523-527. The information on religious and civic cults presented here is summarized from these two sources.

<sup>5</sup> This point is repeatedly made by Donfried, "Cults of Thessalonica"; see also Piotr J. Malysz, "Paul's Use of the Imagery of Sleep and His Understanding of the Christian Life: A Study in the Thessalonian Correspondence," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 67 (2003): 65-78.

17:7 indicates that Christians were supposedly acting against the “decrees of Caesar” (τῶν δογμάτων Καίσαρος). It is quite probable that citizens had to take an oath of loyalty to Caesar such as this one noted by Donfried:

I swear . . . that I will support Caesar Augustus, his children and descendents, throughout my life, in word, deed, and thought . . . that in whatsoever concerns them I will spare neither body nor soul nor life nor children . . . that whenever I see or hear of anything being said, planned, or done against them I will report it . . . and whomsoever they regard as enemies I will attack and pursue with arms and the sword by land and by sea.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to reverence offered to prior Roman benefactors who granted Thessalonica its “free city” status and to the goddess Roma, a temple of Caesar was built there during the reign of Augustus (27 BC–AD 14). The divine status of Augustus is visible not only from the presence of this temple but also from the fact that his head soon displaced that of Zeus on local coinage of this period.

Although one can see evidence of this pagan setting in various places of Paul’s two letters to this congregation, the most explicit evidence comes in the opening thanksgiving of 1 Thessalonians 1:8–10:

For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, with the result that we have no need to say anything. For they themselves report concerning what kind of a reception [εἰσοδόν] we had with you, namely, how you turned to God from idols [τῶν εἰδώλων] in order to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.<sup>7</sup>

Paul’s Jewish background shows through here; he labels all the numerous gods of this *polis* as “idols” —as non-living and false gods—in distinction to the single “living and true God” who is known in his risen and *living* Son. More could obviously be said, but the conclusion from this brief survey is clear: Paul sought to cultivate Christian identity in a thoroughly pagan setting.

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<sup>6</sup> Donfried, “Cults of Thessalonica,” 343.

<sup>7</sup> All translations of the Pauline Epistles are mine.

## II. Christian Identity through Imitation of Paul's Example

Paul introduces the theme of imitation early in the thanksgiving portion of 1 Thessalonians.<sup>8</sup> Although the end of the thanksgiving was cited above, the opening verses of the thanksgiving, 1 Thessalonians 1:2-7, are given here:

We give thanks to God always concerning all of you, as we make mention of you in our prayers, your work of faith, your labor of love, and always remembering your steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, because we know, brothers beloved by God, your election; for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of people we proved to be among you for your sake. You also became imitators of us and of the Lord [καὶ ὑμεῖς μιμηταὶ ἡμῶν ἐγενήθητε καὶ τοῦ κυρίου], when you received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, with the result that you became an example [τύπον] to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

The aorist verb ἐγενήθητε shows that Paul is not exhorting the congregation to imitate him *in the future*, but is confessing that they *have already become* imitators (μιμηταί) of him and the Lord in how they received the gospel with joy amidst suffering. These Christians, in turn, became an example or pattern (τύπον) for the rest of the church in Macedonia and Achaia. This text introduces two terms, μιμητής and τύπος, that will resurface repeatedly in the Pauline Letters as an important theme.

Abraham Malherbe points to the social background for Paul's emphasis on imitation (μιμῆσις) in both of these letters as well as in 1 Corinthians and Philipians. Malherbe states:

In attempting to discover how Paul shaped the Thessalonians into a community we must begin with his claim, "And you became imitators of us and of the Lord" (1 Thess. 1:6). Paul usually calls his readers to imitation (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:16; cf. 2 Thess. 3:7, 9). This description of the Thessalonian church's origin, however, is the only place where Paul refers to converts who had already modeled themselves after him. In short, Paul's method of shaping a community was to gather converts around himself and by his own behavior to demonstrate what he taught. In doing this, he followed a widely practiced method of his day, particularly by oral philosophers.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For this theme, see further Willis Peter de Boer, *The Imitation of Paul: An Exegetical Study* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1962).

<sup>9</sup> Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 52.

An example that Malherbe uses to illustrate this method among Roman stoic philosophers is from Seneca, a contemporary of Paul. Seneca asserts the importance of the personal example of the teacher—even above teaching—in the shaping of followers. Seneca wrote:

Of course, however, the living voice and the intimacy of a common life will help you more than the written word. You must go to the scene of the action, first, because men put more faith in their eyes than in their ears, and second, because the way is long if one follows precepts, but short and helpful, if one follows patterns. Cleanthes could not have been the express image of Zeno, if he had merely heard his lectures; he shared in his life, saw into his hidden purposes, and watched him to see whether he lived according to his own rules. Plato, Aristotle, and the whole throng of sages who were destined to go each his different way, derived more benefit from the character than from the words of Socrates. It was not the classroom of Epicurus, but living together under the same roof, that made great men out of Metrodorus, Hermarchus, and Polyaeus. Therefore I summon you, not merely that you may derive benefit, but that you may confer benefit; for we can assist each other greatly.<sup>10</sup>

Seneca illustrates the understanding that a teacher's life lent a tangible example to his teaching, which, in turn, had a significant impact on shaping the identity of the student, certainly more than the teaching alone.

This is not to say that Paul learned this imitation tradition from philosophers and employed it without modification. Malherbe also stresses Paul's recasting of this philosophic imitation tradition in two ways in 1 Thessalonians.<sup>11</sup> First, Paul does not point to his own personal words and accomplishments but focuses on the gospel proclamation and what that gospel has accomplished. Second, Paul uses the theme of the "harsh treatment" he received (ὕβρισθέντες in 2:2) not as justification for harsh "frankness" in making demands (ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα in 2:2), as would Cynic philosophers, but as authentication that—in spite of the way he had been treated in Philippi—God gave him boldness to speak the gospel and give gently of himself to the Thessalonians.

Paul, however, as an apostle, also carefully distances himself from the problematic practices of charlatan philosophers who took advantage of

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<sup>10</sup> Seneca *Epistle* 6.5–6, quoted in Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, 52–53; see also Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 32B (New York: Doubleday, 2000), especially 134–163.

<sup>11</sup> Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 56–60.

their hosts through deceitful and flattering speech. Notice his language in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain, but even though we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. For our appeal does not come from error, impurity, or deceit; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so also we speak, not so that we please men but God, who discerns our hearts. For we neither came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with pretext for greed—God is witness—nor did we seek honor from men, from either you or others, even though as apostles of Christ we are able to demand support. But we were gentle ones among you, as a nursing mother nourishes her own children. So because we had a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. For you remember, brothers, our labor and hardship, because we worked night and day in order not to overburden any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and righteously and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father with his own children, in order that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

Paul gives us much insight here into his personal example that he calls upon the Thessalonians to imitate. Once again, it is Malherbe who has illuminated this description of Paul's ministry in light of the writings of philosophers who defended their vocation against imposters. Dio Chrysostom, a younger contemporary of Paul, speaks of the abundance of such imposters:

But to find a man who in plain terms [*katharōs*] and without guile [*adolōs*] speaks his mind with frankness [*parrēsiazomenon*], and *neither* for the sake of reputation [*doxēs*] nor for gain, *but*, out of good will and concern for his fellow men stands ready, if need be, to submit to ridicule and to the disorder and uproar of the mob—to find such a man as that is *not easy, but* rather the good fortune of a very lucky city, so great is the death of noble, independent souls and such the abundance of toadies [*kolakōn*], mountebanks, and sophists. In my own case, for instance, I feel that I have chosen that role, *not* of my own volition, *but* by the will of some deity. For when divine providence is at work for men, the gods provide, *not* only



good counselors who need no urging, *but* also words that are appropriate and profitable to the listener.<sup>12</sup>

Paul's call to imitation of his personal example was probably not only influenced by this pattern found in the philosophical tradition of the Greco-Roman world but also from his experience within Judaism. The pattern of setting forward examples to be imitated is found within Second Temple Jewish literature.<sup>13</sup> Philo, an Alexandrian Jew who was a contemporary of Paul, was himself influenced strongly by the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition and writes about how the virtuous man imitates God to his neighbors who, in turn, can imitate him:

And in another place also the lawgiver [Moses] gives this precept, which is most becoming and suitable to a rational nature, that men should imitate God to the best of their power, omitting nothing which can possibly contribute to such a similarity as the case admits of. Since then you have received strength from a being who is more powerful than you, give others a share of that strength, distributing among them the benefits which you have received yourself, in order that you may imitate God by bestowing gifts like his; for all the gifts of the Supreme Ruler are of common advantage to all men; and he gives them to some individuals, not in order that they when they have received them may hide them out of sight, or employ them to the injury of others, but in order that they may bring them into common stock, and invite all those whom they can find to use and enjoy them with them.<sup>14</sup>

Philo's call to imitate God shows that Paul's imitation of Christ (1 Cor 11:1) is taught within a literary and theological context where it could be understood.

Later rabbinic literature also evinces this theme of imitation. Rabbis were not merely to impart knowledge of *Torah* with words, but they were to live a *life* of *Torah* that is an example for disciples. *Aboth* 1.17 states: "Simeon, his son, used to say: All my days I grew up among the sages and I have found nothing better for a person than silence. Study is not the most

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<sup>12</sup> Dio Chrysostom *Oration* 32.11-12, quoted in Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 154 (italics in the original).

<sup>13</sup> The practice of using patriarchs, prophets, priests, and kings from Israelite history as exemplars grew in the Second Temple Period. For example, Jews are called to imitate Joseph frequently in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*; see *Testament of Benjamin* 3:1-4:2, cf. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 825-826. See also Michael F. Stone and Theodore A. Bergen, *Biblical Figures Outside the Bible* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998).

<sup>14</sup> Philo *On the Virtues* 168-169; cf. *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. C. D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 657.

important thing, but deed; whoever indulges in too many words brings about sin."<sup>15</sup> Being able to live as one's teacher is valued even above being able to teach as one's teacher, as can also be seen in *Aboth* 4.5: "R. Ishmael said: He who learns in order to teach, they afford him adequate means to learn and to teach; and he who learns in order to practice, they afford him adequate means to learn and to teach and to practice."<sup>16</sup> In light of the importance of disciples imitating their rabbi's example of life, Jacob Neusner concludes:

If the master is a living Torah, source of revelation of the oral tradition given at Sinai and embodied now in the master himself, then the disciple had best humbly imitate each and every gesture of that living Torah and so prepare himself as the nexus of the transmission of his same oral tradition to the coming generations.<sup>17</sup>

Paul notes in 1 Thessalonians 2:9 that he was not a burden to them but provided for his own sustenance through his trade. It is very possible that Paul shared the gospel with the networks of families who were in business or trade at the marketplace where he did business. It is his work ethic and his giving of himself to this congregation that he calls the Thessalonians to imitate, especially in light of the confused eschatology in the congregation which involved some rejection of vocational responsibilities.<sup>18</sup> Notice how he addressed this problem sternly in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13:

Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you avoid any brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. For you yourselves know how it is necessary to imitate us [οἴδατε πῶς δεῖ μιμεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς], because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day in order that we not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as an example for you, with the result that you imitate us [ἵνα ἑαυτοὺς τύπον δώμεν ὑμῖν εἰς τὸ μιμεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς]. For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but being busybodies. Now such persons we command

<sup>15</sup> *Aboth* 1.17, in *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud*, vol. 21, *Tractates Abodah Zarah, Horayoth, Eduyyoth, Aboth*, ed. I Epstein (London: Soncino, 1988), 6a-6b.

<sup>16</sup> *Aboth* 4.5, in *Babylonian Talmud: Aboth* 21:10b-11a.

<sup>17</sup> Jacob Neusner, "The Phenomenon of the Rabbi in Late Antiquity," *Numen: International Review for the History of Religions* 17 (1970): 13.

<sup>18</sup> M. J. J. Menken, "Paradise Regained or Still Lost? Eschatology and Disorderly Behavior in 2 Thessalonians," *New Testament Studies* 38 (1992): 271-289.

and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. But as for you, brothers, do not grow weary of doing good.

Here Paul puts himself, Silas, and Timothy forward as “an example” (τύπον) and twice calls upon these Christians to “imitate us” (μιμεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς). This text is especially noteworthy because “the example” that Paul’s life provides is neither his ability to argue before the Athenian Areopagus nor the number of his congregational mission starts but the example of his bi-vocational labor, probably the combination of his tent-making and mission work of preaching and teaching.<sup>19</sup>

As one examines the imitation theme in Paul beyond the Thessalonian correspondence, it becomes clear that Paul had a fairly broad and inclusive understanding of what was to be imitated in his life—it certainly went beyond his work ethic or missionary zeal—and included his wider moral life as a witness in the midst of pagan indulgence. For example, he writes to the church at Philippi—which was just down the road from Thessalonica—in Philippians 3:15–19:

Let us therefore, as many as are complete, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. Become fellow imitators of me, brothers, and observe those who walk according to the example you have in us [συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε, ἀδελφοί, καὶ σκοπεῖτε τοὺς οὕτω περιπατοῦντας καθὼς ἔχετε τύπον ἡμᾶς]. For many walk [περιπατοῦσιν], of whom I often told you, and now tell you while weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.

This text confirms Paul’s earlier teaching because he commands the Philippians to become “fellow imitators” (συμμιμηταί) of him, observing not only him but also those who already are walking according to the example of Paul. The participle τοὺς περιπατοῦντας reminds us of Paul’s Jewish heritage, since  $\text{לָּחַק}$  (“walk”) is a common Hebrew metaphor for daily living.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Todd D. Still, “Did Paul Loathe Manual Labor? Revisiting the Work of Ronald F. Hock on the Apostle’s Tentmaking and Social Class,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125 (2006): 781–795. See also Bruce Winter, “‘If a man does not wish to work . . .’ A Cultural and Historical Setting for 2 Thessalonians 3:6–16,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 40 (1989): 303–315.

<sup>20</sup> See Andrew E. Steinmann and Michael Eschelbach, “Walk This Way: A Theme from Proverbs Reflected and Extended in Paul’s Letters,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 70 (2006): 52–53.

Perhaps the most revealing of Paul's discussions of imitation is found in 1 Corinthians 4:9-17. There Paul speaks of being fools for Christ's sake, weak, without honor, hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed, homeless, working long hours; it is this life of service and sacrifice that Paul calls upon the Corinthians to imitate. Paul writes:

For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now. I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. I exhort you, therefore, become imitators of me [παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς, μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε]. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

Paul's reference to "my ways which are *in Christ*" is baptismal language (1 Cor 4:17). These are the "ways" manifest in Paul because Paul has been crucified with Christ and remains in Christ (Gal 2:20). Willis Peter de Boer states, "There is a certain accent that keeps recurring in the passages on imitation. It is the accent on humility, self-denial, self-giving, self-sacrifice for the sake of Christ and the salvation of others."<sup>21</sup> It is this cruciform life, which is Paul's through his baptismal union with Christ, that he calls Christians to imitate because they, too, have been crucified with Christ in baptism and remain in him and he in them.

### III. Paul's Imitation of Christ's Cruciform Life

An absolutely vital aspect of Paul's focus on imitation of his example is the understanding that imitation of Paul is really *not* imitation of his own person but is imitation of the new baptismal reality: Christ as the one who speaks and lives in Paul.<sup>22</sup> This is brought out already in 1 Thessalonians 1:6, the first imitation text noted at the start of this study: "You also became

<sup>21</sup> De Boer, *Imitation of Paul*, 207.

<sup>22</sup> Paul describes the new anthropology resulting from baptism as being "in Christ" but also as Christ being in the believer. The latter is what he also calls "the inner man" (Rom 6:22; 2 Cor 4:6; Eph 3:16; cf. Gal 2:20).

imitators of us and of the Lord." Important here is that Paul puts the apostles forward to be imitated because in them the congregation sees the reality of Christ who lives and speaks in the apostles. Jonathan Grothe, in his excellent book *Reclaiming Patterns of Pastoral Ministry*, explains this chain of examples:

Paul recognized that his apostleship held a special place in a chain of models for behavior and imitation. With Jesus as Savior and example and with Jesus' Spirit as the transforming power at work in the church, Christians are "saints" who are being made new according to the pattern of Christ. The ministry of the apostle plays a key mediating role also in this area of sanctification, both broadly and as regards specific situations. If Jesus is example, then His apostolic representative and imitator is also an example of the "Christ-like way of life" and also of what this means for Christian conduct in specific situations.<sup>23</sup>

William Weinrich makes a similar point about how the office of the apostolic minister is shaped by the life of Christ:

The narrative of the story of the Christ from his Baptism to his death is, to be sure, the narrative of every Christian who is the disciple of Jesus from Baptism to faithful death. But the narrative of Jesus is also the narrative of the office of Christ, by no means separated from the reality of Baptism common to all, but yet given to some who are called and chosen to be in the midst of the disciples as the representative of him who is "gone away" but who is present in them for all.<sup>24</sup>

The text where the explicit connection is made between imitating Paul because one will be imitating Christ is 1 Corinthians 11:1, where he states: "Become imitators of me, just as also I am of Christ [μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε καθὼς ἐγὼ Χριστοῦ]. Here Paul claims to be an imitator of Christ. There is a divergence of opinion among scholars, however, about how we are to understand Paul as an imitator of Christ.<sup>25</sup> The debate centers around exactly how much Paul could imitate Christ since he was neither an eyewitness to his earthly ministry nor had a gospel account among his scrolls. Wilhelm Michaelis, in his *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* article on "μιμέομαι," even states that imitation in Paul is primarily about

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan F. Grothe, *Reclaiming Patterns of Pastoral Ministry: Jesus and Paul* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988), 78.

<sup>24</sup> William Weinrich, "Called and Ordained: Reflections on the New Testament View of the Office of the Ministry," *Logia* 2, no. 1 (1993): 24–25.

<sup>25</sup> Seyoon Kim, "Imitatio Christi (1 Corinthians 11:1): How Paul Imitates Jesus Christ in Dealing with Idol Food (1 Corinthians 8–10)," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 13 (2003): 193–226; see also David B. Capes, "Imitatio Christi and the Gospel Genre," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 13 (2003): 1–19.

obedience of apostolic authority; Paul's call to imitate him then is reduced to a call to obey him.<sup>26</sup> While the call to imitate him in 2 Thessalonians 3 has an edge to it, there is more to this theme than a covert way of exercising apostolic muscle. Although Paul probably knew many details about that life of Jesus through the oral gospel traditions and his personal contact with "the pillars" of the church, it appears that it is primarily Jesus' sacrificial servanthood that Paul has in mind when he speaks of imitating Christ, and not a list of specific behaviors of Jesus. Others have aptly titled this the "cruciform life" of Paul.<sup>27</sup> In 2 Corinthians 4:11, Paul describes how the life of Jesus is manifested in his own being given up to death: "For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake in order that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh."

This cruciform life of sacrificial servanthood is not a detached life to be imitated from afar; it is a life Paul imitates because it is already his life through being joined to Christ's crucifixion in baptism: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered himself up for me" (Gal 2:20; cf. Rom 6:1-6). Paul's exhortations to imitation are due to the fact that Christians are both sinner and saint; because of the ongoing condition of sin waging war within Christians, it is important to remind them who they are and how they show that new identity in Christ.<sup>28</sup> This cruciform life is not a spiritual abstraction; over time it manifested itself even in Paul's own physical appearance: "From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus [τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ]" (Gal 6:17).

Some interpreters may think that baptismal theology is being read *into* (rather than *out of*) the teaching of imitation in the Thessalonian epistles. The foundational nature of baptism for the cruciform life of which Paul writes is implicit at the end of the thanksgiving in 2 Thessalonians in his mention of "the name of our Lord Jesus Christ being glorified in you": "To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power; in order that the name of our Lord Jesus be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus

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<sup>26</sup> Michaelis, "μυμέομαι," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), 4:671-673.

<sup>27</sup> See Gorman, *Cruciformity*, and especially Weinrich, "Called and Ordained," 26.

<sup>28</sup> For Paul's understanding of sin as an ongoing condition, see Charles A. Gieschen, "Original Sin in the New Testament," *Concordia Journal* 31 (2005): 365-372.

Christ" (2 Thess 1:11–12). I have shown elsewhere that "the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . in you" is the Divine Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit given in baptism.<sup>29</sup> It is not just any word of God used in baptism, but the Name of God is given, dwells in the believer, and shows forth a new creation from this divine reality. Paul is more explicit in connecting name and baptism in 1 Corinthians 6:11: "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified *in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ* and in the Spirit of our God."

In light of Paul's assertion that he imitates Christ, one may surmise that Paul's imitation could not have been too convincing since no one thought Paul to be Jesus. Yet, in spite of his weaknesses and apparent physical challenges, Paul states that the Galatians received him as "Christ Jesus" in their midst. He writes in Galatians 4:12–14:

I beg of you, brethren, become as I am [γίνεσθε ὡς ἐγώ], for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong; but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as God's Angel, namely Christ Jesus.

Hans Dieter Betz downplays the assertion Paul is making by understanding it as a hypothetical exaggeration; the Galatians received Paul *as if* he were an angel, even *as if* he were Jesus Christ.<sup>30</sup> J. Louis Martyn offers a more balanced explanation to this startling reception:

As God's messenger, Paul preached Christ (1:16); and that preaching included the conviction that, as he had himself suffered crucifixion with Christ, so in his present life he bears in his body physical scars—and illnesses—that are marks of his association with Jesus (6:17; cf. 2 Cor 4:5, 10). It was then the crucified Jesus Christ who lived in him, paradoxically transforming his weakness into strength without removing it (3:1; 2:19–20). The odiously sick, apparently demonic figure [Paul] was seen, then, to be in fact an angel sent from God, just as the legally executed criminal was seen, then, to be in fact God's own Son.<sup>31</sup>

I have argued extensively elsewhere that, in light of Paul's emphasis on apostolic authority and direct revelation earlier in this epistle, the

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<sup>29</sup> Charles A. Gieschen, "The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology," *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003): 131.

<sup>30</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 226.

<sup>31</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 421

Galatians did not receive him merely as an envoy of Jesus or as an angel from among the myriads of angels (note Gal 1:8), but they received him as the most authoritative angel/messenger who not only sent him (Gal 1:1), but also lives in him (Gal 2:20) and speaks in him (2 Cor 13:3): God's Angel, Christ Jesus.<sup>32</sup> It is this union with Christ through both baptism and the apostolic office that led Paul to confess "as I imitate Christ."

#### IV. Imitation of Christ as Example to the Church in a Pagan World

What, therefore, does all this mean for twenty-first century Lutheran pastors? These Pauline texts are certainly neither a manual for the spiritual life, such as that developed by Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471), nor are they primarily calling upon us to imitate *Paul*. These texts are calling upon pastors to imitate *Christ* by living in their baptismal reality as pastors who through union with Christ and placement in the apostolic ministry have his mind and show him forth, not only in their proclamation but also in their very lives.<sup>33</sup> These Pauline texts are not calling pastors merely to be moral examples; they are calling upon pastors to be living icons of Christ to their flocks and to this fallen world, to be tangible, embodied examples of the new cruciform life that Christ lives out through his body, the church. These Pauline texts are calling pastors to an apostolic ministry that is not characterized by worldly markers of success, but one that is characterized by the marks of Christ: service, suffering, and sacrifice. Paul is not mimicking someone he cannot be; he is imitating who he *already truly is* in Christ.

Does this mean pastors are to be more of an example in the world and congregation than other Christians? Jonathan Grothe addresses this question:

Does this mean operating with a "double standard," a different set of criteria to which pastors must "measure up"? Yes and no. The same Christ is example to all, and the same paradigm of holiness and love is the goal for all. Nor is it really a matter of a "standard" that one must "live up to," but rather a "pattern" that one will "grow in to." Nevertheless, in human eyes the answer may have to be "yes." For we must make, as well as we are able, evaluation of human conduct *because*, in God's economy, the conduct of the pastor is paradigmatic of the life of Christ. Also, the

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<sup>32</sup> Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 315–325.

<sup>33</sup> See also the comments of Jacob A. O. Preus III, "Jesus: To Be or Not to Be, That Is the Question," *Concordia Journal* 23 (1997): 172–174.



consequences of the behavior of these men—whether they succeed or fail—are so far-reaching for the spiritual lives of others.<sup>34</sup>

The purpose of this walk through these texts was to demonstrate that a significant element of Paul's effort to shape Christian identity among his early congregations in pagan settings is found in his understanding of baptism as crucifixion with Christ and the presentation of his resulting cruciform life as a personal example to be imitated. Because the gifts of God delivered in the proclamation of the gospel and administration of the sacraments are not dependent upon the personal sanctification of the pastor, there may be a tendency within our Lutheran circles to downplay the significance of the personal example of the pastor in carrying out the mission of the church. The imitation of the apostolic minister as the one who imitates Christ, however, is biblical teaching reflected in the ordination vows of pastors<sup>35</sup> because it is important for the mission of the church. This is especially true in a pagan setting where people are ignorant of the biblical narrative or where the church, in its compromise with the world, is losing its cruciform shape. Here the reality of Christ is read not only off the pages of the Scriptures but off "the living epistles"—the apostolic ministers—who show the world and their flocks the life of Christ in faithful service, suffering, and sacrifice (2 Cor 3:2). A pastor cannot say, "Do what I say, not what I do." His example is shown not only at the pulpit, altar, and narthex but also during the rest of the week as the pastor lives out the cruciform life in his congregation, community, marriage, and family.

Paul's purpose in calling others to imitate him was for the church as a whole to reflect the cruciform life of Christ in the world. Michael Gorman expresses Paul's ecclesial focus: "For Paul, the experience of dying with Christ, though intensely personal, can never be private. Fundamentally, cruciformity means community, and community means cruciformity. . . . The Church is a living icon of the cross, of the crucified Messiah."<sup>36</sup> In like manner, the cruciform life of the pastor is not an end in itself, but

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<sup>34</sup> Grothe, *Reclaiming Patterns of Pastoral Ministry*, 82 (italics in the original).

<sup>35</sup> The final set of questions asked of the candidate prior to the laying on of hands is: "Finally, will you adorn the Office of the Holy Ministry with a holy life? Will you be diligent in the study of Holy Scripture and the Confessions? And will you be constant in prayer for those under your pastoral care?" To this he responds: "I will, the Lord helping me through the power and grace of His Holy Spirit." The Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 166.

<sup>36</sup> Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 366–367.

something that Christ uses to shape his church like unto himself, in order that the church might be "a living icon" of him to the world.

How can pastors help converts from false religions understand the life in Christ? How can pastors help their flocks shape their Christian identity in today's pagan and pluralistic world? With their apostolic predecessor they can say, "Become imitators of me, just as also I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1).

# The Narrative of Scripture and Justification by Faith: A Fresh Response to N. T. Wright<sup>1</sup>

Mark A. Seifrid

## I. Introduction: A Fresher Reading of Paul

We cannot escape the theological currents of our time. Whether directly or indirectly, their forces come to bear on us. The course of biblical studies, as Adolf Schlatter long ago observed, largely has been determined not by forces arising from within the discipline, but from the broader cultural and philosophical concerns of the day. Biblical scholars seldom are able to see precisely what drives the course of study at the moment. In theology the rearview mirror generally offers a better view than the front windshield. That is not to say, however, that we operate best by throwing our vehicle into reverse. The attempt to repristinate is bound to fail. New questions require that we take fresh stances in order to maintain fidelity to the gospel. Like Alice-through-the-Looking-Glass, we must run *fast* if we only wish to stay in place. Or, as the author of Hebrews enjoins us, we must here and now give the closest attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. Fresh interpretations of Scripture, particularly when they raise questions about matters which Christians have long believed, taught, and confessed, require still fresher restatements of biblical truth. Only then can the gospel remain gospel. Thankfully, the gospel so fundamentally addresses us as fallen human beings that it has the power again and again to impart itself afresh to us in our present time.

Various currents within the present life of Evangelical Christianity (and Protestant Christianity more broadly considered) stream through N. T. Wright's ambitious work in New Testament theology. That does not in any way imply either opportunism or surrender to these currents on Wright's part. Nor does it imply that all of the present currents flow in the wrong direction. Everything must be tested against the text. One would be

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<sup>1</sup> This essay was originally presented at the Symposium on Exegetical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, on January 17, 2006. I would like to thank Dean Wenthe and Charles Gieschen for their invitation to participate. I owe thanks as well to the entire faculty and conference participants for their warm welcome.

blind, however, not to see the ways in which the concerns of our time – the thirst for community, the preference for image-driven Christianity, the drive toward equality-without-distinction, and the effort to recover moral virtue for church and society – run through his work.<sup>2</sup> With three massive volumes already published, Wright's project is arguably the most influential in our time.<sup>3</sup> The wide appeal of his work and the provocative nature of his reading of Paul make engagement with his views unavoidable. The project has emerged over a long period of time with roots going back to Wright's unpublished dissertation on Paul titled "The Messiah and the People of God."<sup>4</sup> His introductory and programmatic volume, *The New Testament and the People of God*, sets the background for the whole of his work with its sweeping presentation of early Judaism and earliest Christianity.<sup>5</sup> Although Wright has not yet published his major volume on Paul, a collection of essays, brief commentaries on the Pauline Epistles, and two brief works have already appeared.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> On current cultural issues in Evangelical Christianity, see D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, 3 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992–2003).

<sup>4</sup> N. T. Wright, "The Messiah and the People of God: A Study in Pauline Theology with Particular Reference to the Argument of the Epistle to the Romans" (DPhil diss., University of Oxford, 1981).

<sup>5</sup> N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 1, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> For the collection of essays, see N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). For Wright's two brief works on Paul, see N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), and *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997). Wright's brief *Paul for Everyone* commentaries, part of the *For Everyone Series* published jointly by Westminster John Knox in Louisville and SPCK in London, include the following: *Romans, Part 1: Chapters 1–8* (2005); *Romans, Part 2: Chapters 9–16* (2005); *1 Corinthians* (2004); *2 Corinthians* (2004); *Galatians and Thessalonians* (2004); *The Prison Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (2004); *The Pastoral Letters: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (2004). In addition, Wright has written other commentaries on Pauline Epistles: *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, rev. ed., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 12 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), and "The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections for Each Book of the Bible, including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, vol. 10, *The Acts of the Apostles; Introduction to Epistolary Literature; The Letter to the Romans; The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002).

As Wright himself indicates, his work represents the next wave of New Testament studies, which follows the now-aging, not-so-new "New Perspective on Paul." More firmly and unquestioningly than most, Wright continues to embrace the conclusions of the New Perspective, and of E. P. Sanders in particular, that first-century Judaism was (largely, at least) a religion of grace which found an unconditioned promise of salvation in God's covenant with the people of Israel. The close connection to Sanders's work is understandable. Wright's dissertation, out of which his remarkable program has developed, was completed only shortly after Sanders's *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* appeared in 1977.<sup>7</sup> That is not to say that Wright does not critically distance himself from Sanders. His thesis that the majority of Jews in Paul's day viewed themselves as living in a continuing "exile" of Israel fills a serious gap which Sanders originally left in his work. It is a plight to which Jesus' proclamation and Paul's gospel provided an answer. Wright also significantly departs from the New Perspective in his narrative interpretations of Jesus and of Paul and regards this departure as one of the most significant developments of this "revolution."<sup>8</sup> According to Wright's reading of Paul, the apostle does not treat Israel's Scriptures arbitrarily, as Sanders notoriously claimed. Paul rather takes up Israel's story as it is found both in Scripture and the writings of early Judaism. This narrative has at least three basic elements: the announcement of the one true God, the election of Israel, and God's covenant with his people. In this form, Israel's narrative fills out Paul's message. Yet there is one crucial difference: Paul redefines Israel's story around Jesus Christ. In Wright's re-reading of Paul, Paul re-reads Israel's history. This re-reading of Paul in relation to early Judaism, which Wright presents as a "fresh perspective," entails a revisionary understanding of justification; through this "fresh perspective," Wright distances himself in various ways from traditional Protestant views. Wright's fresh questions demand still fresher answers.

## II. Wright's Reading of Scripture and Justification

### *Narrative and Interpretation*

*The Necessity of Explanation.* It is crucial to observe that narration and dogmatic explanation are not mutually exclusive but in fact interdependent. Doctrinal statements must be set within a life-context if we

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<sup>7</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

<sup>8</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 8. Other, quite different influences—for example, that of Hans Frei and the "Yale school"—also played a major role in this turn to narrative.

are to know their significance. Narrative, conversely, bears an explanatory connection with the external world (whether explicit or implicit) by which it speaks to us.<sup>9</sup> Wright complains, probably legitimately, that some of his critics have treated narrative readings of Paul as though the narrative “is just the embroidery around central theological points, which are taken to be non-narrative.”<sup>10</sup> Fair enough. It is not clear, however, that Wright sufficiently recognizes the critical role which the theological linking of narrative to the external world plays. One of the primary weaknesses of the appeal to “salvation-history” in the 1950s (and beyond) was the difficulty of determining precisely *how* that salvation-history addresses us as human beings here and now. It is already evident that Wright’s program is in some measure an heir of the earlier salvation-historical approaches. As we shall see, and this is our fundamental criticism, Wright accomplishes the linking of narrative to life through a sort of moral idealism.<sup>11</sup> His “explanation” of narrative, like any doctrinal statement, is therefore necessarily static, even if it is implicit rather than discursive.

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<sup>9</sup> Oswald Bayer, who appropriates Hamann’s critique of Kant, overthrows Kant’s dictum concerning the relation of thought and sensory objects in a reformulation of Kant’s own words: “Erklärung ohne Erzählung ist blind, Erzählung ohne Erklärung ist leer.” Narration (whether in faith or unbelief) has priority over explanation, since all our speaking is a response to the address of our Creator through the creation, which, of course, is historical in nature. The biblical narrative has the power to communicate itself to us, to supply its own explanation in God’s word of promise and its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, and to open our ears to hear our Creator. See Oswald Bayer, *Gott als Autor: Zu einer poetologischen Theologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 240–254. The alternative is to treat the stories humans tell and their establishing of historical facts as independent acts, abstract and isolated from the address of the Creator. Kevin Vanhoozer, who characterizes and critiques the work of Paul Ricoeur in a similar rephrasing of the Kantian dictum (“history without poetry is blind, but poetry without history is empty”), approximates Hamann and Bayer in his recognition of the resurrection as simultaneously “deed” and “promise.” Yet he does not take into account the prior and determinative poetical “speech-act” of God in the creation and preservation of the world, and of each of us within that world. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 279–284. On the development of Vanhoozer’s thought, see note 16 below.

<sup>10</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Wright’s approach is remarkably similar to one of the weaker points in the ethical theology of Karl Barth. I am by no means suggesting dependence or even a mediated influence of Barth on Wright’s work. It is merely the similar pattern in which Christ is linked with life that is instructive. See Karl Barth, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik: Die Lehre von Gott*, vol. II/2 (Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1942), 564–603. For a critique of Barth, see Oswald Bayer, *Theologie, Handbuch Systematischer Theologie 1* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1994), 356–379, to whom I am indebted. Bayer points to the similarity of

*The Unity of Scripture, Encounter with God and Faith.* Wright is quite insistent that “a single narrative line” runs through the Hebrew Scriptures and early Judaism to Paul and beyond. The “great stories” of Scripture yield not merely motifs and patterns, typological recapitulations, but a meta-narrative about God’s redeeming activity which runs from Genesis to Revelation. In this one must, of course, agree with Wright. We learn the basics of it already in Sunday School: creation, fall, flood, Babel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Egypt, Exodus, and so on, all the way to Christ’s return. Yet our “locating” ourselves here and now within that story, that is, within the larger, overarching purpose of God, is just as critical as the story itself. That location is not simply a point on a line. Naturally, progress in God’s dealings with the world is not to be denied. We are not called, as Israel once was, to possess the land of Canaan and slay its inhabitants. Nor are we looking for an earthly king, priesthood, or temple. Nevertheless, our connection to the biblical story is not punctiliar. Those who belong to Jesus Christ live simultaneously in two times.<sup>12</sup> In Adam we live in the time of the fallen creation, which God yet preserves. As those addressed by the word of God (both individually and corporately), we take our place alongside Israel in Scripture, although we certainly are distinct from it. In Christ we live simultaneously in the time of the new creation. We are those “upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor 10:11). Although the goal and end has come to us, we must make our way through the wilderness to that end, subject to the same temptations as Israel once was (1 Cor 10:13). God’s ways with Israel and Israel’s failures remain instructive for us: “these things happened as *patterns for us*, so that we might not desire evil things, as they desired them, nor become idolaters, as they did” (1 Cor 10:6-7a). God’s address to Israel is not his address to us. The two must not be confused. In addressing Israel, however, God addresses us *with* and *through* Israel.<sup>13</sup>

The discernment of “patterns” (or “types”) of God’s dealings *presupposes* a meta-narrative and its development. It is not independent of

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Barth’s ethics as presented in *Christusgemeinde und Bürgergemeinde* to the work of Oscar Cullmann that preceded it. The construction bears remarkable similarity to Wright’s work and in seminal form bears its weaknesses: Oscar Cullmann, *Christus und die Zeit: Die urchristliche Zeit- und Geschichtsauffassung*, 2nd ed. (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1948), 164-169.

<sup>12</sup> Wright attempts to take into account the intersection of the times but does not fully succeed, see *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 170-171.

<sup>13</sup> For this formulation of the distinction, I am indebted to Oswald Bayer, “Glauben und Hören: Grundzüge einer reformatorischen Theologie in gegenwärtiger Verantwortung” (lectures, University of Tübingen, winter semester, 2004-2005).

it. Conversely, and this again is the main point, *interpretation of the narrative of Scripture* is not a matter of pinpointing our situation on a line. Whether one has in view its corporate or individual significance, interpretation has to do with an encounter with God, which in the present time cannot be reduced to a single, unified vision.<sup>14</sup> We still see only "in a mirror, indirectly by reflection," and know and prophesy only "in part" (1 Cor 13:9, 12-13). We walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor 5:7). There is something to be appreciated in the current narrative approaches to theology and to the interpretation of Scripture in so far as they illuminate the life-setting(s) of doctrinal propositions. Yet it would be false to imagine that the narrative approach is free from the temptation to radical systematization, the attempt to reduce the message of Scripture to a single, unified vision of God and God's dealings with the world. The narrative approach can be in its own way just as radically systematic as any doctrinal outline. It is worth reminding ourselves that just as Scripture has not been given to us as a dogmatic outline, neither has it been given to us as a single, unified story. It is a collection of narratives that not only complement one another but also overlap and stand in tension with one another. There are two accounts of creation in Genesis, two accounts of the Davidic monarchy, and four Gospels. The Psalms tell and retell the story of Israel in ways that are sometimes remarkably different from one another.

More significant than the variations in perspective, and often lying behind these variations, are the differing ways in which God encounters his people. We no longer live in Eden, yet God's quiet governance and preservation of the present world preserves the traces of Eden in it. At the same time, in this fallen world we also encounter God as one who works not only life and blessing, but also death and destruction, and that not in predictable retribution of evil but seemingly without reason or cause (cf. Isa 45:7; 1 Sam 2:6). The Psalms especially recount the experience of God's hiddenness and absence (e.g., Psalms 44, 77). That is not all. Through the law, human beings further encounter the condemning voice of the God who calls them to account and who brings judgment on them for their sins. Israel's story in Scripture is anything but a single, unbroken line. The broken covenant brings an end to Israel's history, a break in the narrative which is bridged and overcome only by the wonder of God's unbounded mercy (e.g., Isa 6:13; 11:1; Hos 1:6-7; 2:21-23; Amos 8:1-3). The promises to the fathers notwithstanding, the story need not have run this way. The narrative is held together, not by a "strong historical continuity" as Wright

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<sup>14</sup> Here and in the following discussion of the four-fold nature of human encounter with God, I am again indebted to Oswald Bayer, *Theologie*, 408-418.



claims, but by the love and power of the Creator alone.<sup>15</sup> That brings us finally, and decisively, to the human encounter with the God who, out of unconditioned love, forgives sin, promises salvation and blessing, and in Jesus Christ has brought his promises to fulfillment. In the gospel, God reveals himself to us beyond all other encounters with him as our loving, forgiving, and saving Creator.

All four of these experiences of God appear in Paul's letter to the circle of house churches in Rome: the preserving presence of the Creator, for example, in his affirmation of the governing authorities (Rom 13:1-7); the hiddenness of God in his description of the sufferings of believers and again in his lament over Israel's unbelief (Rom 8:35-36; 9:1-5); the condemning work of the law in his charge that all human beings are under the power of sin (Rom 3:9-20; 7:1-25); and the gospel itself from the opening words to the conclusion of the letter. Paul makes no attempt to resolve these presently irreducible experiences by a dogmatic outline or a simple story-line. He rather *proclaims* their final resolution in Christ, confessing it by faith, not by sight: "I trust [πίπτειν] that neither death nor life, nor angels nor authorities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall have power to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:39).

As we have observed above, the tracing of the overarching narrative of Scripture, as proper as that task may be, does not finally interpret the Scripture. It is only a dimension of the *claritas externa*. The text must still somehow be brought to the world, or, more fundamentally stated, we must hear it as it brings itself to the world.<sup>16</sup> In place of the idealism by which Wright connects the textual narrative to the world (and thus interprets it), the Scriptures offer us a deeper, richer witness that does not diminish, overlook, or eliminate the unanswered questions, sorrows, laments, or radical guilt of the human being. The unity of the story-line of

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<sup>15</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 12.

<sup>16</sup> In its appeal to and use of narrative and dramatic form, current theology has not reflected sufficiently on this problem. Despite its virtue in seeking to articulate the connection between theological proposition and life, the recent Evangelical proposal by Kevin Vanhoozer makes the "performance" of the "divine drama" illegitimately contingent on human response. The (professional) theologian, whether academic or pastoral, correspondingly is thrust into a mediating position between Scripture and the congregation. One finds here a nearly Aristotelian alternative to Wright's nearly Platonistic idealism. See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005).

Scripture – which remains for us in the form of promise – is found solely in Jesus the Christ and *his story* in all its particularity (Luke 24:25–27, 44–49).

In the real life of this world, in time and space, the confession of the unity of the narrative of Scripture, and thereby the unity of God, cannot be reduced to a transforming vision or ideal. Contrary to outward appearance, it demands faith in the incarnate, crucified, and risen God. A *vision* necessarily remains essentially within the human being either in silent contemplation or in moral endeavor. In contrast, the encounter with the living God of Scripture calls human beings outside themselves into *communion* with God in *verbal form* in thanksgiving, lament, petition, and the confession of guilt.<sup>17</sup> If our interpretation of Scripture is to take place on the terms of Scripture, it must embrace this *claritas interna* which is found in faith and given by the Holy Spirit alone. Along with Israel in the wilderness, we have still to learn the ways of God, *precisely because* we already know the promise of God and the end of the story (see, for example, Pss 77:1–20; 95:1–11; Isa 40:3, 43:16; 55:8). With the psalmist, we still must confess, both individually and corporately, “my times are in your hands” (Ps 31:15). The interpretation of Scripture includes the divine address which comes to us through its narratives.<sup>18</sup> In Wright’s work, the drive for a *unified* interpretation leads to an idealism that overruns the irreducibly different ways in which God speaks to us in and through the Scriptures.

*Between the Lines: Reading the Text or Reading into the Text?* Narrative approaches to biblical theology, such as that of Wright, face special difficulties when dealing with the Letters of Paul and other didactic texts that primarily explain God’s works rather than narrating them. That does not mean, of course, that a narrative approach to Paul has no value. Especially in Galatians and Romans, but not exclusively there, his argument often has to do with how one ought to read Israel’s story (Rom 4:1–25; Gal 3:15–29; 4:21–31). Allusions to scriptural narratives abound in Paul’s Letters. Nevertheless, as the practitioners of this art have recognized, caution is in order. Those who adopt this sort of reading generally appeal to an *implicit narrative* that informs the statements which appear in the text.<sup>19</sup> The text stands in constant danger of being overrun by the imagination of the interpreter, rather than being illuminated by a story

<sup>17</sup> I again want to acknowledge the work of Oswald Bayer, e.g., *Theologie*, 408–418.

<sup>18</sup> Stories themselves naturally have the power to instruct and challenge, as do, for example, Jesus’ parables; however, the further they stand from our own stories, expectations, and time, the more they require explanation.

<sup>19</sup> For example, Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 9.

to which it alludes.<sup>20</sup> The various criteria which Richard Hays wisely proposed, and which have been widely adopted, may be applied with varying degrees of rigor.<sup>21</sup> Judgments likewise may differ as to whether the standard of detection has been met in any given reading.

Moreover, there is a substantial difference between detecting an allusion to a biblical narrative in a brief statement or phrase in Paul's Letters<sup>22</sup> and proposing a sweeping narrative sequence which shapes the interpretation of the whole of Paul's Letters. The larger claim demands stricter and more careful application of the criteria. A further "criterion of explicit markers" suggests itself: the more extensive the claim, and the more interpretive power that the interpreter accords to it, the more the interpreter is obligated to locate *explicit* words, phrases, and statements within the text that may be demonstrated to express the proposed theme or narrative sequence. The more far-reaching the claim, the more explicit that usage must be.

Wright's fundamental and repeated claim that Paul was a "covenant theologian," one who understood that God had made a single, unbroken covenant with Israel beginning with Abraham and extending to the consummation of all things, simply falls flat when so measured. It is something of an overstatement and an obscuring of a legitimate question to claim, as he does, that the infrequency of the term διαθήκη in Paul's Letters is "no argument against calling him a covenant theologian."<sup>23</sup> Even if one concedes this claim, one still may ask why, if the concept of "covenant" is so basic and significant to Paul's thought, the term διαθήκη does not at least appear at some crucial juncture of Paul's argument in something close to the sense that Wright ascribes to it. On this basis one may reasonably argue, for example, that υἱὸς θεοῦ conveys a significant aspect of Paul's Christology, even though it appears only eighteen times in his letters. In contrast, however, when διαθήκη finally appears in Romans 9:4—its first occurrence in Paul's Letter to the Romans—it is in the plural form. When it appears for the second and last time in the letter, it clearly refers to a future covenant that God will conclude with his people in redeeming them, hardly a sense that would support Wright's claim (Rom

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<sup>20</sup> I am reminded of an experience related to me by Ronald Youngblood. He once received from an author a dozen or more gratis copies of a self-published exposition of the entire Scripture based on Job 40:15 KJV ("behold now behemoth, which I made with thee"); it was titled *I Have Seen an Elephant in the Bible*.

<sup>21</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 29–33.

<sup>22</sup> E.g., Isaiah 50:1 and "exile" in Romans 7:14, "sold under sin."

<sup>23</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 26.

11:27). Further, it is not clear that Wright can subsume the plural in Romans 9:4 into his proposal since these "covenants" are obviously bound up with the Exodus and Sinai. The reference to "covenants of promise" in Ephesians 2:12 comes a bit closer, but in Ephesians 2:15 these covenants are distinguished from the law.

Paul's usage elsewhere offers little support to Wright's case, since, in two of the passages in which διαθήκη appears, Paul draws an explicit distinction between the new covenant and the old, between the law and the promise (2 Cor 3:6, 14; Gal 3:15, 17). I suppose that Wright would insist that the "new covenant" which Jesus effects, and to which Paul refers in his account of the institution of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:25), is to be understood merely as a "renewed" covenant, and that this claim somehow applies to Galatians 4 and 2 Corinthians 3. But to build such a massive construction on so few texts—to which such debatable claims must be attached—is highly questionable. Even if one overlooks these objections, one waits in vain for an argument as to why the contingencies of Paul's situation require him to set aside explicit use of the term "covenant" (or other, similar language) in expressing his primary theological conception. One may therefore reasonably ask whether the implicit narrative which Wright proposes is present at all. Reading between the lines has its weaknesses and dangers.

### *"The Covenant" and Idealism*

It is instructive to consider the conception of God's covenant with Israel that guides Wright's reading of Paul (and of the entire New Testament). It is best for us to consider this theme in connection with that of creation and God's work as Creator, as Wright himself does in his recent work on Paul. God's covenant with Abraham is intended to solve the problem of evil in the world. For this reason, Wright declares, all attempts to evade "covenant theology" are doomed to failure.<sup>24</sup> One might in fact agree with him. Everything depends on how one understands "covenant." That is precisely where Wright's reading of Scripture becomes interesting. His recent description of *what he means* by "covenant" does not begin with Abraham but with Psalm 19:7–14, God's gift of the law to Israel. Two dimensions of his interpretation of "covenant" are worth noting. In the first instance, the call of Abraham shifts directly to a charter for a people. Community and the individual may well be equal in Wright's reading, as he maintains, but of these two equals the priority belongs to

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<sup>24</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 24.

community. One shares in salvation only as one shares in the covenant community.

At this point Wright stands at some distance from Scripture and especially from Paul. He also lands in some rather large theological difficulties. His construal of God's covenant with Abraham in terms of the gift of the law to Israel is equally questionable. In the context of his discussion of the people of God, he frames the matter as follows:

For the writer of Genesis, the call of Abraham was God's answer to the problem of Adam which had become the problem of Babel . . . . The canonical Old Testament frames the entire story of God's people as the divine answer to the problem of evil: somehow, through this people, God will deal with the problem that has infected his good creation in general and his image-bearing creatures in particular. Israel is to be God's royal nation of holy priests, chosen out of the world but also for the sake of the world. Israel is to be the light of the world: the nations will see in Israel what it means to be truly human, and hence who the true God is. For this purpose, Israel is given Torah.<sup>25</sup>

Can the promise to Abraham, however, be identified with the law in this way? There is an irony here that we must not overlook: when Paul recounts the story of Abraham, he is intent upon showing the sharp distinction between promise and law (Gal 3:15-29; 4:21-31; Rom 4:1-25). The apostle's explicit reading of Israel's history stands at odds with the implicit reading which Wright attributes to him. This merging of promise and law, unconditioned gift and demand, runs through the whole of Wright's discussion and leads to what at first seems to be a lack of clarity in his presentation. In fact, Wright tries to resolve this difficulty, and leaves only one matter nebulous and highly problematic. His attempted resolution of the problem lies in his interpretation of Christ and his saving work, the same act of interpretation that brings Wright's narrative reading into life. The root conception of his broader project appears in this interpretation of Christ.

In assessing Wright's interpretation of Christ, we shall have to examine three interrelated tensions into which the problematic joining of law and promise resolves: first, the tension that we already have touched upon between conditionality and unconditionality within the promise to Abraham; which leads, second, to the central and fundamental tension between the purpose of God for Israel in the gift of Torah and God's saving work in Christ; and, third, the tension between the exclusivity of the gift of Torah to Israel and the universality of God's saving purpose.

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<sup>25</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 109.

*The Covenant: Conditional or Unconditional?* Within Wright's work, the covenant with Israel appears conditional, in the first instance at least, in that the sins of Israel thwart the blessings of the covenant for both them and the nations. Citing Deuteronomy 27-30, Wright recounts its warnings: if Israel obeys, the Promised Land will be fruitful; if it disobeys, the land itself will drive them into exile.<sup>26</sup> That is precisely what happened, of course: the prophets of Israel announced that the people of Israel, "the bearers of God's solution," were part of the problem.<sup>27</sup> Exile thus came upon Israel.<sup>28</sup> Matters are no different in Paul's day: the presence of sin within Israel "as it stands" means that God cannot effect his saving purposes through them.<sup>29</sup>

Yet Wright also speaks of the divine promise and covenant with Israel as undefeated and effective despite Israel's failure. God did not abandon his people when he sent them off to Babylon.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, God knew that Abraham and his family were part of the problem of sin, and yet called them to undo the sin of Adam.<sup>31</sup> The failure of Israel notwithstanding, the covenant with Abraham is meant as God's way of dealing with evil within the good creation.<sup>32</sup> Wright even speaks of God fulfilling the *promise* of a new creation, despite Israel's failure.<sup>33</sup> It is here that confusion enters into his argument, since the covenant with Abraham must either be an unconditioned promise or a conditional offer of blessing. It cannot be both at once. Yet this confusion, if it is present, is not the whole picture, since it is precisely at this point that Wright introduces God in the role of Creator, who unconditionally intervenes to rectify Israel's failure and bring salvation.

Just as the covenant serves to mend creation, so creation, or God's acting as Creator, serves to mend the defects in the covenant.<sup>34</sup> The Creator thus appears on the scene like an incompetent plumber who arrives to repair leaks in the system that he himself installed. In any case, Wright finds these two dimensions of God's saving work bound together in the

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<sup>26</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 23.

<sup>27</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 110, 115.

<sup>28</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 110.

<sup>29</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 117-118.

<sup>30</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 12.

<sup>31</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 23. Cf. Wright, *New Testament and the People of God*, 260-268.

<sup>32</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 36.

<sup>33</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 31.

<sup>34</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 22-26.

expression, "the righteousness of God."<sup>35</sup> Consequently, the unconditional saving purpose of God is loosed from a distinct word of promise and becomes generalized in an indistinct conception of "creation" or "promise." Correspondingly, the freedom of the Creator disappears. The Creator now has an obligation to bring salvation to the world, a claim which stands at the widest distance from Paul who rejects all speculation about the right of the Creator and insists that the Creator remains free even in that word of promise to which the Creator has bound himself (Rom 9:1–29).<sup>36</sup>

*Torah and Christ.* The first tension spills over into the second. On the one hand, as Wright repeatedly indicates, "Israel is to be the light of the world," the means by which God "will address and solve the problems of the world, bringing justice and salvation to the ends of the earth."<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, "Abraham and his family are themselves part of the problem as well as bearers of the solution."<sup>38</sup> As the exile made clear, Israel failed in its vocation.<sup>39</sup> The covenant that God made with Abraham, he fulfilled in Jesus. What then was God's purpose for Israel? Was it to be the means of salvation or the recipient of it?

This question is inescapably bound up with a second. What was the purpose of Torah, the gift given to Israel as the expression of God's covenant with the nation? On the one hand, according to Wright, Psalm 19 "celebrates Torah as the covenant charter, designed to enable each individual Israelite to become a whole, cleansed, integrated human being."<sup>40</sup> Torah was given to facilitate Israel's role as light of the world, so that "the nations will see in Israel what it means to be truly human, and hence who the true God is."<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, according to Paul, Torah "spectacularly" failed "to give the life it promised."<sup>42</sup> With the arrival of Torah in Israel, Israel "recapitulates the sin of Adam, and the sinful human life which follows from it."<sup>43</sup> What then, we may ask, was God's purpose for Torah? Was it to enable Israel to be a light for the nations? Or was

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<sup>35</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 25–26.

<sup>36</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 26, 130. Some confusion as to the location of unconditional promise remains, but the larger context in both cases suggests that Wright finally locates it in God's role as Creator.

<sup>37</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 24.

<sup>38</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 23.

<sup>39</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 29.

<sup>40</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 22–23.

<sup>41</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 109.

<sup>42</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 99.

<sup>43</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 31.



God's purpose for Torah to expose Israel's sin and point it to the Messiah? The answer for Wright, fraught with difficulty though it is, seems to be that it was both: Israel was to be both the means of salvation and its recipient. It is at this point in the narrative that God appears as the plumber who repairs his own work.

Wright attempts to reconcile the irreconcilable by proposing that God fulfilled the covenant with Israel through *Jesus*, the one faithful Israelite: "Precisely as Messiah, he offers God that representative faithfulness to the plan of salvation through which the plan can go ahead at last, Abraham can have a worldwide family, and the long entail of Adam's sin and death can be undone . . . ." <sup>44</sup> For Wright, the Messiah's task is to act *as Israel's representative*, embodying that faithfulness to covenant and Torah which Israel had failed to do. In so acting, "the Messiah has done for the world what Israel was called to do but could not, namely to act on behalf of the whole world." <sup>45</sup> Now those who are in the Messiah and transformed by the Spirit attain "the genuine humanness envisaged as God's will for Israel." <sup>46</sup> Furthermore, Jesus acted not only as Israel's representative but also as God's representative. <sup>47</sup> The high Christology, which Wright quite admirably embraces, shines through brilliantly at this point: Jesus is the true image of God who has fulfilled "the double divine purpose" in "creation and covenant." <sup>48</sup> In him God has revealed his righteousness. <sup>49</sup>

This is the heart of Wright's interpretation of Scripture, the means by which he binds his narrative reading to life. Jesus fulfills his saving role as Messiah by being the faithful Israelite, God's image and God's representative. In him we *see* the true God and what it means to be truly human, and *in seeing* him we are transformed by the power of the Spirit. Among other unnamed functions, the resurrection of Jesus serves "not least" as a *symbol* of the new creation. <sup>50</sup> Torah itself could not fill this role. *The image of true humanity had to be embodied in human life.* Here lies the significance of Wright's repeated statement that God gave the gift of Torah to Israel so that Israel might become a light to the nations. Israel's failure to be this light has been overcome by the "representative faithfulness" of Jesus the Messiah. In him God's righteousness, God's covenant

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<sup>44</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 47.

<sup>45</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 122.

<sup>46</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 124.

<sup>47</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 48.

<sup>48</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 27–28.

<sup>49</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 30.

<sup>50</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 70.



faithfulness, has finally been revealed. The "genuine humanness" that is God's will for all humanity is ours in him. At this point any hint of the "wonderful exchange" between God and humanity in Christ is excluded. The fundamental element of Wright's conception of "representation" is thus a moral idealism with Platonistic features.<sup>51</sup> The human being threatens to become "god" writ small.

Alongside this idealistic conception of Jesus' saving work, Wright retains the traditional understanding of Jesus' death as sacrificial and atoning, a death in which God passed judgment on the sin of Israel and of the world.<sup>52</sup> It is precisely here that another major element in Wright's meta-narrative comes into play. In his estimation, "many if not most" Jews of Paul's day saw themselves as living in a continuing exile, still under punishment for sin.<sup>53</sup> Jesus' death and resurrection brought for them (and therewith for the world) the end of exile, the forgiveness of sins. Nevertheless, as far as he is able, Wright makes this more or less traditional interpretation of Jesus' death serve his larger idealistic reading. Several features of his work make this apparent. First, he treats the presence of guilt and sin within Israel as a corporate phenomenon. While guilt ultimately has to do with the individual, it has to do in the first place with the nation. Consequently, Wright imagines that first-century Jews read their continuing guilt off of Israel's outward circumstances and the unfulfilled promises of God: "Israel's present plight is to be explained, *within* the terms of the divine covenant faithfulness, as his punishment for her sin."<sup>54</sup> No room is left for the God who inexplicably hides his face. Nor is there any decisive address to the "rebellious and despairing" human heart. Second, particularly in connection with Deuteronomy 30 and Romans 10:5-11, Wright interprets Israel's salvation (and that of the world) as contingent on its repentance and renewal.<sup>55</sup> The restoration of creation, the present plight of which is the indicator of humanity's guilt, is the result of the renewal of humanity, which in turn has its basis in the faithfulness of Jesus. Wright undoubtedly regards the forgiveness of sins as somehow underlying renewal, but it nowhere appears in his work as the

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<sup>51</sup> It is for this reason that the merging of law and promise (or gospel), which was characteristic of Barth's theology, reappears as a central element of Wright's work.

<sup>52</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 38, 53, 120.

<sup>53</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 92, 132-135, 138-140.

<sup>54</sup> Wright, *New Testament and the People of God*, 271.

<sup>55</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 32-33, 37-38, 91-92, 125, 132-133, and in considerable detail in Wright, "The Letter to the Romans," 658-664, where Wright distances himself slightly from Barth in that he reads Leviticus 18:5 in Romans 10:5 as speaking of the believer, rather than of Christ.

unconditioned act by which God recreates fallen human beings and, with them, the world. The renewal of the human being, not a bare and unqualified forgiveness of sins, serves as the basis for the restoration.

That leads back, finally, to the initial question: What was God's purpose for Israel? Was it to be the recipient of salvation or the means of salvation? In light of the preceding reflections, the lack of clarity in Wright's construal becomes telling. God called Abraham in order to solve "the problem of evil, the problem of Adam, the problem of the world."<sup>56</sup> Israel in the first place was to be a "light to the nations." Did God then intend Israel to die for the sins of the world? If Israel had been faithful to God, would it have fulfilled this role? How could the people who from the start were part of the problem *themselves* be the solution to the problem? That these questions remain unresolved indicate that, despite its traditional elements, *Wright's understanding of Christ's saving work is driven by the moral idealism inherent to his conception of "representation."* At the very least, his work requires considerable clarification at this crucial point. Otherwise, the traditional understanding of the atonement seems to ride along in his work as nothing more than excess baggage.

*The Covenant: Exclusive or Universal?* The third tension in Wright's reading of Scripture confirms the primacy of its moral idealism. Throughout his work, the scriptural dialectic between the exclusivity of God's call upon Israel, especially as it is expressed in the gift of Torah, and the universal purpose of God is heightened and stretched into an aporia. As already noted, in Wright's view Israel's particular sin was that it claimed the exclusive privilege of election and covenant for itself, rather than fulfilling its purpose of being a light to the nations. In another context, it would be worth retracing some of the broad strokes of Israel's story in Scripture, where it quickly becomes clear that this reading of Israel's vocation cannot be sustained. Indeed, the end of the Exodus is the conquest of Canaan, where it was God's purpose that Israel utterly destroy its inhabitants. The biblical Psalms celebrate not only the conversion of the nations to the true God but also their defeat and destruction. This inner biblical tension remains until the arrival of the Messiah. Likewise in the prophets: while Israel is singled out for judgment, it is nevertheless promised renewal. In the wonder of God's love, "the gifts and calling of God" upon Israel remain irrevocable, despite Israel's failure.<sup>57</sup> We should also note that the unconditionality of the election of the people of Israel

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<sup>56</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 24.

<sup>57</sup> Rom 11:29.

plays a significant role in Paul's understanding of justification, as becomes apparent in Romans 9–11.

It is the gift of Torah that interests us at this point. On the one hand, Torah is Israel's guide by which "Israel celebrates its unique vocation as the creator's chosen people, the people who know the secrets of the universe and are called to live by its otherwise hidden rules, while the other nations blunder around in darkness."<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, as we have seen, Israel's meta-sin was that it treated its vocation as "indicating exclusive privilege."<sup>59</sup> In Wright's view, the psalmist's joy that the Lord who has made known his "statutes and judgments to Israel" and has not "dealt thus with any other nation" (Ps 147:20) entails a "certain unappealing smugness."<sup>60</sup> This criticism, which is fundamental to Wright's entire program, finds at least partial resolution in his idealistic conception of the covenant. According to his basic line of interpretation, when God fulfills the covenant in Jesus he enables "Abraham's family to be the worldwide Jew-plus-Gentile people it was always intended to be."<sup>61</sup>

It is from this perspective that the charge of exclusivism arises against Israel. Wright readily acknowledges that Gentiles could and did join the nation of Israel and that Israel might invite them to do so, but that was at the expense of their remaining Gentiles. In the end, Wright implicitly conceives of God's covenant, as it ought to have been embodied in Israel, as consisting finally in a Torah stripped of ethnic particularity, food-laws, circumcision, Sabbath, ceremony, and whatever else might not conform to a universal human ideal. Although it is highly problematic to speak in this way, Israel's sin was that it did not see beyond the particular demands of Torah to this ideal. This is another indication that a form of moral idealism drives the whole of Wright's interpretation. This problem expresses itself again directly in his repeated assertion that the "new covenant" is nothing

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<sup>58</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 22. Without in any way dismissing the benefits of the law for Israel, for example, such as in Deuteronomy 4:5–8, one has to regard this statement as an over-reading of Psalm 19 that runs into direct conflict with Paul's declaration that the "work of the Law" is written in the hearts of Gentiles (Rom 2:15) and almost certainly, too, with his charge that immoral idolaters "know the judgment of God, that those who do such things are worthy of death" (Rom 1:32). Wright's own reading of Romans 1:32 stands at odds with his claim here. See Wright, "Letter to the Romans," 434. His interpretation of Romans 2:15 as a reference to believing Gentiles fails to convince, not least because Paul here clearly speaks of the final judgment comprehensively (i.e., encompassing the entire human race).

<sup>59</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 36.

<sup>60</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 112.

<sup>61</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 37.

but a "renewed covenant." He does not see that *precisely* in the "new covenant," and *only* in the "new covenant," the reality of the eschaton breaks into the world, transcending the distinction between Jew and Gentile. Consequently, he necessarily introduces universalism into God's former covenant with Israel *by interpreting that covenant in idealistic terms*.<sup>62</sup>

### *Wright's Reading of Justification*

We are at long last ready to consider Wright's reading of justification in Paul. It is best to allow him to speak in his own words. For the sake of clarity, we may begin with a description of the thought of early Judaism from *The New Testament and the People of God*:

When the age to come finally arrives, those who are the true covenant members will be vindicated; but if one already knows the signs and symbols which mark out those true covenant members, this vindication, this 'justification', *can be seen already in the present time*. Covenant faithfulness in the present is the sign of covenant vindication in the future . . . .<sup>63</sup>

This understanding of justification continues in early Christianity and comes to expression in Romans. Wright therefore claims in *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*:

the word 'justification' does not itself *denote* the process whereby, or the event in which, a person is brought by grace from unbelief, idolatry and sin into faith, true worship and renewal of life. Paul, clearly and unambiguously, uses a different word for that, the word 'call'. The word 'justification', despite centuries of Christian misuse, is used by Paul to denote that which happens immediately after the 'call': 'those God called, he also justified' (Rom 8.30). In other words, those who hear the gospel and respond to it in faith are *then* declared by God to be his people, his elect, 'the circumcision', 'the Jews', 'the Israel of God'. They are given the status *dikaïos*, 'righteous', 'within the covenant'.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Admittedly, he is able to speak of Paul's theology of the "renewed covenant" as that in which the nations may share on equal terms. See Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 38. This statement has to be regarded either as an inconsistency—otherwise Israel would have no particular sin—or, more likely, as expressing Paul's correction of Israel's failure. With this, however, it is not merely early Judaism but the Israel of Scripture—the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms—which Paul's theology corrects!

<sup>63</sup> Wright, *New Testament and the People of God*, 336.

<sup>64</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 121. See also Wright, *New Testament and the People of God*, 458.

Consequently:

The doctrine of justification by faith, from Galatians through Philippians to Romans, was never about how people were to be converted, how someone might become a Christian, but about how one could *tell*, in the present, who God's true people were—and hence who one's family were, who were the people with whom one should as a matter of family love and loyalty, sit down and eat.<sup>65</sup>

Several features of his interpretation of justification stand out. First, Wright understands justification to be a subordinate element of the covenant which he discerns in the scriptural narrative. Salvation of human beings in the proper sense, that is, their deliverance from sin and guilt, takes place apart from and prior to justification, which now is placed in a medial position between the initial event of salvation (namely, the call of God), and the final vindication of God's people when all creation is renewed. Wright's construal of final redemption thus lacks clarity. Final salvation, he says, is not to be regarded as an "ahistorical rescue *from* the world but as the *transhistorical* redemption *of* the world."<sup>66</sup> The *parousia* of the Lord is not to be regarded so much as a "coming" as it is "drawing back a previously unnoticed curtain to reveal what had been there all along."<sup>67</sup> The King will come back and transform the earth where we have lived "as a colonial outpost of heaven."<sup>68</sup> Christian words and work no longer remain distinctly within the limit of "witness" but in some measure are exposed to taking upon themselves absolute burdens. Every believer is charged with "making God's saving, restorative justice as much of a reality as possible in the present age."<sup>69</sup> The fulfillment of God's redemptive purpose for creation does not arrive decisively with the final judgment but with the completion of a transition already begun. The problem is compounded by Wright's insistence that Israel *alone* was to be the channel of blessing and salvation for the world, a role which through Jesus the Messiah now falls upon the community of believers.<sup>70</sup> These statements may be read innocently, of course, but there is no clear indication of their limit.

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<sup>65</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 159.

<sup>66</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 12.

<sup>67</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 143.

<sup>68</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 143.

<sup>69</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 147.

<sup>70</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 24, 108–129. Consequently, insufficient room is left for God's quiet governance of the fallen world beyond the pale of the church. It is allotted only the role, through pagan rulers, of preventing anarchy. See *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 66.

Second, this medial placement of "justification" means that justification takes the form of a "constative utterance," that is, a statement which establishes facts.<sup>71</sup> God declares those who have faith to be his people, to be *dikaïos*, righteous. God shall yet vindicate them and give them justice as an act of his covenant fidelity. For Wright, the *effect* of justification is located firmly in a covenantal framework. For Paul, however, justification ultimately consists in nothing other than a "performative utterance" by God. The promise of God that is fulfilled in Christ *creates* the human being anew and thus effects righteousness.<sup>72</sup>

Third, the divine declaration that human beings are righteous is based on "faith." Here Wright's understanding of justification becomes highly problematic, and rather troubling. In some sense, he wishes to find an unconditioned work of God behind and before justification, but, as we have seen, he does not conceive the covenant with Abraham as strictly promissory. His conception of it is tinged with the demands of a moral idealism. The unconditional, saving commitment of God to creation that he supposes is itself problematic since it remains diffuse and unattached to a definite word from God. Wright's moral idealism, moreover, comes to bear on his conception of faith, so that his discussion of "faith" contains the lack of clarity that we have seen in various forms in his work. On the one hand, it is faith alone which justifies. On the other hand, Wright does not distinguish between faith and "faithfulness" or "obedience," especially in his understanding of Paul's references to "the faith of Christ." We have already seen what a large role the "faithfulness" of Jesus plays in Wright's understanding of salvation. Those who believe are transformed by the power of the Spirit. They come to share in God's new humanity, the genuine humanness that Jesus embodied. This new humanity is marked out not by circumcision or Torah but *by the badge of faith*.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> I have borrowed the appeal to John Austin's speech-act theory from Oswald Bayer. The debates associated with the Holl school at the beginning of the twentieth century used the Kantian distinction between "analytical" and "synthetic" judgments, in which the external and effective character of the divine word does not come to expression.

<sup>72</sup> The difference between the two forms of utterance may be illustrated within a modern legal context (which, it should be noted, differs from the biblical context). A "constative utterance," in the American system of justice at least, is the task of the jury, which finds the facts with respect to the law in a given case. The "performative utterance" belongs to the judge, who, taking up the jury's verdict, pronounces sentence or releases the accused with an operative statement. The judge's word *effects* the sentence, in contrast to the work of the jury.

<sup>73</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 121.

Thus, while faith for Wright has its center in the human heart, it is also *outward and visible*, a mark of allegiance to Jesus as Messiah. Wright understands faith, whatever else it might be, as a transforming vision of the image of God and of the true humanness found in Jesus. Wright's understanding of faith thus comes under the pull of his moral idealism. *It is no longer clear in his proposal that justification takes place entirely in the work of God in Christ, a work which faith passively receives.* Rather than regarding faith as an expression of the new creation, Wright makes the blessing and renewal of the creation contingent on faith, a deeply troubling move when one considers that in his reading "faith" embraces "faithfulness." For this reason, too, his claim that when, on account of the work of the Spirit, Paul looks forward to the last day, "he holds up as his joy and crown, not the merits and death of Jesus, but the churches he has planted who remain faithful to the Gospel."<sup>74</sup> The dichotomy is false and, again, deeply troubling.

It is instructive to consider for a moment the potential situation of the people who embrace Wright's reading of Scripture. Believing in Jesus, they know themselves to share in the vocation to be truly human people by the power of the Spirit, part of the vanguard of the new creation. Whether one takes this vocation leniently or strictly, one's status with respect to God is determined by the mark of faith in one's life. How much faith is enough? To what extent must my life be marked by this faith—or faithfulness? The word of forgiveness and justification in this case is very much like the word of the priest to the young, pre-Reformational Luther in the sacrament of penance; the priest, seeing the contrition of the penitent and thus finding righteousness present, stated the facts of the case in the word of forgiveness: *te absolvo*.<sup>75</sup> At the very least, Wright's interpretation of justification results in a radical loss of assurance, which we fallen human beings then will always seek to find elsewhere (to be sure, "by the power of the Spirit") in our works, our faith, and our humanness. We thus lose God as our Creator who by his word of promise alone forgives us and makes us new creatures. This loss of assurance and of the knowledge of our Creator go largely unnoticed in Wright's scheme because, through the lens of his moral idealism, he views salvation primarily as a corporate reality and overlooks divine judgment as an essential element of the saving event. That you and I must die and stand before God *alone* hardly comes

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<sup>74</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 148.

<sup>75</sup> Again my debt to Oswald Bayer is apparent. See his *Promissio: Geschichte der reformatorischen Wende in Luthers Theologie*, 2nd ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989).

into view. We therefore return to Paul for a still fresher reading of justification.

### III. Justification Still Fresher Yet: Paul's Witness in Romans

We will take Paul's pithy summary of God's justifying work in Christ in Romans 3:21–26 as the focal point. After reading the text afresh, I will offer a series of reflections in which I will attempt to connect it with Paul's larger argument in Romans. On the basis of these reflections I want to offer four theses on justification.

#### *God's Righteousness through Faith from the Crucified and Risen Christ*

Romans 3:21–26:

Now,

apart from the Law,  
the righteousness of God has been manifest  
being borne witness by the Law and the prophets.  
indeed, the righteousness of God  
through the faith *which is of Jesus Christ* unto all who believe.

For all sinned and lack the glory of God,  
being justified freely by his grace through the *deliverance* which is in  
Christ Jesus.

whom God *purposed as a mercy-seat*, through faith, by his blood  
unto the demonstration of his righteousness  
on account of the passing over of past sins  
in the mercy of God.  
unto the demonstration of his righteousness  
in the present time  
so that he might be righteous  
and the justifier of the one who is of *the faith of Jesus*.

The passage begins in striking and profound contrast to Paul's preceding discussion as to how one is to read the law (Rom 2:17–3:20). The Jewish dialogue partner reads the law as the gift of the knowledge of God's will, with the underlying supposition that the human being (no doubt with divine aid) is able to put that knowledge into practice (Rom 2:17–24). Paul reads the law in a radically different way. The law *speaks* to us, announcing our subjection to sin, which is both tragic and guilty. It speaks in order that "every mouth might be shut" and the whole world might be guilty (ὑπόδικος) before God (Rom 3:19). The inner voice of conscience is insufficient. God's saving purpose requires the external voice of the law. It is not that Paul imagines that human beings are incapable of doing anything that the law demands. Those who possess the law are well



able to accomplish the "works of the Law," deeds of outward observance which mark a person as a pious Jew;<sup>76</sup> but "no flesh" can be justified before God by these deeds. It is the experience of sinning, not justification, which comes through the law ("the knowledge of sin," cf. Rom 7:7-13).

"Now the righteousness of God has been manifest" (Rom 3:21). With these words Paul takes up his opening announcement that the gospel is God's saving power *because* the righteousness of God is revealed in it (Rom 1:16-17). This expression quite clearly alludes to Psalm 98:2, and similar passages in the Scriptures, where "the righteousness of God" does not refer to a divine attribute or to a status conferred. It refers instead to an event in which God establishes saving justice in the rebellious and corrupt world which he nevertheless rules: "Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The Lord has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations." The revelation of this righteousness of God in the gospel follows the pattern which Paul finds in the prophet Habakkuk who, in the face of impending judgment and disaster on Israel, announces that "the righteous one shall live by the faithfulness of the Lord to his promise" (Hab 2:4).<sup>77</sup> The apostle rightly understands this "living by the faithful promise" as a call to faith. As is the case elsewhere in the prophets, deliverance comes through disaster. Mercy is given only in judgment. Justification comes only in the justification of God against his enemies. Paul underscores this dimension of God's righteousness, when in Romans 3:4-5 he cites Psalm 51:4 in conjunction with Psalm 116:11. Every human being shall be shown to be a liar (that is, in context, an idolater) in order that God might be justified in his words, words which declare us to be so. The manifestation of God's righteousness is the manifestation of our unrighteousness: *deus verax, homo mendax*.

It is to this understanding of the righteousness of God and of justification that Paul returns in Romans 3:21-26, where he four times refers to God's righteousness at the opening and closing of this summary, thus bracketing and defining his description of justification. Paul's final reference to the "demonstration of God's righteousness," which bears

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. 4Q398 14-17, II, 3 = 4QMMT 113, in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, ed. Florentino García Martínez, trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 84-85.

<sup>77</sup> I have offered a slight over-translation, the basic idea of which is well-supported by the context. See Mark A. Seifrid, "Unrighteous by Faith: Apostolic Proclamation in Romans 1:18-3:20," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 2, *The Paradoxes of Paul*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 112-113.

distinct overtones, is worth noting. He thereby indicates that God "comes to be just": God's right is established by the revelation of his righteousness "in the present time," namely in the crucified and risen Jesus. The judgment and salvation of the fallen human being emerge together from the same event. By the wonder of God's love, our condemnation is simultaneously our justification and salvation. The two can be distinguished but not separated. They are found in the crucified and risen Christ alone.

Christ stands at the center of this description of justification. The glory of God the Creator, which each and every human being has abandoned in idolatry, is restored to us by God's justifying work in him (Rom 3:23; cf. 1:23). In Paul's words, we are "justified by the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24). In the resurrection of the crucified Jesus, the new exodus promised by God has come about. This event is not merely the starting point but the abiding center of the life of the believer: God purposed Christ Jesus to be for us ἱλαστήριον, the mercy-seat, the one and only place we sinful human beings may *ever* encounter God in his glory for salvation (Rom 3:25). The justifying work of God in Christ encompasses both the moment of deliverance and the entire life of the one who believes, a relation which continues *into all eternity*.

The righteousness of God revealed in Christ for salvation is made *ours* by faith. More precisely, it is "through the faith of Jesus Christ." Neither the traditional reading of this expression as "faith in Christ," nor the currently popular reading "faith/fairfulness of Christ," is fully satisfying, the former because Paul generally presupposes the object of faith in the term πίστις itself and the latter because we never find in Paul a verbal expression of Christ's faith/fairfulness. Furthermore, there are a number of signals in this passage, and elsewhere, that in this usage Paul views the crucified and risen Christ himself as the source from which faith flows.<sup>78</sup> Already his description of justification taking place "in Christ Jesus," and that implicitly as the restoration of the glory of God (Rom 3:24), points in this direction, as does his concluding description of the believer as one who is "of the faith of Jesus" (Rom 3:26). It is also important to see that Paul describes Abraham's faith in the following chapter as the work of the promissory word of God the Creator "who makes alive the dead and calls (for his purposes) that which is not as if it exists" (Rom 4:17). Abraham believes and acts, yet, in Paul's reading of Genesis, Abraham is more fundamentally acted upon: despite his aging body and Sarah's barrenness,

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<sup>78</sup> See now Mark A. Seifrid, "The Faith of Christ," in *The Faith of Christ Debate*, ed. Michael F. Bird (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, forthcoming).

with respect to the promise "he was made strong in faith" and "is made fully assured" that the Creator could do what he promised. Abraham's "giving glory to God"—Paul here overlooks his rather remarkable failure (Genesis 20)—is nothing other than the work of the Creator in Abraham (Rom 4:20). Our believing in "the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead" is no different. Faith for Paul is nothing other than the word of promise performing its work in those who believe.

A note of individualism appears decisively in the final word of Paul's summary: "God is the justifier of the one who is of the faith of Jesus" (Rom 3:26). This makes clear that Paul's preceding universal statements are to be understood as individualizing as well: "the righteousness of God (is given) through the faith of Christ *unto all who believe, . . . for all have sinned and lack God's glory*" (Rom 3:22–23). This individualizing emphasis, which continues in Romans 3:27–31, is an extension of Paul's prior argument. Already at the outset he uses the singular pairing "Jew and Greek" to indicate the scope of the gospel (Rom 1:16; 2:9–10), setting it aside only to indicate universal subjection to sin (Rom 3:9), and then pointedly opening his catena of condemnation with the singular, "there is none righteous, no not one" (Rom 3:10; Ps 14:1). Likewise, when he turns to the moralizing judge at the opening of Romans 2, he shifts to the singular form common in the diatribe and continues to use the singular in his address to the rhetorical figure of the Jew in Romans 2:17–29. Particularly here, in his rejection of the efficacy of the law in imparting true wisdom and knowledge, he drives a wedge between the benefits in which Israel shared corporately and the responsibility of the individual before God. We must not overlook the thrust of the argument which begins in Romans 1:18 and runs into Romans 3 and beyond. Paul understands human beings to seek their identity *within a corporate reality of this fallen world and its unified narrative*. Sometimes, as in the case of Paul, they seek to be an outstanding member of that community (cf. Gal 1:14).<sup>79</sup> The believing Paul, in contrast, seeks to individuate, to set the individual before the presence of God as a sinner (Rom 3:4; *tibi soli peccavi*; Ps 51:4) and as one who is justified and forgiven in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:26). The unity of our times is found in him alone.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> We may observe that Western individualism, expressed primarily in materialism (or sometimes in reaction against it) operates precisely in this way as it is subject to mass marketing (or, rarely, in reaction against it).

<sup>80</sup> See Rudolf Hermann, *Religionsphilosophie*, ed. Heinrich Assel, *Gesammelte und nach gelassene Werke* 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 137–160.

It is here that we find the significance of the brief clause in Romans 3:22, "for there is no distinction," that is, no distinction between Jew and Gentile. The reason that the inclusion of Gentiles appears so regularly in connection with Paul's teaching on justification is that their participation in the people of God was a *visible and bodily* expression of the justification of the ungodly, an event which cannot be reduced to a moral vision (see Gal 2:11-21). Table-fellowship with Gentiles was therefore a call to mission, to the evangelization of the world, a call to an ever-expanding community. This community of Jews and Gentiles was not held together by any visible outward ties but solely by the invisible bond of faith in the risen Messiah (Rom 15:5-13). It was a community of forgiven sinners who came to one another, not by means of an ideal of equality (defined on whose terms?), and certainly not by a common culture (cf. Rom 14:1-23), but through Jesus Christ alone. As Paul instructs his readers in Romans 9-11, Israel and the nations were, after all, God's work. Their varying paths to Christ were the open, visible, and necessary indications that God's mercy, if it is to be mercy, must be radically free.

#### *Theses on Justification:*

1. The gospel of God's saving work in Jesus Christ, in which God gives himself to us in unconditioned promise, is distinct from his condemning work in the law, which remains necessary to us throughout life.

2. Justification is an event in Jesus Christ in which God comes to his right as Creator in the fallen human being. It is not merely "God's covenant faithfulness."

3. Faith is the creation of God by the word of promise, the gospel of Jesus Christ, which stands over against the unfaithfulness of the human being.

4. Through law and gospel, God individuates the fallen human being who seeks to hide in earthly community and its history. God thus saves us and sets us in the community of justified sinners.

## The Mystical Sense of Scripture According to Johann Jacob Rambach

Benjamin T. G. Mayes

The scholastic Lutheran Pietist Johann Jacob Rambach (1693-1735), professor in Halle and Giessen, is perhaps best known among modern Lutherans for his hymn, "Baptized into Thy Name Most Holy."<sup>1</sup> Many of Rambach's writings were well-liked by the first few generations of Missouri Synod Lutherans<sup>2</sup> and nineteenth-century German-American evangelicals as well.<sup>3</sup> In the first half of the eighteenth century, however, Rambach was known not only for his work in hymnology, homiletics, catechesis, dogmatics,<sup>4</sup> and as a publisher,<sup>5</sup> but also for his work in

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<sup>1</sup> *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), #298; *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), #224; *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), #590. For biographies of Rambach, see Carl Bertheau, s.v. "Rambach: Johann Jakob R (I)," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1875-1912), hereafter cited as ADB; Klaus-Gunther Wesseling, s.v. "Rambach, Johann Jacob," in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* (Verlag Traugott Bautz), <http://www.bautz.de/bbkl> (accessed February 12, 1999), hereafter cited as BBKL; Carl Bertheau, s.v. "Rambach," in *Realenzyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1905), hereafter cited as RE<sup>3</sup>; Carl Bertheau, s.v. "Rambach, 1. Johann Jacob," in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 13 vols. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1908-1914; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952), hereafter cited as *Schaff-Herzog*; and Richard A. Muller, "J. J. Rambach and the Dogmatics of Scholastic Pietism," *Consensus* (Winnipeg) 16, no. 2 (1990): 8-9. For the most complete bibliography of Rambach's works, see Ulrich Bister and Martin Zeim, eds., *Johann Jakob Rambach: Leben, Briefe, Schriften* (Giessen: Brunnen Verlag, 1993). For literature, see BBKL s.v. "Rambach."

<sup>2</sup> *Lenten Prayers* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1912); *Wohlunterrichteter Katechet* (St. Louis: Volkening, 1866; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1880); Reinhold Pieper, *Evangelisch-Lutherische Homiletik nach der Erläuterung über die Praecepta Homiletica von J. J. Rambach* (Milwaukee: Germania, 1895; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1901).

<sup>3</sup> *Christus in Mose; oder Einhundert Betrachtungen über die vornehmsten Weissagungen und Vorbilder auf Christum in den fünf Büchern Mosis* (Cleveland: Verlagshaus der Evangelischen Gemeinschaft, 1886).

<sup>4</sup> Johann Jacob Rambach, *Dogmatische Theologie oder Christliche Glaubens-Lehre*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt & Leipzig: Wolfgang Ludwig Spring, 1744).

hermeneutics,<sup>6</sup> and especially the “mystical sense of Scripture” (*sensus mysticus scripturae*).<sup>7</sup> Rambach is a part of the Lutheran tradition and not an innovator concerning the mystical sense of Scripture. While cultivating the knowledge of the mystical sense, Rambach also had a high respect for the literal sense of Scripture. From his *De sensus mystici criteriis* (“On the Criteria of the Mystical Sense”) it will be shown that Rambach’s view of the mystical sense, even if not as objective as some would like, is by no means subjective, arbitrary allegorizing.

According to Rambach, the sense of Scripture is “that meaning which the Holy Spirit represented to the mind of the holy writers and which they, through pleasant words, have represented to the mind of the readers.”<sup>8</sup> Rambach upholds the classic Reformation rule that the literal sense of the Scripture is one,<sup>9</sup> but he also believes that “under the literal sense there is a mystical sense hidden in many, but not in all, places of the Holy Scripture.”<sup>10</sup> For example, in Numbers 21, the bronze serpent was lifted up on a pole so that whoever would look at the snake would be saved from death caused by snake bites. Rambach insists that this literally took place (*sensus literalis*). Underneath this factual occurrence, however, something else is prophesied or indicated, namely, that the Son of Man would be lifted up on the cross, as Christ himself explains this passage in John 3:14. This is the *sensus mysticus*.<sup>11</sup>

Scholarship concerning Rambach and Lutheran Pietist hermeneutics are not agreed, however, as to how this view of the mystical sense fits into the general flow of Lutheran hermeneutical tradition. Some have implied that Pietist hermeneutics, emphasizing a double sense of Scripture (literal and mystical), are a clean break from Lutheran orthodoxy’s rule of *sensus literalis unus est* (the literal sense is one).<sup>12</sup> Others have noticed that Pietism

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<sup>5</sup> Bister, *Johann Jakob Rambach*, 97–118, lists 22 works of Luther published by Rambach. Rambach was also the publisher of the first complete works of Johann Arndt, according to Tholuck, s.v. “Arndt, Johann,” in *RE*<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Johann Jacob Rambach, *Institutiones hermeneuticae sacrae variis observationibus copiosissimisque exemplis biblicis illustratae* (Jena: Joan. Wilh. Hartung, 1743).

<sup>7</sup> Johann Jacob Rambach, *Commentatio hermeneutica de sensus mystici criteriis* (Jena: Ex officina Hartungiana, 1728).

<sup>8</sup> Rambach, *Dogmatische Theologie*, 1:225. All translations are by the author of this article.

<sup>9</sup> Rambach, *Dogmatische Theologie*, 1:225; Rambach, *Institutiones hermeneuticae sacrae*, 64.

<sup>10</sup> Rambach, *Dogmatische Theologie*, 1:227.

<sup>11</sup> Rambach, *Dogmatische Theologie*, 1:227–228.

<sup>12</sup> Bengt Hägglund, *History of Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), 307, 327; Emanuel Hirsch, *Geschichte der neuern evangelischen Theologie*, 5 vols.

did not intend to make a new hermeneutic other than what was received from Lutheran orthodoxy, and that a double sense of Scripture had already been taught by the orthodox Lutheran theologians.<sup>13</sup> A third interpretation sees broad continuity between orthodox and Pietist hermeneutics, but also a “change of accent” on the part of Pietism, emphasizing application.<sup>14</sup> In fact, roughly a century earlier the orthodox Lutheran theologian Salomon Glass (1593–1656)<sup>15</sup> had already taught a *sensus duplex* (double sense of Scripture) and had given rules for discovering types in his *Philologia Sacra* (“Sacred Philology,” 1623–1636).<sup>16</sup> Glass was not the first to suggest using

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(Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1951), 2:173–174. Usually the presence of *sensus duplex* language prior to the Pietists is recognized, but a difference of opinion on this issue among the various orthodox theologians (e.g., Glass and Calov) is not recognized: Robert D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 2 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970–1972), 1:329; Hirsch, *Geschichte der neuern evangelischen Theologie*, 2:173.

<sup>13</sup> August Friedrich Christian Vilmar, *Dogmatik: Akademische Vorlesungen* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1937), 1:117; The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, “Appendix R3-01A: Prophecy and Typology,” in 1998 *Convention Workbook* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1998); Ludwig Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments in der christlichen Kirche* (Jena: Mauke, 1869), 369; Brevard S. Childs, “The Sensus Literalis of Scripture: An Ancient and Modern Problem,” in *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 87. E.g., Johann Wilhelm Baier, *Compendium theologiae positivae*, ed. C. F. W. Walther, 2 vols. (St. Louis: Ex officina synodi Missouriensis lutheranae, 1879), 1:177–178. Even up until the late 1920s the *sensus mysticus* had not been excluded from LCMS instruction on hermeneutics, as can be seen from *Theologische Hermeneutik: Leitfaden für Vorlesungen* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1929), 14, § 22, Anm. 5. Here, the rule *sensus literalis unus est* does not exclude the *sensus mysticus*.

<sup>14</sup> Hans Stroh, “Hermeneutik im Pietismus,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 74 (1977): 46–47. Cf. Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 48. In addition, it should be mentioned that the development of Lutheran hermeneutics was not isolated from other developments in Europe, especially among Reformed exegetes. Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments*, 366, sees a wide spectrum of hermeneutical approaches in post-Reformation Reformed theology. On the mystical side was Cocceius, and on the rational/literal side were the Arminians. Cf. Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 2:451–453, 469–473.

<sup>15</sup> Glass was successor of J. Gerhard as professor of theology at Jena (1638–1640) and was thereafter called to Gotha as superintendent. As a Hebrew and Rabbinic scholar, he completed the “Ernestine” or “Weimar Bible” begun by Gerhard, preparing the poetic books of the Old Testament. See F. W. Bautz, s.v. “Glassius, Salomo,” in *BBKL* (accessed December 3, 2003), and Gustav Moritz Redslob, s.v. “Glaß: Salomon,” in *ADB*.

<sup>16</sup> Salomon Glass, *Philologia sacra*, 5th ed. (Frankfurt & Leipzig: Jo. Theodor Fleischer, 1686), 288–350. Glass’s canons for explaining types were abridged by Benjamin Keach and included in his *Tropologia* [modern edition: *Preaching from the Types and Metaphors of the Bible* (London, 1855; Grand Rapids: Kregel Classics, 1972), 233–237], removing Glass’s disparaging remarks about Calvin and his reference to orthodox



types in this way. Already before him Johann Arndt (1555–1621)<sup>17</sup> and Valerius Herberger (1562–1627)<sup>18</sup> had exemplified this kind of exegesis.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, Johann Gerhard's sermons were rich with christological typology.<sup>20</sup>

This is not to say, however, that the "double sense of Scripture" was unopposed in Lutheran Orthodoxy. Ludwig Diestel comments, "Among the Reformed, and since Calov<sup>21</sup> and Pfeiffer<sup>22</sup> also among the Lutherans, the *unity* of the sense is again stressed theoretically."<sup>23</sup> Instead of the *sensus duplex*, Abraham Calov preferred to speak of an "application of the literal sense to another spiritual thing," which was, nevertheless, made according to the will of the Holy Spirit.<sup>24</sup> J. G. Walch thought the debate on whether it should be called the "mystical sense" or an "application of the literal sense" was probably more about words than content as the debate was carried on within the Lutheran Church.<sup>25</sup>

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Lutheran theologians. For an assessment of Glass's hermeneutics, see Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments*, 377.

<sup>17</sup> See the articles s.v. "Arndt, Johann" by H. Hölscher in *Schaff-Herzog* and *RE*<sup>3</sup>, and Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz in *BBKL* (accessed August 27, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz, s.v. "Herberger, Valerius," in *BBKL* (accessed January 29, 2002); Ferdinand Cohrs, s.v. "Herberger, Valerius," in *Schaff-Herzog*.

<sup>19</sup> Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments*, 377. For example, Herberger's commentary on Exodus in his *Magnalia Dei, de Jesu, Scripturae nucleo & medulla: Der grossen Thaten Gottes*, 12 vols. [?] (Leipzig: Schürer, 1616–1619; reprint, Hamburg: Jacob Rebenlein, 1661), 6:46–49 (page citations are to the reprint edition), has every meditation beginning with the name "JESUS" and an explanation of what ways Jesus is in each particular text. See also Johann Arndt, *Sechs Bücher vom Wahren Christenthum* (Braunschweig: Andreas Duncker, 1606–1609; reprint, Philadelphia: J. Kohler, 1856), 42 (page citation is to the reprint edition).

<sup>20</sup> E.g., Johann Gerhard, *Postilla: An Explanation of the Sunday and Most Important Festival Gospels of the Whole Year*, trans. Elmer M. Hohle, vol. 1 (Malone, TX: The Center for the Study of Lutheran Orthodoxy, 2003), 221, where David's five smooth stones are the five wounds of Christ.

<sup>21</sup> Abraham Calov (Kalau) (1612–1686) was professor of theology in Wittenberg. See Wilhelm Gaß, s.v. "Calov," in *ADB*, and Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz, s.v. "Calov (eigentlich: Kalau), Abraham," in *BBKL* (accessed May 23, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> August Pfeiffer (1640–1698) was an orientalist and superintendent of Lübeck. See Adolf Schimmelpfennig, s.v. "Pfeiffer, August," in *ADB*.

<sup>23</sup> Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments*, 365. Diestel refers to Abraham Calov's *System. theol.*, 1:663, and August Pfeiffer's *Thes. herm.*, 168.

<sup>24</sup> Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments*, 377.

<sup>25</sup> Johann Georg Walch, *Bibliotheca theologica selecta*, 4 vols. (Jena: Sumtu viduae Croeckerianae, 1757–1765), 4:227–228. For Walch, talk of an "accommodation" can be misunderstood, but if understood in agreement with the *sensus mysticus*, the names are of little import.



The early eighteenth-century Lutheran Pietists did not invent the mystical sense of Scripture. Walch gives fifteen pages of annotated bibliography on works dealing with the mystical sense of Scripture<sup>26</sup> which go back as far as 1604.<sup>27</sup> Rambach himself was quite aware of his predecessors in hermeneutics, not only of Lutherans, but also of Roman Catholic and Reformed theologians. He was familiar with the works of Glass, Franz,<sup>28</sup> Dannhauer,<sup>29</sup> and Flacius,<sup>30</sup> but in his *De sensus mystici criteriis* he most often quotes the Dutch Cocceians Campegius Vitringa<sup>31</sup> and Herman Witsius.<sup>32</sup> It is obvious that Rambach admires the Reformed federal theologian Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669).<sup>33</sup> In support of this admiration he quotes Abraham Calov, who said of Cocceius, “And many

<sup>26</sup> Walch, *Bibliotheca theologica selecta*, 4:225–239.

<sup>27</sup> Lucas Bacmeister, *Explicatio typorum* (Rostock, 1604), cited in Walch, *Bibliotheca*, 4:229.

<sup>28</sup> Wolfgang Franz (1564–1628) was professor of theology in Wittenberg. See the articles s.v. “Franz, Wolfgang” by Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz in *BBKL* (accessed September 6, 2001), and G. M. Redslob in *ADB*.

<sup>29</sup> Johann Konrad Dannhauer (1603–1666) was professor of theology in Strasbourg and teacher of Spener. See F. Bosse, s.v. “Dannhauer, Johann Conrad” in *Schaff-Herzog*, and Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz, s.v. “Dannhauer, Johann Konrad,” in *BBKL* (accessed March 25, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> Stroh, “Hermeneutik im Pietismus,” 46. Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520–1575) was the leader of the “Gnesio-Lutherans.” For a recent monograph, see Oliver Olson, *Matthias Flacius and the Survival of Luther’s Reform* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002). Flacius’s *Clavis scripturae sacrae, seu de sermone sacrarum literarum*, 2 vols. (Basel: Ioannes Oporinus & Eusebius Episcopius, 1567; Frankfurt and Leipzig: Hieronymus Christianus Paulus, 1710), discouraged allegory and the mystical sense in theory but made use of it in practice and has thus been described as inconsistent. See Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments*, 253; Bernd Jörg Diebner, “Matthias Flacius Illyricus: Zur Hermeneutik der Melanchthon-Schule,” in *Melanchthon in seinen Schülern*, Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, vol. 73 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997), 180–181. To Diebner’s research I might add that Flacius included in his *Clavis* (1:1345–1372) a reprint of the highly allegorical *In librum formularum spiritalis intelligentiae* by Eucherius of Lyons.

<sup>31</sup> Campegius Vitringa (1659–1722), not to be confused with his son of the same name (1693–1723), was professor at Franeken. See the articles s.v. “Vitringa, Campegius” by E. Kautzsch in *Schaff-Herzog* and *RE*<sup>3</sup>, and W. J. Fournier in *Biografisch Lexicon voor de Geschiedenis van het Nederlandse Protestantisme*, ed. D. Nauta et al. (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1983), hereafter *Biografisch Lexicon*.

<sup>32</sup> Witsius (1636–1708) was professor at Franeken and Utrecht. See the articles s.v. “Witsius, Hermannus,” by S. D. van Veen in *Schaff-Herzog* and *RE*<sup>3</sup>, and J. van Sluis in *Biografisch Lexicon*, vol. 4.

<sup>33</sup> On Cocceius, see Brian J. Lee, “Biblical Exegesis, Federal Theology, and Johannes Cocceius: Developments in the Interpretation of Hebrews 7:10–10:18” (PhD diss., Calvin Theological Seminary, 2003); and the articles s.v. “Coccejus, Johannes” by W. J. van Asselt in *Biografisch Lexicon*; Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz in *BBKL*; and C. F. Karl Müller in *RE*<sup>3</sup>.

oracles of the Old Testament he does not, with his Calvin, tear away from Christians; also in many things he seeks Christ with pious zeal, even if he does not find Him."<sup>34</sup> In summary, the debate on whether it is proper to speak of a double sense of Scripture, and to what extent one should make use of the mystical sense, is older than Rambach and his Pietist colleagues.

### I. *De Sensus Mystici Criteriis*

Rambach's hermeneutical work has been described as "more well-balanced" than that of his teacher, August Hermann Francke (1663–1727).<sup>35</sup> J. G. Walch calls the *De sensus mystici criteriis* "a little work written elegantly, accurately, clearly, and distinctly."<sup>36</sup> At issue, however, is whether Rambach has given an *objective* presentation of the mystical sense of Scripture, for this is precisely what is denied by some who have studied the work. In the words of Ludwig Diestel, Rambach allows "absolutely every analogy of Scripture, of content, of faith."<sup>37</sup> If this is true, how are we to understand the places in the book where Rambach makes cautionary statements and restrictions? For example, the stated purpose of the book is to attain greater objectivity in dealing with the mystical sense. "Many without judgment," Rambach writes, "depending on certain principles, are led hither and thither, being led by vague conjectures and being destitute of a guide for the way."<sup>38</sup> These people, noticing any similarity whatsoever between things in the Old Testament and the New Testament, claim immediately "that one has been ordained by divine counsel to be a figure of the other." This leads others to mock the *sensus mysticus* or to expose it to calumny.<sup>39</sup> A closer study of *De sensus mystici criteriis* will be necessary in order to evaluate whether Rambach has achieved his objectives, or whether Diestel is right in seeing therein arbitrary allegorizing.

The table of contents of *De sensus mystici criteriis* summarizes its contents:

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<sup>34</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 85.

<sup>35</sup> Stroh, "Hermeneutik im Pietismus," 41; see also Hirsch, *Geschichte der neuern evangelischen Theologie*, 2:178. On Francke, see the articles s.v. "Francke, August Hermann" by T. Förster in *Schaff-Herzog* and *RE*<sup>3</sup>, and Udo Sträter in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 4th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998–n.d.), hereafter cited as *RGG*<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> Walch, *Bibliotheca theologica selecta*, 4:227.

<sup>37</sup> Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments*, 379; similar, but with more appreciation for Rambach's work is Carl Gottlob Hofmann, *Institutiones theologiae exegeticae* (Wittenberg: Io. Ioach. Ahlfeldium, 1754; reprint, St. Louis: Ex officina synodi Missouriensis lutheranae, 1876), 49, 51, 53, 60 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>38</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 3.

<sup>39</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 3.

Besides the literal sense of Scripture, the *mystical* sense is also given (ch. 1), which, however, is not to be sought everywhere (ch. 2), but *avoiding extremes* on both sides (ch. 3), throughout both the *Old* as well as the *New Testament* (ch. 4), the mystical sense should be investigated in certain 'classic passages,'—of which *twelve* more important ones are reviewed (ch. 5),—and should be recognized by certain *indications* which reveal themselves (ch. 6). For which, nevertheless, we do not, in fact, need an extraordinary inspiration of the Holy Spirit if we want to explore the real sense [*sensum realem*]<sup>40</sup> in other passages besides those explained mystically in the New Testament (ch. 7, 8). But rather, from the example of holy men certain CRITERIA are to be formed, of which many are INTERNAL (ch. 10, 11) which reside 1) in *things* [*in rebus*], and their innate character, where four criteria are indicated, (ch. 12), 2) in *words* [*in verbis*], and their emphasis, where *two* signs are established (ch. 13). Others are EXTERNAL (ch. 14) where the Holy Spirit reveals elsewhere that something of the mystical sense is present in a certain passage 1) *explicitly*, and with distinct words (ch. 15), 2) *implicitly*, where *five* modes are reviewed by which one can come to the knowledge of the mystical sense (ch. 16). Criteria are added, by which it can be demonstrated that we have achieved the *genuine mystical sense* of a certain passage (ch. 17). Nevertheless this whole matter will be confined by *nine precautions* (ch. 18), and the discussion is finished with a *prayer*.<sup>41</sup>

Rambach's first order of business is to assert that there *is* a mystical sense of Scripture aside from the literal sense. The literal sense can be either proper or *metaphorical*, but the mystical sense is different than this: "Besides the literal sense of the sacred Scriptures which is indicated to the readers through the signification itself of the words, whether proper or metaphorical, the mystical sense is also given through the thing [*per rem*] expressed by the words, intended by the Holy Spirit."<sup>42</sup> It is interesting that Rambach does not see the mystical sense as an alternative to the literal, grammatical meaning of the words. Instead, it is an *addition* to the literal sense. The literal sense is one, be it proper (e.g., "Jesus was born in Bethlehem") or figurative (e.g., "Herod is a fox"), and sometimes, in addition, there is also a mystical meaning.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> That is, the sense indicated not by the words but by the thing (*res*) expressed by the words. See Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 6.

<sup>41</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 5-6.

<sup>42</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 6; see Rambach, *Dogmatische Theologie*, 1:226.

<sup>43</sup> Flacius included metaphors and figures in the literal sense: Diebner, "Matthias Flacius Illyricus," 174. So did Glass: Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments*, 376. Glass, likewise, held to only *one* literal sense (*sensus literalis unus est*) while also seeing the *sensus mysticus* in many passages.

Next, Rambach claims that all the "more pure" doctors of the church have held this position, though they have had different ways of expressing it. They have all taught that God expressed himself in two ways in Scripture. Words are always signs of things (*signa rerum*), and sometimes those things are signs of other analogous things (*signa aliarum rerum analogarum*).<sup>44</sup> But there has been disagreement. According to Rambach, the disagreement is whether "that mystical signification which relies on secret analogies of things [*rerum*] can be called the *sensus mysticus*."<sup>45</sup> This is the same argument that Walch notes. On his side, Rambach counts Salomon Glass, and on the other side he names August Pfeiffer. Others have attempted a *via media*, speaking of a composite sense of Scripture which includes a double truth intended by the Holy Spirit. With a quote from Johannes Franciscus Buddeus (1667–1729), we are left to think that it was all a war of words.<sup>46</sup>

It is a testimony to Rambach's objectivity that he states that the *sensus mysticus* must not be sought indiscriminately in all passages of Scripture. It is present in some passages but not in others. In addition, he warns against confusing the mystical sense with the "use and application of a passage," for there is no passage in Scripture which does not have some "spiritual use." Uses and applications are not the mystical sense, but they are rather inferences derived from the literal sense, even if they deal with the most interior and secret things of God and of the Christian religion.<sup>47</sup>

In his exegesis, Rambach's goal is to avoid both excess and defect when it comes to the *sensus mysticus*.<sup>48</sup> People who err in excess hunt out arcane mystical senses almost everywhere, indulging allegories too often,

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<sup>44</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 6 (ch. 1). Cf. Augustine's usage of "word," "sign," and "thing," in "On Christian Doctrine" 1.2.2 and 2.1.2–2.2.3, in Philip Schaff, ed., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 1st series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 2:523, 535–536; also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1981), I–I, 1.10.

<sup>45</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 7 (ch. 1).

<sup>46</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 7 (ch. 1).

<sup>47</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 8 (ch. 2). See Rambach, *Dogmatische Theologie*, 1:226–227, on the spiritual, edifying nature of the literal sense. Glass, likewise, did not see the *sensus mysticus* as being in all passages of Scripture, and also distinguished "innate" allegories from *allegoriae illatae*, "allegories brought in by the reader." Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments*, 375–376.

<sup>48</sup> Rambach had also used the "excess and defect" tool in his discussion of the use of technical terminology in dogmatics. Muller, "Scholastic Pietism," 18. Cf. Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 71–72 (ch. 18).

and usually in a contorted form.<sup>49</sup> As examples of those who err in excess, Rambach names "the most ancient teachers of the Jews," especially Alexandrian Jews such as Philo, but also the Midrashim and Rabboth of the ancient Hebrews. Rambach lauds how some of the ancient Jewish exegetes looked for the Messiah, "the heart of Scripture" (*Scripturae nucleum*), even though they often looked in the wrong place. Other examples of excess include many church fathers (especially Origen), papistic interpreters (especially the scholastic doctors), the more impure mystics (especially those from the school of Paracelsus and Jakob Böhme),<sup>50</sup> many followers of Johannes Cocceius,<sup>51</sup> and several "from that order of recent philosophers, like Thomas Burnetius." Other examples are also given.<sup>52</sup> In another part of *De sensus mystici criteriis*, Rambach says of Cocceius that he is "often more free than what is right in multiplying types."<sup>53</sup> This is a sentiment shared by J. G. Walch.<sup>54</sup> Diestel notes that the Lutheran disagreement with Cocceius was in practice, not in hermeneutics.<sup>55</sup> That is to say, the Lutherans were more controlled in their use of typology, though they were working from the same principles as Cocceius.

According to Rambach, those who err in defect concerning the *sensus mysticus* include, first of all, the Socinians.<sup>56</sup> The Socinians would recognize only the sacrifice of atonement as prefiguring Christ.<sup>57</sup> In addition,

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<sup>49</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 8–9 (ch. 3). Stroh, "Hermeneutik im Pietismus," 44, notes that this was a common concern for Pietist exegetes. On the one hand, they opposed sterility of Bible reading, and, on the other hand, the falsification of the biblical statements.

<sup>50</sup> See Martin Brecht, ed., *Geschichte des Pietismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993).

<sup>51</sup> Note that Cocceius himself is not included in this list.

<sup>52</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 9–10 (ch. 3).

<sup>53</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 36 (ch. 12).

<sup>54</sup> Walch, *Bibliotheca theologica selecta*, 4:228. After reviewing the hermeneutics of Rambach and the early eighteenth-century Lutheran theologians, Diestel is amazed that they could still accuse the papists, associates of Cocceius, and the fanatics of "sinning in excess" in their typology. This is an accusation which Diestel labels "somewhat inconsistent." Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments*, 379.

<sup>55</sup> Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments*, 383–384.

<sup>56</sup> Fausto Sozzini was a sixteenth-century anti-trinitarian with a large following in Poland. See Erich Wenneker, s.v. "Sozzini, Fausto," in *BBKL* (accessed March 6, 2003), and O. Zöckler, s.v. "Socinus, Faustus," in *Schaff-Herzog*.

<sup>57</sup> On the Socinians, see also *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 25–26. Rambach's opposition to the Socinians is further illustrated by his doctoral dissertation, which he wrote three years later: *Dissertatio inauguralis, qua pellis ovina Socinianorum detecta ac detracta sistitur* (Halle, 1731). The Cocceian influence on Rambach has been generally recognized. It

Rambach names Arminians, such as Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), Simon Episcopius (1583–1643), Philippus van Limborch (1633–1712), and Jean le Clerc (1657–1736), and a few others from England and France.<sup>58</sup>

When one thinks of the *sensus mysticus*, the relation between the Old Testament and the New Testament immediately comes to mind. Rambach, however, thinks that the *sensus mysticus* is also to be found in the New Testament, though this is more rare than in the Old Testament. Rambach gives as examples: 1. Jesus' parables; 2. the miracles of the Son of God; 3. the more notable events of our Savior; 4. the singular circumstances of certain singular cases, e.g., the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Paul's conversion, and Peter's call to preach the gospel to the nations; 5. the seven epistles in Revelation. At this point, Rambach is simply giving examples. He has not yet begun to explain the criteria by which one can reasonably assume the mystical sense is present in a particular passage. Usually, however, the New Testament uncovers the *sensus mysticus* in the Old Testament. Hidden under the three days of Jonah in the belly of a fish is a *res mystica* (mystical thing or meaning). The same can be said of the raising of a bronze serpent, the manna, the paschal lamb, the rock in the desert, the marriage of Abraham, and the histories of Joshua and Melchizedek.<sup>59</sup>

Before beginning his explication of the criteria for the mystical sense, Rambach first sets forth "classic passages" in which the *sensus mysticus* is said to be present and then discusses the question of whether an explicit New Testament indication is necessary for one to find the mystical sense in a passage of Scripture. According to Rambach, the *sensus mysticus* lies hidden (*latet*) in several categories of passages:

1. Rituals of the Mosaic law.<sup>60</sup>
2. The histories of the most greatly notable persons of the Old Testament.<sup>61</sup>

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seems, however, that the anti-Socinian element also plays a role in explaining Rambach's exegetical approach.

<sup>58</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 10 (ch. 3). Walch, *Bibliotheca theologia selecta*, 4:228, likewise speaks out against most of these people.

<sup>59</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 11 (ch. 4). Matthew 12:40; John 3:14; 6:32; 19:36; 1 Corinthians 10:4; Galatians 4:24; and Hebrews 4:8–9; 7:1–28 are the passages used.

<sup>60</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 12 (ch. 5). Romans 10:4; Hebrews 8:5; 9:9; 10:1; and Colossians 2:16–17 are cited as proof.

<sup>61</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 12–13 (ch. 5). In the "kingdom of light" Rambach lists Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Gideon, Samson, David, Solomon, Elijah, Jonah, Eliakim, Daniel,

3. The chief oracles (*fatīs*) of ancient Israel, by which God most wisely selected Israel from the number of other nations, in order to thereby delineate the events of the New Testament church.<sup>62</sup>
4. The chief liberations of Israel from the hand of their enemies.<sup>63</sup>
5. The more eminent judgments which God executed under the old *oeconomia*, both against degenerate and noncompliant Israel, as well as against enemy peoples.<sup>64</sup>
6. The more excellent and remarkable benefits which God bestowed on the church of the Old Testament, by which the more sublime benefits, proper to the new *oeconomia*, were prefigured.<sup>65</sup>
7. The promises of good lands, "by which various categories of the felicities of the covenant of God are promised."<sup>66</sup>
8. Many oracles of the prophets, especially concerning Judah, Jerusalem, Babel, Egypt, Edom, etc.<sup>67</sup>
9. Many canticles and Psalms.<sup>68</sup>
10. The chief events of the life of Christ.<sup>69</sup>

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"etc." In the kingdom of darkness, Cain, Ishmael, Esau, Balaam, Jezebel, Antiochus Epiphanes [1 Maccabees 1:10], "etc." are listed.

<sup>62</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 13–14 (ch. 5). Rambach refers to Psalm 78:2; 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11 (Textus Receptus); Isaiah 4:5; 9:4; 35:6; 43:2; 44:10; Jeremiah 31:2; Revelation 11:3–4; and 18:4; as well as to the Lutheran Confessions, Ap III, 274.

<sup>63</sup> The prophets spoke of the future salvation of the New Testament church, either from the power of the devil or from the yoke of antichrist, under the guise of Israel's salvation from the Egyptians, Midianites, Assyrians, Babylonians, "etc." Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 14–15 (ch. 5). For proof, Rambach cites Luke 1:70–71, 74. At this point, Rambach quotes Vitrina, who says that "all the liberations of the church" which happened under the old economy (*oeconomia*) were typological of the redemption which the Son of God would one day bring. Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 14 (ch. 5).

<sup>64</sup> The penalties suffered by Israel in the desert are our types, τύποι ἡμῶν, according to 1 Cor 10:6, 11. Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 15 (ch. 5).

<sup>65</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 16–17 (ch. 5). A quote from Joh. Jac. Pfeizer gives examples: "productio lucis ex tenebris, institutio sabbati, conservatio familiae Noachi per aquam diluvii . . . . Istum tamen indicem novis nominibus augeri posse, non dubitamus."

<sup>66</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 17 (ch. 5). Examples are from Genesis 9:26–27; 27:27–29; 49:3–27; Deuteronomy 33; 30:1–7; Isaiah 1:25, 27; 52:1–4; Jeremiah 3:14–18; 30:1–24; 31:1–30.; and Zechariah 2:2–5.

<sup>67</sup> Rambach claims that sometimes the prophets preached some things *mixed*. In these cases, there is a double subject [*duplex subiectum*], of which one is an emblem of the other. Here the prophets were speaking about both subjects gramatically and mystically. Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 18 (ch. 5).

<sup>68</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 18 (ch. 5). E.g., Psalms 2, 8, 22, 45, 110, etc.

<sup>69</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 19 (ch. 5). E.g., the nativity, circumcision, baptism, temptation, transfiguration, anointing, passion, resurrection, and ascension.



11. Parables.<sup>70</sup>

12. The miracles of our Savior.<sup>71</sup>

For Rambach, the statement that events in Christ's life have a mystical meaning in no way detracts from the importance of the literal meaning. In fact, all of these retain the *sensus literalis*. Without the literal sense, everything falls apart. "If the truth of this history is denied, all of these things transform into mere images and nude pretenses of the thing being shown to us."<sup>72</sup> Another sign of objectivity is Rambach's awareness that there have been abuses in explaining the *sensus mysticus* of the parables. He does not, however, believe that the abuse overthrows the principle.<sup>73</sup>

For Rambach, the most reliable guide to finding the *sensus mysticus* is an explicit explanation from the New Testament, for example, John 3:14. But he also sees the *sensus mysticus* in passages with no explicit testimony from the New Testament. He does not concede defeat to the opinion of those who demand that one must have the gift of *theopneustias* (divine inspiration) and an extraordinary gift of the Holy Spirit in order to investigate the hidden sense of the sacred letters. It is too "severe" when it is claimed that only Christ himself and his apostles were able to discover the *sensus mysticus*.<sup>74</sup> Who is guilty of saying this? Rambach begins by attributing to the Socinians the idea that, for a passage to have a mystical meaning, it must have an explicit explanation by Christ or the apostles. Rambach also finds this idea in the writings of Philippus van Limborch and other Dutch writers, as well as in a treatise by the Lutheran Valentin Veltheim.<sup>75</sup>

After identifying his opponents, he gives his major argument.

However, just as it is certain that many prophecies of the OT have to do with Christ and His kingdom, which are nowhere explicitly explained in the books of the NT concerning Christ, so also we hold that many types

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For proof, he cites Hosea 6:2; Luke 12:50; Psalm 69:3; Hebrews 13:12-13; and Revelation 12:6-14.

<sup>70</sup> Usually the literal sense of parables is a *moral sense*, but in many there is also a prophetic sense present. Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 20. E.g., Matthew 13:24-30, 37-43; 21:33; 22:1; 25:1.

<sup>71</sup> Hence the miracles are called "signs" in the Gospels. Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 21-23.

<sup>72</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 19 (ch. 5).

<sup>73</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 21 (ch. 5).

<sup>74</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 24-25 (ch. 7). Cf. Stroh, "Hermeneutik im Pietismus," 49-50.

<sup>75</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 26-27 (ch. 7). Veltheim (1645-1700) was the successor of Musaeus at Jena. See Paul Tschackert, s.v. "Veltheim, Valentin," in *ADB*.



are given in the Old Economy concerning Christ and concerning things pertaining to Christ, which the Holy Spirit nowhere declared to be destined to that end. It suffices that we accept the key from divinely-inspired men, which we are able and ought to use happily in order to uncover the mystical sense of many passages.<sup>76</sup>

This parallel between prophecies and types seems to be Rambach's key argument on why it is legitimate to look for the *sensus mysticus* in passages not explicitly identified in the New Testament. Rambach quotes Herman Witsius, who finishes by saying that in Hebrews 9:5 the apostle did not intend to list all of the types exhaustively.<sup>77</sup> Rambach does, however, give a caveat with regard to this parallelism. Although types are nothing other than substantive prophecies (*prophetiae reales*), one cannot argue from prophecies to types absolutely. For the interpretation of prophecies depends on the meaning of the words, which is made known by use (*ex usu*). The fact that something represents another analogous thing, however, depends on the will of God alone. This will of God must either be indicated *a priori*, or be concluded *a posteriori* by certain clues.

This is the question under discussion: What are the clues by which it is legitimate to suspect that the *sensus mysticus* is hiding somewhere?<sup>78</sup> The key to answering this question is the example of the exegesis used by Christ and the apostles. If we have the key, we do not need an explicit New Testament explanation for every type, according to Rambach. By examining the examples of the divinely inspired writers we can form rules "from whose presence it can be recognized and with the highest probability decided that in this or that part of Scripture, the mystical sense, fitting for the divine wisdom and beneficial for our souls, is hiding."<sup>79</sup> Rambach's caution here can be easily overlooked. He is not arguing that without an explicit testimony of the New Testament we can know with *total* certainty that the mystical sense is present but is arguing instead that we can "decide with the highest probability."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 27 (ch. 8).

<sup>77</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 27–28 (ch. 8).

<sup>78</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 28 (ch. 8). Rambach notes a controversy on this subject between Vitringa and Limborch, reviewed in Henr. Muelius, *Discussio controversiae inter Limborchium ac Vitringam de sensu Scripturae mystico agitatae*.

<sup>79</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 29 (ch. 9).

<sup>80</sup> Rambach also quotes Guilielmus (Willem) Saldenus, who argued that the Old Testament believers were able to discover the *sensus mysticus* by means of the instruction of the prophets, their own attentive consideration, divine illustration of the mind, and prayer. Rambach states that he used the first lines of this argument in his

## II. The Criteria of the Mystical Sense

The main part of Rambach's book deals with the criteria of the mystical sense. His method is to give a criterion, confirm it with reasons and authorities, and finally to illustrate it with examples. In addition, he sometimes adds a restriction to warn against possible misunderstanding of what he has set forth. The criteria are divided between internal and external, and are subdivided within each category. Among the internal criteria, some are found in things (*in rebus*) and others are in words (*in verbis*).

## III. Internal Criteria *in Rebus*

The internal criteria *in rebus* are those clues drawn from the things (*res*) expressed by the literal sense. For each criterion, "We say, therefore, that the character of the things proposed supplies the criteria of the mystical sense."<sup>81</sup> In the *res* expressed by the literal sense, the clues of the mystical sense exist if the *res* contains something "not fitting enough for the most high wisdom of God, or for the persons of sacred men, or if they are clothed with circumstances so singular and admirable, and apt for signifying a more illustrious thing, that they draw the mind of the reader, even unwilling and resistant, to consider more sublime things."<sup>82</sup> Rambach does not leave it here, however, but continues to explain what he means.

There are four internal criteria *in rebus*. The first is present "if nothing in the *res* occurs which is especially worthy of the divine wisdom and the other perfections of God."<sup>83</sup> That is, if we see something in Scripture that does not seem to support God's perfections, there is probably a divinely-intended type present. Rambach brings forth Leviticus 14:2-32, the laws for the cleansing of a leper, as an example. After describing the ritual process, Rambach asks, if you stop here with the literal sense, what is there which is fitting to be said of God?<sup>84</sup> His point is that if there is not a *sensus mysticus* here, then this would seem to be a ludicrous ceremony which could only serve to encourage superstition. But such thoughts about God's intentions in this ceremony would not fit with his perfections. Therefore, God was intending to teach something else by means of this ceremony. Rambach is not denying the literal sense of Leviticus 14, but is only saying

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*Institutiones herm. sacrae*, and will now amplify and confirm them. *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 29 (ch. 9).

<sup>81</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 30 (ch. 12).

<sup>82</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 30 (ch. 12).

<sup>83</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 30 (ch. 12).

<sup>84</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 31 (ch. 12).

that one cannot stop there. Another example given is God's command that Hosea should marry a prostitute.<sup>85</sup>

The second internal criterion *in rebus* is present "if the literal sense contains something unfitting for the persons of holy men."<sup>86</sup> When something unworthy of holy people is done in Scripture and God does not rebuke it, we have just cause for seeking "something more sublime under the shells of the words."<sup>87</sup> Unless God intended a *sensus mysticus* in these places, readers and hearers would easily be lead to imitate these evil actions. This danger ceases, according to Rambach, if it is agreed that there are "mystical causes" under the unworthy events. For example, in Judges 14:1-4, Samson's desire for a Philistine woman was not fitting for him as a savior of Israel and as a Nazirite. Moreover, it displeased his parents. Rambach, however, says that the reader "will have a different opinion if he considers that Samson prefigured Jesus Christ, the Son of promise, brought forth from a virgin by the power of God, who loved the Church which was being gathered from the nations and being united with Him through the obedience of faith and of love in a spiritual marriage."<sup>88</sup> Other examples include the suicidal death of Samson,<sup>89</sup> Abraham's sending Hagar and Ishmael into the desert, and the polygamy of the patriarchs.<sup>90</sup>

The third internal criterion *in rebus* deals with Old Testament occurrences that thoroughly surprise the reader and inspire more sublime thoughts. "If events [*res gestae*] are narrated under the Old Economy and are clothed with such admirable circumstances that they deeply overpower the mind of the reader and inspire thoughts more sublime,"<sup>91</sup> then it is legitimate to investigate the mystical sense. Rambach uses a quote of Vitranga to explain that he is speaking especially of narratives where divine providence was working miraculously (*extra ordinem*). For example, the young lion slain by Samson was found to have honey in it (Judges 14:5-9). This is nowhere explained in the New Testament with explicit

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<sup>85</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 31-32 (ch. 12). This symbolized God's kindness toward the people of Israel, who had been polluted with spiritual fornication, but would be joined to God by means of a new covenant.

<sup>86</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 32 (ch. 12).

<sup>87</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 32 (ch. 12). On Francke's use of "shell and nut" imagery, see Stroh, "Hermeneutik im Pietismus," 45-46.

<sup>88</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 32 (ch.12).

<sup>89</sup> Judges 16:28-30. This also was done as an image of Christ, "qui pro gloria Dei & populi sui salute, vitae prodigus, plus nocuit hostibus moriens, quam vivus." Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 32 (ch. 12).

<sup>90</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 33 (ch. 12).

<sup>91</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 33 (ch. 12).

words, but Rambach states that it is nevertheless legitimate to find the *sensus mysticus* here. Rambach does not, however, give an actual explanation of the mystical sense of the story. Other examples include Israel's passing through the sea, the Jordan, and the desert; the destruction of the Midianites by Gideon; "and other similar, prodigious events."<sup>92</sup> At this point Rambach adds a caveat. Do all extraordinary events of the Old Testament have a typological significance? A quote from Guilielmus Saldenus denies this, and apparently Rambach does as well.<sup>93</sup> It is unfortunate, however, that Rambach does not give a concrete example at this point. With a specific example of a passage which has no typological significance, Rambach would be able to shape and give substance to his precaution. In fact, this is a weakness which will continue throughout *De sensus mystici criteriis*. Abundant examples are given of passages which have the *sensus mysticus*, but opposite examples are usually, though not always, lacking.

The fourth internal criterion *de rebus* is present "if the circumstances of an Old [Testament] history have such a conspicuous and evident reference to an event of the New Testament, that an attentive reader is unable not to think of it repeatedly while reading, except by either closing or averting the eyes with which he observes that very little thing, after having exerted himself to pay attention."<sup>94</sup> That is, a very obvious similarity to an event of the New Testament is likewise a good reason to investigate the *sensus mysticus*. Despite appearances, this is not a *subjective* observation, but a similarity that the divine author has intended. It was "ordained by the Holy Spirit, who wanted the New Testament to be hidden in the Old, and the Old to be opened in the New, and who shows us Christ most clearly depicted and prefigured in certain passages, so that we might also seek him all the more eagerly as He is hiding more deeply in other passages."<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, a "nude similarity between two events" does not suffice for the *sensus mysticus* to be said to be present.<sup>96</sup>

Rambach spends extra time proving this criterion. Perhaps this is because this criterion can be easily misunderstood. Though a type is a sign of another thing (*signum alterius rei*), one cannot find just any similarity between two things and claim that it is a type intended by the Holy Spirit. Therefore Rambach disagrees with the sort of exegesis that would see the

<sup>92</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 34–35 (ch. 12).

<sup>93</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 34–35 (ch. 12).

<sup>94</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 35 (ch. 12).

<sup>95</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 35 (ch. 12).

<sup>96</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 35 (ch. 12).

history of David and Goliath as a type of Luther's struggle against the pope. Likewise, Rambach questions the Jesuit Gretserus's assertion that Absalom hanging from a tree was a type of Christ on the cross.<sup>97</sup> Here we have two rare examples from Rambach on what he considers an illegitimate use of typology.

So if not just any similarity will do, what sort of similarity *will* do? For Rambach, if there is similarity between two things, such as there is between a man and his image, painted by an artist, then an exegete is not pertinacious who ascribes such a similarity to the will of the "most wise Arbiter of all things [*omnium rerum*]." <sup>98</sup> One is either blind or surrounded with the fog of prejudice if he does not recognize Joseph as a type of Christ, "especially in his profound humiliation and unexpected exaltation."<sup>99</sup> The same kind of typology can be found in the histories of Abel, Enoch, Aaron, Moses, David, Jonah, and others. Rambach's intention is to make a distinction. "Therefore we hold that one must distinguish between *any similarity whatsoever*, and between an *adequate similarity which befalls the eyes of all*."<sup>100</sup> Rambach is right to make a distinction, but "the eyes of all" seem to keep this criterion in the realm of the subjective.

In an attempt to keep the *sensus mysticus* objective, Rambach continues by reviewing four requisites for a genuine analogy between a *rem significantem* and *significatam* (a signifying and signified thing).

1. *That which produces itself by easy work*, and throws itself into the eyes of the attentive reader as by its own will. 2. *That which shines forth* not from a conflict of the individual parts of the type, but *by the comparison of the whole*. . . . [T]hus we should not make judgment on the basis of the truncated limbs of the type, but we must consider the whole series; if it squares with Jesus or a thing [*res*] of Jesus, it becomes clear by all means that a typological condition [*schesin*] is underneath. 3. *That which is proper to the prefigured thing by way of excellence*, not indicated as such in another more express way in the Word of God, that is, so peculiar to it that in this manner and degree it does not fall into other things. 4. That which has been provided individually to illustrate, strengthen, and assist the doctrine both of truth and of piety according to the Scriptures.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 36 (ch. 12).

<sup>98</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 36–37 (ch. 12).

<sup>99</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 37 (ch. 12).

<sup>100</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 38 (ch. 12).

<sup>101</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 39 (ch. 12). Rambach is following Guilielmus Saldenus, *Otia Theologica, sive Exercitationum subcisivarum, Varii Argumenti, Libri Quatuor* (Amstelodami: Apud Henricum & Viduam Theodori Boom, 1684), 292.

The meaning seems to be that in order for something to be a type of one thing, it must not be able to be more easily a type of something else. As an example of this caveat, Rambach mentions Jonah. Jonah prefigured Christ, not in *every* way, but only in that he was in the fish for three days and came back alive.<sup>102</sup> Here Rambach has given rules to put limits on how and where the mystical sense can be found, and has even illustrated it with an example. It would have been even more helpful, however, had he illustrated each of the four requisites with examples and counter-examples.

#### IV. Internal Criteria *in Verbis*

After discussing the internal criteria *in rebus*, Rambach next turns to the internal criteria *in verbis*.

In *words* and the form of writing itself, the traces of a more sublime meaning [*sensus*] are detected if the assertions [*praedicata*] are expressed with such distinguished and magnificent ways of speaking, that according to every emphasis by which they are powerful, they fit very little with the subject understood literally. In this case we must think of another mystical subject, in which those illustrious assertions [*praedicata*] take their complement.<sup>103</sup>

Words can be an indicator of the *sensus mysticus*, according to Rambach, if what is said is expressed so fully and magnificently that they do not fully correspond to the literal subject. But what does this mean? Is the literal subject *not* accepted, or is it indeed accepted, but, due to the exalted rhetoric, another subject is being spoken of *in addition*? From what follows in Rambach, it seems that the latter is the case.

The first internal criterion *in verbis* is present "when the assertions [*praedicata*], or at least some of them, were conceived with such illustrious and magnificent words, that they do not entirely square with the subject literally accepted."<sup>104</sup> It is Rambach's high view of Scripture and its inspiration by the Holy Spirit that leads him to the criteria *de verbis*. Rambach argues that because it is the Holy Spirit who is using the human author as an amanuensis he is able to "mix in" words that do not properly square with the subject literally denoted. The conclusion is this: Either the Spirit of Truth has transgressed the bounds of truth (*quod longissime absit!*) or it must be conceded that another subject is being mystically indicated.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 39 (ch. 12).

<sup>103</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 40 (ch. 13).

<sup>104</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 40 (ch. 13).

<sup>105</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 40 (ch. 13).

This argument depends totally on the inspiration and full truthfulness of the Scriptures.

As examples of this criterion, Rambach points to the things said of Jerusalem and Zion in Psalm 48:3, 4, 9 and Psalm 132:14. These things are signifying a more majestic reality than the earthly Jerusalem actually was. Thus, the heavenly Jerusalem was signified, a fact which Rambach corroborates with reference to Galatians 4:26 and Hebrews 12:22.<sup>106</sup> If Rambach was saying that these passages are not literally about the earthly Jerusalem, then it would be better to understand this as metaphorical language within the literal sense. But since Rambach includes this as part of the mystical sense, he seems to be saying that the psalm verses are speaking literally about the earthly Jerusalem using exaggerated language and are speaking mystically about the heavenly Jerusalem *without* exaggerated language.

The second internal criterion *in verbis* is similar to the first. If the thing described is clothed with such full and sublime terms so that one cannot understand them of the "subject literally accepted" without diluting or weakening the meaning, then we should look for the *sensus mysticus*. Again, a high view of Scripture is his support. Not a word of Scripture is idle (*otiosum*), nor is anything ever said so majestically without the most exact truth. The Holy Spirit is not playing games with exaggerated words in a serious thing (*sesquipedalibus verbis in re seria*).<sup>107</sup>

Examples include Isaiah 23 and Ezekiel 26–28 regarding the destruction of Tyre.<sup>108</sup> These prophecies can only be accepted in a diluted sense concerning old Tyre. In Ezekiel 26:15–28:23, *all* peoples of the world will come and mourn over Tyre. This would be an excessive hyperbole according to Rambach, unless the Holy Spirit had intended a *sensus mysticus* here. The *sensus mysticus* teaches that one day there would be a city, greater than Tyre, in which the characteristics of Tyre could be seen much more clearly, and in whose destruction God's providence, justice, and wisdom would be shown "with the stupor of all other nations." The *sensus mysticus* of Tyre is the Roman pontiff, according to Rambach. The same typology is also shown in Revelation 18:23, where the characteristics

<sup>106</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 40–41 (ch. 13).

<sup>107</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 41 (ch. 13).

<sup>108</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 44 (ch. 13). Another example from Rambach is 2 Thessalonians 2:4 (son of perdition) and Isaiah 14:13–14 (fall of Lucifer). Isaiah is speaking of the pride of the king of Babylon, but Paul says that this pride will reach its height in the antichrist.



of Rome are taken from Isaiah 23:8.<sup>109</sup> It is noteworthy that Rambach is using the book of Revelation to corroborate the *internal* criterion under discussion, rather than using it (or the New Testament) as the criterion itself. Other examples cited by Rambach include Noah (Gen 5:29), Judah (Gen 49:8-12), Asher (Deut 33:24), and Eliakim (Isa 16:5; 22:20-25).<sup>110</sup>

Rambach ends chapter 13 with the observation that there is sometimes a "deliberate silence" among the criteria of the *sensus mysticus*. For example, Scripture is silent on Melchizedek's place, birth, death, and successor in his double office of priest and king. From this, Hebrews 7:3 can see him as a type of Christ's eternity and royal priesthood.<sup>111</sup> It is interesting that the exegesis of Hebrews is seen as an example of how we, too, can do exegesis of the Old Testament, not as an exception.

### V. Explicit External Criteria

The external criteria for discovering the mystical sense of Scripture are those which are found outside of the text which has the mystical interpretation. The explicit external criteria seem to be the most obvious ones, and the most easily accepted. For example, the fact that Melchizedek was a type of Christ, the high priest and king, is proved from Psalm 110:4 and Hebrews 7.<sup>112</sup> Other examples abound. The bronze serpent is a type of Christ lifted up on the cross (John 3:14-15). Jonah is a type of Christ's burial and resurrection (Matt 12:40). The rock in the wilderness is a type of Christ (1 Cor 10:4). Adam is a "type of the coming one" (Rom 5:14). The typology of Abraham's two wives is made explicit not only by Galatians 4:22-31, but also by Isaiah 54:1, for the latter is Paul's proof passage in Galatians 4:27. The most holy place of the Mosaic tabernacle is a type of the highest heaven. The curtain is a type of the flesh of Christ (Heb 9:9, 11, 24; 10:20). The entry of the high priest annually was a type of Christ's entry to the throne of divine glory with his own blood (Heb 9:12, 20).<sup>113</sup>

At this point Rambach responds to an objection brought forth by Richard Simon and Jean le Clerc. In response to their claim that the arguments which Christ and the apostles made from the mystical sense "truly have nothing of strength in them," Rambach states: "Nevertheless, since the Jews of their time admired that sense and did not usually reject

<sup>109</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 44 (ch. 13).

<sup>110</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 45 (ch. 13).

<sup>111</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 49 (ch. 13).

<sup>112</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 50 (ch. 15). It is interesting that Psalm 110 is considered an *explicit* criterion.

<sup>113</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 50 (ch. 15).



arguments produced from it, however minimally demonstrative [*quamvis parum apodictica*], the apostles considered themselves permitted to assault them with weapons of their own character."<sup>114</sup> Rambach here is defending the apostles' and Christ's use of the *sensus mysticus* in arguments. It appears that, at least for Christ and the apostles, the *sensus mysticus* was indeed *argumentativus*, able to be used to prove doctrine to others.

## VI. Implicit External Criteria

Rambach also discusses five more implicit clues that Holy Scripture gives toward discovering the *sensus mysticus* in another passage. First, the mystical sense is present in a passage "when Scripture puts forth an antitype under these or those figurative names, taken from the Old Economy of God."<sup>115</sup> Again, the Holy Spirit is not playing games with empty names. For example, Christ is called "David" and "Solomon" by Ezekiel 34:23–24; Hosea 3:5; Psalm 72:1; Song of Songs 3:9, 11. It is interesting that Rambach is trying to prove his christological exegesis primarily from the Old Testament. He could have cited Luke 11:31 alone, but instead he chose Old Testament passages and used the New Testament passage as a capstone to his argument. He is avoiding the idea that christological exegesis is simply reading the New Testament into the Old Testament.

Now that we know the prophets call Christ "David," "Solomon," and "Israel," Rambach says it is legitimate to see the latter persons as types of Christ intended by the Holy Spirit.<sup>116</sup> Rambach does not think the New Testament writers were using metaphorical language when they spoke of Christ as "David" or "Solomon" but instead sees this as an indication that David and Solomon *themselves* were types of Christ. He sees these titles not as a metaphor by a human author based on history but as a prophetic type intended by the Holy Spirit when inspired writers wrote of David and Solomon *for the first time*.

The second external implicit criterion is present "when Scripture refers one thing to another with manifest allusions of words."<sup>117</sup> For example, Isaiah 4:5, speaking of God's defense of the apostolic church, says, "Then the LORD will create about every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud of smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire

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<sup>114</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 51 (ch. 15).

<sup>115</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 51 (ch. 16). Cf. Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments*, 377.

<sup>116</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 52 (ch. 16).

<sup>117</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 53 (ch. 16).

by night." The allusion here is to that sign of divine presence by which God "decorated" the Israelites redeemed from Egypt (Exod 13:21). From this allusion we learn two things. First, there is a typological analogy between the status of the apostolic church redeemed by Christ and that of Israel brought out of Egypt by the "symbol of divine glory." Second, the function which the pillar played for Israel prefigured the benefits and help of grace (*auxilia gratiae*) granted to the early church.<sup>118</sup>

Rambach adds a restriction in order to prevent the misuse of this criterion. Quoting Johann Christian Kirchmeier, he lets it be known that not every allusion to a Levitical law (and also to an Old Testament narrative?) necessarily means that a type or figure intended by the Holy Spirit is present in what is alluded to.<sup>119</sup> This is a helpful restriction, but Rambach has not gone far enough. He has said that not every allusion is a divinely-intended type, but he has not told us how to distinguish between an innate type and a type which is "illate" (brought to the text by the reader).

The third implicit external criterion is present "when God in Scripture has testified concerning that *genus* of things under which this thing is contained as a *species*, that it has a typological or mystical meaning."<sup>120</sup> For a *species* is of the same nature as its *genus*. For example, Mosaic ceremonies, as a *genus*, have the testimony of being "shadows of future things, whose body is Christ." Rambach explains, "Whatever, therefore, pertains to those rites, even if we do not figure it out, has been applied individually [*speciatim*, according to *species*] to Christ, and is to be interpreted mystically, and to be compared with those things of Christ and of his mystical body which have an analogy corresponding beautifully and wisely to that [particular] ceremony."<sup>121</sup> The *genus* is explicitly made known to us as typological, and this implies that the *species* of the *genus* are also typological. With this in mind, Rambach's restraint should be noticed. He does not seem to be overly confident that the specific meaning of all the *species* of the *genus* will be discovered. He is simply interested in showing that the mystical meaning is there, even if he cannot discover what it is. So if "Mosaic ceremonies" is the *genus*, what are the *species*? From Paul, Rambach answers: persons, places, times, actions, benefits, and judgments.

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<sup>118</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 54 (ch. 16).

<sup>119</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 56 (ch. 16).

<sup>120</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 56 (ch. 16).

<sup>121</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 57 (ch. 16). Cf. Hofmann, *Institutiones theologiae exegeticae*, 47–48.

As 1 Corinthians 10:6–11 says, all of these things are *typoi*, types. According to Rambach, Luther observed the same.<sup>122</sup>

The fourth external implicit criterion is present “when Scripture by means and method of its argumentation hints, and even tacitly supposes, that this or that person of the OT is to be numbered among the types.”<sup>123</sup> A quote from Herman Witsius notes the rhetorical context of Paul’s usage of types from Melchizedek, Hagar, and Sarah. Namely, Paul was using these types *argumentatively* against the unbelieving Jews. He was not appealing to his own authority as an apostle to show that his exegesis of these types was valid. Instead, he argued from the “clearness of reasons and the suitability of deduction.” From the apostle’s way of arguing, we can conclude that also the memorable people he does *not* explicitly name are types of Christ in many things which they did or which happened to them. So just as Paul made explicit use of Adam, Melchizedek, Isaac, Ishmael, Hagar, Sarah, and others as types, so also it is legitimate to see persons as types which he did *not* use, for example, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Jacob, Joseph, Gideon, and Samson.<sup>124</sup> It is interesting that Rambach argues that the mystical sense is argumentative, while at the same time using this fact not to support his own argumentative use of the mystical sense but to support a wider recognition of the *presence* of the mystical sense.<sup>125</sup>

## VII. Objectivity

Rambach is aware that the typological criteria he has set forth can be misused. In order to prevent this, he sets forth ways by which one can be certain that the type found is one intended by the Holy Spirit. He reminds us that types are “substantial prophecies” (*prophetiae reales*), and therefore the same criteria we use for verbal prophecies can be used for types. The general rule is correspondence. “As are the subjects, so must be the things asserted of them. And in turn: As are the assertions, so must they be

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<sup>122</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 57 (ch. 16). Cf. Martin Luther, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, ed. John Nicholas Lenker and Eugene F. A. Klug, 7 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 4.1:96–103, especially 100–101.

<sup>123</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 58 (ch. 16).

<sup>124</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 58. Cf. Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments*, 365, 376.

<sup>125</sup> I must leave off Rambach’s lengthy discussion of the fifth implicit external criterion (logical syllogisms), about which criterion he is also the most tentative. Rambach discusses syllogisms *a toto ad partes*, *a parte ad totum*, *a continente ad contentum*, *a contento ad continens*, from similar to similar, *a causa ad effectum*, *ab effectibus ad causam*, *a minori ad maius*. Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 59–64 (ch. 16). For a critique of syllogisms *a parte ad totum*, see Hofmann, *Institutiones theologiae exegeticae*, 55.

prescribed by their subjects."<sup>126</sup> More specifically, the "mystical subject" can be confirmed by means of the analogy of subject matter (*analogia rei*) and the analogy of Scripture (*analogia Scripturae*).

The *analogia rei* is the exact similarity which exists between the thing which prefigures and the thing which is prefigured. For example, the description of Eliakim in Isaiah 22:20–25 cannot be a type of Luther, since the words describing Eliakim are too exalted. Instead the characteristics used to describe Eliakim apply to Christ (and we know that Christ has these characteristics from the literal sense of other passages).<sup>127</sup> The *analogia rei* is concerned with the correspondence between type and antitype.

Under *analogia Scripturae* one would expect Rambach to say that a type is genuinely intended by the Holy Spirit if it teaches something explicitly stated by the literal sense of Scripture, or at least that it is *not* so intended if it contradicts the literal sense. Instead, Rambach understands the analogy of Scripture as being nothing other than the external criteria of the mystical sense, both explicit and implicit. He gives several examples of how the analogy of Scripture can show us that a type is present, but unfortunately he omits any examples of passages that do not contain a type of Christ. His examples here are only positive, not negative, and therefore it is difficult to see how his *analogiae* could function to exclude an illegitimate type.

Is there anything, for Rambach, which is *not* a type of Christ? We have seen only one example of this (Absalom on the tree). For the most part, however, Rambach seems to agree with Vitranga, whom he quotes with approval:

Christ Jesus is the wisdom of God, 1 Cor. 1:24, because the meaning of *all things* done formerly in the church, and which will hereafter be done, is established by God in His Son, Christ Jesus. Wherefore if *anything* marvelous and notable should happen to occur in the Word of God, we are to have recourse to Christ, as to the center of divine wisdom, and to consider it in reference to Him.<sup>128</sup>

Without negative examples, Rambach is not leaving us much choice but to think that any and every thing in Scripture is prophetic of Christ.

However, Rambach concludes his discussion of the criteria of the mystical sense with nine precautions, which he brings in "lest one

<sup>126</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 66 (ch. 17).

<sup>127</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 46–48 (ch. 13).

<sup>128</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 69 (ch. 17), emphasis added.

transgress the boundaries of prudence and sobriety in their application."<sup>129</sup> Several points are worth noting. Though some of the precautions are in defense of his treatise, many are aimed at objectivity. Rambach is aware of gray areas in the exegesis of the mystical sense. He states that not all of the criteria he has set forth can bring the student of Scripture to the same level of certainty. Explicit exegesis from the New Testament is always the most certain and firm. He is especially tentative about the certainty that can be derived from logical syllogisms, and he wants the syllogisms to be supported by the other criteria as much as possible.<sup>130</sup> He warns against the idea that all the *minutiae* of a type can be discovered. Confidence in the existence of the *sensus mysticus* in various passages does not lead to overconfidence in being able to discover their meanings in detail.<sup>131</sup> Rambach warns strongly against *inventing* allegories and types. Thinking these up out of our own heart is something that should "terrify" us.<sup>132</sup> Finally, he warns his reader not to despise the literal sense.<sup>133</sup>

### VIII. Assessment

In the year 1754, an assessment of Rambach's work was given by Carl Gottlob Hofmann (1703–1774).<sup>134</sup> He wrote, "On the criteria of the mystical sense of Holy Scripture there is Rambach's peculiar treatise, where he has commented on these infallible criteria indeed learnedly enough, but also too widely and not always exactly."<sup>135</sup> Hofmann, the conservative Lutheran, did not agree with all aspects of Rambach's work, but he recognized that Rambach's treatment of the *sensus mysticus* was not a complete *novum*.

The *De sensus mystici criteriis* does not represent a clean break from previous Lutheran exegetical tradition, though it may possibly contain further developments and refinements beyond what the Lutheran tradition had handed down to him. Working from a standpoint of faith in the

<sup>129</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 70 (ch. 18).

<sup>130</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 71 (ch. 18).

<sup>131</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 77 (ch. 18).

<sup>132</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 73 (ch. 18).

<sup>133</sup> Rambach, *De sensus mystici criteriis*, 75 (ch. 18).

<sup>134</sup> Hofmann was professor of theology in Wittenberg. His *Institutiones theologiae exegeticae* (Wittenberg: Io. Ioach. Ahlfeldius, 1754) was republished by C. F. W. Walther for use as a hermeneutics text at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1876. For Hofmann's life and works, see s.v. "Hofmann, (Carl Gottlob)," in Johann Christoph Adelung, *Fortsetzung und Ergänzungen zu Christian Gottlieb Jöchers allgemeinem Gelehrten-Lexico* (Leipzig: Gleditsch, 1784–1787; reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1960).

<sup>135</sup> Carl Gottlob Hofmann, *Institutiones theologiae exegeticae*, rev. ed. (St. Louis: Ex officina synodi Missouriensis lutheranae, 1876), 60; cf. 49, 51, 53.

complete inspiration of Scripture and belief in the factual truth of the events narrated by the *sensus literalis*, Rambach's work shows a concern for objectivity. In fact, many of his criteria are successful in giving an objective basis for discovering the *sensus mysticus*. However, because he does not give illustrations of passages which do *not* typify Christ to accompany his precautionary statements, I must agree for the most part with Diestel's assessment. The impression is given that every similarity is a type, no matter how remote. Unlike Diestel, I do not think that Rambach's entire project is flawed. Though his work is not completely objective, it is also not completely subjective, but indeed shows much concern for objectivity. Rambach usually rejects typology which points past the New Testament (for example, to Luther's struggle against the pope) and is instead christological in his exegesis. The types have to do with Christ and his church (if positive) or with his enemies (if negative). Rambach wants to see the exegesis of Christ and the apostles as examples of how Christians should do exegesis, not as exceptions to the rule. He wants to see the original rhetorical function of the types within the New Testament, namely, that they were used by the apostles and Christ to prove Christian truth. Christ and the apostles did not simply rely on their own authority in order to be able to use the type but used the type in order to prove their message. Perhaps the most convincing evidence for Rambach's objectivity, however, is his tentativeness. Though he says types are *present* in many places, he admits that we will not be able to discover their meaning in every case.

Amid the plethora of writings on the mystical sense of Scripture within seventeenth- and eighteenth-century German Lutheranism, Rambach's *De sensus mystici criteriis* is a work whose reading brings forth much fruit. Even if he has not attained his goal, he has nevertheless attained a remarkable level of objectivity in investigating the mystical sense of Scripture.

## *Pro Deo et Patria:* Themes of the Cruciform Life in Dietrich Bonhoeffer<sup>1</sup>

Eric R. Andrae

**"There are still . . . hearts and minds who love God's Word,  
their fatherland and their freedom."<sup>2</sup>**

Many love Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and many hate him. Although some claim to know and understand Bonhoeffer, others assert that few actually do. There are at least two reasons for much of the misunderstanding: Bonhoeffer preached and was published widely before he became a devout Christian (ca. 1932), as he himself acknowledged,<sup>3</sup> and material, including many personal letters, were published from the midst of prison struggles. In The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), he has been generally ignored.<sup>4</sup> In 2006, Bonhoeffer's centennial year, however, both LCMS seminaries had conferences devoted to examining aspects of his life and thought.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier and much longer form of this article was presented at the second annual Pastors' Study Week at Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catherines, Canada, on June 19-20, 2006. The Latin title translates "For God and Fatherland."

<sup>2</sup> The quotation is from Bonhoeffer's cousin and confidant, Hans Christoph von Hase, as quoted in Uwe Siemon-Netto, *The Fabricated Luther: The Rise and Fall of the Shirer Myth* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995), 92.

<sup>3</sup> See Bonhoeffer, *Meditating on the Word*, ed. and trans. David McL. Gracie (Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 1986), 42-48, on his encounter with the Bible. See also Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, ed Victoria J. Barnett, trans. Eric Mosbacher, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 205.

<sup>4</sup> An exception to this exclusion has been *Christian News*, which has labeled him a heretic, a false teacher, and an unbeliever. For example, "Evangelicals Who Promote Unbelievers: Bonhoeffer Worshipped a False Christ," *Christian News* (New Haven, MO), June 5, 2006, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, held its "Dietrich Bonhoeffer Conference" on February 3-4, 2006, and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, with the Bonhoeffer Centennial Committee of America, held a conference entitled "Will the Real Dietrich Bonhoeffer Please Stand Up?" on July 19-21, 2006.

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Bonhoeffer's reception, which Stephen Haynes calls *The Bonhoeffer Phenomenon* in his insightful overview of the topic, is fascinating.<sup>6</sup> Haynes provides a survey of Bonhoeffer interpretation with sections on "The Historical Bonhoeffer," "The Radical Bonhoeffer," "The Liberal Bonhoeffer," "The Conservative Bonhoeffer," and "The Universal Bonhoeffer." One obvious omission would seem to be a chapter on "The Confessional Bonhoeffer," or simply "The Lutheran Bonhoeffer."<sup>7</sup> While in the past Bonhoeffer has often been extolled among liberal Lutherans and shunned by conservative Lutherans, there is now increasing interest in and appreciation for Bonhoeffer among some conservative, confessional Lutherans.<sup>8</sup> This study offers a similar perspective by looking at some of the themes in his thought, life, and death from a confessional Lutheran perspective. Some may argue that Bonhoeffer cannot fit into this category; certainly there is room for criticism, as well as reason to distance oneself from several of his positions. While acknowledging these areas, the purpose of this study is to show what—and there is much—confessional Lutherans can affirm in Bonhoeffer's writings and actions.

After Martin Luther, Bonhoeffer may arguably be the most recognized and quoted, as well as the most misunderstood and misapplied, Lutheran theologian today. The full-page spread that his centennial received in a February 2006 issue of *The USA Today* certainly confirms that he is widely appreciated.<sup>9</sup> Uwe Siemon-Netto even advocates reclaiming Bonhoeffer for confessional Lutheranism. He claims that for decades Bonhoeffer has been misinterpreted, misrepresented, and hijacked by odd admirers: the unorthodox theologies of the 1960s "God is dead" movement, the left-wing, the liberationists, the radicals, the postmodernists, and others. Siemon-Netto tells them to "step back and hand [Bonhoeffer] over to us."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen R. Haynes, *The Bonhoeffer Phenomenon: Portraits of a Protestant Saint* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> On "The Lutheran Bonhoeffer," see *Lutheran Forum* 27, no. 3 (1993). In personal correspondence with Haynes, he acknowledged this omission (e-mail dated January 13, 2006). [It must also be acknowledged that Bonhoeffer did not identify himself with confessional Lutheranism; he was a life-long member of the Prussian Union. The Editors]

<sup>8</sup> For example, Uwe Siemon-Netto and Charles Ford in St. Louis. The fruit of this has been seen at the two conferences mentioned above.

<sup>9</sup> G. Jeffrey MacDonald, "Courage vs. Conscience," *USA Today*, February 1, 2006, 6D. Matthew Becker calls Bonhoeffer "the most influential Lutheran theologian of the twentieth century" in his review of *Till the Night Be Past: The Life and Times of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, by Theodore J. Kleinhaus, *Concordia Journal* 30 (2004): 409.

<sup>10</sup> Uwe Siemon-Netto, "Welcome Back, Dietrich," *The Lutheran Witness* (February 2006): 16, 17, and Siemon-Netto, "Bonhoeffer, the Bold Sinner," (Fort Wayne, IN:



Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born on February 4, 1906, in Breslau, then the capital of German Silesia, now part of Poland. He was executed on April 9, 1945, at Flossenburg concentration camp for directly assisting persecuted Jews,<sup>11</sup> as well as for his part in assassination plots against Adolf Hitler. What follows is an introduction to a few important themes in Bonhoeffer that deserve close attention: suffering, prayer, action, and community.

### I. Suffering (The Theology of the Cross)

"When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."<sup>12</sup> These words from *The Cost of Discipleship* are arguably Bonhoeffer's most famous. He lived out their meaning in a most tangible and unique way. They find their context within his theology of the cross as a whole, and specifically in his discussion of grace, discipleship, and the cross. Indeed, for Bonhoeffer, "everything depended on the *theologia crucis*. . . ."<sup>13</sup>

The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our lives to death. Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise godfearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow him, or it may be a death like Luther's, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world. But it is the same death every time—death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at his call. Jesus' summons to the rich young man was calling him to die, because only the man who is dead to his own will can follow Christ. In fact every command of Jesus is a call to die, with all our affections and lusts. But we do not want to die, and therefore Jesus Christ and his call are necessarily our death as well as our life.<sup>14</sup>

There is neither neutrality nor luke-warmness with the one who is a consuming fire. One is never the same after being met by the Lord who confronts you: you die to self, the world, and its ways. This is painful. It is a cutting off, a pruning, and a drowning. There is no way around the cross;

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Concordia Theological Seminary, 2006), <http://www.ctsfw.edu/events/bonhoeffer/BonhoefferEssays.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> "In 1943 [he was] arrested for [his] involvement in a successful *Abwehr* operation that enabled 14 Jews to escape Germany." Charles Ford, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the German Resistance" (unpublished paper, March 11, 1995), 2.

<sup>12</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 99.

<sup>13</sup> Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 888.

<sup>14</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 99.

one can only go through it. Death, even the resulting (new) birth, is painful. After being in the presence of Christ, one will either remain dead or will have a new life, but that person will never again be the same. "For the rest of mankind to be with Christ means death, but for Christians it is [finally] a means of grace."<sup>15</sup> Bonhoeffer describes the suffering of the Christian life:

The call to discipleship, the baptism in the name of Jesus Christ means both death and life. The call of Christ, his baptism, sets the Christian in the middle of the daily arena against sin and the devil. Every day he encounters new temptations, and every day he must suffer anew for Jesus Christ's sake. The wounds and scars he receives in the fray are living tokens of this participation in the cross of his Lord. But there is another kind of suffering and shame which the Christian is not spared. While . . . only the sufferings of Christ are a means of atonement, yet since he has suffered for and borne the sins of the whole world and shares with his disciples the fruits of his passion, the Christian also has to undergo temptation, he too has to bear the sins of others; he too must bear their shame and be driven like a scapegoat from the gates of the city. But he would certainly break down under this burden, but for the support of him who bore the sins of all. The passion of Christ strengthens him to overcome the sins of others by forgiving them.<sup>16</sup>

Of course, this forgiving is exceedingly difficult for sinners. Indeed, it would be impossible were it not that the forgiveness is Christ's, won and given by him. Forgiveness overcomes sin because the forgiveness of Christ, in which the baptized participate, removes sin.

As Christ bears our burdens, so ought we to bear the burdens of our fellow-men. The law of Christ . . . is the bearing of the cross. My brother's burden which I must bear is not only his outward lot, his natural characteristics and gifts, but quite literally his sin. And the only way to bear that sin is by forgiving it in the power of the cross of Christ in which I now share. Thus the call to follow Christ always means a call to share the work of forgiving men their sins. Forgiveness is the Christlike suffering which it is the Christian's duty to bear.<sup>17</sup>

Baptism is foundational to Bonhoeffer's understanding of the theology of the cross, the Christian's suffering in this world. The call to discipleship

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<sup>15</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 268.

<sup>16</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 99–100.

<sup>17</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 100. Others are borne in and through prayer as well; see Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, ed. Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr., vol. 5, *Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 90, hereafter DBW.

is baptism.<sup>18</sup> Bonhoeffer makes explicit the connection between baptism and the cross with its forgiveness. Consider, for example, his sacramental focus in his explication of key texts such as Romans 6 and Galatians 2:

Baptismal death means justification from sin. The sinner must die that he may be delivered from his sin. If a man dies he is justified from sin (Rom. 6:7; Col. 2:20). Sin has no further claim on him, for death's demand has been met, and its account settled. Justification from . . . sin can only happen through death. Forgiveness of sin does not mean that the sin is overlooked and forgotten, it means a real death on the part of the sinner and his separation from . . . sin. But the only reason why the sinner's death can bring justification and not condemnation is that this death is a sharing of the death of Christ. It is baptism into the death of Christ which effects the forgiveness of sin and justification, and completes our separation from sin. The fellowship of the cross to which Jesus invited his disciples is the gift of justification through that cross, it is the gift of death and of the forgiveness of sins. . . . All this creates in them the assurance that they will also live with him.<sup>19</sup>

For Bonhoeffer, this Christ crucified is the very *imago Dei* that is recreated in the disciple through baptism. The conclusion of *The Cost of Discipleship* states:

The image of God is the image of Christ crucified. It is to this image that the life of the disciples must be conformed: in other words, they must be conformed to his death (Phil. 3:10; Rom. 6:4f). The Christian life is a life of crucifixion (Gal. 2:19). In baptism the form of Christ's death is impressed upon his own. They are dead to the flesh and to sin, they are dead to the world, and the world is dead to them (Gal. 6:14). Anybody living in the strength of Christ's baptism lives in the strength of Christ's death. Their life is marked by a daily dying in the war between the flesh and the spirit, and in the mortal agony the devil inflicts upon them day by day. This is the suffering of Christ which all his disciples on earth must undergo. A few, but only a few, of his followers are accounted worthy of the closest fellowship with his sufferings—the blessed martyrs. No other Christian is so closely identified with the form of Christ crucified. When Christians are exposed to public insult, when they suffer and die for his sake, Christ takes on visible form in his Church. Here we see the divine image created anew through the power of Christ crucified. But throughout the Christian

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<sup>18</sup> An imperfect appropriation of Bonhoeffer appears on the *Kjos Ministries Web site*, which includes the above quotation but without the references to the substitutionary atonement and the call of Jesus in baptism. "The Cost of Discipleship," *Kjos Ministries Web site*, <http://www.crossroad.to/Persecution/Bonhoffer.html>; cf. *Shepherd's Notes – Bonhoeffer's Cost of Discipleship* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 258, 268.

life, from baptism to martyrdom, it is the same suffering and the same death.<sup>20</sup>

The cruciform presence of Christ in baptism shapes Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology. As such, he goes on to say, "The Church of Christ is the presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit. In this way the life of the Body of Christ becomes our own life. In Christ we no longer live our own lives, but he lives his life in us. The life of the faithful in the Church is indeed the *Life of Christ in them*. . . ."<sup>21</sup> He states again: "Every day Christ is their death and Christ is their life."<sup>22</sup>

This life of the crucified Christ in the baptized "who have died after the old man through Christ" effects both faith and love:

Love, in the sense of spontaneous, unreflective action, spells the death of the old man. For man recovers his true nature in the righteousness of Christ and in his fellow-man. The love of Christ crucified, who delivers our old man to death, is the love which lives in those who follow him. "I live; yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). Henceforth the Christian finds himself only in Christ and in his brethren.<sup>23</sup>

Or, as Luther famously said, a "Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor."<sup>24</sup>

## II. Prayer

Bonhoeffer's confession of the theology of the cross and his aversion to a theology of glory finds doxological expression in the life of prayer and meditation. Regarding the meaning and purpose of prayer, Bonhoeffer introduces his *Prayerbook of the Bible* with the following instruction:

"Lord, Teach Us to Pray!" So spoke the disciples to Jesus. In making this request, they confessed that they were not able to pray on their own, that they had to learn to pray. The phrase "learning to pray" sounds strange to

<sup>20</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 342.

<sup>21</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 272.

<sup>22</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 321.

<sup>23</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 178-179.

<sup>24</sup> Martin Luther, *On Christian Liberty*, in *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols., ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-1986), 31:371, hereafter *LW*. Bonhoeffer concludes his chapter on "Discipleship and the Cross" by quoting from Luther on Psalm 32:8. See Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 103-104; in a different translation, the Luther quotation is available in *LW* 14:152.

us. If the heart does not overflow and begin to pray by itself, we say, it will never "learn" to pray. But it is a dangerous error, surely very widespread among Christians, to think that the heart can pray by itself. For then we confuse wishes, hopes, sighs, laments, rejoicings—all of which the heart can do by itself—with prayer. And we confuse earth and heaven, man and God. Prayer does not mean simply to pour out one's heart. It means rather to find the way to God and to speak with him, whether the heart is full or empty. No man can do that by himself. For that he needs Jesus Christ.

The disciples want to pray, but they do not know how to do it. That can be very painful, to want to speak with God and not to be able to, to have to be speechless before God, to discover that every call to him dies within itself, that heart and mouth speak an absurd language that God does not want to hear. . . . If he [Jesus Christ] takes us with him in his prayer, if we are privileged to pray along with him, if he lets us accompany him on his way to God and teaches us to pray, then we are free from the agony of prayerlessness. But that is precisely what Jesus Christ wants to do. He wants to pray with us and have us pray with him, so that we may be confident and glad that God hears us. When our will wholeheartedly enters into the prayer of Christ, then we pray correctly. Only in Jesus Christ are we able to pray, and with him we also know that we shall be heard.

And so we must learn to pray. The child learns to speak because his father speaks to him. He learns the speech of his father. So we learn to speak to God because God has spoken to us and speaks to us. By means of the speech of the Father in heaven his children learn to speak with him. Repeating God's own words after him, we begin to pray to him.<sup>25</sup>

This is the rhythm of worship and prayer: from the word of God to man—the word which prompts prayer and teaches how to pray—and then from word-saturated hearts and minds back to the Word made flesh who is at the right hand of the Father and yet dwells among Christians and in the world. Bonhoeffer continues:

We ought to speak to God and he wants to hear us, not in the false and confused speech of our heart, but in the clear and pure speech, which God has spoken to us in Jesus Christ. God's speech in Jesus Christ meets us in the Holy Scriptures. If we wish to pray with confidence and gladness, then the words of Holy Scripture will have to be the solid basis of our

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<sup>25</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1970), 9–11; see also Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1954), 84–85. Norman Nagel echoes this understanding of worship in his introduction to *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 6.

prayer. For here we know that Jesus Christ, the Word of God, teaches us to pray.<sup>26</sup>

Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the Psalms is pervasively christocentric. Some liberal Lutheran scholars actually seem embarrassed at how Christ-centered Bonhoeffer is as an interpreter of the Psalms. An editorial footnote in the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* translation of *Prayerbook* suggests that Bonhoeffer's use of the phrase "Pauline Psalms" does violence to Scripture.<sup>27</sup> The editor also claims that "[f]ew exegetes today would agree . . . with Bonhoeffer's attempt to interpret the psalms of wrath in terms of the Christian gospel's insistence on forgiving one's enemies."<sup>28</sup> Bonhoeffer, however, insists on the doctrine of justification as the touchstone and thereby interprets these Psalms in light of Christ's forgiveness toward all.<sup>29</sup> In *Prayerbook*, he continues to advocate this christocentric reading of the Psalms:

If we want to read and to pray the prayers of the Bible and especially the Psalms, therefore, we must not ask first what they have do with us, but what they have to do with Jesus Christ. We must ask how we can understand the Psalms as God's Word, and then we shall be able to pray them. It does not depend, therefore, on whether the Psalms express adequately that which we feel at a given moment in our heart. If we are to pray aright, perhaps it is quite necessary that we pray contrary to our own heart. Not what we want to pray is important, but what God wants us to pray. If we were dependent entirely on ourselves, we would probably pray only the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer. But God wants it otherwise. The richness of the Word of God ought to determine our prayer, not the poverty of our heart.

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<sup>26</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Prayer Book of the Bible*, 11–12.

<sup>27</sup> The editor's note seems to apply the following passage, written by Karl Holl about Luther, to Bonhoeffer: "Luther bases his interpretation on the conviction that the Bible in all its parts has one and the same meaning. Under this constraint he points out that what had become for him the most significant feature of the Bible, the Pauline Gospel, was also integral to the Psalms. He did not realize that he was, thereby, doing very serious violence to the text. The Psalms, indeed, preach self-justification as does the entire Old Testament. . . ." *Prayerbook* in DBW 5:171 n. 23.

<sup>28</sup> *Prayerbook* in DBW 5:174 n. 26. Cf. Bonhoeffer, *A Testament to Freedom: The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, eds. Geoffrey B. Kelly and F. Burton Nelson (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1995), 15, 17.

<sup>29</sup> See Daniel Bloesch and F. Burton Nelson, "A Bonhoeffer Sermon Translated," *Theology Today* 38 (1982): 466, <http://theologytoday.ptsem.edu/jan1982/v38-4-article3.htm>. See also Bonhoeffer, *Meditating on the Word*, 84–96; Bonhoeffer, *My Soul Finds Rest: Reflections on the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 53–66; and Martin Kuske, *The Old Testament as the Book of Christ: An Appraisal of Bonhoeffer's Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976).

Thus if the Bible also contains a prayerbook, we learn from this that not only that Word which he has to say to us belongs to the Word of God, but also that word which he wants to hear from us, because it is the word of his beloved Son. This is pure grace, that God tells us how we can speak with and have fellowship with him. We can do it by praying in the name of Jesus Christ. The Psalms are given to us to this end, that we may learn to pray them in the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>30</sup>

In his "Sermon on a Psalm of Vengeance," Bonhoeffer points us outside ourselves—*extra nos*—to Christ. Not only justifying righteousness but also the life of prayer is alien. Bonhoeffer outlines the proper order of application when praying the Psalms: "In David is Christ," he says, "and thereby the church of God. . . . Christ himself prays [the] psalm with David—and with Christ the whole church of God."<sup>31</sup> Biblical prayer asks first what the text says about Jesus. This is then applied to the *una sancta*, as well as to David, the human instrument. Only after these steps can one finally ask, "What does this mean for me?" By praying and asking in this way, one is led in true prayer to the true answer.<sup>32</sup> This pattern can also be applied in general to the Lord's Prayer, as well as to the collects and prayers of the church. A theology of glory would not only reverse the order just given but then would also stop at the first point with self. A theology of glory requests for the self: it demands expansion of its own territory, and daily bread narrowly and selfishly understood—and lots of it. A theology of glory establishes the word of man first and last. A theology of glory boasts that prayer is natural, overflowing from the heart.

The theology of the cross, however, understands that "the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14). The theology of the cross proclaims that God is the Alpha and Omega of prayerful conversation: he has, and is, the first and last word. Bonhoeffer understood this literally: God's word in disciplined devotion and meditation<sup>33</sup> should begin each day, before other concerns arise, and should end the day as the proper conclusion. Significant time should be set

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<sup>30</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Prayer Book of the Bible*, 14–15.

<sup>31</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Meditating on the Word*, 87.

<sup>32</sup> For a discussion of how prayer flows from God's gracious will in Jesus Christ, see John Pless, "Prayer: The Voice of Faith," *For the Life of the World* 3, no. 2 (1999): 10, [http://www.lifeoftheworld.com/lotw/article.php?m\\_vol=3&m\\_num=2&a\\_num=3](http://www.lifeoftheworld.com/lotw/article.php?m_vol=3&m_num=2&a_num=3).

<sup>33</sup> Meditation is not dissecting and analyzing the word but accepting it: "You should accept the Word of Scripture and ponder it in your heart as Mary did." Bonhoeffer, *Meditating on the Word*, 33; cf. 44.

aside for this—up to an hour, undisturbed.<sup>34</sup> “Meet [Christ] first in the day, before you meet other people. . . . Before our daily bread should be the daily Word. . . . Before our daily work should be the morning prayer.”<sup>35</sup> Bonhoeffer maintained that the church, especially in times of crises, must “believe much, pray much, and suffer much.”<sup>36</sup> Bonhoeffer’s theology of prayer confesses the all-encompassing nature of the God of prayer with joy, because he knows that there is indeed a merciful God who teaches so that man may learn, who leads so that man may find, and who incorporates man into his sacred heart so that he may live. Having been taught to pray in the unshakeable language of God by God himself—and knowing that he delights to hear—the Christian prays in confidence and gladness.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, Bonhoeffer closes his introduction to prayer by quoting Luther: “[The Psalter] penetrates the Lord’s Prayer and the Lord’s Prayer penetrates it, so that it is possible to understand one on the basis of the other and to bring them into joyful harmony.”<sup>38</sup> Bonhoeffer concludes: “It makes good sense, then, that the Psalter is often bound together in a single volume with the New Testament. It is the prayer of the Christian church. It belongs to the Lord’s Prayer.”<sup>39</sup>

### III. Action

Prayer leads to action, for God is not to be called upon as a *deus ex machine*,<sup>40</sup> invoked simply to solve problems that humanity has created. Prayer is actional, instrumental, and incarnational. It calls upon God to use the faithful as his hands, feet, and voice (Matthew 25). Prayer is a petition that the heavenly Father would conform Christians to his will, both in word and deed (SC III, 10). Gustaf Wingren describes the relationship between prayer and action in Luther: “Turning to God in prayer, without using the external means which God has given, is tempting God; it is

<sup>34</sup> See Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 87; cf. 73, 97.

<sup>35</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Meditating on the Word*, 32, 39; see also Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 290.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Torbjörn Johansson, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer—kristen bekännare i en svår tid,” *Kyrka och Folk* 15–16 (2006): 12 (my translation). “[Bonhoeffer’s] ecclesiology seemed entirely absorbed with the *theologia crucis*.” Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 887.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Johann Gerhard, *Sacred Meditations* (Decatur, IL: Repristination Press, 1998), 119–120. According to John Pless, “The confidence is not in the praying heart but in the promises of God. . . . The God who has given us His Son tenderly invites us to trust His Word and call upon His name with boldness and confidence.” Pless, “Prayer,” 10, 11.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Bonhoeffer, *Prayer Book of the Bible*, 16.

<sup>39</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Prayer Book of the Bible*, 16.

<sup>40</sup> See Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 281–282, 361; cf. 312.



*praesumptio*. . . . [I]n vocation, man becomes God's mask . . . In his toil he is a tool in God's hands, bound before God, i.e., receiving and passive before God, but active outwardly."<sup>41</sup> Prayer calls to action; prayer bids to love. The theology of the cross and prayer, as creed and deed, were concretely expressed in Bonhoeffer's life and death. As fellow Nazi-resister Eivind Berggrav writes, "Words are never *mere* words when they are God's. Words are action, contribution, courage, the willingness to take consequences, and finally the willingness to suffer."<sup>42</sup>

As early as 1932, while serving as a campus pastor at the Berlin Technical University in Charlottenburg, Bonhoeffer wrote to the students: "The church . . . needs nothing less than spectators and nothing more than coworkers."<sup>43</sup> The following year Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany. As the German state instigated mass boycotts against Jewish businesses and established the "Aryan Paragraph" of the "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service," which proscribed Jews from holding any position of civil service in Germany, Bonhoeffer published his essay "The Church and the Jewish Question." He outlined possible ways for the church to interact with the state:

[The church] can ask the state whether its actions are legitimate and in accordance with its character as state, i.e., it can throw the state back on its responsibilities. Secondly, it can aid the victims of state action. The church has an unconditional obligation to the victims of any ordering of society, even if they do not belong to the Christian community.<sup>44</sup> 'Do good to all men.' . . . The third possibility is not just to bandage the victims under the wheel, but to put a spoke in the wheel itself.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation* (Evansville, IN: Ballast Press, 1994), 136–137; see also 185.

<sup>42</sup> Eivind Berggrav, *Man and State* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1951), 307. Berggrav was the Bishop of Oslo (1937–1951) during the Nazi occupation of Norway (1940–1945).

<sup>43</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Aufsatz: Evangelische Studentenseelsorge an der Technischen Hochschule," *Die Technische Hochschule* 99 (1932), 200f., quoted in Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 224. After ten years he was still emphasizing the same: "Mere waiting and looking on is not Christian behaviour." *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 14.

<sup>44</sup> See also Berggrav, *Man and State*, 283–284.

<sup>45</sup> Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 225; cf. 221–230. The essay was apparently completed in April or May 1933 and then originally published in the June issue of *Vormarsch*.

To be more explicit with Bonhoeffer's imagery: When the state crushes its citizens unjustly, the church is to throw itself between the spokes of the wheel in order to stop it!<sup>46</sup>

These beliefs led, in due course, to Bonhoeffer's well-documented participation in attempted tyrannicide. In 1939 he joined the *Abwehr*, military counterintelligence, which was the center of the German resistance against Hitler and the Third Reich. Bonhoeffer's statements from the 1933 article and his subsequent actions from within the state as citizen and officer led to many questions. For example, a co-conspirator "asked Bonhoeffer one evening what he thought about the New Testament passage 'all who take up the sword will perish by the sword' (Matt. 26:52). Bonhoeffer's reply was that the word was valid for their circle too—'we have to accept that we are subject to that judgment, but there is now need of such men as will accept its validity for themselves.'"<sup>47</sup> Confessional Lutherans rightly have questions about Bonhoeffer. Courageous though his words and action might have been, did Bonhoeffer ignore discretion and so lose his life? More significantly, how do such actions conform to Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms?<sup>48</sup> Was not Bonhoeffer's action a violation of this teaching? How can a Christian, much less a pastor, violate the Pauline injunction to submit to the governing authorities (Rom 13:1–5) as Bonhoeffer did?

Bonhoeffer, however, did not believe that his action contradicted the biblical teaching on the two governments. In fact, he invoked this teaching

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Renate Wind, "A Spoke in the Wheel," *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* 3, no. 8 (August 2003): [11], <http://www.elca.org/jle/article.asp?k=24>. See also Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 272–276, and Renate Wind, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Spoke in the Wheel*, trans. John Bowden (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992). For a comparison of Karl Barth's and Bonhoeffer's responses to the Aryan Clauses, see Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords*, 230–240, and Jordan J. Ballor "A Time to Tear, A Time to Speak," *Acton Institute PowerBlog*, <http://www.acton.org/blog/index.html?/archives/896-A-Time-to-Tear,-A-Time-to-Speak.html> (May 5, 2006).

<sup>47</sup> Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 530. See also Siemon-Netto, *The Fabricated Luther*, 84–85, 91–98, 148, 183, and 189.

<sup>48</sup> Rather than using the language of "two kingdoms," this doctrine might be better termed the "two realms (or regiments)." See Martin Luther, *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should be Obeyed* in LW 45:75–129 and *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved* in LW 46:93–137; J. M. Porter, ed., *Luther: Selected Political Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974); Cameron A. MacKenzie, "The Challenge of History: Luther's Two Kingdoms Theology as a Test Case," *CTQ* 71 (2007): 3–28; Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, especially 1–37; Berggrav, *Man and State*, 300–319; Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords*, 221–230; and CA XVI, XXVIII.

of Luther as the basis of his decision.<sup>49</sup> A few months after writing "The Church and the Jewish Question," Bonhoeffer co-authored "The Bethel Confession" with Hermann Sasse.<sup>50</sup> His goal was to recognize the state and preserve it as such, that is, as legitimate temporal authority: nothing more, but nothing less.<sup>51</sup> Bonhoeffer gives at least four applications of the principle of the state's and church's distinct realms to the situation of Germany and the church under Hitler, and thus supplies reasoning for his ultimate stance and act. First, the Nazi totalitarian state had abdicated its responsibilities to protect the just and legal order. Second, the Nazi state, as temporal government, infringed on church order (the ecclesial realm) by barring those of Jewish ethnicity from ministry and even membership. Third, the Nazi state gave no legal recourse for dissent. With these three points, Bonhoeffer boldly proclaimed that the Nazi state had actually negated itself.<sup>52</sup> Finally, civil disobedience is legitimate (Acts 5:29), but only if marked by a willingness to suffer the consequences, by unselfishness, by sacrifice, and by the corporate conscience.<sup>53</sup>

Another Nazi-antagonist, the Danish Lutheran playwright and pastor Kaj Munk, spoke similarly. In January 1944—the same month that the Nazis dragged him from his home, shot him in the head, and left him dead in a ditch—Munk wrote: "The Scriptures do not say: When your neighbor is smitten on one cheek it is your duty to hold him so that he may be smitten on the other cheek also."<sup>54</sup> No, rather, love does no harm to a neighbor. In his essay, "God and Caesar: 'Christianity Takes Orders from Nobody,'" Munk also wrote:

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. David Mark Whitford, *Tyranny and Resistance: The Magdeburg Confession and the Lutheran Tradition* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2001), 103.

<sup>50</sup> See the comments about "The Bethel Confession" in Laurence L. White, "The Cultural Crisis and Lutheran Social Ethics," *Confessional Lutherans Web site*, <http://www.confessionallutherans.org/papers/alwhite.html> (April 17, 1998).

<sup>51</sup> Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords*, 226.

<sup>52</sup> Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords*, 225.

<sup>53</sup> See Charles Ford, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Resistance, and the Two Kingdoms," *Lutheran Forum* 27, no. 3(1993): 28, and "Luther, Bonhoeffer and Revolution" *Lutheran Forum* 25, no. 4 (1991): 24. Cf. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 193–204, 280–297, 327–357; as well as Ford, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Authority" (unpublished paper, January 4, 2004), and "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the German Resistance." This echoes three features of Bonhoeffer's theology of the cross: "first, it is voluntary; second, it is bearing the burden of others; and third, it is done for the sake of Christ." John D. Godsey, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Suffering," *Stauros Notebook* 14, no. 2 (1995), <http://www.stauros.org/notebooks/v14n2a01.html>. See also Berggrav, *Man and State*, 282–283.

<sup>54</sup> Kaj Munk, *Four Sermons* (Blair, NE: Lutheran Publishing House, 1944), 27.

[What] a pretty sort of religion! If only little So-and-So can be kept out of harm's way . . . and find his seat in Heaven, what business of his are his neighbors . . . ? Let it go to Hell! Such would certainly be a religion to the liking of Cæsar! Upon such a religion he would be happy to bestow the favors of the state! For such . . . would never cross his path! The name of this religion is — Blasphemy!<sup>55</sup>

So Romans 13, the very same text that is often used against Bonhoeffer, concludes with this summary of the fulfillment of the law: "Love does no harm to a neighbor" (Rom 13:10). Love is neither cautious nor passive; it is active. "Every moment and every situation challenges us to action. . . ."<sup>56</sup> For Bonhoeffer, love meant taking action—jamming the wheel that was crushing his neighbor, church, and nation. He explained, "If you boarded the wrong train, could you get where you wanted by running through the corridor in the opposite direction?"<sup>57</sup>

Bonhoeffer claimed that non-action in the face of the Nazi antichrist<sup>58</sup> would be spiritual suicide; in other words, it would be harmful not only to the Jews and other persecuted ones but also to the Christian church and the self. Thus, in 1940, he would lead the church in this confession of sin:

If my share in this is so small as to seem negligible, that still cannot set my mind at rest . . . but I must acknowledge that precisely my sin is to blame for all. . . . I am guilty of cowardly silence at a time when I ought to have spoken. I am guilty of hypocrisy and untruthfulness in the face of force. I have been lacking in compassion and I have denied the poorest of my brethren. . . . The Church confesses that she has not proclaimed often and clearly enough her message of the one God who has revealed Himself for all times in Jesus Christ and who will tolerate no other gods beside Himself. She confesses her timidity, her evasiveness, her dangerous concessions. She has often been untrue to her office of guardianship and to her office of comfort. . . . She was silent when she should have cried out because the blood of the innocent was crying aloud to heaven. She has failed to speak the right word in the right way and at the right time. She

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<sup>55</sup> Munk, *Four Sermons*, 36. The first of these sermons has also been translated and published under the title "The Cost of Truth," in *Kaj Munk: Playwright, Priest and Patriot*, ed. R. P. Keigwin (London: The Free Danish Publishing House, 1944), 69. Many parallels can be drawn between Bonhoeffer and Munk, see Hans Mikkelsen, "Only the Suffering God Can Help," *Portland Independent Media Center*, <http://portland.indymedia.org/en/2003/12/277367.shtml> (December 28, 2003).

<sup>56</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 86.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Theodore J. Kleinhaus, *Till the Night Be Past: The Life and Times of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 128. See also Berggrav, *Man and State*, 308.

<sup>58</sup> On this use of the term "antichrist," see Siemon-Netto, "Welcome Back, Dietrich," 16; Berggrav, *Man and State*, 305–306; and Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 722.

has not resisted to the uttermost the apostasy of faith, and she has brought upon herself the guilt of the godlessness of the masses. The Church confesses that she has taken in vain the name of Jesus Christ, for she has been ashamed of this name before the world and she has not striven forcefully enough against the misuse of this name for an evil purpose. She has stood by while violence and wrong were being committed under cover of this name. . . . The Church confesses that she has witnessed the lawless application of brutal force, the physical and spiritual suffering of countless innocent people, oppression, hatred, and murder, and that she has not raised her voice on behalf of the victims and has not found ways to hasten to their aid. She is guilty of the deaths of the weakest and most defenseless brothers of Jesus Christ. . . . The Church must confess that she has desired security, peace, and quiet, possessions and honor, to which she had no right. . . . She has not borne witness to the truth of God. . . . By her own silence she has rendered herself guilty of the decline in responsible action, in bravery in the defence of a cause, and in willingness to suffer for what is known to be right. She bears the guilt of the defection of the governing authority from Christ.<sup>59</sup>

Upon confession of guilt, justification and renewal result. This renewal finds its place very much in the world. Bonhoeffer wrote, "Jesus Christ lived in the midst of his enemies. . . . On the Cross he was utterly alone, surrounded by evildoers and mockers. For this cause he had come, to bring peace to the enemies of God. So the Christian, too, belongs not in the seclusion of a cloistered life but in the thick of foes. There is his commission, his work."<sup>60</sup> For Bonhoeffer there is a "profound this-worldliness" of Christianity, as he explained in a prison letter to his best friend,<sup>61</sup> relative, and future biographer Eberhard Bethge:

I don't mean the shallow and banal this-worldliness of the enlightened, the busy, the comfortable, or lascivious, but the profound this-worldliness characterized by discipline and the constant knowledge of death and resurrection. I think Luther lived a this-worldly life in this sense. . . . [It is] only by living completely in this world that one learns to live by faith. One must completely abandon any attempt to make something of oneself, whether it be saint or converted sinner or churchman (a so-called priestly type!), a righteous man or an unrighteous one, a sick man or a healthy one. By this-worldliness I mean living unreservedly in life's duties,

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<sup>59</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 112–115. This is part of a section titled "Guilt, Justification and Renewal" on pages 110–119.

<sup>60</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 17. Bonhoeffer then quotes Luther: "The Kingdom is to be in the midst of your enemies. . . . If Christ had done what you are doing [dwelling only among friends] who would ever have been spared?" *Life Together*, 17–18.

<sup>61</sup> See Bethge, *Friendship and Resistance: Essays on Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995), especially "Bonhoeffer's Theology of Friendship," 80–104.

problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities. In so doing, we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God, taking seriously, not our own sufferings, but those of God in the world—watching with Christ in Gethsemane. That, I think, is faith; that is *metanoia*; and that is how one becomes a man and a Christian (cf. Jer 45!).<sup>62</sup>

For Bonhoeffer, “this-worldliness” was deeply incarnational (as indicated by his reference to John 1:14).<sup>63</sup> According to Charles Ford, Bonhoeffer’s “this-worldly” activity in the German resistance was an attempt to draw the attention of the allied nations to Nazi atrocities and to encourage allied support of the German resistance.<sup>64</sup>

Although Lutherans may come to different conclusions regarding the appropriateness of Bonhoeffer’s actions, I am convinced that Bonhoeffer’s assistance with the assassination plots against Hitler was an act done in Christian faith and love within God’s left-hand regiment. Uwe Siemon-Netto has designated Bonhoeffer as a martyr—not of the right-hand but of the left-hand realm.<sup>65</sup> He acted as a dutiful German citizen, returning in July 1939 to his native country from the United States just prior to the outbreak of war. In deciding this, Bonhoeffer said:

I must live through this difficult period of our national history with the Christian people of Germany. I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people. My brethren in the Confessing Synod wanted me to go [to the United States]. They may have been right in urging me to do so; but I was wrong in going. Such a decision each person must make for him- or herself. Christians in Germany will face the terrible alternative of either willing the defeat of their nation in order that Christian civilisation may survive, or willing the victory of their nation and thereby destroying our civilisation. I know which of these alternatives I have to choose; but I cannot make the choice in security.<sup>66</sup>

Bonhoeffer acted to protect his nation, neighbor, and the church from a ruler turned robber and murderer. According to Siemon-Netto, “Bonhoeffer explained himself with the quintessentially Lutheran imperative: ‘Sin boldly! [*pecca fortiter*].’ This advice to citizens of the secular

<sup>62</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 369–370; cf. 393.

<sup>63</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 286–287.

<sup>64</sup> Ford, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the German Resistance,” 2.

<sup>65</sup> Siemon-Netto, “Bonhoeffer, a Bold Sinner.”

<sup>66</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Way to Freedom: Letters, Lectures and Notes, 1935–1939 from the Collected Works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. Edwin H. Robertson, trans. Edwin H. Robertson and John Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 246. See also Wind, “A Spoke in the Wheel,” [18].

realm is often ripped out of context and then becomes a dreadful cliché to be used against Luther. . . . But when quoted in full, it really sums up how, according to Luther, a Christian should live in this world."<sup>67</sup>

Luther himself, in his *Warning to His Dear German People* (1531), explicitly sanctioned armed resistance by individual Christian citizens against a corrupt monarch who is acting in violation of all divine and human law:

[I]f war breaks out—which God forbid—I will not reprove those who defend themselves against the murderous and bloodthirsty papists, nor let anyone else rebuke them as being seditious, but I will accept their action and let it pass as self-defense. I will direct them in this matter to the law and to the jurists. For in such an instance, when the murderers and bloodhounds wish to wage war and to murder, it is in truth no insurrection to rise against them and defend oneself.<sup>68</sup>

Luther maintained that the church itself should certainly never resort to weapons.<sup>69</sup> New situations required a new application of this principle. Violent anarchy would result if the citizens, including Christian citizens, were left defenseless. Even in such a situation a Christian citizen "could not raise a weapon of defense against the rioter . . . in the name of the church. At this point the Christian citizen is no higher than the second table. He exists in that situation not as a child of God but as one who is subject to civil authority. . . . His responsibility is to the law."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Siemon-Netto, *The Fabricated Luther*, 84–85; cf. 103 n. 106. "[I]f grace is true, you must bear a true and not a fictitious sin. God does not save people who are only fictitious sinners. Be a sinner and sin boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ even more boldly, for he is victorious over sin, death, and the world. As long as we are [in this world] we have to sin. This life is not the dwelling place of righteousness, but, as Peter says (2 Pe. 3:13), we look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." Martin Luther, Letter to Philip Melanchthon, Wartburg, August 1, 1521 in *LW* 48:279. Luther, of course, was not against a Pauline view of sin, grace, and the redeemed life. What he advocated, and the way in which Bonhoeffer appropriated it, was that the Christian life is active and not a "spectator sport." Indeed, Christian love is action. See also Carter Lindberg, foreword to Whitford, *Tyranny and Resistance*, 10.

<sup>68</sup> Luther, *Warning to His Dear German People* in *LW* 47:19–20. On Luther's position, see also Berggrav, *Man and State*, 315.

<sup>69</sup> Luther, *Temporal Authority* (1523), *LW* 45:75–129.

<sup>70</sup> Berggrav, *Man and State*, 315. Berggrav argues that this "responsibility to the law" was the argument used by Luther when the Smalcald League was created. *Man and State*, 315–316. See Whitford, *Tyranny and Resistance*. For example, Luther made this statement in 1538: "If the emperor undertakes war he will be a tyrant and will oppose our ministry and religion, and then he will also oppose our civil and domestic life. Here there is no question whether it's permissible to fight for one's faith. On the contrary, it's



Hitler opposed the law in civil and domestic life and, via the Aryan clause, opposed the ministry and religion. Bonhoeffer was acting out of Christian love for the neighbor, focusing on the neighbor's needs.<sup>71</sup> About his own actions, Bonhoeffer said, "[R]eason dictates that we must do this, and then of course we must still turn to God for forgiveness in Christ."<sup>72</sup> The question, however, was not one of submission; it could not be. All means of non-violent dissent and protest had been removed by the Nazis: distribution of various written materials (free press), opportunity for public speaking and lecturing (free speech), peaceable assembly, the petitioning of government, and open elections. The question is not "Was Bonhoeffer's action sinful?"—as if an answer to this would finally resolve the issue—but rather "Of the choices before him, all 'sinful,'<sup>73</sup> what should he have done?" Though the action was difficult, the question was not difficult to answer. According to Bethge, they "just assumed as a matter of course that as followers of Christ, they could not possibly allow themselves to become accomplices in the slaughter of Jews and all the other horrible things that were going on in Germany."<sup>74</sup>

Bonhoeffer's action grew out of his theology of the cross, as well as his understanding of baptism, prayer, and the call to discipleship.<sup>75</sup> In this he found true freedom: "freedom from the fear of decision, freedom from fear to act."<sup>76</sup>

#### IV. Community

For Bonhoeffer, though, this freedom was always bound up in action within and to the community. It was outwardly directed, corporately understood, and communally lived.

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necessary to fight for one's children and family." *Table Talk* in *LW* 54:278–279. Those who espouse quietism in the face of despotism must look elsewhere than the mature Luther.

<sup>71</sup> On Luther's view of service to the neighbor, see Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 153–154. See also Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 298, and *Ethics*, 299–313, where he discusses the uses of the law.

<sup>72</sup> As recounted by Bethge in Siemon-Netto, "Welcome Back, Dietrich," 16.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 362–363.

<sup>74</sup> Malcolm Muggeridge, *A Third Testament* (Farmington, PA: Plough Publishing House, 2002), 157.

<sup>75</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 299–300. The scriptural support for Bonhoeffer's action is simply the biblical concept of love for neighbor. Bonhoeffer wrote: "The Christian is called to sympathy and action, not in the first place by his own sufferings, but by the sufferings of his brethren, for whose sake Christ suffered." *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 14.

<sup>76</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 276. See also Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 14.



Freedom *from* something experiences its fulfillment [sic] only in freedom *for* something. Freedom for freedom's sake, however, leads to anarchy. Biblically, freedom means: freedom for service to God and the neighbor, freedom for obedience to the commands of God . . . Freedom is not primarily an individual right but a responsibility, freedom is not primarily oriented to the individual but to the neighbor. . . .<sup>77</sup>

The call to discipleship naturally meant community: the call being, for Bonhoeffer, baptism (that is, incorporation into Christ and his church).

Bonhoeffer's classic statement on community is *Life Together*,<sup>78</sup> which was written in the setting of an illegal seminary at Finkenwalde. One of the students, Gerhard Lehne, described the community of this seminary-life "as a 'brotherhood under the Word, irrespective of the person,' with an 'open-mindedness and love for everything that still makes this fallen creation loveable—music, literature, sport, and the beauty of the earth—a grand way of life.'"<sup>79</sup> The seminary was opened in April 1935, moved to Finkenwalde in June 1935, and closed by the Gestapo in September 1937. The themes explored by *Life Together* are the day with others, the day alone, intercession, quiet and solitude, service, private confession,<sup>80</sup> and the Lord's Supper.

The continuity, consistency, and interrelatedness in Bonhoeffer's thought are clear; the themes of suffering, prayer, and action also find a home in Bonhoeffer's discussion of community:

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Thus the law of Christ is a law of bearing. Bearing means forbearing and sustaining. The brother is a burden to the Christian, precisely because he

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<sup>77</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Gedanken," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, *Ökumene: Briefe, Aufsätze, Dokumente, 1928–1942*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1958), 359, quoted in Ford, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Resistance, and the Two Kingdoms," 32 (emphasis original).

<sup>78</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993). This edition is subtitled: "The Classic Exploration of Faith in Community." *Life Together* was written in a single four-week stretch in 1938, with breaks only for tennis and a music festival. Geoffrey B. Kelly, "Editor's Introduction to the English Edition," in *DBW 5:4. Life Together*, with *Prayer Book*, is Bonhoeffer's finest work. According to Maria von Wedemeyer, his fiancée, while in prison Bonhoeffer himself "claimed that the only [book of his] of concern to him at that moment was *Life Together*." Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 416.

<sup>79</sup> David McL. Gracie, introduction to "Meditation on Psalm 119," in Bonhoeffer, *Meditating on the Word*, 103.

<sup>80</sup> On private confession, see Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (1954), 110–122. This should be understood in the historical context of the preachers' seminary at Finkenwalde, as well as James 5:16.

is a Christian. For the pagan the other person never becomes a burden at all. He simply sidesteps every burden that others may impose on him. The Christian, however, must bear the burden of a brother. He must suffer and endure the brother. It is only when he is a burden that another person is really a brother and not merely an object to be manipulated. The burden of men was so heavy for God Himself that He had to endure the Cross. God verily bore the burden of men in the body of Jesus Christ. But He bore them as a mother carries her child, as a shepherd enfolds the lost lamb that has been found. God took men upon Himself and they weighted him to the ground, but God remained with them and they with God. In bearing with men God maintained community with them. It is the law of Christ that was fulfilled in the Cross. And Christians must share in this law. They must suffer their brethren, but, what is more important, now that the law of Christ has been fulfilled, they *can* bear with their brethren.<sup>81</sup>

Believers bear each other's burdens in time and space, and also in intercessory forgiving prayer, even as Christ bore the sins of all.<sup>82</sup> This focus on community did not preclude Bonhoeffer's feelings of isolation at times. While in prison, Bonhoeffer yearned for family and friends; he felt alone even among his fellow prisoners. He expressed these emotions on community, self-identity, and God in his poem "Who Am I?":

Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.  
Whoever I am, thou knowest, O God, I am thine.<sup>83</sup>

### V. Excursus: Bonhoeffer's Non-Religious Language

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of Bonhoeffer is his prison-cell musings on so-called non-religious language. These reflections on a "non-religious interpretation of Christianity" have caused as much, or more, controversy and debate than even his resistance to Nazi totalitarianism. Bonhoeffer used the phrase "non-religious Christianity" only once, in order to ask a hypothetical question regarding its definition.<sup>84</sup> Bethge maintains that Bonhoeffer's more common phrase was "'nonreligious interpretation,' [which] means Christological interpretation. It might not mean that for others, but it did for Bonhoeffer."<sup>85</sup> Bonhoeffer specifically

<sup>81</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 100-101. See also Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 95, 98-99, and *Cost of Discipleship*, 110.

<sup>82</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 102-103.

<sup>83</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 347-348.

<sup>84</sup> This is the correct translation of the phrase found in a 30 April 1944 letter to Bethge in Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 280.

<sup>85</sup> H. Elliott Wright, "Aftermath of Flossenbürg: Bonhoeffer, 1947-1970: An Interview with Eberhard Bethge," *Christian Century* 87 (May 27, 1970): 657.

references justification, and uses Paul and circumcision as an analogy: "The Pauline question whether [circumcision] is a condition of<sup>86</sup> justification seems to me in present-day terms to be whether religion is a condition of salvation."<sup>87</sup> Bonhoeffer, however, nowhere defines "religion" or "develops any closed theory of religion,"<sup>88</sup> though he seems to equate it with the outward trappings, the externals, even the anthropocentric and self-righteous elements of worship. Nonetheless, he does not systematically identify it. "It seems that Bonhoeffer is using the word 'religion' in a way that not only makes a definition of its content difficult, but often does not even try to provide any such definition."<sup>89</sup> This makes "the large number of misinterpretations understandable, all of which presuppose Bonhoeffer to be operating with a fixed concept of religion and then on the basis of this presupposition attempt to explain the nonreligious interpretation."<sup>90</sup>

Bonhoeffer was struggling with how to present the gospel to an increasingly secularized world, that is, with evangelism and catechesis.

The day will come . . . when men will once more be called so to utter the word of God that the world will be changed and renewed by it. It will be a new language, perhaps quite non-religious, but liberating and redeeming—as was Jesus' language; it will shock people and yet overcome them by its power; it will be the language of a new righteousness and truth, proclaiming God's peace with men and the coming of his kingdom. . . . (Jer. 33.9).<sup>91</sup>

Bonhoeffer did not give up traditional, biblical terminology.<sup>92</sup> Charles Ford notes that

leading figures in the resistance, including members of [his] own family, were motivated by nineteenth century liberal thought and far from Christianity. It was specifically to address the latter that Bonhoeffer wanted to develop a "non-religious" interpretation of Christianity. In approaching the liberal resistance, Bonhoeffer wanted to present

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<sup>86</sup> This phrase, in both instances in this sentence, could be translated "prerequisite for." Ralf K. Wüstenberg, *A Theology of Life: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Religionless Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 25.

<sup>87</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 281.

<sup>88</sup> Some attempts include "human yearning [and striving] for God" and "cheap grace." Wüstenberg, *A Theology of Life*, 8, 14; cf. Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 45–48.

<sup>89</sup> Wüstenberg, *A Theology of Life*, 27.

<sup>90</sup> Wüstenberg, *A Theology of Life*, 297.

<sup>91</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 300.

<sup>92</sup> See Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 881; cf. Bonhoeffer, *Reflections on the Bible: Human Word and Word of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 83.

Christianity gradually in ways that addressed issues which they were encountering.<sup>93</sup>

He was attempting to formulate an evangelistic paradigm within the context of a catechetical model. Ford states:

In this he appealed to early church tradition in which catechumens were asked to leave the liturgy before Holy Communion. His "non-religious" language for Christianity was like a catechism. At some point the catechumens will be ready for traditional Christian language. One can notice how members of his family came gradually to speak traditional Christian language, especially as they faced execution.<sup>94</sup>

Ford also points out that after his "reflections on 'non-religious' language, Bonhoeffer himself returned to traditional language after the failure of the attempted assassination of Hitler. 'My past life is brim-full of God's goodness and my sins are covered by the forgiving love of Christ crucified.'"<sup>95</sup>

It must be kept in mind that Bonhoeffer was discussing and asking questions on nonreligious interpretation in personal letters from jail to his best friend. On one occasion he wrote to Bethge: "You would be surprised, and perhaps even worried, by my theological thoughts and the conclusions they lead to; and this is where I miss you most of all, because I don't know anyone else with whom I could so well discuss them to have my thinking clarified."<sup>96</sup> On another occasion he wrote, "Forgive me for still putting it all so terribly clumsily and badly, as I really feel I am. But perhaps you will help me again to make things clearer and simpler, even if only by my being able to talk about them with you and to hear you, so to speak, keep asking and answering."<sup>97</sup>

## VI. Conclusion

Bonhoeffer is not without faults, so it is fitting to consider briefly some of his shortcomings. Though he believed in the inspiration of the original text, in regard to Scripture he was not an inerrantist,<sup>98</sup> which is not a

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<sup>93</sup> Ford, e-mail to author, June 18, 2006. Also published as "Luther and Bonhoeffer Misunderstood," *Christian News* (New Haven, MO), July 3, 2006, 23. Some have called these leading figures in the resistance, whom Bonhoeffer was trying to reach, "homesick humanists."

<sup>94</sup> Ford, e-mail to author, June 18, 2006.

<sup>95</sup> Ford, e-mail to author, June 18, 2006.

<sup>96</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 279.

<sup>97</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 362.

<sup>98</sup> He believed in the inspiration of the original text. See Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords*, 322.

surprise considering the German milieu in which he was born and bred.<sup>99</sup> Bonhoeffer, however, was no higher critic—a discipline that he considered more or less useless for meeting the world on its own terms and for the purpose it was intended.<sup>100</sup> Rather, he read the Bible faithfully, meditatively, prayerfully,<sup>101</sup> and christocentrically, pondering each word in a passage,<sup>102</sup> sometimes for days or even weeks.<sup>103</sup> He also preached from the Bible.<sup>104</sup> Not surprisingly Bonhoeffer has been labeled in opposite ways by different people. One considers him a radical; another, a biblicist.<sup>105</sup> He was neither. He was a man of the word of God. His “view on the relationship between revelation and Scripture is that revelation takes place by means of the Holy Spirit who works through the text of Scripture, the presentation of Christ in the proclaimed word, and also the sacraments.”<sup>106</sup> Bonhoeffer could have given more frequent attention to sacramental

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<sup>99</sup> Hermann Sasse had to overcome the same barriers and, granted a longer life, he did so. According to Robert Kolb and Charles Ford, while visiting Concordia Seminary in 1964, Sasse called Bonhoeffer a wonderful young Lutheran theologian and said, “The longer he lived the more Lutheran he became.” Two of Bonhoeffer’s latest complete works intended for publication were his best: *Life Together* (1939) and *Psalms: The Prayerbook of the Bible* (1940).

<sup>100</sup> See Bonhoeffer, *Meditating on the Word*, 44.

<sup>101</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 84–85.

<sup>102</sup> “The Gospel . . . never speaks a superfluous word.” Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 43. See also Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 204.

<sup>103</sup> See Bonhoeffer, *Meditating on the Word*, especially 30–41. No interruptions should be allowed during this quiet time; it should precede all other activities of the day. Bonhoeffer’s claim to “need help against the ungodly haste and unrest which threaten my work as a pastor” rings true for all. Bonhoeffer, *Meditating on the Word*, 31.

<sup>104</sup> As an example of his approach, see Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997).

<sup>105</sup> For example, see Kleinhans, *Till the Night Be Past*, 64. See especially Bonhoeffer, “The Bible Alone” in *Meditating on the Word*, 40–48; Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 204–206; Bonhoeffer, *Reflections on the Bible*; and Joel Shaltanis, *The Interpretation of Scripture in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (unpublished paper, Concordia Seminary, 2006), in which the author argues that Bonhoeffer must be understood in light of three distinct periods: pre-1931 (pre-conversion [see, e.g., Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 202–206]), ca. 1932–1943, and 1943–1945 (imprisonment). One could even divide the second phase into two sub-periods: ca. 1932–1937 and ca. 1937–1943, as Bonhoeffer himself indicates a break in comments on the writing of *Cost of Discipleship* (1937). Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 369–370. For a brief overview of Bonhoeffer’s hermeneutic from a confessional Lutheran perspective see Timo Laato, *Romarbrevets Hermeneutik* (Gothenburg: Forsamlingsforlaget, 2006), especially 38–44, though Laato focuses on *Act and Being*, Bonhoeffer’s doctoral dissertation (habilitation thesis) written in 1930. By 1932, Bonhoeffer, in a personal letter, mentioned he had himself “taken quite a dislike to [the dissertation].” Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords*, 149.

<sup>106</sup> Shaltanis, *Interpretation of Scripture*, n.p.

theology in his writing, even though he considered baptism and the Lord's Supper to be foundational and essential.<sup>107</sup>

Occasionally, Bonhoeffer shows an attraction to pacifism.<sup>108</sup> In *Ethics*, however, Bonhoeffer defends war as a necessary reality.<sup>109</sup> According to Jordan J. Ballor, "The idea that Bonhoeffer was ever a pure pacifist is incorrect. [H]e did have lifelong affinities for the position, however. Bethge relates Bonhoeffer's great interest in Gandhi's methods of nonviolent protest, for example."<sup>110</sup> Some maintain that the early Bonhoeffer was a pacifist who was forced to change course due to the rise of Hitler. Ballor argues against the view that Bonhoeffer began as a pacifist but changed after the rise of Hitler by citing from an early work, *Sanctorum Communio*: "Where a people, submitting in conscience to God's will, goes to war in order to fulfill its historical purpose and mission in the world though entering fully into the ambiguity of human sinful action—it knows it has been called upon by God, that history is to be made; here war is no longer murder."<sup>111</sup> Ballor concludes, "Many attempts to cast Bonhoeffer as a pacifist fit more with later interpreters' thoughts about what they wish Bonhoeffer would have done or should have done, rather than the realities of his positions and actions."<sup>112</sup>

Finally, although *Life Together*, his *Prayerbook*, and other works are highly recommended, *Christ the Center* is not. Despite its helpful summary of christological heresies, it is the least useful, the weakest stylistically, and perhaps the least orthodox of his books.<sup>113</sup> Bonhoeffer also offered this caution about *The Cost of Discipleship*: "I thought I could acquire faith by trying to live a holy life, or something like it. I suppose I wrote *The Cost of Discipleship* as the end of that path. Today I see the dangers of that book,

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<sup>107</sup> See, for example, Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords*, 241–242, and Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 267, and 46–48 for the relationship of "cheap grace" to the sacraments.

<sup>108</sup> As one of several possible examples see Bonhoeffer, *A Testament to Freedom*, 95 (1932), but then compare his words in the same year on 99. See also Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 205.

<sup>109</sup> See especially Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 89–110, 154–164, 171–181, 232–236, 244–258. Cf. Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords*, 223.

<sup>110</sup> Jordan J. Ballor, e-mail to the Bonhoeffer's Cell yahoo e-group, November 16, 2004.

<sup>111</sup> Ballor, e-mail to the Bonhoeffer's Cell yahoo e-group, November 16, 2004. For a different translation of the same statement, see Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, in DBW 1:119.

<sup>112</sup> Ballor, e-mail to the Bonhoeffer's Cell yahoo e-group, November 16, 2004.

<sup>113</sup> *Christ the Center* is based on lecture notes from the summer of 1933, during Bonhoeffer's transition to what he would simply term Christianity. Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 205.

though I still stand by what I wrote."<sup>114</sup> Due to its depth and its sometimes subtle, though proper, distinction of law and gospel and of obedience and faith,<sup>115</sup> it is best read only by the mature, discerning Christian.<sup>116</sup> There is no doubt that Bonhoeffer was broken and twisted: a sinner conceived, born, and living after the fall. He simply cannot measure up to the expectation that he should be something other than this.<sup>117</sup>

There is really only one focus for Bonhoeffer, one theme among these interconnected cruciform themes of suffering, prayer, action, and community: Christ. His last recorded words—"This is the end, but for me it is the beginning of life"<sup>118</sup>—and the text for his last sermon—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet 1:3)<sup>119</sup>—provided a fitting close to his life.

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<sup>114</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 369.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 63.

<sup>116</sup> See Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 312.

<sup>117</sup> See his reflections on being a pastor in Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 109.

<sup>118</sup> John W. Doberstein, introduction to Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 13.

<sup>119</sup> The text was for Quasimodogeniti Sunday (First Sunday after Easter), April 8, 1945. Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 926–927. See also Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 370–371.

## Book Review

*Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism.* Edited by D. A. Carsons, Peter O'Brien, and Mark Seifrid. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001. 619 Pages. \$55.00. *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume 2: The Paradoxes of Paul.* Edited by D. A. Carsons, Peter O'Brien, and Mark Seifrid. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004. 545 Pages. \$55.00.

Even though the term "variegated nomism" in the titles of this two-volume collection of essays does not sound inviting, they are a treasure trove of research from numerous scholars that issues a very substantial challenge to the "New Perspective on Paul" scholarship. The "New Perspective" was promulgated in the latter decades of the twentieth century, especially by E. P. Sanders who popularized the term "covenantal nomism" in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977). Sanders stressed that first-century Judaism—including Paul—understood that Jews entered the covenant by grace through faith but maintained their position in the covenant by works of the law (thus the term "covenantal nomism"). The research in these volumes demonstrates that such an understanding of first-century Judaism is reductionistic and does not reflect the complex variety of perspectives that existed on the soteriological function of the law (thus the title *Justification and Variegated Nomism*).

The first volume, *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, is the foundational volume. It has essays that address soteriology and the role of the law in various types of Second Temple Jewish literature by the following scholars: Daniel Falk, Craig Evans, Peter Enns, Philip Davies, Richard Bauckham, Richard Kugler, Donald Gowan, Paul Spilsbury, Philip Alexander, Martin McNamara, David Hay, and Markus Bockmuehl. Essays by Mark Seifrid (Righteousness in the OT) and Roland Deines (Pharisees) are especially valuable, as well as the synthetic summary by D. A. Carsons.

The second volume, *The Paradoxes of Paul*, deals directly with Pauline texts and responds critically to "New Perspective" positions. Essay topics include "New Perspective" scholarship (Stephen Westerholm), Paul's Righteousness Language (Mark Seifrid), Paul and the Law from Damascus to Antioch (Martin Hengel), Romans 1:18–3:20 (Mark Seifrid), Romans 3:21–4:25 (Simon Gathercole), Romans 5–11 (Douglas Moo), Faith and Works in Galatians (Moisés Silva), Covenantal Nomism in Paul (Peter O'Brien), Salvation History (Robert Yarbrough), Paul's Anthropology (Timo Laato), Paul's Conversion (Peter O'Brien), Paul's Understanding of Old and New (D. A. Carsons), Luther and Paul (Timothy George), and Justification of the Ungodly (Henri Blocher). This volume is a very valuable distillation of rigorous research against the various "New Perspective" positions. It should be consulted by all who study Paul's understanding of the law, a subject of importance to Lutheran pastors.

Charles A. Gieschen