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The Migrant Camp of the People of God:

A Uniting Theme for the Epistle to the Hebrews

by

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Abstract

Although the movement motif is prominent in Hebrews, it has not been demonstrated that it unites the epistle. In a previous article, we proposed that the author used the spaces of the wilderness camp and tabernacle as a heuristic device for the Christological expositions. This article will employ the root metaphor of migration to explain the exhortations and suggest that "the Migrant Camp of God's People" serves as a uniting theme for Hebrews. Judging that the precarious state of his congregation typologically corresponded to that of the Exodus generation, the author has provided us with a Christian interpretation of the Book of Numbers as its solution. This relationship also accounts for the epistle's unique literary structure.

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1. Introduction

Craig Koester's (2002:103-123) proposal that the community behind the epistle to the Hebrews developed through three historical phases of conversion, persecution and malaise has significantly elucidated its contextual background.[3] What now remains to be resolved is the question of a uniting theme or "master idea" (Saydon 1961:19) that seamlessly connects the author's distinctive theological emphases and choices with his literary and rhetorical approach aimed at addressing the pastoral problems. Lindars' (1991:26) suggestion that "[i]t is a mistake to look for a leading idea as the key to the whole", while understandable as an expression of the frustration involved in the venture, is perhaps mistaken as an approach. Earlier generations of scholars, from Davidson (1882) to Swetnam (1974), favoured the doctrine of the high priesthood of Christ as the "central category" (Moule 1950:37), and Hughes' (1977:2) proposition that "the absolute supremacy of Christ" is the epistle's "comprehensive theme" is well known, but they both fail to provide fitting links with the exhortations. Since, according to Attridge (1990:211), the purpose of Hebrews is "not to socialize new members of a group, to legitimize a structure of authority, or to polemicize against an external social unit and its symbol system, but to reinforce the identity of a social sub-group in such a way as not to isolate it from its environment", any proposal must demonstrate how this reinforcement of identity is achieved. In addition, it must also fit the socio-historical context of the epistle, as far as that may be ascertained, and explain the unique literary and rhetorical style.

The proposal that so far qualifies to be near enough to fulfilling these conditions is the theme of the Christian life as a pilgrimage. Eastern Christianity, as early as the third century, cherished this theme in the exhortations of Hebrews (Koester 2001:19), but it was Ernst Käsemann's *The*

[3] The questions about authorship and date are probably irresolvable from the internal evidence alone. We assume, based largely on Hebrews 11:32, that the author is male. His philosophical background is clearly found within the primitive Christian faith and the general consensus that Hebrews is a homily also seems to be now firmly established. The issue of the ethnicity of the congregation is not fully settled and though we assume that they were Jewish Christians in diaspora, the import of this assumption is marginal to our investigation.

Wandering People of God (1984) which in 1938 brought the idea of movement in the exhortations of Hebrews 3-4 and 11 to the attention of Western Christianity. Käsemann did not propose the theme as uniting the epistle and emphasised a wandering motif rather than pilgrimage theme. His suggestion that the motif was derived from a strong Gnostic influence on the author was also clearly incorrect. Barrett's (1956) refinement of Käsemann's proposal firmly established the presence of the motif as uniting the exhortations of Hebrews[4] and as its major contribution to New Testament theology. More recently, Isaacs (1992) has employed the phenomenology of space to suggest that there are parallel pilgrimage themes in both the exhortations and the expositions. The cultic expositions demonstrate that Christ has arrived in His own pilgrimage into the inner sanctum that is heaven, whereas the exhortations encourage the Hebrews congregation to also persevere in their pilgrimage towards the same destination. The expositions of Hebrews are however rather static and do not readily exhibit movement themes, and though Jesus is presented as Apostle and Example to be emulated, this is found in the exhortations. In addition, Isaacs postulated that the author aimed at redirecting the congregation's traditional understanding of the destination of pilgrimage from the recently destroyed Jerusalem temple to the heavenly sacred place. Though such a construct of the purpose of the epistle is plausible, it seems not to account sufficiently for the urgency in the author's tone.

Some of the most important features of Hebrews do not completely match the pilgrimage motif either. The Christological comparisons are not adequately explained by the motif and similarly the nature of the destination as expounded in the exhortations, that is, salvation (Heb 2:1-4), God's rest (Heb 3-4), perfection (Heb 5-6) and the promise (Heb 10-13) do not fully fit the pilgrimage model in which cultic rituals mark the destination. The cultic experience in Hebrews occurs more during the journey rather than at its destination. The transitional exhortations to "approach" (Heb 4:16) and to

[4] Other significant contributors to the development of the pilgrimage theme include Spicq (1958-59:365-390) who suggested that the community who received the epistle were displaced persons and Partin (1967) who employed the Muslim *hajj* as a heuristic device to explore the pilgrimage theme in the epistle.

"draw near" (Heb 10:22) to God's throne in the Holy of Holies are therefore designed to provide "mercy and find grace to help" (Heb 4:16) during the journey rather than an exhortation to step into the pilgrim's destination. Likewise, the emphasis that Christ's sacrificial death and the congregation's experience of some of its benefits were in the past does not sufficiently fit the pilgrimage model.

In a comprehensive evaluation of the pilgrimage metaphor in Hebrews, Johnsson (1978) has questioned whether that theme sufficiently accounted for both the expositions and exhortations of the Epistle. He posited that "Christianity in Hebrews is set forth in a variety of ways and we should not claim too much for the pilgrimage idea…among the different ways in which Christianity is described within Hebrews, the leading ones are those of cult and pilgrimage" (248). He therefore concluded that the Christians of Hebrews should be viewed as a "cultic community on the move" (249). Johnsson did not however define the actual nature of this movement, and what may have been the precedence for our author's unique approach to the pastoral challenges he aimed to address with his homily.

In what follows, we employ cognitive and sociological theories in human spatial movement to affirm that "the cultic community on the move" motif indeed unites the epistle, that the root metaphor of migration best describes this motif and that our author typologically interprets the situation of Israel during their migration from Egypt to the Promised Land that is depicted in the Book of Numbers as corresponding to that of his congregation.

The basic tenet of our methodology is that root metaphors are not mere rhetorical adornments but do serve as a guide to the literary intentions of a writer (Lakoff and Johnson 2003:254-257). We therefore share Barcelona's (2003:3) definition of a metaphor as a "cognitive mechanism whereby one experiential domain is partially 'mapped', i.e. projected, onto a different experiential domain, so that the second domain is partially understood in terms of the first one." A root metaphor is a fundamental but often unstated underlying assumption in a text that the author employs as a heuristic device. By investigating the nature of the cognitive construct by which the root metaphor of migration governs the author's choices in Hebrews, we hope to ascertain some of the underlying assumptions that influence his presentation.

Contrary to Synge's (1959:51) assertion that the expositions and exhortations are from two independent sources, we agree with DeSilva (2000:71) that our author has woven "his material together so artfully that no scheme will be able to separate perfectly what he has so closely joined together." We therefore hypothesise that a single motif or root metaphor is more likely to have underpinned his sermon, and this theme is the migration of God's people to the Promise. We begin by briefly setting out the model of migration and movement.

2. Sociology of Human Movement and Migration

2.1 Orientation during Movement

The movement of a person may be defined as his or her change of location relative to other places over time through the use of spatial direction and orientation. Whereas location refers to the person's position in space relative to other persons and places, direction of movement refers to the specific route between the original position and the intended destination. The spatial orientation of a moving person refers to the process of alignment in relation to a specific direction of movement and a set of reference points, and involves the mental integration of sensory perception from the environment. Thus spatial orientation is the more general term that combines the cognitive and perceptual aspects with the direction of motion. Since a moving person's location constantly changes, orientation is required to enable continuous alignment in relation to the specified direction. The role of sensory perception and integration in this spatial orientation is for that matter fundamental. In humans all input from the six major senses—sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell and balance—are integrated in the brain to provide this spatial orientation. The first two of these sensations (i.e., sight and hearing) in particular serve as rich sources of Biblical metaphors related to the orientation of the believer as a person on the move. The Bible, for example, frequently expresses revelation with the metaphor of sight or insight (e.g., Matt 13:14-15), and obedience to God as "hearing" or paying "heed" to God's Word (e.g., Rev 13:9). The lack of sufficient sensory input or wrong interpretation of any of these sensations results in disorientation. Darkness is therefore a disorienting environment and

is commonly used as a Biblical metaphor for being lost and lacking God's enlightenment (e.g., Matt 6:23, Luke 11:36, 2 Pet 1:19). Similarly blindness is used as a metaphor for spiritual ignorance (e.g., Matt 23:24) so that in parts of the gospels (e.g., Mark 10, John 9) the healing of blind persons is linked with Jesus' call to discipleship (see Achtemeier 1978). These metaphors of sensory perception demonstrate the essential orientational roles of the Word of God and faith in the Christian life, as we shall find in Hebrews.

The integration of the sensory input relies on recollections of previous other experiences of the sensation, so that memory plays an important role in spatial orientation. In a similar manner, the Bible employs memory to orientate the disciple of Christ. Thus in Mark 8:18 Jesus rebukes His disciples: "Do you have eyes and do not see? Do you have ears and do not hear? And do you not remember?" Equally, instructions for orienting disciples tend to be cyclically repeated to enhance memory (Mouton 1997:128). In addition, mental concentration enhances orientation by aiding the integration of perception. The author of Hebrews, as we shall see, also employs the reinforcement of the collective memory of the congregation and rigorous warnings to ensure focus and realignment in their migration toward the promise.

2.2 Liminality during Movement

From the sociological point of view, human movement may be analysed by employing the concept of *liminality*. The word "liminal" is derived from the Latin *limen,* which means threshold and describes the intermediary state of a person or group of persons who are in transition. The concept was first proposed by Arnold van Gennep who used the metaphor of movement to analyse rituals and rites of passages and asserted that liminality "accompany every change of place, state, social position and age" (1960:vii). He indicated that all such transitions may be analysed in three sequential phases: the separation or pre-liminal phase, the liminal phase itself and the aggregation or the post-liminal phase. The separation and aggregation phases of movement depend very much on the purpose of the movement. Thus the separation phase of migration may well be affected by socio-economic and political factors whereas pilgrimage is made for religious purposes.

The social anthropologist Victor Turner defined liminality as a transitional phase during which a person abandons his or her old identity and dwells in a threshold state of ambiguity, openness and indeterminacy. "During the Liminal stage, the between stage, one's status becomes ambiguous; one is 'neither here nor there', one is betwixt and between all fixed points of classification…" (Turner 1974:232). People in liminality tend to experience a sense of togetherness, comradeship, lowliness and non-hierarchical homogeneity, which he called *communitas*. They also tend to be marginalised in society. The liminal phase is particularly dangerous because of the disorientation, ambiguity and instability it produces. It is experienced as a difficult, fragile, risky and trying phase in which the ambiguities may not be well tolerated (Taylor 1990). As stated by Douglas, "Danger lies in transitional states, simply because transition is neither one state nor the next. The person who must pass from one to another is himself in danger and emanates danger to others…. To have been in the margins is to have been in contact with danger" (2002:119-120). The instructions that are provided before one enters the liminal period therefore tend to underscore these dangers and are aimed at instilling a positive sense of fear that will help *liminas* to maintain their concentration and therefore orientation during the movement. For the uninitiated, these warnings may sound as if they are exaggerations, but they are fundamental for survival during the movement (Douglas 2002:120).[5]

One of the most common Biblical symbols of liminality is the wilderness; for on the one hand, it symbolises hardships that test one's covenantal loyalty and faithfulness to God (Funk 1959:209); and on the other hand, it is a "location where God is encountered, where personal transformation takes place and where community is formed" (Dozeman 1998:43); a place of "judgment and renewal" (Gibson 1994:15). The wilderness symbolism in Scripture therefore has both positive and negative aspects: everyone who passes through it is subjected to one test or another. Those who humble themselves and persevere in faith come out of it transformed whereas those who succumb to the tests and dangers may give up their faith and end up "departing from the living

[5] The concept of liminality has been used to explore the social circumstances of the earliest Christians by Meeks (1983), Wedderburn (1987) and McVann (1991) among others.

God" (Heb 3:12). In an examination of 1 Corinthians 10:1-12 using the concept of liminality, Oropeza has cogently argued that "[i]t was during the Israelites' wilderness trek that the conceptions of liminality and *communitas* affected the social and religious values of the people in a religious way" (1999:75) and that the Apostle's stern warnings against apostasy were a reflection of the liminal status of the Corinthian believers. We suggest that this liminal situation also applied to the Hebrews congregation.

2.3 Migration as a Metaphor

Migration is defined as a "permanent or semi-permanent change of residence of an individual or group of people" (Johnson and others 2000:504). Of the several theories that examine the separation phase of migration, the simplest is Lee's (1966:47-57) in which he delineated the factors influencing migration as various "pushes" and "pulls" from both the origin and destination. "Push" forces such as war, famine, forced human trafficking and flooding combine with "pull" forces such as liberation, better climate, employment and socio-economic lifestyle and family factors to influence the flow of people from one place to another. Unlike pilgrimage, people seldom migrate for a single reason, as Gidden's Structuration theory demonstrates (Johnson and Others 2000:505). Likewise in Hebrews, though there is one destination, the author depicts it in different forms, each one of which emphasises an aspect. This makes migration a more suited metaphor than pilgrimage for the movement theme of Hebrews. Again, in contrast to the pilgrims' separation from their origins, the departure of the emigrants in many cases may be a complete physical severance from the origin with no intention of return. The phase of liminality with regard to migration is similar to that of pilgrimage, even though in the case of the migrant, liminality may extend throughout the period of settlement in the host country and often never terminates.

In addition to the social status of liminality, the migrant also experiences a peculiar sense of place characterised by a hybrid consciousness described by Cohen as "diasporic" (1997: xi), in which the migrant (and also exiled person) may feel "in place" but not "at home". This diasporic consciousness, according to Baumann, expresses a specific type of thinking, "of hybridity, heterogeneity, identity fragmentation and reconstruction, double

consciousness, fractures of memory, ambivalence, roots and routes, discrepant cosmopolitanism, multi-locationality and so forth" (2000:324). It tends to orientate the migrant's psychological, social and cultural behaviour in the host country so that in many respects the immigrant maintains a different identity from the native person. Generally, the migrant may not intend to return to the land of origin, and yet has an idealised vision of a "homeland", of a symbolic geographical place to which he or she belongs and regards as home and to which he or she may wish eventually to return. Thus to the migrant, "returning home" is an eschatological concept that provides orientation during liminality. This conception of a migrant's "homeland" has been highlighted by Edward Said's migration related theory of "imaginative geographies". Imaginative geographies are mental representations of a homeland far away, which are reflections of the desires, fantasies, expectations and preconceptions of the migrant and which help to sustain the identity and orientation of the migrant. Said asserts that "[i]maginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatising the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far" (1978:55). In other words, imaginative geography helps in the orientation of the migrant. The Biblical counterpart to this concept is hope and, as we shall find in Hebrews, it plays an indispensable orientating role for the migrant people of God. Unlike Said's imaginative geography, however, hope is anchored in the reality of the ministry of Christ in the heavenly Holy of Holies (Heb 6:18-20) and though it is full of desire and pregnant with expectation, it is not based on fantasy.

Throughout their history, the Israelites have been very familiar with this diasporic migrant consciousness. During their journey to the Promised Land, they had the most profound spiritual, cultural, political, theological and social experience that constituted them as a nation in diaspora. This experience was forever to serve as the template[6] of the idealised liminal migrant spirit—both positively and negatively (Bauman 2000:317). To the Jew in exile, life was always very much equivalent to that in the wilderness, being tested and tried and prepared by God for return to the Promised Land which was their home. By the first century BC, the Mediterranean region was teeming with millions

[6] See for example Is 35, Jer 2, Hos 2, Ezek 20, Ps 78 & 106

of Jewish migrants familiar with this consciousness (Elliot 1981:67). The earliest Christians, who were largely Jewish and even more marginalised because of the non-recognition of their religion at the time, therefore had the worse of the "liminal migrant condition". Christians were sometimes "excluded from voting and landholding privileges as well as from the chief civic offices and honours, they enjoyed only limited legal protection while … they still shared full responsibilities with the citizenry for all financial burdens, such as tributes, taxes, and production quotas" (Elliot 2000:94). It is in this sense that they developed three main migration related terminologies to describe their diasporic state: as strangers (or aliens), foreigners and sojourners. These metaphors themselves had double meanings for, in some respects, Gentile Christians were no longer "excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise … but [became] fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (Eph 2:12, 19). And yet at the same time they were to consider themselves "like a stranger in a foreign country … looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb 11:9-10). The Christian condition is clearly therefore a diasporic migrant condition whose orientation is towards the heavenly homeland. If, as is likely, the community behind Hebrews were Jews in diaspora (Koester 2001:49), such a consciousness would have been so familiar to them that its use as root metaphor was not only appropriate but, perhaps, even "therapeutic", as we now demonstrate.

3. The Migrant Camp of God's People

In a previous article (Asumang and Domeris 2006:1-26) we employed sociological models in spatiality to examine the expositions of Hebrews and concluded that the spaces of the wilderness camp of Israel that are depicted in Numbers were typologically interpreted by the author of Hebrews in his schematic expositions. In this scheme, the "inhabited world" (Heb 2:5-18) corresponded to the Camp itself that extended to the front gate of the tabernacle where sacrifices took place, the "house" (Heb 3:1-6) corresponded to the priestly courtyard and Holy Place, heaven corresponded to the Holy of Holies (Heb 5-10) and the Christological comparisons were a reflection of the contested nature of these spaces. Hebrews 1 is located in heaven and acted as the author's summary of the state of knowledge of the congregation. This

basic spatial scheme was a semiosphere that controlled the author's choices of theological themes, persons, cultic practices and expositions. We therefore proposed that "the picture of the encamped people of God around the tabernacle" (23) should influence the reading of the epistle. We now examine the exhortations of Hebrews,[7] which contain the movement theme and demonstrate that it is also influenced by the theological themes of Numbers.

3.1 The Migration of God's People – the Exhortations of Hebrews

The exhortations of Hebrews contain several metaphors of movement. Believers are warned not to "drift away" from the great salvation or they would not "escape" God's punishment; they are to "enter" or "go in" to God's Rest; they are to "leave" the basic doctrines behind and "go on" to perfection; and they are again to "enter" and "draw near" and not to "shrink back" from the Promise. Similarly, faith is explained as a movement towards God while one is "looking forward to" or "thinking of" or "longing for" the "city" and the "country" that God has built for His people. It is also expressed as "running the race with perseverance" while the "eyes" are fixed on Christ and believers are hence to "go to Him" outside of the Camp. How has the author organised this movement theme and for what purpose?

Each block of exhortation, like the expositions, is constructed in a self-contained manner so that it has five main components (table 1 below): a reference to God's Word, warning against retrogression or failure to progress, encouragement to persevere, move forward and enter, positive and/or negative OT examples and a reminder of the past experiences of the community (see McKnight 1992:21-59 for a formal analysis of these passages). Hebrews 10:19-13:17, though containing these five components, follows a different pattern.

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[7] We have adopted Guthrie's (1998) proposal for the literary structure of the epistle, even though as we shall later point out, the alternative Vanhoye's (1963) chiastic structure equally explains the link between Hebrews and Numbers. In Guthrie's structure, the Exhortations of Hebrews are in Heb 2:1-4, 3:1-4:16, 5:11-6:20, 10:19-13:17. Heb 3:1-6 is an exposition with hortatory elements.

Table 1: The Five Components of the Exhortations of Hebrews

Component	**Heb 2:1-4**	**Heb 3:7-4:16**	**Heb 5:12-6:20**	**Heb 10:19-13:17**
God's Word (Perception)	Heb 2:1	Heb 3:7-11	Heb 5:12-14	Heb 10:24-25
Warning (Dangers in Liminality)	Heb 2:1, 3	Heb 3:12-19	Heb 6:4-8	Heb 10:26-31, 12:25-29
Encouragement (Movement)	Heb 2:1	Heb 4:1-16	Heb 6:1-3, 12-20	Heb 10:19-23, 35-39, 12:1-3
Reminder (Memory)	Heb 2:4	None	Heb 6:9-11	Heb 10:32-34
OT Examples (Memory)	Punishment in OT (Heb 2:2)	Wilderness Generation (Heb 3)	Wilderness Gen. & Abraham (Heb 6:12-15)	Positive & Negative (Heb 11 & Esau - 12:16)

Of these components, the encouragement to hold fast to the confession, move forward and enter (Heb 2:1, 4:1-16, 6:1-3, 12-20, 10:19-23, 35-39 & 12:1-3) serves as the central purpose of each block and constitutes the major movement theme. The references to hearing or heeding God's word (perception), the negative and/or positive examples from the OT (memory), the warnings against the consequences of retrogression and failure to persevere (dangers in liminality) and the reminders of the past experiences of the community (memory) provide alignment and orientation for the journey. These feed the life of faith (orientation), hope (migrant consciousness) and love (*communitas*) required for completing the journey. In addition, Heb 4:14-16 and 10:19-22 show how access to the cultic ministry of Christ in the Holy of Holies provides an ever present provision of grace, help and mercy for the migrant who approaches, draws near and enters.

In the background of each section of exhortation are not just a movement motif, but also allusions and echoes to the wilderness experiences of Israel. Thus each block is presented in such a fashion that it contains a stated or implied origin, destination, dangers that could cause disorientation and encouragement to faith, hope and love to enable orientation in the migration. As shown in table 2 below, the destination is called salvation in Heb 2:1-4, Divine Rest in Heb 3-4, Perfection in Heb 5-6 and the Promise in Heb 10-13.

Each one of these is treated by Hebrews in a complex manner but represents an aspect of "eternal life" and may therefore be subsumed under the title of "The Promise". Each is also experienced in some limited form during the journey, but the full inheritance awaits "the world to come". Since each one is also symbolised by the Holy of Holies, the migrant's access to it during the journey provides a foretaste of the Promise.

Table 2: The Migration Scheme in the Exhortations of Hebrews

	Heb 2:1-4	**Heb 3:1-4:13**	**Heb 5:11-6:20**	**Heb 10:19-13:17**
Separation	Signs & Wonders	Holy & Called to heaven	Birth & Flight	Falsehood to Truth Darkness to light
Disorienting Dangers	Neglect & Drift	Unbelief & Disobedience	Immaturity & Falling Away	Deliberate sin, Spiritual Fatigue & Bitterness
Orienting Praxis	Pay Heed to God's Word	Faith & Perseverance	Know God's Word & Faith	Faith, Hope & Love
Destination	Salvation	Rest	Perfection	The Promise

We now briefly discuss each of the exhortations

3.1.1 Don't drift away but inherit your salvation (Heb 2:1-4)

The separation of the Hebrews Christians as migrants was instigated by the "pull" factor of the "great salvation". This is the salvation for which angels have been sent to minister to the saints (Heb 1:14) and which was first proclaimed by the Lord and His apostles "with signs and wonders and with different kinds of miracles" (Heb 2:4). Their separation was therefore characterised by God's mighty intervention in human life that transformed them into new people signified by the "gifts of the Holy Spirit". While no doubt the miraculous events occurred at their conversion, the author's manner of description also alludes to the separation of Israel from slavery in Egypt, for this was the Old Testament's formula for characterizing that momentous event (Exod 3:20, 7:3, 15:11, Deut 4:34, 6:22, 7:19, Ps 135:8-9). Rengstorf hence states, "When the OT speaks of God's signs and wonders the reference is

almost always to the leading of the people out of Egypt by Moses and to the special circumstances under which the people stood up to the passage of the Red Sea and in all of which God proved Himself to be the Almighty and showed Israel to be His chosen people" (1976:216). The implied reference to the reception of the law at Sinai in Hebrews 2:2 strengthens this allusion. Indeed, the whole of Hebrews 2:1-4 echoes a similar statement by God to the failing Exodus generation "who have seen My glory and My miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness" (Num 14:22). The Hebrews congregation, like the Exodus generation, saw God's glory and wonders, and it was important for them, unlike their Old Testament counterparts, to pay attention to His voice.

The author expresses concern over the state of the congregation's faith during liminality and warns them not to "neglect" their salvation or drift away from their position in Christ. "'Neglect' and "drift" or "slip" are expressions of spatial disorientation. "Neglect suggests a gradual, unthinking movement away from the faith" (Koester 2001:206) and lack of concentration in a dangerous environment. Similarly "drift away" is a nautical metaphor depicting an unanchored ship that is drifting carelessly from the harbour into the sea. Distraction during liminality easily results in destruction. The warnings of apocalyptic danger are therefore meant to awaken and refocus the migrant's orientation to the Promise and are represented by the movement metaphor of "escape" (Heb 2:3). [8] Hebrews 12:25 will echo a similar sentiment. It has been debated throughout church history whether the envisaged consequences of drifting away, or falling away, are eternal damnation or some sort of temporary punishment or even lack of rewards. Important though this debate is, the intention of the author was more to re-

[8] The particular Greek word, εκφευξόμεθα ("we escape"), is used seven times in the New Testament; on four occasions it refers to escaping the apocalyptic judgment of God (Luke 21:36, Rom 2:3, 1 Thes 5:3 & Heb 2:3.), the other three refer to escaping from other dangers such as imprisonment (Acts16: 27), physical harm (Acts 19:16) and persecution (2 Cor 11:33).

orientate drifting migrants.[9] The response he was looking for was not one that asks whether eternal damnation was at all possible for the Christian, but a response of constructive fear instilled by the knowledge of potential disaster if one is careless during liminality (see Gray's [2003] analysis of the concept of fear in Hebrews). Noah's fear (Heb 11:70) is one such example that reflected his faith and believers are therefore encouraged to cultivate a similar fear (Heb 12:28-29). In this respect, Hebrews' warnings parallel Paul's in 1 Corinthians 10:12. The antidote to drifting away from the faith during the liminal phase is careful attention or "paying heed" to God's Word. The Exodus generation who heard the laws given by the angels failed to pay heed and perished (Heb 3:17-19). How much more those who have heard the Gospel from the superior Christ?

In setting the great salvation in opposition to punitive destruction, the author of Hebrews conveys the notion of salvation as the destination of the migration of God's people. He had previously intimated in Hebrews 1:14 that believers are those who will inherit this salvation, now he conveys some of its features. This salvation was first preached by the Lord (Heb 2:3), for He is the Author (Heb 2:10) and the Source (Heb 5:9) of it. It is a great salvation because He provides it from within the Holy of Holies, "to the uttermost", to those who come to Him (Heb 7:25). Though it is in the future, since it is inherited (Heb 1:14) and fully experienced at the second coming of Christ (Heb 9:28), its experience by the believers has already begun, for entrance into it occurs now as we come to Him (Heb 7:25), taste of its powers (Heb 6:5) and indeed escape "to take hold of the hope" before us (Heb 6:18). It is therefore an "already and not yet" salvation, fulfilled but not yet consummated (Ladd 1974:575, Osborne 1975:145). Here in Hebrews 2:1-4, our author's concern

[9] The warning passages of Hebrews are integral to the author's argument. Interpretations that reduce their full rhetorical force are akin to dismissing as exaggerations the warnings by a driving instructor about the dangers of driving while disoriented, at least in sociological terms. Since our author's dire warnings echo the warnings by the Lord (Matt 12:31-32), Paul (1 Cor 10, 1 Tim 1:20) and John (1 Jn 5:16-17) and yet equally emphasize the completeness of the salvation for which we are redeemed, the focus of interpretation should be on how they contribute to orienting the migrant and not whether they are exaggerations by the author.

was that by sheer neglect, carelessness and laziness, his hearers might become disoriented and ignore this great salvation leading to a severe punishment.

3.1.2 Don't depart from the living God, but enter His rest (Heb 3-4)

The influence of Numbers on the author of Hebrews is most obvious in Hebrews 3-4. In Hebrews 3:1-6, he employs an exposition on God's witness about the faithfulness of Moses "in all My House" (Num 12:1-8)[10] to underline the superiority of Jesus in this sphere. He then follows it with an exhortation in which he expounds on Psalm 95's commentary on the failure of the Exodus generation to enter God's Rest as in Numbers 13-14. The nature of our author's approach here, in which he does not directly cite the main text on which he depends for his argument but rather alludes to it, demonstrates how allusions and intertextual echoes (see Hays 1989:29-32) are vital clues to the root metaphor controlling the migration theme of Hebrews.

As with the first exhortation, the separation phase of this group of believers is described in brief but dramatic terms. He calls the believers "holy brothers, called to be partakers of the heavenly calling" (Heb 3:1). This way of identifying the believers demonstrates a number of themes that typify their separation. They are holy; that is, they have been set apart from the world unto God. The description looks back to the portrayal of believers in Hebrews 2 as people who have been freed from slavery and sanctified by the Son who declares God's name to them so they praise Him in the assembly (Heb 2:10-15). Secondly the group's identity is one of collegiality, kinship and partnership together in God's service—they had *communitas*. Thirdly they have been called from and towards heaven. They are indeed children who are being brought to glory (Heb 2:10). The word "calling" is used throughout the New Testament to describe the Christian way of life;[11] it denotes having to

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[10] Allusions to the oracles to Eli in 1 Sam 2:35 and to Nathan in 1 Chron 7:14 may also have contributed to the author's discussion here.

[11] Rom 11:29, 1 Cor 1:26, 7:20, Eph 1:18, 4:4, Phil 3:14, 2 Thes 1:11, 2 Tim 1:9, & 2 Pet 1:10.

tread a specific direction and lifestyle that is heavenward. Fourthly, the description echoes an Old Testament idiom for the migration of Israel from Egypt (Exod 4:22-23). God speaks for example of how He "called My son out of Egypt" (Hos 11:1). In describing the believers therefore as brothers who have been called towards heaven, the author of Hebrews depicts their separation in terms that alludes to the redemption of Israel from Egypt (Heb 3:16). Unlike Israel, however, the destination of their journey is heaven, of which Canaan is figurative.

Hebrews 3-4 portrays the nature of the dangers that believer's face in their condition of liminality as they travel to their heavenly destination. This may be summarised using Hebrews 3:12. In the liminal phase of the journey, carelessness leads to unbelief, which then leads to disobedience and departure from the living God. In addition to careful attention to God's Word, continuous fellowship, effective *communitas,* is required for orientation (Heb 3:13). The Exodus generation did not do that but were rather full of strife and dissention and hence became hardened in their attitude towards God. Those who keep their focus on God's Word will know God's direction and not stray from His ways (Heb 3:10). God's "ways" (Heb 3:10) is an expression that depicts both His powerful and gracious manner of dealing with His people and the instructions that He lays before them to follow (Deut 26:17, Ex 33:13). Underlying this metaphor is the imagery of a widely open wilderness, with several confusing paths, only one of which is God's Way. Thus He sent His angel to guide and guard Israel, "to keep you in the way" (Exod 23:20), if they would only pay attention to Him. According to Coats therefore, "the uniting motif in the wilderness theme is God's leadership" (1972:292). Knowing God's ways, in the context of the wilderness motif of Psalm 95 therefore evokes the imagery of the pillar of cloud and fire together with the tabernacle that led God's people (Num 14:14; see Harrelson 1959:27). The Exodus generation did not pay heed to Him but this must not be repeated with the Hebrews congregation. [12] From the narratives of the wilderness wanderings of Israel in the Pentateuch, their unbelief consisted of a continual questioning of

[12] Prov 1-9 similarly reflect this emphasis on God's Ways as a correct direction in the liminal phase. Equally, described the first Christians as followers of "the Way" (Acts 9:2, 19:9, 23, 24:14, 22).

God's love and intentions for His people (Exod 17:1-7), lack of will to believe God's promises of giving them the Land (Num 13-14) and repeated rejection of the authority of God through His servant Moses (Deut 1). On all counts, unbelief is directly related to the dismissal of the Word of God and results in the hardening of the heart. It is, in Lane's words, "a deliberate act of rejection" (1991:86).

The destination of the Christian's migration in Hebrews 3-4 is God's Rest. Its exposition in Hebrews 3-4 is complex and the text indicates several shades of its meaning. The author uses three Greek words to express the same concept: κατάπαυσίν (Heb 3:11, 18, 4:1, 3, 5 10, 11), κατέπαυσεν (Heb 4:4, 8) and σαββατισμός (Heb 4:10). In the Old Testament, it was a term used for the land of Canaan as the place of Israel's rest from their enemies (Deut 3:20, 12:10), as the place where the Ark of the Covenant resides, that is, the Holy of Holies (Ps 132:8, 13-14) and for the Sabbath day celebrations (Exod 35:2). The author of Hebrews combines all three in the exposition of Rest in Hebrews 4 (see Toussaint 1982:71). The crux question is whether the promised rest is a future eschatological condition that is only part of life in heaven, or the summary of the whole condition of heaven or a spiritual experience which though extending into the future heaven, may be foretasted in this life (see Bruce 1990:77-79, Oberholtzer 1985:185-196, Isaacs 2002:63).

Being the condition of intimate spiritual communion in God's presence, Rest in its fullness is life in heaven as it is now and in the world to come. But a foretaste of it is experienced in this life by faith (Heb 3:16-19). In exhorting the believers to exercise their faith "today", Hebrews 3-4 teaches that assurance and foretaste of God's Rest is now available (Heb 4:3). Just as the Holy of Holies is symbolic of God's throne-room (Heb 4:14-16), it is also symbolic of His Rest (Ps 132:8, 13-14). And just as even now, believers have the confidence to enter this throne-room for help in time of need, they may also now experience the foretaste of the Rest that God gives from there. The full nature of God's Sabbath's Rest will certainly only be experienced in the future when all the people of God, "together with us", are made perfect (Heb 11:40). In eschatological terms, Rest is in the future, but in terms of soteriology, it represents realised salvation, a taste of what is in the future. The Exodus generation of Numbers did not enter an aspect of God's Rest (Canaan); the Hebrews congregation must "fear lest any of you should seem to

come short of it" (Heb 4:1). Fear, godly fear, once again plays a focussing orienting role in bolstering faith.

3.1.3 Don't delay your growth, but go on to perfection (Heb 5:11-6:20)

In the third exhortation, our author decries the lack of spiritual progress in the congregation, expresses his deep anxiety that this made them prone to fall away, warns them of the dire consequences of such a result, conveys his confidence that they will persevere and not fall away and encourages them to imitate the faith of God's people who have in the past relied on the sure and unfailing promises of God to persevere to the end. Unlike the other exhortations, no explicit reference to an Old Testament example is made, even though attention to the Scriptural allusions and echoes will direct us again to the Exodus generation. While suggestions on the Old Testament background have ranged from Psalm 110 (France 1996:245-276), Deuteronomy 11 (Attridge 1989:169) and no Old Testament background (Ellingworth 1993:42), we agree with Gleason (1998:62-91) and Mathewson (1999:209-225) that the migration of Israel and the whole wilderness motif, particularly in Numbers 11-14 & Nehemiah 9 (in addition to Deut 11), provide the background to this exhortation.

Two metaphors are used to express the separation phase of the believer's journey in this passage: the metaphors of "birth" and of "flight". At the time the author wrote the homily, he felt the believers were not maturing (Heb 5:13-14). Their redemption was regarded as new birth and our author expresses his disappointment that they remained infants after some period of time. In Hebrews 6:18, the author describes believers as people who "have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope" anchored in the Holy of Holies. The author had earlier noted how salvation is an escape from severe punishment (Heb 2:2-3); and how before they were redeemed, believers were held as slaves to the fear of death by the devil (Heb 2:15). Here in Hebrews 6:18 "flight" conveys both notions: flight from severe danger and into a place of refuge. Not surprisingly, both metaphors of birth and flight were associated with the deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Exod 3:8). Though the primary allusion in Hebrews 6:18 is the altar in the priestly courtyard as the place of

refuge (1 Kings 1:50, 2:28), the depiction of the redemption of the Hebrews congregation also echoes the flight of Israel from Egypt (Exod 14:5) for refuge. In addition, the depiction of the previous experience of salvation of the Hebrews congregation in Hebrews 6:4-5 alludes to the life of redeemed Israel in the wilderness. Salvation as spiritual enlightenment not only portrays a movement from ignorance to the knowledge of the truth (Heb 10:26), but also alludes to the pillar that gave Israel light on their journey (Exod 13:20-22, Num 14: 14 & Neh 9:12, 9). Sharing in the Holy Spirit also alludes to the experience in the wilderness where, according to Nehemiah 9:20, God "gave [His] good Spirit to teach them". Numbers 11:25 similarly describes the corporate ecstatic experience of God's Spirit in the wilderness. The Word of God as a "heavenly gift" to be tasted is an allusion to the manna by which God fed His people in the wilderness (Exod 16, Num 11:7-9, Deut 8:3, 16, Neh 9:15). Thus the language that influences our author's depiction of the experience of salvation is largely drawn from the wilderness experience of the Exodus generation.

Disorientation and retrogression characterised the liminal phase of the congregation. They had become "dull of hearing". Hearing and understanding God's Word, as in the previous exhortations, is necessary for orientation and progress through faith. On the other hand maturing believers are distinguished by their ability to teach others because they have understood it (Heb 5:12) and are able to apply it to make judgments between what is right from wrong (Heb 5:14). The role of the knowledge of God's Word in maturing Christians cannot be overemphasised. As stated by Fortosis, "Though spiritual development is often reflected in behaviour, its roots and rationale begin in the mind and emotion" (1992:283).

To many readers, what is unnerving about this passage is the relationship the author saw between lack of spiritual growth and possible apostasy. He points out that if the believer failed to leave the elementary issues of the faith and move on to perfection, then the end result could be a wavering faith that leads to falling away. Fear of falling away should therefore concentrate the mind and orientate and spur believers on to perfection. The author used the most intense apocalyptic language of warning to instill this fear (see McKnight 1992:26) but, as noted by Nongbri, the actual words of apocalyptic language are not as important as "the specific kind of fear" (2003:265) that they are

designed to instill (for discussion on the various views on "impossibility", see Koester 2001:311-335). The author was convinced that destruction was not the lot of his audience, however, for the faithfulness of God, as well as theirs, was at stake in the matter. The harsh warning, thankfully, serves a crucial purpose; to spur and orientate the migrant from immature dependence and go on to perfection.

Perfection therefore is the destination of the migration as expounded in this exhortation. The term perfection is used in Hebrews in a complex manner since four forms of the Greek word τελειότητα are used by our author on sixteen occasions, three of which are directly applicable to the perfection of Jesus (Heb 2:10, 5:8-9 and 7:28). The word is used in Hebrews in such a way that each occurrence has more than one semantic meaning. Ellingworth has noted that in Hebrews the meaning of perfection could span from the telic (i.e., to bring something to its goal or completion), to the cultic (i.e., qualify for participation in worship), the ethical (i.e., remove imperfections), the organic (i.e., make mature) and the temporal (make complete) (1993:162). In Hebrews 11:40, for example, perfection of all believers occurs in the future eschatological age, whereas in Hebrews 9:9-14 Jesus has attained cultic perfection already for us in the Holy of Holies by cleansing our consciences from dead works. Jesus was Himself made perfect (Heb 2:10) through His death in order to make us perfect so we may draw near to God (Heb 7:19). An aspect of perfection is therefore obtainable and experienced by believers now but its fullness lies in the future. Thus Bruce defines perfection as "unimpeded access to God and unbroken communion with Him" (1990:80), whereas Silva suggests an additional eschatological dimension (1976: 60-71). Lindars notes that perfection in the end is "the completion of God's Plan" (1991:44-45), the summation of the whole intention of God for humanity. Like salvation in Hebrews 2 and rest in Hebrews 4, perfection is also God's perfection. Evidently, when applied to Jesus, perfection has no ethical component, but expresses His death that made Him complete as our Saviour so that He became the "Perfector of our Salvation" (Heb 12:2); He is the one who leads us to complete the process of our salvation.

With this background in mind, it is clearly insufficient for τελειότητα in Hebrews 6:1 to be simply translated as "maturity" (e.g., NIV). What our author had in mind is not only a mature stage in the Christian life when the

person is able to teach and discern good from evil (Heb 5:12-14), but also one reaching forward to God's goal of completion of the journey of migration that is marked out for us, characterised by an unbroken fellowship with God in His eternal presence. Perfection starts now and continues to end in the future eschatological age. This is why, to our author, not leaving the elementary issues to go on to perfection will certainly result in "falling away". Going on to perfection, like going on to Salvation and Rest, requires faith and faithfulness for orientation. Though our author mentions faith on several occasions it is in the next exhortation that he discusses it.

3.1.4 Don't despair but persevere to inherit the promise (Heb 10:19-13:17)

The final section of Hebrews is a long cyclical exhortation. Its tone is generally more positive than the previous three, even though it contains two sub-sections of warnings that are designed to concentrate the minds and efforts of the believers to persevere towards the goal of their migration to the Promise. Though made up of the usual five components (table 1), these are in a different format.

While several different citations of the Old Testament are made, there are sufficient reasons to suggest that the motif of the wilderness journey to the Promised Land continues to echo in the background of this long exhortation. The warning against the rejection of God's Word in Hebrews 10:26-31 is influenced by the Mosaic Law against deliberate or willful sin promulgated in Leviticus 4-5, Numbers 9 & 15 and the reference to punishment by fire to Deuteronomy 4:24, 17:2-6 & 32:35-36. The encouragement in Hebrews 10:32-39 to live by faith is influenced by the quotation from Habakkuk 2:3-4 but the rest of the exhortation from Hebrews 11-13 have the migration theme in the background. Rhee's examination of the chiastic structure of Hebrews 11 (1998: 327-345) concluded that Heb 11:13-16 holds the clue to understanding the key message of that encomium. To put it simply, therefore, faith is basically living the Christian life as if one is a diasporic migrant in a liminal wilderness state while orientated towards the inheritance of the Promise.

The athletic imagery in Hebrews 12:1-3 to run the Christian race with patience also has in its background, the wilderness journey motif through its relationship with Isaiah 35. Similarly, the encouragement to persevere in suffering in Hebrews 12:4-11 is influenced by the paranaetic instructions of Proverbs 3-4 which in itself is based on a journey motif. The instruction not to despise the Lord's discipline (Prov 3:11; cf. Heb 12:5) is set in the context of allowing God to "make your paths straight" (Prov 3:6; See Habel 1972:131-133). The exhortation to endure hardship in Hebrews 12:4-11 therefore plays the same role as it does in Proverbs 3, namely, to encourage the believer not to despair of God's discipline as He directs him or her on the way to inherit the Promise. In addition, some of the imageries in the rest of the epistle from Hebrews 12:12-13:17 echo several parts of Isaiah's vision of the redeemed people in Isaiah 35 which is also placed in a wilderness journey setting. The exhortation to "strengthen your feeble arms" in Hebrews 12:12-13, for example, not only quotes Proverbs 4:26 but also Isaiah 35:3 and the exhortation to "live in peace with all men" in Hebrews 12:14 echoes Proverbs 4:25-27 and Isaiah 35:5 & 8. Though the reference to arrival at Mount Zion as the migrant's destination instead of Sinai in Hebrews 12:18-24 is clearly our author's own construction, it has strong echoes of Isaiah 35:4 & 10. Thus in addition to Proverbs 3-4, Isaiah 35 influences our author's choices of themes and words in Hebrews 12.

Within the concluding paranaesis of Hebrews 13:1-17 is another reference to the migrant camp of the people of God in Hebrews 13:9-14. Believers are depicted as priests who minister with Christ in the priestly courtyard of the camp-tabernacle complex. And just as Jesus suffered "outside the city gate", we are also exhorted to "go to him outside the camp" (Heb 13:13). Thompson has suggested that in addition to the burning of the carcasses of sacrificial animals outside of the camp, there is an element of Moses pitching his tent outside the camp to avoid defilement (Exod 33:7) in this passage. He proposes therefore that "outside the camp" means "outside the earthly sphere … to give up earthly securities (11:8) and to accept the lifestyle of the pilgrim people" (1978:53-63). Like all the major points made by our author throughout the exhortations, therefore, the migration of Israel from Egypt towards the Promised Land is the background narrative, which served as the master parable, controlling and directing his message. Hebrews 10-13 may therefore

be conveniently studied using the phases of separation, liminality and entry into the destination as guide.

The separation phase of the believer's migration in Hebrews 10-13 is described as a movement from falsehood to truth (Heb 10:26) and from darkness into light (Heb 10:32).[13] For the believer, ignorance (Lev 4-5, Num 15) is inexcusable. Joshua also depicted life in Egypt as one of falsehood and idol worship and so challenged his people to give that life up and follow Yahweh (Josh 24:14).

The way of life of the believer is described by our author as a "new and living way" and is characterised by a diasporic migrant lifestyle requiring an effective *communitas*, faith, faithfulness and perseverance to reach the destination. This peculiar diasporic sense of place orientates the Christian psychologically, socially and culturally so that the Christian has a completely different identity—s/he belongs to "a better country—a heavenly one". As a migrant, the Christian is therefore not actually intending to return to his or her origins (Heb 11:15). Instead s/he should have an "imaginative geography" of a heavenly homeland—long for a better country, the heavenly Jerusalem, a city with foundations whose architect and builder is God (Heb 11:10). Unlike Said's description, this "imaginative geography" is not one of "fantasy and the play of desire" (1995:55), but is a hope that is anchored in the certain and unchangeable Promise of God (Heb 6:18).

The journey of migration through the wilderness holds a number of dangers that threaten to trip the Christian. Hebrews 10-13 highlights several of these. There is the danger of deliberate or willful sin (Heb 10:26-30), of withdrawing or shrinking back (Heb 10:38-39), of hardships and persecutions (Heb 11: 32-38), of the weight and sin that would weigh the migrant down into distraction and destruction (Heb 12:1-2), of weariness and faint heartedness, of fatigue, despair and giving up under suffering (Heb 12:3-13) and of internal spiritual

[13] Paul describes salvation in similar terms in 1 Timothy 2:4 & 2 Timothy 3:7. Salvation sharply contrasts with the ignorance of living in sin (Acts 17:30, 1 Cor 15:34, Eph 4:18, 1 Pet 1:14 & 2:15) and the knowledge of the truth comes through the experience of God's Word and His Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of truth (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13, 1 Jn 4:6, 5:6).

decay and defilement that is caused by bitterness towards God and His people (Heb 12:14-17). Some dangers are of the believer's own making; others are not, but are part of the normal experience of spiritual growth and discipleship (Heb 12:4-11). All of them however have the strong potential to cause disorientation and apostasy. Our author was in no doubt that the consequences of apostasy are horrifying: it is one of experiencing God's fiery judgment (Heb 10:27), destruction (Heb 10:39) and loss of His blessings (Heb 12:17). He therefore cites positive examples of godly fear (Noah, Heb 11:7; cf. Heb 12:28-29), of faithfulness in perseverance (Jesus, Heb 12:1-3) and of faith (Heb 11) that help to maintain focus and orientation. These fellow migrants join the larger *communitas* of believers, both contemporary (Heb 10:25) and past (Heb 11:40), to serve as "a great cloud of witnesses" encouraging the migrant on to persevere to the end (Heb 12:1-2).

The term "faith" occurs some thirty two times in this epistle, and even though two thirds of these are in the special chapter eleven that is devoted to the subject, the rest are scattered throughout the epistle. Thus our author clearly saw faith and faithfulness as playing a very crucial part in the migrant's journey to the Promise. To him, faith is everything the migrant does to keep his/her orientation. In Bultmann's words, the earliest Christian "understanding of faith was the relationship people have with God. Faith can be belief, obedience or trust. It can be future-oriented as a hope for something yet to come" (1968:205-208). Faith in Hebrews is not just one single act of belief but a continuous attitude required for the separation throughout the journey and entry into the Promise. It has an immediate certainty to it, which is boldness (Heb 4:16) assurance (Heb 4:2, 6:11, 10:22) and confidence (Heb 10:23, 35); it is a faith that immediately rises up to our great High Priest in heaven's throne-room and gets His response. This faith has Christ as its object (Heb 2:17-18, 4:14-16; see Hamm 1990:270-291 and Rhee 2000:83-96). On the other hand, Hebrews presents the other aspect of faith as unremitting trust, patience, perseverance and endurance throughout the liminal journey while holding firm to the hope and promise. This faith, or better put, faithfulness is constancy, loyalty and fidelity (Heb 3:6). It is therefore a horizontal and temporal faith that holds on to enter into the Promise, sees it afar off but lives now in view of it; benefits from it in some respects but waits and endures and strives and perseveres to inherit it at the end. This type of faith is therefore

hard work (Heb 6:12) and continuously needs reinforcing (Heb 4:2-3). It also has Christ as its object all right, for according to our author, Moses suffered "disgrace for the sake of Christ" (Heb 11:26); but much more than that, Christ is the exemplar, enabler and perfector of this aspect of faith (Heb 12:2). Barrett was right: "there is only one faith in Hebrews, with both spatial and temporal categories, vertical and at the same time horizontal with both heaven/earth dualism and already/not yet interpretation" (1954:381-382). The Epistle to the Hebrews therefore presents the widest possible spectrum of understanding of faith in the New Testament.

Hope relates to faith in Hebrews through a very interesting orientational scheme. In this scheme (Heb 11:1), "hope is the goal and faith is a means toward its full realization" (MacRae 1978:192). Hope, according to Hebrews, is anchored behind the veil (Heb 6:19) and faith is the way of life within the liminal priestly courtyard that is aiming forward to this hope. Because Christ's Body, which is the veil, has been torn to make a new and living way (Heb 10:20), we can now look towards hope. This is why the metaphor of "seeing" or "looking for" is so stressed by the author of Hebrews (e.g. Heb 9:28, 11:10, 13, 26, 12:2). In his definition in Hebrews 11:1, faith is "the certainty of what is not seen" (NIV); in other words, and to borrow another metaphor, faith is an orienting telescope that makes the unseen but heard Promise visible to the migrant. Our author sets the tone with regard to the role of this "vision" in relation to faith in Hebrews 2:8-9: "at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus…." What we do not yet see is the fulfillment of the full potential of humanity, namely, his/her perfection, full salvation, enjoyment of God's Rest, or inheriting the Promise (see Attridge 1989:310). On the other hand, what we do see by the telescope of faith is the Lord Jesus exalted on God's right hand as our eternal and great High Priest; it is He the "apostle and High Priest of our confession" whom we should "consider" (Heb 3:1) and it is on Him, "the pioneer and perfector of our faith" that we should "fix" our eyes (Heb 12:2) as we journey to the Promise in faith, and look for His second coming (Heb 9:28). Because we can, through faith, see Jesus exalted on high in the Holy of Holies, we will remain oriented and be certain that all His promises will be fulfilled.

The Promise is therefore the destination of the migrant's journey in the last exhortation. Like salvation, rest and perfection, the promise is again a

complex concept in Hebrews, which has several facets. It may generally be experienced in part in this world, though its fullness will only be inherited in the future world. To start with, our author uses the singular "*a* promise" (Heb 4:1, 6:3) or "*the* promise" (Heb 6:15, 10:36, 11: 39) interchangeably with the plural "promises" (Heb 6:12, 7:6, 8:6, 11:13, 17, 33) in a fashion that suggests there is no considerable difference between them. The Promise in Hebrews is an umbrella term that brings together all the promises of God for humanity. It is, as always, God's promise and consists of the promise of eternal salvation that believers will inherit (Heb 1:14, 9:28), the promise of the "world to come" in which humanity will fulfill its full potential (Heb 2:5), the promise of sharing in God's Sabbath Rest (Heb 4:1), the promise of perfection for all believers (Heb 11:39-40), the promise of a better resurrection (Heb 11:35), the promise of righteousness that comes by faith (Heb 11:7), the promise of a better country (Heb 11:16) and the promise of entering the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22). It is also the promise of a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb 12:28), the promise of "an enduring substance" (Heb 10:22), an eternal city that endures (Heb 13:14) and whose architect and builder is God (Heb 11:10). The Promise is hence the sum total of all that God has promised the Christian as a migrant on the way to the inheritance (see Koester 2001:268 and Lindars 1991:112). It is in effect the "pull-factor" of the Christian's migration.

It is therefore demonstrated that the migration of the camp of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land served as a root metaphor for the exhortations of the epistle to the Hebrews. Our author has interpreted the experiences of the migrant camp of Israel through a Christ tinted lens to produce a very effective sermon aimed at addressing the spiritual liminality of his congregation.

4. Hebrews, Numbers and Postmodern Discipleship

If this interpretation is correct, two questions immediately need answering. First of all, if his intention was to match the Old Testament narrative of the wilderness experience of Israel, why does the author adopt a literary style that is not linear but circular? And secondly, if the root metaphor of migrating camp of God's people unites the epistle, how does that influence our application of Hebrews?

In answer to the first question, we propose that the author aimed to match not only the theology but also the circular literary style of the Book of Numbers. As established, the dangers that confronted the Hebrews congregation, though different from those of the Exodus generation, were of similar spiritual and sociological nature. The author of Hebrews evidently saw strong parallels between his congregation and those in Numbers and, therefore, employed the correspondences to pen a sermon that would deal with such an ominous spiritual disaster. Ashley has noted the preponderance of the orientation/disorientation theme in Numbers and suggested that the book may be structured into three parts (1993:8): orientation (Num 1-10), disorientation (Num 11-21) and new orientation (Num 22-36). This parallels the dominance of the same theme in Hebrews. Harrelson has also established that the major theme of Numbers is "Yahweh's guidance and testing of Israel in the Wilderness" (1959:27). This guidance theme fits very well with the emphases on orientation in both Numbers and Hebrews. God provided His Word, the angelic presence, the pillar of fire and cloud and His constant Presence in the tabernacle to guide and lead Israel to the Promised Land. Similarly, the author of Hebrews highlights the primary role of the Word of God in guiding and orienting the faith of the people of God on their way to the Promise. The expositions of Hebrews are, on the other hand, focused on the tabernacle and teach the doctrine of the accessibility of God's presence provided through Christ to enable the orientation of the migrant believer. The theme of the fulfillment of God's Promise is another parallel between the two books as is the journey motif. MaCrae has summed up this journey motif of Numbers by noting, "No other book of the OT contains so much that is exactly parallel to the pilgrim journey of the Christian in the present age" (1954:52). It is right to say also that no other book in the New Testament presents the Christian experience as a movement, pilgrimage or, more appropriately, migration to the Promise in the way that the epistle to the Hebrews does. These correspondences between Numbers and Hebrews are unlikely to have been mere coincidences.

Like Hebrews, Numbers is structured in such a way that narratives of rebellion and disorientation on the part of the Israelite congregation alternate with laws, many of which are of cultic and ritual nature designed to orientate God's people. This superficially haphazard nature of the structure of Numbers earned

the book an unfortunate reputation, but the alternating narrative/laws structure is not just a way of producing a polyphony (Leveen 2002:201-220) that compares idealism (the six laws) with real human experience (the seven narratives), but more than that reflects the theology of the guidance and the presence of God among His redeemed migrant people. Using indexes of spatiality and spatial orientation in the text, Douglas has established that Numbers is made up of a complex chiastic concentric ring structure, "formed of alternating stories and laws set in parallel with each other, twelve in all" (2004:xxiii). This structure reflects the spatial structure of the camp arranged around the tabernacle as elaborately described in Numbers 1-10. The chiastic structure has also been noted by Milgrom, who argues: "The main structural device, to judge by its attestation in nearly every chapter of Numbers, is chiasm and introversion" (1990:xxii). Such a statement would have been equally true were it to be made of Hebrews, for the concentric chiastic structure of the epistle which was proposed by Vanhoye (1963) has similar though less complex features.

Clearly, the author of Hebrews has greatly transformed the theology of Numbers through his reading using the death, resurrection, ascension and exaltation of Jesus as his interpretive key. The differences between Numbers and Hebrews are many. The congregation of Hebrews had not yet apostasised as the Exodus generation did. The Exodus generation had Moses and Aaron as their leaders, whereas the Hebrews congregation had Jesus as their Apostle and High Priest. The tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant in Numbers were physical objects that were symbolic of the true tabernacle of heaven where Christ is seated on the right hand of God Almighty. The new covenant that was inaugurated by Him is far superior to the "faulty" and "vanishing" old covenant in Numbers. The Hebrews congregation was therefore in a better position than the Numbers congregation to enter the promised salvation, rest, perfection and promise. Nevertheless, the experiences of the Exodus generation were "examples" (1 Cor 10:6; cf. Heb 4:2) for the Hebrews congregation, and for us.

Read this way, Hebrews demonstrates itself to be a potent epistle for spiritual formation and discipleship, especially for the postmodern "liminal" mentality. Migration, pilgrimage, quests, nomadism, multiple interpretations, hybridity, indeterminacy and diaspora are familiar concepts that are associated with the

postmodern generation. In this respect, Hebrews is thoroughly postmodern and an approach to the epistle that employs these ideas as methodological models is likely to be beneficial. In a recent sociological examination of anthropological theories of religion, Tweed (2002 and 2006) has demonstrated that the most stimulating religious experiences are best expressed in terms of movement and orientation. He has therefore argued that "religions orient itinerant individuals and groups in time and space as they map the natural and social terrain, mark the always shifting horizon, and offer the means to cross over" (Tweed 2002:262). He further argues that what religion does is to enable its adherents to be oriented "in the body, the home, the homeland and the cosmos" (Tweed 2006:101). If he is right, then our approach, employing spatiality, movement, orientation and migration as interpretative tools in Hebrews, will be much useful for Christian discipleship and spiritual formation.

5. Conclusion

The Hebrews congregation was in a state of liminality which threatened to disorientate them and shift them from their focus on Christ. The author rightly saw a typological correspondence between his congregation and the migrating camp of Israel in the wilderness. Through his Christological reading of the Old Testament, he constructed a sermon, which represents the Christian as a migrant on the way to the Promise. Faith, faithfulness, focus on God's Word and hope enables the migrant to maintain his or her orientation. In addition the fellowship of believers, past and present, provide a much needed *communitas* during the liminal stage. During the journey to salvation, Divine rest, perfection and the promise, the migrant has continual access to the Holy of Holies where the superior and exalted Christ ministers to provide grace, mercy and help. This in effect is the summary of Hebrews.

Notwithstanding the epistle's popularity as a goldmine for various proof texts, its systematic exposition continues to be neglected in many of today's pulpits. As one of the most important documents in the Bible, not the least because of the interpretive bridge it provides between the two testaments, this situation is regrettable. A uniting theme as the one proposed may contribute in ameliorating this shortfall.

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The Unique Status of Jesus as the Divine Messiah:

An Exegetical and Theological Analysis of Mark 1:1, 9-13

by

Dan Lioy[1]

Abstract

The intent of this essay is to analyze Mark 1:1, 9-13 in order to elucidate the unique status of Jesus as the divine Messiah. An exegetical and theological examination of these verses indicates that with the advent of the Redeemer, God has initiated a new spiritual beginning for humanity. As the Son of God, Jesus enjoys a special and intimate relationship with the Father. Jesus is also fully and absolutely equal to the Father and the Spirit. Furthermore, Jesus, as the ideal Israelite and representative of the human race, completely devoted Himself to do the Father's will, despite the fact that it would eventually cost the Messiah His own life. Even repeated attacks from Satan and the humiliation of the divine Saviour on the cross did not deter Him from fulfilling His preordained mission. In every episode, the Son, who enjoyed the Father's approval and the Spirit's abiding presence, proved Himself to be "God's Chosen One" (John 1:33).2

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[2] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from *Today's New International Version* (hereafter abbreviated, TNIV).

1. The Beginning of the Good News (Mark 1:1)

The motivation for this essay stems from the chorus of protest among those within academia who reject the teaching of Scripture that Jesus alone is the true Redeemer and the only way to God. For instance, Killinger (2002:39, 52-53) dismisses John 14:6—in which Jesus declares Himself to be "the way and the truth and the life"—by maintaining that the fourth Gospel, along with the other Gospel accounts, is historically "semi-fictional", "contrived", and "unreliable". Likewise, Killinger brushes aside Acts 4:12—wherein Peter announces that "salvation is found in no one else" but Jesus—by asserting that the entire book sets forth a "dubious 'history' of the early church". Killinger represents a "cafeteria-style" approach to Christianity in which people choose those aspects of the religion they like and disregard those they find objectionable. In light of this situation, Jude 3 is correct in urging believers to "contend for the faith that the Lord has once for all entrusted to us".

With that exhortation in mind, this journal article affirms the unique status of Jesus as the divine Messiah, a truth likewise emphasized in Mark 1:1. The verse opens the second Synoptic Gospel with the statement, "the beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God". Then, verses 4 through 8 narrate the efforts of John the Baptizer to prepare the way for the Messiah's arrival. This material is followed by an account of Jesus' baptism and testing, events that are recorded in verses 9 through 13. The other three Gospels make some reference to John's baptism of Jesus (cf. Matt 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:31-34), while only the other two Synoptic Gospels devote considerably more space to Jesus' encounter with Satan (Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). Pertinent information found in these other portions of Scripture are taken into account as this essay unfolds, especially as it sheds light on Jesus' unique status as the divine Messiah.

According to Danker (2000:137), the Greek term *arche*, which is translated "beginning", denotes "the commencement of something", including (but not limited to) "an action, process, or state of being" (cf. Louw and Nida 1989:1:655). In the original, the word appears without the article. Also, as Wallace (1996:50) notes, the entire opening phrase is a nominative absolute participle. In all likelihood, then, the word and phrase were meant to function as a title (cf. Rogers and Rogers 1998:67; Zerwick and Grosvenor 1981:100),

whether for Mark's entire Gospel or the ministry of John the Baptizer (cf. Bock 2002:78; Cranfield 1959:34-35; Croy 2001:110-114; Marshall 2004:57; Perkins 1995:8:527). Another possibility is that, like John 1:1, Mark 1:1 uses *arche* as an allusion to Genesis 1:1 (Edwards 1978:84-85; Edwards 2002:23; cf. the Septuagint rendering of this verse). The idea would be that, with the advent of the Messiah, God has initiated a new spiritual beginning for humanity (Wessel 1984:8:618; cf. Lioy 2005b:66).

"Jesus" (Mark 1:1) is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name *Joshua*, which means "Yahweh saves" (Danker 2000:471; Louw and Nida 1989:1:824). As well, "Messiah" (from the Hebrew) and "Christ" (from the Greek) both mean "the Anointed One" (Danker 2000:1091; Louw and Nida 1989:1:543, 832). When taken together, they indicate that the Father chose, appointed, and empowered His Son to save people from their sins (Matt 1:21; Luke 1:30-33; cf. Grundmann 1974:9:528-529; Guthrie 1981:241-242; Rengstorf 1986:2:339-340). It is commonly understood that the genitive in the opening phrase of Mark 1:1 functions in an objective sense (cf. Rogers and Rogers 1998:67; Zerwick and Grosvenor 1981:100). However, as Wallace (1996:121) points out, this might be an example of a plenary genitive, in other words, that "Jesus the Messiah" (or "Jesus Christ") can be subjective and objective in the way in which it functions. Accordingly, the "good news" is both proclaimed by Jesus and about Him (cf. Bock 2002:79; Cranfield 1959:36; France 2002:53). The Greek noun *euangélion* is derived from the verb *euangelézo*, which means "to tell good news" or "to proclaim the gospel" (Lioy 2004:88). In turn, the noun refers to the message of salvation proclaimed first by Jesus and then by His disciples (Edwards 2002:25).

The concept of the "gospel" has Roman and Jewish roots. Among Romans, the word was used to describe good news about events in the emperor's life, such as his enthronement. These events were thought to affect the whole world. Thus, Mark's use of *euangélion* shows that Jesus' ministry marked the beginning of a new era for the world. Jewish roots of the term are found in the Old Testament prophecy books, especially Isaiah (e.g. 40:9; 52:7; 61:1). There the announcement of the future time of salvation is called "good tidings" and is set against a backdrop of joy. Consequently, a Jewish audience knew that the era Jesus ushered in was the prophesied time of salvation (Lioy 2004:89).

An examination of Mark 1:14-15 indicates that the "kingdom of God" is the principal focus of the gospel, especially that it has "come near"or is "at hand". The Greek verb *engiken*, which is in the perfect tense, denotes a completed past action whose effect continues into the present. With respect to the Greek noun rendered "kingdom", it is *basileía* and refers to "the royal reign of God". In Jesus' day, the concept of the kingdom was rooted in the Old Testament (Lioy 2003:87). For instance, God's rule was eternal (Ps 145:13) and universal (103:19), but it was only partially recognized on earth. In fact, all nations would not serve the Lord until the last days (Zech 14:9). Jewish people prayed daily for the coming of God's reign. Also, when they prayed for His kingdom, they did not doubt that God presently reigned over His creation; yet they longed for the day when God would rule unchallenged and all people would acknowledge Him.

Jesus' teachings about the kingdom show it was both present with Him on earth (Matt 4:17) and also something that would be completely fulfilled at the end of the ages (13:24-30; 16:28). Jesus revealed that entrance into His kingdom is something that God gives to those who believe (25:34), but (paradoxically) it can cost a person everything he or she has (19:16-24). Other portions of the New Testament describe God's kingdom as being heavenly (2 Tim 4:18) and unshakable (Heb 12:28). It is also inseparably linked to righteousness, peace, and joy (Rom 14:17). Moreover, the divine kingdom is associated with suffering and patient endurance (Rev 1:9), supernatural power (1 Cor 4:20), promise (Jas 2:5), glory (1 Thess 2:12), and "the renewal of all things" (Matt 19:28).

God's kingdom is not the product of human striving or invention (John 18:36). It is given as a gift (Luke 12:32) and humbly received (Mark 10:15). The Lord brings His people into His kingdom (Col 1:13), makes them worthy of it (2 Thess 1:5), and preserves them for it (2 Tim 4:18). Perhaps more than anything else in the Saviour's mind, the divine kingdom was a dynamic, eschatological concept. The Lord declared what the kingdom would be like and that He also sovereignly established it. The justice and righteousness of His kingdom is evident by His concern for the weak and oppressed (Matt 5:3). He reached out to the poor, hungry, and distressed with His unfailing, covenantal love.

Mark's Gospel conveys an air of anticipation as the sovereign Creator inaugurated a new phase in His plan of redemption, and the arrival of the Messiah made this possible. He is none other than the "Son of God" (1:1), a title that scholars recognize as having immense christological importance (Bauer 1992:769; Garlington 1994:287). Admittedly, while some Greek manuscripts omit *huiou theou* (literally, "son of god"), the majority contain the phrase. This lends strong support for its authenticity and rightful inclusion in the opening verse to Mark's account (Cranfield 1959:38; Edwards 1978:86; France 2002:49; Lane 1974:41; Wessel 1984:8:619). In fact, an emphasis on Jesus as the unique Son of God is consistently found throughout the second Synoptic Gospel (Marshall 2004:57-58; Thielman 2005:62-53; cf. 1:11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 12:1-11, 35-37; 13:32; 14:36; 15:39).

As I have noted elsewhere (Lioy 2003:115-116), "Son of God" is a messianic title that the New Testament writers applied to the Lord Jesus (e.g. Rom 1:4; Rev 2:18). The phrase emphasizes the "special and intimate relationship that exists between the first and second persons of the Trinity" (cf. Matt 16:16; Luke 1:35). Jesus, as the divine Son, reveals the Father to humankind by "carrying out perfectly God's purposes as Messiah, Servant, and eternal sovereign" (Brindle 1989:315). Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5 quote Psalm 2:7 in connection with the Messiah being the Son of God. Most likely, the Israelites applied this verse to the descendants of David, whom they crowned king. However, Psalm 2:7 ultimately refers to the Saviour. This is made clear in Acts 13:33. When God raised Jesus from the dead, He conferred great dignity on Him by declaring Him to be His Son (something that had been true of Jesus for all eternity; Lioy 2007b:323-324; cf. Edwards 1978:106; Geldenhuys 1983:147; Wright 2002:51).

Jesus' divinity is a second emphasis implicit in the phrase "Son of God". It "indicates that the Son is to be identified with the Father and considered fully and absolutely equal to Him" (Lioy 2003:116; cf. John 5:18; 10:30, 36). In a previous study (Lioy 2005:82), I noted that the appearance of *monogenes* (literally, "only begotten") draws attention to Jesus' "unique, special, [and] one-of-a-kind" relationship with the Father; in other words, the Lord Jesus is the "one and only Son of the Father" (cf. John 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). As such, Jesus is the extraordinary object of the Father's love, co-equal with the Father and the Spirit, and the "enfleshment of the divine". This is not a peripheral

doctrine, for as O'Collins (2002:3; italics in the original) notes, the divinity of the Son "stands or falls with accepting his *personal* pre-existence within the eternal life of the Trinity".

2. The Baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:9-11)

The unique status of Jesus as the divine Messiah is again emphasized at His baptism. "At that time" (Mark 1:9) serves as a chronological marker for the start of Jesus' public ministry, which by some estimates was around A.D. 27 or 28 (Culpepper 1995:9:93; Wessel 1984:8:621). Jesus traveled south from His hometown of Nazareth in Galilee to be baptized by John in the waters of the Jordan River. Undoubtedly, this was the highpoint of John's ministry, especially in light of the fact that God had called John to prepare his fellow Jews for the advent of the Messiah.

It is not possible to determine with certainty when the practice of baptism began. Baptizing Gentile converts to Judaism (called "proselytes") occurred even before John's time. Also, many Old Testament passages refer to ceremonial washings (Exod 29:4; Lev 14:8). Several prophets used the washing image to speak of inner cleansings (Isa. 1:16; Jer 4:14; Ezek 36:25; Zech 13:1). What makes John's baptism unique was that he called candidates who desired to undergo the procedure to repent and be cleansed spiritually. Thus, his baptism was not just for the ceremonially unclean or for Gentiles; instead, his rite was for everyone—whether Jew or Gentile—who repented. John's baptism was intended to prepare people for the coming of God's anointed one (Lioy 2007a:169).

John proclaimed to the people that the Messiah was far greater than the Baptizer in power and authority. In fact, Jesus was so superior in rank that John felt he was unworthy to stoop down like a servant and untie Jesus' sandals (Mark 1:7; cf. John 1:27; 3:27-30). John's humble attitude explains why he did all he could to prevent Jesus from undergoing the rite of baptism (Matt 3:14). John only consented in doing so because Jesus explained that performing the ritual would "fulfill all righteousness" (vs. 15). Three reasons for this incident are worth mentioning (Lioy 1995:18; cf. Blomberg 1992:81; Bock 1994:337; Carson 1984:8:107-108; Geldenhuys 1983:146; Gibbs

2002:521-522, 526; Keener 1999:132; Nolland 2005:152-154). First, Jesus wished to identify with sinners. He especially wanted to associate with those who hungered for righteousness. Second, Jesus sought to intercede as an advocate on behalf sinners. Expressed differently, He was baptized as the representative of all people. In this way, He demonstrated that everyone needed to repent, for all people need cleansing from sin. Third, Jesus' baptism foreshadowed His own death, burial, and resurrection for sinners (Rom 6:3-4).

The Greek of Mark 1:10, which the TNIV renders as "just as", is more literally translated "and immediately". This phrase helps to emphasize the continuity between the ministries of John and Jesus (Rogers and Rogers 1998:68; cf. Sefa-Dapaah 1995:219, 247-248). While the Son was emerging from the waters of the Jordan, He saw the heavens being "torn apart". Contemporary Jewish writings subdivided the heavens into three or more layers (cf. 2 Cor 12:2). If it is assumed that the first heaven is the sky and the second heaven the more distant stars and planets, the third heaven refers to the place where God dwells. Paradise is the abode of blessedness for the righteous dead. For believers, it also signifies dwelling in fellowship with the exalted Redeemer in unending glory (Lioy 2005a:370).

The cosmic event recorded in Mark 1:10 signified that the Father was revealing Himself in a unique way to humanity through the Son, perhaps in fulfillment of Isaiah 64:1 (cf. Ezek 1:1). A parallel reference can be found in the *Testament of Levi* 18:6-7, which refers to "the heavens" being "opened", along with the presence of "a fatherly voice", "the glory of the Most High", and "the spirit of understanding and sanctification" resting on an end-time regal and priestly figure (Charlesworth 1983:1:794-795). Also, the *Testament of Judah* 24:1-3 speaks of a royal, messianic figure called the "Star from Jacob" for whom "the heavens" are "opened" and on whom "the spirit" is poured out, the latter signifying a "blessing of the Holy Father" (Charlesworth 1983:1:801; cf. Edwards 1978:88-89; Edwards 2002:35; Lane 1974:55; Marshall 1978:155). Splitting open the heavens also drew attention to the Son's role as the only Mediator between God and humankind (Perkins 1995:8:535; cf. John 1:51; Acts 7:56; 1 Tim 2:5).

At the outset of Jesus' public ministry, His status as the anointed, divine Son was affirmed in two ways. First, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the

bodily form of a dove (Mark 1:10; cf. Matt 3:16; Luke 3:22; John 1:33). This fulfilled the "prophetic expectation of a messianic figure endowed with God's Spirit" (France 2002:77; cf. Isa 11:2; 42:1; 61:1). *Tractate Hagigah* 15a of the Babylonian Talmud refers to the dove as brooding or hovering "over her young without touching them". Most likely, this is an allusion to Genesis 1:2, which says that at the dawn of creation, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters of the earth. Support for this view comes from *Tractate Hagigah* 2.6 of the Tosefta, which likens the Spirit of creation with the mother eagle described in Deuteronomy 32:11, who hovers over its young. Similarly, *Genesis Rabbah* 2:4, by making reference to Isaiah 11:2, connects the Spirit mentioned in Genesis 1:2 with the Messiah. Also, Dead Sea Scroll fragment 4Q521 (sometimes referred to as the "Messianic Apocalypse") says that in the end times, the Lord's Spirit will hover over the poor and renew the faithful with His power. When all these ancient Jewish writings are considered, it is possible that the presence of the Spirit in the form of a dove at the baptism of Jesus implies that He "brings a new creation" (Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 1998:217; cf. Bock 2002:86; Boring 1995:8:160; Cole 1983:58; Evans 2003:78; Lane 1974:56-57).

Keener (1999:132-133; 2003:460; cf. Marshall 1978:153) thinks a more likely background for Jesus' anointing is the episode recorded in Genesis 8:8-12 (cf. 4 Baraita 7:8). In this case, the dove is not only a "harbinger of the new world after the flood", but also a "prototype of the coming age" of grace (Keener 1999:133; cf. Matt 24:38; 1 Pet 3:20-21; 2 Pet 3:6-7). Genesis 8:11 specifically notes that the dove Noah had sent out from the ark returned with a freshly plucked olive leaf in its beak. Based on this image, the dove has "appropriately become a sign of peace" (Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 1998:216). It was also prized for its "softness, beauty of feathers and eyes, and affection for and faithfulness to its mate" (Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 1998:217; cf. Song of Songs 1:15; 2:14; 4:1; 5:2, 12; 6:9). In the Old Testament times, this bird was used in sacrificial rites (cf. Gen 15:9; Lev 1:14-17; 5:7; 14:21-22). In the New Testament period, doves were seen as harmless, innocent creatures (cf. Matt 10:16). All of these are appropriate symbols of the Holy Spirit (cf. Blomberg 1992:82; Edwards 1978:92-93; Geldenhuys 1983:146), whose visible anointing of Jesus certified that He was

the divinely-empowered Messiah (Bock 1994:335; Culpepper 1995:9:91; Ridderbos 1997:76).

The second affirmation of Jesus as the anointed, divine Son came when the Father audibly identified and endorsed Jesus. During the historical period between the Old and New Testaments, when divine revelation through the prophets had stopped, rabbinic sources maintained that the heavenly voice was one way, along with the exposition of Scripture, that God communicated with His people (Betz 1974:9:288; Culpepper 1995:9:91). In Hebrew, the sound from heaven was called the *bath qol*, which literally means "daughter of the voice", that is, an "echo of a heavenly voice" (Cranfield 1959:54; cf. Liefeld 1984:8:860; Wessel 1984:8:622). Allegedly, the sound people heard was comparable to "whispering or chirping" (Helmbold 1976:1:492) and "unaccompanied by a visible divine manifestation" (Van Pelt 1979:1:438-439; cf. Dan 4:31; Acts 9:4; 10:13, 15; 22:7-9; 26:14). It is possible "the Jewish tradition of the heavenly voice" (Keener 1999:133) would have formed a familiar conceptual backdrop, at least to Jewish readers of the account of the episode recorded in all three Synoptic Gospels (cf. Keener 2003:458). The idea, then, is that the *bath qol*, along with the testimony of John the Baptizer and the witness of Scripture, helped confirm the divine, messianic identity of Jesus (Keener 1999:134; Keener 2003:458). Another possibility is that the *bath qol* signaled the "dawning of the Messianic Age" (Carson 1984:8:109; cf. Boring 1995:8:160; Edwards 1978:97) and the resumption of "divine communication with Israel" (Blomberg 1992:82; cf. Bock 1994:337; Marshall 1978:152).

The voice from heaven literally declared, "You are my Son, the beloved [one]" (Mark 1:11), in which the Greek term *agapetos* denotes Jesus as being uniquely "loved and cherished" (Louw and Nida 1989:1:591) by the Father (cf. Danker 2000:7). The Father also announced that He was well pleased with, or took great delight in, His Son. These remarks directly allude to Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1, and possibly echo Genesis 22:2, 12, 16; Exodus 4:22-23; and Isaiah 41:8 (cf. Cureton 1993:74-82; Fossum 1992:134; France 2002:80; Keener 2003:464-465; Lane 1974:57). The Gospels record two other occasions in which the Father affirmed the Messiah's unique, divine sonship, namely, at Jesus' transfiguration (Matt 17:6; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35) and on the

day when He entered triumphantly into Jerusalem (John 12:28; cf. Morris 1990:100). The imagery is possibly that of the Redeemer entering into "Messianic kingship analogous to that of the enthronement of the Israelite king" (Edwards 1978:99).

The reference to Isaiah 42:1 is particularly relevant, for it is part of a group of passages called the "Servant Songs" (Ladd 1993:164; Perkins 1995:8:535; cf. Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13—53:12). Some consider the Servant to represent Israel as a collective, namely, an ideal Israel that is fully submissive to the will of God. Others say the Servant represents a corporate personality of sorts, where an individual (like a king or father figure) represents Israel as a nation. Despite the possible attractiveness of these views, the one with the most merit is that the Servant represents a historical individual who acts as a representative of God's people. This person is more than just an obedient follower of God. The Lord called and empowered Him to carry out a unique mission, one that fulfilled God's eternal purposes in a significant way. Thus, the Servant of God is the Messiah. He would deliver the people of God—not only from their enemies but also from their sinful condition (Lioy 2007a:113).

In the previous section of this essay, it was noted that Jesus' intimate relationship with the Father and co-equal status with Him as God are two emphases connected with the phrase "Son of God" (cf. Guthrie 1981:305-306). A third emphasis is Jesus' unswerving obedience to His Father's will, even to the point of being crucified (Bauer 1992:773; Keener 2003:458; cf. Mark 10:45). Indeed, the Gospels make a strong connection between the divine, royal status of Jesus as the eternal Son of God and His suffering, atoning sacrifice at Calvary, and resurrection from the dead (Edwards 1978:84; Edwards 2002:483; Michel 1986:3:641; Schweizer 1972:8:379).

For instance, during Jesus' transfiguration, the Father referred to Him as "my Son, whom I love" (Mark 9:7). Just before that, Moses and Elijah spoke with the Messiah about "his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31; cf. Matt 17:3; Mark 9:4). The Greek is more literally translated "his exodus" and refers to Jesus' eventual return in glory to heaven (cf. Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11; Phil 2:2:6-11). Then, immediately following the episode, as Jesus, Peter, James, and John made their way down from the

"high mountain" (Mark 9:2; cf. 2 Pet 1:17), the Saviour ordered the three not to say a word to anyone until He had been raised from the dead (Mark 9:9).

A similar emphasis is found in the testimony John gave concerning Jesus, perhaps not long after His baptism (John 1:29-34). John declared Jesus to be the eternally preexistent, divine Messiah (cf. Keener 2003:457). The Baptizer also referred to Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world". The Greek noun *amnós*, which is rendered "Lamb", generally refers to a "sheep of one year old" (Danker 2000:54; cf. Louw and Nida 1989:1:41). In Apocalyptic literature (e.g. 1 Enoch 89:45; 90:6, 9-19, 37-38; Testament of Benjamin 3:8; Testament of Joseph 19:8-11), the lamb is depicted as a ruling figure who "conquers its foes and leads its flock" (Lioy 2003:119). There is a more direct conceptual allusion between John 1:29 and Isaiah 53:7. The latter verse says that the Suffering Servant was like a lamb led to a slaughtering block. The Son as the Passover lamb is a related notion emphasized in the New Testament. For instance, Paul referred to the Messiah as "our Passover lamb" (1 Cor 5:7). Peter equated the "precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet 1:19) to that of a "lamb without blemish or defect" (cf. Exod 12:5; Lev 22:17-25). The apostle also noted that believers have been healed by the Messiah's "wounds" (1 Pet 2:24).

Unique to Luke's account of Jesus' baptism (3:21-22) is the note that when He began His ministry, He was about 30 years old (vs. 23). What follows is an extensive genealogy that traces Jesus' ancestry back from Joseph to Adam and ends with the phrase "son of God" (vs. 37; cf. Garlington 1994:288). The list of names indicates that the person whom John baptized in the waters of the Jordan River was none other than a descendant of Adam, the patriarchs, and David; the representative of all humanity; and the divine Messiah (Culpepper 1995:9:95). In the incarnate Son of God, the "entire hope" of the Old Testament is "inseparably and eternally bound"; likewise, the destiny of "all divinely created humans is bound together" (Bock 1994:360; cf. Bock 2002:88, 90; Geldenhuys 1983:152-153; Marshall 1978:161). When the first Adam transgressed the command of God, he was banished from the Garden of Eden (cf. Gen 3); but Adam's more pernicious legacy was the introduction of sin and death to the human race (Rom 5:12) as well as the entire creation (8:20). It would take the advent of the second Adam, the true divine Son, to bring eternal life to redeemed humanity as well as future glory for them along

with all creation (Geldenhuys 1983:158; Jeremias 1964:1:141; Liefeld 1984:8:861; cf. Rom 5:13-20; 8:18-23).

3. The Temptation of Jesus (Mark 1:12-13)

The temptation of Jesus draws further attention to His unique status as the divine Messiah. He was now anointed with God's Spirit, which signified the Son's inauguration into His public ministry (Acts 10:37-38; cf. Cureton 1993:85-86; Dockery 1992:57; Lyon 2001:136). When Mark 1:12 says that the Spirit "immediately . . . thrust [Jesus] into the wilderness" (personal translation), one is left with the impression that this event occurred by divine necessity (Garlington 1994:285; cf. similar wording in Deut 8:2) and in private (Bock 2002:89). "Wilderness" (Mark 1:12) renders the Greek term *éremos*, which denotes an "uninhabited region or locality" (Danker 2000:392), though not necessarily a parched or arid locale (such as a desert; cf. Allison 1992:565). The identity of the specific area near the Jordan River to which this verse refers remains unknown (France 2002:85).

At various times in Jesus' earthly life, He experienced events that paralleled important episodes in Israel's history. For instance, the nation, as God's "son" (Exod 4:23), was led by Moses into the desert (15:22). Then, for the next four decades (cf. Deut 1:3), the Lord tested His people as they wandered in the wilderness (Exod 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut 8:2-5). Tragically, as Scripture reveals, that generation of Israelites failed the divine test, even though they enjoyed the provision of the Father (Deut 2:7; Neh 9:21; Ps 78:17-22) and the presence of the Spirit (cf. Neh 9:20; Isa 63:7-10). Their unbelief led them to transgress the Lord repeatedly (cf. Num 14:33; 32:13; Ps 95:10-11; Heb 3:7-19). In contrast, Jesus, as the ideal Israelite and representative of the human race, not only endured real testing, but also triumphed over it in the power of the Spirit (cf. Carson 1984:8:111; Cureton 1993:245; Liefeld 1984:8:862).

Mark 1:13 notes that Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days, a number to which some scholars assign sacred significance (cf. Lioy 2003:42). During this time, the Saviour ate nothing and by the end of it was famished (Matt 4:2; Luke 4:2). Various Old Testament luminaries also had life-shaping experiences that lasted 40 days, including Moses (Exod 34:28; Deut 9:9, 18),

David (1 Sam 17:16), and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8). The temptation episode is a reminder that the Son, as the "pioneer and perfecter of faith" (Heb 12:2), inaugurated a new exodus (of sorts) for the people of God (cf. 1 Cor 10:1-5). Jesus, of course, is not simply a new Moses. More importantly, the Son, as the divine Messiah, utterly transcends Israel's lawgiver as well as all other prominent individuals in the Old Testament (Lioy 2003:91; cf. Heb 3:1-7). Indeed, the Son alone is "God's ultimate revelation" (Keener 1999:135; cf. Garlington 1994:306-308).

This truth is confirmed by Jesus' encounter with Satan, who "tempted" (Mark 1:13) the Son throughout and (especially) toward the end of His sojourn in the wilderness (Bock 1994:370). *Peirázo* is the Greek verb behind this translation and means "to entice to improper behavior" (Danker 2000:793; cf. Louw and Nida 1989:1:775). Furthermore, the Greek noun *satán* literally means "adversary" and refers to a preeminent and powerful rogue angel who is also known as the devil. Sometime before God created human beings, Satan "rebelled against the Creator" (Unger 2001:1054) and became the arch-enemy of God and humanity (Gibson 1994:13-14). Scripture reveals that the devil is a murderer, liar, and the "father of lies" (John 8:44); the one who "leads the whole world astray" (Rev 12:9); and "the ruler of the kingdom of the air" (Eph. 2:2) at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God (cf. Boring 1995:8:162). The prince of demons wanted to draw away the Son from obeying the Father's will; but despite the devil's repeated efforts, he failed to entice Jesus to sin. As a result of this encounter, the Messiah proved that He is a "loyal and beloved Son" (Bock 1994:383; cf. Marshall 1978:166).

Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 offer collaborating biblical witness to this fact (cf. Lioy 1995:19-20). The account of Jesus' "visionary experience" is a "three-part conversation" that resembles the "debates of the scribes", who made use of "proof-texts from Scripture" (Twelftree 1992:822). The three particular temptations mentioned by Matthew's Gospel apparently occurred at the end of Jesus' 40-day fast (Matt 4:2). Therefore, when the devil launched his final attacks, Jesus was at a disadvantage. First, Satan said to Jesus that if He was truly the Son of God, He should turn some of the stones that were lying about into bread (vs. 3). Certainly, Jesus could have used some bread after a 40-day fast, just as the Israelites needed manna to sustain them in the wilderness (Exod 16:13-36); but it would have been wrong for the divine

Messiah to utilize His power for a purely selfish purpose. His power was meant for His redemptive ministry. Rather than yield to the tempter's suggestion, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3. This verse teaches that people live not only by consuming food; they also need to take in God's Word for spiritual nourishment (Matt 4:4). Jesus could do without bread, but He could not do without obedience to God (cf. Luke 4:3-4).

The devil next supernaturally escorted Jesus to Jerusalem and stood Him on the highest point of the temple (Matt 4:5). The tempter invited Jesus to prove in a spectacular way that He was God the Son. Supposedly, He could throw Himself down from the apex of the temple and trust the Father to protect Him (vs. 6). A common interpretation of Malachi 3:1 held that the Messiah would appear in the sky, descend to the temple, and proclaim deliverance (cf. the rabbinical saying in *Pesiqta Rabbati* 36). Apparently, Satan wanted Jesus to combine such an appearance with a sensational descent, complete with angels, to win popular approval for His kingdom. The tempter cleverly misquoted Psalm 91:11-12 by leaving out the phrase "to guard you in all your ways". This passage teaches that God provides His angels to watch over His people when they live in accordance with His will (cf. Exod 19:4-5; Deut 32:10-11). Satan claimed that the Father would protect the Son as He plummeted to the ground; but since such a stunt would not be within the will of God, the promise of divine protection would not apply. Rather than yield to the devil's suggestion, Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16, saying, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" (Matt 4:7; cf. Luke 4:9-12).

In the third and final temptation, Satan supernaturally transported Jesus to a very high mountain. In a moment of time, the devil paraded before the Son all the nations of the world and their glory, promising them to Him if He would fall before the tempter in worship (Matt 4:8-9). Through the Messiah's death and resurrection, the Father intended to free the world from the oppressive control of Satan (cf. Heb 2:14-15) and give the Son the nations throughout the earth as His rightful inheritance (Ps 2:8). Therefore, rather than oblige His tempter, Jesus commanded, "Away from me, Satan!" (Matt 4:10). There was good reason for this command. It stands written in Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20 that worship and service are to be given only to God. In the midst of temptation, Jesus showed an unwavering commitment to do the will of the Father (cf. Luke 4:5-8).

When the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from the Lord (Matt 4:11); even so, when the next opportunity came, Satan would tempt Jesus again (Luke 4:13). Mark 1:13 notes that angels came and attended to Jesus' needs (possibly throughout His 40-day sojourn; cf. Edwards 2002:42), just as they had offered care and support to the Israelites during their wanderings in the wilderness (cf. Exod 14:19; 23:20, 23; 32:34; 33:2) and food to Elijah when he fled to Horeb for safety from Ahab (cf. 1 Kings 19:3-8). It is also revealed that the Messiah was out among the wild animals (cf. Lioy 2005a:289). In Saviour's day, far more wild animals roamed the countryside than today, including lions that prowled the wooded areas along the Jordan River (Jer 5:6; 49:19). The mention of wild beasts thus adds drama to Jesus' confronting evil.

One reason for the mention of the presence of angels and wild animals may be that Mark wanted to emphasize the divine protection Jesus received in the midst of the danger He faced (Heil 2006:66, 74, 77). Gibson (1994:21) notes that similar ideas can be found in ancient Jewish literature penned during the intertestamental period. For instance, the *Testament of Issachar* 7:7 states that when the people of God are known for their piety and faith, "every spirit of Beliar will flee" from them and they will be able to subdue "every wild creature" (Charlesworth 1983:1:804). Similarly, the *Testament of Naphtali* 8:4 says that when those in the covenant community "achieve the good", the "devil will flee" from them, "wild animals will be afraid" of them, and God's "angels will stand by" them (Charlesworth 1983:1:813). Likewise, the *Testament of Benjamin* 5:2 declares that those who "continue to do good" will find "unclean spirits" departing from them and "wild animals" dreading their presence (Charlesworth 1983:1:826).

A second reason for mentioning wild animals may be that untamed beasts were associated with evil powers. The historical episode, in a sense, became a symbol of the cosmic struggle of good and evil in which the Son was engaged. Likewise, the wild beasts might be connected to the hope of the messianic era, when animal enemies such as the wolf and the lamb will live in peace (Isa 11:6-9; 32:14-20; 65:25; Hos 2:18). A third reason may come from Mark's audience. If Mark was writing his Gospel for Gentile Christians about A.D 64–67, particularly those in Rome (cf. 1 Pet 5:13), they would be facing

persecutions from Nero that often included being thrown to the lions for refusing to worship the emperor. The early Christians could take comfort in the fact that Jesus too had confronted wild animals.

The biblical record of Jesus' temptations serves as a reminder that our great High Priest is not austere, aloof, or fear-inducing, but one who can empathize with our weaknesses because He became one of us and experienced life—with its joys and sorrows, highs and lows—just as we do. In fact, He even faced enticements to sin as we do (Heb 4:15); but unlike us, our High Priest remained sinless, despite being tempted in all sorts of ways (Blomberg 1992:86; Geldenhuys 1983:156-157; cf. John 8:46; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 3:5). Some have objected that, if Jesus did not sin, He was not truly human, for all humans sin; but those making that objection fail to realize that human beings are in an abnormal state. God did not create Adam and Eve as sinful, but as holy and righteous (Gen 1:26-27). It was their willful disobedience that introduced sin into the human race (Gen 3:1-24; Rom 5:12).

The question is sometimes raised, "Was it possible for the Messiah to have sinned?" Some people argue for the impeccability of the Lord Jesus, in which the word *impeccable* means "not able to sin". Others object that, if the Redeemer were not able to sin, His temptations could not have been real, for how can a temptation be real if the person being tempted is not able to sin at all? In thinking our way through the divine mystery associated with the sinlessness of the Messiah, it is prudent to affirm what Scripture teaches: 1) that Jesus never actually sinned; and 2) that Jesus was tempted with real enticements to sin.

The core of the issue centers around the way in which Jesus' human nature and divine nature worked together. If Jesus' human nature had existed by itself, independent of His divine nature, it would have been a human nature just like that which God gave Adam and Eve. It would be free from sin but nonetheless able to sin. Of course, Jesus' human nature never existed apart from union with His divine nature. From the moment of His conception, He existed as truly God and truly man in one person. An act of sin would have been a moral one involving the whole person of Christ, namely, both His human and divine natures. James 1:13 says that God is never tempted to do wrong. Also, it is impossible for the infinite holiness of God to compromise

morally. For these reasons, it is best to conclude that it was not possible for Jesus to have sinned; in other words, the union of His human and divine natures in one person prevented it (cf. Lioy 2007b:332).

3. Conclusion

Within academia there is a persistent trend to reject the biblical teaching that Jesus alone is the true Redeemer and the only way to God. This observation provides motivation for exegetically and theologically analyzing Mark 1:1, 9-13. Each section of this passage—the beginning of the good news (vs. 1), the baptism of Jesus (vss. 9-11), and the temptation of Jesus (vss. 12-13)—staunchly affirms Jesus' unique status as the divine Messiah. These verses also reveal that with Jesus' first advent, God initiated a new spiritual beginning for humanity. Indeed, the Father chose, appointed, and empowered the Son to save people from their sins.

Furthermore, these verses disclose that Jesus is the Son of God. The latter phrase underscores Jesus' special and intimate relationship with the Father, Jesus' full and absolute equality as God with the other two members of the Trinity, and Jesus' unswerving obedience to the carrying out the will of the Father, even to the point of being crucified. Even repeated attacks from Satan and the humiliation of the divine Saviour on the cross did not deter Him from fulfilling His preordained mission. In every episode, the Son, who enjoyed the Father's approval and the Spirit's abiding presence, proved Himself to be "God's Chosen One" (John 1:33).

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The Moral Law from a Christ-centered Perspective:

A Canonical and Integrative Approach

by

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Abstract[2]

This essay uses a canonical and integrative approach to examine the nature of the moral law from a Christ-centered perspective. The writer affirms that the Messiah, as the divine, incarnate Torah (John 1:1, 14, 16-18), fulfilled the law by carrying out its ethical injunctions, showing forth its true spiritual meaning, and bringing all that it stood for prophetically to completion (Matt 5:17). The Redeemer is the culmination (that is, the destination, goal, outcome, and fulfillment) of the law for believers (Rom 10:4) and the realization of the law's types, prophecies, and expectations (Heb 1:1-4; 8:8-8, 13). While His death and resurrection put an end to the administrative and ritual aspects of the law, its universal moral absolutes remain authoritative and applicable for His followers (Jas 1:19-20, 22-27; 2:8-27). The foremost way they heed the moral law is by showing unconditional, Christlike love to others (Rom 13:8-10; Jas 2:8).

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[2] This essay is a preliminary version of a chapter to appear in a forthcoming monograph being researched and written by the author. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of the faculty and staff of SATS.

1. The Intent of This Essay

The intent of this essay is to examine the nature of the moral law from a Christ-centered perspective and to do so in a canonical and integrative manner. It builds on the findings and conclusions presented in my monograph dealing with the relationship between the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount (Lioy 2004). In that study, I maintained that God's universal ethical absolutes were applicable for the church today. In the last chapter, I noted some areas for further research. This included how Matthew 5:17-20 interlaced with other pivotal texts (for instance, Romans 10:4 and the Book of Hebrews) regarding the continuing applicability of the moral law. The latter part of this essay investigates these matters further, along with exploring other relevant portions of the New Testament, but before that is done, a foundation of understanding is laid regarding the biblical concept of the law and the relationship of Jesus and His followers to the law.

2. The Biblical Concept of the Law

Foundational to this study is the biblical concept of the law, an issue I have previously discussed at length (Lioy 2004:13-34). This includes understanding various legal terms used in the Old Testament, the primary one of which is the Hebrew noun *tôrâ*. Depending on the context in which the word is used, it can mean "direction", "instruction" or "law". *Tôrâ* appears not only in legal texts, but also in narratives, speeches, poems, and genealogies. An examination of Scripture indicates that for the ancient Hebrews, morality was not an abstract concept disconnected from the present; rather, it signified ethical imperatives concerning how people of faith should live.

A similar mindset is found in the New Testament, especially in connection with the Greek noun *nomos*. The focus of this term is on ethical standards and rules of conduct, as established by tradition. Such synonyms as "custom", "principle" and "norm" help to convey the lexical range of meanings found in *nomos*. The term also is used to denote what people should do, with such terms as "ordinance", "rule" and "command" helping to capture this sense of the noun. Depending on the context, *nomos* is used to refer to the Pentateuch, guidelines for ethical behavior and the promise of God. The noun denotes

ethical instruction that is divine in origin and concerns the way of life characterized by righteousness and blessing. While in the New Testament, *nomos* does not refer to the teaching tradition of Israel's religious leaders, an awareness of the oral Torah can help one to better understand and appreciate the New Testament concept of the law.

Clarifying the biblical concept of the law includes a discussion of its nature, various categories and interrelated purposes. With respect to its nature, the law reflects the holiness of God and His will for humankind. Also, by means of His law, God evaluates how closely people live up to His flawless moral standard (cf. Rom 3:20). While there is an essential unity to the law, it would be incorrect to view it as a judicial monolith, for its various ordinances deal with civil, ceremonial, and ethical matters. While the administrative and ritual aspects of the Mosaic legal code are no longer binding on Christians, the moral aspects of God's law remain authoritative for the church (cf. John 14:15; 1 Cor 9:21; Gal 5:13-14; 6:2; 1 John 5:2-3). Admittedly, Scripture does not explicitly map out these particular distinctions; nonetheless, they represent a valid and useful demarcation of the three main types of law appearing in Scripture.

The three main categories of biblical law served distinct, though related, purposes. Because ancient Israel was a theocracy (in which the people recognized God as their King), the civil codes and religious ordinances were limited in their application to that nation during the period of the Old Testament. The moral law, however, transcends the time and culture of ancient Israel and has enduring applicability for the household of faith today. Two premier examples of the ethical aspect of God's law would be the Ten Commandments (recorded in Exod 20:1-17 and Deut 5:6-21) and the Sermon on the Mount (recorded in Matt 5-7). Because these portions of Scripture represent the epitome of God's will for humankind, they also serve as useful starting points for recognizing His universal moral absolutes.

Just as there are various categories of biblical law, there are also several interrelated purposes. The first of these is to increase the cognizance people have of their sin (cf. Rom 3:20; 4:15; 5:13; 7:7-11). They recognize that they have violated God's will and fall short of His glorious moral standard (3:23). Second, the law spotlights the transgressors' need for a Redeemer, that is,

salvation through faith in the Son (Gal 3:19-24). Third, the law helps to restrain evil by specifying the kinds of acts that are wicked. In this way, it assists governing authorities to maintain civil order, protect the innocent, and penalize the unjust. Fourth, the law helps God's people to recognize and live uprightly by giving them an ethical frame of reference. They are able to do so, for they are indwelt by the Spirit and energized by the Father's love.

3. The Relationship of the Messiah to the Law

In any discussion concerning the relevancy of the law for believers, it is important clarify the nature of the relationship between the Messiah and the law. Throughout His time on earth, Jesus remained subject to the law (Gal 4:4), and as a righteous Jew, acted in accordance with its stipulations (Luke 2:21-23; 4:16). Jesus also upheld the truth that the moral law continued to be relevant and binding (Matt 5:17-18). Furthermore, as Israel's greatest teacher (cf. Matt 7:28-29; John 13:13-14), He expounded on the meaning of the law and clarified its significance for God's people (e.g., Matt 5:21-48). In particular, Jesus stated that love for God and all people were the foremost commandments of Scripture (Matt 22:37-40; cf. Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18).

In His teaching ministry, Jesus disclosed the true meaning and intent of the law. He also affirmed the divine authority of the Hebrew sacred writings. This included condemning the extra-biblical traditions added to the Mosaic code (cf. Matt 15:1-9; 23:1-36) and censuring rigid, inaccurate views of the law (cf. Matt 5:20, 38). His sought neither to invalidate God's commands nor add new edicts to what already existed; instead, He strove to undo humanly imposed notions of right and wrong that ran counter to the divine intent of the law (cf. Mark 7:1-23).

When Adam and Eve violated God's command (Gen 3:1-7), sin entered the world and brought death along with it (Rom 5:12). The law of God was within its rightful authority to condemn all people, for all Adam's descendants had violated what the Lord decreed (Rom 3:23). Through Jesus' atoning sacrifice at Calvary, the fundamental relationship between regenerate sinners and the law was radically altered. To be specific, the Messiah, through His work on the cross, rendered powerless the law's ability to condemn those trusting in

Him. As a result of their spiritual union with Christ (Rom 6:1-7), they were pardoned (or acquitted) of sin and delivered from eternal damnation (Rom 8:1).

In addition, Jesus' death and resurrection put an end to the need for the ritualistic elements of the Mosaic code. As the sacrificial Lamb of God, Jesus satisfied the demands of the law completely and for all time (cf. John 1:29; Heb 7:26-28; 9:1, 9-10, 23-27). In this way, the Saviour brought to pass the spiritual reality foreshadowed by the ceremonial laws, thus rendering them obsolete and outdated (Heb 8:13). The upshot is that neither the civil nor ceremonial aspects of the Mosaic legal code remain biding for believers today; nonetheless, these aspects of the law continue to have pedagogic value for believers, especially as they seek to understand and adhere to God's moral law.

4. The Relationship of Believers to the Law

Jesus, through His atoning death at Calvary, frees believers from the condemnation of the law, but not from living in accordance with its timeless moral precepts and injunctions. After all, the "law is holy"[3] (Rom 7:12); likewise, its commandments are "holy, righteous and good". The implication is that God's universal moral absolutes are eternal in nature, unchanging, and perfect. As such, they transcend historical eras and societal constructs, having applicability for Christians down through the centuries.

The New Testament affirms the abiding validity of the ethical precepts of the Mosaic legal code. Paul noted that when we "live … according to the Spirit", the "righteous requirement of the law" is "fully met in us" (Rom 8:4). Similarly, John exhorted the believers in his day to "keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). This injunction brings to mind the second commandment of the Decalogue prohibiting idolatry (Exod 20:4; Deut 5:8). Clearly, the holy

[3] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from *Today's New International Version* (hereafter abbreviated, TNIV).

God revealed in the Old Testament is the same Lord disclosed in the New Testament.

Some might argue that biblical concepts of God have changed between the time of Abraham and Moses in the Old Testament and Jesus and the disciples in the New Testament. This notion, however, is undercut by the indistinguishable theological orientation found throughout the Judeo-Christian Scriptures, especially as seen in their moral directives. As a matter of fact, legal imperatives are an inseparable part of the Lord's covenant relationship with His people. In short, the covenant and law go hand in hand to create a unified and holy community of the redeemed down through the ages (cf. Heb 12:18-29). Not surprisingly, then, the ethical instruction given by Jesus and His apostles reflects an affirmation of the Mosaic legal code and its reapplication to believers this side of Calvary.

5. The Messiah's Fulfillment of the Law (Matt 5:17-19)

I have previously discussed the way in which the Messiah fulfilled the moral law (Lioy 2004:104-106, 136-144), and a review of that information is in order here. The key biblical text is Matthew 5:17-20, with verses 21-48 forming a broader pertinent scriptural context. A pivotal interpretative issue concerns whether Jesus was taking umbrage with the Mosaic law recorded in the Old Testament or the Pharisaic interpretation of the same. In this discussion, I am siding with the latter premise; in other words, the Messiah was challenging the Halakha, the collective body of Jewish religious law, including talmudic and rabbinic ordinances, customs, and traditions.

In verse 17, Jesus' collectively referred to the Hebrew sacred writings as "the Law" and "the Prophets", which mirrors how religious experts of the day would have talked about the entire Old Testament. Some think the Messiah wanted to abrogate, supersede, or replace the Mosaic legal code. Others conjecture that He radicalized the demands of the law and intensified its requirements, and in the process nullified some longstanding injunctions. Still others maintain that Jesus introduced demands that go beyond and in different directions from those found in the law (cf. Banks 1975:210, 229-230, 235; Barth 1976:153-159; Davies 1962:33-34, 39; Geisler 1989:204-207; Guthrie

1981:676-677; Fanning 1994b:431; Jeremias 1971:206; Lowery 1994a:47-48; Marshall 2004:118-119; Menninger 1994:104-108; Moo 1992:450, 454-456; Moo 1993:350-353; Pate 2000:350-351; Sanders 1985:260; Sanders 1990:93-94; Thielman 2005:87, 89-90).

None of these options are acceptable, for they contradict Jesus' statement that He did not "come to abolish the Law and the Prophets". "Abolish" renders the Greek verb *katalyo*, which means "to put an end to the effect or validity of something". The idea is that during the Saviour's first advent, He did not seek to annul, repeal, do away with, or make invalid the Mosaic legal code. Instead, His primary concern was to dismantle incorrect views about the law, especially faulty interpretations promulgated by the religious specialists of the day. This included a works-based form of righteousness in which strict adherence to the law would gain people their salvation (cf. Rom 9:30-33).

Rather than tear down all that the law stood for and represented, Jesus came to "fulfill" (Matt 5:17) the same. The Greek verb *plērōo* has three interrelated meanings (cf. Barth 1976:67-68; Branscomb 1930:226-229; Jeremias 1971:84-85; Meier 1976:73-75; Motyer 1996:61; Sanders 1985:261; Suggs 1970:115-119), each of which apply to what Jesus said about Himself. The Messiah fulfilled the law by carrying out its ethical injunctions, showing forth its true spiritual meaning, and bringing all that it stood for prophetically to completion (cf. Bock 2002:132; Bolton 1978:61-62; Henry 1957:318-319; Ladd 1997:122-123; Loader 2002:167-168; McQuilkin 1995:46-49; Murray 1957:150; Sprinkle 2006:27; VanGemeren 1993:38-39). The idea is that Jesus obeyed the law perfectly, thoroughly, and absolutely. He is the realization of its types and prophecies and the exclusive inspired interpretor of its teachings. Furthermore, He alone fully satisfied the payment for sin required by the law. Thus, He is more than an ideal example of how God's people should act. The Son is the object of the believers' faith, enabling them to be declared righteous in the Father's sight. Jesus also leads them beyond a surface-level compliance with the law to an inward adherence to its moral expectations.

There is no dichotomy, then, between Jesus and the Mosaic legal code. What He taught and did stood in continuity with the Old Testament, while at the same time made a break with the prevalent legalistic traditions of the day. Jesus endeavored to clarify what God originally revealed in the law, truths that

had been obscured by some religious experts in the intertestamental period. The Saviour made it clear that erroneous views about the law were separate from it and worthy of being rejected. Accordingly, His goal was to abrogate unscriptural notions by replacing them with the truth.

The moral law forms the backdrop of Jesus' declaration recorded in verse 18. This is due in part to the fact that during His earthly ministry, He began to nullify the ceremonial aspect of the Mosaic legal code (cf. Mark 7:19; Acts 10:15; 1 Tim 4:4). Indeed, because of Jesus' high priestly ministry, the ceremonies and sacrifices connected with the Levitical priesthood ceased to be valid (Heb 8:13). While the administrative and liturgical functions of the law were no longer in force, God's universal moral absolutes remained in effect. This is made clear when Jesus solemnly assured His listeners that "the smallest letter" (Matt 5:18) and "the least stroke of a pen" found in the law would never "disappear" from it until everything recorded in it was achieved. Not even "heaven and earth" would vanish before God had "accomplished" all that He declared would come to pass.

Ginomai is the Greek verb rendered "accomplished" and it refers to attaining to or arriving at something. From a Christ-centered standpoint, Jesus satisfied all the demands of the Torah, fulfilled their prophetic announcements, and flawlessly elucidated their divinely inspired teaching. These interrelated purposes find their fullest and most ultimate expression in the Saviour's atoning sacrifice on the cross. Through His death and resurrection, He makes it possible for believers to live in accordance with the ethical standards of the law. Likewise, all the hopes and dreams for saved humanity, as expressed in the law, reach their consummation and closure as a result of the Son's redemptive work.

Behind Jesus' statements in verse 19 is His refusal to countenance any misinterpretations and misapplications of the law. The religionists of the day ignored the least commandment by using the Mosaic legal code to win acceptance with God; and they encouraged others to disregard the law by perpetuating the incorrect notion that a mere outward compliance with rules and regulations ensured the intactness of one's relationship with God. In the end, the meticulous observance of human traditions and opinions is an inadequate substitute for the moral law. Those who so depreciated the

ordinances of Scripture would be considered least in the kingdom of the Lawgiver. Oppositely, those who affirmed the moral law—from the least to the greatest of its injunctions—would correspondingly be "called great in the kingdom of heaven".

The ethical demands of the kingdom exceed what anyone can humanly achieve on their own. Indeed, no matter how closely religionists might try to abide by the technicalities of the law, their sinful nature undermines their best efforts (cf. Rom 7:7-25). Even the smallest infraction makes one guilty of breaking all of God's commands (cf. Jas 2:10). This was just as true for such pious leaders as "the Pharisees and the teachers of the law" (Matt 5:20). Because they remained entrenched in their legalism and hypocrisy, they would fail to secure redemption for themselves. Only those who rely on God—completely and exclusively—will be admitted to the divine kingdom.

6. The Messiah as the Divine, Incarnate Torah (John 1:1, 14, 16-18)

I have elsewhere explored the Johannine view of Jesus' relationship to the Mosaic law (Lioy 2005:66-71, 80-87), information that is germane to this essay. Foundational is the apostle's presentation of Jesus as the eternally preexistent, divine Word. John 1:1 uses the Greek noun *logos* to refer to the Messiah as "the independent personified expression of God" (Danker 2000:601) to the world. *Logos* represents a fusion of the religious-philosophical outlook of ancient Greece and the monotheistic orientation of biblical Judaism. The resulting emphasis is on Jesus being the Creator, Sustainer, Ruler, and Judge of the universe. In short, He is the divine, incarnate Torah, the One who embodies God's wisdom, revelation, and command.

The opening verse of John's Gospel uses the Greek term *archē* (translated "beginning") in connection with the Messiah. At the dawn of time, when the material universe came into being, the Logos already existed. Every aspect of life, whether temporal or eternal, originated from and was consummated in the Logos. Also, because He is the divine, incarnate Torah, the Logos is the source of whatever is considered right and true. With the enfleshment of the

Word, God has entered the scene of human history to usher in a new age of redemption. The climax of this cosmic drama is the Son's atoning sacrifice at Calvary, which proves to be the success, not failure, of His divinely foreordained mission. In this way, the Logos reveals the heart of the Father and enables believing sinners to become His spiritual children (cf. v. 12).

John 1:1 states that the divine, incarnate Torah was with the Father from all eternity. Their relationship is intimate, personal, and (in a manner of speaking) face-to-face. The apostle, by using the Greek noun *theos* in reference to Jesus, emphasized that the Logos is truly God, just as are the Father and the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the fullness of the Godhead resides in all three Persons of the Trinity, implying that they each fully share the same divine nature (cf. John 5:18; 8:58; 10:30; 17:11; Rom 9:5; Phil 2:6; Col 2:9; Heb 1:3; 2 Pet 1:1). Also, because the Son is uncreated, He is not dependent on anyone or anything; instead, every entity throughout the universe exists because of Him and for Him.

Logos is again used in John 1:14 in connection with the divine Torah of eternity becoming a human being (literally, "flesh") and taking up residence among humankind. Jesus, without giving up any of His attributes as God (cf. Phil 2:6-8), took upon Himself a full and genuine human nature. Thus, within the person of the Messiah was the complete and perfect union of His divine and human natures (Col 1:19; 2:9; Heb 1:3). In becoming incarnate, the Word remained untainted by and free from sin (cf. Rom 8:3; Heb 4:5; 7:26). These truths are not a theological abstraction, but rather signify the literal enfleshment of the Creator in space and time.

"Made his dwelling" translates the Greek verb *skēnōo*, which is more literally rendered "tabernacled". This serves as a reminder of the shrine in the wilderness wherein the Lord displayed His glory among the Israelites (cf. Exod 25:8; 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11). The grandeur and splendor of God were also present in the Messiah, whose "glory" (John 1:14) the disciples noted. In one sense, the luminescent perfection of God shining forth from Jesus is implied by the Greek term *doxa* (cf. the account of the Transfiguration recorded in Matt 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36); but the most profound way in which Jesus' followers witnessed His glory was through His death on

the cross, followed by His resurrection and ascension (cf. John 7:39; 12:23, 28; 13:31-32; 17:1, 4-5).

This is none other than the glory of the divine, incarnate Torah, whom John 1:14 refers to as "the one and only" Son. The phrase renders the Greek word *monogenēs*, a term that points to something distinctively unique, special, or one-of-a-kind. With respect to the Logos, He alone is the eternal Son of God, the extraordinary object of the Father's love, and equal to the Father and the Spirit as God. Just as important is the apostle's statement about the Logos being "full of grace and truth". *Charis* (literally, "grace") denotes God's enduring love (*chesed* in Hebrew), while *alētheia* (literally, "truth") refers to God's faithfulness (*'emet* in Hebrew). In the Old Testament, the Lord made His mercy and compassion known through an intermediary such as Moses (cf. Exod 33:18-19; 34:6-7). Now, with the advent of the Messiah, grace and truth from God have reached their full and final expression (cf. John 14:6; Eph 2:8).

The eternal preexistence of the divine, incarnate Torah was the basis for John the Baptizer declaring that the Messiah far outranked him (John 1:15). The same preeminent, incarnate Lord inundated His disciples with the fullness of His presence. The apostle referred to it as *charin anti charitos*, which is literally rendered "grace upon grace" (v. 16). Admittedly, God's unmerited favor was already present throughout the Old Testament era; yet John, without diminishing this truth, noted that the enfleshment of the Logos resulted in even more of an inexhaustible supply of divine grace being piled on top of grace for the redeemed. Less likely is the view that the grace of God available under the new covenant somehow replaces or displaces what was available under the old covenant (cf. McQuilkin 1995:52; Moo 1992:461; Räisänen 1986:196). Ultimately, there is a strong correspondence and continuity between the testaments with respect to the compassion and faithfulness of the Lord that He made available to the faith community.

This emphasis on continuity between the testaments also applies to the "law" (*nomos*), which is mentioned in verse 17. After all, it was the triune God who revealed the law to Moses, and he in turn made it known to Israel (cf. Heb 1:1). That same body of teaching pointed to the long awaited Messiah, the very individual about whom Moses wrote (John 5:46). Likewise, Abraham and Isaiah foresaw the advent of the Redeemer (cf. 8:56; 12:41). Admittedly,

the perspective of these and other Old Testament saints was limited (cf. 1 Pet 1:10-12); nonetheless, the Spirit enabled them to prophesy about the humiliation and exaltation of the Messiah (cf. Deut 18:15, 18; Ps 2:1-2; 22; 28:16; 118:22; Isa 52:13—53:12; Matt 21:42; Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; Acts 4:11, 25-26; 1 Cor 10:3).

As the divine, incarnate Torah, Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God (cf. Heb 1:2-3). He is also the one through whom God's "grace and truth" (John 1:17; cf. Exod 33:13) are made available to believers in fullest abundance. While there is an implied contrast between Moses and the Messiah in John 1:17, it would be incorrect to conclude that Jesus either displaced and repudiated the law or questioned its abiding validity and authority (cf. Loader 2002:448-451; Pancaro 1975:539-543; Paroschi 2006:162-165); instead, the emphasis is on Jesus fulfilling the Mosaic corpus (Fernando 2004:70; Ladd 1997:266-267; Murray 1957:123, 150; Motyer 1996:61, 134; Sloyan 1978:118; Sprinkle 2006:31-32, 38-39; VanGemeren 1993:37-38). Jesus is not simply a new Moses. More importantly, the Son utterly transcends Israel's lawgiver as well as all other prominent individuals in the Old Testament (cf. Heb 3:1-7). With the advent of the divine, incarnate Torah, the old era is subsumed by the new one. Indeed, all the redemptive-historical types and prophecies recorded in the sacred Hebrew writings find their consummation in the Son (cf. 10:1).

Although the Mosaic law is holy (cf. Rom 7:12), it could only provide an incomplete understanding of God (Guthrie 1981:684; cf. Heb 1:1-2). In addition, He who "lives in unapproachable light" (1 Tim 6:16) has never been seen in the fullness of His glory by human eyes (John 1:18; cf. Exod 33:20; 1 John 4:12). The only exception is the divine, incarnate Torah (John 6:46). All that the law anticipated and declared is embodied in the Messiah. He is not only the "one and only son" (1:18; Greek, *monogenēs huios*), but also "God" (*theos*) made in "human likeness" (Phil. 2:6). John 1:18 uses the Greek noun *kolpos* to declare that the Lord Jesus abides in intimate relationship with the Father (as well as the Spirit). As the premier soteriological and eschatological revelation of the Torah, the Son has made the Father known to humankind (cf. Fernando 2004:65-66; Paroschi 2006:158-161; Sprinkle 2006:37).

With the advent of the Messiah, the Father's revelation to believers is ultimate, complete, and final (cf. Fernando 2004:68). This truth is emphasized

by the Greek verb *exegeomai*, which means "to expound" or "to set forth in great detail". Interestingly, the English noun "exegesis" is derived from the verb and refers to a critical explanation or interpretation of a text. What the law of Moses could not elucidate about the triune God has now been fully unveiled by the divine, incarnate Torah. Only He could reveal the essential being of the Godhead, for the Messiah alone is "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15), the "exact representation of [God's] being" (Heb 1:3), and the One in whom "all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Col 2:9). We should not be surprised, then, that Jesus said to Philip, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

7. The Messiah as the Culmination of the Law (Rom 3:21, 28, 31; 6:6, 14; 7:5-6; 8:1-4; 9:30-32; 10:3-4; 13:8-10)

The Pauline writings contain a wealth of information about the moral law, and the apostle's letter to the Romans is possibly his most seminal text on the issue. His epistle affirms the truth that there is a fundamental unity and continuity between the testaments, in which the same world view and theological message is consistently maintained (cf. Lioy 2005:15). For instance, the gospel Paul declared had its origin in the Hebrew Scriptures and previously was the subject of the prophets' interest (Rom 1:2). In fact, the message of truth had even been proclaimed to Abraham (Gal 3:8); and so the good news Paul heralded was not something novel or deviant, but rather grounded in the revelation of the Old Testament.

This literary and theological coherence between the testaments is reflected in Paul's discussion of the moral law. By way of example, Romans 3:21 states that the entire Hebrew corpus testified to the "righteousness of God". The precise meaning of this phrase is debated among scholars, with some asserting that the emphasis is on God's attribute of righteousness. Without denying the truth of the latter, a more likely exegetical option is that Paul was emphasizing God's justifying activity in conferring an upright status on believers; hence, the verse is referring to righteousness from God, which He imputes to sinners who trust in the Messiah for salvation (cf. Kruse 1996:170, 188-189; Martin 2001:126-127; McGrath 1993:520-521; Thielman 2005:346; VanDrunen 2006:43; cf. 1:17; 3:22).

In 3:31, Paul asked whether his stress on faith in the Son as the basis for imputed righteousness nullifies the law (that is, renders it inoperative). Expressed differently, does an emphasis on faith somehow imply that believers can forget about the law? The apostle's response was an emphatic "not at all!" The basis for this assertion stems from the interrelated purposes of the law, which were mentioned earlier in this essay. In short, God did not give the law to provide justification but rather to show people their state of sin and their need to be reconciled with Him. Consequently, the faith of those who trust in the Messiah actually "uphold the law", especially its continuing authority to condemn those who reject the Son. From what has been said, the Messiah is central to the believers' ongoing relationship with the law.

In 6:14, Paul revealed that sin is no longer the believers' master. Here the apostle metaphorically depicted sin as a powerful foe that enslaves people (cf. Ps 19:13). Sin misuses the law to arouse evil desires within the lost. In turn, these forbidden passions yield a harvest of ungodly deeds, resulting in death (Rom 7:5). The situation is different for believers. Their identification with Jesus' in His death, burial, and resurrection means they have died to the law (6:1-14). Consequently, they are no longer held captive like prisoners under its condemnation. Now that they are "released from the law" (7:6), they can serve God by living in the Spirit (cf. VanDrunen 2006:4).

Paul, in saying that believers are no longer "under the law" (6:14), did not mean they have no obligation to heed God's universal ethical absolutes. In fact, when believers operate "under grace", the Spirit enables them to do all that the moral law enjoins. Put another way, under the disciplinary authority of grace, believers have the freedom to live according to a higher principle—a principle that is rooted in the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus (cf. Titus 2:11-12). He has unshackled them from slavery to sin so that they can become slaves, or willing servants, to righteous living (cf. Rom 6:15-18).

Jesus' atoning sacrifice on the cross is the basis for God showering believers with His love and grace, rather than giving them the punishment they deserve (cf. 5:1-11). Jesus' redemptive work at Calvary is also the reason why there is no condemnation, or looming eternal punishment, for those who are united to Him by faith (8:1). His followers operate in the power of the Spirit, who is life-giving, rather than the power of sin, which is death-producing. In verse 2,

the Greek noun translated "law" (*nomos*) can refer to a controlling principle (cf. 3:27; 7:21-23). Another possibility is that Paul meant the law of God functioning within two different contexts. In one situation, sin misuses the law and brings about death for sinners. In the opposite situation, believers operate in the Son through the Spirit to obey the moral law, which leads to life (cf. Bandstra 1964:108-110; Martin 2001:31; Thielman 1994:201-202).

The viability of this second option is reinforced by the explanation Paul supplied in 8:3. He noted that the sinful nature weakened the Mosaic law by arousing forbidden passions within the lost; and in this crippled state, the law was "powerless" to free them from sin and death. What the law failed to achieve—providing righteousness for humanity—the Father did by sending His "in the likeness of sinful humanity". The latter phrase implies that sin never controlled the Messiah; in turn, His human nature remained morally pure and spiritually undefiled. This qualified Him to be God's offering to atone for the sins of the world (cf. John 1:29; 1 John 2:2).

By one righteous act on the cross, the incarnate Messiah "condemned sin in human flesh" (Rom 8:3). Likewise, the believers' "old self" (6:6) was crucified with the Son. "Old self" refers to everything people were before trusting in Jesus for salvation, when they were still enslaved to sin (cf. 3:9), were ungodly (cf. 5:6), and were God's enemies (cf. 5:10). In short, the old self is our state before being born again. The crucifixion of our pre-conversion, unregenerate self is the basis for sin losing its power in our lives and for our post-conversion, regenerate self being enlivened and empowered by the Spirit.

When people trust in the Son, a miraculous exchange occurs. Their guilty status as condemned sinners is transferred to the Messiah on the cross and His perfect righteousness is transferred to them. Through this exchange, the requirements of the law are met in full. Jesus' righteousness operating in believers enables them to live consistently according to the Spirit of God, rather than according to the sinful nature (8:4). Additionally, the Saviour makes it possible for the moral law of God to become a part the innermost being of believing sinners and for its ethical injunctions and principles to affect their thoughts, emotions and decisions (Ladd 1997:553-554; cf. Jer 31:31-34).

These truths have sobering implications. To be specific, those who trust in the Son and operate in the power of the Spirit are declared righteous. Also, they live in such a way that they fully satisfy the requirements of the moral law. In contrast, those who reject the Messiah and operate in the "old way of the written code" (Rom 7:6)—that is, the letter of the Old Testament law—remain eternally condemned sinners (9:30-32). Their unregenerate status will never change as long as they insist on trying to get right with God by scrupulously keeping the law or assert that maintaining their covenant status as God's people depends on them performing a never-ending catalog of meritorious works (Thielman 1993:532, 538; VanDrunen 2006:9-11, 45). The fundamental truth of the gospel is that people receive God's imputed righteousness through faith in the Messiah, not earn it by doing what is commanded in the Mosaic legal code (Schreiner 1993c:975, 978; cf. Acts 15:11; Rom 3:28; 10:3; Gal 2:16).

Recent critical scholarship has largely abandoned the "traditional Reformation understanding" of the doctrine of justification by faith taught in Paul's writings (Hafemann 1993:671). Indeed, despite the "plethora of new proposals" that specialists have offered, "no consensus has yet emerged" (Hafemann 1993:673; cf. Gager 2000:146; Thielman 1994:45-47). For instance, one current paradigm known as the "new perspective" on Paul (or NPP) is not a "unified, homogenous group", but rather a "spectrum of viewpoints" (VanDrunen 2006:36; cf. Chancey 2006:21; Farnell 2005:201-202; Waters 2004:151). Admittedly, supporters of the NPP are right in disapproving any caricature of rabbinicism prevalent during the Second Temple period of Judaism (approximately 515 B.C.-A.D. 70; cf. Chancey 2006:20; Gieschen 2004:121, 144; Lichtenberger 2001:7, 22). Moreover, adherents are correct in emphasizing the importance of carefully analyzing primary sources written during that time, especially to obtain a clearer, more accurate understanding of the New Testament corpus, including the Pauline epistles (cf. Bird 2005:63-64, 68-69; Mattison 2006; Mitchell 1996).

Such affirmations notwithstanding, the major tenets of the NPP are undermined by an objective analysis of the biblical and extra-biblical data. According to Carson (2001:544), the NPP tries to adopt a single, tidy explanation for a diverse array of extra-biblical literature, with the result that the formulation is both "reductionistic" and "misleading" (cf. O'Brien

2004:253). Kim (2002:294-295) notes that the NPP sociological and philosophical reconstruction of Second Temple Judaism has attained the "status of a dogma" that "insists on interpreting Paul" only through the distorted lens of that credo. Others have observed that the NPP contradicts far more accurate and nuanced interpretations of the apostle's theology found in conservative, confessional forms of Protestantism (cf. Busenitz 2005:258-259; Farnell 2005:203, 243; Riddlebarger 1996; Trueman 2000; Venema 2003; Waters 2004:151, 191-198; Watson 2001).

VanDrunen (2006:54) advances the discussion with the observation that those favoring the "new perspective" put too much "interpretive weight" on the literature found in first-century Judaism (Diaspora, Palestinian, and Qumran writings) and too little on the Judeo-Christian Scriptures (especially the broader historical and theological perspective found in them). They redefine "righteousness" as living in covenant relationship with God and remaining faithful to His covenant promises, over against the more traditional understanding of conforming to God's perfect "moral standard". "Works of the law" is said to refer to "boundary markers identifying Israel as God's covenant people" (in particular, being circumcised, keeping the Sabbath, and observing dietary regulations), not attempts to create one's own upright status before God by doing what the Mosaic law demands. "Justification" refers to the vindication of God's covenant people before the pagan nations, not His unconditional pardoning and acceptance of believing sinners. The basis for justification is shifted from the "finished work" of the Lord Jesus at Calvary to the "Spirit-produced works of the believer". Finally, NPP adherents reject the notion that the sin of the first Adam has been imputed to humanity and that the righteousness of the second (eschatological) Adam has been imputed to believers (cf. Bird 2005:58-63; Das 2001:5, 273; Gaffin 2002; Gieschen 2004:121-122; Horton 2004; Hughes 2005:275; Johnson 2004; O'Brien 2004:295-296; Seifrid 2006:19-28; Thomas 2005:315-316; Waters 2004:151-190; Westerholm 2006:16-25).

Romans 10:4 explains that the Saviour is the *telos* (literally, "end") of the law for all who trust in Him. One implication is that He is the terminus of "using the law to establish one's own righteousness" (Schreiner 1993b:121, 135; cf. Das 2003:93). There are two other interpretive options worth mentioning in connection with this verse. The first is that Jesus somehow brings about the

cessation or abolition of the Mosaic law, either historically, existentially, or both (cf. Adeyemi 2006:133-136, 206; Kruse 1996:226-229; Martin 2001:133-134, 141, 154; Pate 2000:248-249; Räisänen 1986:54-56, 82, 199-200; Sanders 1983:38-40; Strickland 1993:266-270). While it is true that the Messiah's death and resurrection put an end to the civil and ceremonial aspects of the law (a point made in the third section of this essay), its universal moral absolutes remain authoritative and applicable for His followers. Also, as I explained in the fifth section of this paper, it is incorrect to suppose that Jesus sought to annul, repeal, or do away with the Mosaic legal code. Accordingly, a second interpretive option is preferred, namely, that *telos* points to Jesus being the culmination (that is, the destination, goal, outcome, and fulfillment) of the law (Badenas 1985:114-115, 117-118, 143, 151; Bandstra 1964:101-106, 183; Bolton 1978:61; Das 2001:249-251; Fairbairn 1957:443-444; Gager 2000:134-135; Guthrie 1981:694; Henry 1957:180; Kaiser 1993:188; Meyer 2004:86, 89, 92; Moo 1993:358-359; Moo 2004:214-215; Morris 1990:62; Motyer 1996:38, 182; Rhyne 1981:103-104, 113-114, 118; Rhyne 1985:492-493, 498-499; Sloyan 1978:171; Thielman 1994:207-208; Wenham 1995:228; Wright 1991:24-244; cf. Matt 5:17). The implication is that all its types and prophecies are realized in Him, its teachings find their most perfect expression in Him, and its demands are most fully satisfied in Him (cf. Gal 3:24).

The ongoing relevance of the ethical and social aspects of the Mosaic law for believers is evident in Romans 13:8-10, where Paul stressed that Christians are duty bound to show love to all people (v. 8). This reflects Jesus' teaching in Matthew 22:34-40. He said the greatest commandment is to love God unconditionally and to love others as we love ourselves. There are always opportunities for believers to help others in need (Gal 6:10) and thus "fulfill the law of Christ" (v. 2). The latter phrase refers to "the moral norms" of the Old Testament legal code (Schreiner 1993a:542, 544; cf. Bandstra 1964:111-114; Das 2003:171-173; Ridderbos 1975:284-285; Sprinkle 2006:21; contra Adeyemi 2006:108-119), especially as interpreted by the Saviour (Kim 2002:267; Stanton 2001:115-116; Stanton 2004:113, 116, 122). To refuse to assist the disadvantaged would be a denial of God's love for us (cf. 1 John 3:16-18). We must pay the debt of love even to those who do not love us. For

this, we must rely on the Spirit for the strength to be kind to the mean and coldhearted (cf. Gal 5:22).

To love others unconditionally fulfills the moral requirements of the law of Moses (Gal 5:14). Romans 13:9 lists four of the ten commandments that appear in Exodus 20:1-17 (cf. Deut 5:6-21), and these four all concern relationships with other people. The Lord forbids His people from committing adultery, murdering, stealing, and coveting the possessions of others. Paul could have mentioned numerous additional injunctions. This was unnecessary, however, for the command in Leviticus 19:18 sums up every conceivable law: "Love your neighbor as yourself". This directive acknowledges a self-evident truth, namely, that we instinctively love ourselves. When we make every effort to treat others with the sensitivity and compassion of the Messiah, we do what is prescribed in the moral law. In fact, love is the essence of God's universal ethical absolutes (Rom 13:10).

8. The Messiah as the Realization of the Law's Types, Prophecies, and Expectations (Heb 1:1-4; 8:8-8, 13)

The Book of Hebrews occupies a distinctive place among the New Testament writings for its emphasis on the superiority of the Messiah to leading figures and institutions existing during the Old Testament era. The epistle teaches that because of who Jesus is and what He has done, He is the realization of the law's types, prophecies, and expectations. This truth harmonizes with what has been said up to this point concerning the Saviour's relationship to the Mosaic legal code.

Hebrews 1:1 declares that during the era of the Old Testament, God spoke redemptively to His people through His prophets on a number of occasions. The Lord did so in various portions and in a variety of ways (for example, through visions, dreams, and riddles). The idea is that His revelation was fragmentary and partial, though fully inspired and authoritative. Prophets used a variety of means to convey God's message to people, including oral, dramatic, and written forms. Prophets did not spend all of their time predicting the future. Much of their efforts went into observing what was taking place around them and declaring God's message concerning those situations. The

prophets were not speaking on their own behalf or for their personal benefit. Rather, they were God's messengers, whom He authorized to convey vital truths to others.

The basis for God choosing to reveal Himself in progressive stages rests on the fact that He works with us according to the level of our understanding. At first, He revealed Himself only in shadows and symbols; but as people came to know more about Him and the way He works, He became more explicit in His dealings and disclosures. It is important to acknowledge these ancient revelations for what they taught people about God, while simultaneously noting that they pointed to a time when God would reveal Himself more fully and finally in "his Son" (v. 2).

The candid statements appearing in verse 1 were not meant to diminish the value of God's revelation through the Hebrew prophets. The fact that He considered them the transmitters of divine truth is evidence of just how much respect He held for these faithful servants of the Lord; but the same God who had partially revealed Himself in times past, now had disclosed Himself totally and ultimately in His Son. With the advent of the Messiah, everything is centered in Him. Expressed differently, He is the meta-narrative of life, whether temporal or eternal in nature. He in turn gives full and final expression to all that was previously revealed (cf. Luke 24:44), and He does so in a way that is focused, clear, and relevant.

"In these last days" (Heb 1:2) would carry a special significance for the first readers of the epistle, who probably interpreted the phrase to mean that Jesus, as the Saviour, had ushered in the messianic age. He is not merely the end of a long line of Old Testament prophets, but more importantly the one for whom the Hebrews had waited for centuries. He is the complete and distinct revelation of God. Even with the coming of the Saviour, the inspired nature of God's communication has not changed. The messages He conveyed through the prophets to the community of faith were graced by His power and love; and this remains true now that the Son has unveiled the Father to us. In fact, what the Messiah has disclosed is in harmony with all that appears in the Old Testament, for what the prophets foretold finds its realization in the Messiah (cf. Rom 1:2; 3:21).

Having pointed out Jesus' distinction as the Son of God, the author of Hebrews proceeded to explain ways in which God's revelation through the Saviour is better than all other revelations of the Lord. To show this superiority, the writer made a number of statements describing the Son. First, the Father appointed His Son as "heir of all things" (1:2). In Hebrew culture, the firstborn son was the highest ranked of all children. Therefore, he was also the family heir. Jesus is the heir, owner, and Lord of God's creation. Second, it is through the Son that the Father "made the universe". The Greek term rendered "universe" refers to the temporal ages and includes the spatial realm, which exists in those time periods. Before time and matter were created, the Messiah eternally preexisted.

Third, the Son is the "radiance" (v. 3) of the triune God's glory. This does not mean Jesus is merely a reflection of the Lord's majesty. The Messiah is God Himself, for the glory of God is His radiance. In Jesus' incarnation, He unveiled to humankind the majesty of the divine. Fourth, the Son is the "exact representation" of the triune God's being. The Greek word behind this translation originally referred to the die used in minting coins. The term later came to refer to the impression on coins. The writer of Hebrews was saying that who Jesus is corresponds exactly to that of the Godhead. Thus, He alone is the precise image of God's essence. While the Son is one with the Father and the Spirit in terms of their being, there remains a distinction of the divine persons of the Trinity. Fifth, not only did the Son create the universe, but He also holds it together by His powerful word. Through His sustaining royal decree, He prevents the cosmos from destruction. Clearly, the Son has a continued interest in the world and loves it. Thus, He is carrying it toward the fulfillment of His divine plan.

Sixth, at the heart of the divine plan and revelation to humankind is making redemption available for the lost. This is why the Son died to wash us from the stain of our sins. The Greek noun for "purged" is *katharismos,* from which we derive the term *catharsis*, meaning a purging that brings about spiritual renewal. The idea is that through His atoning sacrifice at Calvary, Jesus accomplished cleansing for humanity's transgressions. The writer expressed his thoughts in the past tense to underscore that the Messiah's redemptive work on our behalf has already been accomplished. Seventh, because Jesus completed the task for which He was sent, He was granted the place of highest

honor—to sit at God's right hand in a posture of rest (as opposed to endlessly ministering in a standing position; cf. 10:11). The Lord Jesus did once and for all what the Hebrew priests were required to do on a regular basis. Now, as our great High Priest, the Messiah continually applies to us the purification for sins He obtained at the cross. This enables us to worship in God's presence.

For the various reasons given by the writer of Hebrews, the Son is to be considered superior to everything else. This includes the angels (1:5-2:18), Moses (3:1-4:13), the office of the Aaronic priests (4:14-7:28), and the sacrifices the priests offered (8:1-10:18). In short, the Messiah is the realization of all the types, prophecies, and expectations connected with the Mosaic legal code.

Of particular relevance is the discussion appearing Hebrews 8 concerning the interrelationship between the old and new covenants (cf. Lioy 2006). Verses 1-5 indicate that because Jesus' ministry is heavenly and unlimited, it is superior to that of the Levitical priests. The Saviour, as the mediator between God and humanity (1 Tim 2:5), has inaugurated a new and better covenant than the old one based on the Mosaic law. The new covenant is superior, precisely because it is "established on better promises" (Heb 8:6). The writer of Hebrews argued that if the first covenant had sufficiently met the needs of people and had adequately provided for their salvation, then there would have been no need for a new covenant to replace it (v. 7). But the old covenant was insufficient and inadequate in bringing people to God, and therefore a new covenant had to be established.

The nexus of the shortfall was not the covenant in and of itself, but those living under it. God had found fault with the Israelites, primarily because they did not continue in that covenant (v. 8). While God initiated the old covenant with His people, they also willingly agreed to it (cf. Josh 24). Thus, the covenant was a mutual obligation between God and the people. Nonetheless, the people often failed to live up to their part of the obligation (cf. Neh 9; Dan 9:1-19). As a result, human failure rendered the old covenant inoperative (cf. Rom 7:7-25).

The establishment of a new covenant naturally implies that the old covenant—especially its "ceremonies and rituals" (Kaiser 1993:186)—is obsolete, needs

to be replaced, and will eventually disappear from the scene altogether (Heb 8:13). It would be incorrect to conclude from the preceding remarks that the writer of Hebrews disparaged or maligned the old covenant, or that he indicated the abrogation of the moral law associated with it (cf. Fanning 1994a:401-403; Rhee 2001:144). The contrast is not between an evil system (namely, the old covenant) and a good system (namely, the new covenant), but between what is good and what is better. According to Jones (1994:110), the way in which the administrative and liturgical aspects of the Sinaitic covenant were "rendered nonbinding is by redemptive accomplishment rather than legislative repeal". Furthermore, as Ladd (1997:630) notes, "all that the old order symbolized was fulfilled in the reality of Christ" (cf. Murray 1957:150-151; Portalatín 2006:58-60).

9. The Abiding Relevance of the Moral Law for Christians (Jas 1:19-20, 22-27; 2:8-27)

The implications of the moral law, especially its abiding relevance for believers, receives considerable attention in the Letter of James. Of particular importance is the biblical concept of righteousness, which is first mentioned in 1:20. In verse 19, James exhorted his readers to be slow to get angry. Human anger is a volatile emotion that can easily get out of control, especially in tense situations. When inappropriate forms of anger erupt, whether toward evildoers or unwanted circumstances, it does not accomplish God's "righteousness" (v. 20). This means the aftermath of human anger falls short of God's righteous moral standard, does not reflect the upright standing He gives believers in the Messiah, does not result in any of the good things God wants done, and is contrary to the equity and justice He will establish in His future eternal kingdom. In short, human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires, regardless of its form.

For many Christians, the concept of righteousness might seem too abstract to understand. This difficulty is decreased as they grow in their appreciation of what it means to live in a holy, or morally pure, manner. People are considered righteous when their personal behaviors are in harmony with God's will as it is revealed in Scripture. The righteous person voluntarily serves the Lord (Mal 3:18), takes delight in Him (Ps 33:1), and gives thanks to Him for His mercy

and love (140:13). The righteous are blessed by God (5:12) and upheld by Him (37:17). The righteous may experience hardships and trials in life, but God promises to help them through the difficulty (34:19).

No matter how severe the believers' afflictions might be, the Lord will never forsake them (37:25) or allow them to fall (55:22). The prospect for the righteous is joy (Prov 10:28) and the way of the Lord is their strength, or refuge (v. 29). The Lord promises to be with them in their darkest moments (11:8) and to be a refuge for them in death (14:32). In summary, James was urging his readers to leave whatever sinful path they might have been on, and to follow the path of uprightness. Otherwise, they would be sinning by refusing to do what they knew to be "good" (Jas 4:17). Here we see that sins of omission (neglecting to do what is right) are just as inappropriate as sins of commission (opting to do what is wrong).

James told his readers that passively listening to God's Word was not enough to promote spiritual growth. It was just as important for them to obediently act upon what it says (1:22). To hear what the moral law declares without implementing its teachings is nothing but self-deception. Those who hear but do not heed God's Word are like people who observe what they look like in a mirror, walk away, and quickly forget the image they saw (vv. 23-24). James exhorted his readers to look carefully into and fix their attention on the "perfect law that gives freedom" (v. 25). They were to live out, not forget, what the law of liberty taught. The sustained and thoughtful study of God's universal ethical precepts would bring them true liberty, spiritual vitality, and abundant blessing in whatever they undertook.

"Religion" (v. 26) is another important biblical concept in James, especially in terms of the abiding relevance of the moral law for Christians. The Greek word translated "religious" denotes the practice of external rituals and observances of a spiritual tradition, such as attendance at worship, prayer, fasting, and giving to the poor. Merely doing these things does not in itself constitute true religion. Those who are genuinely pious demonstrate their faith by controlling what they say. On the other hand, failure to bridle the tongue betrays the self-deception in those who regard themselves as religious and exposes a form of spirituality that has no eternal value.

Verse 27 shifts the focus from outward observances to service for others, particularly "orphans and widows". In Scripture, widows, orphans, and aliens are usually depicted as the most helpless among people. Often, they had none but God as their patron and protector (cf. Exod 22:22-23; Deut 10:18; Isa 1:17). Moreover, in Bible times, there was no social safety net to catch the dispossessed and homeless when their source of support was suddenly gone. Widows, orphans, and foreigners were frequently reduced to begging, especially if there was no friend, relative, or benefactor to care for them (cf. Gen 38:11; Ruth 1:8).

James 1:27 reflects this biblical perspective by focusing attention on orphans and widows who live in a state of distress. The writer maintained that clean and undefiled religion is demonstrated, not just in rituals and observances, but also in the upright conduct and righteous character associated with God's moral law. Examples of this type of behavior include caring for those in anguish and keeping oneself clean in a morally polluted world. The writer's intention in this passage was not to give a formal definition of religion. Rather, his aim was to draw a contrast between religion as mere ritualistic observance and faith in action that pleases God. Religion that demonstrates genuine spirituality and Christian maturity is an active faith motivated by love.

A similar emphasis can be found in 2:8, in which the writer focused on the directive recorded Leviticus 19:18. It is the supreme commandment in terms of defining how people should treat one another. This dictum is also royal, for among all the commandments given by God (who is the sovereign King of the universe), it sums up the entirety of the "moral norms" contained in the Old Testament legal code (Schreiner 1997:645). James 2:8 builds on this truth by stressing that the royal law will become the guiding principle in the future messianic kingdom. The author observed that believers are doing well when they love others as much as they love themselves. The point is that they cannot heed the most important directive in Scripture and discriminate against others at the same time (cf. vv. 1-7).

As this essay on the nature of the moral law has maintained, both testaments of Scripture are one unified expression, given by one Lawgiver. This means believers cannot make exceptions or subtract the ethical injunctions of God they dislike. Against the backdrop of His infinitely perfect moral standard

(Rom 3:23), the person who observes every divine law except for one, is still liable for violating them all (Jas 2:10; cf. VanDrunen 2006:5-6). The sobering reality is that everyone fails to heed the whole law (Rom 3:9-18), which is why people must depend on the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus in order to be saved (v. 24).

James set up a clear contrast between treating others the way we would like to be treated and showing favoritism toward somebody for any reason (Jas 2:9). Doing the first pleases God, while doing the second is sin. Accordingly, failing to observe the royal law—the most liberating, relationship-building command God ever gave—makes one a lawbreaker. Perhaps James thought that some among his readers would look upon showing favoritism as more a social convention than as sin. How, they might ask, could such a custom compare to sins like adultery and murder (v. 11)? The answer James provided is clear and direct. If we transgress any part of the moral law, we are guilty of breaking all of it (v. 10).

To better understand this concept, imagine a balloon with all the commands of God written upon it. Next, imagine trying to cut out one of the commands with a razor blade without affecting the others. James used the weighty sins of adultery and murder to explain that selective obedience to the provisions of God's universal ethical code was absurd. The author would scoff at the popular notion that certain iniquities do not affect our relationship with God because they are less serious than others.

The author seems to have associated obedience to the moral law with fellowship with God, the one who gave the law. From this perspective, heeding the precepts of God's abiding ethical absolutes is a display of faith and springs from love. Disobedience to the moral law, on the other hand, is a breach of faith that disrupts fellowship with God, the Lawgiver. In James 2:12, the author placed an equally strong emphasis on talking and acting as if one is going to be judged by the liberating law of God. There is also an emphasis in the original language to make this behavior a matter of habit. Because of the wise counsel contained in God's perfect moral law, James could say that it gives spiritual freedom (cf. 1:25)—but only if it is respected and obeyed. Disobedience results in bondage and restricted living (cf. John 8:34).

According to James 2:13, the believer who has been merciful will be shown mercy when his or her character flaws and weaknesses are exposed on the final day. In contrast, those who have shown little mercy to others will receive little themselves. Furthermore, the believer who has demonstrated mercy to others will have nothing to fear at the time of divine assessment, for the mercy shown to him or her will triumph over that judgment (cf. 1 John 4:17). As Jesus' followers strive to become more merciful, there is hope. The liberating power of the Son working within them makes it possible for them to obey God's moral law more fully and completely.

James 2:14-27 spotlights the relationship of faith to good works. For some, these verses seem difficult to reconcile with Paul's teaching concerning justification by faith (cf. Laato 2006:213-215); but an objective and balanced study of the New Testament indicates the two men were in agreement and that James was possibly "responding to a misunderstood Pauline teaching" (Davids 1993:458; cf. Guthrie 1981:598-599; Ladd 1997:639; Marshall 2004:692-693; Sloyan 1978:112). Both writers would affirm that saving faith is a voluntary change in a sinner's mind that results in a turning to God with a corresponding turning away from sin. It includes a transformation of one's view, feeling, and purpose in life. An exercise of faith involves the whole person—the mind, emotions, and will—and eventually one's behavior. With the mind one believes in God's existence and in the teaching of Scripture; emotions are connected to personal faith in the Son as the only one who can redeem from sin; and with the will one surrenders to the Messiah and trusts Him as Lord and Saviour. The natural consequence of saving faith is a lifestyle that actively promotes and demonstrates righteousness through the doing of good works (McGrath 1993:522; Morris 1990:314; cf. Eph 2:8-9; Titus 2:11-14).

James used two rhetorical questions to begin his discussion about the nature of genuine, saving faith. To paraphrase, those questions were: (1) What good is faith that is not accompanied by righteous deeds? and (2) How can a faith that is devoid of good works save anybody (Jas 2:14)? The author's point was that faith resulting in eternal life will naturally manifest itself in virtuous acts. The construction of the second question in the Greek shows that "No" was the expected answer. There is no contradiction here with Paul's teaching that salvation cannot be attained through works (cf. Rom 3:28). James was simply saying that true faith will manifest itself in a life of active obedience to God's

moral law. The author's rebuke is directed toward a spurious kind of "faith" that is merely an intellectual assent, not a life-changing trust in the Messiah. Because this kind of "faith" is void of good works, it is worthless. Expressed differently, belief without action is dead on arrival (Jas 2:16-17).

Verse 18 anticipates an imaginary objector declaring, "You have faith; I have deeds". The idea is that there are two equally valid types of faith—one that simply believes and another that acts on that belief. James challenged the idea that genuine, saving faith has no effect on the way a person acts. In short, trusting in the Messiah is authenticated by doing kind deeds to others. Next, the author commented on the presumed value of merely believing in the existence of God by noting that such by itself does not result in eternal life. After all, even the demons are monotheists, for they affirm that there is only one God and it causes them to tremble with fear (v. 19; cf. Deut 6:4; Mark 12:29). The obvious conclusion is that "faith without deeds is useless", for dead orthodoxy is barren of eternal fruit (v. 20).

To reinforce his point, James presented illustrations from the lives of two prominent Old Testament characters—the patriarch Abraham and the prostitute Rahab. James introduced each example by means of a question with which his readers were expected to give full and hearty agreement. In the case of Abraham, when he was about 85, he believed God's promise concerning a son to be born through Sarah (Gen 15:5). Verse 6 indicates that the patriarch considered the Lord's pledge as being reliable and dependable. Indeed, the patriarch was confident that God was fully capable of bringing about what He had promised. Consequently, Abraham's faith was "credited … to him as righteousness". Expressed differently, the Lord considered the patriarch's response of faith as proof of his genuine commitment and evidence of his steadfast loyalty. Paul referred to this verse in Romans 4:3 to stress that an upright standing before God comes through faith, not by means of obedience to the law (cf. Gal 3:6). As Abraham's life illustrated, God forgives the believing sinner on the basis of Jesus' atoning sacrifice (Rom 3:25-26).

Years later, when Abraham was about 116, he submitted to God's test to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:1-19). This was an act of faith on the part of the patriarch (Heb 11:17-19) in which he demonstrated that he feared God (Gen 22:12). This meant Abraham followed the Lord in absolute obedience. James

2:21 explains that the patriarch's willingness to sacrifice his son, Isaac, proved that his faith was genuine and that he existed in a right relationship with God. It was not the deed that justified Abraham; rather, he showed himself to be justified through the saving faith that was manifested in his virtuous deed. Verse 22 says that the patriarch's faith and actions worked together, with his actions making his faith complete.

James 2:23 and Romans 4:3 both quote Genesis 15:6 when referring to Abraham's justification. Paul maintained that God counted the patriarch to be righteous because of his faith. James stressed a related truth, namely, that Abraham vindicated the reality of his previously-existing faith and his upright status before God by obeying the Lord (Fanning 1994b:429). The patriarch showed by his actions that he genuinely was God's friend (cf. 2 Chr 20:7). This indicates that Abraham so pleased God by his life that the Lord showered the patriarch with His favor in a distinctive way.

A superficial reading of James 2:24 seems to teach that people are justified by what they do and not by faith alone. Moreover, some have been confused by the author's concept of justification here and how it relates to Paul's teaching on the subject (cf. Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16; 3:11); but a careful examination of Scripture indicates there is no contradiction. For Paul, "justification" means to declare a sinner not guilty before the Father by means of faith in the Son and His death in the sinner's place. Because the Messiah died for sin, the repentant sinner can enjoy a standing of righteousness before God. In James, the concept of "justification" is taken one step further to include the validation of one's faith in the sight of God and others. Expressed differently, the upright status of believers with God is vindicated by the way they choose to live.

Rahab the prostitute is the second example James put forward of genuine, saving faith. Joshua 2:1-21 records the episode in which Rahab hid the Israelite spies and sent them safely away by a different road. Like Abraham, Rahab was shown to be righteous when her trust in God prompted her to act in a way that met with His approval (Jas 2:25). He was pleased with Rahab's virtuous deed because she operated in faith (cf. Heb 11:6, 31). James 2:26 reveals that the connection between genuine, saving faith and godly deeds is as close as that between body and spirit. When the spirit is separated from the body, the latter dies (cf. Eccl 12:7). Likewise, faith that is barren of any fruit is

just as dead. Oppositely, living faith manifests itself in good works advocated by God's moral law.

It is worth noting that John also insisted on the inseparable connection between genuine faith and righteous deeds. He wrote that loving God meant keeping His commands (1 John 5:3). The idea is that love for God has less to do with emotions than with an across-the-board compliance with His universal ethical absolutes. Likewise, our love for other believers is not just something we talk about. It is also demonstrated by truly helping those in need (cf. 3:18). Regrettably, when people who are not Christians think about God's demands, they equate them with regulations like those of the scribes and Pharisees, something that was truly irksome and overwhelming (5:3). The new birth, however, changes the perspective of believers and gives them strength through the Spirit to live in accordance with God's moral law. As Jesus Himself declared, His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matt 11:30).

10. Conclusion

This essay has examined the nature of the moral law from a Christ-centered perspective and done so in a canonical and integrative manner. The discussion began by considering the biblical concept of the law. From the vantage point of the Old Testament, morality concerned how people of faith should live. Similarly, the New Testament regarded ethical instruction as being concerned with a way of life that is characterized by righteousness and blessing. The Mosaic legal code dealt with civil, ceremonial, and ethical issues, of which the administrative and ritual aspects are no longer binding on Christians. In contrast, the universal ethical absolutes of God's law remain authoritative and applicable for Jesus' followers. Two interrelated purposes of His moral law are helping people recognize their sin and see their need for a Redeemer.

This essay maintains that the Lord Jesus always remained subject to the law and sought to fulfill it. He did the latter by carrying out its ethical injunctions, showing forth its true spiritual meaning, and bringing all that it stood for prophetically to completion. He also endeavored to dismantle incorrect views about the law, such as the erroneous interpretations put forward by the religious elite of His day. Jesus particularly took issue with the works-based

form of righteousness they promulgated, especially its insistence on people earning their salvation by strictly following the law.

As the atoning sacrifice for humankind, the Messiah satisfied the demands of the law completely and for all time. Accordingly, those who trust in Him for eternal life are freed from the condemnation of the law. The natural consequence of saving faith is a lifestyle that actively promotes and demonstrates righteousness through the doing of good works. In short, the Holy Spirit empowers believers to do what the moral law enjoins.

The implication is that God wants believers to abide by His universal ethical absolutes, not ignore, disregard, or minimize them. The sustained and thoughtful study of the moral law brings them true liberty, spiritual vitality, and abundant blessing in whatever they undertake. Through their new life in the Son and the enabling presence of the Spirit, all that the moral law advocates influences the believers' thoughts, emotions, and decisions. The foremost way this is demonstrated is by showing unconditional, Christlike love to others.

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Christian-Muslim Engagement:

Obstacles and Opportunities

by

Anna-Marie Lockard[1]

Abstract

Issues of religious diversity and interfaith understanding take centre stage in today's post-modern global society. Since September 11 (911), the church's mission to engage the Muslim community has been met with both obstacles and opportunities. The quintessential of global Christian witness is to have a pellucid grasp of the dangers and opportunities for Christian-Muslim witness. Basic principles of encounter must be relational rather than confrontative. Contextualisation must be viewed as both an opportunity and a challenge. Seeking a common witness can pose theological concerns for those who seek interfaith understanding among Muslims.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to integrate three missiological topics that hold high interest for me, namely, current opportunities for Christian-Muslim encounters, the challenges of Christian witness in contextualising the gospel among Islamic groups, and the caveats in examining a common witness to Muslims.

According to Stan Guthrie (2002), September 11 (911) has only intensified the dangers and rewards of Muslim evangelism. Guthrie graphically illustrates his assertion by citing the following example of a recent Muslim convert to Christianity:

> Samuel (not his real name) watched the Jesus film and listened to Christian radio on July 15, 2001. For an Afghan Muslim, Samuel took a very dangerous but courageous step when he accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior. Soon the Taliban came for him and he was thrown into jail for being guilty of working for foreigners. For the next fourteen days, they beat him at least once a day with a five-foot steel cable. After the last of these brutal sessions, he fell unconscious in his prison cell.
>
> That night Samuel had a dream in which a man wearing bright white clothes appeared and spoke to him in a kind voice: "Get up." When Samuel awoke he found his prison cell door open and unguarded. He walked out the front gate of the prison and into the night to safety.

Clearly, the risks of Muslim-Christian encounters are high for both the Muslim convert and the ministry worker. Yet, the leading of the Holy Spirit has opened doors of opportunity on a global scale and the time is now for the church to respond.

2. Opportunities

Following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the USA, the church found itself with fresh momentum in engaging the world's 1.2 billion Muslims in

Christian witness. However, due to the harassment and persecution of Muslims in the West, particularly, many Muslims are fearful and suspicious of Christians. This rift provides the church the wonderful opportunity to seek to build loving relationships by modelling Jesus as the Christ of God. When the church seeks to meet human needs and foster loving relationships, it will espouse what Muslims already believe.[2]

> When Christians show holistic concern, verbal witness about Jesus will be credible and will create a reconciling atmosphere for witness (Gilliland 1997:11).

Gilliland (1997:12) cites long deceased Bishop Gairdner of Cairo, who posits that "the church has the responsibility to be a body of patient and loving people among Muslims." Gairdner viewed the church as God's people who act on behalf of Jesus.

Additionally, according to Dudley Woodberry, professor of Islamic studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, the church has entered a new era of opportunity with an increased level of responsiveness among the Muslim global communities.

For example, countries that face political instability and natural disasters appear to be particularly ripe for Christian witness, especially when Christians combine practical relief and development ministries with their witness. For example, over the last forty years, Christian growth rates have been double the population growth rate in Bangladesh. In 2000, the rate of increase for Christians was 3.2 percent per annum, versus 1.8 percent for Muslims (see Guthrie 2002). Similarly, in Indonesia, the Christian minority has reached 34 million since the mid 1960s, when government reprisals left one-half million communists and sympathisers dead. Churches on the heavily Muslim island of Java have grown by five percent annually since 1982—despite persecution, political upheaval and economic decline.

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[2] For more insights on the Western-Christian/Muslim relations and tensions since September 11, see: Al-Massiah, Ubaid (2004).

According to the Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity, September 11 appears to have had two effects on Muslims worldwide: some have become more radical while others are seeing their religion in a new light and are seeking alternatives. Most Christian workers among Muslims attest that the opportunities for Christian-Muslim engagement has reached the apex of opportunity. For example, in all of North Africa (except Libya) there has been a significant increase in receptivity to the gospel. Guthrie (2002) posits that in the past it took nearly five years of Christian witness to a North African to produce one solid conversion. Today, however, following exposure to Christian media and the Jesus film, often we see Muslim converts within weeks.

Opportunities have risen for Christian-Muslim engagement in Algeria, where forty years ago there were only about 1,200 believers. Today it is estimated that there are more than 12,000 believers. Growth continues and the opportunities are reaching unprecedented levels (see Guthrie 2002).

3. Challenges: Progress and Problems

Reaching Muslims has always been a challenging mission task. In 1900, there were fewer than 200 million Muslims among the world's 1.6 billion people (12%). Today, there are 1.2 billion Muslims (19%) among a global population of 6.2 billion (Guthrie 2002).

Guthrie (2002) contends that Islam is the most studied and least evangelised religion. Reportedly, only six percent of Christian workers are focused on Muslims. Although signs of a breakthrough are clearly visible, the risks are real: mentioning specifics of how evangelism works can be risky because it inevitably gets back to the Arabic newspapers. The Islamic penalty for "apostasy" is death.

3.1 The Challenge of Contextualisation

The greatest success in engaging Muslims for Christian witness comes through contextualisation. Western ideas of what it means to follow Christ have been ineffective. Translation of Scripture into local languages,

worshipping Christ using their own forms of music, presenting the Bible chronologically and orally as a story, the use of acceptable religious language (Allah for God or other Islamic terms) and keeping cultural forms (e.g., the Muslim fast) have all been proven to draw many Muslims to Christ (see Guthrie 2002).

Highly contextual approaches, however, can raise theological concerns. For example, some Christian workers have permitted Muslim converts to Christianity to worship in the mosque and call themselves Muslims. A research study led by Dr. Gilliland (1997) of Fuller Theological Seminary confirmed these caveats when he evaluated a contextualised group in a Creative Access Area of the world.[3] Two-thirds of the leaders said the Quran was the greatest holy book. Forty-five percent of "converts" to Christianity did not affirm the Triune Godhead. Thirty-three percent went to the mosque more than once a day.[4]

Therefore, the theological challenge of contextualisation still remains: how do we carry out the mission of the church (*missio Dei)* and live out the great commandment in a world of cultural diversity? In what ways do we implement a gospel that is truly Christian in content and culturally significant in form? Missiologists (e.g., Woodberry 2002; Bevans and Schroeder 2004) posit that missiological cues must be taken from the incarnation; just as Jesus emptied Himself and lived among us, we too must be ready to do the same as we enter another culture. Additionally, cross-cultural workers must recognise that the Holy Spirit has been at work long before they arrive.

3.2 Insurmountable Obstacles and Common Ground

The one seemingly insurmountable obstacle in Christian-Muslim engagement is that both faiths posit the claim to be God's final message of salvation and

[3] The term "Creative Access Area" is a missiological term used to protect the identity of cross-cultural Christian workers in areas of the world that oppose proselytising.

[4] For additional insights on contextualisation, see Racey (1996), Parshall (1998 and 2005), Johnson and Scoggins (2005).

eternal bliss for the world. Although the Quran calls for tolerance and respect for Christians, Muslims generally condemn Christians as polytheists.

Ayoub (2004) posits that of all the dialogues between Christians and Muslims, there appears to be only one common ground: that of the Abrahamic roots of both faiths. Others have argued that while Christians have come to accept Muslims as people of faith, but do not accept Islam as an authentic post-Christian religious tradition, Muslims have accepted Christianity as a revealed faith, yet have not accepted the Christian's faith in the triune God or the church as a source of guidance or the books of the New Testament as authentic Scriptures According to Ayoub (2004), the main obstacle to true Christian-Muslim dialogue is their unwillingness to truly admit that God's love and providence extend equally to all human beings. What is needed is a dialogue of faith.

A dialogue of faith, according to Ayoub, espouses the ideas and methods on a deeper more personal level—its aim is to deepen the faith of both Muslim and Christian by sharing the personal faith of the other.

> The ultimate purpose of this dialogue is to create a fellowship of faith among followers of Islam and Christianity. This goal may be achieved by sharing one's faith with the other through worship, spiritual exercises and the existential struggle in God (Ayoub 2006:7).[5]

4. Conclusion

This paper sought to discuss three integrated topics for missiological reflection: basic principles of Muslim-Christian encounter with regards to the challenges of contextualisation in seeking a common witness among Islamic groups. As cross-cultural workers, our tendency to engage in superficial contextualisation can cause us to overlook critical Biblical and foundational issues such as: *Who is Jesus?* More than forty years ago, missiologist Kramer

[5] For additional readings on Muslim-Christian dialogues, see Chandler 2003) and Wakely (2004).

(1960) wisely affirmed the primacy of offering Christ to Muslims: "It is not Christianity that Muslims need to see. It is Jesus."

In order to present and model Christ effectively, our perspective and focus must first be to remember that it is the Holy Spirit who witnesses to all the truth claims of Jesus as the one holy Son of God. Scripture attests to this truth:

> But, when the counselor comes who I shall send to you from the Father, even the spirit of truth…. He will bear witness to me (John 15:26, RSV).

> This is He who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ…. And the Spirit is the witness because the Spirit is the Truth (1 John 5:6-7, RSV).

As issues of religious diversity and interfaith dialogue take centre stage in today's postmodern world, let us neither forget nor minimize the quintessential elements of the true gospel of Jesus Christ when engaging our Muslim brothers in Christian witness.

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The Structure of Titus

Criss-cross Chiasmus as Structural Marker

by

Kevin Gary Smith[24]

Abstract

In terms of structure, Titus is one of the most neatly crafted epistles in the New Testament, its key structural marker has gone largely unnoticed in scholarly literature. In this article, I set forth a proposal that criss-cross chiasmus provides the structural skeleton around which the letter is built. I point out three occurrences of this technique in the letter and illustrate how it might be used as the primary organising principle of the letter's macrostructure.

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1. Introduction

Until recently, almost nothing had been written about the structure of Titus. I find this surprising, for it may well be the most delicately structured of all Paul's letters. Three recent works (Clark 2002, Van Neste 2002 and 2004) have tackled the structure of Titus by analysing the discourse features of the letter.

Despite the undoubted contribution that both Clark (2002) and Van Neste (2002 and 2004) have made to our understanding of the discourse features of Titus, neither of their proposals as to the macrostructure of Titus seems to give sufficient consideration to a key structural technique used in the letter—a form of criss-cross chiasmus.

In this article, I shall set forth a proposal that criss-cross chiasmus provides the structural skeleton around which the letter is built. I shall point out three occurrences of this technique in the letter and illustrate how it *might* be used as the primary organising principle of the letter's macrostructure. In the next article, I shall analyse the linguistic clues within the letter that corroborate the contention that the author deliberately use criss-cross chiasm to organise this letter.

2. Review of Scholarship

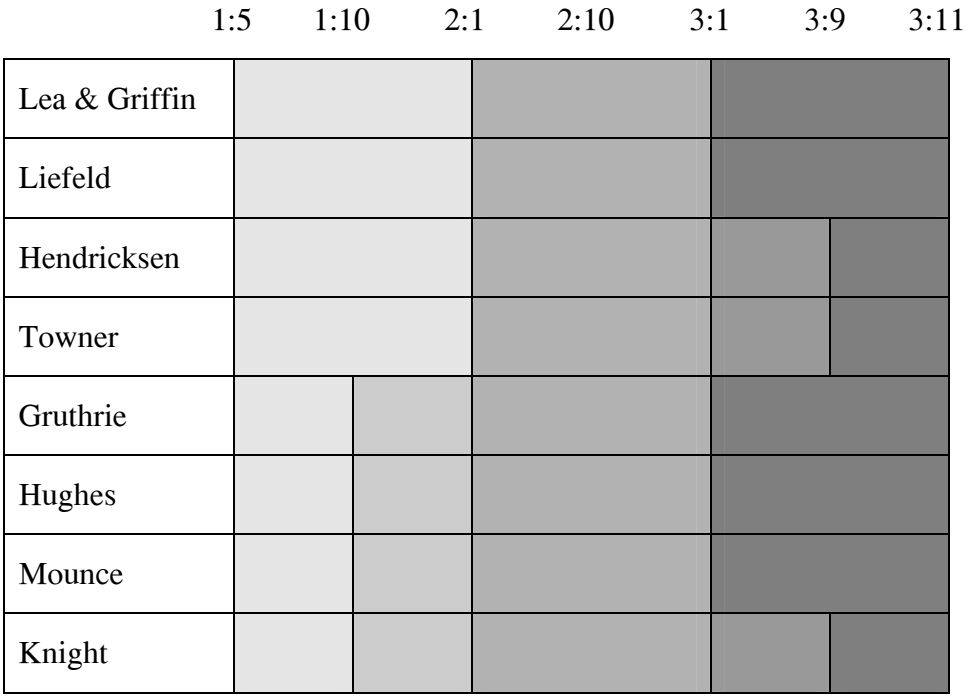
2.1 The Traditional View

Few commentaries grapple in a meaningful way with the structure of Titus. The overwhelming majority accept the traditional view of the letter's structure. The traditional view holds that the body of the letter, Titus 1:5-3:11, consists of three sections:

1:5-16	Establishing leadership in the churches
2:1-15	Household code for various groups
3:1-11	Christian behavioural standards

With minor variations, the major commentaries accept this breakdown of the structure. However, since they make little effort to grapple with the discourse features of the letter or to analyse markers of cohesion and shift, it seems their understanding of the structure is more taken for granted than well thought through. Diagram 1 summarises the structural divisions in commentaries.

Diagram 1: How commentators outline Titus



All forms of the traditional view take Titus 2:1 and 3:1 as major section boundaries. The diagram reveals minor variations within the traditional view. Liefeld (1999) and Lea & Griffin (2001) support the traditional view without alteration. All eight commentaries agree that Titus 2:1-15 is an independent major section of the letter. Four commentators divide Titus 1:5-16 into two sections, one dealing with elders' qualifications (1:5-9) and another dealing with their responsibilities (1:10-16). Likewise, four commentaries divide Titus 3:1-11 into two sections, one giving instructions for all believers (3:1-8) and another providing instructions regarding false teachers (3:9-11).

2.2 The Linguistic Views

Since discourse analysis rose to prominence in Biblical studies, scholars have used discourse features and patterns to identify the structure of Bible books. Three important structural studies of Titus have been conducted: Banker (1987 and 1994), Clark (2002) and Van Neste (2002 and 2004).

Banker (1987 and 1994) employed the method known as *semantic and structural analysis* (see Beekman, Callow and Kopesec 1981). The method consists of dividing the letter into semantic units by identifying the boundaries and markers of coherence, then analysing the semantic relationships between the units. When the semantic relationships are identified, the structure of the letter emerges naturally.

Banker's analysis showed that "the structural organisation of the body of the epistle is basically chiastic" (1994:27). He noted that in 1:5 and 1:9, the epistle introduces the two main topics to be addressed in the following sections. It then proceeds to discuss them in reverse order. This creates a chiastic pattern with four constituents, an A-B-B-A pattern. By using this approach, he saw the macro-structure of Titus 1:5-3:8 as follows:

A.	Appoint elders	1:5-9
B.	Establish order	1:10-3:8
1.		Correct false teachers 1:10-16
2.		Teach sound doctrine 2:1-3:8

Banker's identification of how Titus 1:5 and 1:9 signpost the chiastic structure of the letter was a big step forward. It challenged the prevailing assumption that Titus 2:1 marked a major structural break within the letter.

Van Nest (2002 and 2004) set out to demonstrate the cohesion of Titus by means of cohesion and shift analysis. First he sought to delimit the boundaries

of each paragraph by analysing discourse markers of continuity and discontinuity. He used such factors as "literary form (or subgenre), topic, subject, participants, verb tense, person, and number, as well as temporal and local frames of reference" (2004:9) to demonstrate the internal cohesion of each paragraph. Next, he analysed the linguistic and thematic links between paragraphs to demonstrate the cohesion of the entire letter. He concluded with a proposal as to the macrostructure of the letter. His proposed macrostructure is chiastic.

A.	Body opening	1:5-9
	B.	Opponents 1:10-16
	C.	Doctrine 2:1-15
	C.	Doctrine 3:1-8
	B.	Opponents 3:9-11
A.	Body closing	3:12-14

The body opening (Titus 1:5-9) introduces "the need for elders to (a) exhort in sound doctrine and (b) refute opponents" (Van Neste 2003). The body itself develops these two themes in a chiastic arrangement. Van Neste's analysis of the markers of coherence and shift is thorough, building on the foundation laid by Banker.

Clark (2002; cf. Keating 2003) too analysed the discourse features of Titus, but produced a vastly different synthesis the letter's macrostructure from those

suggested by Banker and Van Neste. Clark argued that the key structural marker lies in a paragraph pattern consisting of a hortatory paragraph in the foreground followed by an explanatory paragraph in the background. The explanations are introduced by the conjunction γάρ; their main verbs are in the indicative mood. The main verbs in the hortatory paragraphs are in the imperative mood. After an explanatory paragraph (marked by γάρ), the introduction of an imperative verb marks a shift to a new main section. Applying this method, the sections of Titus should be as follows:

Section A: 1:5-1:13a	hortatory subsection:	1:5-9
	explanatory subsection:	1:10-13a
Section B: 1:13b-2:15	hortatory subsections:	1:13b-2:10
	explanatory subsection:	2:11-15
Section C: 3:1-8	hortatory subsection:	3:1-2
	explanatory subsection:	3:3-8
Section D: 3:9-11	hortatory subsections:	3:9a, 10
	explanatory subsections:	3:9b, 11

The pattern is not completely consistent. The hortatory subsection of Section A does not contain any imperative verbs, but the list of qualifications for elders is directive in tone. Section B has three hortatory paragraphs, each governed by an imperative—ἔλεγχε governs 1:13b-16, λάλει 2:1-5 and παρακάλει 2:6-10. In Titus 2:1, λάλει, coupled with σὺ δέ, marks a new major section, so the hortatory subsection 1:13b-16 does not contain its own explanatory paragraph. Finally, the explanatory note in 3:11 is introduced by the causal participle εἰδὼς instead of by the conjunction γάρ.

3. The Macrostructure of Titus

The contention of this article is that, leaving aside the opening greetings (1:1-4) and the closing remarks (3:12-15), the author signposts the structural divisions of the body of the letter by using a rare form of chiasmus that I shall call criss-cross chiasmus. The device has two parts: (a) *announcement of purpose* and (b) *reverse development*. The announcement of purpose introduces two topics to be developed in the following section. These topics are then developed in reverse order, with greater emphasis on the second. Banker (1994) and Van Neste (2004) both picked up on this pattern, but in my

view neither pursued it far enough as the key to the macrostructure of the letter. There are two and a half instances of this technique in Titus.

The first announcement of purpose occurs in Titus 1:5, a verse that introduces not only Paul's purpose for leaving Titus in Crete, but also his purpose and agenda in writing the letter to Titus.

5a For this reason I left you in Crete,

5b that you would set in order what remains

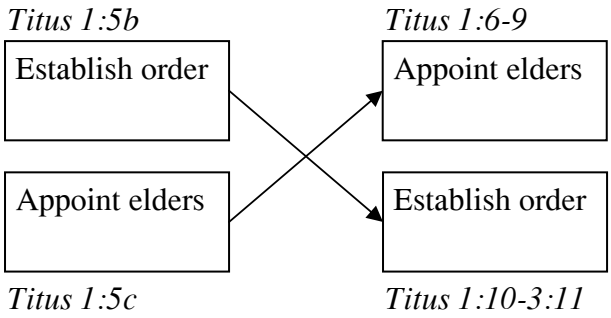
5c and appoint elders in every city

The two purpose clauses introduce the letter's agenda. They also serve to identify its major structural division, for the remainder of the letter addresses these two topics in reverse order. The opening announcement divides the letter into two unequal parts.

A^1	Establish order		1:5b
		B^1	Appoint elders 1:5c
		B^2	Appointing elders 1:6-9
A^2	Establishing order		1:10-3:11

This criss-cross chiasmus is easier to visualise if it is diagrammed. Diagram 2 shows the pattern.

Diagram 2: Criss-cross chiasmus of Titus 1:5-3:11



The label "establish order" is not very descriptive. The instruction itself (τὰ λείποντα ἐπιδιορθώσῃ) refers to finishing a work previously begun (Smith 2000). Paul and Titus began a task while they were both in Crete; Paul commissioned Titus to complete it. The remainder of the letter indicates that the task in question was establishing the church in sound doctrine and warding off the threat of false teachers.

Several commentators (e.g., Hendriksen 1957; Lea and Griffin 2001) treat 1:5b-c as one command, deeming καί ("and") to be epexegetical. They would translate it as "that you may set in order what remains, namely, appoint elders in every city". However, Banker (1994) is surely correct that καί is copulative. The two clauses indicate separate tasks. Several arguments converge in support of this interpretation. Firstly, the bulk of the letter deals with other matters, while appointing elders occupies only four verses. Secondly, appointing elders was probably not a task already begun; thus it would not fall under "what remains" (τὰ λείποντα). Finally, the book is structured chiastically (Banker 1994; Smith 2000; Van Neste 2004). The author introduces two topics, then proceeds to discuss the second topic first, later returning to the first topic. This implies that 1:5c and 1:5d are separate topics that are developed in 1:6-9 and 1:10-3:11 respectively. Admittedly, in the context of this paper the third point represents a circular argument. Nevertheless, it seems best to regard "set in order what remains" and "appoint elders in every city" as separate tasks.

The second announcement occurs in Titus 1:9. In the mould of a gifted orator, the conclusion to the first main section (Titus 1:6-9) serves as a natural bridge to the next main section (Titus 1:10-3:11).

9b so that he will be able

9c both to exhort (*parakalein*) in sound doctrine

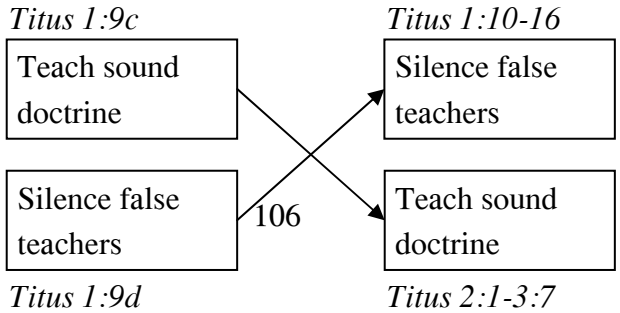
9d and to refute (*elegchein*) those who contradict

Titus 1:9 concludes the list of qualifications for elders by stating two purposes for which an elder must be well grounded in sound doctrine. These two purpose clauses not only lay down a job description for elders, but also set the agenda for the remainder of the letter. The switch from the third person, the potential elder, in 1:6-9 to the second person, Titus himself, in 1:10-3:11 does not break the link because Titus was then serving as an interim elder. Paul called upon him to model the role of an elder by performing the two tasks required of elders—teaching sound doctrine and silencing false teachers.

Just as Titus 1:5 divided the entire body of the letter into two unequal sections, which the author treated in reverse order, so Titus 1:9 divides the remainder of the letter's body into two unequal subsections. Once again, the two topics are treated in reverse order, yielding the following structural arrangement.

C^1	Teach sound doctrine	1:9c
	D^1 Silence false teachers	1:9d
	D^2 Silencing false teachers	1:10-16
C^2	Teaching sound doctrine	2:1-3:7

Diagram 3 illustrates the criss-cross pattern of the announcement of purpose



and its reverse order development.

Diagram 3: Criss-cross chiasmus in Titus 1:9-3:11

Whereas normal chiasmus emphasises the central elements, this technique gives greatest natural prominence to the peripheral items. Two things signal the natural prominence of the items: (1) in the announcement, the item mentioned first is most emphasised; (2) in the exposition, the item receiving the greater amount of space is most emphasised.

Thus Titus 1:5 divides the main body of the letter into two sections, (1) establishing order and (2) appointing elders. The main focus is on establishing order. This is evident from the fact that 88 percent of the body of the letter is devoted to establishing order and only 12 percent to appointing elders.[25] Similarly, the section of the letter that deals with establishing order is divided into two subsections by the announcement in Titus 1:9. The two subsections are (1) teaching sound doctrine and (2) silencing false teachers. The focus is on teaching sound doctrine, as indicated by the fact that 70 percent of the section is devoted to it while only 30 percent deals with silencing false teachers.

The third and final occurrence of the criss-cross pattern sheds light on the structure of Titus 3, particularly the role of Titus 3:8-11 in the argument of the epistle. Hendriksen (1957), Hiebert (1978), Knight (1992), Clark (2002), Van Neste (2002 and 2004) and several leading translations, including the NIV and the NKJV, divide Titus 3 as if 3:3-8 and 3:9-11 are paragraph divisions. This division creates two major problems. First, it awkwardly groups the asyndetic 3:8 with the preceding paragraph. Second, and more important, it leaves 3:9-11 dangling disjointedly at the end of the letter, as if the author unexpectedly and inexplicably returned to the topic of 1:10-16.

The better division is to group 3:3-7 and 3:8-11 (or 3:3-8a and 3:8b-11) as paragraphs. Guthrie (1957), Dibelius and Conzelman (1972), Fee (1988) and

[25] These figures are calculated on a simple verse count. The body of the letter contains 38 verses, of which 33 are devoted to establishing order, 4 to appointing elders and 1 is introductory.

Quinn (1990) all support this division, as do CEV, NET, NRSV, NA27 and UBS4.[26] However, only Banker (1994) explicitly draws attention to the chiastic patterning of the epistle as the rationale for this division.

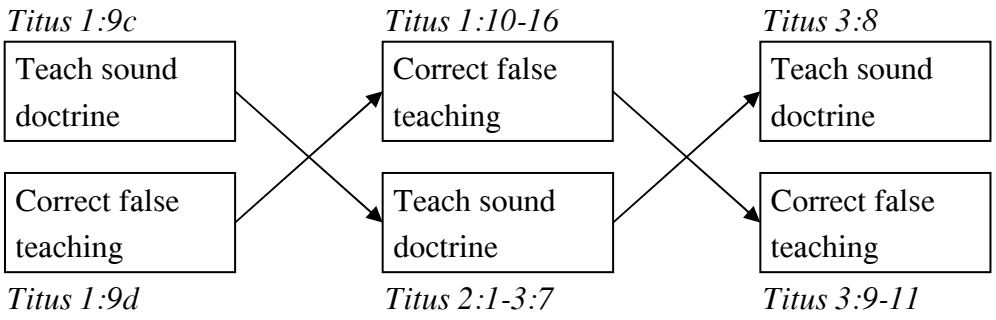
In the argument of the epistle, Titus 3:8-11 functions as the conclusion to the main division of the letter dealing with establishing order (1:10-3:11). Just as the relationship between the introduction and the body is chiastic, so too is the relationship between the body and the conclusion.

C^1	Teach sound doctrine	1:9c	
D^1	Silence false teachers	1:9d	*Introduction*
D^2	Silencing false teachers	1:10-16	
C^2	Teaching sound doctrine	2:1-3:7	*Body*
C^3	Teach sound doctrine	3:8	*Conclusion*
D^3	Silence false teachers	3:9-11	

The criss-cross pattern of the letter conclusively swings the decision in favour of treating 3:8-11 as a separate section. In the argument of the letter, this section serves as the conclusion to the main section on establishing order (1:10-3:11). Diagram 4 illustrates the extended criss-cross patterning.

Diagram 4: Criss-cross chiasmus of Titus 3:8-11

[26] Opinions differ as to whether πιστός ὁ λόγος ("this is a faithful saying") belongs with 3:3-7 or with 3:8b-11. I have previously stated my reasons for believing it belongs with 3:8b-11 (see Smith 2000). For the purposes of this structural analysis, it matters little whether one groups it with what precedes or with what follows.



4. Summary and Conclusion

I propose that a criss-cross arrangement of announcements of purpose followed by reverse-order development provides the basic structural framework for Titus. The first announcement of purpose (1:5) divides the letter into two unequal sections, a small section dealing with appointing elders and a large section on establishing order. The second announcement (1:9), divides the large section into two unequal subsections, a short one about silencing false teachers and a longer one on teaching sound doctrine. Finally, an asyndetic paragraph concludes the argument of the section on establishing order with concluding instructions on each subdivision.

On the basis of the preceding observations, I propose that a linear outline of Titus should reflect the following structural framework.

A.	Introduction	1:1-4
B.	Appoint elders	1:5-9
C.	Establish order	1:10-3:11
1.	Silence false teachers	1:10-16
2.	Teach sound doctrine	2:1-3:7
3.	Conclusion	3:8-11
	a. Teach sound doctrine	3:8
	b. Silence false teachers	3:9-11
D.	Conclusion	3:12-15

If my contention is correct that criss-cross chiasmus provides the primary structural framework of the letter, then the traditional view of its structure, which treats Titus 2:1-15 as an independent major section, becomes untenable. It would also argue against Clark's (2002) view that alternating genres (hortatory and explanatory) provide the clue to the letter's structure. It confirms, with minor adjustments, the structural analyses of Banker (1994) and Van Neste (2002).

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A review of the *Africa Bible Commentary*

by

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Adeyemo, Tokunboh (general editor) 2006. *Africa Bible Commentary.* Nairobi: Word Alive Publishers.

My qualifications for reviewing this commentary are two decades in full time pastoral church leadership and a decade of academic research and teaching. Right up front, however, let me describe the limitations of this review. Firstly, I have not read all 1,585 pages of this one-volume commentary on the whole Bible. Instead, I have focused on the first three chapters of Genesis, the first 15 chapters of Exodus, Malachi, John, Acts, First Corinthians, and Revelation. I have not read all of the 78 articles but I have attempted to follow key threads through them. The second limitation is my own cultural background and education. I was born in South Africa, have lived here my whole life and my ancestors go back to the 1820 settlers. However, my cultural upbringing was decidedly Western in orientation. My education too was heavily influenced by European thought patterns and traditions. The commentary I have been asked to review has been produced almost exclusively by black Africans whose roots go back not to the 1820 English settlers but to the migratory tribes of the African continent. Compared to them I lack understanding of many of the

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cultural nuances and heart attitudes implicit in much of the work I am reviewing.

In the vision statement it says, "The general aim of the commentary is to make the word of God speak relevantly to African realities today." The African Bible Commentary (ABC) has certainly fulfilled this aspect of the vision. The various commentaries within the ABC include references to African traditions and cultural idiosyncrasies as well as aspects of modern application within the current African reality. In addition to this, the majority of the articles cover issues ranging from "Christian Education in Africa" to "HIV and AIDS" and "Initiation Rites". I found most of the articles I read informative and I have no doubt that they will be of benefit to Christian pastors and teachers throughout Africa.

The quality and depth of the various commentaries differ fairly substantially. For instance, I found the commentary on the first fifteen chapters of Exodus excellent. The author's comments are very informative. He uses several African sayings and makes many helpful applications of the text within the African context. He avoids liberationist themes as well as allegorical interpretations. The commentary on John's Gospel is also very good. The treatment of 1 Corinthians 14 is particularly good. The commentary on Malachi, however, is not as good. In Malachi 2:13-16 the author misses a key opportunity of dealing with the endemic problem of wife abuse. Also, in 3:8-9 the author essentially endorses the practice of tithing without commenting on other understandings and applications of the concept of Christian financial giving. I was disappointed with the commentary on Genesis 1-3. I found that it failed to introduce some important current theological issues such as the evolutionist versus creationist debate—this issue is skipped over with the words, "This account of the creation in six days (whether taken literally as twenty-four hour days or figuratively as representing long periods of time) reveals a methodical God who created different things one after another with precise purpose." Also, it does not give at least introductory pointers to the major treatments of key doctrines such as the Holy Trinity—all that the two authors write about this key doctrine is, "the plural 'let us' also suggests the community of the Godhead, which involves three persons—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (Barnabe Assohoto and Samuel Ngewa, 11). In addition, it deals inadequately with major current African issues such as stewardship of

the natural habitat and domination of women by men. The authors' comments on the issues they do address are rather moralistic and "preachy". A more serious problem for me is that the authors place the nature and impact of original sin primarily in the context of a breakdown in original community rather than rebellion against God. I was also surprised that the authors give no introduction to or Scriptural evaluation of the major African creation myths such as the Shilluk "an African story of the creation of man" and the Yoruba "the creation of the universe and life".

The ABC gives much valuable information on, and insight into, African traditions, customs and cultural peculiarities. In most of the commentaries I read, the authors have made a serious attempt to provide relevant and helpful insights and applications. There are however some disappointing exceptions. Citing the commentary on Genesis again, the authors make a number of contextual applications that I don't find helpful. For instance, with reference to God's creative words "let there be", they attempt an application to African context with, "If we listen to his word and submit our plans to his will, he can speak to raise Africa to new heights" (Barnabe Assohoto and Samuel Ngewa, 11). Generally true perhaps, but not specific enough to be either helpful or particularly contextual. Another attempt at making the commentary on Genesis relevant to Africans says, "We who are in the image of God should imitate his creation in what we create. Thus, for example, we should build a church in Africa that is a place of order, of diversity" (13). Again, this is generally applicable but neither particularly African nor within the context of the passage.

I would expect a one-volume commentary produced by so many scholars to contain a range of doctrinal understandings. I think the editor was correct in not enforcing strict compliance to one particular doctrinal or philosophical position. For instance, the commentary on Ephesians 1:4 appears to support typical Calvinist teaching (although the commentary on the next few verses appears to moderate or even negate this). It would have been helpful if the author had been required to present at least the essence of the major competing views. I found this to be a weakness in the ABC as a whole. Another example is 1 Corinthians 12 where the author gives a particular, and conservative, interpretation of what constitutes a Word of Wisdom and a Word of Knowledge, without exposing the reader to other major understandings of

these gifts. Much of the material I reviewed is essentially one-dimensional in that the authors present their views without introducing the other major viewpoints.

The greatest strengths of the ABC are its African character and its many excellent articles and commentaries. However, its Africanisation is also its most problematic area. Syncretism is a constant potential threat to the integrity of both the Bible and the church. Another allied challenge is the need to guard against interpreting the Bible from the current cultural context. The ABC does not demonstrate a consistent policy concerning these issues. In several instances, the authors come perilously close to the line between exegesis and eisegesis. Here are a few examples. In the article entitled "New Family Relationships", the author refers to sacrifices for protection but does not comment critically or evaluate in any way against the Biblical revelation. In the article on "Taboos" (Ernestina Afriyie, 159), the author states that "we should carefully examine taboos to see what they tell us about God and his self-revelation." The conservative evangelical approach would be to evaluate taboos against the Scriptural record rather than to accept them as a peculiar form of general revelation. The article entitled "The Role of the Ancestors" (Yusufu Turaki, 480) contains a number of potentially problematic statements, such as "… some African theologies have proposed that Jesus be presented as an African ancestor. This idea is not without merit, for Jesus is like the ancestors in that people can take their problems to him." The author then qualifies his statement by saying, "But there is a danger that making him an ancestor may be tantamount to reducing his post-resurrection elevation as Lord of lords". He then proposes that "the best approach may be … [to say] that Jesus has come to fulfil our African ancestral cult". This approach is fraught with difficulties and dangers. It assumes that most traditional African religions are both "of God" and generally similar to the religion of the ancient Hebrews. I do not believe that either of these assumptions can reasonably be supported from Scripture or from an analysis of many forms of traditional African religion. In the article "Yahweh and Other Gods" (Abel Ndjerareou, 861), the author makes a similar claim when he writes that "we can use the name of the Supreme Being of African peoples to refer to God." Could we equally argue that Allah is just another name for the God of the Old Testament, or that Krishna is just another name for Jesus? Counterbalancing

these tenuous contentions, I found the article "Syncretism" (Lawrence Lasisi, 900) to be well reasoned and helpful. Here the author argues for the legitimacy of "adapting any traditional elements that make one's faith more culturally relevant." He goes on to caution Evangelicals not to "allow their fear of syncretism to prevent them from contextualizing their faith to allow for meaningful local expression of it." Then he makes the all important observation that "such contextualization must be accompanied by a firm stand for the absolutes or cores of the gospel message. We need to be rigorous in guarding against any form of Christo-paganism, but there is nothing wrong theologically and missiologically with integrating culture and the gospel as long as the finality and supremacy of Jesus Christ alone as our Lord and Saviour is not sacrificed at the altar of multicultural and religious relativism." Well put indeed!

Just as the first commentary in the ABC is problematic, so is the first article, "Scripture as the Interpreter of Culture and Tradition" (Kwame Bediako, 3-4). This lead article contains a number of questionable statements. Contextualisation and enculturation are complex issues and perhaps a longer and deeper article would have more adequately presented the author's ideas. As it stands, however, I found the article contentious and potentially misleading. For instance, "Africans have a strong sense of their pre-Christian religious journey and should be alive to this participation in Scripture" assumes acceptance, as I have previously noted, that most traditional African religions are godly and that African history parallels, or even equates to, Biblical history. Certainly several traditional beliefs and practices appear to belie the contention that in general African traditional religion should be regarded as holy. The author also states that "[w]e should not focus on extracting principles from the Bible and applying these to culture." In my opinion, that is exactly what we should be doing. Our culture certainly influences the way we read doctrine, but the general direction of interpretation should be from Scripture to culture and not from culture to Scripture. The commentator later writes, "If people recognize that Onyankopon (as God is called by the Akan of Ghana), the God they have known from time immemorial, is their Saviour". Here a traditional African god is presented as the God of Scripture and a manifestation of Jesus! In my view, the author has stepped well over a crucial contextual line here.

The ABC is a valuable contribution to the body of commentaries available and has a unique range of Africanised comments and applications. However, parts of it need to be read with discretion. Most of it is excellent, but some commentaries and articles are questionable. Whilst it provides valuable background and African contextual material, it tends to lack adequate introductory treatment of several key issues and doctrines. A careful re-editing could greatly improve this work and provide a second edition purged of dubious comments and enhanced by the inclusion of a fuller range of introductions to doctrines and key societal issues. The commentary will most likely continue through several reprints and we should regard it as a work in progress. It constitutes a major undertaking and the editor has done a remarkable job of bringing great diversity generally within sound Scriptural parameters. With suitable attention to its tendency towards theological one-dimensionality and its attempts to justify traditional African religions rather than evaluate them against the Biblical record, the ABC should evolve into an even more worthy one-volume African commentary of the Bible.