CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY

Volume 88 Number 1
January 2024

US ISSN 0038-8610

Concordia Theological Quarterly

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

Concordia Theological Quarterly (*CTQ*) is indexed in Religion Index One: Periodicals and abstracted in *Old Testament Abstracts* and *New Testament Abstracts*. *CTQ* is also indexed in the ATLA Religion Database® and included in the full-text ATLASerials® (ATLAS®) collection. Both are products of the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606, (E-mail: atla@atla.com; Web: www.atla.com). It is also indexed in the International Bibliography of Periodical Literature on the Humanities and Social Sciences (www.gbv.de).

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CTQ is published in four issues per year: January, April, July, and October. The annual subscription rate is $35.00 within the United States, $40.00 (U.S.) in Canada, and $50.00 (U.S.) elsewhere. All changes of address, subscription payments, subscription cancellations, and other correspondence should be e-mailed to CTQ@ctsfw.edu or sent to Concordia Theological Quarterly, 6600 North Clinton Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825. CTQ is printed and shipped by Kingery Printing Company, Effingham, IL.

 • US ISSN 0038-8610

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Volume 88:1 **January 2024**

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Errata

There is an error on page 218 in the article by Isaac R. W. Johnson, "Reinhold Pieper's Strictly Textual Preaching: Proclaiming Law and Gospel in Accordance with Scripture," *CTQ* 87 (2023). The latter part of footnote six should read, "Concordia Publishing House reprinted the text in 1901 without change but omitted the forward that was included in the 1895 version."

The Editors

CTQ 88 (2024): 3–26

Old Testament Circumcision: Sacramental?

Lowell S. Sorenson

Christians informed by the apostle Paul's Epistle to the Galatians generally view circumcision as a legal requirement of the Old Testament, an abolished ritual. Central to Paul's argument in Galatians is that Old Testament ceremonies, including but not limited to the rite of circumcision, do not have the power to elicit faith or to confer righteousness in God's sight (Gal 3:1–9). In Galatians, Paul clearly regards circumcision as a work that cannot bring justification. But what are we to make of the Old Testament injunction to circumcise and its meaning for the faith of the patriarchs and Israelites? Was circumcision merely a matter of legal or ritual observance, or was the gospel promise of Israel's covenant God central to this Old Testament rite? The fact that circumcision was commanded by God and required by the Torah (Lev 12:3) does not make Old Testament circumcision a mere ritual ordinance. Baptism is commanded in the New Testament, and yet this sacrament also concerns the promise of God's forgiveness.

Circumcision was important in the Old Testament economy of God's grace. Failing to deal adequately with circumcision's sacramental character may result in a less robust basis for our doctrine of the New Testament sacraments, specifically Baptism. The thesis of this essay is that circumcision is in fact central to the gospel content of the Torah; it was an Old Testament sacramental seal of the righteousness that is by faith (Rom 4:11). Indeed, we may go astray if circumcision is viewed only through the lens of Paul's polemic in Galatians. Circumcision became an abolished rite only through Christ's fulfillment of the Old Testament sacraments. Baptism, commanded by God for his church, is the New Testament rite replacing circumcision as the sacrament of initiation into the family of God.

I. Circumcision and the New Perspective on Paul

Contrary to the classic Protestant understanding of Galatians, the New Perspective on Paul sees the problem of the Judaizers not in terms of soteriology (i.e., the question of how humans are saved from sin, death, and hell), but rather in terms of how Gentiles are given inclusion in the church apart from Jewish ceremonies. It is therefore imperative for us to answer this question: Is Paul in Galatians dealing with the law in a comprehensive manner in terms of all works that are done in an attempt to merit God's favor, or is Paul simply concerned with Jewish ceremonies that were

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inhibiting the full inclusion of Gentiles in God's mission? In other words, were Paul's "works of law" simply religious "boundary markers" between Jew and Gentile in the first century?[1]

Krister Stendahl is credited with laying the foundation for the New Perspective on Paul, but he was really following the path of Albert Schweitzer in questioning the centrality of justification by faith, that doctrine Lutherans have proclaimed as the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*.[2] Surely Solomon was right: "There is nothing new under the sun" (Eccl 1:9).[3] Centuries ago, John Calvin wrote of "the error, or rather the delusion, of those who imagine that Paul is depriving only ceremonies of the power to justify." This approach to Paul is refuted, maintained Calvin, "since Paul expressly lays the blame on ourselves, and declares that he finds no fault in the doctrine of the Law."[4] Paul's eschatological approach to justification makes it clear that he was not thinking merely of Gentile inclusion in the church. At the judgment, neither Jews nor Gentiles may claim righteousness as doers of the will of God (Rom 1:18–3:20).[5] Ernst Käsemann was correct in arguing that the Pauline doctrine of justification must not be reduced to a matter of the equality of Jews and Gentiles in the church, for "God's Basileia is the content of the Pauline doctrine of justification."[6] "This justification," avers Peter Stuhlmacher, "is concerned with the survival of Jews and Gentiles in front of God's throne of judgment at the end of time."[7] The New Perspective on Paul simply cannot do justice to justification apart from works as a soteriological or eschatological category in the Bible. This is important for our topic

[1] Peter Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 44.

[2] On justification by faith as the "article by which the church stands or falls," see Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Psalms of Degrees* (1532–33/1540), in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [*Schriften*], 73 vols. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–2009), 40/3:351 (hereafter cited as WA); *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–76); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–86); vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), vol. 66 (forthcoming) (hereafter cited as AE); cf. *Commentary on Psalm 117* (1530), AE 14:37; *Disputation for Palladius and Tilemann: On the Works of the Law and of Grace* (1537), WA 39/1:205.2–5 (AE 72).—Ed.

[3] Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations are from the ESV.

[4] John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, trans. Ross Mackenzie, eds. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, Calvin's New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 158–159.

[5] Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification*, 42.

[6] Ernst Käsemann, "Rechtfertigung und Heilsgeschichte im Römerbrief," in *Paulinische Perspektiven* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969), 133 (108–39); see Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification*, 52.

[7] Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification*, 10.

of circumcision. Paul not only deprives circumcision and other Old Testament ceremonies of the power to justify, but also rejects all legal observance for the purpose of attaining salvation (Rom 3:28; Gal 2:21; Eph 2:8–9; Titus 3:5).

II. The Sacrament of Circumcision and Its Connection with Baptism

Insisting on circumcision for the New Testament church is contrary to the gospel and is an attack on the very heart of justification by faith alone; yet in the Old Testament, circumcision was indeed connected with the righteousness of faith for the people of God. Abraham, who was credited with righteousness through faith (Gen 15:6), was given by God a sacramental "seal of the righteousness of faith" in his circumcision (Rom 4:11, my translation). One discovers in Genesis 17 that the circumcision God enjoined upon Abraham and his descendants has all the characteristics that Lutherans have typically used in defining the sacramental nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper: the institution of God, a visible element, and the promise of God's grace.[8]

The institution of the sacrament of circumcision is clear, for God says: "This is my covenant [בְּרִיתִי], which you shall keep, between me and you, and your seed after you; every male child among you shall be circumcised" (Gen 17:10, my translation). The sacrament has a visible sign: "And you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin" (Gen 17:11, my translation). Circumcision also has the promise of grace attached: "It shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you" (Gen 17:11). This is stated more fully in the seventh verse of the same chapter: "And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your seed after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto you and to your seed after you" (my translation).[9] It simply will not do to relegate circumcision to the category of legal demand in opposition to the gospel when we seek to understand circumcision in the economy of Old Testament salvation history. J. T. Mueller helpfully articulated the gospel content of circumcision: "To the act of circumcision was attached the divine promise of grace: 'I will be their God,' Gen. 17, 8, that is, their gracious God, who out of pure love freely forgives sin. This is evident from the fact that in the New Testament St. Paul calls the sign of circumcision 'a seal of the righteousness of faith,' Rom. 4, 11."[10] Lest someone be inclined to view circumcision simply as an empty

[8] F. R. Zucker, "Circumcision and Baptism," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 15, no. 4 (1944): 247.

[9] Zucker, "Circumcision and Baptism," 248. That circumcision is referred to in Scripture as an "everlasting covenant" (לִבְרִית עוֹלָם) does not mean that it is without end in an absolute sense. Eternity may also refer to a "long, indefinite period of time." See Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950–1953), 1:445–446.

[10] John Theodore Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), 466.

token in no way truly connected with the fulfillment of the promises of God, Genesis 17 clearly teaches that those who refused circumcision broke the covenant of YHWH; they were to be "cut off from his people" (Gen 17:14). Meredith Kline, the late Reformed New Testament scholar, argued that the nature of this mark itself pointed to the danger of being "cut off" from the covenant relationship with YHWH. Physical circumcision thus pointed beyond itself to the consecration or circumcision of the heart (Jer 4:4).[11] Circumcision is a "searing" of the electing God "into the flesh of Israel."[12]

The apostle Paul instructs us that Abraham was righteous by faith before he received the covenant sign of circumcision (Rom 4:9–12). However, this does not make circumcision an empty ritual of symbolic orientation. The apostle clearly teaches in Romans 4 that Abraham received circumcision as a "seal of the righteousness of faith" (4:11, my translation). The appositional genitive in Romans 4:11, σημεῖον περιτομῆς, "circumcision-sign," is amplified by the noun, σφραγῖδα, a "seal." Circumcision is a seal attesting Abraham's righteousness by faith. Seals speak to the genuine nature of a document; the Christian's salvation is attested by the seal of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13; 4:30).[13] Romans 4:11 involves an objective genitive: "a seal of the righteousness of faith" (my translation). "Circumcision seals Abraham's righteousness to him. He has not only this righteousness but also this seal stamped upon it, this attestation to its genuineness, this attestation from God to him, for he 'received' it from God."[14] Whereas in Galatians circumcision is a law that is not binding on the Christian, in Romans 4 circumcision deals with the gospel content of the Old Testament; circumcision was nothing less than the seal of that righteousness that Abraham received by faith. "Abraham believed the LORD and it was credited [reckoned] to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:6, my translation).

Would this seal of the righteousness of faith have any value for females, considering the mark was placed on the male body? A sacrament that applies to only one gender does indeed seem strange to contemporary readers. Victor Hamilton has

[11] Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 43.

[12] Michael Wyschogrod, *The Body of Faith: God in the People Israel* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1983; repr., San Francisco: Harper, 1989), 67.

[13] R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of the New Testament*, 12 vols. (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1932–1946; repr. as *Commentary on the New Testament*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 6:302.

[14] Lenski, *Interpretation*, 6:303.

made the intriguing suggestion that only males needed circumcision because husband and wife become "one flesh" in marriage (Gen 2:24).[15] The covenant sign applied to wives and daughters through their fathers and husbands.[16] Women married husbands who bore the sacramental sign; daughters were born into families in which the fathers bore the mark. Circumcision reminded God's people, both male and female, that the hope of Israel was based on that singular seed of Abraham who would come to defeat the devil (Gen 3:15; Gal 3:16). The birth and circumcision of Christ are thus the fulfillment of Abraham's circumcision. The promise of the Messiah is the distinctive significance of this mark that is so tied to human reproduction and progeny.[17] What better outward sign could there have been—one that was appreciated by both sexes—that served as a reminder that in Abraham all the families of the earth would be blessed through the coming of the Savior into the world as the culmination of that line that stretches from the ancient patriarchs to the Redeemer himself?

In Genesis, Abraham is the first to receive this mark at the command of God; furthermore, the Torah commanded this sacrament be administered to infants, who entered the covenant of circumcision on the eighth day after birth (Gen 17:12; Lev 12:3). It is somewhat analogous to the situation in the Book of Acts in which adults came to faith through the preaching and teaching of the gospel and then received the sacrament of Baptism; yet these very same converts brought the sacrament of Baptism to their households (Acts 11:14; 16:15, 33). The early Christian households would certainly have included families with children. The established church still follows this pattern: infants are baptized as adult believers bring the Christian faith to their families. Joachim Jeremias concludes that the language of primitive Christian Baptism, in particular the New Testament οἶκος formula, was taken from Old Testament cultic language, in particular the ritual language related to circumcision.[18] With reference to the household formulas in the Book of Acts and in 1 Corinthians, Jeremias notes that the word οἶκος meant as much as ὅλος ὁ οἶκος, πᾶς ὁ οἶκος ("the whole house") and οἱ αὐτοῦ ἅπαντες ("all of his"). Thus, no members of the οἶκος were excluded, and children were certainly included in this term.[19]

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[15] Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 62–64.

[16] Albertus Pieters made a similar observation in his book *The Seed of Abraham: A Biblical Study of Israel, the Church, and the Jew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 17.

[17] John Goldingay suggests that because men are inclined to fall into sexual sin—even men like David and Solomon—circumcision impresses upon males the need for discipline with regard to their sexuality. See "The Significance of Circumcision," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 25, no. 88 (2000): 16.

[18] Joachim Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*, trans. David Cairns (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 21.

[19] Jeremias, *Infant Baptism*, 20.

Circumcision was rightly received by all Israelite male infants, but other males who had not received the mark needed it in order to have admission to the Old Testament community. In terms of the order of word and sacrament as it applies to adults and children, Martin Chemnitz explains,

> Therefore, just as in the Old Testament both was [*sic*] commanded, to teach and to circumcise, and adults were first taught then circumcised (Gn 17), but infants were circumcised first (Gn 17:12) and taught later, at a time when they were old enough to understand and ask questions (Dt 6:20; Ex 12:26), so also does the whole ministry of the New Testament consist in the Word and the Sacraments. And when adults are first converted, teaching precedes and Baptism follows. Acts 2:41; 8:12, 35–38; 10:44–48. And regarding the infants of Christians, the same order of teaching and baptizing is observed as was of old followed in the Old Testament in teaching and circumcising. For what circumcision was in the Old Testament, the same is now Baptism in the New Testament. Cl 2:11–12. Thus John, writing to children of believers, that they might know the heavenly Father, gives [them] this comfort first, that they have forgiveness of sins through His name, 1 Jn 2:12–13; this applies to them, since they are baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38; for that promise pertains also to little children, Acts 2:39; Is. 49:22.[20]

III. Circumcision and Sacrifice

The Old Testament sacrament of circumcision was connected with the shedding of blood and sacrifice. In this respect, circumcision, like so many Old Testament realities, is an adumbration of Christ's shedding of blood for the life of the world, as even the Savior's circumcision attests (Luke 2:21). With Christ's circumcision, the first few drops of blood were shed for the redemption of humankind.

Circumcision's relationship to sacrifice and the shedding of blood is evident in the most mysterious circumcision passage of all in the Hebrew Bible: the incident in which Zipporah circumcises the son of Moses (Exod 4:24–26). The New King James Version translates the text as follows: "And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the LORD met him and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, 'Surely you are a husband of blood to me!' So He let him go. Then she said, 'You are a husband of blood!'—because of the circumcision." The questions needing to be asked of this passage might seem to outweigh anything of clear dogmatic significance. The lack of antecedents in the Hebrew text makes it hard to know which

[20] Martin Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion*, trans. Luther Poellot (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 118.

agents are being described. Was God seeking to kill Moses for failing to circumcise his son, or was God seeking to kill the son because of his lack of circumcision? What is meant by "husband of blood" or "blood-bridegroom"? Whose "feet" are being touched by Zipporah? Is "feet" being used euphemistically for genitalia?

The problems of the passage have been resolved in ways too numerous to be listed in this essay, although some general remarks are in order. There is no proof for the Wellhausen thesis that this episode explains how a rite usually associated with puberty became necessary for children in Israel. According to this interpretation, it was Moses who was uncircumcised and Zipporah circumcises her son as a substitute, thus rendering child circumcision the normative practice.[21] The theory of H. Kosmala posits that the text is dealing with a case in which a Midianite deity wanted to claim Moses' son, but Zipporah saved her child by performing the circumcision and designating the child, in Arabic, the "blood-circumcised one." But the proof is lacking for such a Midianite tradition or for the transmission of the Arabic root in the manner suggested by Kosmala.[22] Another purely speculative suggestion is that the episode represents a woman threatened with the prospect of *droit du seigneur*.[23] There is even a Freudian analysis of this text that interprets it through the lens of the Oedipus complex, with a symbolical castration carried out by a son-hating mother![24] Against all such speculation, Brevard Childs rightly affirmed the wisdom and common sense of the precritical understanding of the text.[25] However, even Childs maintained that the final collector of the material could not have understood the enigma in Zipporah's words—"blood-bridegroom"—or whether these words refer to Moses or his son.[26] Rudolf Meyer asserts that the developed stage of the narrative we find in the Hebrew Bible, which Meyer attributes to the J source, involves the redemption of the child when his mother circumcises him and offers the "apotropaic cry": "A bridegroom of blood art thou to me!"[27]

The precritical consensus, from both ancient Jewish sources (Targums and Midrashim) as well as Jewish medieval and Christian commentaries, is that Moses had failed to circumcise his son by the eighth day as God had prescribed. This is the

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[21] Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 97.

[22] Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 97–98.

[23] B. Embry, "The Endangerment of Moses: Towards a New Reading of Exodus 4:24–26," *Vetus Testamentum* 60, no. 2 (2010): 181.

[24] Andrew Peto, "The Development of Ethical Monotheism," *Psychoanalytical Study of Society* 1 (1960): 311–376.

[25] Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 101.

[26] Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 104.

[27] Rudolf Meyer, "περιτέμνω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976), 6:76.

approach taken also by Martin Chemnitz.[28] It was Moses himself who was spared from death through the blood of the circumcision of his son.[29] Zipporah circumcised the boy and touched Moses' feet[30] with the smeared blood. Keil and Delitzsch suggest that Moses failed to circumcise his son because of his Midianite wife's revulsion to the procedure.[31] At any rate, the most natural reading of the text is that Moses was the bloody husband; Moses was touched with the blood of Gershom's circumcision and was spared from death. Moses was purchased anew as a husband by the blood of his son.[32] Thus, the episode teaches us that circumcision entailed a covenant relationship with God through the shedding of blood, a shedding ultimately connected with being espoused to YHWH, who stands as the bridegroom of his Old Testament church.[33]

John Goldingay connects the need for Moses' cleansing with the bloodguilt incurred by Moses by his killing of the Egyptian. Goldingay argues that the application of circumcision blood points to expiation.[34] But perhaps the more immediate reason for God to pursue Moses was that he had failed to circumcise Gershom as was prescribed by the Torah. G. Stöckhardt follows this interpretation and even uses Moses' failure to circumcise his son as a warning to those who would despise the grace of Baptism, the parallel sacrament to Old Testament circumcision: "The sign of the New Testament covenant is baptism, and he who despises baptism, despises the covenant and grace of God, and excludes himself from life and salvation. With this historical account our God has shown us that it is not a trifle with Him when His covenant of grace in His sacraments are delayed and despised."[35]

In the Book of Joshua, we discover that circumcision had not been carried out on the males who were born during the time in the desert on the journey to the

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[28] Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments*, 119.

[29] Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 95–96.

[30] Or genitals? See Judg 3:24; 1 Sam 24:3; Ezek 16:25.

[31] C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, trans. James Martin et al., 25 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1857–1878; repr., 10 vols., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 1:298. Citations refer to the reprinted volumes.

[32] Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1:299.

[33] Patrick Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture: Viewed in Connection with the Entire Scheme of the Divine Dispensations*, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Martien, 1859), 272.

[34] He directs the reader to the LXX and the Targum for proof. Goldingay, "The Significance of Circumcision," 10–11; see also W. H. Propp, "That Bloody Bridegroom," *Vetus Testamentum* 43 (1993): 501–506; Geza Vermes, "Baptism and Jewish Exegesis," *New Testament Studies* 4 (1957–1958): 308–319; and Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1993), 50–52.

[35] Georg Stöckhardt, *The Biblical History of the Old Testament* (Swanville, MN: Wisdom for Today, 1969), 74.

Promised Land.[36] While many possible reasons have been suggested for this failure to administer the sacrament, the most compelling suggestion simply points to Israel's apostasy from the Lord's word. While the fathers died in the wilderness without experiencing the Promised Land, the sons were later consecrated to God before their entry into Canaan.[37] Thus, Joshua was directed to use flint knives and circumcise the Israelites at Gibeath Haaraloth ("hill of foreskins"). The "reproach of Egypt" was rolled away by God only once Israel was consecrated to YHWH in the Promised Land by rightly receiving the sacrament of circumcision (Josh 5:1–9). The "reproach" removed by God is the Egyptian assertion and taunt that YHWH had brought the people out of Egypt only to kill them in the desert (Exod 32:12; Num 14:13–16; Deut 9:28); this "reproach" plagued Israel in her restless wilderness wandering.[38] While Joshua 5:2 uses the words שֵׁנִית ("the second") and וְשׁוּב ("and again"), this means not that men were re-circumcised but rather that the nation as a whole needed to be reconsecrated to YHWH, especially because the males under forty had not rightly received the sacrament in the desert.[39]

IV. A Controversial Rite

The basic verb for "circumcise" in the Hebrew Bible is מוּל, meaning "to cut off." It is used to refer not only to the removal of the foreskin but also cutting in a more general sense. In Psalm 58:8, the verb is found in the Hithpael Imperfect (יִתְמֹלָלוּ) to refer to the blunting of arrows. In Psalm 118:10–11, it refers to the cutting off (or annihilation) of enemies.[40] The Greek verb for circumcision is περιτέμνω, which literally means "to cut around."[41]

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[36] The Old Greek text implies that circumcision had not been properly carried out in Egypt, but the Masoretic Text assures the reader that the failure in sacramental practice concerns the time of the wilderness journey. See Goldingay, "The Significance of Circumcision," 5.

[37] Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 2:40.

[38] Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 2:43.

[39] For another argument, see J. M. Sasson, "Circumcision in the Ancient Near East," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85 (1966): 473–76. Sasson argues that a more thoroughgoing operation is in view in Josh 5. Rather than the Egyptian procedure of slitting the foreskin, Sasson maintains that the "second circumcision" of Josh 5 involved the total removal of the foreskin.

[40] Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 557–558.

[41] Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1979), 652. On the surgical practice, see Erich Isaac, "Circumcision as a Covenant Rite," *Anthropos* 59, no. 3/4 (1964): 453. Isaac refers to J. Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 3 (New York: Scribner, 1951), 660; see also Charles Weiss, "Worldwide Survey of the Current Practice of Milah (Ritual Circumcision)," *Jewish Social Studies* 24, no. 1 (1962): 31.

Circumcision has not been without controversy in the history of its practice. In the Hellenistic context, some Jewish men even sought to reverse their circumcisions (see 1 Macc 1:15).[42] Conflicts of religion under Antiochus IV (215–164 BC) resulted in a ban placed on the practice of circumcision. In fact, mothers who had their children circumcised were subject to execution along with their family members and those who performed the operations. The babies receiving the sacrament were killed by being hanged around their mothers' necks. In this context, circumcision became a clear mark of confession for which the true believer was willing to lay down his or her life (1 Macc 1:60–64).[43]

Further conflict came during the period after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Jews found themselves at odds with Roman imperial power under Hadrian (117–138), who banned circumcision throughout the empire. This was perhaps one of the contributing factors that led to the famous Jewish rebellion known as the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Both Greeks and Romans regarded circumcision as "indecorous" and "perverse." It was compared to castration by Hadrian and was punishable as murder.[44] Even after the suppression of the Bar Kokhba Revolt, the ban on circumcision was enforced. The Jews found liberty in regard to circumcision with the edict of toleration issued by Antoninus Pius in AD 138.[45]

The conflict with Hellenism reveals how seriously the Jewish leadership and Jewish believers were regarding the importance of circumcision as a critical ritual of their faith. As Rudolf Meyer noted,

> The theological significance of circumcision is that it is a precondition, sign and seal of participation in the covenant which God made with Abraham. He who invalidates this sign by ἐπισπασμός breaks the covenant and loses the salvation mediated thereby.[46] If he is to be accepted again, he must submit afresh to circumcision. Circumcision is also a confessional sign for whose sake Israel accepted bloody martyrdom.[47] The blessing which accrues to Israel therefrom is as follows: Because of it God undertook to protect His people and gave them the land of Israel. The lifegiving power of circumcision is everywhere at work

[42] On methods of reversing circumcision in the ancient world, see Robert Hall, "Epispasm: Circumcision in Reverse," *Bible Review* 8, no. 4 (1992): 54.

[43] Meyer, "περιτέμνω," 77.

[44] Meyer, "περιτέμνω," 78–80.

[45] Meyer, "περιτέμνω," 80.

[46] Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 6 vols. (Munich: Beck, 1922–1961), 4/1:34, cited in Meyer, "περιτέμνω," 81.

[47] Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 4/1:37–38, cited in Meyer, "περιτέμνω," 81.

> in the universe and in history. In the coming aeon Israel will be redeemed from Gehinnom in virtue of it, and will participate in the joys of the Messianic age.[48]

V. Circumcision and Lutheran Theology

For Lutheran theology, circumcision is not simply an outdated legal requirement of the Old Testament. It belongs to the gospel of the Old Testament, for it was a true means of grace, "offering and conveying the forgiveness of sins."[49] Yet this does not mean that circumcision is equivalent to New Testament Baptism. Lutheran dogmatic theology teaches the superiority of the New Testament sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper in comparison to circumcision and Passover. Baptism is superior to circumcision in that it belongs to the era of the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham and ancient Israel. New Testament Baptism, moreover, has been instituted for "all nations" and is to be administered for the purpose of making disciples unto the end of the age (Matt 28:19–20). Circumcision was applied only to boys and men, but Baptism is received by both sexes. Martin Chemnitz stresses the value of circumcision as a sacrament while also affirming the superiority of Baptism, which supersedes the old sacrament:

> Baptism of the New Testament succeeded circumcision of the Old Testament, Cl 2:11–12. Therefore, just as in the Old Testament the covenant of divine grace was applied and sealed through circumcision not only to adults but also to infants, Gn 17:10, 12, so also now in the New Testament that grace should rightly be applied and confirmed as by a seal both to infants as well as adults through Baptism, since the grace of God was made not less but rather more abundant and richer in the New Testament.[50]

The caution is certainly in order against a semi-Marcionite understanding of Old Testament sacramental theology wherein the Old Testament sacraments are received as "mere signs" while the New Testament sacraments are considered to be "effective signs."[51] The Lutheran fathers, in particular Quenstedt, insisted that the Old Testament sacraments, while not demonstrating the grace of Christ as clearly, fully, perfectly, or abundantly as those of the New Testament, were still God's means to present and convey grace.[52] Luther taught that it is a mistake to think that the

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[48] Meyer, "περιτέμνω," 80–81. At the conclusion of this paragraph, Meyer again cites Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 4/1:38–40.

[49] Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*, 466.

[50] Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments*, 117.

[51] Peter J. Leithart, "Old Covenant and New in Sacramental Theology New and Old," *Pro Ecclesia* 14, no. 2 (2005): 177.

[52] Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, rev. 3rd ed., trans. Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 536.

sacraments of the New Testament differ from those of the Old in terms of their force and meaning as divinely appointed means of grace. The same function is to be found in both Testaments of Scripture.[53] Writing of the new and old sacraments, the reformer maintained the following:

> What both signify is equally efficacious, for the same God who now saves us through Baptism and the Lord's Supper saved Abel through his sacrifice, Noah by means of the rainbow, Abraham by circumcision, and all the others through His appointed signs. . . . But our signs and the signs of the patriarchs have a Word of promise attached which calls for faith and cannot be fulfilled by any other work. Therefore they are signs or Sacraments of justification, for they are Sacraments of justifying faith and not of a work to be performed. Therefore their entire efficacy consists in faith itself, not in the doing of a work; for whoever believes them fulfills them even if he performs no work at all.[54]

On the basis of the Old Testament's fulfillment in Christ, Christians are not bound to circumcision and other sacraments or ceremonial laws of the Old Testament. Such matters have been brought to completion and abrogated by Christ.[55] Christ's fulfillment of the law has made circumcision an indifferent ceremony for Christians.[56] However, such an indifferent matter ceases to be truly indifferent when the enemies of the gospel seek to enforce it as a matter of righteousness in God's sight. This was the error of the Judaizers with whom Paul contended in the Epistle to the Galatians. In such cases, the Christian is duty bound to resist that which is being imposed, for the very truth of the gospel is at stake (Gal 2:4–5; 5:1; FC SD X 12–13).

Yet the Lutheran Confessions also maintain that for Abraham, who received circumcision after his justification (Rom 4:9–22), circumcision was a matter not of the law but of the gospel. Abraham was justified by faith, but "circumcision was added to give him a sign written in his body by which he might be reminded and grow in faith, and through this witness testify to his faith before others and induce them to believe" (Ap IV 201).[57] According to Francis Pieper, circumcision was given

[53] Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*, 467.

[54] Ewald Plass, comp. and trans., *What Luther Says: A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 1236 (Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* [1520], AE 36:65–66).

[55] Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments*, 49.

[56] Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments*, 52.

[57] Theodore Tappert, ed. and trans., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 134.

to Abraham as a "sign presented for exercising faith."[58] Moreover, at the divine institution of circumcision, God held forth the promise of the resurrection of the body.[59]

In his *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Martin Luther stresses that circumcision was nothing less than a mark of Abraham's justification by faith.[60] While the word of God is the testament, God has given signs as sacraments.[61] Testament and sacrament belong together. Luther further insists that the Roman church had erred in regard to the sacraments by converting them into good works and teaching the fiction of *opus operatum*.[62] The Apology asserts that the sacraments do not confer grace *ex opere operato*; rather, faith receives the promises to which the sacraments are signs (Ap XIII 18–20).[63] Luther teaches that the mass is not a good work that can be presented to God on behalf of oneself or others; rather, the mass involves the promise of God whereby the testament (word) has been sealed with the sacrament (sign).[64]

That God works sacramentally is not an innovation of the New Testament era. God has throughout history attached his word to certain visible means with the promise of his grace. The Old Testament signs were just as effective as the New Testament signs, yet the New Testament signs surpass the Old even as the fulfillment of prophecy surpasses and completes prophecy. The God who saved Abraham by circumcision saves us today by Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Thus Martin Chemnitz wrote of God's sacramental dealings with his creation throughout the history of the world:

> God, in all ages of the world, by giving a certain Word, revealed His will concerning the mystery of redemption to the human race, concerning the gratuitous reconciliation and acceptance of believers to life eternal through faith, because of the sacrifice of His Son as Mediator. He also added to the Word, by His own divine institution, certain external signs, by which to seal and confirm more clearly the promise of righteousness by faith. The institution and use of the Sacraments did not, therefore, first begin in the time of the New Testament; but the fathers in the time of the Old Testament, even before the publication of the Law, had their certain signs or Sacraments divinely instituted for this use, which were the seals of the righteousness of faith. Rom. 4. But though it is the same God, the same Mediator, the same grace, righteousness, promise, faith,

[58] Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3:114.
[59] Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3:535.
[60] Luther, *Babylonian Captivity*, AE 36:44.
[61] Luther, *Babylonian Captivity*, AE 36:44.
[62] Luther, *Babylonian Captivity*, AE 36:37, 44, 47.
[63] Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, 213.
[64] Luther, *Babylonian Captivity*, AE 36:47.

> salvation, etc., yet those external signs or seals are sometimes changed for others, substituted in their place by divine institution, so that the mode of revelation was constantly rendered more clear, which at first was like a lamp shining in a dark place; afterwards the morning star succeeded, until at length, the night being past, the Sun of righteousness arose.[65]

Luther was careful to distinguish between Old Testament sacramental signs and legal symbols connected with the Mosaic law. The legal signs, including such things as "priestly usages concerning vestments, vessels, foods, houses, and the like," are vastly different from both Old and New Testament sacraments, for a sacrament has a promise that requires faith. While the Mosaic ordinances were not given for the sake of justification, circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith (Rom 4:11). Thus Luther writes,

> Our signs or sacraments, as well as those of the fathers, have attached to them a word of promise which requires faith, and they cannot be fulfilled by any other work. Hence they are signs or sacraments of justification, for they are sacraments of justifying faith and not of works. Their whole efficacy, therefore, consists in faith itself, not in the doing of a work. Whoever believes them, fulfils them, even if he should not do a single work. This is the origin of the saying: "Not the sacrament, but the faith of the sacrament, justifies." Thus circumcision did not justify Abraham and his seed, and yet the Apostle calls it the seal of the righteousness by faith [Rom. 4:11], because faith in the promise, to which circumcision was added, justified him and fulfilled what the circumcision signified. For faith was the spiritual circumcision of the foreskin of the heart [Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4], which was symbolized by the literal circumcision of the flesh. In the same way it was obviously not Abel's sacrifice that justified him, but it was his faith [Heb. 11:4] by which he offered himself wholly to God, and this was symbolized by the outward sacrifice.[66]

Luther preached that the circumcision of Christ marks the end of the old ceremonial requirements and their power to condemn us.[67] God used the male member precisely because the organ of generation points to human corruption and original

[65] Martin Chemnitz, *Examen Concilii Tridentini*, 2:18, quoted in Schmid, *Doctrinal Theology*, 536.

[66] Luther, *Babylonian Captivity*, AE 36:65–66.

[67] Eugene F. A. Klug, ed., *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, vols. 5–7 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 5:188.

sin.[68] Furthermore, if Christ had not been born, we would still be under the requirement of circumcision.[69] Yet, "Christ has abolished this ordinance and instead commands that we believe and be baptized, if we truly want to be God's children and be eternally saved."[70]

Circumcision is connected with Luther's (and the Bible's) theology of the cross, for what kind of God commands circumcision to a ninety-year-old man and an eight-day-old child? This was an offense to the Gentiles. The ridiculous character of God's circumcision command may be compared with the seemingly unreasonable idea that in the Lord's Supper the Christian receives the body and blood of Christ. It further offends against reason that a child should be dipped in water and thereby his sins are washed away.[71] And yet, this is the truth of God. "Abraham," says Luther, "could have said after receiving the circumcision command, 'Dear Lord, how can this contribute to salvation if on the eighth day after birth a little bit of skin is cut away from the body?' That's how reason speaks and thinks when it wants to be really brilliant!" For Luther, the word must be believed above all else: "As soon as we begin asking why God has commanded this or that, the devil has already won, as is plain from the case of Eve in Paradise! She had the command not to eat from a certain forbidden tree. When she lost sight of that command, and lent an ear to the devil's explanation of God's motives, she was already guilty of that terrible disobedience from which we all still suffer today."[72]

VI. Circumcision and Christology

The sacraments of the Old Testament cannot be rightly understood apart from their fulfillment in Christ.[73] According to Gerhard, the Old Testament sacraments "signified and prefigured" Christ, while the sacraments of the New Testament currently tender and give the present Christ.[74] Circumcision prefigured Christian Baptism (Col 2:11–12), even as the Old Testament Passover lambs were a prefigurement of the slain Messiah himself (1 Cor 5:7), "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Circumcision was given to Abraham as a sign of the blessing in his Seed. When Christ came, this sign could no longer continue to function as it once did. Christ

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[68] John Nicholas Lenker, ed., *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, vols. 1–4 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 1.1:310–311.

[69] Klug, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, 5:178–179.

[70] Klug, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, 5:179.

[71] Klug, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, 5:179.

[72] Klug, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, 5:180.

[73] David P. Scaer, *Law and Gospel and the Means of Grace*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics 8, ed. John R. Stephenson and John A. Maxfield (St. Louis: Luther Academy, 2008), 128.

[74] Schmid, *Doctrinal Theology*, 536.

himself is the Seed who was coming; therefore circumcision stands fulfilled.[75] Christian parents may choose circumcision for their sons, but only as a matter of freedom. It would be wrong to carry out circumcision from a sense of religious obligation or from a failure to recognize that the promises given to Abraham have been fulfilled in Christ. The true spiritual offspring of Abraham have a different sign, that of Baptism.[76]

Already with his circumcision on the eighth day after birth (Luke 2:21), the infant Lord was given the name of salvation, Jesus (Matt 1:21). This name was thus connected with the spilling of blood for the forgiveness of sins already in the Lord's circumcision. For early Christians, Christ's circumcision became a sign of Christian identity.[77] While mystics reflected on the theme of Christ's circumcision, heretics denied Christ's circumcision and even removed Luke 2:21 from their Gospels. This included Marcion and the later Julianists or Aphthartodocetists.[78] Although "salvific properties" were superstitiously tied to the holy foreskin, and even alleged relics of the holy prepuce appeared in many places, it is clear that the early Christians made the connection between Christ's circumcision and his shedding of blood for their salvation.[79]

While one might imagine that a "Jewish mark" on the Christian God could potentially "Judaize" the Christian faith, Andrew Jacobs has argued that the truth is just the opposite. He maintains that the circumcision of Jesus "covertly signals to its readers (in Luke) the 'past-tenseness' of the Jewish Temple and covenant, and therefore its obsolescence."[80] Jacobs teaches that for early Christian identity, Christ's reception of the covenant mark of the Jew was both a "recuperation" of the otherness of the Jews and simultaneously a rejection "at the deepest levels of religious identity, inscribed on and within the body of the founder himself."[81] Thus in Justin Martyr's *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, Christ's keeping of the law is not about establishing Moses but rather bringing Moses to fulfillment.[82] While Trypho argues that by obedience to the law Jesus would have earned his messianic status, Justin asserts that Christ's obedience to Moses has brought a radical departure from Moses. Justin writes,

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[75] Lenker, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, 1.1:315.

[76] Lenker, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, 1.1:315.

[77] Andrew S. Jacobs, "The Kindest Cut: Christ's Circumcision and the Signs of Early Christian Identity," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (2009): 99.

[78] Jacobs, "The Kindest Cut," 99n7.

[79] Jacobs, "The Kindest Cut," 99n8; see Severus, Epistle 97, in *A Collection of Letters of Severus of Antioch*, ed. E. W. Brooks, Patrologia Orientalis 14.1 (Paris: Firmis-Didot, 1920), cols. 194/364–199/369.

[80] Jacobs, "The Kindest Cut," 101.

[81] Jacobs, "The Kindest Cut," 117.

[82] Jacobs, "The Kindest Cut," 102.

> I have confessed it, and I do confess: but I confessed that he underwent all of these things not as if he were made righteous (*dikaioumenon*) through them, but bringing to fulfillment (*apartizonta*) the dispensation that his Father—creator of all things, Lord, and God—wished. For likewise I confess that he underwent fatal crucifixion and that he became a human being and that he suffered as many things as those members of your people arranged for him.[83]

Other early church figures employed Christ's circumcision in a variety of ways. In the fourth century, Ambrose of Milan argued that the circumcision of our Lord was a sign that God wanted to convert the Jews. Christ "was born under the Law (*factus est enim sub lege*; cf. Gal 4:4) so that he might win those (*lucrifaceret*) who were under the Law."[84] But the law has no rightful claim on him. Christ's circumcision was not a Jewish rite per se, even though it was supposed to benefit the Jews. In like manner, Jesus had no actual need of a Baptism for the forgiveness of sins, and yet he did it for our sake.[85] Cyril of Alexandria stressed Christ's fulfillment of the law; thus, Cyril provides a resolution between the Old Testament command to circumcise and Paul's affirmation that "circumcision is of no benefit."[86]

The circumcision of Christ also would become significant in the christological debates of the early church. Clearly the meaning of Christ's circumcision can have salvific import only if the consubstantialist position (that the Son is of the same substance, ὁμοούσιος, with the Father) is upheld. Thus, in the same way that deity cannot be said to die, and yet in the divine-human person of Christ deity can be said to die, so also it follows that circumcision cannot be ascribed to bare divinity, yet in Christ Jesus, God himself embraced the humiliation of circumcision for the benefit of our salvation. Saint Athanasius taught that "indeed in the body being circumcised, and being carried around, and eating, and tiring, and affixed to the tree, and suffering, was the impassible and bodiless Word of God."[87]

Against the heretical Ebionites who insisted on circumcision because Christ was circumcised, Epiphanius gave four theological reasons for Christ's reception of circumcision:

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[83] Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 67.5, Patristische Texte und Studien 47, ed. Miroslav Marcovich (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 185; translation from Jacobs, "The Kindest Cut," 102n18.

[84] Ambrose, *Expositio evangelii secundam Lucam* 2.55 (Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina 14:54 [hereafter cited as CCSL]); translation from Jacobs, "The Kindest Cut," 105n35.

[85] Ambrose, *Expositio evangelii secundam Lucam* 4.6 (CCSL 14:107); see Jacobs, "The Kindest Cut," 106.

[86] Cyril of Alexandria, *Homilia 3 in Lucam* (= *Homiliae 12 diversae*), in *Patrologiae cursus completus, series graeca*, 162 vols., ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1857–1886), 77:1041B; see Jacobs, "The Kindest Cut," 107n39.

[87] Athanasius, *Epistula ad Epictetum* 5, in Epiphanius, *Panarion* 77.7.7, in *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller* (Leipzig: Hinrich, 1891–), 37:422–423 (hereafter cited as GCS); translation from Jacobs, "The Kindest Cut," 112n52.

> First, to prove that he had actually taken flesh, because of the Manicheans, and those who say he has (only) appeared in a semblance. Then, to show that the body was not of the same nature as the Godhead, as Apollinarius says, and that he had not brought it down from above, as Valentinus says. And [third] to confirm the fact that the circumcision he had given long ago served legitimately until his advent, and [fourth] to deprive the Jews of an excuse; for, if he had not been circumcised, they could have said, "we could not accept an uncircumcised messiah."[88]

The sacramental theology of circumcision reached its high point with the Anglo-Saxon theologian the Venerable Bede. While Augustine was the first Latin father who seemed to suggest that circumcision remitted original sin, Bede developed further the connection between Baptism and circumcision. While Bede mistakenly taught that the Old Testament saints were not permitted access to heaven until Christ had risen from the dead and ascended on high,[89] he nevertheless taught the following:

> Circumcision offered the same help of health-giving treatment against the wound of original sin that now, in the time of revealed grace, baptism is wont to do, except that they [who were under the law] could not yet enter the gate of the heavenly kingdom, until by his coming he who gave the law would give his blessing . . . and so, consoled in the bosom of Abraham by a blessed rest after death, they awaited with blissful hope their entry into heavenly peace.[90]

Bede asserted a threefold function of the sacrament of circumcision: it was a seal of Abraham's righteousness by faith; it was a prophecy concerning the cleansing to be provided by Christ; and it was a gift of remission from the sin of Adam's transgression.[91] In his *On Luke*, Bede argued that John 3:5 and Genesis 17:4 are essentially the same divine command: "For he who now says 'unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God', then said 'The male,

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[88] Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.28.2–4 (GCS 25:371); translation from Jacobs, "The Kindest Cut," 116n72.

[89] Bede, *Libri quatuor in principium Genesis usque ad nativitatem Isaac et eiectionem Ismahelis adnotationum* 4 (CCSL 118A:206). For an English translation, see Bede, *On Genesis*, trans. Calvin B. Kendall (Liverpool: Liverpool Univ. Press, 2008), 284.

[90] Bede, *Homeliae evangelii* I.11 (CCSL 122:74); translation from Bede the Venerable, *Homilies on the Gospels*, vol. 1, *Advent to Lent*, trans. Lawrence T. Martin and David Hurst (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991), 104–105.

[91] Conor O'Brien, "Bede's Theology of Circumcision, Its Sources and Significance," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 67, no. 2 (October 2016): 596. See Bede, *In Lucae evangelium expositio* I (CCSL 120:56).

whose flesh of his foreskin shall not be circumcised, that soul shall be destroyed out of his people: because he hath broken my covenant'."[92]

The search for proof texts to support Bede's contention of circumcision remitting original sin might seem to be in vain. But actually, a scriptural argument can be logically deduced. If it is true that Baptism is concerned with the remission of sin (Acts 22:16), and if it is also true that circumcision is the Old Testament counterpart to New Testament Baptism (Col 2:11–12), then Bede's convictions regarding circumcision do not seem so untenable. Indeed, Bede's understanding of Augustine became the standard explanation for the theology of circumcision. By the time of Thomas Aquinas, the doctor could assert in his *Summa Theologiae* that "it is commonly admitted by all that original sin was remitted in circumcision."[93] Commentators of the Middle Ages looked to Augustine's *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, an anti-Pelagian text, for the patristic support to buttress their contention. Aquinas, Gratian, Peter Lombard, and Peter Abelard all made use of Augustine's material, though it is debatable to what degree Augustine was rightly understood by them.[94] Bede's theology represents a development of Augustinian thought that was filtered through the claims of Gregory the Great.[95] As Gregory wrote in his *Moralia*, "Whoever is not absolved by the water of regeneration, is held bound by the guilt of the original bond. Because that which the water of baptism achieves amongst us, amongst the ancients either faith alone for children or the power of sacrifice for their elders, or, for those who had come from Abraham's line, the rite of circumcision achieved."[96]

For the church of the Augsburg Confession, circumcision is comprehended in Christ. Luther taught that even as the eighth day follows the Sabbath after a week of work, so Christ's circumcision on the eighth day has brought to us a new day of

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[92] Bede, *In Lucam* 56 (CCSL 120:56); translation from O'Brien, "Bede's Theology of Circumcision," 596.

[93] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 3, q. 70, a. 4, co.; translation from St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 57, *Baptism and Confirmation*, trans. James J. Cunningham (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1975), 167.

[94] O'Brien argues that it was more of an assumption that Augustine taught that circumcision removed original sin ("Bede's Theology of Circumcision," 603). Augustine wrote that circumcision was "to signify" (*ad significationem*) the cleansing of original sin, rather than "to sanctify" (*ad sanctificationem*) as Aquinas thought. See O'Brien, "Bede's Theology of Circumcision," 599; Peter Abelard, *Sic et Non* 109.1; and Augustine, *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* 2.9.24 (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 42:276–277). It is doubtful whether Lutherans would draw such a hard line between cleansing and the signification of cleansing.

[95] O'Brien, "Bede's Theology of Circumcision," 603.

[96] Gregory, *Moralia in Iob* 4pref.3 (CCSL 143:160); translation from O'Brien, "Bede's Theology of Circumcision," 602.

grace.[97] With his circumcision, Christ began to fulfill what was spoken by the Christmas angel and what Simeon proclaimed concerning the Savior.[98] Even though Christ did not need this mark for himself, and even as he did not need to die on the cross for his own person, yet Christ subjected himself to his very own law in our place, for "we needed a sinless one to keep the Law in our stead and thus appease the wrath of God, otherwise we would be under the curse of the Law forever." Thus, the circumcision of Christ already involved Christ seeking our adoption as sons (Gal 4:4–5).[99]

While Abraham bore the mark of circumcision as a sinner, Jesus received the mark without guilt, as the Lord of the law. Luther proclaimed of Christ that he "takes away the Law's authority and power; yes, tears the Law to pieces so that it can no longer ensnare and condemn those who believe in him."[100] Luther also taught that the law "overreached itself" in the case of Christ. Because of this, the law has become the servant of Christ for seeking to rob Christ of his innocence and authority. Therefore, Christ can share his triumph over the law with us.[101] When the innocent Savior suffers circumcision, then this mark receives a meaning far above the meaning it had under the old law. It becomes a sign of Christian salvation on the body of Jesus. While Jews were once known by circumcision, the Christian is known by Baptism and the body of Christ.[102]

The new Israel is constituted by the New Testament Christian church (Gal 6:16), and God's grace is no longer mediated by circumcision. The blessed apostle makes the point in 1 Corinthians 7:18 that in coming to the Christian faith, the uncircumcised need not seek circumcision; those having been circumcised need not seek to undo their circumcisions. This was a controverted point in the early Christian community. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:3–21) addressed the matter of the Antiochian Jewish Christianity's insistence that circumcision be observed. But Paul claims in Galatians that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has value for the new Israel; what matters is faith expressing itself through love (Gal 5:6). Those who constitute the new Israel actually are the people of real and genuine circumcision as they worship God in spirit (Phil 3:3).

Clearly Lutherans speak of circumcision as an Old Testament legal requirement at times and as an Old Testament means of grace at other times. Concerning the promises of God to the patriarchs, circumcision is gospel. Regarding the Messiah who was to come, circumcision is gospel. Yet, with reference to circumcision as an abolished Old Testament ceremony—a ceremony whose intent was corrupted by

[97] Klug, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, 5:181.
[98] Klug, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, 5:181.
[99] Klug, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, 5:182.
[100] Klug, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, 5:182.
[101] Klug, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, 5:185.
[102] Lenker, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, 1.1:310.

the Judaizers—circumcision is a wrongful legalistic requirement. The same paradox is clearly evidenced in Scripture itself (compare Rom 4:11 with Gal 5:3!). In terms of Christ's act of being circumcised, this is clearly good news for the church in the same way that Christ being baptized or being nailed to the cross is gospel. While one could preach the law from Christ's circumcision (or his crucifixion) in terms of man's failure to keep God's commands, this would be according to Christ's alien work rather than his proper office—the preaching of the gospel of grace (FC Ep V 10).

We may speak of Christ's circumcision in terms of all three categories (genera) of the communication of properties. In that Christ's circumcision involved the Son of God being circumcised for us in and through his assumed human nature, it is rightly maintained that the Son of God suffered circumcision for our benefit (category of properties, *genus idiomaticum*). This suffering of Christ's human nature is always in communion with the divine nature. Since the assumed human nature of Christ possesses the divine gifts imparted to it, the circumcision of Christ involves the shedding of Christ's life-giving blood, a blood that can be ascribed to no other mere man (category of majesty, *genus maiestaticum*).[103] The blood of Christ's circumcision is the blood of the Son of God and has the power to cleanse from sin (1 John 1:7). Furthermore, it is the whole person of Christ who received circumcision, with each nature performing that which is peculiar to it; yet, the two natures are in constant communion with each other, and therefore Christ's circumcision is part of the "one undivided theanthropic action" (category of accomplishments, *genus apotelesmaticum*).[104]

Francis Pieper affirmed the connection between Christ's circumcision and his work of saving sinners. Indeed, Christ was the Messiah for us also in his circumcision.[105] We may rejoice in Christ's circumcision as if it were our own, for Christ's circumcision has a vicarious character.[106] It was done not for the benefit of himself, but to fulfill God's command in our place. It was in fact here that Christ first spilled his blood for our redemption. As the old hymn text by Sebastian Besnault, translated by John Chandler, proclaims,

> O blessed day when first was poured
> The blood of our redeeming Lord!
> O blessed day when Christ began
> His saving work for sinful man!

[103] Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:220.
[104] Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:247.
[105] Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:331.
[106] Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 2:332.

While from His mother's bosom fed,
His precious blood He wills to shed;
A foretaste of His death He feels,
An earnest of His love reveals.

Scarce come to earth, His Father's will
With prompt obedience to fulfill,
A victim even now He lies
Before the day of sacrifice.[107]

VII. Circumcision and Baptism: Colossians 2:11–13

The key passage in the New Testament dealing with the relationship between circumcision and Baptism was probably written with the threat of Judaizers in mind, although perhaps not such Judaizers that made circumcision the sine qua non, as was the case with Paul's opponents in Galatia.[108] Both Baptism and circumcision are concerned with initiation.[109] In Colossians 2, Paul writes of the fullness of the Godhead that dwells bodily in Christ Jesus (v. 9), and then goes on to declare the following:

> In connection with whom you also were circumcised with a circumcision not done by hand, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ, having been jointly entombed with him in Baptism, in which you were also jointly raised up with him through faith by God's working, as one who raised him up from the dead. And you, being dead in the transgressions and in the uncircumcision [foreskin] of your flesh, he made alive together, you with him, having forgiven us all the transgressions. (Col 2:11–13, my translation)

In view of the Judaizing heresy that posed a threat to the faith of the Colossians, Paul here contrasts the inferiority of a mere physical circumcision with the spiritual removal of the ethical flesh in holy Baptism. It is not a rejection of Abraham's circumcision, which was to have both physical and spiritual significance. However, the problem with the Judaizers, especially those with whom Paul contended in Galatians, was that they failed to understand the gospel of Old Testament circumcision, and instead made of it "a mere legal rite that was disconnected from justification by

[107] Sebastian Besnault, "O Blessed Day When First was Poured," trans. John Chandler, in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, ed. The Intersynodical Committee on Hymnology and Liturgics for the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), no. 115:1–3.

[108] Lenski, *Interpretation*, 9:103.

[109] John Albert Bengel, *Bengel's New Testament Commentary*, 2 vols., trans. Charlton T. Lewis and Marvin R. Vincent (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1981), 2:461.

faith."[110] Furthermore, as has been previously argued, the circumcision Christ received on the eighth day points to the fulfillment and abolition of the Old Testament sacraments.

When Paul writes of the "circumcision of Christ" (περιτομῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ), the exegete must consider whether he is dealing with a subjective or an objective genitive. R. C. H. Lenski preferred the subjective—i.e., "the circumcision he (Christ) inaugurated by baptism."[111] It is possible, but far less likely, that the objective is in mind—i.e., the circumcision that Christ underwent by "putting off" his body in death.[112] As Paul E. Deterding concludes, the whole context speaks in favor of this "circumcision" being experienced by the baptized believers Paul was addressing.[113] Paul reveals how the Baptism instituted by Christ is shown to be vastly superior to the physical circumcision in which the Judaizers boasted.[114]

Theological passives dominate Colossians 2:12. The Colossians were circumcised by God himself in Baptism. With echoes of Romans 6:3–5, we read that Christians "have been entombed with Christ in Baptism" (συνταφέντες αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ βαπτισμῷ), and also "have been raised up" (συνηγέρθητε) by faith that comes as a gift of God. In both Romans 6 and Colossians 2, we are not dealing with merely symbolical language but the real theological truth of what happens in holy Baptism. We enter Christ's tomb with him; we are also raised up with him. We die to sin and are given new life through the resurrection. Baptism brings us into connection with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The distances of time and space are overcome. Paul's use of συν- in συνταφέντες entails nothing less than the actual impartation of all the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection.[115]

Baptism involves an actual spiritual circumcision. The word and promise of God is present along with God-given faith to receive what God extends to us in grace. This is why Paul connects our resurrection not only with Baptism but also with faith. Luther regarded the genitive here to be a genitive of cause (τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ Θεοῦ). That is, it is God's operation (see KJV). It is "the faith that God works."[116] So, Bengel wrote, "Faith is of *Divine working*, and divine working is in believers; Eph. i.19, ii.8; 1 Thess. ii.13." Yet most modern translations prefer the objective genitive—i.e., "faith in the working of God."[117]

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[110] Lenski, *Interpretation*, 9:105.

[111] Lenski, *Interpretation*, 9:105.

[112] Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary 44 (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 116–117.

[113] Paul E. Deterding, *Colossians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 104.

[114] Lenski, *Interpretation*, 9:105.

[115] Lenski, *Interpretation*, 9:107.

[116] Lenski, *Interpretation*, 9:109.

[117] Bengel, *Bengel's New Testament Commentary*, 2:461.

The state of being in spiritual "uncircumcision" (ἀκροβυστία) entails the depravity of humans under the corruption of the fall.[118] This is why it is vital to receive the "circumcision of Christ," the "circumcision not hand-made" (περιτομῇ ἀχειροποιήτῳ). In this circumcision, which comes by holy Baptism, the sinful nature is "cut off" (ἀπεκδύσει) and a new status is given. In John's Gospel, it is the new birth of water and the Spirit (John 3:5). Once being dead, the baptized are made alive together with him (συνεζωοποίησεν ὑμᾶς σὺν αὐτῷ) in Baptism, God having forgiven us of all the transgressions (χαρισάμενος ἡμῖν πάντα τὰ παραπτώματα). The fact that circumcision stands parallel with Baptism in this passage is compelling evidence that infants are proper recipients of Baptism. If infants received God's grace in the time of the Old Testament through circumcision, who may rightly doubt that they should receive his grace in the time of the New Testament through the sacrament of Baptism?

VIII. Conclusion

Circumcision and the promises connected to it are part of the gospel content of the Torah. It was not a mere legal rite but a sacrament whereby Abraham and his physical and spiritual progeny throughout the Old Testament era were given God's grace. Circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith (Rom 4:11). It was not simply a ceremony to be required, but was connected with faith in God's promises and the consecration of one's heart (Jer 4:4). Old Testament circumcision has reached its christological fulfillment with the circumcision of Jesus, his death and resurrection, and the Baptism he instituted for all nations at the culmination of his earthly ministry (Matt 28). As Christ was given the name "Jesus" in connection with his circumcision, a name that points to the soteriological intent of his person and work (Matt 1:21), so he has instituted a new circumcision in connection with his death and resurrection, the sacrament of holy Baptism. Lutherans would do well not to simply relegate circumcision to the category of an outmoded legal requirement based solely on the reading of Galatians and other New Testament references, but rather to discover that circumcision was strongly connected with the promises of God's grace to Abraham and his progeny, a grace that finds its apex in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

[118] Deterding, *Colossians*, 106.

CTQ 88 (2024): 27–54

The Holy Spirit and Baptism in the Book of Acts

Mark P. Surburg

On the day of Pentecost, Peter announced, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).[1] He explained this further in Acts 2:39 (connected with γάρ) by adding, "For the promise [ἡ ἐπαγγελία] is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." The language of "promise" identifies the Spirit received by believers as the same Spirit poured out on the disciples on Pentecost (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:33). Understood within the framework of the pneumatology in Luke-Acts, the primary focus of the Spirit's work is empowerment for mission (Acts 1:8). However, the Spirit also is involved in bringing individuals to saving faith in Jesus Christ, and enables Christians to live in the salvation they have received.[2]

Acts 2:38 indicates that the Spirit is received through Baptism. However, Acts contains three texts that conspicuously do not work in this way. In Acts 8:4–13 the Samaritans believe and are baptized. However, the Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them (8:16), and instead they receive the Spirit through the laying on of hands by Peter and John (8:17). Next, in Acts 10, Peter shares the gospel with the Gentile Cornelius and those gathered with him (10:34–43). The Holy Spirit falls directly on all who hear the word and they begin to speak in tongues (10:44). Then, later they receive Baptism. Finally, in chapter 19 Paul meets a group of "disciples" in Ephesus who know only "John's baptism" (19:3). They are baptized, and then receive the Holy Spirit through Paul's laying on of hands, and begin to speak in tongues (19:6). A closer examination reveals that Pentecost and these accounts are in fact linked by multiple interlocking textual features that lead us to interpret them together as unique and extraordinary events.[3] We will see that this is a crucial factor for interpreting these texts.

[1] Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations are from the ESV.

[2] For a discussion of the pneumatology in Luke-Acts and the manner in which it is best understood according to the concept of the "Spirit of prophecy" present in Second Temple Judaism, see Mark P. Surburg, "Pneumatology in Luke-Acts and Baptism: An Explanation of the Samaritan Believers Who Had Not 'Received the Spirit' (Acts 8:4–17)," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 86, no. 4 (2022): 279–302.

[3] Pentecost and Acts 10 are connected by the fact that the Spirit is poured out (ἐκχέω) in 2:17, 18, 33; 10:45 (only occurrences of the verb with the Spirit). The Holy Spirit is described as "gift" (δωρέα) in 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17 (only occurrences in Acts); is received (λαμβάνω) in 1:8; 2:33, 38;

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Acts 2:38

Acts 2:38 is naturally a critical text for understanding Baptism in Acts.[4] In the interpretation of this verse, two sets of issues must be considered. First, the verse itself must be examined along with its relation to the context of 2:37–47. Second, the verse must be considered in relation to what is narrated about Baptism and reception of the Spirit in Acts 8, 10, and 19.

It is common to deny that in this verse Baptism is the means by which God gives the Spirit.[5] Within the verse itself, the strongest argument used to support this is that the future verb λήμψεσθε is ambiguous and cannot provide precision regarding *when* the Spirit is received.[6] This may in fact be a point in time *subsequent* to Baptism.[7] On this basis, some have described repentance and Baptism as the prerequisites to receive the Spirit.[8] In their view, the water of Baptism is not the means by which this happens.

More recently, Paul Elbert has argued that the syntactical construction (καί) used by Luke does not yield mere ambiguity, but instead proves that Baptism and the reception of the Spirit *cannot* occur at the same time. Elbert calls attention to "the conditional imperative-future passive indicative combination in Koine Greek where the subject of the two verbal ideas is the same, namely that the addressee(s) of the imperative in the conditional protasis is/are the same as the subject(s) of the

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8:15, 17; 10:47; 19:2 (only occurrences of the verb with the Spirit); and falls upon people (ἐπιπίπτω) in 8:16; 10:44; 11:15 (only occurrences of the verb with the Spirit). There is speaking "in tongues" (γλώσσαις), which is found only in 2:4; 10:46; 19:6 (and is suggested by 8:18). Acts 1:8 says the disciples will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon (ἐπέρχομαι) them at Pentecost, and in 19:6 the Spirit comes upon (ἔρχομαι + ἐπί) the "disciples." Finally, the laying on of hands to give the Spirit is present only in 8:17–19 and 19:6.

[4] Though as we will see, some will argue that Acts 2:38 should not be accorded a special status when compared with what is present in Acts 8, 10, and 19.

[5] Johannes Behm, *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum nach Verwendung, Herkunft und Bedeutung in religionsgeschichtlichem Zusammenhang untersucht* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1911), 165; and Laurence Decousu, *La perte de l'Esprit Saint et son recouvrement dans l'Église ancienne: La réconciliation des hérétiques et des penitents en Occident du IIIe siècle jusqu'à Grégoire le Grand* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 453.

[6] While not denying that Baptism and the Spirit go together, Andrew Das also has noted the temporal uncertainty (A. Andrew Das, "Acts 8: Water, Baptism, and the Spirit," *Concordia Journal* 19 [1993]: 108–134, esp. 125).

[7] Schuyler Brown, "'Water-Baptism' and 'Spirit-Baptism' in Luke-Acts," *Anglican Theological Review* 59 (1977): 135–151, esp. 144; and John Fleter Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament: Its Significance, Techniques, and Effects* (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America, 2009), 193.

[8] Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 203–204; and Nikolaus Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung: Eine exegetische-theologische Untersuchung von Apg 8, 14–17* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1951), 27–28.

future indicative in the apodosis."[9] Elbert argues that in such constructions, which include Acts 2:38, the action expressed in the future passive takes place at some indefinite future time.[10]

Seeking to provide background relevant to the Lukan material, Elbert cites several examples from the papyri, the LXX, and Eusebius. Most importantly, the very first LXX example is 4 Kingdoms (2 Kings) 5:10, which reports Elisha's message to Naaman: λοῦσαι ἑπτάκις ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ καὶ ἐπιστρέψει ἡ σάρξ σού σοι καὶ καθαρισθήσῃ ("wash seven times in the Jordan and your flesh will return to you and you will be cleansed").[11] However, there is nothing indefinite about the timing between the washing and the being cleansed. The act of washing is the means that will provide cleansing.[12] Then, in a great irony, considering the subject of Elbert's study, the word βαπτίζω is used when Naaman washes in the Jordan, and this is the means by which he is cleansed: "Naaman went down and washed [ἐβαπτίσατο] in the Jordan seven times according to the word of Elisha and his skin returned as the flesh of a little child and he was cleansed [ἐκαθαρίσθη]" (4 Kgdms 5:14, my translation). Rather than supporting Elbert's position, 4 Kingdoms 5:10 illustrates how this syntactical construction can be used to describe simultaneous action, and indeed it does so in a way that leads to the verb βαπτίζω as means by which the result is achieved.

Elbert must assign a future eschatological salvation to the statement in Acts 16:31, πίστευσον ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ σωθήσῃ σὺ καὶ ὁ οἶκός σου ("Believe in the Lord Jesus and you and your house will be saved").[13] While this is possible, it can easily be argued that the believing and the being saved occur at the same time since "salvation" is also a present reality in Luke's writings.[14] Elbert has failed to prove that in Koine Greek in general, or in Luke in particular, the construction necessitates a fulfillment in the indefinite future.

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[9] Paul Elbert, "Acts 2:38 in Light of the Syntax of Imperative-Future Passive and Imperative-Present Participle Combinations," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 75 (2013): 94–107, esp. 95n2.

[10] Elbert, "Acts 2:38 in Light of the Syntax," 100–103, 107–108.

[11] My translation. Elbert, "Acts 2:38 in Light of the Syntax," 101.

[12] Naaman's own servants emphasize this when they attempt to persuade Naaman to follow through by quoting the prophet's words, εἶπεν πρὸς σέ, λοῦσαι καὶ καθαρίσθητι ("he said to you, 'wash and be cleansed'"; 4 Kgdms 5:13, my translation).

[13] My translation.

[14] Jesus says of Zacchaeus, "Today salvation has come to this house [σήμερον σωτηρία τῷ οἴκῳ τούτῳ ἐγένετο]" (Luke 19:9). Jesus forgives the sinful woman and tells her, "Your faith has saved you [ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε· πορεύου εἰς εἰρήνην]" (Luke 7:50). Perhaps most pertinent to the subject of this study is the fact that Peter calls upon the crowd at Pentecost, "Be saved [σώθητε] from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:40, my translation). In Acts 2:41, we hear about their Baptism, which is certainly part of how they are saved, and then 2:47 provides this summary statement: "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved [τοὺς σῳζομένους]."

It has been observed that Acts 2:38 narrowly ties the forgiveness of sins to Baptism, rather than to the Spirit, as the purpose/result.[15] Luther McIntyre has argued instead that since in 2:38 μετανοήσατε ("repent") is second-person plural and the pronoun in the phrase εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν ("for the forgiveness of your sins") is second-person plural, "the concord between verb and pronoun requires that the remission of sins be connected with repentance, not with baptism."[16] However, Ashby Camp has pointed out that McIntyre has ignored the unique character of ἕκαστος" since "the singular form of ἕκαστος occasionally serves as the antecedent of a plural personal pronoun."[17] Consistent with this, Carroll Osburn had called attention to the construction in which a second-person plural imperative is followed by a third-person singular imperative where "in this distributive imperatival usage, the speaker attaches such tremendous importance to the command that he makes it clear with the third person singular imperative that not a single member of the group is exempt."[18]

In Acts 2:38 the verb λήμψεσθε ("you will receive") is linked to βαπτισθήτω by the conjunction καὶ. This καὶ follows an imperative and so is best understood as a καὶ consecutive.[19] The translation then is "And so you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

While it is possible to understand the statement to mean that the Spirit is received after Baptism, this is in no way necessary. It is a matter of lexical semantics. The statement "Eat the pizza and you will enjoy it" does not indicate the enjoyment will happen at some future time after the eating. Instead, the enjoyment happens by means of the eating. The verb "eat" permits a fulfillment of the second verb simultaneous with itself. In the same way the verb "baptize" can be understood as the means by which the Spirit is received, and the fulfillment of "and so you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" occurs simultaneously with Baptism.

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[15] Brown, "Water-Baptism," 141; and Scott Shauf, *Theology as History, History as Theology: Paul in Ephesus in Acts 19* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 93.

[16] Luther B. McIntyre, "Baptism and Forgiveness in Acts 2:38," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (1996): 53–62, esp. 55.

[17] Ashby L. Camp, "Reexamining the Rule of Concord in Acts 2:38," *Restoration Quarterly* 39 (1997): 37–42, 39. Examples of this include Acts 3:26, John 7:53, and Rev 20:13 (39–41), and it is found in the LXX as well in Exod 1:1; 5:4; 7:12; 33:8; Deut 16:17; Josh 24:33; and Jer 6:3 (41n19).

[18] Carroll D. Osburn, "The Third Person Imperative in Acts 2:38," *Restoration Quarterly* 26 (1983): 81–84, esp. 83.

[19] F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), 442.2; Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung*, 27; C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 154; and Michel Quesnel, *Baptisés dans l'Esprit: Baptême et Esprit Saint dans les Actes des Apôtres* (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 47.

Acts 2:38 states in a straightforward manner that each person who repents and is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.[20] The following verse (2:39) explains further (γάρ) that this promise of receiving the Spirit by repenting and being baptized is true for Peter's hearers. This is true for all whom the Lord calls to himself (ὅσους αν προσκαλέσηται κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν). Those whom the Lord calls are those who call on the name of the Lord (mentioned earlier in 2:21: ἐπικαλέσηται) by being baptized in the name of Jesus (2:38). Acts 2:38–39 (and its relation to 2:21) establishes a very tight connection between faith, Baptism, and the gift of the Holy Spirit as God's promise to each believer. For this reason, a number of scholars have observed that the text does not provide any suggestion of a delay in receiving the Spirit.[21]

In addition, Luke's description of the first Christians in Acts 2:41–47 indicates that there was no such delay. He does not narrate the reception of the Spirit by the three thousand who are baptized (2:41). This is not surprising when the explicit nature of 2:38–39 is borne in mind. Instead, Luke immediately narrates the life of the community that is produced by the Spirit in 2:42–47.

The second issue that must be examined when looking at Acts 2:38 is how the description of Baptism in this verse relates to the accounts of Baptism and reception of the Spirit provided in chapters 8, 10, and 19. Many have argued that these chapters show there is no one pattern of Spirit reception, and that reception of the Spirit is

[20] This character of the text has led many scholars to conclude that the Holy Spirit is given through Baptism. See Friedrich Avemarie, *Die Tauferzählungen der Apostelgeschichte: Theologie und Geschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 82–84; Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Eldon J. Epp and Christopher J. Matthews (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 22; Gustav Stählin, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 54; Quesnel, *Baptisés dans l'Esprit*, 49–50, 184; and Fredrick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 168. The Confirmationist view affirms that the Spirit is given through Baptism, but not yet as the gift or fullness that is provided by the laying on of hands. See J. Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology: Its Origins and Early Development* (Nijmegen: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1962), 56, 86; and Johannes Bapt. Umberg, *Die Schriftlehre vom Sakrament der Firmung: Eine biblisch-dogmatische Studie* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1920), 113–114. The difficulty in explaining what this distinction really means is one of several major problems for this approach.

[21] G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 105; Avemarie, *Die Tauferzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 143; and Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 358.

not tied to Baptism.[22] However, this fails to grasp the manner in which these exceptions actually establish that Baptism and the Spirit belong together.[23] As we will see in the exegesis that follows, in each of these texts there is evidence that the separation of Baptism and reception of the Spirit is *abnormal* and must be redressed.

Peter's speech in Acts 2 is programmatic for Acts, in the same way that Jesus' speech in Luke 4 is for the Gospel of Luke.[24] In Acts 2:38–40 we find the only place where the three important themes of repentance, Baptism, and reception of the Spirit are linked with conversion.[25] Acts 2:38–40 thus provides the paradigm according to which all conversions in Acts are to be understood. They involve repentance, faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:21), and Baptism, which gives the gift of the Spirit. This is for Luke the normative pattern by which an individual becomes a Christian.

Acts 10:44–48

We now turn to a close examination of the key texts in chapters 8, 10, and 19. For the sake of clarity in presentation, we begin with Acts 10, and do this for two reasons. First, Pentecost and the events with Cornelius and the Gentiles are the two most significant events of the work of the Spirit within the Book of Acts, and Acts 10 stands in a very close relationship to Acts 2. Second, the understanding of the relation between these chapters prepares us for the interpretation of chapters 8 and 19.

In Acts 10 Peter proclaims the gospel to Cornelius and the Gentiles (10:34–43), and 10:44 states, "While Peter was still saying these things [Ἔτι λαλοῦντος τοῦ Πέτρου], the Holy Spirit fell on [ἐπέπεσεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον] all who were hearing the word [ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντας τὸν λόγον]."[26] Peter and his companions were amazed "because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out [ὅτι . . . ἡ δωρεὰ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐκκέχυται] even on the Gentiles" (10:45). They knew the Spirit had

[22] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 57; and Wilhem Wilkens, "Wassertaufe und Geistempfang bei Lukas," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 23 (1967): 26–47, esp. 29.

[23] A point made by Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte, I. Teil: Enleitung, Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1–8,40* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1980), 277; and Avemarie, *Die Tauferzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 140.

[24] The point is widely acknowledged. See for example Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol. 2, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 29–30.

[25] Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 139–140.

[26] ESV modified. The particle ἀκούοντας is best understood as a participle of simultaneous action (Ernest De Witt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1900], 54–55). The Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentiles at the same time they were hearing Peter's proclamation.

been poured out because the Gentiles were speaking "in tongues" (γλώσσαις) (10:46). After seeing this, Peter asked, "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have [οἵτινες τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔλαβον ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς]?" (10:47). Then he commanded the Gentiles to be baptized (10:48).

Four features in this text serve to identify what happens to Cornelius and the Gentiles with what had happened to the first believers at Pentecost. First, there is a dramatic event when the Spirit falls upon the Gentiles (ἐπέπεσεν) (10:44), which is perceived as a pouring out of the Spirit (ἐκκέχυται) (10:45). This is the same verb that occurs in Peter's quotation of Joel (2:17–18) and that is used to describe what the exalted Christ had done on Pentecost (2:33). Second, the gift of the Holy Spirit (ἡ δωρεὰ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος) (10:45) is poured out on the Gentiles directly without Baptism, just like the Pentecost disciples.

Third, the Spirit causes the Gentiles to speak in tongues (αὐτῶν λαλούντων γλώσσαις) (10:46), just as he had caused the disciples to speak in tongues (2:4). Finally, Peter explicitly makes this identification when he refers to the Gentiles as those "who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have [οἵτινες τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔλαβον ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς]" (10:47).

This identification is further amplified when Peter defends his actions in Jerusalem. Peter reports that "the Holy Spirit fell on them [ἐπέπεσεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπ᾽ αὐτοὺς] just as on us at the beginning" (11:15). Peter then describes how the event caused him to remember that Jesus had said, "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (11:16). This reference back to Jesus' statement in 1:5 directly identifies what happened to the disciples on Pentecost with what had happened to the Gentiles at Caesarea. Next, Peter adds, "If then God gave *the same gift* to them [τὴν ἴσην δωρεὰν ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς] as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" (11:17, emphasis added). The final identification of the two events occurs at the Jerusalem council when Peter says of the Gentiles that God "bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us [δοὺς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον καθὼς καὶ ἡμῖν]" (15:8).

On four different occasions Luke equates the experience of the disciples on Pentecost with that of the Gentiles at Caesarea (10:47; 11:15, 17; 15:8). These texts leave no doubt that the event with Cornelius is a "Gentile Pentecost." The dramatic features accompanying the Gentiles' reception of the Spirit take place as the Gentiles receive the Spirit directly and apart from Baptism. The events do not follow the paradigmatic expectation established in 2:38–40 that Baptism gives the gift of the Spirit,

but do they contradict it?[27] Peter's statement in 10:47 indicates they do not, because it is based on the premise that the *Spirit and Baptism are expected to go together*: if the Gentiles have received the Spirit they cannot be hindered from receiving Baptism (and in fact in 10:48 Peter commands that they be baptized).[28] Instead, Acts 10:44–48 is an exception in which God works in an unanticipated manner at a turning point to demonstrate that the Gentiles too are included in the expansion of the gospel.[29]

Acts 8:14–19

Turning next to chapter 8, we read that the persecution by Saul scatters the church in Jerusalem, apart from the apostles (8:1). Luke says that those who were dispersed "went about preaching the word [εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὸν λόγον]" (8:4). Beginning at 8:5, he then provides Philip as an example of this as Philip goes to the city of Samaria and "proclaimed to them the Christ" (8:5). The content of Philip's preaching and the description of the miracles he performs leave no doubt this is true gospel ministry that must be placed on the same level as that carried out by the apostles.[30]

As a result of Philip's ministry, the Samaritans believe (ἐπίστευσαν) and are baptized (8:12). The verb πιστεύω is the standard means by which Luke expresses saving faith in Christ, and so it seems apparent that the Samaritans and Simon have converted and become Christians.[31] James Dunn has denied that the Samaritans were actually believers in Jesus.[32] However, his arguments do not withstand examination, and have been widely rejected.[33]

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[27] Scholars regularly assert that Acts 10 demonstrates that Baptism and the Spirit are not linked: Laurence Decousu, "Liturgie baptismale et don de l'Esprit aux origines chrétiennes: Une pneumatologie oubliée," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 89 (2015): 47–66, 133; and James B. Shelton, *Mighty in Word and Deed: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1991), 133.

[28] So also Quesnel, *Baptisés dans l'Esprit*, 54; Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 86; and Avemarie, *Die Tauferzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 141–142, 349.

[29] So also G. W. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit: A Study of the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and the Fathers*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1967), 66, 75; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 108; and Joel B. Green, "From 'John's Baptism' to 'Baptism in the Name of the Lord Jesus': The Significance of Baptism in Luke-Acts," in *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church: Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R.E.O. White*, eds. Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 157–172, esp. 166.

[30] See the discussion of Philip's preaching and miracles in Surburg, "Pneumatology in Luke-Acts and Baptism," 295.

[31] The verb is used in this way in 2:44; 4:4, 32; 5:14; 9:42; 10:43; 11:17, 21; 13:12, 39, 48; 14:1, 23; 15:5, 7; 16:31, 34; 17:2, 34; 18:8, 27; 19:2, 4, 18; 21:20, 25; and 22:19.

[32] James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching of the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (London: SCM, 1970), 63–66.

[33] See Das, "Acts 8: Water, Baptism, and the Spirit," 114–116.

The fact that the Samaritans had received the word of God and believed in Jesus Christ was an event of great significance because of the relation between the Jews and Samaritans, which was one of antagonism and religious animosity.[34] The report of the Samaritans' reception of the word of God prompts the apostles to send Peter and John to confirm the events in Samaria (8:14). It is important to recognize that the text does *not* describe the giving of the Spirit as the purpose of the journey.[35] There they find an unexpected situation. Luke states that "when they had gone down they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit [ὅπως λάβωσιν πνεῦμα ἅγιον], for he had not yet fallen on any of them [οὐδέπω γὰρ ἦν ἐπ' οὐδενὶ αὐτῶν ἐπιπεπτωκός], but they had only [μόνον] been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (8:15–16).[36]

The statement that the Spirit had not yet fallen upon the Samaritans contradicts the expectation created by Acts 2:38–40.[37] Since the Samaritans are described as believers, some have argued that the Samaritans had received the Spirit. What they had not yet received were dramatic and charismatic manifestations of the Spirit.[38] However, multiple features in the text make it clear that the Samaritans had not received the Spirit in the manner Luke uses the phrase.[39]

Peter and John pray for the Samaritans to receive the Spirit (8:15), and Luke states, "Then they laid their hands on them [τότε ἐπετίθεσαν τὰς χεῖρας ἐπ' αὐτοὺς] and they received the Holy Spirit [καὶ ἐλάμβανον πνεῦμα ἅγιον]" (8:17). In the Old Testament, the laying on of hands was used for blessing, in sacrifices, in the Day of Atonement rite, in the consecration of the Levites, in commissioning leaders, and to

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[34] V. J. Samkutty, *The Samaritan Mission in Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 77–78. See Samkutty's detailed examination of this history and the status of the Samaritans in 57–85.

[35] I have found this observation in only Gerhard Delling, *Die Taufe im Neuen Testament* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1963), 65; Turner, *Power from on High*, 360n31; and Decousu, "Liturgie baptismale et don de l'Esprit aux origines chrétiennes," 54. Scholars generally assume that Peter and John went to Samaria in order to give the Samaritans the Spirit, but the text nowhere says this.

[36] ESV modified.

[37] Luke's description of the believing Samaritans who have not "receive[d] the Holy Spirit" does not contradict Romans 8:9, because in Luke's pneumatology, to "receive the Holy Spirit" refers to a specific activity of the Spirit, and not the mere presence or absence. See the discussion in Surburg, "Pneumatology in Luke-Acts and Baptism," 286–302.

[38] John Ernest Leonard Oulton, "The Holy Spirit, Baptism, and Laying on of Hands in Acts," *The Expository Times* 66, no. 8 (May 1955): 240, 238; and Michel Gourgues, "Esprit des commencements et Esprit des prolongements dans les *Actes*. Note sur la «Pentecôte des Samaritans» (*Act*., VIII, 5–25)," *Revue Biblique* 93, no. 3 (1986): 378, 382.

[39] There is the explicit statement about the absence of the Spirit (8:16), the prayer of Peter and John that the Samaritans might receive the Spirit (8:15), and then the description that through the laying on of Peter and John's hands the Samaritans receive the Spirit (ἐλάμβανον πνεῦμα ἅγιον) (8:17).

pass sentence on a blasphemer.[40] Although the data present challenges, it seems likely the hand laying to commission Joshua (Num 27:18–23; Deut 21:23; 34:9) was understood to give the Spirit.[41] Hand laying was not used for healing in the Old Testament, but there is evidence that it came to be understood in this way during Second Temple Judaism.[42]

Jesus used hand laying to bless and to heal.[43] In the rest of the New Testament, it is used for commissioning and ordaining, healing, and bestowing the Spirit.[44] This indicates that only blessing and commissioning were carried over from the Old Testament into New Testament practice.[45] More importantly, it seems certain that the use of hand laying to bestow the Spirit in the context of initiation is a Christian innovation not seen before.[46] The New Testament provides no evidence that Jesus established it, and so it appears to be an apostolic adaptation of a practice that had been used by Jesus in a different context.[47]

David Daube maintained that the different vocabulary used for hand laying in the Old Testament provides the key to understanding ἐπιτίθημι + τὰς χεῖρας in the

[40] Blessing: Gen 48:13–16; sacrifice: Lev 4:4; Day of Atonement: Lev 16:21; consecration of Levites: Num 8:10; commissioning of leaders: Num 27:22–23 and Deut 34:9; and passing sentence on blasphemer: Lev 24:14. See Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 17–44, for a thorough examination of each of these uses.

[41] See the discussion in Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 32–38.

[42] When Naaman learns of Elisha's instruction for healing, he is angry because he expected that the prophet would "wave his hand over the place [וְהֵנִיף יָדוֹ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם] and cure the leper" (2 Kgs 5:11). Yet in the LXX this is translated as "lay his hand on the place [ἐπιθήσει τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον]" (4 Kgdms 5:11). Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the *Genesis Apocryphon* describes how Abraham healed Pharaoh through prayer and the laying of hands on Pharaoh's head (20.22, 29) (Everett Fergusson, "Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination," *Journal of Theological Studies* 26 [1975]: 1–12, esp. 1).

[43] Blessing (of children): Mark 10:6 (in Matt 19:13 parents ask him to lay his hands on children and pray for them); healing: Mark 5:23; 6:5; 8:23, 25; and Luke 4:40.

[44] Commissioning and ordaining: Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Tim 4:14; 5:22; and 2 Tim 1:6; healing: Acts 28:8; and bestowing the Spirit: Acts 8:17 and 19:6. In Heb 6:2 it is included among "the elementary doctrine of Christ [τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον]" mentioned in 6:1, but the verse and context provide no information on how the laying on of hands was understood.

[45] Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 293.

[46] This assessment is shared by Behm, *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum*, 142–143, 145; Joseph Coppens, "L'imposition des mains dans les Actes des Apôtres," in *Les Actes des Apôtres: Traditions, rédaction, théologie*, ed. J. Kremer (Louvain: Leuven Univ. Press, 1979), 405–438, esp. 426–427 and 435–437; Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung*, 70; and Michael Patrick Whitehouse, "*Manus Impositio*: The Initiatory Rite of Handlaying in the Churches of Early Western Christianity" (PhD diss., Univ. of Notre Dame, 2008), 96.

[47] The complete absence of evidence has not prevented Umberg (*Die Schriftlehre vom Sakrament der Firmung*, 136) and Adler (*Taufe und Handauflegung*, 76–77) from asserting that Jesus is the source.

New Testament.[48] However, his approach is certainly flawed.[49] Behm, Coppens, and Neumann have asserted that rabbinic ordination in which hand laying bestowed the Spirit provided a critical influence that led Christians to associate the bestowing of the Spirit with hand laying.[50] But this too faces serious problems that lead to rejection.[51] Ysebaert has maintained that hand laying was accompanied by anointing and termed a sealing, and that "the three groups of terms may be used for the same gesture or rite."[52] Yet his evidence for anointing in the New Testament does not withstand examination.[53] Tipei argues on the basis of his study that in the New Testament the laying on of hands "always signifies the transference of some positive *materia*, blessing, 'life-force,' the Spirit and *charismata*."[54] There is merit in his approach, but the vague definitions of what is bestowed in the "transference" is a drawback.

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[48] Daube argued that there were two different kinds of laying on of hands. The verb סָמַךְ involved more pressure and indicates "the pouring of one's personality into another being, the creation of a representative or substitute." On the other hand, the verbs שִׂים or שִׁית conveyed a lighter touch and were used in blessing, and to a lesser extent in healing. David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone, 1956; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994], 229. Daube then maintained this showed that in the New Testament usage of hand laying they "cannot all have had either the same form or the same import" (233).

[49] Daube himself had to admit that the LXX used the same verb ἐπιτίθημι [+ τὰς χεῖρας] to translate both סָמַךְ and שִׂים, just as the New Testament uses ἐπιτίθημι + τὰς χεῖρας for all types of hand laying (*The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, 225). The Septuagint, Hellenistic Jewish writers, and the New Testament show no acknowledgment of a distinction (Everett Ferguson, "Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 26 [1975]: 1).

[50] Behm, *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum*, 145–146, 161–163; Joseph Coppens, *L'Imposition des mains et les rites connexes dans le Nouveau Testament et dans l'Église ancienne* (Paris: Gabalda, 1925), 163, 169, 171, 371; and Johannes Neumann, *Der Spender der Firmung in der Kirche des Abendlandes bis zum ende des kirchlichen Altertums* (Freising: Kyrios-Verlag, 1963), 26, 33–34.

[51] In very detailed studies, both Arnold Ehrhardt ("Jewish and Christian Ordination," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 5, no. 2 [1954]: 125–138) and Lawrence A. Hoffman ("Jewish Ordination on the Eve of Christianity," *Studia Liturgica* 13, nos. 2–4 [1979]: 11–41) have demonstrated that hand laying was not used in rabbinic ordination during the time when the New Testament was being written. It therefore could not have been an influence on the development of Christian hand laying. In addition, both Hoffman (17) and Ferguson ("Jewish and Christian Ordination: Some Observations," *Harvard Theological Review* 56 [1963]: 15–16) deny that there is any evidence that hand laying was understood to bestow the Spirit in early rabbinic ordination.

[52] Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 254; see also 264 and 289.

[53] Ysebaert states, "Our conclusion may be that in the New Testament a gift of the Spirit is granted by an imposition of hands and an anointing. It is not necessary, however, to assume two separate rites, for it was already apparent that the imposition of hands is a gesture of touching that may comprise an anointing" (*Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 264). However, Ysebaert's supposed proof of anointing combined with hand laying in the New Testament are the unusual healings performed by Jesus in Mark 7:33, 8:23, and John 9:6–7, 11, of which he says, "In a few passages it is mentioned that Jesus combines the gesture of touching with the use of something in the nature of an ointment" (258). Ysebaert's qualification ("something in the nature of an ointment") reveals the great weakness of his argument.

[54] Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 296.

The preferable approach to hand laying is that of Ferguson, who argues, "The idea of blessing or benediction, especially in the sense of an efficacious sign, is the meaning which best explains all the varied occasions when the rite was employed in the ancient church."[55] It was an act of prayer in which the prayer stated the blessing God was asked to bestow and "the laying of hands suggests the identification of the object toward whom the benediction is directed."[56]

The Holy Spirit is given through hand laying in 8:14–19 and not through Baptism. The Confirmationist view has argued that hand laying is the primary (or even the only) means by which the Spirit is given. One version of this approach has argued that in Acts the Spirit is not given in Baptism at all, but instead is given only through hand laying.[57] Some who hold this view allow that Paul developed his ideas about Baptism in a different way that did to some degree connect the work of the Spirit to the water of Baptism.[58] The other version maintains that the Spirit is given through Baptism in a basic manner in Acts, but that hand laying works "a further imparting of the Spirit, which becomes manifest primarily in the gift of tongues and in prophecy."[59]

The Confirmationist position has usually argued that only the apostles could lay on hands and bestow the Spirit.[60] A modified version of this maintains that only the apostles could, or those designated and sent by them.[61] However, there are four

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[55] Ferguson, "Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination," 6.

[56] Ferguson, "Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination," 6. In Acts 8:15, Peter and John "prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit." Tipei agrees with Ferguson that blessing is the origin of hand laying for the bestowal of the Spirit (Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 228–229).

[57] Heinrich Elfers, "Gehört die Salbung mit Chrisma im ältesten abendländischen Initiationsritus zur Taufe oder zur Firmung?," *Theologie und Glaube* 34 (1942): 334–341, esp. 335; Umberg, *Die Schriftlehre vom Sakrament der Firmung*, 100–114, 172; Arthur James Mason, *The Relation of Confirmation to Baptism: As Taught in Holy Scripture and the Fathers*, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, Green, 1893), 37; and Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 266–267.

[58] Behm, *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum*, 165–175; Coppens, "L'imposition des mains dans les Actes des Apôtres," 426–428; and Thomas Marsh, *Gift of Community: Baptism and Confirmation* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1984), 53–54, 70–85.

[59] Burkhard Neunheuser, *Baptism and Confirmation*, trans. John Jay Hughes (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), 18–19. This lays an exegetical foundation for the classic Roman Catholic view that in Confirmation "the Holy Spirit is given for strength" (Council of Florence [1438–1445]) (Heinrich Denzinger et al., eds., *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, 43rd ed. [San Francisco: Ignatius, 2012], sec. 1319).

[60] Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung*, 115–117; Neumann, *Der Spender der Firmung in der Kirche des Abendlandes bis zum ende des kirchlichen Altertums*, 35–36; Coppens, "L'imposition des mains dans les Actes des Apôtres," 186, 188; Franz Joseph Dölger, *Das Sakrament der Firmung: Historisch-dogmatisch dargestellt* (Vienna: Mayer, 1906), 141; and Umberg, *Die Schriftlehre vom Sakrament der Firmung*, 205–207.

[61] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts," in *The Unity of Luke-Acts*, ed. J. Verheyden (Leuven: Leuven Univ. Press, 1999), 165–183, esp. 182. Marsh describes them as "recognised leaders in the Church" (*Gift of Community*, 111).

reasons why this must be rejected. First, it is an entirely anachronistic view, based on later western church practice, to imagine that the apostles (or their delegates) followed up on every setting where conversions had occurred through the work of others.[62] Second, when the church in Jerusalem sends Barnabas to Antioch to check on the newly founded church (11:22–24), there is no evidence that he lays hands on them to receive the Spirit.[63] Third, the account of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch that follows immediately after (8:26–40) completely contradicts this idea, unless one is willing to argue that the eunuch never receives the Spirit.[64] Finally, there is no evidence in the rest of the New Testament for a special hand laying administered by only the apostles or their delegates in order to bestow the Spirit.[65]

Because of the hand laying in 8:14–19 and its use after the Baptism of the "disciples" in Ephesus (19:1–7), it has been common to assume that Baptism was accompanied by hand laying from the time of the apostolic church.[66] It is argued that in Acts 8 and 19, Luke gives a full account of initiation, and that other passages that only mention Baptism are merely summary accounts.[67] Therefore, the language of "baptism" can be understood to include hand laying, even when hand laying is not actually mentioned.[68]

The question of hand laying and Baptism must be answered on two levels. First, we must consider how Luke intends hand laying to be understood in the Book of Acts. Here it must be denied that he saw hand laying as the *normal means* by which the Spirit was given to believers, and therefore a rite that was a necessary complement to Baptism. If hand laying was the means by which the Holy Spirit was given, it becomes inexplicable that when Peter speaks about receiving the gift of the Spirit

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[62] So also Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 114; and Whitehouse, "*Manus Impositio*," 78.

[63] So also Jean Amougou-Atangana, *Ein Sakrament des Geistempfangs? Zum Verhältnis von Taufe and Firmung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1974), 86; and Whitehouse, "*Manus Impositio*," 78.

[64] So also Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, 68; Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 58; and Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries*, 2nd rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 35n27.

[65] So also Turner, *Power from on High*, 53–54; and Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, 67.

[66] Coppens, "L'imposition des mains dans les Actes des Apôtres," 193; Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 65; Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung*, 76–77; Behm, *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum*, 28; and Jürgen Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 121.

[67] Neumann, *Der Spender der Firmung in der Kirche des Abendlandes bis zum ende des kirchlichen Altertums*, 34–35; and Coppens, "L'imposition des mains dans les Actes des Apôtres," 209–210.

[68] L. S. Thornton, *Confirmation: Its Place in the Baptismal Mystery* (London: Dacre, 1954), 73; and Neunheuser, *Baptism and Confirmation*, 48–49.

(2:38) at Pentecost he says nothing about hand laying and the entire context never mentions the action.[69]

Second, with regard to the general practice of the early church, the available evidence makes it highly unlikely that during the first few decades there was ever *one* ritual practice in the administration of Baptism.[70] For example, the pre-Nicene evidence from Syria and Egypt does not have a post-baptismal hand laying, and instead emphasizes a pre-baptismal anointing.[71] If there was truly *one apostolic practice*, how could these regions (especially Syria, for which Acts depicts very strong ties to Jerusalem and the apostles: 11:19–30; 15:1–35) have deviated so dramatically and so quickly? The absence of any reference to hand laying in relation to Baptism and the giving of the Spirit in Paul's epistles speaks strongly against the notion that this practice was an apostolic one present in all churches.[72] At the same time, the association of hand laying with blessing and prayer that we have already seen would have made it a natural complement to Baptism. Hebrews 6:2 indicates that it was present in at least some churches during the first century AD, but there is nothing in this text or context that proves it was done to give the Spirit.

Returning to Acts itself, the most likely understanding of hand laying in Acts 8 and 19 is that it is used to address an *abnormal situation* in which the Spirit for some reason has not been received.[73] We will observe in the exegesis that follows that this

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[69] So also Avemarie, *Die Tauferzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 166–167; and E. C. Whitaker, *Sacramental Initiation Complete in Baptism* (Bramcote, UK: Grove, 1975), 20.

[70] The work of Paul Bradshaw (*The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, 2nd ed. [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002]) has been of critical importance in revealing the extent to which previous scholarship assumed continuity and used evidence from disparate regions and time periods in order to create the impression of a united and common practice.

[71] See the discussion in Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 41–82.

[72] So also Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 123; and R. E. O. White, *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation: A Theology of Baptism and Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 196. The absence of references to hand laying has not stopped scholars from arguing that texts in Paul's letters actually speak about it (Umberg, *Die Schriftlehre vom Sakrament der Firmung*, 101–105; Mason, *The Relation of Confirmation to Baptism*, 40–52; and Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology*, 268–271), but this exegesis, which detects what is not actually mentioned, is forced and unconvincing. Recognizing this, others maintain that a hand laying that gives the Spirit must be assumed in Paul's letters that do not seek to describe the rite itself (Coppens, "L'imposition des mains dans les Actes des Apôtres," 265–266; and Neunheuser, *Baptism and Confirmation*, 48–49). Yet this argument is itself based on the assumption that the practice was apostolic and present from the beginning.

[73] This is the position of Tipei (*The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 294), Avemarie (*Die Tauferzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 166–167), and Laurence Decousu ("Imposition des mains et onction: recherches sur l'adjonction de rites additionnels dans les liturgies baptismales primitives – Première partie: L'imposition des mains," *Ecclesia orans* 34 [2017]: 11–46, esp. 12–13).

coheres best with details of these texts. Acts 8 and 19 do not describe normal occasions of Baptism; rather, they are responses to abnormal and exceptional circumstances.

The details of Acts 8 have been explained by Pentecostals as an important example of subsequence—namely, that believers in Jesus Christ receive the Spirit at a later point in time (and the Spirit then provides charismatic gifts and empowerment for mission). Yet as we will see, 8:16 presents the delay as being *contrary* to normal expectation. It was commonly argued in the twentieth century that the challenging features of Acts 8 are the result of the way Luke has combined or adapted different sources, but this has been soundly rejected.[74] Quesnel has maintained that Acts 8:14–17 and 19:1–7 are different because they represent a completely different understanding of Baptism than that found in Acts 2:38 and 10:48.[75] But the use of different prepositions with βαπτίζω provides a weak basis for his argument.[76]

Luke describes the absence of the Spirit in Samaria by stating, "For he had not yet fallen on any of them [οὐδέπω γὰρ ἦν ἐπ᾽ οὐδενὶ αὐτῶν ἐπιπεπτωκός], but they had only [μόνον] been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (8:16). The key word in this description is the adverb οὐδέπω, which means "the negation of extending

[74] For more discussion of why this general approach should be rejected, see Turner, *Power from on High*, 361–362.

[75] Quesnel emphasizes that 8:16 and 19:5 both describe Baptism as εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ. In these texts the giving of the Spirit then follows through hand laying. On the other hand, Acts 2:38 describes Baptism as ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ and 10:48 as ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Acts 2:38 states that the Spirit is given through Baptism (Quesnel, *Baptisés dans l'Esprit*, 48–49, 57–59). According to Quesnel, these represent two different practices that existed in the church, and while the Acts 2:38 version is Luke's own view, Luke has respected the traditions he received by retaining this different version of Baptism in Acts 8 and 19 (211).

[76] Lars Hartman has noted, "The expression '*into* the name (of somebody)' is, however, unbiblical in so far as it does not occur in the Septuagint. In addition, it is at odds with Greek style, and actually in normal Greek used only in banking language" (Lars Hartman, *"Into the Name of the Lord Jesus": Baptism in the Early Church* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997], 38; emphasis original). He also observes that Luke uses εἰς τὸ ὄνομα to describe Christian Baptism when he is the narrator (8:16; 19:5) and goes on to add that this "means that the form corresponds to his natural style, presumably the mode of expression he has learnt from his own Christian surroundings" (38). Paul's statement in 1 Cor 1:13 where he points out the Corinthians were not baptized "into the name of Paul [εἰς τὸ ὄνομα Παύλου]" supports this. The form ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι in 2:28 has most likely been influenced by the citation of Joel in 2:21 (πᾶς ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσηται τὸ ὄνομα) (Rudolf Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte. 1 Teilband Apg 1–12*, 2nd ed. [Solothurn: Benzinger, 1995], 125; and Avemarie, *Die Tauferzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 35). It is an example of Luke's skill in prosopopoeia as he gives Peter's speech a biblical or Septuagintal tone. The same thing is true for ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι in 10:48, where Luke provides an account of Peter's statement in indirect speech (Avemarie, *Die Tauferzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 35). For an extensive and detailed refutation of Quesnel's position, see Avemarie, *Die Tauferzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 255–267.

time up to and beyond *an expected point*."[77] The word οὐδέπω defines the relationship between Baptism and reception of the Spirit. Baptism had occurred, but the expected event of the reception of the Spirit had not yet happened.

The adverb οὐδέπω indicates the expectation that Baptism and reception of the Spirit go together.[78] This explains the μόνον ("only") of 8:16b. Contrary to normal expectation, Baptism had occurred and remained "alone" without the reception of the Spirit. Yet Thomas Marsh has emphasized that here and in Acts 19:1–7 we see the actual process of Baptism depicted, and so we receive a full description of what Luke considered to be normal in Baptism.[79] Like Marsh, many have seen in μόνον an indication that it was the normal expectation for the Spirit to be given after Baptism through hand laying.[80] But this ignores the fact that the text does not say Peter and John went to Samaria in order to bestow the Spirit. Instead, when they had gone down, they found that the Spirit "had not yet [οὐδέπω]" fallen on them (8:16). They found something that was *contrary* to the normal expectation established in 2:38–40, and so they took action to remedy the situation.

The need for the Spirit to be given through hand laying to those who had already been baptized marks 8:14–17 as an exceptional circumstance.[81] An additional feature also marks this as an exceptional event. Acts 8:18 states that "when Simon saw that [ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Σίμων ὅτι] the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands," he offered money to acquire this power. The fact that Simon could *see* the Spirit had been given indicates that there was some kind of perceptible manifestation of the Spirit's presence.[82]

It has been noted earlier that multiple interlocking textual features connect Acts 2 (Pentecost), Acts 8 (Samaritans), Acts 10 (Cornelius and the Gentiles), and Acts 19 (the "disciples"), and these lead us to interpret them *together* as unique and extraordinary events. Since there is speaking "in tongues" (γλώσσαις) present in 2:4,

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[77] Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000), 736 (hereafter cited as BDAG) (emphasis mine).

[78] In 8:16's explanatory statement, οὐδέπω is fronted for emphasis.

[79] Thomas Marsh, "A Study of Confirmation," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 39 (1972): 149–163, esp. 159.

[80] Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte. 1 Teilband Apg 1–12*, 275–276; and Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung*, 58.

[81] So also McDonnell and Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 35; Decousu, "Imposition des mains et onction," 12–13; and Delling, *Die Taufe im Neuen Testament*, 66–67.

[82] The obviously perceptible character of the Spirit's presence has been commented on by Richard F. Zehnle, *Peter's Pentecost Discourse: Tradition and Lukan Reinterpretation in Peter's Speeches of Acts 2 and 3* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 128; Gourgues, "Esprit des commencements et Esprit des prolongements dans les *Actes*," 382; and Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 1:413.

10:46, and 19:6, it is highly likely this is also the case in 8:16.[83] Most likely Luke leaves this strongly implied since the Samaritans are only the first step outside Judaism, and he saves a full description (10:44–46; cf. 11:15–17) for the great leap forward as the Spirit compels the church to recognize God's acceptance of the Gentiles.

Thus Acts 8 is a "Samaritan Pentecost" and it represents the first movement of the gospel beyond the Jews.[84] This is not an advance undertaken by the twelve apostles, and it is directed toward a group with whom the Jews shared a long and bitter opposition. The delay of the reception of the Spirit, the bestowal of the Holy Spirit through hand laying, and the likelihood of tongues and other manifestations of the Spirit serve to show God's approval of this development.[85] As we have already seen in Acts 10, exceptional circumstances in which the Spirit is not received through Baptism mark the advance of the gospel to other groups that have stood outside or in tension with the original Jewish-based church.[86]

Acts 19:1–7

The final text to consider is Paul's encounter with the "disciples" at Ephesus in Acts 19:1–7. However, this is preceded by the description of Apollos at Ephesus (18:24–28), in which there is a significant parallel.[87] Apollos is a Jew from Alexandria who is described as "eloquent/learned [λόγιος]" and "powerful in the Scriptures

[83] The presence of tongues is suggested by Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung*, 84; Stählin, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 122; Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 135; Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, trans. Bernard Noble and Gerald Shinn (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 304; Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 332; Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 194; and Anthony Ash, "John's Disciples: A Serious Problem," *Restoration Quarterly* 45 (2003): 85–93, 211.

[84] Lampe (*The Seal of the Spirit*, 72) and Richard I. Pervo (*Acts: A Commentary* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009], 213) both make this helpful identification.

[85] This point is emphasized by Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012–2015), 2:1521; Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, 69; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 118; Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 289; Samkutty, *The Samaritan Mission in Acts*, 174; and Oulton, "The Holy Spirit, Baptism, and Laying on of Hands in Acts," 239.

[86] Lampe comments that "the original nucleus of the Church received the Spirit in the most striking and dramatic way at Pentecost, and at every turning-point in the missionary enterprise something in the nature of a Pentecostal manifestation of the Spirit occurs" (*The Seal of the Spirit*, 72).

[87] Luke's intentional juxtaposition of the texts, and the need to understand them in relation to one another, is widely recognized: C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 885; Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 458; and Avemarie, *Die Tauferzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 71–72.

[δυνατὸς ὢν ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς]" (18:24).[88] Luke then reports, "This one had been instructed in the way of the Lord and being fervent in the Spirit he was speaking [καὶ ζέων τῷ πνεύματι ἐλάλει] and was teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus [καὶ ἐδίδασκεν ἀκριβῶς τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ]" (18:25).[89] Yet then he adds, "although he knew only the baptism of John [ἐπιστάμενος μόνον τὸ βάπτισμα Ἰωάννου]" (18:25). Apollos began to speak boldly (παρρησιάζεσθαι) in the synagogue, and when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, "they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately [προσελάβοντο αὐτὸν καὶ ἀκριβέστερον αὐτῷ ἐξέθεντο τὴν ὁδὸν [τοῦ θεοῦ]]" (18:26).[90]

Luke's description of Apollos presents him as a somewhat enigmatic figure.[91] One line of interpretation argues that Luke presents Apollos as a Christian, but he does so because he has *misunderstood* the information about Apollos, who was in fact a non-Christian Jew.[92] However, this argument founders on the fact that Apollos was a well known figure in the early church (certainly to Paul), and therefore such a basic error on Luke's part is not plausible.[93]

Michael Wolter maintains instead that Luke seeks to present Apollos as having a significant deficiency in his knowledge and teaching that renders him not yet a Christian.[94] For Wolter, the participial phrase ζέων τῷ πνεύματι (18:25b) does not refer to the work of the Holy Spirit.[95] Apollos is described as showing that Jesus is

[88] BDAG, 598.1.2. Within the setting of the Hellenistic world where rhetoric stood at the center of education, there was no real difference between "eloquent" and "learned" (so also Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 157; and Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 2:887).

[89] ESV modified.

[90] ESV modified.

[91] According to 18:25, Apollos has been taught the way of the Lord, the Spirit appears to be at work in him through his speaking, and he teaches accurately about Jesus. However, he only knows (and apparently has received) the Baptism of John (18:25). He needs further instruction from Priscilla and Aquila to understand the teaching of the church more accurately (18:26). Presumably this must have included instruction about Christian Baptism, yet Luke never says that Apollos *actually received* Christian Baptism. At the same time, Apollos is then sent forth by the Ephesian Christians to Achaia (18:27), where he proves to be a great help (18:28).

[92] Eduard Schweizer, "Die Bekehrung des Apollos, Apg 18, 24–26," in *Beiträge zur Theologie des Neuen Testaments: Neutestamentliche Aufsätze (1955–1970)* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1970), 71–79, esp. 77–79.

[93] See 1 Cor 1:12; 3:4–6; 3:22; 4:6; 16:12; and Titus 3:13.

[94] Michael Wolter, "Apollos und die ephesinischen Johannesjünger (Act 18:24–19:7)," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der ältern Kirche* 78 (1987): 49–73, esp. 63–65.

[95] It is not uncommon for scholars to take this phrase as an anthropocentric reference to Apollo being "fervent in spirit," rather than to the work of the Holy Spirit (Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 459; Bock, *Acts,* 592; and Coppens, "L'imposition des mains dans les Actes des Apôtres," 217).

the Christ (18:28) only after Priscilla and Aquila explain the way of God more accurately (18:26).[96]

However, the available evidence indicates that while Apollos' situation may be somewhat unusual, he is certainly a Christian. The phrase ζέων τῷ πνεύματι ἐλάλει (18:25b) is key to understanding Apollos' status, and four items demonstrate that the referent of τῷ πνεύματι is the Holy Spirit. First, in the paratactic construction this phrase is sandwiched between two statements (18:25a and 18:25c) that describe someone who is a Christian.[97] Second, while Luke can use πνεῦμα in an anthropological sense (Luke 1:47; Acts 17:16), Avemarie has pointed out that when Luke uses πνεῦμα absolutely and without qualification as in 18:25b, overwhelmingly the referent is the Spirit or a demonic or spiritual creature.[98] Third, in the immediate and parallel context of 19:1–7, the referent of πνεῦμα is the Holy Spirit (19:2, 6), and we should expect the same to be true in 18:25.[99] Finally, the parallel statement "fervent in spirit [τῷ πνεύματι ζέοντες]" in Romans 12:11 provides further external confirmation that Luke is describing Apollos as an individual who has received the Spirit. (It is likely an early Christian idiom).[100]

Luke says that Apollos taught the things concerning Jesus accurately (ἀκριβῶς), but he knew only the Baptism of John (18:25). Priscilla and Aquila then explained the way more accurately (ἀκριβέστερον) (18:26). Certainly, this teaching included

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[96] This is part of Wolter's broader argument that Acts 18:24–19:7 is really about "Paul and Apollos" ("Apollos und die ephesinischen Johannesjünger," 59–60). He argues that this has been generated by the conflict found in 1 Cor 1–4. He thinks Luke could not accept such a conflict and so presents Apollos as subordinate to Paul. Apollos was taught the true faith by Paul's associates, who also then encouraged the church in Achaia to receive him (Acts 18:27; Wolter, "Apollos und die ephesinischen Johannesjünger," 65–66).

[97] 18:25a: "He had been instructed in the way of the Lord [οὗτος ἦν κατηχημένος τὴν ὁδὸν τοῦ κυρίου]"; 18:25c: "and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus [καὶ ἐδίδασκεν ἀκριβῶς τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ]." The importance of this for interpretation is noted by Ernst Käsemann, "The Disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus," in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague (London: SCM, 1964), 143; Turner, *Power from on High*, 389n124.

[98] Avemarie, *Die Tauferzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 71n161. Expanding on Avemarie's evidence, the referent is the Holy Spirit in Luke 2:27; 4:1, 14; Acts 6:3, 10 (cf. 6:5); 8:18, 29; 10:19; 11:12, 28; and 21:4. It is a demonic or spiritual creature in Luke 9:39; 10:20; 24:37, 39; Acts 16:18; and 23:8, 9. The only possible exceptions are Luke 1:80, Acts 19:21, and 20:22, which could be anthropological. However, in each of these a strong case can be made that the referent is also the Spirit.

[99] Keener makes the same point (*Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 3:2808).

[100] So also Käsemann, "The Disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus," 143; Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 3:2807; F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 402; Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 2:888; and Stählin, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 250.

Christian Baptism as the means by which Christ now gives the Spirit to his church.[101] In this sense, Apollos' knowledge was incomplete. However, the adverb ἀκριβῶς would be entirely inappropriate if Apollos did not have a Christian understanding of Jesus as the Christ who had died and risen from the dead.[102] Apollos needed more knowledge (specifically about Christian Baptism), but he was a Christian and did not require conversion.[103]

Apollos is a Christian in whom the Holy Spirit is at work, and yet he has known and received only the Baptism of John the Baptist. How was this possible? The answer must be found in the parallel that exists with the apostles and the small group accompanying them (Acts 1:15) at Pentecost who received the Spirit (2:1–4). We have no record that the accompanying group ever received Christian Baptism. Acts 1:22 and its description of the apostolic requirement for Judas' successor ("beginning from the baptism of John"; see John 1:35–42) indicates that many (if not all) had received John's Baptism. Apparently, the water of John's Baptism found its completion in the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 11:16).[104] It is likely that Apollos should be understood in the same way: the Baptism of John was completed by a reception of the Spirit.[105]

Immediately after the description of Apollos (18:24–28), Acts 19:1 states Paul came to Ephesus, where he found "some disciples [τινας μαθητὰς]." The apostle asks in 19:2 what seems to be an unusual question: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? [εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐλάβετε πιστεύσαντες;]." Their answer in turn is puzzling: "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit [ἀλλ᾽ οὐδ᾽ εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἔστιν ἠκούσαμεν]" (19:2). Paul then follows up with another question, asking, "Into what then [εἰς τί οὖν] were you baptized?" and they reply, "Into John's baptism [εἰς τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα]" (19:3).

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[101] This is, after all, the specific shortcoming identified by Luke (so also Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New York: Doubleday, 1998], 639; and Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 206).

[102] So also Knut Backhaus, *Die „Jüngerkreise" des Täufers Johannes: Eine Studie zu den religionsgeschichtlichen Ursprüngen des Christentums* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1991), 221–222; and Bock, *Acts*, 592.

[103] This is the same conclusion shared by F. Scott Spencer, *The Portrait of Philip in Acts: A Study of Roles and Relations* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 233; and Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 2:887.

[104] This is a common position found in scholars such as Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*, 46; W. F. Flemington, *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism* (London: SPCK, 1964), 42; and Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 170.

[105] So also Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 112; Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 89; J. C. O'Neill, "The Connection Between Baptism and the Gift of the Spirit in Acts," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 63 (1996): 87–103, esp. 95; Das, "Acts 8: Water, Baptism, and the Spirit," 125n36; and Backhaus, *Die „Jüngerkreise" des Täufers Johannes*, 227.

After acquiring this information, Paul tells them, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus" (19:4). We learn that when they heard this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (19:5). Then, "when Paul had laid his hands on them [ἐπιθέντος αὐτοῖς τοῦ Παύλου [τὰς] χεῖρας], the Holy Spirit came on them [ἦλθε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπ' αὐτούς], and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying" (19:6). Finally, Luke states that there were about twelve men in all (19:7).

The brief report provided by Luke is filled with difficult features.[106] The first question to be answered is whether the Ephesian "disciples" are Christians. Some have answered in the affirmative for four different reasons. First, Luke calls these individuals "disciples [μαθητὰς]," and in every other instance in Acts, the word refers to Christians.[107] Second, Paul describes the disciples as "believing [πιστεύσαντες]," and in Acts this verb always refers to Christian faith.[108] Third, Paul's explanation in 19:4 contains little about Jesus' saving work per se, and so shows that these individuals knew the basic saving content of the Christian faith.[109] Finally, some maintain that the juxtaposition of 19:1–7 with 18:24–28, which discusses the Christian Apollos, indicates that the Ephesian disciples were also Christians.[110] Yet while these scholars identify the Ephesian disciples as Christians, they must immediately qualify this identification with expressions that indicate they were not "normal disciples."[111] These qualifications indicate the highly ambiguous status of these "disciples" and ultimately point in the opposite direction.

Five factors indicate that the disciples were not Christians. First, Luke describes them as τινας μαθητὰς (19:1), and this is the only time in Acts when Luke uses this phrase.[112] While the indefinite pronoun τις can indicate unspecified quantity, it can also be used to moderate an expression that could be viewed as too definite, since it

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[106] Backhaus comments that "Acts 19:1–7 is loaded with difficulties as hardly another New Testament text" (*Die „Jüngerkreise" des Täufers Johannes*, 191), and Käsemann has called it "the despair of the exegete" ("The Disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus," 136).

[107] Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 222; and Quesnel, *Baptisés dans l'Esprit*, 66.

[108] Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 208; Avemarie, *Die Tauferzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 78; and Backhaus, *Die „Jüngerkreise" des Täufers Johannes*, 199.

[109] Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 642; and Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 208.

[110] Backhaus, *Die „Jüngerkreise" des Täufers Johannes*, 197–198; Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 208.

[111] "Of a sort": Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 468; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 643; "'disciples' of sorts": McDonnell and Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 38; "in some sense at least": J. H. E. Hull, *The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles* (Cleveland: World, 1967), 112; "in some imprecise way": Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 207n58; and "defective Christians": Avemarie, *Die Tauferzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 73n167.

[112] Shauf, *Theology as History*, 146–147.

is used "to introduce a member of a class without further identification."[113] The fact that Luke provides the number of disciples in 19:7 speaks against a quantitative understanding.[114] Here, "some disciples" has this indefinite qualitative sense as Luke introduces the "disciples" in an ambiguous way that raises questions about them because it stands in striking contrast to his typical practice.[115]

Second, Paul's question in 19:2 about whether they had received the Holy Spirit is highly unusual. As Dunn comments, the question is "hardly his opening gambit in every and any conversation."[116] However, following the description τινας μαθητὰς, the question indicates Paul has perceived that something about the disciples is not right and he has begun to seek out the true nature of things. Third, the participle πιστεύσαντες used in the question is hardly surprising as Paul seeks to assess the true character of these believers. Set within the context of this question, this participle does not prove that Paul considered them to be Christians. This was in fact the very thing he was seeking to learn.

Fourth, within the very terse account found in 19:1–7, Paul's explanation in 19:4 contains little about Jesus' saving work per se. Yet it points to Jesus as the central object of faith, in contrast to John, who was the forerunner. Equally important, this is not the first time Luke has narrated Paul speaking about John the Baptist. Paul's very first speech in Acts at Pisidian Antioch (13:15–41) describes John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus (13:25–26) and then provides an extensive discussion about Jesus' saving work (13:26–39). This preceding text informs our understanding of what Paul means in 19:4.[117] Fifth, the "disciples'" ignorance about the fact that the Spirit had come (see discussion below) demonstrates they are not Christian.[118]

Finally, the juxtaposition of 19:1–7 with 18:24–28, which discusses the Christian Apollos, demonstrates the *contrast* between Apollos and the disciples and not their similarity. Apollos is "fervent in spirit" (18:25), while the Ephesian disciples do not even know that the Spirit has been given (19:2).[119] Apollos teaches accurately the

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[113] BDAG, 1008, 1.b.β. See Jas 1:18. Porter notes that the sense can be of an item that is "unspecified" (Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999], 135).

[114] Shauf correctly asks, "If τινας is supposed to be merely quantitative in v. 1, i.e. indicating an indefinite number of disciples, why would Luke then correct himself by providing a definite number in v. 7?" (*Theology as History*, 147).

[115] Shauf, *Theology as History*, 146–147. Shauf notes that Jacquier advocated this indefinite qualitative view (Eugène Jacquier, *Les Actes des Apôtres* [Paris: Gabalda, 192], 565). Dunn also argues that τινας μαθητὰς indicates they were not Christians (*Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 84).

[116] Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 85.

[117] Shauf, *Theology as History*, 157–158.

[118] So also Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 3:2816–2817; Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 570; Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 83; and Hartman, *"Into the Name of the Lord Jesus,"* 137–138.

[119] So also Turner, *Power from on High*, 389.

things concerning Jesus (18:25), while the Ephesian disciples require instruction about faith in Jesus (19:4).[120] There is no mention of Apollos being baptized, while the Ephesians disciples receive Baptism (19:5). In fact, the only element the two texts have in common is the mention of the Baptism of John (18:25; 19:3).[121]

The shared connection of the Baptism of John and the vastly different treatment accorded by Luke to Apollos and the Ephesian disciples underscore an important truth about Christianity in the first century AD. The Christian church emerged out of the setting of John's baptizing ministry.[122] Christian Baptism, as a washing administered to another person, was a reinterpreted application of John's baptizing practice.[123]

These strong ties from the past existed, yet also there is evidence that John himself continued to be an influential figure after his death. He had his own group of disciples (Luke 7:18–19), and we cannot say how long they continued to function as a group.[124] However, the continuing popular views about John (that he had risen from the dead, Luke 9:7–9; that Jesus was John the Baptist, 9:19; that John had been a prophet, 20:6) demonstrate his ongoing influence. The fact that people attributed Herod Antipas' defeat by Aretas IV to God's judgment for John's death[125] and that Josephus provided an account about John[126] demonstrate that "John the Baptist was a well-known figure, whose memory lingered in Jewish circles."[127]

Apollos and the Ephesian disciples illustrate the fact that first-century Christianity included a broad fringe of groups that were not strongly tied to the apostolic church (and of course some of these groups ultimately were not Christian or were heretical).[128] Considering the original ties Christian origins had with John the Baptist and his continuing influence in the first century, it is unsurprising that there

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[120] So also Decousu, "Imposition des mains et onction," 20n16.

[121] So also Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 642; and Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 281.

[122] John proclaimed that one greater than he was coming (Luke 3:15–17), and Jesus came to receive John's Baptism (Luke 3:21–22). At least some of those who followed Jesus had been associated with John's baptizing ministry (Acts 1:22; John 1:35–42). Backhaus correctly emphasizes the significance of this point (*Die „Jüngerkreise" des Täufers Johannes*, 330–333).

[123] Washings in Second Temple Judaism were self administered. The fact that John *administered the Baptism to others* set him apart and provided him with the moniker "the baptizer [Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτίζων]" (Mark 6:14, my translation). (See Robert L. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-Historical Study* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991], 178–179.) Christian Baptism continued this practice of a washing administered by another person.

[124] They fasted and prayed (Luke 5:33) (prayer that was done in a form taught by John; Luke 11:1), and they buried him after his execution (Mark 6:29).

[125] Josephus, *Ant*., 18.116.

[126] Josephus, *Ant*., 18.116–118.

[127] Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, 168.

[128] Backhaus, *Die „Jüngerkreise" des Täufers Johannes*, 212; and Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 96–97.

were groups that continued the practice of John's Baptism and shared his teaching that came into contact with the church.

Some have suggested that the Ephesian disciples are an example of disciples of John the Baptist who continued after their master's death.[129] However, two pieces of evidence indicate that they are not disciples of John. First, Luke does not identify them as such, while he does so elsewhere when referring to disciples of John (Luke 5:33; 7:18; cf. 11:1). Second, their lack of knowledge about the Spirit is completely inconsistent with anyone who had contact with John.[130] What they have received is the "baptism of John," which in this case means the baptismal rite that originated with John.[131]

Luke intentionally introduces the Ephesian disciples in a very ambiguous manner. As we will see in the exegesis that follows, the Ephesian disciples' association with the heritage of John the Baptist proves to be the key in understanding why they experience a reception of the Spirit that does not follow the paradigm established by Acts 2:38–40. This connection to John the Baptist is what puts them in a category to experience an event that has clear ties to Acts 2, 8, and 10.

In the exegesis of 19:1–7, it is critical to recognize that 19:2–6 has been arranged in an ABCB´A´ chiasm. In 19:2 (A), Paul asks about whether the disciples have received the Holy Spirit, and in 19:6 (A´), the Holy Spirit comes upon them. In 19:3 (B), the discussion is about the Baptism they have received, and in 19:5 (B´), the disciples receive Baptism in the name of Jesus. Acts 19:4 (C) stands at the center of the chiasm as Paul explains the nature of John's Baptism and teaches that the true outcome of John's work must lead to faith in Jesus.[132] The chiasm helps us to understand that the issues of receiving the Spirit and Baptism in the discussion ultimately have a christological focus and answer.

It has been noted earlier that Paul's initial question, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? [εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐλάβετε πιστεύσαντες;]," is surprising and arrives with no prior preparation. Some have argued that Paul is asking whether the disciples know they have received the Spirit because of immediate perceptible

[129] Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 2:885. Käsemann has argued that these disciples of John were "a Baptist community in competition with the young Church" ("The Disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus," 141–142). Backhaus argues convincingly against such an understanding (*Die „Jüngerkreise" des Täufers Johannes*, 190–197, 314).

[130] Rejecting their status as disciples of John are Backhaus, *Die „Jüngerkreise" des Täufers Johannes*, 209; Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 84; Quesnel, *Baptisés dans l'Esprit*, 67; Shauf, *Theology as History*, 147–148; and Avemarie, *Die Tauferzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 76, 436.

[131] So also Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 84; Quesnel, *Baptisés dans l'Esprit*, 67; and Avemarie, *Die Tauferzählungen der Apostelgeschichte*, 76, 436.

[132] The chiasm is identified in Wolter, "Apollos und die ephesinischen Johannesjünger," 69–70; Shauf, *Theology as History*, 145; and Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 467.

evidence and point to 19:6 as support for this interpretation.[133] However, Paul's follow-up question in 19:3 indicates that the apostle's question about receiving the Spirit is intended to lead to the subject of Baptism.[134]

The disciples' answer in turn is puzzling: "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit [ἀλλ' οὐδ' εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἔστιν ἠκούσαμεν]." It is virtually impossible to conceive of a way that anyone who had come into contact with the teaching of John the Baptist (and its background in Judaism) could be unaware of the existence of the Holy Spirit. Scholars have correctly interpreted the language here in light of John 7:39, and have understood the answer to mean that the disciples did not know that the Spirit had come and could be received.[135] Confirmation of this is found in the fact that Paul does not seek to explain what he means by "Holy Spirit."[136]

The disciples' obvious failure to understand the presence and availability of the eschatological Spirit prompts Paul to ask, "Into what then [εἰς τί οὖν] were you baptized?" (19:3a). The fact that Paul goes immediately to a question about the Baptism they had received shows that Paul presupposes the close connection between Christian Baptism and reception of the Spirit.[137] It coheres with the paradigm about Baptism and reception of the Spirit that has been expressed in 2:38–40 and provides further evidence that this paradigm is foundational to Acts.

The disciples' reply, "Into John's baptism [εἰς τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα]" (19:3b), shows that they have not received Christian Baptism.[138] Yet Paul's answer reveals they are lacking a more basic understanding without which Christian Baptism is not possible. He says, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus" (19:4). The syntax is important here, since the object of the verb (εἰς τὸν ἐρχόμενον μετ' αὐτὸν) in the

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[133] Howard M. Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit: An Engaging Critique of James D.G. Dunn's "Baptism in the Holy Spirit"* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), 59–60; Tipei, *The Laying on of Hands in the New Testament*, 211; Turner, *Power from On High*, 392; and Backhaus, *Die „Jüngerkreise" des Täufers Johannes*, 200.

[134] So also Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 468; and Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 282. Johnson comments, "If they are in fact *mathetai*, the natural assumption would be that they had been baptized into Jesus and had received the Spirit" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 337).

[135] John 7:39 states, οὔπω γὰρ ἦν πνεῦμα, ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐδέπω ἐδοξάσθη. Translated literally, this would mean "for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not been glorified." Since the statement cannot be a denial of the existence of the Spirit, it is rightly translated "for as yet the Spirit had not been given." Scholars who advocate this interpretation include Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 3:2819; Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 571; and Wolter, "Apollos und die ephesinischen Johannesjünger," 67–68.

[136] Youngmo Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom in the Writings of Luke and Paul: An Attempt to Reconcile These Concepts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 157.

[137] So also Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, 468; Stählin, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 253; Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 212–213; and Turner, *Power from on High*, 392.

[138] We have seen that the best understanding of this phrase is the baptismal rite that originated with John.

phrase ἵνα πιστεύσωσιν has been placed in front of the ἵνα clause itself (εἰς τὸν ἐρχόμενον μετ᾽ αὐτὸν ἵνα πιστεύσωσιν). This emphasizes the preparatory character of John's work, and identifies Jesus as the one proclaimed by John, a point that has pneumatologic importance.

It was noted earlier that 19:4 stands at the center of a chiasm in which the surrounding verses deal with the Spirit (19:2; 19:6) and Baptism (19:3; 19:5). Paul's answer provides the christological core that makes reception of the Christian Baptism and the Spirit possible. First, he identifies John's Baptism as a "baptism of repentance [βάπτισμα μετανοίας]."[139] This describes its preparatory character as part of John's ministry and distinguishes it from Christian Baptism. Next, the fronting syntax places emphasis on Jesus as the one coming after John (εἰς τὸν ἐρχόμενον μετ᾽ αὐτὸν). The fundamental point of John's message was that the mightier one coming after him would give the Spirit (Luke 3:15–17).[140] If the disciples had any familiarity with John's teaching, this statement would have identified Jesus as the source of the Spirit about whose coming they were ignorant.

Finally, Paul specifically identifies Jesus as the one coming after John: "that is, Jesus [τοῦτ᾽ ἔστιν εἰς τὸν Ἰησοῦν]" (Acts 19:4). The argument drives toward the fundamental need of the disciples: correct faith in Jesus.[141] As noted earlier, 19:4 contains little about Jesus' saving work per se, yet Paul's statement is followed by Baptism in the name of Jesus in 19:5. The most likely explanation for this is Shauf's suggestion that 19:4 is a concise summary of Paul's preaching in Acts at Pisidian Antioch (13:15–41) describing John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus (13:25–26) and providing an extensive discussion about Jesus' saving work (13:26–39). This preceding text informs our understanding of what Paul means in 19:4, and what was said (it is unlikely that Paul's entire presentation of the gospel was a single sentence).[142]

Acts 19:5 states that when the disciples heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Immediately after this we are told, "and when Paul had laid his hands on them [καὶ ἐπιθέντος αὐτοῖς τοῦ Παύλου [τὰς] χεῖρας], the Holy Spirit came on them [ἦλθε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπ᾽ αὐτούς], and they began speaking in

[139] It is important to observe that this phrase occurs in only Luke 3:3, Acts 13:24, and 19:4. The second and third instances are spoken by Paul.

[140] Jesus as the fulfillment of this is, of course, emphasized by Acts (1:5; 2:33; 11:16).

[141] Backhaus, *Die „Jüngerkreise" des Täufers Johannes*, 206; and Shauf, *Theology as History*, 158.

[142] Shauf, *Theology as History*, 157–158. Backhaus has plausibly suggested that the Ephesian disciples had some knowledge of Jesus, just as Cornelius did (10:37–39), which prepared them for the specific identification of Jesus as the object of faith (*Die „Jüngerkreise" des Täufers Johannes*, 206).

tongues and prophesying [ἐλάλουν τε γλώσσαις καὶ ἐπροφήτευον]" (19:6). The questions and answers exchanged in 19:2–3 lead us to expect that the disciples will receive the Spirit through Baptism. Yet here, instead, they receive the Spirit through Paul's laying on of hands. Naturally, the Confirmationist view has taken this as proof that the Spirit was given through this means in the church of the first century AD.[143] In our consideration of Acts 8:17, we have already seen the insurmountable problems of this approach.

The Pentecostal interpretation has maintained that 19:4–6 demonstrates how faith in Jesus and water Baptism are preconditions for "baptism in the Holy Spirit," which is claimed to result in charismatic manifestations of the Spirit such as tongues and prophesying.[144] While this position incorrectly ignores the Baptismal paradigm of 2:38–40 and the evidence for it in 19:2–3, the Pentecostal emphasis on the character of 19:6 points in the correct direction for a proper understanding.

We have noted that the features of Acts 19:2–6 join those found in 8:14–17 (Samaritans) and 10:44–48, along with 11:15–18 (Gentiles), in a unique connection with Acts 2 (Pentecost). Three of them are found here. First, the text deals with reception of the Spirit using the verb λαμβάνω (19:2). Second, Jesus had promised in 1:8, using the verb ἐπέρχομαι, that the Holy Spirit would come upon the disciples at Pentecost. Here in 19:6 the Spirit comes upon the disciples (ἔρχομαι + ἐπί) (ἦλθε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐπ' αὐτούς). Third, there is speaking "in tongues" (γλώσσαις) (19:6), which is found only here in 2:4 and 10:46.[145]

The interaction between Paul and the disciples had begun with the question in 19:2 about whether they had received the Spirit. Now, in 19:6, the disciples receive the Spirit in a dramatic fashion that does not directly involve Baptism. Like the previous occasions in Acts 8 and 10, this is an example of an exceptional circumstance, which highlights the significance of the event. The Spirit is received through hand laying, and just as in 8:16–17, this use of hand laying addresses an abnormal situation.

The exceptional circumstances in Acts 8 and 10 dealt with the inclusion of the Samaritans and the Gentiles, as they each experienced their own "Pentecost." Acts

[143] Neunheuser, *Baptism and Confirmation*, 40–41; Adler, *Taufe und Handauflegung*, 98; and Yves-Marie Blanchard, "Esprit Saint et baptême à l'époque apostolique: Le témoignage des Actes des Apôtres," in *Chrismation et confirmation: Questions autour d'un rite post-baptismal*, ed. C. Braga (Rome: Centro Liturgico Vincenziano, 2009), 165–174, esp. 173–174.

[144] Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 58. It should be noted that the phrase "baptism in the Holy Spirit" never occurs in the New Testament.

[145] It is also strongly suggested by 8:18.

19:2–6 describes the inclusion of those who have been associated with John the Baptist's Baptism, teaching, and influence. It is the "Johannine Pentecost."[146] Luke has placed a large emphasis on John the Baptist in his Gospel.[147] However, this focus on John continues in Acts as he is mentioned on six occasions (1:5, 22; 10:37; 11:16; 13:24–25; 18:25; 19:3–4). The narration about Apollos and the Ephesian disciples demonstrates the continuing significance of John in the setting of Christianity in the first century AD. Groups under this influence were not pagan Gentiles, and they were not unbelieving Jews of the synagogue. Their close ties with the origins of Christianity, yet lack of true faith in Jesus, presented the potential for tension and misunderstanding.[148]

Here, in the final mention of John the Baptist within Acts, Luke demonstrates in a definitive manner that a true understanding of John can only lead to faith in Jesus Christ.[149] Acts 19:2–6 presents the inclusion of a group that has been on the fringe of Christianity.[150] The features shared with Acts 2 (Pentecost), Acts 8 (Samaritans), and Acts 10 (Gentiles), in which exceptional circumstances occur that differ from the paradigm established in 2:38–40, are woven into the narrative of Acts to indicate the significance that this held as God demonstrated the legitimacy and need for this inclusion.[151]

Conclusion

These exceptional circumstances underscore the normative pattern of 2:38–40, in which Baptism gives the Spirit, and each one includes statements that affirm this pattern (8:16; 10:47; 19:2–3).

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[146] Stählin (*Die Apostelgeschichte*, 254) and Fitzmyer (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 644) both make this helpful identification.

[147] 1:5–25, 57–80; 3:1–20; and 7:18–35 focus on John, and reference is made to him in 5:33; 9:7–9, 18–19; 11:1; 16:16; and 20:3–6 (Shauf, *Theology as History*, 153).

[148] This view is shared by Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 569; Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 281; Blanchard, "Esprit Saint et baptême à l'époque apostolique," 171; and Ash, "John's Disciples: A Serious Problem," 90.

[149] In the final analysis, this is the difference between Apollos and the Ephesian disciples. Apollos has true faith in Christ, and so he also has the Spirit. The Ephesian disciples do not have true faith in Christ, and so they have not received the Spirit.

[150] So also Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 641; Brown, "Water-Baptism," 149; and Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 338.

[151] Hand laying by Paul provides the Spirit in narration of the "Johannine Pentecost" in 19:2–6. It has been widely recognized that this serves to establish the parallel between Peter and Paul that is found in the two halves of Acts (Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 236). Just as Peter's hand laying had given the Spirit to the Samaritans (a group on the fringe of Judaism), so also Paul's hand laying gives the Spirit to a group on the fringe of Christianity.

CTQ 88 (2024): 55–73

Wives, Husbands, Children, Slaves: Forming the Faith among the First Christians

John G. Nordling

In a recent article, Peter J. Scaer demonstrates how the lawlessness and decadence of the 1960s and 1970s have paved the way for our present delusions: divorce, cohabitation, a hookup culture, and now abortion, gay "marriage," and a generation grown up without fathers or extended families.[1] There can be no doubt that willful violations of the sixth commandment lead to the jealous God's punishment of sinners—down to the third and fourth generation "of those who hate me," the Decalogue says (Exod 20:5).[2] In a manner of speaking, our Lord Jesus Christ brought not peace but a sword, pitting son against father, daughter against mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—"and a person's enemies will be those of his own household" (Matt 10:35–36). This is because Jesus' coming—swordlike—splits families asunder, some being for the Lord Jesus, and others against. But domestic tranquility, as we shall see, ever has been a most elusive item—since the fall into sin, when our first parents were estranged from each other (Gen 3:12–13), and Cain's jealousy of Abel led the former to murder the latter (Gen 4:8–12). I would argue that not just biblical history but, indeed, all *human* history demonstrates the dismal record of families in crisis—as true now as ever it has been.

Haustafeln, Ancient Families, and Godly Submission

In this study, I shall address the original circumstances surrounding Paul's paraenetic statements to wives, husbands, children, and slaves—as the apostle formed the faith among those first Christians mentioned in the so-called *Haustafeln*, which is German for "house tablets [of rules]."[3] Thomas Winger suggests that rather than "tables of duties," *Haustafeln* might better be translated "domestic orders"[4]—

[1] Peter J. Scaer, "Critical Theory and Intersectionality: The Abolition of Man," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 87, no. 1 (2023), 39–56. See especially page 39.

[2] Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations are from the ESV.

[3] Richard N. Soulen, "Household Rules," in *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, new expanded 2nd ed. (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 91.

[4] Thomas M. Winger, *Ephesians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 632.

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i.e., the orderly *arrangement* of those diverse persons who constitute a human family.[5] Here we can do justice to only the first, and arguably most fully worked-out, *Haustafel* in the New Testament—namely, Ephesians 5:22–6:9.[6] Naturally, all New Testament *Haustafeln* function similarly and pertain, I would argue, to being a real Christian in the midst of those domestic relationships wherein God has placed one—whether in the first or twenty-first century AD. I need to emphasize here, however, that slavery was never intended to be part of God's created order—whereas the family was always part of God's plan. Marriage is given by God, defined in his very creation as one man and one woman for mutual love, for procreation, and for the raising of children (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:4–6; Mark 10:6–8; 1 Cor 6:16; Eph 5:31). However, slavery, like war, was the fruit of the fall into sin and so cannot compare to the freedom God gives to the Christian in Christ Jesus (cf. John 8:32, 36; Rom 6:6; 8:2; Gal 2:4; 4:31; 5:1, 13, etc.). Nonetheless, Paul can speak about slavery in ways that are instructive for Christian life here below, and this holds implications for godly vocation.[7]

Also, I shall be dispensing with the scriptural order of persons presented in this article's title. That is, instead of beginning with wives (as Paul himself does in Ephesians 5:22ff.), I shall begin with the slaves and work backward from there: slaves, children, husbands, wives. I do this, first, because the ancients among whom Paul wrote could not help but think of the (extended) "family" in quasi-servile terms: the Latin words *familia* ("household of slaves"), *familiaris* ("belonging to the slaves of a house"), *famularis* ("relating to servants or slaves"), *famulatus* ("servitude, slavery"), and *famulus*/*famula* ("house servant, slave") link the ancient family rather directly to slavery.[8] Hence, in the ancient world, slavery was that social unit upon which the *paterfamilias* ("father of the house"), *materfamilias* ("mother of the house"), and

[5] The term *Haustafel* is generally attributed to Luther (e.g., "Table of Duties" in SC, section 3), who may have popularized it from contemporary usage. See Winger, *Ephesians*, 632.

[6] Other New Testament units that fall into the category of *Haustafeln* are Col 3:18–4:1, 1 Tim 6:1–2, Titus 2:1–3:7, and 1 Pet 2:11–3:22 and 5:1–5. See Winger, *Ephesians*, 632, which includes (in note 141) similar units in the apostolic fathers.

[7] For which, see, for example, John G. Nordling, "Slavery in the New Testament and Luther's Doctrine of Vocation," in *Philemon*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 137–139.

[8] For the Latin words and their definitions, see D. P. Simpson, *Cassell's Latin Dictionary* (New York: Macmillan, 1959, 1968), 240–241. Obviously, the English word "family" is related to all these words etymologically—especially to the first one (*familia –ae*, f.), from which the other words derive. However, *familia* was not used to describe "father, mother, and children" in the common meaning of "family" today: "It did have a technical, legal usage akin to 'family', but in common parlance most often meant 'slave staff', exclusive of the master's family" (Richard Saller, "Slavery and the Roman Family," in *Classical Slavery*, ed. Moses I. Finley [London: Cass, 1987], 67).

liberi ("legitimate children") in a sense depended.[9] Another way of putting it is that although slaves were nonpersons, and so quintessential outsiders by ancient standards, civilized persons could not help but think of communal life *as such* as somewhat dependent upon the institution of slavery and those many persons who served their masters and mistresses selflessly as slaves.[10] So the Romans included slaves nearly everywhere in ancient society—and in those domestic arrangements that most resembled our own, no less. Saint Paul valued them too and so includes them in most of his *Haustafeln*. Thus, we shall make our beginning with the slaves.

A second point, related to the first, is that Paul was ever keen to structure his *Haustafeln* with an eye toward forming the faith of those Christians who constituted a congregation, regardless of social status. Hence, Paul thought of the slaves—the lowest rung of the ladder, as it were—as sharing the same faith as possessed by the children, the *paterfamilias*, and the wife, all of who participated in the liturgical worship of the congregation, which typically assembled in a domestic residence.[11] In his treatment of Ephesians 5:21–6:9, Winger frequently comments upon the christological nature of the paraenesis contained within this *Haustafel*: that willing subordination to one another within the body of Christ is first and foremost a gift of the Holy Spirit, who, as it were, *inspires* the godly order that takes place between the diverse family members;[12] that all proper submission is ultimately submission to God himself, who establishes the order and stands at its head (e.g., Ps 37:7; 2 Macc 9:12; Rom 13:1; 1 Cor 15:27–28; Heb 12:9; Jas 4:7), so refusal to submit represents an attitude that arises from a sinful heart in rebellion to the word of God (Rom 8:7; 10:3);[13] that when slaves submit to masters (Eph 6:5–8), children to parents (6:1–2), and wives to husbands (5:21–24) there is a submission to Christ himself, who has purchased and won sinners to himself by his atoning sacrifice (Matt 20:28; 26:28; 1

[9] For the three Latin words and their respective definitions, see Simpson, *Cassell's Latin Dictionary*, 426, 364, 344.

[10] For a lay of the land, see "The Ambiguity of Ancient Slavery," in Nordling, *Philemon*, 44–59.

[11] The expression κατ᾽ οἶκον refers to a church "throughout" someone's "house" four times in the New Testament (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phlm 2), each time designating both a fellowship of believers and a place of meeting. Thus, Otto Michel, "οἶκος κτλ," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976), 5:130. More generally, the expression κατ᾽ οἶκον without the name(s) of any house owner(s) occurs twice in reference to Christians meeting in houses for the Lord's Supper and for teaching and preaching (Acts 2:46; 5:42). Thus, Nordling, *Philemon*, 152–153.

[12] The dependence of the participle ὑποτασσόμενοι ("being subordinate," Eph 5:21) upon the imperative πληροῦσθε ("be filled up in the Spirit," Eph 5:18) describes an activity moved by the Holy Spirit, rather than simply being a command. Thus, Winger, *Ephesians*, 598, 600.

[13] Winger, *Ephesians*, 603.

Tim 2:6; Titus 2:14; Heb 9:28; 1 Pet 1:18–19, etc.);[14] and that the whole point of Paul's more extensive instruction to husbands that they love their wives as Christ loves the church (Eph 5:25–33—nine verses) is that he was unfolding the "mystery" (5:32) of the gospel of Christ, for which the role of the husband in Christian marriage is a type.[15] Hence, I would argue that there is a kind of progression that can be discerned by proceeding from slaves to children to husbands to wives, rather than the other way around. God intends that each family member die to him- or herself by submitting to the other, assuming one's proper station in life, and participating in the means of grace with other Christians—most of whom occupy a different God-given vocation from oneself.

I. Slaves

> Slaves [οἱ δοῦλοι], obey [ὑπακούετε] your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service [κατ' ὀφθαλμοδουλίαν], as people-pleasers [ὡς ἀνθρωπάρεσκοι], but as servants of Christ [ὡς δοῦλοι Χριστοῦ], doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service [δουλεύοντες] with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free [εἴτε δοῦλος εἴτε ἐλεύθερος]. Masters [οἱ κύριοι], do the same to them, and stop your threatening [ἀνιέντες τὴν ἀπειλήν], knowing that he who is both their Master and yours [καὶ αὐτῶν καὶ ὑμῶν ὁ κύριος] is in heaven, and that there is no partiality [προσωποληψία] with him. (Eph 6:5–9, my translation)

This instruction for slaves indicates not only an awareness that slaves were part of the worshipping congregation in the Pauline assemblies, but also that the apostle knew exactly what sort of persons he was dealing with whilst writing the instruction for them. It was "countercultural"[16] for Paul to address them at all, inasmuch as they were beings without personhood and therefore regarded—in the culture and by secular law—as little more, perhaps, than an animated tool (ἔμψχον ὄργανον)[17] or a piece of property (*res*): "We compare slavery closely to death [*servitutem mortalitati fere comparamus*]."[18] All the more remarkable, then, that Paul regarded such beings

[14] "The divine order is for Christ to be the Savior and his people to be the saved." Thus, Winger, *Ephesians*, 603.

[15] Winger, *Ephesians*, 608. Paul's admonition to the wives that they submit to their husbands as the church submits to Christ (Eph 5:22–24—three verses) is noticeably briefer and not as well developed as the paraenesis intended for husbands.

[16] Thus, Winger, *Ephesians*, 663.

[17] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.13 (1161b).

[18] Justinian, *Digest* 50.17.209, citing the jurisprudent Ulpian, AD 211–222. Also, "a slave [*servile caput*] has no rights [*nullum ius habet*]" (4.5.3.1, citing Paulus, AD 193–222), and "before the

as fellow baptized children of God—as being, in effect, among those "saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph 1:1).[19] And yet the *Haustafel* is wise to the ways slaves "typically" behaved whilst rubbing shoulders with masters and persons of higher status than themselves: "not with eyeservice, as menpleasers [μὴ κατ᾽ ὀφθαλμοδουλίαν ὡς ἀνθρωπάρεσκοι]" (Eph 6:6a KJV) is how the apostle puts it, tellingly.[20] In the world outside the church, everyone *knew* that the only appropriate way to deal with slaves was through violence, force, and intimidation: one had literally to beat the silly out of them so they would attend to the assigned tasks upon which a smoothly running household depended.[21] Paul was on to the game that inevitably transpired between the typically unmotivated slave (who worked only when the master was looking on, "eyeservice") and the sadistic despot who typically rained blows and demeaning slaps upon any domestic within reach because they *were* slaves, so he could not trust them. Sheila Briggs refers to this sad state of affairs as a "discourse of evasion" that stubbornly resisted "the coercive character of slavery"; K. R. Bradley refers to it as a "form of servile resistance" to the social system "of which the slaves themselves were the victims."[22]

Whatever it was, the *Haustafel* lets on that this hellish struggle between master and slave could now be broken. One thinks of Yahweh's tender word to Jerusalem that her "warfare is ended," that her "iniquity is pardoned," and that she has received from Yahweh's gracious hand "double for all her sins" (Isa 40:2). As in Old Testament times, so in the great new age of the church a vast recompense had been paid

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praetor those persons [i.e., slaves] are considered as non-existent [*pro nullo*]" (28.8.1, preface, citing Ulpian). *The Digest of Justinian* was not compiled until the early sixth century AD, although it contains the names and pronouncements of many earlier jurisprudents (from ca. 150 BC on). For their respective dates, see E. C. Clark, "Tables of Juristic Writers," in *History of Roman Private Law*, 3 vols. in 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1906; repr., New York: Biblo & Tannen, 1965), 156–63; Nordling, *Philemon*, 44nn29–31.

[19] For the association, see Winger, *Ephesians*, 663.

[20] The nearly verbatim injunction occurs in Col 3:22—which represents a parallel, though greatly abbreviated, *Haustafel*.

[21] "Romans regularly and legitimately inflicted on their fellow men corporal punishments that maimed and even killed. It is important to move beyond shock at the cruelty of Roman civilization and not to lose sight of the fact that more was at stake than physical pain: to the Romans the anguish was in significant measure social and psychological, the insult to *dignitas*" (Richard Saller, "Corporal Punishment, Authority, and Obedience in the Roman Household," in *Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome*, ed. Beryl Rawson [Oxford: Clarendon, 1991], 151). *Dignitas* is literally a "being worthy, worth, worthiness, merit, desert." Thus, C. T. Lewis and C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1879), 577. Thus, "Lamia is seeking a praetorship. And everyone knows that neither *dignitas* nor favor is lacking him [*omnesque intelligunt nec dignitatem ei deesse nec gratiam*]" (Cicero, *Fam*. 11.17, my translation).

[22] Sheila Briggs, "Paul on Bondage and Freedom in Imperial Roman Society," in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation; Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2000), 110, 111; and K. R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987), 31.

for the sins and shortcomings of all people—of slaves, as well as masters—by the all-availing sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ upon a cross, which was a servile death.[23] Now all things were "new," Paul announces in 2 Corinthians 5:17 (cf. Isa 65:17; Rev 21:4–5)—including, one imagines, what had been the sordid state of affairs between slaves and masters in the world outside the church. Oh, to be sure, the apostle must in another *Haustafel* cajole Christian slaves not to show any less respect to masters because "they are brothers" (1 Tim 6:2), indicating that slave back talk and insubordination could well have been problems in the Pauline assemblies.[24]

Nonetheless (and to return to the *Haustafel* in Ephesians 5:22–6:9), there was now, as a result of the gospel, a new state of affairs that could begin to exist between slaves and masters in Christ Jesus: slaves could obey their earthly masters with the "fear and trembling" of a new esteem and respect for them (Eph 6:5), as they would serve "Christ" (6:5),[25] doing the will of God "from the heart" (6:6), and "slaving away [δουλεύοντες]" with a good will as unto the Lord and not unto man (6:7, my translation), etc. So Christian slaves vis-à-vis their masters (and, for that matter, Christian employees still today vis-à-vis their bosses) could (and still *can*) take comfort in the fact that their "service" (work, labor, toil, etc.) was really expended as unto "Christ" (6:5) and "as to the Lord and *not* to man" (6:7, added emphasis). Of course, it requires *faith* to see it this way and to take God at his word—especially if one labored under a cruel and vindictive master. But there you have it: a *promise* (more than a mere rule!) extended by Paul to the parties involved, so that slaves could render their best work "with a sincere heart" (6:5), and with a "good will" (6:7), and masters could forego with their "threatening" (6:9). Indeed, the latter were to remember that they also possessed a Master (with a capital *M*!) "in heaven," and that there was "no partiality" with him (6:9; cf. Col 4:1). If, as we have seen, slaves were beholden to their

[23] "All-availing" recalls the wording of the Prayer of Thanksgiving in Settings One and Two of the Divine Service: "With repentant joy, we receive the salvation accomplished for us by the all-availing sacrifice of His body and His blood on the cross" (*Lutheran Service Book*, ed. The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006], 161, 178). For the servile death of Jesus upon a Roman cross and the significance of that death for the slaves who would have been exposed to Paul's missionary preaching in the first century AD, see "The Servility of Christ and the First Christians," in Nordling, *Philemon*, 111–116.

[24] Paul writes, "So that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled" (1 Tim 6:1b). Disrespect and disobedience on the part of Christian slaves would cause the unbelieving world (and unbelieving masters, especially) to disparage the newfound faith, whereas honorable service would have had an evangelistic effect upon the same. Thus, the study note on 1 Tim 6:1, in Edward A. Engelbrecht et al., eds., *The Lutheran Study Bible* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 2076.

[25] "Fear and trembling" need not be correlated to the secular principle of the master's ability to punish a slave, but could be "part of the typology" (thus, Winger, *Ephesians*, 666) wherein when slaves show "fear"—that is, respect—to their masters, they participate in the church's submission to Christ as unto God himself. In the same way, then, wives are to "fear/respect" their husbands (Eph 5:33, my translation; cf. 1 Pet 3:1–2) and children are to "honor" their parents (Eph 6:2).

masters/persons in authority, so masters/persons in authority were in a sense beholden to their slaves/dependents and responsible for them. This is not the *mutual* submission that the egalitarian Alan Padgett imagines.[26] Rather, it is what Winger styles a *willing* submission wherein the slaves, children, and wives freely and willingly, from hearts changed by the Holy Spirit, no less, are subject to the ones whom God desires them to be subject to—namely, to the masters, parents, and husbands, respectively.[27] Such may be a tough sell nowadays in modern, egalitarian America—but the offensive *ordo* is the one supported by Scripture and the one toward which it behooves every Christian, regardless of vocation, to be striving.

II. Children

> Children [τὰ τέκνα], obey [ὑπακούετε] your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother [τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα]" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." Fathers [οἱ πατέρες], do not provoke your children to anger [μὴ παροργίζετε], but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord [ἐν παιδείᾳ καὶ νουθεσίᾳ κυρίου]. (Eph 6:1–4)

This portion of the *Haustafel* is crammed with biblical admonition Paul expects the Ephesians to apply from their awareness of Old Testament precedents; however, before considering the biblical evidence, let us recognize that, as a whole, this household code offers a response to what could have been, and often was, a conflict raging between irascible *patresfamiliae* ("fathers-of-families") and their children—especially wayward sons. If you've ever seen *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1966 musical, directed by Richard Lester), you're on the way to understanding correctly the tension in Roman society between fathers and dissolute young sons trying to have at their patrimony to spend on what?—love affairs with as-yet virginal courtesans, and buffoonish tomfoolery at the fathers' expense.[28] Obviously, the

[26] See Alan G. Padgett, *As Christ Submits to the Church: A Biblical Understanding of Leadership and Mutual Submission* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), passim, but see especially 41–42.

[27] For *willing* submission (as opposed to mutual submission), see Winger, *Ephesians*, 602, 605, 607, 637. For a theological critique of mutual submission, see my review of Padgett's *As Christ Submits to the Church*, *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology*, January 5, 2012, https://logia.org/logia-online/170. See also John G. Nordling, "Research Notes [on Ephesians 5:21]," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 77, no. 3–4 (2013): 327–334; John G. Nordling, "Does Ephesians 5:21 Support Mutual Submission?," *Logia* 24, no. 4 (2015): 19–20; and Winger, *Ephesians*, 600–602.

[28] The movie was inspired by the farces of the ancient Roman playwright Titus Maccius Plautus (254–184 BC), particularly *Pseudolus*, *Miles Gloriosus*, and *Mostellaria*. It tells the "bawdy story" of a clever slave attempting to contrive his own freedom by helping his young master to "woo the girl next door." See Wikipedia, s.v. "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," last modified November 22, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Funny_Thing_Happened_on_the_Way_to_the_Forum.

Plautine picture is overdrawn, and Roman fathers genuinely loved their children—as all parents generally do.[29] Still, allowance must be made for the awesome *patria potestas* (literally "fatherly power") over wives, children, slaves, dependents, and anyone, theoretically, who inhabited the *domus* ("house").[30] In earlier Roman times, fathers wielded the still more awful *ius vitae necisque* ("the power of life and death") over family members. Before exacting a severe penalty, the *paterfamilias* was obliged to consult a council of relatives, but its advice was not obligatory. An abuse of the father's rights was punished by *infamia* ("infamy") through a decision of the censors. Later legislation in imperial times curtailed considerably the "power of life and death" until the power was abolished by Valentinian I (AD 364–375).[31] Nonetheless, such "fathers' rights" undoubtedly exerted an influence over every aspect of domestic life from early to late Roman times—including, as we might imagine, when Saint Paul wrote this *Haustafel* for the benefit of those Christians who read his letters at the Divine Service.

Back in the old days, so the story went, every citizen's son was the child of a chaste mother and so was from the beginning reared not in the chamber of a purchased nurse but in the original mother's bosom and embrace, and it was her special glory "to study her home and devote herself to her children [*tueri domum et inservire liberis*]."[32] However, the fabric of Roman society began to unravel in the centuries before Christ with the importation of vast numbers of vanquished persons into the Roman world *as slaves*. Slaves (*servi*) were so called because commanders generally sold the people captured in battle, and thereby "saved" them (*servaverunt*) instead

[29] Katherine N. Macfarlane, "The Roman Family: Legally and As It Really Was," *Social Education* 43, no. 7 (November/December 1979): 551–554.

[30] See "Patria potestas," in Adolf Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1953; repr. 1980), 621. The *domus* ("house") did not possess the legal precision of *familia* and so was more diverse in meaning: "*Domus* could refer to the physical edifice or to all those who lived within it, both free and slave. *Domus* was the realm over which the head exercised *dominium* or *potestas*; as such, possession of a *domus* was an attribute of power and prestige" (Richard Saller, "The Hierarchical Household in Roman Society: A Study of Domestic Slavery," in *Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage*, ed. M. L. Bush [London: Longman, 1996], 115).

[31] See "Ius vitae necisque," in Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*, 534. *Infamia* ("evil reputation") not only was connected with a diminution of the estimation of a person among his fellow citizens but also produced certain legal disabilities that differed according to the grounds for the infamy. The *nota censoria* was a moral punishment inflicted by the Roman censors for misconduct in political or private life. See "Infamia," in Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*, 500.

[32] Tacitus, *Dialogus* 28. As translated in Saller, "Slavery and the Roman Family," 79.

of butchering them at the battle's conclusion.[33] Suddenly it was fashionable for Roman parents just to get out of the child-rearing business altogether and let the slaves take over; Quintilian advises Roman elites to choose wet nurses and childminders (*paedagogi*) who spoke Greek correctly, were of a philosophical bent, and possessed good character: "It is the nurse that the child first hears, and her words that he will first attempt to imitate."[34] To be sure, whippings were exacted mainly from slaves in Roman households, and only rarely from the freeborn children—usually when they were young and rowdy—nor were they ever punished as severely. Nonetheless, I think it can be said that routine violence was part and parcel of normal family life in the extended households in Roman antiquity: not only would there have been the inevitable shrieks and howls resounding through the *domus* as a result of spankings administered to naughty children by mothers, teachers, and even grandparents,[35] but also there would have been the hissing of a lash biting deeply into slave bodies for such trifling offenses as coughing at dinner,[36] flashing the master an insolent look,[37] failing to prepare a meal to the master's complete satisfaction,[38] or taking out one's fury on a slave because of a failed love affair.[39] Such were whipping boys "in the literal sense."[40] Indeed, many slave masters hired *tortores* ("torturers") to rough up the slaves and do the dirty work: "After all, administering a brutal beating could be an exhausting job better left to professionals."[41]

Into such darkness the *Haustafel* bursts, as a sunbeam lighting up a vast cavern. To return to our passage, children were to "obey" their own parents as also slaves "obeyed" their own masters—the second-person plural imperative ὑπακούετε occurs identically to admonish both children (Eph 6:1) and slaves (6:5).[42] The apostle says that such obedience is δίκαιον ("right," Eph 6:1b)—that is, in accord with God's will (Acts 4:19; 2 Thess 1:6) and God's law (Rom 2:13; 7:12).[43] Here then is where Paul

[33] Justinian, *Digest* 1.5.4.2, citing the jurisprudent Florentinus (AD 193–223). In Nordling, *Philemon*, 106n417, with additional evidence. For ample additional examples of battles, times, and places where prisoners of war were enslaved, not butchered, see Nordling, *Philemon*, 107n420.

[34] Quintilian, *Instit*. 1.1.5. As translated in Saller, "Slavery and the Roman Family," 80.

[35] "Punishment of a child for bad conduct was not the role solely of the father and did not require legal justification in the form of *potestas*. Mothers and grandfathers might also strike a child for purposes of discipline" (Saller, "Corporal Punishment," 161). For maternal and grandfatherly correction, see Seneca, *Contr*. 9.5.7; and Cicero, *Tusc*. 3.64.

[36] Younger Seneca, *Ep*. 47.3, in Saller, "Corporal Punishment," 158.

[37] Younger Seneca, *Ira* 3.24–25, in Saller, "Corporal Punishment," 158.

[38] Martial 3.94; Petronius, *Sat*. 49, in Saller, "Corporal Punishment," 158.

[39] Plautus, *Poen*. 410, 819, in Saller, "Corporal Punishment," 158.

[40] Saller, "Corporal Punishment," 158.

[41] Saller, "Corporal Punishment," 159.

[42] The verb ὑποκούω ("obey") derives etymologically from ὑπό ("under") and ἀκούω ("to hear/listen"), implying a "subordination of the ear." Thus, Winger, *Ephesians*, 655.

[43] G. Schrenk ("δίκαιος," in Kittel and Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 2:188) contends that the phrase "for this is right [δίκαιον]" (Eph 6:1b) in relation to the obedience

quotes the fourth commandment, about honoring one's father and mother (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16)—intended, I think, not only for an epistolary audience possessing some familiarity with Old Testament Scripture, but also possibly for a formerly pagan readership all too familiar with the ways of the world as surveyed in preceding paragraphs.[44] As a word of God's law, the statement would have both guided and condemned the hearers—the children who strove to heed their parents but found their actions fell short of God's command. However, just as Scripture presents Jesus as "the Righteous One" (Acts 3:14; 7:52), so also is he "righteous" on behalf of the unrighteous (Matt 27:19; Luke 23:47; 1 Pet 3:18)—that is, there is the real forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus to all who are penitent and believe the gospel.[45] And fathers are expressly admonished not to provoke their children to anger, but to "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4)—injunctions of the Old Testament (e.g., Gen 18:19; Deut 6:7; Prov 13:24; 22:6) applied by Paul to the Ephesian context.

Again, as was the case with the slaves, the apostle envisions a scenario wherein sons and fathers are not at one another's throats (as frequently happened in the world outside the church, evidently), but wherein domestic harmony could prevail among family members—conceivably, where it had not before. This is "the first commandment with a promise," as the code puts it (Eph 6:2), and the one to which long life is expressly attached (6:3). Paul intended there to prevail among the first Christians the situation wise old King Solomon presumed in Old Testament times: "Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old" (Prov 23:22).

III. Husbands

> Husbands [οἱ ἄνδρες], love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her [καὶ ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς], that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes

of children means not only that which is "right and fitting" in terms of natural law, but rather that which "corresponds to the righteous divine order enjoined by the commandment." In Winger, *Ephesians*, 658n23.

[44] Winger maintains (*Ephesians*, 141–144) that Paul wrote the letter for both Jews and Greeks (i.e., former pagans) in the body of Christ at Ephesus. The apostle calls the Ephesians "you Gentiles in the flesh" who were at one time "separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise," etc. (Eph 2:11–12).

[45] Thus, Winger, *Ephesians*, 658.

> it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound [τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν], and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love [ἀγαπάτω] his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects [ἵνα φοβῆται] her husband. (Eph 5:25–33)

Of course, Roman men could at one and the same time be slave masters, fathers of wayward sons, and heads of family units extending far back into remote antiquity. Whilst surveying slaves and children in the world outside the church, we have seen a consistent picture of Roman manhood emerge: "peevish," "short-tempered," "cruel," "stingy," and "suspicious" are words that come naturally to mind. "Lecher" and "philanderer" might well be added to this list since Roman men were notoriously promiscuous and thus capable of carrying on love affairs with married women, slave girls (forever vulnerable to their masters' attentions), prostitutes for hire, and even prepubescent boys should the opportunity arise. For a lay of the land, consider the passages Shelton provides under the heading "Adultery" in her sourcebook *As the Romans Did*. First, under "Where to Meet," Shelton lists the poet Ovid (P. Ovidius Naso, 43 BC–AD 17), who advises men on where to meet women and how to initiate love affairs. That would be at the horse races, where tight seating forced gallants to put the squeeze on some unsuspecting woman to take advantage of her.[46] Next, under "Deceiving One's Husband," more advice from Ovid on how an obviously unsatisfied matron might give her husband the slip at a dinner party, thereby permitting both her and her paramour to enjoy each other sexually under the covers of a dining couch.[47] In Pompeii and other Roman cities, corner restaurants doubled as houses of prostitution: "They were forever being shut down because of the noise, vice, and violence they bred. Prostitution nevertheless flourished throughout the cities of the empire, known to us chiefly through references to the taxes paid on the exercise of the profession. In the one place really well excavated, Pompeii, twenty-eight brothels have been identified and, scattered along back streets, another nine single rooms rented by prostitutes."[48]

For compelling evidence that Roman males could have homosexual relations with boys (or hapless older slaves who were obliged to *play the part* of boys with insistent masters), see the following:

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[46] Ovid, *Ars* 1.149–151, as translated in Jo-Ann Shelton, *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988), 51.

[47] Ovid, *Am*. 1.4.47–48, in Shelton, *As the Romans Did*, 52.

[48] Ramsay MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations, 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press), 86–87. For the taxes and single rooms mentioned in the citation, see 182nn107–108.

> Another [slave], who serves the wine, must dress like a woman and wrestle with his advancing years; he cannot get away from his boyhood; he is dragged back to it; and though he has already acquired a soldier's figure, he is kept beardless by having his hair smoothed away or plucked out by the roots, and he must remain awake throughout the night, dividing his time between his master's drunkenness and his lust [*inter ebrietatem domini ac libidinem*]; in the chamber he must be a man, at the feast a boy [*in cubiculo vir, in convivio puer*].[49]

Finally, there was the "double standard" so decried by modern observers.[50] The Roman view, that wives were supposed to be chaste and faithful to their husbands, but not necessarily husbands to their wives, extended the older Greek view that "we have courtesans [τάς . . . ἑταίρας] for pleasure, concubines [τάς . . . παλλακάς] to look after the day-to-day needs of the body, [and] wives [τάς . . . γυναῖκας] that we may breed legitimate children and have a trusty warden of what we have in the house."[51] Males typically married later in life, and women much earlier—so when Augustus was emperor, for example, there was a proclivity among men toward bachelorhood and the desire to avoid legitimate marriage, with its entanglements, altogether.[52] This hardly meant that Roman men refrained from sex and led "chaste and decent" lives, however. Far from it: they had had a lifetime to play the field and

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[49] Younger Seneca, *Ep*. 47.7, as translated in Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales I*, trans. Richard M. Gummere, Loeb Classical Library 75 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1917), 305. A comparable text is Petronius, *Sat*. 75, wherein Trimalchio explains that for fourteen years he was his master's "favorite [*ad delicias*]": "No disgrace in obeying your master's orders. Well, I used to amuse my mistress too. You know what I mean; I say no more, I am not a conceited man" (as translated in Petronius and Seneca, *[Satyricon,] Apocolocyntosis*, trans. Michael Heseltine, E. H. Warmington, and W. H. D. Rouse, Loeb Classical Library 15 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1913], 151). Both passages appear, independently translated, in Shelton, *As the Romans Did*, 186 and 198, respectively. For male pederastic relations in Rome, patterned after Greek models, and the involvement of slaves, see Beert C. Verstraete, "Slavery and the Social Dynamics of Male Homosexual Relations in Ancient Rome," *Journal of Homosexuality* 5 (1980): 227–236.

[50] E.g., Saller, "Slavery and the Roman Family," 78; Richard Saller, "The Hierarchical Household," 126; Richard Saller, "Symbols of Gender and Status Hierarchies in the Roman Household," in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture: Differential Equations*, ed. S. R. Joshel and S. Murnaghan (London: Routledge, 1998), 89; and Annalisa Rei, "Villains, Wives, and Slaves in the Comedies of Plautus," in Joshel and Murnaghan, *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture*, 105n10.

[51] Demosthenes 59, Theomnestus and Apollodorus against Neaera 118–122, as translated in W. K. Lacey, "Marriage and the Family in Athens," in *The Family in Classical Greece* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1968), 113.

[52] The Augustan marriage laws penalized males who had not become fathers by age 25. Thus, David Herlihy, "The Household in Late Classical Antiquity," in *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1985), 18. In about AD 384, Saint Augustine chose as fiancée a ten-year-old girl, resolved to wait two years until she reached the legal age of twelve (*Conf*. 6.13). The marriage never took place (Augustine's conversion intervened), but had it done so, "Augustine would have taken a bride probably twenty years younger than himself" (Herlihy, "Household," 17).

sow their "wild oats" with slave girls in the *domus* who were either willing or unwilling paramours; it made no difference.[53] So by the time the older men "settled down" (in their late twenties or early thirties), they often found their legitimate wives to be mere girls by comparison, and less than interesting. When one possesses ample amounts of money, time to play the field, and easy access to girls (or even boys) of one's own choosing, it can be difficult to commit to but one spouse and do one's duty. I submit that similar relational dynamics prevailed in many Roman marriages too, marred as these were by infidelity and playing the field—on both sides, by Roman matrons as well as by their dissatisfied husbands.

The Pauline *Haustafel* presumes a completely different picture, obviously. Again, the apostle likely adapts the code to a Gentile (formerly pagan) readership that possessed some awareness of Old Testament Scripture. Here is a passage the young Christians at Ephesus might well have pondered together: "Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well" (Prov 5:15). Here, wise old King Solomon is scarcely talking about hydrology in the desert. No. This is Bible-speak for cherishing one's own wife sexually, like drinking deeply from a cistern, well, or fountain in a parched land. For three verses later Solomon states, far more suggestively, "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love" (Prov 5:18–19; cf. Song 4:5; 8:14). And so on and so forth. Sometimes the Bible does not leave much to the imagination! What is clear here is that sex could be savored within the bonds of holy matrimony, and one can grow old with "the wife of [one's] youth." The first Christians were hardworking men and women, who would not have had time to fill idle days with illicit sexual encounters with slaves and others outside the man-woman marital relationship designed by God for Adam and Eve in paradise.[54] And in the *Haustafel* it is *the husband* who plays the part of Christ and so is responsible for keeping his wife—and, by extension, his children, slaves, and any hangers-on—in the one true faith, and on the way back with him to their one heavenly home. That seems to be the point of Paul's statement that no one has ever "hated his own flesh," but "nourishes and cherishes it" (Eph 5:29)—just as Christ does the church through the ministry of the word and the sacraments. Both Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper are likely alluded to here, please notice.[55] The husband is to the wife, children, and all dependents as Christ is to the

[53] For the sexual availability of slaves in Roman households, see Saller, "Slavery and the Roman Family," 72, 78, and Saller, "The Hierarchical Household," 125–126.

[54] For Christian attitudes toward work that clashed with classical ideals, see Nordling, *Philemon*, 128–137.

[55] The "washing of water with the word" (Baptism) is mentioned in Eph 5:26. Then too, "Christ truly nourishes the church, even to the point of giving his very body and blood for her to eat, spreading a banquet before her" (Winger, *Ephesians*, 616). Winger presents (*Ephesians*,

church—loving her and selflessly "[giving] himself up for her [ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς]" (5:25). Here Paul uses the language of the atonement: "to give oneself *for* [ὑπέρ] something" (added emphasis).[56] Winger points out how quickly the apostle moves from admonishing the husband to "proclaiming the Gospel, which is the main theme of the section."[57] The husband's loving of the wife mirrors—albeit imperfectly—Christ's love for his church, where the Savior lays down his life for us sinners, washing us clean of our sins baptismally, feeding us amply in our "daily bread" and with forgiveness at the Supper (Matt 6:11), and keeping us with other sinner-saints on the way with him to our heavenly home. This "being on the way with Jesus" is a metaphor for the life in Christ that every Christian experiences as a "journey" through this vale of tears to the heavenly Jerusalem.[58]

And as for the problem of a wife not submitting to her husband, which is a common problem in many Christian marriages still today, the way to deal with that, Saint John Chrysostom counseled, was for the husband to "wear down" his wife by persistent patience, kindliness, and Christ-like solicitude:

> Do you want your wife to be obedient to you, as the Church is to Christ? Then be responsible for the same providential care of her, as Christ is for the Church. And even if it becomes necessary for you to give your life for her, yes, and even to endure and undergo suffering of any kind, do not refuse. Even though you undergo all this, you will never have done anything equal to what Christ has done. . . . Even if you see her belittling you, or despising and mocking you, still you will be able to subject her to yourself through affection, kindliness, and your great regard for her. There is no influence more powerful than the bond of love, especially for husband and wife. A servant can be taught submission through fear; but even he, if provoked too much will seek his escape. But one's partner for life, the mother of one's children, the source of one's every joy, should never be fettered with fear and threats, but with love and patience. What kind of marriage can there be when the wife is afraid of her husband? What sort of satisfaction could a husband himself have, if he lives with his wife as if

616n86) the following passages as suggestive of the Lord's Supper: Ps 23:5; John 4:32–34; 6:53–58; 21:15–17; and Rev 2:7.

[56] Compare Gal 1:4; 2:20; and Eph 5:2. Comparable formulae (but using varying prepositions) occur at Matt 20:28; 26:28; Rom 5:6, 8; 8:32; 1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Tim 2:6; and Titus 2:14.

[57] Winger, *Ephesians*, 609.

[58] See Arthur A. Just, "The Journey," in *Luke 1:1–9:50*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 21–25.

> she were a slave, and not with a woman by her own free will? Suffer anything for her sake, but never disgrace her, for Christ never did this with the Church.[59]

Still, Paul encourages a metaphorical interpretation of man-woman marriage in his statement that "this mystery" here is "profound," and that it refers to "Christ and the church" (Eph 5:32). Such marriage is at the heart of the Christian religion and so pertains to everything that should matter to us, both small and great. It cannot be studied or preached on too much among the redeemed, especially as marriage is under such satanic attack in the world—as experienced now in modern America.

IV. Wives

> Wives [αἱ γυναῖκες], submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord [τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ]. For the husband is the head of the wife [κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικός] even as Christ is the head of the church [κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας], his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ [ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ], so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. (Eph 5:22–24)

Up to this point, we have seen how Roman women—like their male counterparts—could play the field, engage in wiles specific to their sex, contract love affairs outside the bonds of matrimony, and so break a man's heart, just as some women always have done since the dawn of time. To be sure, there was an unfair double standard between men and women in Roman society; but women then were extraordinarily adept at striking back at male chauvinism, real or imagined, and leveling the playing field. That is what the erotic poetry of Catullus, Horace, and Ovid is all about.

What is not so well known in our circles is how marriage *worked* for girls and women in Roman society. Again, we have seen that girls were married off at a tender age to older husbands who rarely were interested in them as equals—which concern is of prime importance for us in *modern* marriages, to be sure. What mattered more than compatibility between equals in the original situation, however, was *the girl's virginity*—for just this insured the *legitimate* issue upon which the nuclear family depended for its perpetuation into the future.[60] So of course marriages typically were

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[59] St. John Chrysostom, "Homily 20: On Ephesians 5:22–33," in *On Marriage and Family Life*, trans. Catharine P. Roth and David Anderson, Popular Patristic Series (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), 46–47. See my more extensive treatment of Chrysostom's remarkable homily in Nordling, "Does Ephesians 5:21 Support Mutual Submission?," 24–28.

[60] For the crucial distinction between legitimate "sons [υἱοί]" and what the ESV translates as "illegitimate children [νόθοι]" see Heb 12:8. But really, νόθοι here means "bastards"—that is, persons born out of wedlock (usually of slave concubines) in an enfranchised citizen's household. Such

arranged between *patresfamiliae* who hoped to establish liaisons between other families that would help them economically. At marriage, the as-yet virginal girl passed from the "hand" (*manus*) of her father and into the "hand" of the new husband in a family different from her own—a legal procedure known as *conventio in manum* (an "'into the hand' agreement").[61] Such arrangements ensured that legitimate wives, like trusted slaves, were never quite welcome even at home in the new family—but could constitute "the enemy within."[62] Also, as with slaves, so a "severe cognitive dissonance" existed between husbands and wives in even the most stable of marriages, in the opinion of some.[63] And the tendency of Roman wives to submit to the *manus* of one's father (and not to the *manus* of one's husband) led to disunity throughout Roman society—and not simply for those couples who would end their marriages in divorce.[64]

Thus, when marriages failed, as often happened, husbands and wives went their separate ways with not a lot of remorse nor tears shed: the dowry (*dos*) reverted to the erstwhile wife's father (or guardian), with interest;[65] children remained with the father, not the mother, whom they might not ever see again;[66] and each (former) spouse got on with life as best he or she could—perhaps with a *new* marriage, love

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could not inherit and would remain in the household as legal nonentities. See Saller, "Slavery and the Roman Family," 71–73; and Nordling, *Philemon*, 63–64.

[61] *Conventio in manum* was "an agreement accompanying the conclusion of a marriage, by which the wife entered into the family of her husband and acquired the legal position of a daughter (*filiae familias loco*) dependent upon his power (*manus*)." Thus, Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*, 416.

[62] "So too in her role as Stranger, the wife can exhibit the servile vice of treachery. This fear, though best known as centering on the figure of the step-mother, was not confined to her. Rather, since for Rome the children were the husband's, both legally and biologically, all mothers were step-mothers, fostering another's children" (Holt Parker, "Loyal Slaves and Loyal Wives: The Crisis of the Outsider-within and Roman *Exemplum* Literature," in Joshel and Murnaghan, *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture*, 156).

[63] Thus, Parker, "Loyal Slaves and Loyal Wives," 164, and secondary scholarship listed there.

[64] Jack J. Gibson, "Ephesians 5:21–33 and the Lack of Marital Unity in the Roman Empire," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168 (April–June 2011): 174–175.

[65] The new husband was the legal owner of the dowry and could invest it as he wished. However, he could not alienate the landed property generated by the dowry as a matter of principle—for all of it, with interest, had to be returned to the former wife's *paterfamilias* (or guardian, in case the father had died) at the dissolution of the marriage. See Shelton, *As the Romans Did*, 44, citing *BGU* 1052 (13 BC Alexandria), which documents the items he has received from Thermion's household as a dowry, and how he will furnish his new bride "with all necessities" and "according to his means" (lines 13 and 15) available at https://papyri.info/ddbdp/bgu;4;1052lin1_34, accessed January 3, 2023. Also see "Dos," in Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*, 444.

[66] Thus, Shelton, *As the Romans Did*, 21n17, which notes that there is no mention in Younger Pliny *Ep*. 5.16.1–7 of a little girl's mother who "is perhaps dead or perhaps separated from her children by divorce."

interest, or paramour in tow.[67] Granted, examples presented in the previous footnote feature marital goings-on at the extreme upper edges of Roman society (knights, senators, holders of high office), and lower-class marriages could be more stable, to be sure.[68] Still, it can be said that the frequency of divorce at all levels of Roman society, and the many illicit dalliances, *lessened* marriage as a social institution in the eyes of most—and even *cheapened* it. In this respect, marriage among the ancient Romans could not have been too different in its negative perception—though, perhaps, for different reasons—from its scorned position now by many in the more permissive societies of the West. Hence, it is for good reason that the author of Hebrews exhorts his readership that marriage should be "held in honor among all," and that the marriage bed be "undefiled" (Heb 13:4); for clearly then, as now, there existed problems that could produce heartbreak and worse for Christians, and all others, in ancient Roman society.

Again, it is not difficult to see how our *Haustafel* was designed by Paul to combat the problems marriage faced in the world of that day, and to form the faith among the first—and all subsequent—Christians. Here we face the unpopular dictum that Christian wives should "submit" to their husbands "as to the Lord" (Eph 5:22) and "in everything" (5:24). An analogical relationship is assumed here: the wife cannot take on the role of head in the marital relationship because that would imply that "the church can act as her own savior."[69] Once again, and as is typical of the other relationships mentioned in the Ephesian *Haustafel*, Paul moves quickly from talking about power dynamics between husbands and wives to Christ and the gospel.[70] So at least two things can be said regarding the submission of wives to husbands among the Christians at Ephesus. First, theirs would have had to have been a *willing*, rather than a *forced*, submission—just as, as we have seen, Paul desires slaves to submit willingly to their masters, children to their fathers, and husbands to loving their wives, even as Christ loves the church. Such submitting of oneself to another cannot take place unless a heart has been brought to repentance and faith by the

[67] See the several women to whom the eventual emperor Augustus was married (Suetonius *Aug.* 62, in Shelton, *As the Romans Did*, 55, 58): Claudia, Scribonia, Livia Drusilla, and nameless others to whom he had been betrothed. Most of the named brides of Augustus also had been married previously, according to the account provided by Suetonius. And this from an emperor who would publish extremely harsh laws against adultery, divorce, celibacy, and willful childlessness! For the pertinent legislation, see Shelton, *As the Romans Did*, 54–55. On divorce in general, see "Divortium," in Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*, 439–440.

[68] E.g., one Spurius Ligustinus, descended from the Sabines, was married to his brother's nameless daughter who "brought with her nothing except her free birth and chastity" (Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 42.34, in Shelton, *As the Romans Did*, 256). Theirs was a fruitful marriage (six sons and two daughters), and apparently a happy one.

[69] Winger, *Ephesians*, 606.

[70] Winger, *Ephesians*, 606.

gracious activity of the word and the sacraments in the life of a Christian. Otherwise, it would have been a *forced* submission, which is antithetical to the gospel and the Christian religion.

Second, Christ is the "head" of the church and himself "Savior" of his body. As the church does not attempt to save herself, but graciously receives salvation from Christ, so the wife cherishes her husband's self-sacrifice for her (cf. Eph 5:25, 28).[71] With a husband so playing the part of Christ, she can submit to him and put all of what she has been created to be into serving her vocation—which might consist of duties that could be perceived as less than desirable in marriages then as now (1 Cor 7:4–5). There is considerable freedom as to specifics, but still a wife's submitting to her husband need not be demeaning *in itself*—and this is the point that should be recognized now, by us, as faithful Christians in modern America. Jesus Christ has given up himself for his church, sanctified her, cleansed her "by the washing of water with the word" (Eph 5:26). Now the church, as embodied by the wife in the marital relationship, gives her all for her Lord. Not because she has to, but because she *wants* to—indeed, because she *gets* to. It is her greatest *joy* to be a submissive wife in the marital relationship to her husband and to the rest of the family who depend on her. Some sense of this surely impelled Paul to craft this portion of the Ephesian *Haustafel* for wives in the way that he did. In order to help wives to be saved amid all the wrong thinking regarding marriage that was rampant in the world of that day, and to help modern wives to be saved amid all the harmful thinking regarding sexuality and marriage that is going on in our day. The godly vocation of wife and mother is as essential now in modern families as ever it has been.

Conclusion

As has been evident so far, the New Testament *Haustafeln* are not about more rules and regulations, by the following of which we shall bring about greater domestic tranquility. What has been shown throughout is that families in Paul's day, as families in our day, are often in grievous estate and we cannot save ourselves. Therefore, God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, sent his Son into the world to rescue sinners, including those who constitute troubled families—which might include all of us. While slavery is an institution of the fallen human world, the other vocations discussed here are rooted in creation. For all of them, Paul's household code has much to teach us concerning Christian contentment, the dignity of the Christian no matter what his or her position in life may be, and the joy that can be found in service toward others, most especially in our families, as husbands lead and cherish their wives, and in their mutual love, care for the children God has given them. The

[71] Study note on Eph 2:24 in Engelbrecht et al., *The Lutheran Study Bible*, 2026.

household codes, with their practical admonitions to godly living, would have attracted many outsiders to Christ in the original situation and so brought them into the proximity of the word and sacraments so that they could be saved. But mainly the *Haustafeln* guard each Christian's faith—so that all of us, each in his or her proper vocation, may be on the way to life everlasting with the other diverse household members into whose proximity the Lord has put us. Let us study these *Haustafeln*, then, and learn from them. God will bless us richly as we do.

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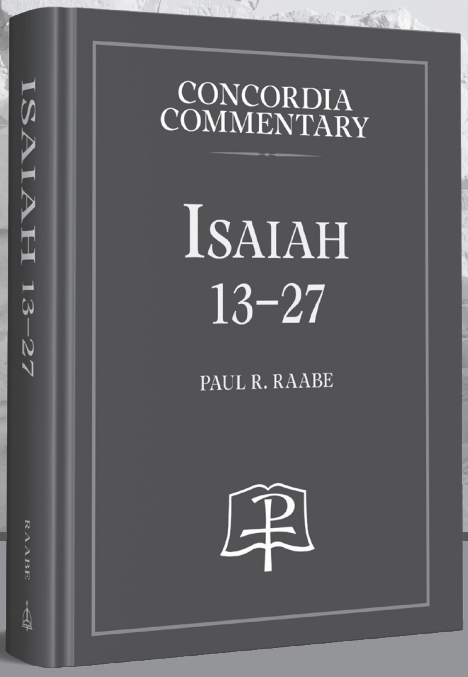

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CTQ 88 (2024): 75–90

Theological Observer

Women's Ordination: Government and Culture Ruling in the Place of Christ and His Apostles

Thank you for inviting me to participate in the discussion as a confessional Lutheran church body like the Lutheran Church in Korea contemplates introducing the ordination of women as pastors.[1] I have divided this presentation into two parts: (1) the current state of feminism, of which the ordination of women is a part, as well as how and why Lutheran churches came to ordain women pastors, and (2) the ministry of Jesus in choosing only men to be apostles.

I. The How and Why of the Ordination of Women

Few teachings and practices are as divisive among Lutherans as the ordination of women as pastors, a practice that has opened the door in all churches to other practices (e.g., the blessing of same-sex marriages, as is being proposed by Catholic bishops in Belgium). A fundamental problem is whether God can be spoken of in feminine terms in our prayers and preaching. If so, then the First Person of the Trinity can be understood and addressed not only as "Father" but also as "Father-Mother" or "Mother," which is already happening. So in the Lord's Prayer, "our Father" could then be replaced by "our Father-Mother," and the name of God revealed by Jesus as "Father-Son-Holy Spirit" finds a substitute in "God-Christ-Spirit." So in churches that have embraced the ordination of women, feminism has already led to a different understanding of God from what is revealed in Scripture.

The ordination of women as pastors has no support in the tradition of church practice going back to apostolic times. There were simply no women pastors or priests. Lutherans ordaining women as pastors is of very recent origin, with the first woman ordained in the 1950s.[2] At that time, Lutheran churches throughout the world did not know of the practice, and much effort had to be expended to convince parishioners that this was an acceptable practice. When it was first instituted, it was ignored and resisted by the people, but it is now commonplace. By any definition, the ordination of women was an innovation doing away with nearly two thousand

[1] Presented at the dialogue of the Lutheran Church in Korea (LCK) and the LCMS on women's ordination (Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, January 17, 2023).

[2] The history of the introduction of women pastors in Germany and Scandinavia has been presented in detail by Gottfried Martens, "The Introduction of Women's Ordination in the German Landeskirchen and in the Lutheran Churches of Scandinavia," in *You, My People, Shall Be Holy: A Festschrift in Honour of John W. Kleinig*, ed. John R. Stephenson and Thomas M. Winger (St. Catharines, ON: Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, 2013), 127–52.—Ed.

years of church practice, and the innovation came with serious consequences regarding how people think of God and how men and women relate to one another. It is a repudiation of Genesis 1–3 of how God created Adam and Eve and how they are related to each other. At the time the institution of the practice in Lutheran churches was up for discussion, the well known confessional Lutheran scholar Peter Brunner of Heidelberg University predicted with accuracy that should women be ordained as pastors, how we understood God would be permanently and drastically changed, and year after year he has been proven to be right.

The current major proponent of ordaining women is the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The ordination of women has become the new orthodoxy and has replaced the older view that only men, but certainly not all men, can serve in the ministry. The LWF presumes that its member churches ordain women or that they soon will. Women's ordination is no longer a topic of discussion in the LWF, which can now be headed by a woman; rather, it is assumed that the ordination of women is now a necessary practice.

In the pastoral epistles, Paul laid down certain specifications for pastors, one of which is that they had to be men (1 Tim 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6). Women could not be given this office (1 Tim 2:11–15). Not only has the feminism that has taken over some Lutheran churches led to ordaining women and a different understanding of God, but also arguments used to allow the ordination of women have been used to allow the ordination of homosexuals and even place them in places of church leadership. Women serve as bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), its subsidiary synods, and the state-related churches of Scandinavia and Germany and can even serve as president of the LWF. The code for this is the LGBTQ+ movement. Sexual orientation is no longer a factor for them in who may become a pastor.

Approaching eighty-seven years of age, I will be so bold as to present myself as a chronological gauge of how things have changed in the life of one person. I was born in 1936, and until I was in my midtwenties, no women served as pastors in any of the mainline churches, including the Reformed, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Anglican communions. Pentecostals and other fringe groups who did not have a carefully outlined doctrine of the ministry allowed women to preach, as both men and women in their assemblies could claim that they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Anyone claiming to be moved by the Holy Spirit could speak at will during their church services, as was thought to be the case in Corinth (1 Cor 14:26–33). Heretical, charismatic groups in the apostolic and postapostolic churches allowed women to preach, a practice that was condemned. It was not a matter of disorganization in having two or more persons preaching at the same time. Rather, it was against what

God established in Genesis: that Adam was the preacher and Eve was the congregation.

Today things are drastically different from the time of my youth, and the change has come with equally drastic speed. The collateral damage in feminizing our practice and doctrine has been catastrophic. When I was ordained into the ministry, no one in any Lutheran church in America thought of ordaining women, unless it was those who were keeping their intentions private. Now at the conclusion of my ministry of sixty years, the tables are turned, and in some seminaries, women constitute the majority of entering students. We are not far off from the time when they will constitute the majority of clergy. All of these developments can be supported by neither Scripture nor the nearly two-millennia history of the church. Jesus taught men and women, but he prepared only men—the twelve disciples—and not all men to be his apostles.

II. How Did it Happen?

The practice of ordaining women did not come about by a congregation, a group of congregations like a synod, or some theologian looking into the tradition of the ancient church and finding something in it that previous generations overlooked. Ordaining women also did not come about by biblical research. It was not a Luther-like experience by which his reading of Romans and Galatians proved that Roman Catholic practice—such as the idea that selling indulgences or paying for masses could free the dead from the pangs of purgatory—stood at odds with the biblical doctrine of justification by grace. Even though Lutherans were and are very careful to show that what they believe is derived from Scripture, Melanchthon in the Augsburg Confession carefully demonstrated that what the Lutherans taught about justification was within the universal (that is, catholic) tradition of the church and they quoted the church fathers to prove it. Just as there is no biblical support for women pastors in Scripture, there is also no support in the nearly two-thousand-year history of the church. Neither was anything written in any of the Lutheran Confessions or in the writings of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century orthodox Lutheran dogmaticians indicating that women should be pastors.

In terms of how the church measures time, the impetus for the ordination of women is recent; not even sixty years have passed since the first woman was ordained, and women thus began serving as preachers and the leaders of the liturgy in Lutheran congregations. But ordaining one woman opened the floodgates, and where once no women were ordained, it is now common practice in all the mainline churches, except the churches of the International Lutheran Council (ILC), the East-

ern Orthodox churches, and perhaps the Southern Baptists. Unfortunately, momentum in the Catholic Church toward the ordination of women, especially in Europe, has been building.

For those who are closer to ninety years of age rather than they are to eighty, it is almost as if the ordination of women happened yesterday, and in a way, it did. Within cultural environments in which all occupations are open to women, the practice has spread like wildfire. If a woman can run for president and serve as vice president of the United States and its Supreme Court, there can be little reason why she could not be a pastor, so the reasoning goes. It is now so widespread among Lutheran churches and other mainline Protestant churches—such as the Anglicans, Methodists, and Presbyterians—that the churches in the ILC that do not have women clergy are seen as out of step with the times. Companies that manufacture ecclesiastical attire for the clergy have accommodated themselves to the times. Look at their catalogs, and you will find women dressed in cassocks, chasubles, and copes. Look at any church painting before the twentieth century, and you will find only men in ecclesiastical garb.

III. Details on How it Happened

All this began when legislation was passed by the left-leaning socialist governments of Europe at a time when the principle of equality was in the political air. In 1957, the Swedish parliament passed a law allowing that women be ordained, but giving congregations the right to reject them.[3] About twenty years later, the parliament insisted that the congregations accept women pastors that the church authorities assigned to them.[4] This was not something the people in the congregations asked to have. (Let it be noted that since its founding, the ELCA has had a modified episcopal structure in that the regional bishops appointed pastors for congregations, which had the right to reject the nomination of two bishops, and then the congregation had to accept the third nominee, who was often a woman, and who for reasons of conscience the congregation did not want.) Again it must be said that the practice of ordaining women did not arise from congregations, churches' conventions, synods, conferences of pastors, or theological faculties themselves, but it came from parliaments or other legislative bodies whose members were chosen by political parties and who were not necessarily Lutheran or even Christian. Only later did Lutheran synods in America follow suit, since they saw themselves as part of the same fellowship.

[3] Martens, "Introduction of Women's Ordination," 142.
[4] Martens, "Introduction of Women's Ordination," 144.

This arrangement in Europe between the civil rulers and the church goes back seventeen hundred years when kings, princes, and towns who were financially supporting the church took upon themselves certain prerogatives in how the church should conduct its affairs, ones that in the New Testament belonged instead to the people and their pastors. Rulers involved themselves in who should serve as priests and bishops and how the liturgy should be worded. Until Constantine became the emperor of the Roman Empire, Christianity was an illegal religion. This was because, unlike other religions, it did not allow Christians to worship the emperor as divine. In Rome, the worship of the emperor was like the pledge of allegiance that was required of all citizens, but that respect also required acknowledging the emperor was God. Without himself at first being baptized, Constantine legalized Christianity, and it was soon afterward made the official religion of the empire. Constantine became instrumental in building churches, appointing bishops, and summoning church councils, such as the Council of Nicaea (AD 325), which formulated the core of our Nicene Creed. The Roman Empire embraced an area of land roughly coterminous with modern Europe, and about one hundred years after Rome fell to the barbarians, it was reconstituted in the year 800 as the Holy Roman Empire. There, its emperor and his vassal kings and princes assumed rights to how the church was to be administered and bishops appointed. Only those baptized as Christians could be citizens of the empire, an arrangement that is still called Constantinian Christianity.

This was the world in which Luther lived and in which his Reformation took place. Luther's famous "here I stand" confession was made before Emperor Charles V and the members of the parliament that constituted the empire at Worms in 1521. His followers presented the Augsburg Confession to the same group in 1530. In the 1555 Peace of Augsburg, princes and certain cities were allowed to make their territories Lutheran, while some remained Catholic. The situation was similar in England and Scandinavia, and as was often the case, kings used the bishops to further their own interests. This would have devastating consequences for Lutherans. In 1617, Lutheranism came close to being abolished in Brandenburg (what is now northeastern Germany and eastern Poland) when the prince elector chose to exercise his right over the church and attempted to merge Lutheran congregations with the Reformed but failed.[5]

[5] Elector Johann Sigismund (1572–1619, ruled 1608–1619) of Brandenburg converted to Calvinism secretly in 1606. Efforts to calvinize Brandenburg were stepped up during the reign of Frederick William, the "Great Elector" (ruled 1640–1688). In 1657, this elector abolished confessional subscription to the Formula of Concord; in 1662, he prohibited anti-Reformed polemics and the study of theology in Wittenberg by his subjects; in 1683, he abolished traditional liturgical vestments and the use of processional crosses at burials. In 1664, the hymnwriter Paul Gerhardt refused to subscribe the edict outlawing anti-Reformed polemics and for this was removed from his office

Two centuries later, his successor Frederick William III, to commemorate the three hundredth anniversary of the Reformation from 1817 to 1830, succeeded in merging the majority Lutheran population with the minority Reformed population into one church. The newly merged church was known as the Evangelical Church, and its hymns and liturgical forms undermined Lutheran doctrines, especially the Lutheran understanding of the Lord's Supper as Christ's body and blood. Because of his aggressive political agenda, Frederick William III absorbed many of the smaller principalities into what is now the modern nation of Germany, and the Lutheranism that emerged in the Reformation was so undermined that it never regained its Reformation status. Even today, non-Catholic Germans call themselves *evangelisch*, which is more like our word "Protestant." The word *lutherisch* is virtually an unknown word to many Germans.

The ordination of women finds its roots in the Age of Enlightenment, when the rights of kings and the church were denigrated, and modern democratic ideas were born, as was evident in the French Revolution. In subsequent years, the authority that kings had in religious matters slipped into the hands of elected parliaments, whose members were more and more committed to establishing democratic principles with regard to how the churches in their countries should be organized and worship. After World War I, democracy was in the air, and governments fell into the hands of socialist, left-leaning politicians whose sense of equality led them to pass laws allowing women to serve as pastors along with men.

IV. Government and Culture's Incursion into the Church

Thus, in any discussion about whether women should be ordained as pastors in churches that do not have the practice now, it is essential to consider that the decision to ordain them was originally made not on the basis of biblical study and theological principles. It was made by governments that were influenced by the principles set forth in the Age of Enlightenment and perfected in World War I, decisions in which the power of monarchs gave way to so-called democratic principles exercised by elected parliaments. In hindsight, in a world in which all were considered equal, for many people the ordination of women pastors would be inevitable. Nevertheless, since its origins and mandates came from the government, the practice

as pastor in Berlin. Other attempts by princes of Lutheran territorial churches were successful in changing their Lutheran churches into Reformed. In 1560, Elector Frederick III of the Palatinate introduced the Reformed confession to his land. In 1599, Landgrave Moritz of Hesse introduced the Reformed confession to his. Even Electoral Saxony experienced a temporary calvinization under Christian I (ruled 1586–1591). Ernst Koch, *Das konfessionelle Zeitalter: Katholizismus, Luthertum, Calvinismus (1563-1675)* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2000), 267, 269, 333, 261, 265, 270.—Ed.

was as unacceptable then as it is now. In reviewing the acceptability of the ordination of women, people are accommodating an issue raised by the government and not by the church. In response, we must say that Caesar has no rights in the church. But for the sake of those churches that have adopted the practice, we also have to respond to this practice, which has no support in the Bible, in the history of the church from the apostolic period to the present, and especially in the Lutheran Confessions and their dogmaticians.

The first legislative action allowing women pastors was made by the Norwegian parliament in 1938, which had previously been part of the Kingdom of Denmark. Before that, Norway had been part of Sweden, so the people had a heightened sense of their independence. For nearly twenty years, Norwegian congregations were given the right to reject women who were appointed by their bishops to be pastors. This right was taken away in 1956. Even then, the people resisted, and the first ordinations of women in a Lutheran church happened five years later in 1961. It is remarkable that for nearly a quarter century, the people resisted accepting a woman pastor.

Eventually, however, their resistance fell, and soon women pastors were allowed in Denmark and Sweden and (not surprisingly) by the Communist-led governments of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Czechoslovakia. Lutheran synods in America would soon follow suit. In the 1950s, the seminaries that would later constitute the ELCA began admitting women into the regular academic programs leading to certification for the ministry and ordination. It happened that upon the graduation of those women, seminary faculty members who favored the ordination of women took the opportunity to propose their ordination. The first was the American Lutheran Church (ALC), which was soon followed by the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), both churches that would eventually constitute the ELCA. Each synod took up the measure at its respective 1970 plenary convention and endorsed it. Although the press reported that there was little or no theological discussion at the ALC convention, nearly half of the delegates—a four-to-five margin—opposed it, much closer than was anticipated. At future conventions, there was no opposition. At its 1969 and 1971 conventions, the LCMS expressed its opposition to allowing women to serve as pastors on the grounds that it was not biblical.

Opposition to ordaining women pastors in Europe came to an end long ago with the deaths of Bishop Bo Giertz of Sweden as well as Bishop Hermann Dietzfelbinger of Bavaria, who stood against his own church convention. Opposition to ordaining women in the ELCA is nil. In Sweden, those opposing the ordination of women were at first allowed into the ministry without endorsing the practice, but now those who oppose the ordination of women are required to be ordained in the

same church services in which women candidates are also ordained, thus compromising their belief that only men should be ordained. As mentioned, in the LWF, the ordination of women is presumed. It is now established dogma and not open for reevaluation.

Here in America the government exercises no control over who may be ordained, but the overarching culture in which we live sees fewer and fewer differences between men and women, and their functions are regarded as interchangeable. Soon may come the day when the churches that do not give women the same advantages given men, such as ordination, will be financially punished by the government in losing their tax exemption. Since the ordination of women began as a government action and not a church decision, there are no agreed-upon reasons for its practice. Some scholars are up front in acknowledging that Paul was against the practice. But in our context, what Paul or any other biblical writer has to say about the place of women serving in the church and their relationship to men or other women no longer matters. His condemnations of homosexual relationships are also brushed aside. In response, we say that in his opposition to women preachers, Paul was going against the prevailing Greco-Roman culture in which women had prominent parts in religious life, particularly in Rome, where they served as vestal virgins and occupied a status of honor next to the emperor himself and with him were highly revered. As such, some early Christians might have speculated that converted women who previously served as priests in a pagan religion could perform a similar service in the church. Thus Paul's prohibition of women pastors and preachers was not a mere reflection of prevalent societal values but a divine correction to prevalent societal values.

There is no one reason offered for women to be ordained, and the one reason they take from Paul—that there is no difference between men and women (Gal 3:28)—is unsatisfactory, since this passage in Galatians does not address the Office of the Holy Ministry. At the present time, gender equality has morphed into gender interchangeability, and so biblical and theological reasons for the practice no longer have to be offered. If men can become women and women can become men, any prohibition against ordaining women has no meaning.

V. Biblical Evidence: Jesus Establishes the Ministry

Many dismiss as irrelevant the passages found in Paul's epistles that disallow the practice of women's ordination. 1 Timothy was not written by Paul, so some modern commentators claim, and so what he says in 1 Timothy 2:12—that a woman should not teach—has no authority for the church. They also say that 1 Corinthians 14:33–37 was not part of the original epistle but was inserted later, even though there

is no manuscript evidence for such a view. More honest are those who acknowledge that Paul opposed women ministers but assert that what he said is no longer valid for us. Thus, it is no longer only governments in Europe, but also the overwhelming force of culture exercised on church life in America and in other countries, that require their churches to ordain women. Likewise, it was not unexpected that practicing homosexuals are now being ordained and that Lutheran churches that ordain women pastors will soon bless same-sex marriages. In some churches, this is already being done.

The world in which Jesus lived was shaped by the Old Testament, in which women did not serve as priests in the temple, and after the temple was destroyed in AD 70, they did not serve as rabbis. Nevertheless, women now serve as rabbis in liberal and some conservative, but not orthodox, synagogues. There is no Hebrew word for "priestess." Women who were preaching (wrongfully) in Corinth and other New Testament churches (e.g., those churches that were entrusted to Timothy's care) must have been doing so in those churches that had a majority Gentile membership, since the practice of women preaching was common among the pagans. It was not found in congregations whose memberships were predominantly Jewish, like those in Jerusalem.

One must also look at how Jesus established the ministry. While Jesus called men, women, and children to faith, including the most recently born infants, he appointed specific men as apostles (Matt 10:1–2). In reading the Gospels, it soon becomes obvious that women are more likely to be presented as paragons of faith than are men. Those who are chosen by Jesus as disciples, who were to be his apostles, are often pictured as weak in faith and at first do not understand what he is saying, even when he is speaking of his resurrection.

Take Mary, the mother of Jesus, as an example of faith. She immediately accepts her role to become the mother of God, and when she tells Joseph, he does not believe her and contemplates divorcing her until he is convinced by the angel of the Lord. Later, while most of the disciples flee from Jesus at his trial and crucifixion, the women, including his mother, remain at his side until his death and follow his body to the tomb. While the disciples remain behind locked doors because of the fear of Jews, the women venture out at sundown on Saturday to buy ointments to complete his burial. Then they make their way through the darkness of the early morning of the third day to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, only to find his body missing. In so doing, they become the first witnesses of his resurrection.

If faith and the intensification of commitment are the only qualifications for the apostleship and then subsequently for the ministry, Jesus should have chosen the women as apostles, but he did not. Each of the Gospels makes a clear distinction between the disciples or apostles and the other followers of Jesus. The disciples or

apostles are listed by name in Matthew 10:1–2, where their obligations are set down. The disciples are the ones told to meet Jesus in Galilee, where they are commissioned as apostles (Matt 28:7, 10, 16–20).

This argument, that the ministry is given to the apostles, can be traced in the other Gospels also. Take, for example, John 21, in which Jesus sets aside Peter and the other disciples for the ministry. What is striking in Mark is that Jesus gives special instruction to the disciples that he does not give to the people: "With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything" (Mark 4:33–34). Churches that ordain women can no longer consider themselves apostolic churches because they have no support for doing so. They are contravening Paul's admonition that they should not let women preach, and equally important, they are not following the example of Jesus, who in establishing the ministry in the apostles chose only men.

What is often overlooked in the discussion of the ordination of women pastors is the Genesis account of creation and the fall into sin (Gen 3:1–2), which Paul establishes as the reason women should not preach and thus should not be ordained as pastors (1 Tim 2:12–14). In the original creation, there was no division between what was religious and what was secular, what we Lutherans would call the two kingdoms. In their ordinary existence, Adam and Eve were God's creation, and in every moment of their lives, they were to acknowledge him as their creator. In this arrangement, Adam was to be the preacher and Eve the congregation. Her first step in the wrong direction was engaging in a conversation with the serpent, for which she was not equipped. It was to Adam and not to her that God spoke, and so qualified Adam as a preacher. What she knew of the conversation between Adam and God was secondhand. She was not chosen as the spokesman of that first community of man and woman, and so she was not equipped to speak about it. That might be the reason Paul said she was deceived.

The ordination of women is only the tip of a larger iceberg. Underneath the surface are different understandings of God and human beings, and this has led to seeing differences between male and female as nonexistent. Some churches have gone beyond ordaining women to ordaining practicing homosexuals and transsexuals. If what Paul says about women not preaching was applicable in only his cultural context, then what he says about other things in other places is not applicable to our situation either. The authority of Scripture has been comprised and its inspiration denied.

VI. Church Tradition

Before a church adopts any new practice, it should look at and assess what the church has done in previous years and even centuries. The unanimous church tradition from the days of apostles until the late 1930s is that only men qualified by other pastors can be ordained as pastors. There is no restriction on the blessings with hands in any number of situations, such as confirmation and marriage, and at the beds of the sick and dying. Such was the ministry of Jesus, who laid his hands on the sick, and we should do it also. The laying on of hands in the rite of ordination, however, is another matter, since Paul says that it should be done with caution (1 Tim 5:22). He also said women may not teach, and since apostolic time the church has understood this to mean that they also cannot be ordained as pastors. We are not the first to face the ordination of women. Sometime in the second century, the pseudepigraphic document known as the Acts of Paul and Thecla surfaced as supposedly coming from Paul. Because of the document's claim to be written by Paul, its content had to be evaluated before it could be recognized as canonical and binding with the same authority as other documents claiming to be of apostolic origin. Apostolic origin determines a document's biblical authority.[6] Since the Acts of Paul and Thecla presented Paul as having women baptize and preach, a right that Paul specifically denied to women in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy (documents that were recognized as authentic), the Acts of Paul and Thecla was rejected as forgery. In the third century, a heretical group known as the Montanists, which claimed special revelations from the Holy Spirit, also allowed for women preachers. The Montanists were not unlike today's Pentecostals in claiming that the Holy Spirit gave direct revelations to believers that took precedence over anything Scripture had to say.

The Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox communions, which constitute about three quarters of Christendom, do not ordain women. Some Catholic and Eastern Christian theologians are advocating for it, however, under the pressure and influence of an ever-increasing feminist culture.[7] Such mainline churches as the

[6] David P. Scaer, *The Apostolic Scriptures* (Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1979).

[7] Elisabeth Behr-Sigel (1907–2005), influenced by Sergius Bulgakov, challenged the theological arguments against ordaining priestesses in the Eastern Christian churches. A consultation on the rule of women in the church, held at Rhodes in 1988, recommended that women be ordained not to the priesthood but to the diaconate (and thus serve in the liturgy side-by-side with priests), a recommendation that was enacted in 2017 in the Patriarchate of Alexandria. Frederica Mathewes-Green claimed in 2007 that she and other women are allowed to preach in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. Michael Plekon, "The Russian Religious Revival and Its Theological Legacy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, ed. Mary Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), 211–212; Philip Kariatlis, "The Role of Women in the Orthodox Church: A Historical Overview of Consultations and Conclusions Reached in the Twentieth Century," *Phronema* 21 (2006): 29–39; Catherine Clark,

Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Episcopalians, and the United Church of Christ (UCC) already ordain women, and even a conservative group like the Southern Baptists is under feminist influences to ordain them in the future. Any church that ordains women no longer stands in the apostolic tradition since what the church does contradicts what Paul said and how Jesus and the apostles conducted their ministries.

This means that the churches that comprise the ILC remain in the apostolic, catholic tradition in that they teach and practice what was commonly and universally believed and practiced without coming up with innovations in doctrine and practice. This is precisely the way in which the Lutherans presented themselves in 1530 to the emperor and the Roman Church of that day in the Augsburg Confession. No better model is laid out before us than the one set forth by the Augsburg Confession, in which every doctrine taught by the Lutherans and their practice not only had biblical support but also had precedents in the early church fathers and later church theologians. Such support for women preachers and the ordination of women is completely lacking.

At an LWF-sponsored conference of women clergy, Nigerian theology lecturer Hauwa Hazael Madi said, "Man or woman, both have a common value, both were created in the image of God." Having a common value is true in speaking how we, men and women, stand before God in being judged as sinners and being judged as righteous in Christ, but it is not true in how we were created and for what functions we were created. Adam possessed the image of God directly from God in God's creation, and in her being taken out of the side of Adam, Eve possessed the image of God from Adam and through Adam. This means that Adam and Eve possessed a common humanity, not in a way that there were two human races, one male and one female. There was only one "mankind" or "humankind," but man and woman each had and continue to have distinct functions that are derived from how each was created and what each was created by God to do. Fathers are not and cannot become mothers, and mothers are not and cannot become fathers. Despite the current North American culture's madness on this issue, men's and women's functions are not interchangeable; men cannot become women, and women cannot become men.

"Orthodox Church Debate over Women Deacons Moves One Step Closer to Reality," *Religion News Service* (blog), March 9, 2017, https://religionnews.com/2017/03/09/orthodox-church-debate-over-women-deacons-moves-one-step-closer-to-reality/; and Frederica Mathewes-Green, "Women's Ordination," Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, January 10, 2007, http://ww1.antiochian.org/node/17953.—Ed.

Every church service is a replication of how God created man and woman in Genesis. When a woman leads the worshipping congregation and preaches, the original order—set down in Genesis 2 and restored and reflected in the imagery of Christ and his church—is disrupted, and the gospel of salvation is undermined. Left unchecked, the gospel eventually deteriorates to the point that another entirely different gospel is put in its place. This can be a slow process, but its conclusion is that differences between men and women no longer matter. In the case of the UCC, this sexual confusion presents itself as the gospel. Plymouth Congregational Church, a leading UCC church in Fort Wayne, says of itself, "As a progressive Christian community, we understand the gospel as calling us to affirm LGBTQ people, work for justice and peace, care for the planet, and partner with others here and around the world in mission." There you have it.

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Funeral Sermon for Walter Dissen[1]

"Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down death, and to those in the tombs granting life!"

Let this acclamation, taken from an ancient Easter hymn, serve as our own acclamation, as we recall the life of Walter Dissen and give thanks to God, our Father, and to our Savior, Jesus Christ, for the life now ended, and for the life now knowing no end.

Dear Eunice, sister; dear David, Martin, Fred, brothers; Marilyn; and to all the family and friends of Walter:

What a warrior Walter was! What a warrior! The biographical sketch in the bulletin is but a bare-bones outline of Walter's accomplishments, of his loyalties, of his commitments. But those of us who knew Walter and worked with him and struggled with him know that the flesh on those bones was animated with an uncommon intellect, perhaps honed by his legal training, and was animated by a courageous and tenacious commitment to the Christian faith as articulated by the Lutheran Confessions. We will allow that biographical sketch to have its way, as limited as that is. But you who were of his family will have numerous memories that only close relatives

[1] This sermon was preached on August 26, 2023, at Kramer Chapel, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

have: growing up with Walter, stories connected with his youth, family gatherings, reunions, and much more of such experiences. No doubt your minds and hearts are even now in this moment rekindling many of those memories, of a life lived long ago or perhaps not so long ago.

Then there are those of us who worked and struggled with him during various controversies that roiled our church and schools. The biographical sketch mentions this: his critical tenure on the board of Concordia Seminary during the days of the walkout, when he stoutly defended the truth and integrity of the Holy Scriptures against the insidious inroads of higher criticism. For this, Concordia Seminary awarded him the *Christus Vivit* Award in 1984. I myself still have vivid recollection of the invaluable role played by Walter when he served on the board of this seminary in the struggle to maintain this seminary's integrity as a fully theological, confessional seminary for the training of Lutheran pastors. In those moments Walter's tenacity of purpose and his righteous contentiousness, if I might express it so, were immensely helpful and ultimately vindicated. For his service of our board Walter received the *Miles Christi* Award in 2011. *Miles Christi*— "Soldier of Christ"! Indeed, what a warrior Walter was! And we shall surely miss that man!

Yet that warrior, so defined and so remembered, lies here before us, mute to our ears and soon to return to the dust from which, in the beginning, God brought forth man. From dust to dust—that is the encompassing description and narrative of man when man is remembered by way of moments of the past and by the works of his hands and his mind.

But "Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down death, and to those in the tombs granting life!" May we not, then—*must* we not, then—take a closer look at this man bound for his tomb? Must we not, as though with eyes of a prophet, see things far away that are also up close? Before the service we had the opportunity to view the body of Walter as it lies in its coffin. I submit that that is a good and pious practice. And I have no doubt that, as the counselors and psychiatrists inform us, it serves to bring some closure to the grief of family and friends. But let us consider again this man in the reality of his body, over which we pray and sing, and which with prayer and song we shall soon commit to the earth.

Where shall we begin? Again, "Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down death, and to those in the tombs granting life!" We begin where all claims of Christian faith must begin: in the story of another man, born of flesh from his virgin mother, who spoke truth because he was Truth, who hated the lie of man's rebellious self-righteousness because he was the Righteousness of God, who finally died by the hands of unrighteous men in order to justify the sinner, and who by the will and power of his Father put death to death through his resurrection in his flesh from the dead. Why all of this? That we too, that Walter also, might share in and participate

in that man's righteousness and the newness of that man's life. How so is all of this? "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Rom 6:4–5). Those were the words we recited just moments ago in the Remembrance of Baptism. But let us add to these words other words—words from the apostolic pen of Saint Paul:

> You he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked. . . . But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ . . . and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. . . . For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast. (Eph 2:1, 4–6, 8–9 RSV)

So considered, the body of Walter over which we pray and sing and with prayer and song shall soon commit to the earth, well, is not dead. Rather, in the speech of saintly Paul, Walter sleeps. As one thinker rather boldly put it, for the faithful Christian, death is not fatal. Bold perhaps, but why not speak in such bold terms? We shall soon quote that man, sent by God into the flesh, the incarnate Word, God from God, Life from Life. He spoke no less boldly, giving us the right, yes, the obligation to speak boldly: For the faithful Christian, death is not fatal. For that man said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me shall live, even though he die, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25, my translation). Those were the words of our common Savior and Lord, in whom Walter most definitely believed. And so, according to the words of our Savior and Lord, Walter shall never die. Bold words? Strange words? Utterly mysterious words? Perhaps. But such is the calculus that arises from the resurrection of Jesus in the flesh. That flesh, we must hasten to add, which Walter again and again, with faith and Christian intention, joyously ate in the Eucharist of Christ the Crucified. Hence the words of our Gospel text:

> Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. . . . I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:35, 38–40 RSV)

The Scriptures are filled with such promises! We are, then, constrained to consider our brother and friend anew. The body over which we pray and sing and which we soon with prayer and song shall commit to the earth is the silent but living reality of a God-given continuity that began with Walter's Baptism and stretches out into the eternity of God's own life—a life free of sin, free of that death occasioned by trespass, a life without tear and toil of mind and hand, a life that is nothing other than the life of Jesus, the Christ, eternal Son from the eternal Father, given and proffered by him to Walter, and a life in the freedom of faith received and participated in by Walter.

So considered, the biographical sketch in the bulletin assumes a deeper meaning. The life so lived in the flesh was a life, yes, born of woman and lived among men, but also a life encompassed and renewed by the Spirit of God through water and the Spirit, set upon the way of righteousness and faith, which has its end not in the grave but in the halls of the heavenly temple where the glory of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit calls forth the everlasting hymn: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, Almighty, heaven and earth are filled with your glory."[2]

"Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down death, and to those in the tombs granting life!"

There is, then, I suppose, only one more thing to say—a prayer for us: "Grant," O heavenly Father, "that we also may be faithful unto death and receive the crown of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever."[3] Amen.

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[2] Cf. Sanctus, in *Lutheran Service Book*, ed. The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 161.

[3] Collect of the Day, Funeral Service, in *Lutheran Service Book*, 278.

CTQ 88 (2024): 91–94

Book Reviews

***The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution*. By Carl R. Trueman. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020. 425 pages. Hardcover. $34.99.**

"I am a woman trapped in a man's body." Our grandparents would have no idea what such words could mean. Even a generation ago, it would have been thought the height of lunacy, a mental disorder, or a cry for help. But now hardly anyone blinks an eye. In fact, we are obligated, on pain of societal ostracism, to affirm that which is scientifically impossible. Our nation's assistant secretary of health is a biological man who claims to be a woman, even though, medically speaking, Rachel Levine should be medically treated as a man.

Carl Trueman attempts to offer an explanation of how we got here. It is necessary but not sufficient to say that we are a fallen race, or to note with Paul in Romans 1 that we are in a full-scale rebellion against our creator. In a certain sense, these things have always been true. But we have gone further than the likes of Nero or Caligula could have ever dreamed. And it is all so normal.

Trueman sets the table by explaining that every culture has a certain set of expectations, ways in which a society sees itself. Here Trueman draws on the work of Philip Rieff, who wrote *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* (1966). Rieff contends, for instance, that the ancient Athenians thought of themselves as political men, medieval people were religious people, followed by the "economic man," who saw his life in terms of trade and the making of money. Most recently, our culture made a shift to the "psychological man," in which the main thrust of our ambition became personal happiness to be found within us. As Trueman contends, "For such selves in such a world, institutions such as schools and churches are places where one goes to perform, not to be formed—or perhaps better, where one goes to be formed by performing" (49).

In our new world, feelings dominate. The present is always better than the past, as history is nothing but a story of oppression. Sex has no inherent meaning or sacred value, and those who try to limit it in any way are themselves oppressors. Great heroes of the past must be forgotten or despised, especially in an age in which victimhood is the chief social currency in what Charles Taylor calls our "social imaginary"—that is, a worldview held by nearly all, often without even a conscious recognition.

What follows in Trueman's work is a kind of intellectual history. The 1960s, Trueman shows us, were a long time coming. We are introduced to Rousseau, whose own *Confessions* are contrasted with those of Augustine. While the church father

recognized original sin, Rousseau said that man was born basically good, and was only later corrupted by society and its institutions. Morality became about aesthetics, and ethical discourse centered on personal sentiments. Marriage itself came under attack as society's way of keeping a person from true joy and personal commitment.

Then came the poets, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Blake, who romanticized nature. Shelley, for instance, viewed religion as the manipulation of the powerful. Marriage again was seen as nothing but a way to keep people from true happiness. Following the poets, Trueman takes us to what he calls the "plastic people" enabled by Nietzsche, Marx, and Darwin. Nietzsche aided in the killing of God and of the moral order, which was nothing really but the application of power. Marx helped us to see everything in terms of economic struggle. Darwin's theory of evolution made history meaningless, as well as any idea that man was somehow special, created in God's image. There was no designer at creation, and God is not now guiding the process of history. Man was plastic, in charge of his own destiny, shape, and meaning.

From there, Trueman takes this intellectual history one step further, demonstrating Freud's place in psychologizing man, and doing so in a way that put sex at the center, beginning even at childhood. All of this led to what the author calls the triumph of the erotic, and the truly self-made man. Perhaps this is nowhere better encapsulated than in the words of Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life" (*Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, 1992).

If self-identification is at the heart of our belief, no one can deny our claims, no matter how obviously they seem to defy science or, more simply, reality. If there is no God, if society and marriage are the problem, if we are plastic people who are defined by sexuality and are truly the products of our own creation, then the transgender phenomenon begins to make some sort of sense. Against such an ideological tide, there are no clear or easy answers, but as Christians, we need to know what we are up against. And then, as always, it is back to the Scriptures, a return to the story of creation. And in that, we must return to a gospel that is also a new Genesis that affirms God's good creation. This means we recognize that we are a fallen race, but that we were created in the image of God, now found fully and completely in Christ. The road back to reality will not be an easy one, but we must begin the

journey, and part of that is recognizing how we got here. For that, we owe some thanks to Carl Trueman.

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***Nailed! Moral Injury: A Response from the Cross of Christ for the Combat Veteran*. By Mark J. Schreiber. Parker, CO: Outskirts, 2021. 323 pages. Paperback. $28.76.**

In his published and easy-to-read seminary PhD dissertation, lifelong and now retired Navy chaplain, CTS alumnus Captain Mark J. Schreiber brings together the experiences of wounded veterans from the Korean War, Vietnam War, and Iraq Wars. Christians who serve in the military are faced with the ethical dilemma that with the full knowledge that taking life is disallowed in certain cases by the fifth commandment, yet in defending the national interest and in their oath to the constitution, they are compelled to take life. This is not without physical, psychological, and spiritual consequences. In response to this dilemma Schreiber provides thoroughly informed theological chapters on lawful killing, imaginary forgiveness, the conscience of Christians, and the just war, among other moral and ethical issues (1–136). The remainder of the book is devoted to interviews with veterans, which are analyzed by Schreiber. Advances in medical science have reduced the number of fatalities on the battlefield and thereby increased the number of survivors with incapacitating wounds, some psychological, that can be alleviated but not permanently resolved. For the rest of their lives, combat-veteran sailors live with their physical wounds and memories as constant reminders of their time in military service. As a pastor who has known military combat and worked with the men and women who have endured the combat and suffered the physical and psychological consequences of battle, Schreiber addresses these issues from a Christian perspective, especially in relation to the sufferings of Jesus, which is the author's unique contribution to ministering to veterans. Christ's sufferings have both spiritual and physical aspects in that he is offered to God as a sacrifice for sin, which is at the heart of the Christian faith, and that, like common criminals in the ancient world, he was executed by crucifixion, which is arguably the most extreme and prolonged devised form of being put to death. Those who are still suffering from the effects of combat can, and may more likely, see and compare their own personal experiences to what Christ endured. In ministering to the active military and veterans, pastors have here a valued and accessible book in working with their parishioners who have served in the military and their family members. Schreiber opens the door into a world with

which most are unfamiliar, but to which our pastors minister. The plight of veterans is coming to the surface in homelessness and the potential for suicide. Here is a way in which we can begin to address the issue and do something about it—and it is easy to read.

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Books Received

Barker, Joel, and Steven D. West. *Numbers: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching*. Kerux Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Kregel Ministry, 2023. 480 pages. Hardcover. $37.99.

Echevarría, Miguel G., and Benjamin P. Laird. *40 Questions about the Apostle Paul*. 40 Questions Series. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2023. 374 pages. Paperback. $24.99.

Harvey, John D., and David Gentino. *Acts: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching*. Kerux Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Kregel Ministry, 2023. 576 pages. Hardcover. $41.99.

Magness, Phillip. *Church Music: For the Care of Souls*. Lexham Ministry Guides. Bellingham, WA: Lexham. 280 pages. Hardcover. $19.99.

Robinson, Jeffrey M. *Persuasive Apologetics: The Art of Handling Tough Questions without Pushing People Away*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2023. 260 pages. Paperback. $21.99.

Strauss, Mark L. *40 Questions about Bible Translation*. 40 Questions Series. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2023. 368 pages. Paperback. $24.99.

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For more information:

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The Master of Divinity (MDiv) is the leading pastoral degree program at CTSFW. As a three-year residential and one-year vicarage course of study, the MDiv Program forms men through biblical studies in the original languages, the Lutheran Confessions, Church history, and practice in pastoral care. Upon completion of the program, the men are well-rounded students of God's Word and service-oriented leaders who are well equipped to teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all.

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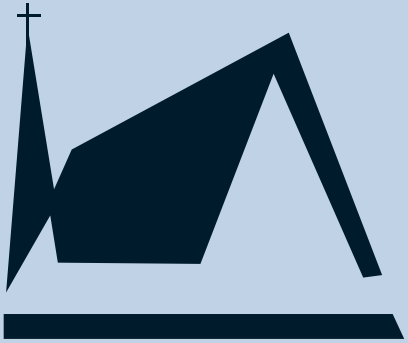

Forming servants in Jesus Christ who
teach the faithful, reach the lost, and care for all.