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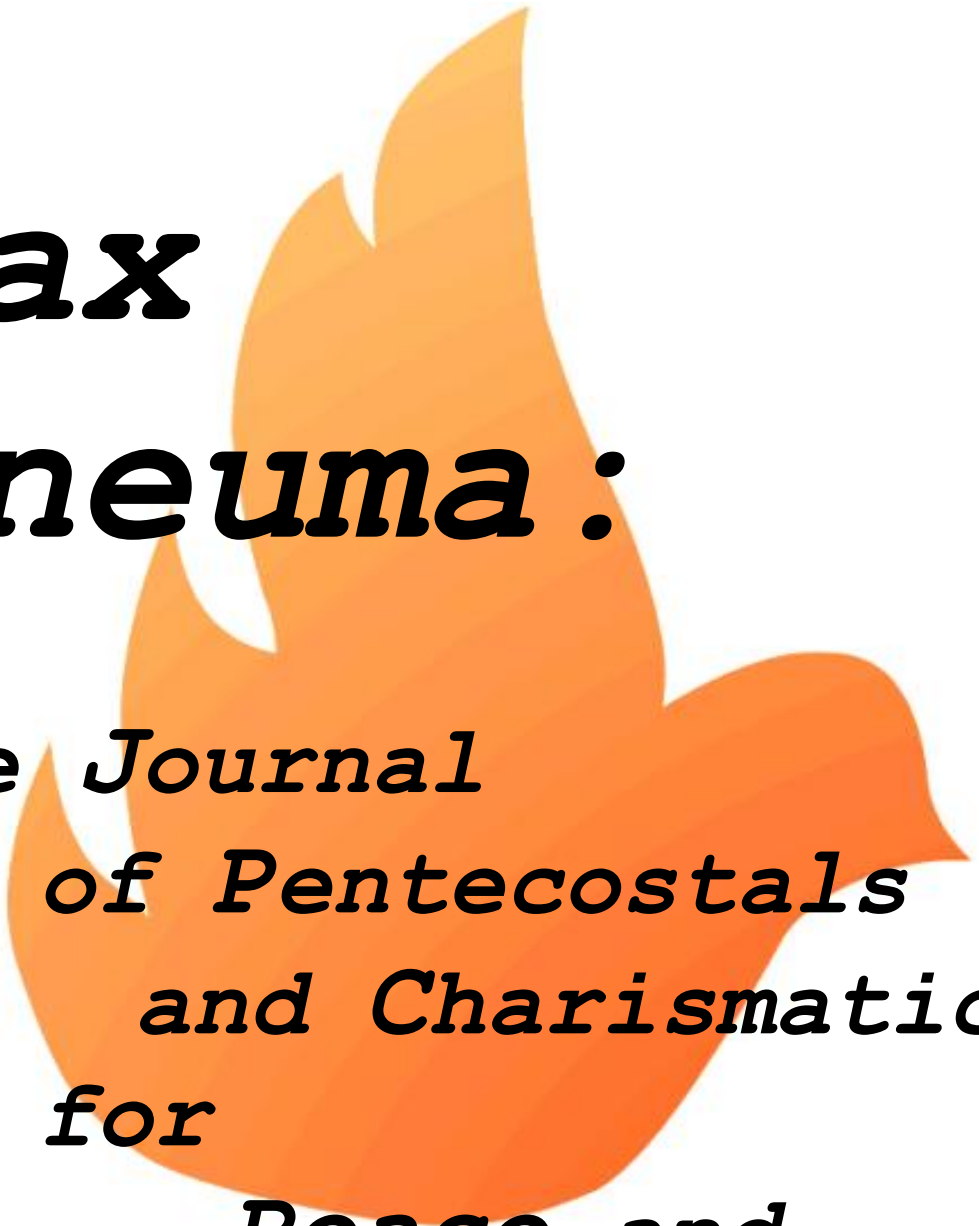

The Journal of Pentecostals and Charismatics for Peace and Justice

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PCPJ MISSION STATEMENT

To encourage, enable, and sustain peacemaking and justice seeking as authentic and integral aspects of Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity, witnessing to the conviction that Jesus Christ is relevant to all tensions, crises, and brokenness in the world. The PCPJ seeks to show that addressing injustice and making peace as Jesus and his followers did is theologically sound, biblically commanded, and realistically possible.

Editorial Board

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COGIC Endorses Human Rights in The Hague

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Bishop Charles E. Blake, presiding bishop of the Church of God in Christ, was one of ten world religious leaders invited to sign the Faith in Human Rights statement on December 10th 2008, the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the Peace Palace, The Hague, the Netherlands, in the presence of Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands. Bishop Blake passionately supported the statement and sent an emissary and personal video greeting and endorsement that was viewed by the high-ranking religious leaders representing the world religions and spiritual traditions. Bishop Blake's ambassador, Rev. Dr. David Hall, an active member of PCPJ and pastor of Mason Temple COGIC in Memphis, TN, signed the Faith in Human Rightshttp://english.faithinhumanrights.org/ statement for Bishop Blake in The Hague. Many Pentecostals around the world have long worked for justice and affirmed peace, but this marks an historic moment as the largest American Pentecostal denomination joined with other Christians and other faiths to affirm together the importance of human rights.

The representatives jointly pronounced and confirmed symbolically for all spiritual traditions that religion supports the human rights and fundamental freedom of every human being.

The International Inter-religious Conference *Faith in Human Rights*

On last year's International Human Rights Day - 10 December 2008 - all over the world the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was commemorated. The United Nations' General Assembly adopted this revolutionary document on the 10th of December 1948. An International Inter-religious Conference **Faith in Human Rights** took place in The Peace Palace in The Hague, The Netherlands on the 9th and 10th of December 2008.

At the International Inter-religious Conference on the 10th December 2008 ten invited supreme authorities of the different world religions signed a **Statement Faith in Human Rights**. They did so in the presence of a large gathering of national and international dignitaries and human rights activists including several Ministers, high level UN officials and Nobel Peace Prize laureates.

The Purpose of the Conference

More than ever, in this world threatened by racial, economic and religious divide, a strong moral voice against violence and injustice is needed. With their signature to the Statement the supreme representatives of the world's largest religious communities jointly pronounce and confirm that true religion defends the human rights and fundamental freedoms of every human person.

They thus symbolically declare to their own communities and the world at large that, in their moral guidance, they are committed to strengthen human rights and fundamental freedoms. Thereby they counter accusations that religion causes violations of human rights;

The Statement Faith in Human Rights may thus initiate a widening process of joint religious responsibility and commitment to uphold human rights.

This may stimulate human rights awareness within religious communities and can serve as a basis for further debate on common principles and practices. It may also inspire believers to be engaged to promote human dignity and human rights.

Faith in Human Rights Statement

(i) Preamble

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 2008, we, representatives of various world religions, are gathered at the Peace Palace, seat of the International Court of Justice, in The Hague, The Netherlands, to pronounce and confirm that our religions recognise and support the human rights and fundamental freedoms of every human person, alone or in community with others.

It must be acknowledged that sadly enough religion sometimes is being misused in a way which violates human rights. But now, while representing different faith traditions, we come together in unity to stress that religion has been a primary source of inspiration for human rights as our sacred writings and teachings clearly show:

"Someone who saves a person's life is equal to someone who saves the life of all." (Qu'ran 5:32);

"A single person was created in the world, to teach that if anyone causes a single person to perish, he has destroyed the entire world; and if anyone saves a single soul, he has saved the entire world" (Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5);

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself" (Luke 10:27);
"Let us stand together, make statements collectively and may our thoughts be one" (Rigveda 10:191:2);

"Just as I protect myself from unpleasant things however small, in the same way I should act towards others with a compassionate and caring mind" (Shantideva, A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life);

"Let us put our minds together to see what life we can make for our children" (Chief Sitting Bull, Lakota).

We recognise our responsibility towards our believers and to the world at large and reaffirm our intention to take all necessary steps both within our communities and in co-operation with others to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms for each and every person, irrespective of religion or belief.

Therefore, we solemnly state to take to our heart the following achievements, challenges and commitments:

(ii) I Human Rights: Achievements

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights celebrates the dignity of the human person, irrespective of religion, race, sex or other distinctions. As such it helps realise our shared vision of a religiously and culturally diverse world community striving together to promote and defend the rights and dignity of all. The Declaration has stimulated and inspired a new standard setting and good practice at national and international levels. We wish to emphasize the importance of two of its principles: that every person enjoys the freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and that no one should be discriminated against on the basis of religion or belief.

2. States bear the primary responsibility to promote and protect human rights. However, we wish to underline that everyone has duties to the wider communities of which they form a part and only in which the free and full development of one's personality is possible. It is therefore important to make all people aware, through information and education, of their human rights and also of the common responsibility to make human rights a reality. In this regard we commend the valuable contribution of many religious and civil society organisations.

(iii) II Human Rights: Challenges

3. We express our deep concern that despite all achievements, the enjoyment of human rights in today's world remains a distant reality for many. Human rights violations cause innocent people to die or to be seriously harmed resulting in untold suffering, loss and hardship. More than ever, in this world threatened by racial, economic and religious divisions, we need to defend and proclaim the universal principles of dignity, equality, freedom, justice, and peace, which are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Challenges to the acceptance of human rights and fundamental freedoms

4. The rights, freedoms and obligations laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are recognised all over the world. Nevertheless, they are not fully accepted everywhere. We observe tensions with regard to a number of specific rights, such as the freedom of religion or belief, the principle of equality and the prohibition of torture. We wish to state clearly that the Declaration should not be regarded as a 'pick-and-choose' list. There is an urgent need for a thorough reflection on the integral acceptance of each right.

Challenges to the interpretation of human rights and fundamental freedoms

5. Human rights are open to a variety of interpretations. The argument of cultural relativity of human rights is at times used to justify grave violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We therefore recall the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on Human Rights, wherein all States of the world agreed that "all human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated. (..) While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind,

it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms." This implies that a continued dialogue is necessary among government representatives, religious communities, indigenous peoples and independent experts based on a dynamic interpretation of human rights.

Challenges to the implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms

6. Peace and security are essential conditions for the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Whilst States are entrusted to guarantee the peace and security of their societies and their citizens, this should not lead to curtailing basic human rights. We denounce the development of security measures and means that endanger human life rather than protect it, for example the tremendous worldwide expenditures on weapons. This life-threatening devastating power makes it imperative to look for peaceful means of resolving tensions.

7. The prevalence of violence within the international and national communities remains a source of serious concern and impedes the realisation of human rights. We call on all concerned to pursue all peaceful means of redress and to refrain from a misuse of violence. In addition, we wish to highlight the problem of structural violence within society and of domestic violence in particular. It is of utmost importance to counter this and to save by so doing the lives of the most vulnerable among us.

8. We note with serious concern the increase of intolerance in matters relating to religion or belief, of cases of incitement to religious hatred, overt or covert. While emphasising the importance of the freedom of expression, we deplore portrayals of objects of religious veneration which fail to be properly respectful of the sensibilities of believers. We consider the freedom to have, to retain and to adopt a religion or belief of one's personal choice, without coercion or inducement, to be an undeniable right. Furthermore, the freedom to manifest one's religion or belief in any form of worship, observance, practice and teaching may only be subject to carefully defined limitations consistent with generally accepted principles of international law.

9. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights demands meeting basic human needs. The abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty to which more than a billion people are currently subjected, must be decisively altered. The human destruction of the environment has to be stopped. The process of achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (eight targets that 189 countries have pledged to meet by 2015) represents a key indicator of the commitment of States to realise human rights for all.

(iv) III Commitments

10. Adherents of various faith traditions have striven to protect human dignity. Religion has to stand for peace, reconciliation, universal values, mutual respect and upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms. Our faith traditions have been and are capable of providing inspiration and guidance towards realising these aims. We wish to reiterate our commitment to respect all human rights for all, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

11. The contributions that may come from religious inspiration and from the structures of religion or belief towards a fuller implementation of human rights include the need to:

1. study carefully our holy scriptures and teachings and to explore the theological rationale in defence of human rights; provide responses where harm has been done in the name of religion and seek ways of forgiveness and reconciliation in order to foster mutual respect and understanding among our communities;
2. address major threats to the full realisation of human rights by fostering concepts of peace, security and development that advance the full realisation of the Millennium Development Goals and make our shared world a safe place to live;
3. listen to the suffering of individuals, families and communities and assist them to tell and visualize their stories so that empathy may lead to solidarity and action;
4. encourage religious communities to become further engaged with human rights issues, both within and outside their community, and stimulate interfaith co-operation with mutual respect.

(v) Conclusion

12. Humbled by the authority that is vested in the religions of the world and conscious of our shared responsibility to defend human rights, we fervently desire that this Statement will initiate a wider process, and will become a catalyst for transformation and change. In order to widen and deepen the support for human rights by religious communities we invite religious leaders around the world to endorse this Statement. We call upon believers everywhere to disseminate this Statement as widely as possible and act upon it.[1]

[1] To endorse this statement, view pictures, or read more about the participants and work please visit www.faithinhumanrights.org.

Pax Pneuma 5 (Spring 2009)

A Historic Moment for PCPJ Member, Dr. David Hall, and the wider Progressive Pentecostal Movement

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Regardless of a person's theological or political orientation, or how utopian one's worldview may be, there is a concerted and often unnoticed effort to undermine social democracy and freedom of religion, especially any religious expression that challenges concentrations of power. While power structures tend to hide behind the rhetoric of religious freedom and human rights, many dissident faith-based groups remain the target of violent resistance for straying from conventional thought and demanding a fair share of the economic pie.

Staying true to history, the gospel according to state-corporate power must be pacified or regulated to the life hereafter. Unfortunately, mainline Pentecostals have met this criteria and have had their most radical heritage (justice, economic equality, and nonviolence) excavated from their Christian experience.

The assault on human rights, trampled by multinational corporations that are currently privatizing social services, has violently assaulted any notions of human rights. Everything from healthcare, education, and public services are in the process of being run by private corporations, which are not, nor intended to be, democratic institutions. Their main goal, simply stated, is not to advance human rights, healthcare, and fair wages, but quite the contrary—to reduce pay and benefits in order to increase profits and thus accommodate their financial partners. The question is not what is best for the poor child down the street, the widow in the grocery store, or the neighbor who cannot afford health insurance, but rather, the question is, "What increases profits for tomorrow, for those that matter." The rejection of moral truisms (universality) is a fundamental doctrine of intellectual culture that is contrary to the elementary principles of the gospels and in direct conflict with the vision of human rights activists. The witnesses of progressive Pentecostals are "irritating" to the ears of concentrated power—religious and political.

To many, it seems that the few who control the world's resources are okay if Jesus remains the *source* of eternal life as long as he does not become the of *source* of concrete liberation. Groups that organize themselves around issues that deal with abuses of power and social democracy will often be met with violence and bitter hostility and subversion. Jesus, for instance, has a reputation of quickly becoming criminalized if any group envisions him as their inspiration and model of liberation. The gospel according to intellectuals, foreign policy writers and the like, seeks to keep the population from being infected with the heresy of taking the gospel too seriously by promoting their way of life which is in contrast to the way of Jesus. This "engineering of consent," if executed properly through deceit, rhetoric, jingoism, and systems of diversion (consumerism and fear), will keep unjust systems intact and human rights will cease at the rhetorical level. The same is true with theological discourse and the persons creating it.

Contrary to those who have given up on envisioning an alternative society on this side of heaven, Dr. David Hall, a member of Pentecostals and Charismatic's for Peace and Justice (PCPJ) and pastor and CEO of Publishing for the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) in Memphis, TN, had a unique opportunity to represent Charles E. Blake, Bishop of the COGIC, at The Hague

by signing the Statement Faith in Human Rights in the Netherlands on December 10, 2008, the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Hall was among many other faith groups represented such as Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Taoist, indigenous faith communities, and Christian.

The goal of the meeting is to promote human rights through religious cooperation, regardless of religious affiliation. It is not a concession of a particular faith tradition, but a confession to organize around the cause of advocating social justice and basic human rights that all people are entitled to. As long as religious communities remain divided over superfluous and non-concrete issues that do not threaten power, real progress toward human rights for all will remain a table top discussion. An obvious lesson from this meeting is that at times, pragmatism overrides orthodoxy. Some might argue that Christians should not participate in ecumenical dialogue or cooperation with other religious traditions because they are at odds in terms of correct belief. However, is correct belief (according to our socialization and assumptions) all that God is concerned about?

Too, right belief is relatively powerless. Intellectual commitment to certain secondary issues has little or no power in providing food to the hungry. A person can believe all the "right things" and still live a miserable life, be in bondage, and remain unchanged. Often times "faith as reason" only exercises the mind with little relevancy for the most vulnerable populations.

The hope of many who attended this historic meeting is that it would spark a greater ecumenical dialogue and encourage faith communities to champion the cause of society's disposables. The vision, while seeking to remain realistic, foresees a better world that begins by nonviolently protesting a global system that values privatization and concentration of power over social democracy. "While representing different faith traditions, we come together in unity to stress that religion has been a primary source of inspiration for human rights as our sacred writings and teachings clearly show," the statement declares.

Hall not only represented Bishop Blake but all Pentecostals who are actively engaged in reclaiming the Pentecostal heritage of nonviolence and peacemaking. This is an example to all progressive Pentecostals who continue to swim in a faith tradition that cares more about following Jesus concretely than drawing lines of who is in or out. Too, in harmony with the gospels, Pentecostals who interpret life from the margins seek virtues designed around social harmony and relational equality. Nothing less will do. Like any experiment in community and the art of reorienting your values and assumptions around the cause for human rights, you will inevitably make enemies. That is the promise, not the exception. Thus, the highest virtues of love will forgive shortcomings, set aside prejudices, and acknowledge social biases for the greater good as this meeting modeled. Dialogue must continue to play a central role in the shaping of a Pentecostal identity in order to protest means and goals of empires, past and present.

In a world with overwhelming and competing images that stand in sharp contrast to the nonviolence of Jesus, Pentecostals like David Hall and groups like PCPJ continue to reject both the goals and means of preserving empire by advancing human rights.

If anything can be taken away from this event, Pentecostal theologians and pastors, particularly in the western world, need to be aware of falling into macro abstractions in our own personal or denominational zeal for concrete change. Theology needs to engage reality, and when it does, human dignity advances rather than personal careers. This witness, thanks to David Hall and Bishop Blake, is what makes sense to the world. The world is looking for tangibles, not theories, and here is where a true Pentecostal identity lies.

In the words of Ms. Dugal, the Baha'i representative at the conference, "More than one-half of the world's population lives under regimes that severely restrict or prohibit the freedom of their citizens to study, believe, observe, and freely practice the religious faith of their choice."

R.S. Sugirtharajah, professor of Biblical Hermeneutics at the University of Birmingham, reminds those who engage in ecumenical dialogue that faith in a multicultural and multireligous context is not a contest between Jesus and other saviors like Buddha or Mohammed, but between "mammon and Satan on the one side, and Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, and Mohammed on the other." Money stands for personal greed, accumulation, and selfishness while "Satan stands for institutional violence." Thus, the "question then is whether these religious figures offer us any clue to challenge these forces, or simply help to perpetuate them, and how the continuities rather than contrasts among these savior figures may be experienced and expressed."

The Spirit-Filled Servant's Agenda of "Becoming the Neighbor"

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The Agenda

Jesus' inaugural sermon in his hometown sets the agenda for his ministry, which builds upon Isaiah's Servant Song (Isa. 61:1-2a). When he affirms his identity as the Spirit-filled Servant, he announces his broad concern for social justice through the plight of numerous victims.

> *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,*
> *because he has anointed me*
> to bring good news to the poor.
> He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
> and recovery of sight to the blind,
> to let the oppressed go free,
> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Lk. 4:18-19).

Jesus then preaches a one-sentence sermon, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk. 4:21). Jesus' message invites people to participate in the "good news" as it bears upon the weak and marginalized.

> Here is my servant, whom I have chosen,
> The one I love, in whom I delight.
> *I will put my Spirit on him,*
> And he will proclaim justice to the nations.
> He will not quarrel or cry out:
> No one will hear his voice in the streets.
> A bruised reed he will not break,
> And a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,
> Till he leads justice to victory.
> In his name the nations will put their hope (Isa:42-1-4; Matt. 12:18-21).

Another Servant-Song affirms Jesus' empowerment, which explains the silence Jesus imposes on individuals whom he heals (Matt. 12:16). The quiet and unobtrusive nature of Jesus' ministry fulfills the expectation of the Spirit-filled Servant. The Servant does not follow the custom of crying aloud in public and thereby imposing upon his hearers with his message.[2] Nor will the Servant use violence and harshly treat the weak, bruised and dimly burning.[3] Instead, the Spirit-filled Servant will express God's own compassion for the poor, oppressed, naked, hungry, blind and imprisoned (blind—Isa. 42:7; weary—Isa. 50:4; prisoners in a dungeon with no hope of freedom—Isa. 42:7), and will be successful in His mission of justice (42:4).

The unique feature is the quiet, non-aggressive and compassionate manner in which Jesus, the Spirit-filled Servant goes about his task of restoration. The world-system often reflects the "law of the jungle," wherein violence and aggression "pay off" and conquerors proclaim victory over the weak, bruised, helpless, vulnerable and alienated; "to be weak and helpless was

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[2] Claus Westermann, *The Promises to the Fathers*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1980), 96.

[3] In the original setting, the prophet regards Israel in the weakened condition which needs to be enlivened, not crushed or snuffed out. The Servant Songs exhibit a creative ebb and flow between the individual and corporate Servant.

to be destined for destruction."[4] Jesus demonstrates compassion for the bruised and the ones who are like smoldering wicks; compassion counters the violence, which the powerful express at the expense of the weak. Needy persons follow Jesus in his withdrawal while the powerful and aggressive authorities remain in the synagogue and plot his murder on the hallowed Sabbath, a day set aside for life and doing good (Matt. 12:12)—not the violent taking of life. Jesus' teaching on social justice deals with personal transformation as well as corporate and structural good and evil. Individual moral agents are to be transformed through their faith-association with the Spirit-Filled Jesus, which then clears the path for social change and transformation.

The new age of salvation is present in Jesus, who is concerned for the whole of life in its physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, relational, national and international dimensions. Jesus is not merely interested in one part of the human person, i.e., the soul, but is concerned for the well-being (*shalom*) of people in all of their concerns. Jesus adopts the holistic Hebrew view that treats the human person as a whole, looked at from different aspects—not parts. Psa. 146 links opening of the eyes (v. 8) with justice for the oppressed (v. 7), protection for the strangers (v. 9), support for the fatherless and the widow (v. 9) and food for the hungry (7). Later, when John sends messengers to ask if Jesus is the Coming One (Lk. 7:20), Jesus responds with a narrative that occurs before the messengers' eyes—healings, exorcisms, people raised from the dead, climaxed with the statement that the "poor are having good news preached to them" (Lk. 7:21-22). Jesus makes salvation real to the poor and despised, mourners and those who are physically, socially, and religiously disadvantaged. Thereby, Jesus summarizes both his verbal proclamation and his messianic activity as a fulfillment of his stated platform as the Spirit-filled Servant. He intends that his concerns become the concerns of his people.

Unfolded in story and parable, Jesus states that God's mercy and justice for the marginalized is for all; however God's offer is made real through the human response to God and to others. God is personal and does not order the human response by divine fiat; a gracious invitation can be turned down (Lk. 14:18-20). God's reign of justice breathes hope into lives that are oppressed, fractured and alienated. Repentance not only means turning to God but conversion towards the poor (Baptist's message in Lk. 3:11).

Other texts echo Jesus' alignment with the poor. Mary's Magnificat (Lk. 1:46-55) affirms God's vested interest in the poor and lowly (Lk. 1:48, 51-53). Her song reflects a reversal of socio-economic conditions when she recalls Hannah's Song (I Sam. 2:4-5). West suggests, "The Magnificat could be suggesting a reversal of conditions for our leaders who proudly create policies rewarding the rich and powerful with ever-increasing benefits so they can acquire more wealth and power, while endlessly study, negatively labeling, and disciplining the morality of those struggling with the least resources and under the most desperate of conditions."[5]

Becoming the Neighbor

Is there a parable in Luke's Gospel that is more focused on Jesus' mission on earth than the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Lk. 10:25-37)? His mission emerges originally in a crisp form through his inaugural sermon in the Nazareth synagogue that noted the Spirit's anointing of Jesus for the cause of social justice. Of the four unfortunate groups of sufferers to whom Jesus is

[4] James D. Smart, *History and Theology in Second Isaiah,* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), p. 84.

[5] Traci West, *Disruptive Christian Ethics*, (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2006), 107.

sent (Lk. 4:18-19), the fourth class (*poor*) is paramount. They are "the broken victims" (RNEB), vividly depicted in the wounded victim on the Jericho road whose wounds the Samaritan stranger cleansed and bound up (10:34).

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is one of the most famous story-parables in the Bible; the influence of its chief character is reflected in the names of countless hospitals and relief agencies throughout the world. Over the years a connection has been made between "good" and "Samaritan," a quantum leap from the apartheid society of the first century.

The lawyer asks the question, "Who is my neighbor?" (Lk. 10:29) Implicitly, the question about the neighbor's identity also implies a double-standard of treatment or rules that apply to one's own group while a different set of rules is applied to outside groups. The parable is intended to transform narrow presuppositions and categories and translate Christian thought into Christian compassion and activity. Jesus' followers are not meant to ask about identity but to see and respond to human need with mercy.

But what is the essence of true discipleship? It consists, says the evangelist, in love for the neighbor by *becoming the neighbor* (10:25-37), utter dependence on the words of Jesus (10:38-42), and persistent intercessory prayer (11:1-13). In brief, the successive paragraphs affirm that the disciple is one who shows compassion and care for the "broken," yet one who always needs to be fortified by the word of Jesus and prayer.

The parable is essentially Jesus' answer to the insistent question of the lawyer, "Who is my neighbor?" Yet, as one expositor has noted, since the parable portrays an example that is to be followed (10:37), "it is legitimate exegesis to say that Jesus was the supreme example of the virtue inculcated."[6] At the same time, the word "example" claims that the action that is shown by the Good Samaritan reveals the beating heart of discipleship of sterling caliber. It is a discipleship that cuts through the barrier of apartheid and demonstrates how compassion—not in word but in deed (I Jn. 3:18)—disregards matters of personal danger and convenience in order to care for a suffering stranger.

The paragraph (Lk. 10:25-37), which contains the Parable of the Good Samaritan reveals the fundamental contrast between the question, "Who *is* my neighbor" (v. 29) and the counter-question, "Who *proved to be* the neighbor?" (v. 36). There is a difference between the verb *to be* and the verb *to become*. Jesus directs his hearer away from identifying the neighbor to becoming the giver of mercy. The lawyer wishes to *exclude* others by his question, Jesus' response is *all-inclusive*, to anyone who is in need. The spokesman is a lawyer who asks the pointed question about *eternal life* (Lk. 10:25). The purpose of the question is a test or trap;[7] the lawyer challenges Jesus and his qualifications to thereby entrap him, since he wishes to justify himself (v. 29). The lawyer's question reveals the notion that eternal life is a reward for works or merit. Jesus refers the questioning lawyer back to the Law, of which he is the expositor. Jesus will not be caught in the carefully prepared net. If Jesus says that eternal life is a gift which is independent of the Torah then he will be easily dismissed by the religious hierarchy as a heretic. Jesus instead chooses to lead the discussion to the major content and purpose of the Torah. Initially, he does not offer his own view but solicits the lawyer's opinion. The lawyer is not directed to the many commands and prohibitions (613), but to the fundamental goal of human life. Through his question, "*How do you read it?*" Jesus intimates that he was asking about a

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[6] A. B. Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ,* (Minneapolis: Klock & Lock Publishers, 1980 repr.), 344.

[7] The Greek verb peirazō is capable of both a positive sense of *to test what is in a person* or a negative and hostile sense of *tempt, try, challenge, put to the test.*

question that he should have known long ago. The lawyer gives an answer which Jesus himself gives in Mk. 12:28-31. The answer combines two OT texts: Deut. 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; 5 and *you shall love the LORD your God* with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Lev. 19:18 You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but *you shall love your neighbor as yourself*: I am the LORD.

The answer parallels the teaching of the Rabbi Hillel, "What is hateful to you, do not do to another" (Shabbat 31a). Similarly, Rabbi Akiba argued that Lev. 19:18 was the principle rule for conduct (Talkut I. 174a). Jesus wholeheartedly affirms the rightness of the Lawyer's response through a rabbinic phrase, *you have judged rightly*. Jesus supports the lawyer's answer and says that it only remains to translate correct theology into practice in order to experience the life of the coming age. "The reply of Jesus is not so much praise for the questioner as acknowledgment that he has hit upon Jesus' view."[8] That is to say, eternal life comes in the practice of life.

The lawyer requires further definition of the *neighbor* so that he would be assured of his own "love of his neighbor"; thus, possessing eternal life (v. 29). He poses problems and raises questions hoping to find a reprieve from action through his religious questions. He wants Jesus to discuss the meaning and nature of the term *neighbor*. Once the term is defined, then one can both include some and exclude others. According to the one strand of Jewish tradition, the term, *neighbor* applied to every Jewish fellow-countryman, but did not extend to a non-Israelite.[9] The text of Lev. 19:17-18 indicates that *neighbor* means *fellow-Israelite*, "*sons of your people*":

Implicit in the question about the identity of the neighbor is the pragmatic concern, "What is demanded of me by way of response?" The lawyer wishes to narrow the circle that encompasses neighbors so that less will be demanded of him. The subtle and surprising message that emerges from the parable does not outline the parameters for the question. The question is unanswerable in that love does not begin by defining groups and objects, but discovers them.

The parable begins with an extreme life and death crisis, with a victim, stripped, robbed, beaten and left half-dead on a lonely, rocky and dangerous road covering seventeen miles, from Jerusalem to Jericho. Nothing except time stood between the victim of our parable and certain death.

In the story, priest and Levite each rides by in turn, sees the prostrate victim and steers his mount to the other side of the road once the half-dead-dead victim is seen. The religious leaders do not *see with compassionate vision.* Thielicke says, "None of us really wants to see. For to look at our neighbor's misery is the first step in brotherly love. Love always seizes the eyes first and then the hand. If I close my eyes, my hands too remain unemployed. And finally my conscience too falls asleep, for this disquieting neighbor has disappeared from my sight."[10] Are they on their way home after serving in the Temple or are they afraid of incurring a ritual defilement by touching a corpse? Was there any visceral response (compassion) that they felt?[11]

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[8] Eta Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus*, (Great Britain: Hollen Street Press Ltd.), 57.

[9] Greeven, "plesion," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* vol. VI, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 315.

[10] Helmut Thielicke, *Theological Ethics Foundations*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 166.

[11] The priest was forbidden to touch a corpse except for blood relatives: Lev. 21:1

1 And the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them that none of them shall defile himself for the dead among his people." The written and oral law both note that contact with a corpse listed contact with a corpse at the top of the defilement list.

The lawyer must have been surprised even shocked as Jesus introduced the Samaritan traveler—a hated half-breed who is responsive to suffering. A laymen in contrast to the religious clerics perhaps, but not a heretical Samaritan. The *Good Samaritan* would have been "as palatable as 'the good terrorist' or the "good crack-dealer."[12] How can the Samaritan be a neighbor? Jews publicly cursed the Samaritans in the synagogues, prayed to God that they would have no share in eternal life, and refused to accept their services or their witness in a court of law. But this Samaritan traveler, the victim of apartheid, does not ask the "neighbor-question" but simply responds to human need and thereby becomes the *neighbor*.

The Samaritan, feeling compassion approaches the victim. The verb "I have compassion" (*splanchnizomai*) has at its root the word, *inward parts, inward seat of feeling,* and is used for the depth of one's entire emotional life.[13] Compassion is that force which moves him not only to see the condition of the victim, but immediately to seek to alleviate his condition.[14] Compassion is then expressed by simple acts of first-aid: caring for the wounds (wine and oil), and for the victim himself as they travel to the inn. The Samaritan traveler assumes fiscal responsibility for the care that the inn-keeper will provide until the victim is completely healed. He does what is needed for life, assuming a subservient position as a walker with respect to the half-dead traveler, who is a rider. No financial burden is imposed upon the innkeeper. He will not be "out-of-pocket" for helping the wounded man. If the tab is higher, the Samaritan will return and pay the balance. Very simply, he does what is needed for the wounded man. His *will to see* is translated into action; "he embodies the prophetic call to true religion."[15] He demonstrates an unexpected love to the one in need—the kind of love that God offers through Christ in the Gospel.

According to the Law (Lev. 19:18), the neighbor is a person to be loved as one's very self. Jesus takes the Levitical law a giant step forward. According to Jesus, "I do not define the neighbor simply as a fellow human being out there somewhere—belonging to one race or another, one culture or another—whom I am to love. No, I myself am the neighbor as I become the neighbor to those in need, and give them help wherever and whoever they may be." Thus, it is wrong to construe Lev. 19:18 in terms of a *neighbor* who needs definition. Rather, the neighbor shows himself through love. The undefined object of love is inverted to become the subject of loving. The answer to the question is clear; *the neighbor* (v. 29) is defined as the one who *proved to be neighbor* (10:36) and *the one who showed mercy on him* (v. 37). The lawyer cannot bring himself to mention the word *Samaritan* but distances himself by avoiding the term.

The lawyers' answer is met by the pointed application, *Go, and do likewise.* That is the final answer to the lawyer's original question (v. 25). The command is not fulfilled by a careful and legal definition of the neighbor or even in the acknowledgment of the neighbor, but in an act of compassion. When Jesus tells the Lawyer, "Go and do likewise" (Lk. 10:37), he intends that the man use his imagination in analogical fashion to his own sphere of influence.[16] Just as Jesus

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[12] William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise,* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 91.

[13] Helmut Köster, "*splanchnizomai*" *TDNT*, vol. VII, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans,1980), 553.

[14] In Luke's Gospel, "compassion" (splavgcna) is highlighted: Jesus sees and has compassion on the woman who buries her son (7:13); the searching father who has compassion on the lost son (15:20); compassion of God with the coming of Jesus (1:76-78). See what was observed in the Parable of the Prodigal Son account. The verb occurs 11 (or 12) times in the NT. All but 3 of the occurrences refer to Jesus. As for the three, they are in parables (Lk. 10:33; 15:20; Matt. 18:27) and do we not see divine compassion behind its use in each of the parables?

[15] John D. Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 133.

[16] Spohn, 52.

applies the message (A) to his world (B), so his followers (A') must apply the message to their sphere (B'), including the audience in the 21st Century.

The command directly relates to the Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12). It is the willingness to see and the readiness to respond to the one in need. Jesus calls his Jesus-people to move beyond the narrow confines of their social and religious boundaries; it forces them to think in broader categories than the "insider" and "outsider." The lawyer, along with the people of God are to be profoundly affected by the needy, feel compassion for the broken and hurting, feel their pain and then to translate that passion into positive action for the well being of victims of social injustice. Jesus speaks of a transformation of compassionate vision that enables people to respond in love to communities and institutions. Such "perception" is the ability to notice the morally relevant features of a situation and the readiness to respond appropriately." The parable speaks to the evangelical, Pentecostal, and charismatic communities that are prone to "demonize" the world in whole or in part, and to treat it as an enemy instead of an object of God's supreme love.

Implications

Evangelical, Pentecostal, and charismatic communities of faith need to understand the identity and incarnate the mission of the Spirit-filled Servant, who is profoundly concerned with how people live in social relationships. Jesus' anointing with the Holy Spirit directs his mission towards justice, i.e., taking the side of the weak, poor, oppressed, and broken victims. The Spirit points Jesus towards alignment with the prophetic call to justice (*sedeqah*). He advocates no mystical ecstasy or a cloistered community, which only emphasizes charismatic experience and teaching concerning the gifts of the Spirit to the exclusion of social concern. Through narrative and teaching, he argues that compassion is not to be "doled out" by determining what persons are suitable objects or recipients of love. Love discovers those in need and moves to meet those needs. The Parable of the "Good" Samaritan affirms the need of genuine compassion and benevolent action towards those in need. It summons the Spirit-filled communities to respond with social justice by *becoming the neighbor*. It concludes with the words, "Go and do the same thing" (Lk. 10:37). In so doing, communities become aware of the wonderful truth that in the person of the Spirit-filled Jesus, **this very God became the neighbor** to a broken and hostile humanity (Rom. 5:8), at the cost of all that God possessed. The message requires the will to see, to sense the heartache and injustice of various victims, and to embody the Spirit's concern for restoration and reconciliation. Having become the object of the supreme love of God, the Church has been given the person and dynamic of the Holy Spirit to bring life, healing, justice, and a new lease on life.

The parable intends to remove Christian communities from narrow vision and personal security to "see" the inclusive love of God for all. "Jesus loves us and therefore he finds us. And therefore, he also knows us. He knows better than we know ourselves and still he does not drop us, still he remains our friend, the nearest friend."[17] In this certainty, we find the initiative to make others the objects of our concern by becoming the neighbor. We express our thanksgiving by loving others, the proper objects of our concern, which heals us from our own self-centered living.

[17] Thielicke, 169.

"Pentecostal Spirituality Politically Applied"

By Tony Richie

Introduction

What some might call either inevitable evolution or quiet revolution seems to be currently underway in Evangelical politics in America. The cultural condition is complex. Religion and Western society, including economics and politics, are neither entirely separate nor synonymous.[18] Historian Jon Meacham eloquently declares that, "The great good news about America—the American gospel, if you will—is that religion shapes the life of the nation without strangling it."[19] From early times until the present, the United States government has labored to balance faith and freedom. It has thus adopted a kind of generic public religion. This allows individuals to choose and practice the specific religion their conscience dictates. Many early Americans were fleeing from the carnage of European religious wars. Nevertheless, they chose not freedom *from* but freedom *of* religion. This step set something of a pluralist tone.

Yet Philip Jenkins argues that, "America remains today substantially what it has always been, a Christian country." That does not translate into "partisan or intolerant" views of "some extremists" regarding government-controlled religion. Rather, though "the United States is home to a remarkable number of religious denominations, overwhelmingly, these are traditions within the broader stream of Christianity." Immigration has brought into the USA people of non-Christians faiths, but it has also brought in many Christians. Consequently, percentage wise Christianity is still by far the most common religion.[20]

In this mixed milieu, based on religious values, Evangelicals have traditionally championed conservative versus liberal political points of view. However, a recent spate of books attempts transcendence of the debilitating conservative-liberal divide.[21] Neither do these appear isolated incidents. Numerous Evangelicals are moving in similar directions.[22] An expanding horizon of concerns is conspicuous. Evangelicals are not continuing to focus only on

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[18] *Religious Foundations of Western Civilization: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam,* ed. Jacob Neusner (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), ix-xvi.

[19] Jon Meacham, *American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation* (New York: Random House, 2006), 5. Cf. Isaac Kramnik and R. Laurence Moore, *The Godless Constitution: A Moral Defense of the Secular State* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2005) and Frank Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[20] Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity,* revised and expanded edition (New York: Oxford, 2007), 122-24 (122). Notably, Jenkins says that, "despite all its critics, American Christianity is very much alive and well", 248.

[21] E.g., see Roger E. Olson, *How to Be Evangelical Without Being Conservative* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008) and Os Guinness, *The Case for Civility: And Why Our Future Depends on It* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008). Cf. also Amy E. Black, *Beyond Left and Right: Helping Christians Make Sense of American Politics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008) and Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of Evangelical Politics: Why Are Christians Missing the Change to Change the World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

[22] Several Evangelical leaders and thinkers signed "An Evangelical Manifesto: A Declaration of Evangelical Identity and Public Commitment," May 7, 2008, Washington, D. C. Among other things, it enumerates concerns for political and social action, ecological awareness, and ecumenical openness and even interreligious engagement. Its tone is quite positive, though just a bit defensive at points, and well balanced. Most of all, it is an intelligent and articulate presentation of Evangelical concerns for a wider arena of issues than previously typical for traditionally conservative Evangelicals. See http://www.anevangelicalmanifesto.com/docs/Evangelical_Manifesto.pdf.

one or two issues such as abortion and same sex relations. They are increasingly involved in issues of peace and justice, poverty, ecology, and so on, as well—though without diminishing concerns over the former.

What role, if any, is Pentecostalism to play in the broader Evangelical political revolution? Sociologists of religion Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori have coined a new term for what they see as a special brand of Pentecostals: "Progressive Pentecostalism." The term describes members of the movement who continue to affirm the apocalyptic return of Jesus but also are concerned about social issues and compassionate service in the present.[23] Miller and Yamamori tested churches according to the following five criteria: churches must be fast growing, located in the developing world, active in social programs, they must be indigenous, and they must be self-supporting congregations. They were initially shocked to discover that 85% of their sampling turned out to be Pentecostal congregations. Now they unabashedly propose the startling thesis that Progressive Pentecostalism is emerging as one of the most important global social movements rooted in religion.[24]

The existence of activist groups like "The Pentecostal Charismatic Peace Fellowship" and "The Crossroads Community" indicate at least some American Pentecostals are becoming intentionally and intensely involved in this social evolution/revolution of political and theological dimensions.[25] This essay specifically explores how Pentecostal spirituality itself may further inform and affect the future of Pentecostal politics. As the title suggests, an underpinning assumption is that politically applying Pentecostal spirituality is appropriate. Accordingly, it will first briefly explore the practical structure of Pentecostal spirituality. Then it will suggest putting it into practice politically speaking.

Structuring Pentecostal Spirituality Practically

An insightful summary of Pentecostal spirituality by Garnet Parris is helpful at this point. Parris is Director of the Centre for Black Theology at Birmingham University, England. He describes Pentecostal spirituality as emphasizing a piety of divine immanence penetrating and permeating all of life with "the personal and direct awareness of and experiencing of the Holy Spirit". The significance of experiencing the Holy Spirit of course includes the centrality of the Spirit's charismatic gifts and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Parris focuses on Spirit

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[23] Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 1-3.

[24] Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*, 5-6. In his study of politics and religion in USA, Kevin Phillips, *American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century* (New York: Viking, 2006), usually lumps Evangelicals and Pentecostals together with hard line Fundamentalists in a quite different evaluative outcome more representative of "radicalized religion". See 99-131 (106-07 and 112-121). Admittedly, enough truth is there to warrant that general charge. However, Phillips seems either unaware of or uninterested in serious rifts between Evangelicals/Pentecostals and Fundamentalists or of the existence of more moderate-minded Evangelicals and Pentecostals considerably qualifying his incautious over identification.

[25] On the first, see http://www.pcpf.org/ and on the second, Jerry Redman, "A Theology of Social Action," 1-7, Faith News Network (4/14/08) at http://www.faithnews.cc/articles.cfm?sid=8827.

baptism and speaking in tongues for the empowerment of individuals for the edification of the whole church in a context of the priority of worship.[26]

Accordingly, I suggest Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues are key *elements* of Pentecostal spirituality, empowerment and edification are key *effects*, and worship is its key *ethos*. Unpacking this concise statement is informative. First, Pentecostal spirituality bases itself on distinctive pneumatic experiences substantiated in Scripture. Yet these experiences are more than exciting individual esoteric encounters. They are lived-out in corporate contexts.[27] Therefore, second, these pneumatic experiences consistently create an environment conducive to positive social transformation. There is a sense of enabling the heretofore disenfranchised and marginalized to achieve full human potentiality. Finally, observe a causative sequence. There is a process of experiential pneumatic encounter followed by invariably egalitarian development of full human ability, integrity, and potentiality. This then is conceptualized and conducted—not as part of an arrogant anthropological enterprise alone—but in a doxological context of offering both the process and its results to God in humble adoration for gracious provision according to sovereign purpose.

Critics often accuse Pentecostals of being extremely individualistic. It seems more accurate that a legitimate application of Pentecostal spirituality entails corporate—even social or political—involvement. Significantly and practically speaking, this liberating, uplifting redemptive reality in Christ's Spirit bridges and embraces gender, economic status, ethnicity, partisanship, and race. As the work of Cheryl Bridges Johns shows, Pentecostals engage in a process of "conscientization." There is a journey of self-discovery in the Spirit of one's gifts and callings apart from societal or structural impediments. This becomes a resource for Spirit-filled believers for divine service in the Church and in the world.[28]

For Pentecostals, political interest and activism does not arise out of ideological avenues or philanthropic sentiments. These arise out of an individual experience of the Spirit impelling us beyond ourselves. A dialectically and simultaneously concentric and centrifugal movement manifests itself. Concentrically, the Spirit first draws believers into the shared center of an all-consuming experience with Christ. Then the Spirit thrusts them outward into an all-embracing expression of multidimensional, even omni-dimensional, redemption for a waiting world (cf. Acts 1:8).[29] Ultimately, this forceful centrifugal movement directs itself toward God in deliberate doxology.

Ardent, expressive worship is a well-known feature of Pentecostalism. Yet Pentecostal worship is so much more than clapping or lifting one's hands while singing and swaying with the

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[26] Cf. Garnet Parris, "Pentecostal Spirituality," *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 485-86. Parris draws on P. Hills Collins, *Black Feminist Thought, Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (London: Routledge, 1990), W. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (London: SCM, 1972), C. Jones Wainwright and E. Yarnold (eds), *The Study of Spirituality* (London SPCK, 1986), Steven Land, *A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), and I MacRobert, *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988).

[27] Note that of the five instances of Spirit baptism/filling in Acts (chap. 4, 8, 9, 10, 19), only one, Paul (chap. 9) involves a lone individual. All the rest are corporate or group experiences.

[28] Cf. Cheryl Bridges Johns, *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy among the Oppressed* JPTSup 2 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993, 1998).

[29] Cf. Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 91-98.

church crowd. It is also a life offered as sacred *liturgia* to God through service to others in the world. This places Pentecostal politics in direct contradistinction to the ego satisfying, power seeking politick of the nations (Mark 10:41-45). A Pentecostal politick is rather God-directed worship humbly offered up in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

Practicing Pentecostal Spirituality Politically

Isaac Rottenberg is a Reformed Christian minister of mixed Jewish ancestry and an avid ecumenist and interfaith dialogue participant. He makes the interesting and insightful observation that "the spiritual life always has political consequences."[30] How might this principle play out among contemporary Pentecostals?

As Pentecostals, we predicate our distinctive belief and practice on an experience of the Holy Spirit through faith in the crucified and risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as taught in the Holy Scriptures and as still encountered in sanctified lives today. A primary paradigm is the Book of Acts, especially chapters 2, 8, 9, 10, and 19. Here God dramatically filled individuals and groups with the Spirit. These passages suggest *uncompromising commitment* to Christ in contexts of *bold obedience* to the Holy Spirit amidst *amazing interest in and openness to* others. Without giving ground concerning Christ, and without stifling the Spirit, a Pentecostal politick will interact with others in our shared world setting in a way that is conducive to justice, peace, and tolerance for all in bearing witness of the gospel. These values, energized and applied in the Spirit, concretely conform to the basic biblical definition of the good in a God-fearing society (Micah 6:8; cf. 3:8).

Renowned Methodist missionary to India, E. Stanley Jones, was himself pronouncedly "pentecostal" in much of his belief and practice. He contributes to the discussion at this point, albeit, from an early twentieth century perspective. Jones recounts a conversation he had with the illustrious Indian political and religious leader Mahatma Gandhi. He had asked Gandhi how Christian missionaries might be more effective in India. He wished for Christianity to become "naturalized," or at home in India rather than always appearing as a foreign faith. Gandhi of course was a Hindu well known for his admiration of Christ and the New Testament. He replied to Jones frankly and without rancor. First, "all of you Christians, missionaries and all, must begin to live more like Jesus Christ." Second, "you must practice your religion without adulterating or toning it down." Third, "you must put your emphasis on love, for love is the centre and soul of Christianity." Fourth, "study the non-Christian religions and culture more sympathetically in order to find the good that is in them, so that you might have a more sympathetic approach to the people."[31]

Jones agreed. This led him to sum up thus, "Here then is the epitome of the whole thing: From every side they say we must be Christian, but Christian in a bigger, broader way than we have hitherto been." He added, "We cannot be Christian and concentrate on ourselves." Then he really brought it home: "America can never be Christian apart from its world task."[32] Taking this advice and its implications seriously helped Jones become one of the most effective and accepted missionaries in history. His work led to broad and deep spiritual and political influence with lasting consequence.

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[30] Isaac C. Rottenberg, *The Promise and the Presence: Toward a Theology of the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 85.

[31] E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road* (New York: Abingdon, 1925), 118-20.

[32] Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road,* 120-21.

There are several implications for the present discussion in what Gandhi and Jones were saying. They are crucial for the missional Church. For example, ethics, evangelism, and ecumenical and interreligious dialogue belong together.[33] For another, religious belief and social practice cannot be effective in isolation. Underlying all of this is an assumption that spirituality and politics are, for better or for worse, partners after all. They become mutually dissatisfactory and detrimental partners when religious people conduct their political lives in ways inconsistent with their own inner commitments. They become mutually satisfactory and supportive partners when people of faith conduct their daily political lives out of the resources and wisdom of their ultimate commitments. For Pentecostals, this means political behavior shaped and sustained by commitment to God through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Though realistic in its assessment of societal sin, this is ultimately a powerfully optimistic vision for the present and for the future. Christ faced and overcame the sufferings of this present sinful world in his Incarnation, Cross, Resurrection, and Ascension (Col 2:15). Further, the vital power to begin sharing in that victory in this present age is transmitted to believers in the voluminous outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost until the full realization at Christ's coming in the veritable establishment of God's eternal Kingdom (Mk. 9:1; 1 Co 15:20-28). Politics arising out of Pentecostal spirituality believes miracles are still possible. Moreover, miracles are not only possible individually but institutionally in the structural systems of today's society.

Conclusion

A few years ago, I received a gentle but telling rebuke regarding my habitually and insistently sharp separation between religion and politics. I was at dinner with a friend, a national Christian leader who is not specifically Pentecostalist, but somewhat of a "Bapticostal" type if we will. As usual, he went straight from "spiritual talk" to political talk and, again as usual, I challenged him for mixing religion and politics. However, this time he calmly replied, "Tony, can you understand that I cannot but apply my religion to my politics, and to all the rest of my life?" I was, of course, quite (uncharacteristically!) speechless.

Yes, an inevitable evolution or quiet revolution is underway in Evangelical politics in America. Additionally, Pentecostals are or ought to be actively involved. Arguably, Pentecostal spirituality and theology have inherent within them elements that lend themselves well to a unique individual experience with untold social applications. Individual and ecclesial recovery of the charismata has been an indescribable boon to contemporary Christianity through the modern Pentecostal and Charismatic movements.

So political and social recovery of a Spirit-inspired and Spirit-impelled politick may also bring reconciliation and renewal to a broader spectrum of society.

Social justice, peace, and tolerance are values meshing remarkably well with a tradition of world evangelism and individual discipleship or spiritual formation. Social ethics are not contra personal morality emphases; rather, they are complementary. Individual spirituality invites and fosters social responsibility. A Pentecostal politick applied from Pentecostal spirituality appears to be characterized by a strong pneumatic element and an egalitarian and

[33] Cf. Tony Richie, "A Threefold Cord: Weaving Together Pentecostal Ecumenism, Ethics, and Evangelism in Christian Conversion", *Current Dialogue* 50 (February 2008), 47-54.

liberating impulse. It empowers. It edifies. Moreover, it addresses itself primarily in doxological adoration to the Source, Way, and End of all its endeavors (cf. Rom 11:36). It is an act of worship. Like an eagle that stirs up her nest, hovering over her young and urging them into flight, the Holy Spirit is even now stirring up Pentecostal people to leave the safety, and the mediocrity, of their churches to launch out into the wide, open spaces of the heavenly calling of an earthly concern (cf. Deut 32:11).

"Divorce as Christian Practice"[34]

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There are few realities of the human existence that cause as much confusion, joy, pain, satisfaction, divergence or convergence as the sexual relationship. The ability to reflect upon and practice well, these dynamic relations is a continuous struggle for the television producer, schoolteacher, or blue-collar worker no less than the Christian ethicist. The problems associated with sexuality, and the ability to navigate interpersonal relationships is one of the common features across time and place. Each people-group in all times has experienced the various nuances of sexual and marital realities. This is no more clearly seen than in the current world in which we find ourselves. As Christians within the current American milieu our thoughts about marriage have been capitalized by the politics of empire, making most of our imaginative work revolves around debates of homosexual marriage and the potential of one or more candidates to be elected based on single dimension reflections upon the myriad possibilities within the realm of sexual and family ethics. Within this milieu I propose revisiting the complex but highly evident problem of divorce.

Most Evangelical reflections on divorce have surrounded different interpretations of the "exception clause" from Matthew's Gospel (Matthew 5.32) or the ramifications of divorce and remarriage (especially as remarriage relates to the ordination of ministers). Instead of adding yet another voice to the cacophony, in this paper I will propose divorce as a practice of the church: a practice of the *polis* that is rightly inherited from the biblical narrative, and to be explicated in the life of the community.

Marriage is a practice of the church: without it the church is not the church, just as Stanley Hauerwas points out, that without the practice of singleness the church is not the church.[35] Unfortunately, while the evangelical churches have done an all too thorough job of telling the single members of their congregations (and whoever else would listen) to refrain from sex outside of marriage, they have done an all too poor job of speaking about marriage in imaginative ways, giving language to a practice that has lost most meaningful definition in a world that has increasingly used it as fodder in a national political debate, failing to see the political reality of Christian marriage on its own terms. In other words, instead of giving single people and the "watching world"[36] a robust dialog regarding the hopeful marriage as much more than a place of romantic and sexual attraction, but rather a political statement of communally held justice and love, a union of the self and the other, and a place where the Christian learns to

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[34] This paper was originally Presented at the 37th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies.

[35] Stanley Hauerwas, "Family Grace: The Christian Family and the Difference It Can Make for the American Family." In *Grace upon Grace: Essays in Honor of Thomas A. Langford,* ed. Robert K. Johnston, L. Gregory Jones, and Jonathan R. Wilson (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 224.

[36] This is John Howard Yoder's language regarding the five practices within his *Body Politics*. I am not trying to infer that Yoder would agree with my thoughts regarding marriage and/or divorce (I briefly interact with his ongoing thoughts regarding divorce later in this paper). Nor do I think that he would have included divorce within a "list" of Christian practices, but his treatment of the witness of the practices of the church to the watching world, if correct, lead me to conclude that the church must have a "politics" regarding divorce. John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World.* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1992), vi-viii.

inhabit the space of her or his body well in relation to the other,[37] the church has opted for single dimension moralisms that give little direction for a just life in a consumer world.

While any number of factors may be responsible for the rate of divorces, I think that the lack of prophetic imagination from the church in regards to what makes a Christian marriage is a primary one (at least within the church). How then to re-imagine, and find "new language" in a debate that has grown stale?[38]

Communal Marriage and Biblical Divorce

I suggest that communal divorces will make communal marriages stronger. To consider this though, consider first that the marriage ceremony, like all other ceremonies, stands not in a vacuum, but rather as a marker: a place in time that holds all that has come before in tension with the hope and promise of all that will come after. The community gathers and ratifies in one moment what has developed between two persons[39] and allows them to commit themselves to each other and the community. Those concerned are far more than the two individuals, but rather the sexual lives of the couple are to be both informed by the life of the community and to extend a sexual ethic to the community, and thus flow outward to the world from the community, as Wendell Berry says, "speaking joyfully and fearfully of the self's suddenly irresistible wish to be given away." This wish to be "given away" to the beloved is faithful, though, only since the lovers, "must finally turn from their gaze at one another back toward the community. If they had only themselves to consider, lovers would not need to marry but they must think of others and of other things. They say their vows to the community as much as to one another, and the community gathers around them to hear and to wish them well, on their behalf and on its own."[40]

This is the "missional" living of the church: that it is to incarnate the good works of God in every instance of practice and theology, but imaging this in sex is a task seldom done, or never done in our public conversations. Berry further contributes to this discussion in his consideration of the "free-market sexuality" which he defines as "the nakedness that is possible only in a society in which price is the only index of worth"[41]. In contrast, the church stands over against that idea of worth to proclaim that God's whole creation is good, even when flawed or marred, and that the economics of the cross and its community, as reflected in the household economy and the hospitality of the marriage bed, are superior to the economics of the powers that be.

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[37] On the communal nature of marriage one may reference any number of sources. I am specifically thinking of Hauerwas' "Sex in Public: How Adventurous Christians Are Doing It" in Stanley Hauerwas, *The Hauerwas Reader,* ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 481-504, and "Family Grace," along with Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community: Eight Essays.* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992).

[38] The idea of a new language for the conversation regarding sexual practice in the church is drawn from Lauren Winner, *Real Sex: The Naked Truth About Chastity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), see especially 25. and Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community*, 119-125. From a Pentecostal perspective, this is exactly what the Spirit empowers the church to do: speak in languages unfamiliar – giving the ability to be poetic/prophetic in our speech and imagination. See Walter Brueggaman *Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 1-22.

[39] I will not discuss the issue of homosexual marriage in this paper. I am sure that any gay reading of the marriage/divorce texts would enliven and enrich the conversation, but that topic deserves its own space and dialog.

[40] Berry, 136-137.

[41] Ibid., 166.

Besides being a political reality, a practice of the church, which witnesses to the community and to the world of the faith of the Church in the God of Jesus, by the fidelity that it has learned from the community of the Spirit, marriage is, for all the current debate, quite undefined. The stories that come to us in the larger biblical narrative are gruesome and many times detestable. Polygamy, rape, murder, incest, betrayal, deception, and greed are the elements that make up the bulk of the marital stories in the Judeo/Christian canon. There is nothing that succinctly gives marriage a full definition. Instead, the biblical stories simply assume marriage. Marriage has only a few internal practices that are universal, and more or less measurable to give definition.[42]

So then, marriage is a public political practice of the church as witness to the good works of God in the world, the chronological end of which is death. It is not a contractual agreement ratified by the state on a piece of paper. To promise fidelity in life-long commitment to the other, is like baptism, to promise to die, and it is the church's responsibility then to help those promising to learn how to live in the newly constructed community of Christ and how to die there.[43]

But, what about the situations in which people have not learned how to live together, die together, and do not then know how to remain together? Can the church find new language for divorce?

An overview of the biblical witness of divorce is obviously necessary. However, the hard work of biblical studies on only the passages that deal directly with divorce would yield innumerable books, and the space for that kind of work is simply not given in this paper. There is, however, room to look at the biblical narrative in search of the *practice* of divorce. In *Kingdom Ethics*, David Gushee argues that the Bible "*assumes"* divorce.[44] The focus of *Kingdom Ethics* being the Sermon on the Mount, Gushee obviously begins with Matthean directive of Jesus regarding the practice of divorce. This is a welcomed change in the direction of Evangelical Christian Ethics, in that Jesus is taken seriously, and the Sermon has import on the lives that we live in the current world, shaped by Jesus' prophetic wisdom. However, Gushee does not treat the "writing of divorce" (nor have I found anyone who does) in the scope of the Jewish religion.

God allowed divorce. The first and obvious place to start the discussion biblically is with the Mosaic commands regarding divorce in Deuteronomy 22. It was a legal document, but also deeply spiritual: there was no separation in the Jewish faith between the secular and the spiritual law. Problematizing this passage are the obvious other "laws" that Christians do not take as binding. Within the same pericope there are laws commanding those in the community to wear tassels and gendered apparel.

More interesting for the sake of this paper, is the fact that God identifies himself as having "divorced" his people.[45] Considering this poses a new dilemma. God is guilty of

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[42] "Fidelity," a "household economy," and "hospitality" are three practices that, I take it, help define marriage within the Christian tradition, but the definition of marriage is not my aim here; so, the distinct practices, and definition, of marriage must be held only provisionally for the purposes of this paper.

[43] Regarding the place of marriage within the life of the baptized see, among others, David Matzko McCarthy, "Becoming One Flesh: Marriage, Remarriage, and Sex" in *The Blackwell companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), 282-284.

[44] Glenn H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 278. (Emphasis original).

[45] Both Isaiah 50 and Jeremiah 3 use this language. (I retain gendered language in this reference for the ease of "husband," "wife," and "divorce" language, not to infer something about God as gendered.)

committing the same action that he later condemns. Jesus specifically states that divorce is because of "hardheartedness." Here though, God is identifying with the unsatisfied or betrayed husband, and is putting-away his wife. The interesting concept is the indication (at least in the passage from Jeremiah) that God is acting in this way for the sake of redemption. If this is the case, it can be assumed that divorce, like other issues that result from broken relationships, can be worked-out correctly within the community of God with a broader, more holistic, purpose.

The prophet Malachi speaks on behalf of God saying: "For I hate divorce, says the LORD, the God of Israel, and covering one's garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless." (2.16 New Revised Standard Version) In this passage, the faithlessness of the husband to his wife is transposed with violence, and the action of divorce is despised.

In *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, Richard Hays shows the egalitarian emphasis of Jesus' teaching on divorce in Mark.[46] Though the Matthean context is more "androcentric,"[47] by radicalizing the command against divorce Jesus demands a "higher righteousness from his followers: a righteousness that will not cause the wife to sin or to starve.[48] Divorce then, within the gospels, surrounds the issues of economics and justice, that is, a household economy held graciously within the community, and any breaking of this justice is condemned.

Finally, Paul also contributes to the discussion, and once again turning to Hays, one sees Paul's attempt at radicalizing the call to discipleship, and creating a community of egalitarian grace within the context of divorce. He is addressing "a new topic not envisioned in Jesus' teaching."[49] In so doing, Paul finds it faithful to work within Jesus' condemnation of divorce to address situations in which divorce can be warranted. Hays reiterates this, saying, "Paul goes on to elaborate some more rules of his own, covering a situation that is deemed to fall outside the intended range of application of the original rule."[50]

How does a quick sketch of the biblical divorce give shape to the current Christian community seeking to faithfully embody marriage? It is impossible to make a one-to-one correlation between the "divorce" referenced in the Biblical narrative and the current "divorce" within a liberal democracy governed by laws of humanity, and not the rule of God. What is obvious, however, is that divorce was an assumed reality. The practice of divorce, though granted because of hard-heartedness, did not invalidate it as a practice. Further, the reflection upon divorce was contextual. Jesus, as expected, called his followers to a life of discipleship, marked by love, justice, and forgiveness, in which case the practice of easy divorces must be roundly condemned,[51] and Paul used this "rule" of Jesus to further explicate the life of the disciple within the life of the community. The "rule" as such was then a prophetic call to a life within the re-constituted people of God[52], allowing for contextual reflection and practice.

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[46] Richard B. Hays, *Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation; A contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 352.

[47] Ibid., 357.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid., 358.

[50] Ibid., 367.

[51] Ibid., 357.

[52] John Howard Yoder, *The Original Revolution: Essays on Christian Pacifism* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1971), 38-39.

The Christian Practice of Divorce

The issues surrounding the legitimacy of divorce must address the legitimacy of rule. This is why marriage must be understood as a daring political act of the community of Christ. If the right to ordain, sanction, sanctify, define, and practice marriage belongs to the church, as one of the practices of the church, then divorce must also be a practice of the church. To concede the sanctioning, practicing, defining of divorce to the Nation State, is for the church to lazily concede its political reality.

The church is a *polis.*[53] Its existence is marked by practices that both give definition to the community as they are practiced, and witness to the world regarding the nature of God's way of being and ruling in contrast to that of the "principalities and powers."[54] Since this is the case, and marriage is a practice (even a sacrament in the Catholic church), it follows that the ending or dissolution of a marriage is the responsibility of the community in which the marriage was made.

If the church is the performing community for the practice of marriage, and if the ceremony is jointly reflective of the couple getting married, and the community itself, then the dissolution of the marriage is the business of the community in that it is a failure of the couple to keep their vows, and a failure of the community to either shape the character of their members into those who know how to keep their vows, or to hold them to the vows. In either case, divorce is just as much a communal reality as is the marriage. As such, the church capitulates to the Nation State by abdicating the responsibility to rightly imagine and practice the process of divorce within their communal setting.

The divorce procedure, as noted above, was assumed within the life of the People of God, within the biblical narrative. The ways in which it was reflected upon proceeded from that assumption towards the desire to strengthen the community in the ability to practice marriage rightly (within the New Testament it was specifically to rightly follow the leading of Jesus in forming a newly constructed egalitarian community[55]). Can we do the same: assume the practice of divorce, and rightly imagine it within the community as we attempt to follow the leading of the Spirit into forming better communities?

Assuming that divorce will take place is the easiest task done. Most people cite a divorce statistic of roughly half of all marriages,[56] and according to the Barna group, the statistic is the same for people within the church.[57] Personal anecdotes of divorce, remarriage, and the children involved in break-ups are common to anyone in America. So the easy task of assumption leads quickly to the harder work of imagination within the community.

If divorce is the responsibility of the People of God: if the church should realize its own place in the marriage narrative, not just as sanctioning community for the ceremony of marriage,

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[53] Yoder, *Body Politics*, vi-viii.

[54] James WM. McClendon, *Ethics: Systematic Theology, Volume I* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 162-170.

Yoder, in his essay, "The Otherness of the Church," describes the church in its "Pre-Constantian" understanding as "over against" the world "visible; identified by baptism, discipline, morality, and martyrdom." John Howard Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical,* ed. Michael G. Cartwright (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 55-56.

[55] McClendon, 216.

[56] National Center for Health Statistics, "Marriage and Divorce," http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/divorce.htm (accessed 4 January 2008).

[57] The Barna Group, Ltd., "Born Again Christians Just As Likely to Divorce As Are Non-Christians" http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrow&BarnaUpdateID=170 (accessed 4 January 2008).

but as active player[58] within the practice of marriage, and thus an active player in the dissolution of marriage, then the church must find a way to reflect upon that practice[59] as well. What is divorce? What does it entail, and further, how can those parts be made into a workable whole, that is practiced within the community?

Divorce dissolves a marriage. Within the Christian community, this is the dissolution of a covenant relationship that was made before God and the community. Within the legal system, the divorce is a legal procedure dissolving on paper a union that existed on paper. So then, what are the marks of a divorce, and how can the Christian community witness to the "watching world"[60] in the practice of divorce? Divorce within the Christian community should reflect the marks that other Christian practices reflect, and most specifically the marks that marriage reflect, that is, forgiveness, reconciliation, hope, peace, and redemption,[61] along with a confrontation to the "principalities and powers."[62] All of these are to be worked out within the gathered community, and the community's larger life together. Given the political nature of marriage, and its economic emphasis, the political statement of a Christian divorce should be political statement of economic justice among the people of God even in a place where the people of God have failed to live up to their name.

How is this accomplished? It is first accomplished by avoiding the possibility of divorce by avoiding bad marriages. The community should be responsible for training people to enter marriage better prepared. This is rudimentary, perhaps, but is a lost way of life within many churches. The practice of hospitality, better reflected upon within congregations in both larger social spheres and interpersonal relationships would make space for better marriages, as marriages are a way of life in which the kitchen no less than the bed is a shared space invaded by the other (this being only further extenuated by the radical hospitality to be practiced by both wife and husband as they become mother and father). The journey to marriage should be worked out within the context of the community, so those witnessing to the marriage vows can both witness joyfully (as those who are blessing the union) and in promise (to hold the couple to their promises). If the community has the ability to speak to a couple about the rightness or wrongness of their relationship, bad marriages should be avoided much more consistently.

Assuming, though, that a couple gets married with the blessing of their community – the community witnessed to their union with joy, and witnessed to their vows. What can that couple do to be faithful even in the process of divorce? I propose that they should do exactly the same

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[58] I use the term "player" to infer the motif of "games" from McClendon's usage of "games" within the discussion of communal practices. *Ethics*, 162-166

[59] Regarding "reflection" on "practice" see, Dorothy C. Bass introduction to *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life,* ed. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 1-3.

[60] Yoder, *Body Politics,* vi-viii.

[61] I understand the practice of divorce within the Christian community to specifically emphasize the practice of reconciliation. At the first level I understand this reconciliation to be the reconciliation of the individuals to the community and restored to wholeness from what was, presumably, a destructive relationship. On a secondary level, it should be the hope and intent of any Christian community to attempt the reconciliation of the former wife and husband to each other. The problem associated with this hope is that for divorce to make a difference in the lives of those who are divorced the separation must be permanent in many cases. If not, the separation is more akin to "trial separation" than to divorce (the possibility of "trial separations" is not a conversation I have space to engage in this paper).

Regarding the marks of the community in reconciliation see, Miroslav Volf *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 119-131.

[62] McClendon, 161-162

thing as they did for the marriage: go back to the community and asked to be divorced. If the community is responsible for holding the couple to their vows, then only the community should be able to dissolve those vows. Further, as people of the Spirit, the church should be more equipped to handle the process and results of divorce than is the state.

If the couple requests a divorce from the community, it becomes the job of the community to judge on the validity of the case.[63] This seems to make sense of the communal directive of the Matthean "exception clause," especially when the linguistic meaning of the exception is now buried under 2000 years of speculation and writing. If it was originally intended to function as a guide within a community, then restoring the ability of the community to function as a divorcing body would make the exception clause less ethereal and more grounded in the lived politics of the church.[64]

The Marks of Christian Divorce

In this section I will explore the marks of a Christian divorce as proposed above. I will do this by both examining the marks themselves, as Christian practices which stand behind the practice of divorce; as such, I am attempting to re-construct divorce in the image of the church, instead of having the church re-constructed by each divorce that separates members of the community. I will also attempt to address the potential questions regarding the practice and process of divorce by creating a hypothetical case study in which the various facets of a divorce would arise in a community attempting to navigate these problems well.[65]

The mutually informative practices of forgiveness, reconciliation, and redemption help to define the entire Christian ontology and identity. Systematic theology has been busily preoccupied explicating the realities of each of these for hundreds of years, taking up volumes upon volumes. I do not intend to add a new voice to this endeavor, but rather to point to the social value and "politics of forgiveness"[66] or "embrace"[67] that defines the church's existence in

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[63] While I do not have time or space to consider the ramifications of such a claim directly in this paper, I am thinking specifically of the possibilities an understanding of discernment would offer a community attempting to moderate the "rightness" or "wrongness" of a divorce. Hays states, "In other words, I would take the New Testament's hermeneutical process of discerning exceptions to the rule of Jesus' teaching to be instructive about the *process* of moral deliberation in the church on this matter. *The canonical witness itself exemplifies a process of reflection and adaptation of the fundamental normative prohibition against divorce*." Hays, 372. (Emphasis original).

For a robust engagement with the practice of discernment, see Amos Yong's chapter "Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Spiritual Discernment," in *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic) (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), 129-162.

[64] "…the teaching of Matthew 5.31-32 comes into focus within its communal context in the Sermon on the Mount: the purpose of Jesus' instruction is to shape a community that will be the light of the world (Matt. 5.14-16)." Hays, 365. See also, 366-367.

[65] Because of the controversial nature of divorce, remarriage, and the numerous overlapping factors, I should be clear here that I am not condoning divorce as normative. I consider divorce to be both sin (it is a breaking of vows, and entails some innate violence, as evidenced in the Malachi passage, along with various other failures by the couple and the community), and a result of sin (as humans we live in relation to principalities and powers, we are still "becoming" in light of the cross, and practically, it is presumably the actual sin of one spouse against the other that will prompt the desire for divorce).

[66] "…the practice of community establishment and maintenance was at the center of the social ethic of earliest Christianity; if its Apostolic Writings speak authoritatively to us, it is such community practice that they require. This practice was for them no mere social convenience; the risen Christ was at the center of their meetings; their assemblies were his "body"; their nourishment was his proffered selfhood. Just such a practice of community is

the world. As these are definitive of the church's existence, whatever practices the church undertakes must be Spirit empowered so the church can live out these formational politics; indeed, any practice in which the church engages that does not live into forgiveness is a practice that is against the church's ontology.

If divorce within the life of the church is to be faithful to this ontology, it must have as its goal the restoration of the people involved. As mentioned above, the restoration will first be that of the individuals within the community. The couple who is divorcing, as a married couple within the community, is now splitting, but the individuals remain part of the community and will need the support of the community to be made whole again, in the face of brokenness. This forgiveness is part of the drama of salvation: it is the process by which the *cosmos* is reconciled to God, and by which humanity is made whole.[68] I will attempt to further address the practice of forgiveness within the constructed "case study" below.

Re-crafting the process of divorce to rightly fit within the social politics of the church requires, as mentioned above, the church to be imaginative in its life.[69] This means that much of the way that the church thinks about itself must fall under the scrutiny of its own imagination. Because of the necessity of imaginative work, and because of the narratival nature of divorce, that is, that every divorce takes place within the overlapping narratives of individuals, communities, marriages, and children, I will thus attempt a narratival approach to consider the practice of divorce. I know of no case studies in which the drama of divorce as a Christian practice is considered, thus in the following, I am crafting an admittedly hypothetical marriage and divorce within a community. The benefit of such a creation is the possibility of isolating specific practices within the narrative. The drawbacks are the obvious reality that each narrative of marriage and divorce will include multifaceted differences and nuances, which cannot be taken into account. Aware of the problems, what follows is what I imagine marriage and divorce to be (nuances and differences within narratives withstanding), within the life of a Christian community.

Because the life of the Christian is one that is to be lived in community, the romantic life of the individual is to be lived vis-à-vis the community.[70] For our purposes here, let us consider the romantic relationship of two individuals who are both part of a congregation that practices life together. As the relationship moves towards marriage, the couple asks the community to bless their union. They choose close friends to be the witnesses at the ceremony, and the minister

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the social norm for Christian existence. So the second lesson is part of the first: For us, too, a central skill for this community maintenance is forgiveness of one another, based upon and empowered by our own forgiveness from God through Jesus Christ." McClendon, 229. See 209-239.

[67] Volf, 99-166. See especially, 140-147.

[68] I understand forgiveness to be caught up in the larger drama of God's salvation of the *cosmos*, and while it might be an end to itself in some cases, it is not just a metaphysical idea, but, rather a social practice that includes the making right of economic injustices as evidenced in the Lord's prayer, "forgive us our debts…" This is especially important in the drama of divorce, as one of the issues that must be addressed is the economic justice required in the division of property. See John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster,* 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 62.

[69] I am using the well-known language of Walter Brueggemann in *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2d ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), as well as Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*, who uses the language of imagination frequently in this essay.

[70] There have been numerous popular books written about dating, and the variants thereof, within the life of the Christian over the past several decades. While I do not greatly appreciate most, if any, of these, I do think that the nature of "dating" relationships within the Christian community is a conversation in need of a re-imagination, and a discourse infused by a new common language, as referenced above.

leads the couple through their vows before God and the gathered congregation. Prior to the marriage those who are to be witnesses to the marriage should have the ability to speak to the couple regarding the marriage. If there are problems that the community has recognized, the community should be responsible for helping the couple work out these problems before the marriage or to help them graciously end the relationship before they say their vows.

Assuming, however, that the community has witnessed the coming-together of two individuals, and the gathered congregation witnessed to the ceremony, what happens, if within the life of the couple, one person (let us assume it is the wife[71]) becomes aware of a situation that makes her want to divorce her husband?[72]

This is where the variants are obviously important. If her husband has engaged in some activity that is harmful, or potentially dangerous (like abuse), then the community should be the group to which she turns first,[73] knowing they will accept her and attend to the immediate needs she faces (and those of the children, if there are children). This is obviously complicated by the legal ramifications of violence.[74] She approaches the community and explains her concerns. The community hears her "case" and judges the possibilities of response. It is at this point that the practice of discernment, referenced above, is of utmost importance. Discernment is, according to Yong, "…a hermeneutics of life that is both a divine gift and a human activity aimed at reading correctly the inner processes of all things—persons, institutions, events, rites, experiences and so on."[75] He points to the "phenomenology" that is required for the process of spiritual discernment: "In short, only sensitive observation of the behaviors and manifestations of the thing in question enables one to pierce through its outer forms into its inner habits, dispositions, tendencies, and powers."[76]

This is also where the reflection on practice of the community is important in developing a teleological understanding of the process in which it is engaged: the goals of forgiveness and reconciliation should form the discernment process. If the stories of the wife and husband lead to the conclusion that the wife's complaints are true, then the community[77] is faced with the further deliberative process of response to the problem. Is there a way in which the couple can remain together, remain faithful to their vows? Can the community strengthen the marriage? Are their

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[71] I am intentional with the choice of gender here. I am attempting to follow the biblical norm of divorce in a consistent trajectory towards egalitarianism. I do not think that women are innocent in all divorces; I am simply creating a narrative in which the possibility for egalitarianism seems more obvious.

[72] John Howard Yoder's chapter on "Binding and Loosing," in *Body Politics*, 1-13, is a great treatment of the Matthew 18 directive regarding community reconciliation. This practice is one that would be important in the life of a Christian marriage that is moving towards divorce in much the same way it is important to the members of a community who are at odds with each other.

[73] I am not saying that a person could not go to their immediate family for support or care, but rather am pointing to the hope that the family of God is to be even stronger than the biological family, though for some, their biological family is an intricate part of their Christian community, and will be even more equipped to care for the hurt spouse. Hauerwas' "Grace Upon Grace" is specifically about the relationship of biological family and the Christian family.

[74] I affirm the need for a legal system to retain order in the world. How the community engages this system (especially in its violent nature) is, however, a matter that deserves the direct attention of the Christian community.

[75] Yong, 129.

[76] Ibid., 151.

[77] By community I do not mean a group over against the main players in the drama. I assume that the couple is part of the community that is mutually submissive to each other: the wife and husband are both actively contributing to the process of discernment regarding their own situation. If the community simply sits in judgment of the couple, the possibility of the misuse of power and the potential of injustice are multiplied greatly.

extenuating circumstances that can be addressed? For instance, can the abusive spouse receive therapy for issues that are motivating him to violence? If this is a possibility, the community can offer economic support, by paying for the therapy, or helping with other bills.[78]

What happens, though, if the community determines that divorce is indeed the end? It is still important for the underlying issues of forgiveness and reconciliation to have primacy. The community should retain this narrative in approaching the actualization of divorce. Because of the community's role within the drama of the marriage, it shares in the guilt associated with the breaking of the covenant.[79] This shared guilt makes the emphases of forgiveness and reconciliation easier to retain: the community is seeking the same salvation that is attempting to mediate to the struggling couple, in which case the burden of guilt is held by the community making the shared burden lighter.

Since the congregation has decided that divorce is indeed the necessary end, it now falls to the community to work this out in reality. There are the spiritual issues associated with reconciliation: the continued life of the couple within the community as divorced persons. There is also the hard business of property rearrangement. The community cannot simply divide the property without considering the economic justice it is to moderate. If the woman has not been the one with the primary income (as is still often the case in rural areas), and will struggle to have food and money, it becomes imperative for the community to rightly care for her in the disbursement of monies. This does not mean however, that alimony is an immediate answer to be borrowed from the legal system. If there is not enough money between the two of them to support two households, the church has the responsibility to care for each party. The church can offer housing to one or both of the individuals. They can help financially by collecting money to help pay bills. In this way the community is actually circumventing the economic hardships presented by the normal process of divorce.[80]

It is specifically in the economic care for the divorcing couple that the Christian practice of divorce is a challenge to the "powers that be." Because of the nature of divorce within the normal legal system, it falls to the "principalities and powers"[81] to disburse the common

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[78] Is it possible that the community can function as "therapy" for such an individual? This question is beyond the scope of this paper, but as a people who are engaged in the larger drama of God's redemption, it should be that engagement in the life of the community would be "therapeutic" (I use this word knowing its loaded theological nature).

[79] John Howard Yoder thought that the biblical witness of divorce demanded that covenant is in fact indissoluble. "Bigamy is certainly not as healthy as monogamy, but this does not keep it from being possible that it might be real marriage, before God, with (in each pair) both partners permanently bound together before God…Then it cannot follow that the second union *ipse facto* invalidates the first or vice versa." "One Flesh Until Death: Conversation on the Meaning and Permanence of Marriage" (Unpublished, 1968-1984) [collection on-line]; available from http://theology.nd.edu/people/research/yoder-john/index.shtml#writings; Internet; accessed 20 June 2007. I do not disagree, in fact, with Yoder's assessment. However, I do not agree with, what he seems to assume, is the legal nature of divorce as normative. I also think that he retains a too androcentric view of divorce within the scope of this paper. Because of these two main differences in the nature of divorce, I refrain from agreeing completely with his assessment of the biblical nature of divorce.

[80] At this point I would like to suggest that the gathered community participate in a ceremony of divorce. John Shelby Spong tells of a ceremony of divorce, but I am not advocating this type of endeavor. "Can the Church Bless Divorce?," *Christian Century,*101, 1126–1127. It seems to me, that his story is lacking the real business of repentance for the collective failing of the couple and the community to keep its vows, and accepts all too readily the modern idea of the individualized self. However, I do think that the congregation should gather to be both repentant and hopeful in granting a divorce. Hays offers an excellent critique of Spong in *Moral Vision,* 348, 349, 370-372.

household goods between the two separating individuals. Precisely because they are not the church, they must judge by different means. Though they might render a just judgment, forcing an offending party to pay the offended, they cannot be concerned with "community-restoring justice."[82]

To say it a different way, within a Christian social practice of divorce as I am here suggesting, it is a disarming act to the powers that a woman would have the same ability to approach the community and request a divorce. The community would respond to a female with the same affection and care as it would a male, and thus practice discernment based on the work of Jesus instead of preconceived ideas of lordship. In the case of abused women this becomes a very strong social ethic, and allows for much more "prophetic imagination" in the working out of this process: the woman would have housing, care, training, work, child-care, etc. within the household of God, instead of being just another statistic of divorce: a single mom in a male dominated economy.

Conversely, if the husband is the one to approach the community, and the community practices discernment leading to a divorce, and rightly divides the household economy, the man is less likely to suffer the economic injustices related to alimony and child support. The community can help him care for his children, afford to continue living, and stop a cycle of poverty and injustice before it starts.

Further disarming to the principalities and powers is the fact that the church does not need the state, but in reality is standing, once again, over against the empire, and inviting the citizens of the empire into their graceful community that works in the lives of the citizens of this community to bring healing and restoration in even the worst of offenses, where everyone is living in light of the redemption granted them at the cross of God, practicing this forgiveness one to another.

The state need not worry about redemption as the split household creates differing tax brackets, different income producers, the need for what was once a single household to now supply double the living supplies for two households, and for divorced "daddies" to buy their children's affection through weekend visits that include new toys, trips to the mall, etc. Thus dissolution of marriage within the empire furthers the fragmented economy and perpetuates corporate greed and parity: the hurting single moms, and the dads who are forced to give in child support a large part of their income – a vicious process which breeds poverty, bitterness, and further hurt.

Finally, I have yet to discuss the possibility for emotional support offered by a community practiced divorce. I have used the word reconciliation several times during the course of this paper, and think that the church's politic of forgiveness informs the process of divorce. This being the case, I also think that the community, in seeking to restore the individuals to wholeness, makes space for them to continue dialog with each other. I draw this from the passage cited above, in which it is claimed that God divorced his people. The movement towards reconciliation between God and God's people is implied. Beyond this, there are biblical laws prohibiting the remarriage of the two individuals to each other after subsequent marriages to others (Deut. 24.1-4). I cite this not to discuss the problems associated with multiple marriages, but to point to the assumption that remarriages of divorced persons were happening: if divorced

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[81] McClendon, 161-162.
[82] Stassen and Gushee, 42.

couples had not been re-marrying each other there would have been no need for laws to govern the practice.

The community is not focused on having the couple remarry each other, however. It is instead, focused on ministering to the individuals, supporting them, and offering the wholeness associated with God's salvation. By offering this care, the community also helps the individuals through the problems associated with rejection and disillusionment. The individuals have a safe place within which they can explore the possibilities of romantic relationships again, and have the community to protect them from unhealthy relationships that might present themselves at points when the individual is weak. For instance, if the abusive husband of our case study goes through therapy, and is still surrounded by the community that he wronged, he is less likely to begin another relationship while still struggling with those problems. Instead the community can offer him a place where he need not experience the loneliness associated with divorce, in the same way, and offer him correction if he does begin a "rebound" relationship, or some other relationship that he still is not able to rightly participate in. In the same way, the abused wife might be drawn to a relationship and has the community there to offer her a safe space to explore the possibility of a relationship again.

If the couple has children the church is there to give support to them as well. Instead of being divided like other forms of property in a legal divorce, the children are part of a community that is mediating between their parents, and giving space for them to be angry, hurt, and confused, and also a place for them to find healing. Their place as active players in this drama is affirmed, and instead of being innocent bystanders caught in the crossfire of a violent divorce, they are cared for and nurtured by the Christian community that grieves with them.

Conclusion

I do not think that I have exhaustively considered the possibilities associated with divorce in the Christian community. In fact I am struck at the myriads of possibilities that I cannot address in a paper of this length. Instead I have sketched a preliminary view of divorce as it could be in light of the nature and practices of the church, instead of within the system that is governed by the principalities and powers. The church is the hopeful body of God, and as such is equipped to practice peacemaking, reconciliation, and hope. These are practices that seem achingly absent from the process of divorce in the lives of Christians as it is now. While it might be nice to imagine a world in which there are no divorces, the fact remains that they are happening. It comes to the church, then, to navigate this reality well, instead of abdicating responsibility for it to the empire. By practicing divorce within the gathered community, the church witnesses to the reign of God as having come into its midst even in the places where it is broken, hurting, and lacking. The church is witness to the hope that it has found in the reconciliation that God gives the *cosmos* in Jesus of Nazareth.

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"Savior" and "Lord" in the Lukan Birth Narrative: A Challenge to Caesar?[83]

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Abstract

This paper investigates whether Luke's use of "Savior" and "Lord" in Luke 2:1-11 in reference to Jesus' birth would have been heard as a challenge to the living Roman emperor. In order to determine if such is the case, this paper proceeds inductively employing the historical critical method to detail the rise of the Roman Imperial Cult and construct from the historic and linguistic convention of the time a cognitive environment likely held by hearers of the Lukan Gospel. Then employing principles of *relevance* communication theory the conclusion is reached that the hearers of the Lukan birth narrative would likely have heard Jesus' birth story as a challenge to Caesar.

Key Words: Jesus, Empire, Imperial Cult, Luke, Birth, Relevance Theory

In the midst of the Roman Empire in the second century of the Common Era a conflict erupted for the allegiance of individuals in the Roman Empire. At the crux of the conflict lay the issue of conflicting claims of lordship. Fledgling Christian communities faced the machinations of the imperial cult(s), which demanded the confession of Caesar's lordship—something they evidently considered a violation of their confession of Christ's lordship. Conversely, the Christian's refusal to confess Caesar's lordship was perceived to be offensive to the point of outright insurrection—resulting, at times, in a death sentence as in the case of Polycarp. In the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* narrative, his imperial examiner queried, "What harm is there to say, 'Caesar is Lord' and to offer incense (and other similar things) and [therefore] to save yourself?"[84] Polycarp refused to merely articulate the lordship of Caesar and was put to death. As Fantin has rightly identified, two important observations may be made from this, namely, that roughly a hundred years[85] after Paul and even less distant from the advent of the Luke–Acts corpus followers of their message perceived the social convention of affirming Caesar's lordship to be in fundamental conflict with their lordship commitment to Jesus of Nazareth.[86] Thus, the religious affections of the *Christus cult* and the affections of the imperial cult(s) became engaged in outright ideological combat to the point of bloodshed. Secondly, the circulation of this material likely functioned as religious propaganda to perpetuate resistance against syncretism on

[83] Special thanks are due Joseph Fantin for his keen insight, critical eye, and graciousness to read and reread this paper as well as Darrell L. Bock, David Hionides, Dallas Gingles, and Paul Alexander. This paper was originally presented at the 37th Annual Society for Pentecostal Studies meeting at Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina.

[84] Ti/ ga\r kako/n e0stin, ku/riov Kai=sar, kai\ e0piqu=sai (kai\ ta\ tou/toiv a0ko/louqa) kai\ diasw/zesqai; MartPol 8.2 All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. Here we are following the Greek text of Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and Translations,* 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007).

[85] Polycarp's death likely occurred in the middle of the second century CE. Cf. Ibid., 301–2.

[86] Both this and the subsequent observations are drawn from Joseph D. Fantin, "The Lord of the Entire World: Lord Jesus, a Challenge to Lord Caesar?" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sheffield, 2007), 1–2.

the part of Christians with respect to the claims and demands of the imperial cult(s). If these conflicts were present within seventy to a hundred years from the time that the Luke–Acts corpus began circulating, might the seeds of conflicting religious affections have been sown early in the tradition?

Peering just below the surface of this conflict unmasks a more complex issue hindering the historiographical (re)construction of the period and analysis of the documents, namely, the *crux interpretum* of religion—the problem of the nature and referentiality of religious language.[87] The essence of this theoretical problem lies in the very bedrock of the historical and interpretive task of exegesis. How can one frame a text, written in religious language, in a cognitive environment of old, taking seriously the historic-political concerns of the period in which it was originally written, and attempt to reconstruct the meaning of a text to its receptor audience? This is precisely the task taken up here with specific focus on the Lukan birth narrative (2:1–11) and the religio-political phenomena of the Roman imperial cult. Is there any warrant to understand a relation of the two? If so, how do these aspects relate? Moreover, how does this inform the project of interpreting the birth pericope and Luke-Acts? With these questions in mind, the present study turns to examine the possibility that the Lukan birth pericope could include *a polemic aspect* against the imperial cult and her imperator. In what follows we shall articulate our limitations, delimit terms, and identify the methodological framework employed and then turn to (re)construct the historical rise of the imperial cult(s) and engage the Lukan pericope 2:1–11.

Limitations, Definitions, and Methodological Framework

Investigating the Luke-Acts material is a task that itself is vexed with difficulty. There is a genuine hindrance to ascertaining answers to many vital questions concerning Luke-Acts, which stands as a formidable barrier to recasting specific socio-political aspects coloring the milieu of the first century. Therefore, setting the Luke-Acts corpus in line with the imperial cult, though a quite appealing prospect, is fraught with seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Rowe has detailed these problems as follows: (1) the provincial nature of the Roman Empire, (2) the cult's lack of homogeneity in expression at various locales, (3) the dating problem of Luke-Acts with reference to the Emperor(s) and Reign(s) during which the cultic praxis evolved, and ultimately (4) the present state of ignorance regarding the place or destination of Luke-Acts.[88] Here two isolated historiographical reconstructive highways intersect slowing traffic to a near standstill. That is, not only must an inquiry of this nature be concerned with the history of the Roman Empire during the Koine period (ca. 330 BCE–330 CE), the succession of emperors, and the multiform and divergent religio-political developments of the

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[87] For Ludwig Feuerbach, in the nineteenth century, religious language disguised what at bottom was language about our own moral ideals. Cf. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 2d ed (trans. Marian Evans; London: Truebner & Co., 1881), 9. Karl Marx posited a similar, but distinctive theory that religious language was inherently classist—an ideological tool or power structure of the ruling class wielded to subject the shivering denizens to the whims of the ruler class. Cf. Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels, *On Religion*, Classics in Religious Studies, vol. 3 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1982). See also Talbert's discussion of this in Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke-Acts in Its Mediterranean Milieu* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), 79–80.

[88] C. Kavin Rowe, "Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult: A Way through the Conundrum?," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27, no. 3 (2005): 279-83. Although others have engaged the question of Luke–Acts in the imperial context such as Richard J. Cassidy, *Jesus, Politics, and Society: A Study of Luke's Gospel* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978); R. J. Cassidy and P. J. Scharper eds., *Political Issues in Luke–Acts* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983).

imperial cult in varying degrees and localities, but it must also be concerned documentary issues of authorship, date, and destination of the document in which the pericope is situated. Compounding this is the literary-critical task of determining the function of the pericope in the narrative and thereby moving to construct a plausible theory of how that narrative might be heard by its readership. Amidst this veritable mine field the researcher must tip-toe through in order not to fall prey to the aforementioned difficulties is the linguistic quagmire of which the entire field is composed, namely, how is religious language used in terms of human psycho-social reality?

The magnitude of these collective barriers is far too great for the critical analysis that each point deserves to be treated fully. The limited scope, though preventing such due attention, necessitates a brief interaction with the pertinent issues so as to formulate footing upon which the present study may rest and indeed, support further argument. Inverting the order of issues as presented above, starting first with literary concerns, in light of the veiled existence of the explicit date and destination of Luke couched in historical uncertainty, a way must be forged to span this gap. Secondly, due to the fluctuation in cultic praxis, taking seriously both the degree of religious affection and diversity in local expression, the aim of movement into authorial intention in relation of the text to historical-religious phenomenon must redirect its efforts toward a common denominator as it were. That is to say, so formidable is the opposition to a study such as the present one, that a different road altogether must be traversed. This road is offered by employing a few principles of *relevance* communication theory, in order to construct, a *cognitive environment* which on one hand is firmly situated in the historical socio-linguistic realm necessary and equally stratified so as to provide for movement geographically and chronologically through the first century thereby transcending, in a sense, the chronological difficulties of the cult, its multiform expression, location, and the similar issues with the Lukan text thereby enabling a serious inquiry as to whether readers in divergent locations would have *heard* the text as including an aspect of *challenge to the Imperial cult and the Emperor.* Stepping back from the table with reference to determining whether Luke wrote polemically first and focusing on how readers may have heard the text, provides an attainable goal, which may indeed have implications retroactively into the former concern.[89]

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[89] This methodology has been adapted in dialogue with Rowe's *article* identifying the problems as well as the method set forth in Fantin's "Lord of the Entire World." The former provides the broad stream directing attention toward readership generally and then moving backward in terms of what Luke might have meant. In this vein he states: "[avoiding reading Luke's intentions in light of our own constructions] if we move away from the time being from what Luke might or might not have thought and toward the likely effect of the text in a given location, may we not divine something of the relationship between Luke–Acts and the imperial cult? [286]... [subsequently he streamlines his study's purview saying:] there remains the possibility that elements in the text of Luke–Acts by virtue of their clarity and/or audacity would have been heard in connection to the imperial cult irrespective of chronological difference [287]." This study is inclined to agree, but sees a missing component to Rowe's method, namely, the addition of the penetrating force of relevance theory to the case, a methodology championed by Fantin, "Lord of the Entire World." This latter study mounts a formidable case for some instances of the term ku/riov in the *corpus Paulinum* as polemic of the living Caesar. We are also familiar with Rowe's published doctoral dissertation *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft; Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006). His exegesis is outstanding and he offers a good case to identify this usage of ku/riov intimately with `hwhy` in view of the broader narratival development of the ku/riov theme within the gospel's theological framework (so 52–54; cf. 54 n67, *et al.*). My argument in this paper pertains to whether the usage in Luke 2:11 specifically may possess *an aspect* of polemic against the imperial cult/imperator. Further, I distance myself by querying whether it would have been *heard* in this way. Thus, Rowe's exegetical thesis pertaining to the usage of ku/riov in the Gospel does not preclude, in my estimation, an aspect or secondary sense in which this specific passage may have been heard in light of the *Sitz im*

Furthermore, the present work will employ a few salient principles from communication theory. The first of which is *cognitive environment* which should be understood as "…the set of assumptions which [a person] is capable of constructing and as accepting as true."[90] Therefore, the first aim of this study will be to construct a cognitive environment in the shadow of the imperial cult in the Roman Near East, with special emphasis upon the key term Swth/r in tandem with Ku/riov. For present purposes, cognitive environment will be used to refer to the general, communal cognitive environment of people living in a specific milieu, namely, that of the Roman provincial areas of the East. What is more, the current study is exclusively interested in the cognitive environment *pertaining to religious loyalties and affections*, though that bears significant overlap with socio-political aspects, as will be obvious below. Secondly, operating upon the principle of *relevance*[91] a *default* referent must be established for the term Swth/r so as to ground the evidence for a polemic against the emperor. Thirdly, in order to move in this direction *polemic* also must be defined, which this study understands as "*a communicative act which challenges and/or gives offence in the form of a challenge to another*" person or "*claim to a role*."[92] Thus, here the concern is whether Luke's use of Swth/r and Ku/riov in some way challenges the position of the living Caesar. Therefore, having cast the contours of the present scope of inquiry, in light of its limitations, clearing away ambiguity with reference to definitions, and framing a plausible methodology, the focus moves now to executing the method upon the data.

Towards a Cognitive Environment in the Roman Near East

Here we are concerned with an articulation of those primary assumptions related to one's *religious loyalties and affections* within the context of the Roman Near East in the first century CE. Two aspects of central importance to this enterprise are the rise of the imperial cult and the political ideology of the Empire. On the first score, we now move to trace the emergence of the Imperial Cult diachronically. Ruler worship, in its heightening expression in Rome, was not a derivation exclusively of the Romans. Rather the practice had historical precedent in varying forms and degrees in Babylonia, Persia, China, Japan, Egypt, and among the Greeks.[93] The Empire of Rome was long in existence prior to the advent of an emperor of its own. Indeed, more than seven hundred years prior to Augustus (Octavian), Rome existed.[94] In 510 BCE, Rome became a Republic. The Empire increased exponentially in regard to both land and population, while it perpetually dealt with the struggle to ground their governmental locus of authority.

Leben of various reading communities in the late first century/early second century CE.

[90] Diane Blakemore, *Relevance and Linguistic Meaning: The Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse Markers*, Cambridge Studies in Linguistics: 99 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 69.

[91] Relevance will be further explained below. However, *relevance* is a principle of communication that suggests that effective communication obtains when a communicative offering bears the maximally relevant content with the least amount of processing effort. Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 46-50, 118ff. There is much to articulating this theory that should be said, but is outside the scope. See Blakemore, *Relevance*, 69ff. Relevance theory is indebted to the linguistic work of H. Paul Grice, "Logic and Conversation," in *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3: Speech Acts*, eds. P. Cole, and J. Morgan (New York: Academic Press, 1975), 41–58.

[92] Fantin, "Lord of the Entire World", 5. Emphasis original.

[93] Louis Matthews Sweet, *Roman Emperor Worship* (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1919), 15–36.

[94] Chris Scarre, *Chronicle of the Roman Emperors: The Reign-by-Reign Record of the Rulers of Imperial Rome* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 8.

Eventually, by way of broad historical strokes, there ensued a political tension between Julius Caesar and Pompey "the Great" around 50 BCE. Caesar defeated Pompey and became the sole, supreme ruler of Rome. This unification under Julius demarcates the most fundamental paradigmatic shift in Roman history, solidifying the most ominous of ancient civilizations as the world superpower.

This victory marked the inception of the Julio-Claudian dynasty (31 BCE–68 CE). Julius was murdered, which eventually led to the rise of Gaius Octavius (later called Augustus). After Julius' death, Octavian was thrust into a great conflict with Marcus Antonius (Antony) which prevented his immediate rise to supreme power. During the period of this struggle, Julius was officially deified; that is to say, he was "recognized as a god of the Roman state…," thus making Octavian "son of a god."[95] The architecture of Roman religion broadly was polytheistic. Thus, the addition of a god or gods was not inherently detrimental to the larger landscape. Nor does this necessarily imply that Julius was thought of in the post-Enlightenment sense of divinity; rather, divinity was a loose term semantically, which bore senses ranging from transcendental deity to a great human hero bordering on superhuman in character or power. Thus, whatever emperor worship in Rome became in the end, the events here with Julius provided a starting point for a religio-ideological development that would undergo growth and development.

While it is probable, though uncertain, as to whether Julius received divine worship during his lifetime, the same cannot be said of Augustus. Octavian was given the "official" *divine* title "Augustus" in 27 BCE.[96] This was conferred upon him largely in the shadow of his conquest of Actium (ca. 31 BCE) and Egypt, that is, in his pursuit of Antony and Cleopatra, who both committed suicide in 30 BCE. Probably bearing significant import from the Egyptian understanding of the emperor's status as divine-human, Augustus was cast in this light by the Egyptians first. Through these events, nationalistically, the Roman Empire was being unified under the Caesar politically, militarily, and most notably *religiously*.

The landscape of the rise of the cults was diverse.[97] For instance, there were provincial cults, established by the government, which were less explicit in their rhetoric for the living emperor in so far as they were restrained from using the term qeo/v explicitly of the emperor.[98] From the outset of established provincial cultic temples, honors were required of the citizens to both Rome and Julius Caesar under Octavian; however, a separate cult to the emperor was distinguished from the honors given to these two.[99] Thus, many cities were physically altered with evidences of the prominence of the cultic praxis. Enshrined in Ephesus was the seven meter high colossus of Titus.[100] In Caesarea Maritima there were two colossi, which Josephus

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[95] Michael Grant, *The Roman Emperors: A Biographical Guide to the Rulers of Imperial Rome 31 BC–AD 476* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1985), 10.

[96] Ibid., 13.

[97] The complexities of the cults are magnified by its various geographic manifestations (already mentioned) and further by the types of cults. For a discussion of cults primarily in the East see S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge Cambridgeshire; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Focusing on the cults in the West see the work still in progress Duncan Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West: Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1987). Finally, for cults with a focus in Rome see Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 2002).

[98] Fantin, "Lord of the Entire World", 112.

[99] See Cassius Dio 51.20.6–8 (tr. Cary; LCL).

[100] So Steven J. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia, and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1993), 60-63. However, Price argues for it being Domitian. Price, *Rituals and Power*,

mentioned, in the temple "at the mouth of the harbor."[101] In Athens at the Acropolis stood the Roma-Augustus temple near the Parthenon. Thus, towering in the midst of the ancient world were the trappings of Imperial ideology penetrating the common areas of the peoples.[102] For present purposes several salient points have been established. First, with the unification of Empire under Julius a central figure took the world-stage. Second, the veneration of Julius quickly transformed by the melding of religious affections and nationalism into worship subsequent to his death. Octavian being Julius' successor and son was elevated immediately and coupled with the religious reform and revitalization of Roman religion he championed, a cult formed for him. Tacitus polemically charged him with leaving "small room for the worship of heaven" because of the temples and worship of himself.[103] Finally, the cult was perpetuated throughout the Julio-Claudian dynasty and well into the Flavian era.[104] Therefore, the prominence of the emperor was encroaching upon centrality within the Roman religious experience. Having looked ever so briefly at the rise of the Imperial cult, we now turn to look at the role of the Emperor and his cult within the Empire.

The Emperor permeated every aspect of Roman life. Though the Roman Empire was extraordinarily vast in size, its economy was largely agrarian and outside its metropolitan areas its peoples were intrinsically poor. Thus, the Caesar was the "savior" (Swth/r) in so far as he "wrought good works for the mass of mankind" and brought peace to the world.[105] As divine-savior he provided food and coinage; moreover, it was the savior that sustained an economy in which individuals could make use of these goods for their purposes.[106] Therefore, salvation, in the context of the era was not a distant metaphysical event through which an individual was "pronounced righteous" before a holy deity, rather it was more pragmatic, pertaining to *health, protection, and provision*. Thus, shrouded in a mystical veil was a soteriology of life and provision intimately connected to the emperor. It was this type of meaning that was evoked in the minds of the populous pertaining to a "savior" and the "salvation," which that figure would offer. Indeed, as the "Savior" he was the liberator of the oppressed, even over the whole world:

> This is he who not only loosed but broke the chains which had shackled and pressed so hard on the habitable world. This is he who exterminated wars … He was the first and the greatest and the common benefactor … The whole habitable world voted him no less than celestial honours. These are so well attested by temples, gateways, vestibules, porticoes, that every city which contains magnificent works new and old is surpassed in these by the

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[101] *Wars*, 1.21.7. Further, Herod built temples of worship for both the emperor and Rome at Caesarea Maritima, Sebaste, and Banias (ca. 20–30 CE [*Cf.* Josephus *War* 1.403, 404, 414; *Ant*. 15.363–64, 339]). James S. McLaren, "Jews and the Imperial Cult: From Augustus to Domitian," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27, no. 3 (2005): 259.

[102] *Cf.* Heidi Hänlein-Schäfer, *VENERATIO AUGUSTI: Eine Studie zu den Tempeln des ersten römischen Kaisers* (Archaeologica 39; Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 1985).

[103] *Annals*, 110; tr. Jackson, LCL. Cassius Dio and Tacitus disagree over Augustus in one sense. The former argues that Augustus was not worshiped explicitly in Rome whereas the latter challenges that notion. However, the issue may be related to the worship of the emperor's *genius* or *numen*, which Tacitus likely saw through as a semantic game for the reality of worshipping the emperor. Fantin, "Lord of the Entire World", 116.

[104] Ibid., 112-24.

[105] William Warde Fowler, *Roman Ideas of Deity: In the Last Century Before the Christian Era* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1914), 104.

[106] Ibid., 109.

> beauty and magnitude of those appropriated to Caesar, and particularly in our own Alexandria.[107]

All of these aspects were subsumed under the role of Augustus.

At the deification of Julius a new class was born, namely, the imperial priesthood. This further developed into priestly colleges and an entire sacerdotal system, of which, Augustus was named *pontifex maximus*—that is the controller of all sacred and religious matters.[108] The Augustan cult reached its zenith, while he lived. In fact, "The machinery of the cult was very complete and elaborate from the start. The whole system of worship was imperialized just as it stood. The Senate established the Augustalia or Augustan celebrations."[109] Thus, the divine-emperor became the *locus of national and religious identity* around which the people's lives in the Empire were oriented, even brandishing the festive life (i.e. games) of the people—in honor of the "great god." Sweet concurs: "The emperor-cult was the only available religious instrument for promoting the unification of the Empire."[110]

Equally important to present purposes concerning the imperial cult were the economic factors. Primarily, there are two aspects through which the cult was enmeshed in the economic landscape of the Empire and its provinces. The first is that at the imperial games, a time at which, on the basis of the gratuitousness of the emperor, food was given to all. Beyond simply unifying the Empire under supreme benevolence, it cast the Caesar forth as the *provider* to the impoverished. Thus, the games created an event at which merchants and vast amounts of money were exchanged; this sustained and influenced the local economies of the Empire, all by the sponsorship of the Imperator. All of this worked to knit the fabric of Roman society together. Secondly, imperial worship necessitated temples; this caused movement toward constructing temples across the Empire, which catalyzed the greater movement toward the extraction of monies from the whole populous. Hence, the immense construction movement had multiform influences upon both economics and politics within the Empire and her outlying territories. Much could be said here regarding the oppression of the poor, as a result of this economic practice, though unfortunately that falls outside the present focus. In drawing these two aspects together, the festivals and imperial worship established an economy, by way of imperial *tribute* and *taxation* to support the Empire and her cultus. From all this activity, two taxes drew to the fore, namely, the poll-tax and the land-tax—"the latter was crucial because the economy of the world was still founded in agriculture."[111] So the economic injustices were acutely felt in the agrarian areas, a point that is crucial when one considers the land of Palestine.

Another important facet of cultic practice, informing the cognitive environment of those during the time, occurred when Augustus began demanding "oaths" to be sworn by his divine *Genius*,[112] that is, "…some type of life force, a divine aspect of an individual, possibly even a protective spirit."[113] These oaths in the context of the expression of Christianity, likely

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[107] Philo, *De Legatione* §§146–50; tr. Colson, LCL, Vol. X.

[108] Fergus Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World*: *31 BC–AD 377* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 355.

[109] Sweet, 69.

[110] Ibid, 88.

[111] Grant, 14.

[112] Allen Brent, *The Imperial Cult and the Development of Church Order: Concepts and Images of Authority in Paganism and Early Christianity before the Age of Cyprian* (Boston: Brill, 1999), 61. Properly, Augustus eschewed early worship of his Genius until subsequent to assuming the role of *pontifex maximus*.

[113] Fantin, 101.

contemporary with the writing of Luke (i.e. the Pauline or late Pauline era), were of such a worshipful and religious character that Christians refused, sometimes to their own martyrdom, to profess allegiance Caesar.[114] From this, it is clear that the Jews and those Christians which rose out of Jewish contexts, especially during the period under consideration, being staunch monotheists, surely would have reacted with equally as much disdain. Hence, the religious and political aspects of the Roman society, and virtually all societies of the ancient world, cannot be bifurcated, but rather are intimately wed together. It is, therefore, quite lucid that there existed a progressive deepening in the relationship between imperial worship and socio-economic privilege beginning with Augustus (oaths specifically coming to the fore in 12 BCE). Resultantly, the emperor had taken on a central role in the Roman Empire and in the daily, economic, and religious life of the populous.

Not just was the emperor's person exalted, but his *birth* was exalted and special language arose around his exaltation that is of primary importance. There are two evidences that must be taken into consideration. First, Paulus Fabius Maximus came up with the notion of changing the local lunar calendar with the solar reckoning of the Julian calendar, as it was used in Rome. This idea was proposed to the Provincial Assembly, responsible for emperor worship at the provincial level.[115] He writes:

> (It is hard to tell) whether the birthday of our most divine Caesar Augustus (h9 tou~ qeiota/tou Kai/sarov gene/qliov h9me/ra) spells more of joy or benefit, this being a date that we could probably without fear of contradiction equate with the beginning of all things (th=| tw~n pa/ntwn a0rxh=i) …he restored stability, when everything was collapsing and falling into disarray, and gave a new look to the entire world that would have been most happy to accept its own ruin had not the good and common fortune of all been born, Caesar Augustus. (Lines 4–9)[116]

This letter prefaced the actual reply of the Assembly which is commonly referred to as the Priene calendar inscription (ca. 9 BCE):

> [30] Decree of the Greek Assembly in the province of Asia, on motion of the High Priest Apolionios, son of Menophilos, of Aizanoi- **WHEREAS** Providence that orders all our lives has in her display of concern and generosity in our behalf adorned our lives with the highest good: **Augustus**, whom she has filled with arete [virtue] for the benefit of humanity, [35] and has in her beneficence granted us and those who will come after us [a Savior (swth=ra)] who has made war to cease and who shall put everything [in peaceful] order; and whereas Caesar, [when he was manifest], transcended the expectations of [all who had anticipated the good news], not only by surpassing the benefits conferred by his predecessors but by leaving no expectation of surpassing him to those who would come after him, [40] with the result that the birthday of our God (tou= qeou=) signaled (h]rcen de\ tw~I ko/smwi tw~i di 0 au0to\n eu0angeli/wn h9 gene/qliov h9me/ra tou= qeou=) the beginning of Good News for the world because of him; . . . [47] .

[114] Ibid,. 220–21; also, all of Ch. 5.
[115] Graham Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 31.
[116] Cited in Ibid.

> . . (proconsul Paul Fabius Maximus) has discovered a way to honor Augustus that was hitherto unknown among the Greeks, namely to reckon time from the date of his nativity; therefore, with the blessings of Good Fortune and for their own welfare, [50] the Greeks in Asia **Decreed** that the New Year begin for all the cities on September 23, which is the birthday of Augustus; and, to ensure that the dates coincide in every city, all documents are to carry both the Roman and the Greek date, and the first month shall, in accordance with the decree, be observed as the Month of Caesar, [55] beginning with 23 September, the birthday of Caesar.[117]

Here not only is the calendar found to have been organized around the birth of the emperor evidencing the significance of this figure's *birth* bringing joy to the world, but several important titular ascriptions are made exposing the rhetoric adorning public places concerning the emperor. Several facets of this inscription must be unpacked. First, the presence of Augustus' *person* is portrayed as benevolent to all humanity. Second, he is explicitly called swth=ra ("savior"). What is meant by "savior" is colored by the deeds which Augustus' presence has wrought, namely, the cease of wars—*peace* and *prosperity*. Moreover, his birth is referred to as his *appearance* (e0pifanei=n) a time that exceeded *all good news* (eu0ange/lia pa/ntwn). This greatness exceeded anyone who had come before *and* everyone who would follow. Indeed, Augustus' birth was the birth of "our god" (qeou=). What is more, this *birth* signaled Good News for the *whole world*, namely, the birth of god Augustus. This verbose rhetoric was found in public view at Priene dating to approximately the ninth year BCE. Hence, the terminology of "god (qeo\v), savior (Swth/r)," and "good news (eu0aggeli/on)" were intimately bound up with Imperial ideology, nationalism, and religious expression prior to the dawn of the first century CE.

This inscription stands as a point of penetration through which we may access the linguistic environment of those in Priene and the surrounding territories at the dawn of the first century CE. This is the *most* significant aspect to reconstructing a plausible hypothesis as to what the cognitive environment of the day might have looked like. The way individuals employed terms informs the way in which they *viewed reality*, and gives great insight into their ideas, symbols, and language. Since the Caesar was the most supreme figure in Rome surpassed in importance by no other figure, he may rightly be viewed as the *default referent* to the terms "savior" (Swth/r) and "gospel/Good News" (eu0aggeli/on).[118] The calendar inscription alone justifies the notion that by the time of the first century CE, conceptually these terms *a priori* bore semantic stock or *normative* (default) reference—the living Caesar. Also, there is much to commend the notion that this linguistic convention was perpetuated through the line of Caesars rather than dropping out of vogue. For instance, Gaius Caligula is referred as "savior and

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[117] Here the Enlish of the inscription has been taken from Danker whereas the Greek was supplemented from Dittenberger (OGIS): IPriene 105.30-56=OGIS 458.30-56; Frederick W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis, MO.: Clayton Pub. House, 1982), 217; W. Dittenberger (ed.), *Orientis Graecae Inscriptiones Selectae* (2 vols., Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1903-5; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1960) 2.48-60. In his commentary on this inscription Danker notes the many semantic parallels between these notions with regard to Caesar and the same terms with reference to Jesus in the New Testament (i.e. "savior, gospel," and the notion of beneficence to the whole world) (220).

[118] Indeed, the default referent of Ku/riov in the superlative sense of "supreme Lord" would also be the living Caesar. Fantin, 241.

benefactor" by Philo writing sometime after his death (ca. 41).[119] Moreover, Josephus records that at the ascension of Vespasian to the throne "every city kept festival for the good news (e9w/rtazen eu0agge/lia) and offered sacrifices on his behalf.[120] Thus, these terms continued to be used throughout the Roman world in the first century CE.

The Lukan Birth Narrative: Luke 2:1–11

The text under present consideration falls within the genre of historical-narrative or more properly a biography.[121] Indeed, the gospel of Luke is not as some have supposed an entirely unique formulation of the day, but rather stands in line with the literary practice of ancient bi/ov and in sharpening precision further, the text in question is a birth narrative within a biography. As Miller has pointed out ancient biographies normatively contained a unique and foreshadowing birth narrative illustrative of the character of the person about whose life the work described.[122] What is more, often the hero's birth was attributed to a god directly impregnating their mother, thereby making them a "son of a god." Indeed, this is the case with Olympic heroes such as Theagenes[123], Philosophers such as Plato[124] and Pythagoras, and most importantly Caesar Augustus. The latter's birth accounts attribute his birth to the god Apollo.[125] While there is no suggestion here being made that the birth account of Jesus necessarily parallels that of Augustus or the others mentioned, for many of the details are disparate from the gospel accounts. The importance here is that heroic birth narratives played a fundamental part in ancient biographies by coloring the character of the hero in terms of divine origin and foreshadowing future greatness. As Suetonius records the events surrounding the birth of Augustus, Quintus Catulus is shown in a dream that the boy (Augustus) will be "the savior of his country" (94:8). Therefore, within ancient biographies the birth narrative functioned literarily to introduce the character, person, and *authority* whether present or future of the biographee. With these factors in mind we turn to the Lukan birth narrative 2:1–11.[126]

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[119] *De Legatione* §§18, 22.

[120] *Bell.* IV.618.

[121] Gospel genre is hardly a resolved matter, however, the present author takes Richard A. Burridge's argument as compelling for "gospel" being closely akin to Bi/ov (Greco-Roman biography). R. A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography,* 2d ed., The biblical Resource Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 76. However, my own view would be more in line with Bi/ov being a *starting point* while understanding the NT gospels as a development from this type of genre. So Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eermans, 2003), 282.

[122] Robert J. Miller, *Born Divine: The Births of Jesus & Other Sons of God* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2003), 133.

[123] Pausanius, *Description of Greece,* Elis II.11.2–9.

[124] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 3.1–3, 45.

[125] So Dio Cassius, *History of Rome*, 45 1.2–2.4; Suetonius*, The Twelve Caesars,* Augustus 94:1–11.

[126] First something must be said of the present selection in terms of the delineation of the pericope under investigation, namely, that the text in question begins in 2:1 and concludes in v 11. This, in fact, is not the case; rather the present distinctions regarding the outset and conclusion of the pericope are conceptual for the present study. That is, most commentators recognize the broader birth narrative of Jesus extending from 2:1–20. So François Bovon and Helmut Koester, *Luke: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 1-41, Darrell L. Bock, *Luke:1–9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 44, G. B. Caird, *The Gospel of St. Luke* (New York: Seabury Press, 1968), 59-61, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke: Introduction, Translation, and Notes (I-IX)*, 1st ed., Anchor Bible Commentary, vol. 28 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 391-417, Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 99-115, Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 25, 124-40, I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke : A Commentary on the Greek*

Regarding the evidence for the document in question, factors which also intrude into questions of author and date, testify the following. No ancient source for the gospel testifies to its authorship by anyone other than Luke.[127] Though the identity of Luke is certainly an historically important aspect of Lukan studies, it does not directly impact the present argument.[128] Our concern is in terms of the final literary composition, which for simplicity's sake will be described as having an "author" named Luke. Therefore, likelihood exists that Luke accompanied Paul and wrote, quite masterfully, Luke-Acts to a predominately Gentile (and thereby Hellenized) audience.[129]

The macro-structure of the piece exemplifies the Lukan movement from birth to resurrection, placing the greatest emphasis upon movement toward Jerusalem and climaxing in the death/resurrection.[130] The micro-structure in which the pericope in question is couched stands in the midst of the birth narratives of both John and Jesus. Here Luke portrays the collision of the divine plan, prophecy, and fulfillment upon the human stage. Luke's intention to provide an historical account coupled with his attentiveness to the political landscape (*viz.,* 1:5, 2:1) add brilliant color to his literary artistry. What is more, Luke emphasized heavily the struggle, hostility, and, social subversion of the occupiers or "bourgeoisie" of his day—thus, he was consciously political.[131] That is to say, Luke did not perceive the compartmentalization of

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Text, 1st American ed., N I G T C (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 96-114, John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), xli, 93-113, Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke*, 5th. ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1922), 46-61, Robert H. Stein, *Luke* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 31, 103-11. This can be further subdivided to vv 1–7 and 8–20 or possibly vv 1–4, 5–7, 8–20. Thus, the present discussion of 2:1–11 is necessitated on the grounds of the present *scope* and constraints of this paper, not on grammatical or even a conceptual basis. As will be evident below, factors from the entire section v 1–20 will be considered, therefore, alleviating any perceived problem.

[127] Evidence for Luke is as follows (all papyri contain various pericopae): P^3 P^4 P^7 P^{42} P^{45} P ^{69} P^{75} P^{111}) A B C D E L P R T W Q C 0171*et al.* This robust testimony, with extant witnesses firmly in the mid-late second century (ca. 150–175) pushes at least one (or more) exemplars back into the late first century. For more see Philip Wesley Comfort and David P. Barrett, *The Text of the Earliest New Testament Greek Manuscripts*, A corrected, enlarged ed. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), 43, 471, 501, Daniel B. Wallace, "Luke: Introduction, Outline, and Argument," (1998), online: http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=1226 database, accessed 8 Aug 2007.

[128] Regarding the identity of Luke there have been many theories. Due to the scope of the present inquiry the views may collapsed into the "traditional" and "late" views. By "traditional" here, we mean the identification of Luke as a *companion of Paul* and the *author of Acts*. First, the "traditional" view holds that Luke was a companion of the Apostle Paul who himself was a Gentile convert to Christianity. However, such a view was not met without significant criticism some of which is evident in Pfleiderer, Jülicher, and Wezsacker who each argued strenuously for an unidentified late second century "heathen" author (A. T. Robertson, *Luke the Historian, in the Light of Research* [New York: C. Scribner's sons, 1936], 3). Arguments in favor of the traditional view would likely be predicated upon: (1) the text critical evidence (e.g. note 45 above), (2) unity and style of the Luke–Acts compendium, (3) the "we" passages (Luke 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–28:16), and (4) the improbability of assuming a virtually unknown name in order to acquire authority for a pseudonymous work (G. B. Caird, *Saint Luke* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977], 16-17); thus, probability lies in Lukan authorship, but such an identification still offers us virtually nothing in terms of *who* this "Luke" was nor does it deal with the issue(s) of potential editorializing of the document.

[129] So Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke : Introduction, Translation, and Notes (I-IX)*, 59.

[130] The literary flow of the Lukan gospel stands as follows: Prologue 1:1–4, The Infancy Narrative 1:5–2:52, The Prelude to Jesus' Ministry 3:1–4:13, The Galilean Ministry 4:14–9:50, Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem 9:51–19:27, Jesus' Ministry in Jerusalem 19:28–21:38, the Passion Narrative 22:1–23:56a, and the Resurrection Narrative 23:56b–24:53.

[131] See Philip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts : The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge, Cambridgeshire; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1-2, 201ff. Also: James Malcolm Arlandson, *Women, Class, and Society in Early Christianity : Models from Luke-Acts* (Peabody,

religious and political affections and concerns, as is the norm through post-Enlightenment taxonomic lenses. Rather, his account, taken *prima facie* must not be so tidily swept under the *Heilsgeschichte* rubic *exclusively*.[132] Furthermore, in teasing out the context of the pericope in question, the broader banner of the *Infancy Narrative* 1:5–2:52, may be divided in the following subset sections: John the Baptist's Birth Announcement 1:5–25, Jesus' Birth Announcement 1:26–38, The "Womb" Meeting 1:39–56, John's Birth 1:57–80, and Jesus' Birth 2:1–20.[133] Hence, the present passage is situated as the literary capstone or climax to the infancy narratives in Luke. They function narratival to orchestrate the actors in position upon the literary stage. Further, the infancy narratives set a distinct and complementary contrast between Jesus and John.[134] The former is set over against the latter both in terms of narrative importance,[135] but also in terms of complementary religious status. That is John is the spiritual forerunner to the Messiah-King who is to come, namely, Jesus.[136] Thus, the swirling pool of prophetic events and expectations which color the outset of Luke's gospel, essentially lead to the birth narrative of Jesus (2:1–20). Indeed, as Green has pointed out: "in terms of the Lukan *narrative*, as such the beginning of Luke-Acts is the account of Jesus' birth and childhood."[137] Therefore, the birth narrative of Jesus could hardly be *more important* to the overall portrayal of Jesus and indeed, to the function of the narrative as the *foreshadowing* of that which is to come, a matter that is enunciated when the consortium of Luke-Acts is considered.[138] The matter of *what* that means in the scope of the broader argument is the issue to which we now turn.

Luke 2:1–11 begins stating: : 0Ege/neto de\ e0n tai=v h9me/raiv e0kei/naiv e0ch=lqen do/gma para\ Kai/sarov Au0gou/stou a0pogra/fesqai pa~san th\n oi0koume/nhn (Now it happened in those days that a decree was sent out from Caesar Augustus [Gaius Octavian] to register the whole world/Empire [for taxes]). Here the transitory conjunction de\ signals the shift to new content; that facet is coupled with the constative aorist indicative e0ge/neto which views the action from a global perspective.[139] Gripping the reader at the outset of this pericope is the

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MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997).

[132] Without question Luke portrays a "salvation history" and in many ways this grid is vital to the broader enterprise of the book on the whole. The assertion here is merely that the Lukan gospel as a document may function more elaborately within its milieu.

[133] Properly, the section 2:1–52 could be considered the birth narrative, and thereby subdivided, but that is unnecessary here.

[134] David Lee, *Luke's Stories of Jesus: Theological Reading of Gospel Narrative and the Legacy of Hans Frei* (Sheffield, Engand: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 210-11.

[135] This is evident in the length of birth treatments; Jesus is given almost *twice* as much space in terms of word count/verses as John at each point of emphasis.

[136] There is also question as to how the birth narratives parallel the interaction between Abraham and God regarding the covenantal promises. See Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 51-58.

[137] Ibid.

[138] This type of foreshadowing (and elsewhere *irony*) is a feature of Lukan style. See William S. Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts: Dynamics of Biblical Narrative*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 19, 20-25, 141.

[139] Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 674, 557. Hereafter referred to as *ExSyn*. For an extended discussion of Luke's use of the construction e0ge\neto de\ see Plummer, *Luke*, 45. Pertinent here also the *complementary* infinitive a0pogra/fesqai is taken with do/gma showing the type of decree, namely, for taxes. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 3rd Rev ed. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1919), 1076. For `ajpogravfh` see: Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 108. Hereafter "BDAG."

circumstance and indeed, the man in view of this impending circumstance—Kai/sarov Au0gou/stou. Note the use of Au0gou/stou the *divine appellation* assumed by Gaius Octavius in 27 BCE, a title conferred upon him by the Senate largely for victories in Actium and Egypt, in which Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide.[140] Of equal importance is the geo-political scope which the narrative draws into purview, which was accomplished by the articular pa~v construction modifying oi0koume/nhn. Both the construction and the context support a wholative rendering rather than distributive (thus, "*whole Empire*" rather than "everyone in the Empire").[141] The importance of this is Luke's emphasis upon *Empire*.[142] Indeed, not only does he draw on the arrogant imperial idiom, but the context is concerning imperial economic oppression, namely, *taxation*. While issues revolving around the historical evidence for this census, especially under or involving Quirinius (Kurhni/ou), are controversial, they are relatively insignificant to the present concern.[143] Another issue of significance, however, is the tremendous contrast between the immense political figure and the birth of the lowly figure of Jesus. This is evident in the following ways: 1) the infant's parents are scrambling as peasants under the imperial edict, 2) the infant is e0sparga/nwsen (lit. "swaddled in strips of cloth") and placed in a "stall" (e0n fa/tnh|) used for feeding animals, 3) in view of the narrative scene are shepherds, which at least were illustrative of the *common* class of peoples,[144] 4) the infinitival construction dia\ to\ ei]nai functions causally[145] drawing out the lineal status of Joseph as clearly Davidic—a subtle shade filling out the portrait of this child's descent. These factors cast a grey, desolate backdrop to the infancy narrative in the shadow of the great Imperator Augustus.

However, at the bleakest moment in the pericope a supernatural manifestation explodes across the canvas, breaking through as it were the darkness with the angelic announcement. This movement draws to the fore Yahweh's messenger angel who announced to those terrified by his presence the forceful prohibitive imperatival command mh\ fobei=sqe ("Do not be afraid"). Here the angelic oration begins with the explanatory conjunction ga\r ("for") coupled with i0dou= ("behold") which signals the importance of the subsequent content. There is no little significance to the use of the customary present declarative indicative main verb eu0aggeli/zomai

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[140] For the significance of the title as indicative of *apotheosis* see Michael Grant, *The Roman Emperors : A Biographical Guide to the Rulers of Imperial Rome, 31 BC-AD 476* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1997), 13, James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, Hendrickson Publishers' ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 91. See also historical reconstruction of this period above.

[141] Julius W. Johnston, *The Use of PAS in the New Testament* (New York: P. Lang, 2004), 118.

[142] So Burrus: "…Luke is concerned to place the narrative of Jesus and his followers into the broader context of Roman/Judaean politics, in part by appropriating the literary conventions of historiographic prose…From the start, then, [speaking of Luke 2] readers are reminded of the political circumstance of early first-century Judaea, ruled by the Herodians…The formidable influence of the Romans is marked in Luke's text both by the imposed power of taxation conveyed by the census and by the presence of a Roman governor (and thus the threat of Roman military forces) in the neighbouring province of Syria" [Virginia Burrus, "The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles" in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, eds. Fernando F. Segovia and R.S. Sugirtharajah (London/New York: T & T Clark/Continuum, 2007), 134]. Further the lexical stock Oi0koume/nhn was *idiomatic* of the Roman Empire. So Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, 443.BDAG, 699.

[143] Every commentary grapples with this issue. See those listed in note 44 above.

[144] Much ink has been spilled concerning the relevance of the shepherd motif in relation to legend and OT. See Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke : Introduction, Translation, and Notes (I-IX)*, 395-96, Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 108, et al.

[145] Friedrich Blass, Albert Debrunner, and Robert Walter Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* ([Chicago]: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 207; Robertson, *Grammar*; Wallace, *ExSyn*, 596-97.

("I proclaim good news"). This verb, while common in the NT, also bore cultural significance, especially with reference to the Roman Emperor and his cult.[146] The content of this good news brought u9mi=n xara\n mega/lhn h3tiv e1stai panti\ tw~| law~| ("great joy to you which will be for all people"). Here conceptually, especially in tandem with the lexical stock of the verb, this rhetoric is reminiscent of the imperial cult.[147] Furthermore, as the declaration plays out, the causative o3ti introduces the subordinate clause, which focuses attention both on *time* (*viz.,* sh/meron) and title/office—swth/r (thus, "because your Savior was born"). Hence, the angelic message of joy is that a "savior" has been born "today." That, is not all, however that is compacted in this brief statement. Luke fills out the term swth/r by issuing a relative clause introduced by the relative pronoun o3v whose nominative case keeps the swth/r in view as the subject of the following appellation, namely, this savior is xristo\v ("Christ") who is ku/riov ("the Lord") e0n po/lei Daui/d ("in the city of David"). These several words could hardly be more hard-hitting in terms of key New Testament and indeed, first century messianic language. But more than that, recent studies have shown cogently that the *default* ku/riov in the Greco-Roman first century cognitive environment, was hardly Yahweh, or the Messiah—rather it was Lord Caesar.[148] What is more, this understanding is validated further by considering other language in the context which suggests that Luke has the Roman Empire in mind and at least based upon the language extant in the document suggests that he intends to draw the Imperial image into purview. This is the case with language in Luke 2:13, 14. These references note the appearance of a "heavenly army" and again employ language normative to the Imperial cult, namely, (e0pi\ gh=v ei0rh/nh) "peace on earth." The latter reference harkens back to the Priene calendar reference affirming the birth of the swth/r Caesar and the peace which he wrought for "the whole world" (=Empire). Hence, not only does the pericope in question support the present contention, but the subsequent context reaffirms that such is likely the case.[149] So in the same brief context Luke mentions Caesar Augustus and his Empire as well as the announcement of Jesus birth in which he is called "savior, Christ, and Lord" (swth/r, xristo/v, and ku/riov) clearly setting the latter in juxtaposition to the former.

The Lukan Birth Narrative as a Challenge to Caesar the Savior

In light of the amount of material covered, how do the facts relate to each other in such a way as to compose a cogent argument in light of relevance, the text, the cult, and most importantly the readers of the Lukan gospel? We have proposed a tenable shape of the Imperial cult whose praxis was grounded in the person of Caesar, a figure worshiped for his greatness and provision to "the whole world." We have noted that throughout the Empire cities were adorned with temples, gateways, vestibules, porticoes all magnifying the wonder and magnitude of Caesar Augustus. It seems a strong possibility that the daily life of the peoples of the Empire generally and in specific locals such as Priene were bombarded with these images and rhetoric; indeed, so much so that the very *calendar* was transformed to honor the birth of the swth/r; this day was equated with the beginning of all things, a day of immense joy announcing eu0aggeli/a

[146] Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel*, 11ff.

[147] See note 31 above.

[148] See our discussion elsewhere of this studies reconstruction of the first century cognitive environment. Also, with reference to ku/riov as default see Fantin, "Lord of the Entire World", 191ff.

[149] Burrus identifies the birth narrative as among messages "strategically veiled in ambiguity" though of a less ambiguous variety than other Lukan passages (e.g. Lk 20.22–26; 23.2) [Burrus, "Luke–Acts," 141].

("Good News") to the world—that is, the "birthday of our God" (OGIS 458.30–56).

Furthermore, the data does not seem to imply that these notions merely loomed in the crevices of the Empire far removed from the fledgling Christian sects flourishing in the recesses of Asia Minor. Rather, Caesar was the most preeminent figure in the world at the time and thereby likely the *default* referent of the terms "Lord" and "Savior" especially in a titular sense.[150] Therefore, what is being considered is not whether Caesar was personally challenged by the Lukan birth narrative, rather, by constructing the cognitive environment in which Caesar was the *default* referent of both terms swth/r and ku/riov we are then seeking to determine whether readers of the Lukan birth narrative would have heard the birth story of Jesus as *a challenge* to the authority, character, and *role* of Caesar as the people's supreme Savior and Lord.

The principles of *relevance* and *efficiency* state that the communicator adds to the communication situation content that is relevant to furthering the communication as well as adding only what is necessitated for the intention of the communication, and that communication transpires when maximally relevant content is added expending the least amount of processing power.[151] Hence, in the Lukan passage, contextually Caesar Augustus is brought into view drawing with him all the relevance of his birth stories as (a) son of Apollo (i.e. divine-man) and (b) "savior" of his country. This context coupled with the lexical stock of swth/r and ku/riov of which Caesar was likely the default referent, sets Jesus in Caesar's role. In doing so, the birth of Jesus heard by Lukan readers as the birth of God's son, Savior of the people, Christ, and Lord of the world being itself the announcement bringing joy to the world of the Good News of the Savior's birth seems to challenge Caesar Augustus's heritage, role, and that of his successors who perpetuated that role.

The use of these terms would most likely have drawn to the fore of hearer's minds in the first century cognitive environment, at least throughout Asia Minor—Caesar's image, but they are confronted with another figure in Caesar's place, namely, Jesus of Nazareth the Savior and Lord who was born. This conclusion seems to transcend the difficulties, which Rowe has articulated (see note 6 above). The notion of Caesar as Savior would have permeated the Empire by the time Luke wrote whether one takes an early or late date. This is intensified if the date is later, for during the latter half of the first century the Imperial cult was even more radical and prevalent throughout the Empire. Secondly, regardless of the place of writing or the destination, by the latter half of the first century Luke-Acts would have been circulating throughout Asia Minor and the issue is not *where* but *how* it was heard. Third, even if one argued that Augustus was not worshipped extensively in his life, by the time of Lukan writing and the circulation of the document certainly the legacy and worship of Augustus and his predecessors would have promulgated the traditions of his birth in tandem with his worship. Hence, the disparity in cultic praxis between emperors and reigns is overcome by virtue of Augustus being the archetypal

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[150] In the form of this article presented at the 2008 annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies at Duke Divinity School I provided a linguistic analysis of swth/r that may be summed up as follows. The term swth/r was employed with the sense of either *savior* or *protector* virtually always in personal terms. The term straddled both divine and human spheres throughout the Classical, LXX, Koine, and NT periods. It was typically wielded as an appellation attributing honor to the quality of an individual who had provided some type of provision whether socio-politically, physically, or spiritually. As time progressed, the term was inducted into Semitic idiom in the LXX taken up with reference to God and his agents. This nuance was perpetuated into NT times. However, the NT shades the term in a rather explicit way, that is, the term in various contexts bears more than its lexical stock provides. This point will guide the subsequent study.

[151] Fantin, "Lord of the Entire World", 201. *Cf.* Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, 46-50, 155ff.

savior of which subsequent "divine men" followed that likely would have continued to be cast in the same light. Therefore, we have argued that it is very likely that the readers/hearers of the Lukan birth narrative, in light of the content of the gospel and other factors would have perceived an aspect of *challenge* to Caesar in the pericope, and thus it seems possible that whoever Luke or the Lukan community was, there is little doubt the narrative was crafted by one(s) who were (1) educated, (2) steeped in Hellenistic culture, (3) attuned "to the political complexity and universalizing ambitions of …[the] Roman Empire…,"[152] and (4) one(s) with a genius for wielding narrative and culture.[153] These factors certainly point towards the cognizance that this may be perceived by hearers as a bold and clear move to put Jesus over against Caesar, taking the so-called "glory" of Caesar's birth and setting forth what was in the document's estimation the true Son of God, the Savior, Jesus of Nazareth.

[152] Burrus, "Luke–Acts," 153.

[153] Indeed: "the political subversiveness of the text has been seriously underestimated by most, though not all, scholars" (Ibid).

Book Reviews

A Postcolonial Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus. By Simon Samuel. Library of New Testament Studies 340. Editor Mark Goodacre. New York, NY: T & T Clark/Continuum, 2007. 161 pp. $99.00

This monograph represents the fruit of Simon Samuel's Ph.D. thesis at Sheffield University in published form. Samuel is Principle and Professor of New Testament at Luther W. New Jr. Theological Seminary in Serampore, India. This volume is structured by an introduction and six chapters, the last of which is the conclusion. The introductory section is invaluable in articulating the value and necessity of colonial/postcolonial criticism in biblical studies as well as proffering an erudite and accessible delimitation of key terminology in postcolonial criticism, without which the approach(es) may easily be misunderstood or underappreciated. This details the "interstitial space" that postcolonial theory pursues, that is, the discourse that takes place between the Roman colonial discourse and the native Jewish (elite) discourse. The discourse found in this third space is of a different character than either of the former discourses in that it is mimetic, showing both ambivalence and complicity, arising as a "hybrid" voice.

The first chapter traces the theoretical roots of the Postcolonial theory which itself is born out of the confluence of forces from several disciplines. The precursors to cultural studies in general are traced initially to classical and revisionist Marxist theorists who were primarily in dialogue with western capitalism and European imperialism. However, as the various trajectories proceeded from that fledgling start towards cultural studies much of Marxist ideology fell away due to its own ideological trappings and the historiographical limitations of its approach. Subsequently, within cultural studies the colonial/postcolonial analysis began to be applied to literature of colonized peoples, which gave rise to three primary conceptual tools: postcolonial mimicry, postcolonial ambivalence, and postcolonial hybridity. These precise terms arise from dialogue with J. Lacan's method of psychoanalysis and M. Bakhtin's methods from linguistic and discourse analysis in interacting with the reciprocal relations between social entities. Next, Samuel methodolically maps four leading approaches to postcolonial biblical criticism indicating the value and limitations of each while ultimately opting for an eclectic approach, which neither comports entirely nor is wholly unique to the four approaches.

In chapter two, Samuel charts the "discursive world of Mark" in a two-fold manner. First, he explores an intermediary genre of literature as postcolonial, namely, several creative writings that appeared in Roman times by postclassical authors. The primary text he dealt with was the romantic novel Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*. Samuel's argument in this document alone is very compelling for reading the text with a postcolonial optic because the story portrays a woman married in one culture, taken captive to another culture, married again in that culture to ultimately wind up in her primary culture forever internally torn and constructed as a true "postcolonial hybrid." Not to mention being broadly contemporaneous with the Markan gospel. Secondly, Samuel moved to (re)construct the "discursive world" of Mark. In doing so, Samuel's work betrays the influence (acknowledged in the preface) of Dr. Loveday Alexander throughout the corpus by his facility with, reconstruction of, and depth of knowledge of the Greco-Roman/Judean Second Temple period from the Persian sponsored establishment of the Temple-state forward. Herein his analysis of various resistance motifs in the so-called Old Testament Pseudapigraphical writings and apocryphal documents are challenging, well-reasoned, and

worthy of further consideration. He treats the "Son of Humanity" motif in the *Similitudes*, 4 Ezra, and Daniel 7 through a postcolonial optic in a rather fascinating way. In chapter three Samuel returns to the four postcolonial approaches and orients each to the Gospel of Mark. This analysis alone is beneficial for anyone attempting to sort through the postcolonial voices in New Testament scholarship. Here Samuel values the findings of each as well as noting serious reservations with several methodologies and illustrates the need for a fresh investigation.

In chapter four Samuel engages his Markan analysis through two entry points, namely, the Markan superscription (1:1) and vv 2–8, 9–11 as midrashic discourse arguing that both texts evidence neither pro- nor anti- colonialism *in toto,* but rather offer a genuine "ambivalent transcultural hybrid discourse" bearing traces of both accommodation and disruption with the essentialist Jewish national discourse as well as the Roman colonial discourse. For instance, in Mark 1:1 Samuel finds (ajrch; tou: eujaggelivou) a usage of distinct language of the Roman imperial cult and generally a reference to the *imperium*. Conversely, the identification of Jesus as the Messiah would "evoke a complex mixture of meanings" to Jewish ears. Yet, the way Mark fills out these terms in his "heavenly midrash" (vv 2–11) disrupts both "complexes of meaning" evoked whether Roman or Jewish offering a suffering-son-Jesus in its place (pp. 87–93). Or to put it in Samuel's terminology, the Markan Jesus or "*huios*-human hybrid" is presented in a discourse that paints him as both suffering-servant figure and royal figure charting a new "ambivalent hybrid discourse" that both is contiguous with, but strategically altered and disruptive to the essentialist discourse of the Jewish elite.

In chapter five, he argues that the Markan portrait of Jesus is a "colonial/postcolonial conundrum" in that it affiliates and disrupts both primary discourses of its day and therefore is best understood as a "postcolonial discourse" where the term describes in a sense the genre of literature as well as its content. Chapter six recaps and reiterates these arguments.

Simon Samuel's work is profound in so far as he employs postcolonial criticism to Second Temple historiography without falling prey to one monolithic lens. For him, Postcolonialist theory provides the necessary and indeed beneficial analytic tools to investigate, frame, and explicate the Gospel of Mark. Samuel's monograph illustrates the potential and likely direction of New Testament studies in the future and value of the postcolonial optic without necessitating a reading outside the pale of evangelical theology broadly. Finally, the value of reading the gospels through the postcolonial lens is the holistic unification of various factors within the complex of ancient life that have more often than not be lost in historical reconstructions, specifically those deeply ingrained socio-political conflicts, ambiguities, and discourses of resistance embedded within the narratives, which in the ancient world, could not be so tidily compartmentalized from religious belief and practice. —Robert G. Reid