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Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος,
καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς
τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. πάντα
δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ
ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν.
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καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ
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Ὁ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν,

SCEPTRE

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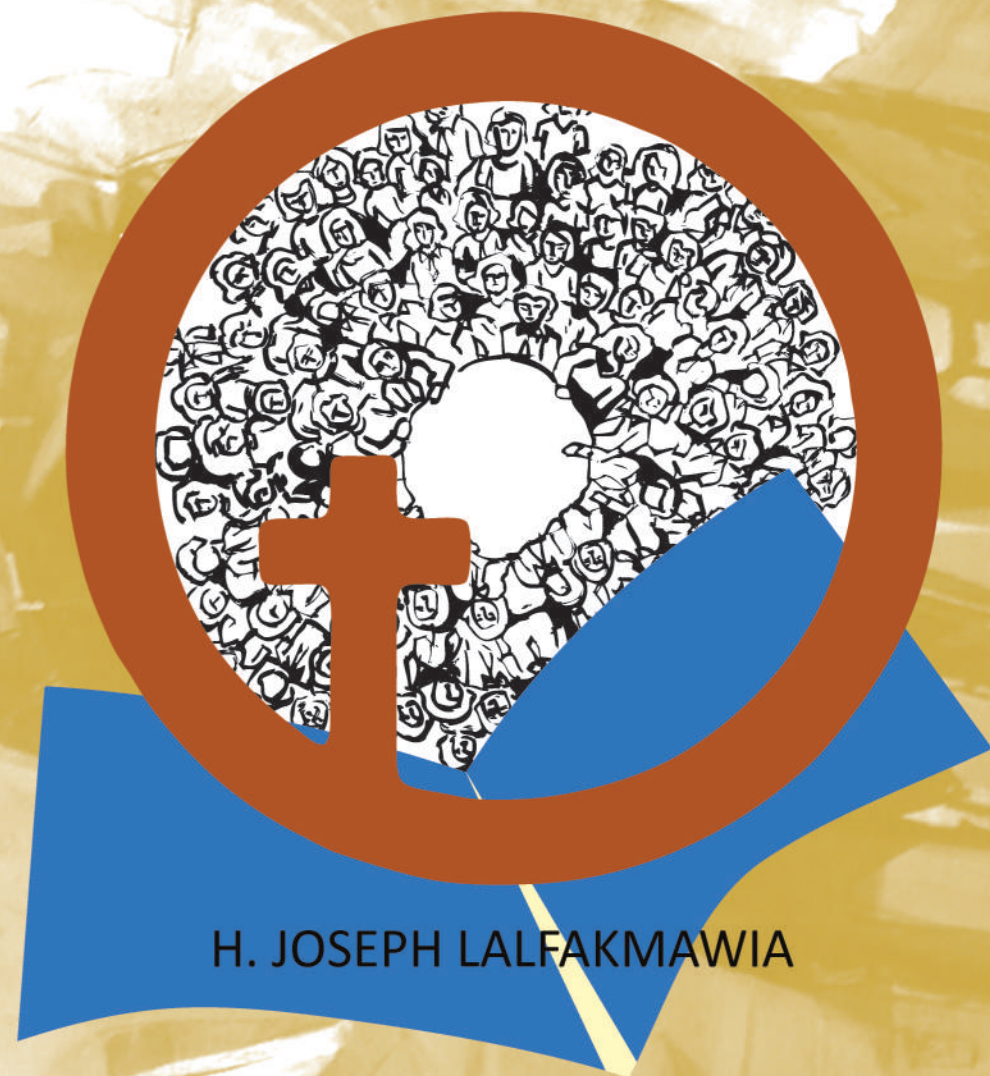
UNDERSTANDING THE NEW TESTAMENT ITS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTENT

H. JOSEPH LALFAKMAWIA

BCS Study Material: NT

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UNDERSTANDING THE NEW TESTAMENT ITS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTENT



H. JOSEPH LALFAKMAWIA

UNDERSTANDING THE NEW TESTAMENT :
Its Historical Background and Content

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FOREWORD

For many years theological education has been done within the well-protected campus with the primary objective of training pastors. Theological Education by Extension (TEE) is an attempt to do theology beyond campus. The vision of TEE is not confined to ministerial training programme of the churches alone; rather it involves equipping the whole people of God; it is for the *Laos* – the whole people of God. It seeks to empower the whole people of God for formation and transformation of the whole community and search to build a just and inclusive community in the context of the people of other faiths and to all people. Thus, the theological education extension programme is meant to strengthen building an inclusive community. Those who go through the process of such education will be able to work not only “for” the people, but also “together with the people”.

To aid external candidates in their studies, the production of BCS study materials was under consideration for a long time. We are happy that the resource materials are ready and I am sure this will greatly benefit the BCS candidates especially those who do not have access to library facility. We record our appreciation to Rev. H. Joseph Lalfakmawia for preparing, *Understanding the New Testament: Its Historical Background and Content*. We thank EMW, Germany, for journeying with us in strengthening theological education and making the resources available for the production of study materials.

Wati Longchar
Dean
Kolkata
April, 2013

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CHAPTER 1

Diaspora in Babylon

Introduction

The Greek term, Diaspora, is used to mean the “Jews in dispersion outside Palestine”. Jews were dispersed in several places such as Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Egypt, Rome etc. due to various reasons. According to Prophets, dispersion was a punishment for the disobedience of the people (Hos. 9:3; Jer. 8:3; 16:15; Ezek. 4:13; Zec. 10:9). Jewish exile/deportation in Babylon is one of the most important landmarks in the history of Israel, especially during the second temple Judaism. They were religiously shocked and politically shattered. But it served as a fiery refinery in their religious thought. Therefore, it is indispensable to study Babylonian exile to understand the New Testament and its background.

The Exiles

Many Israelites in the kingdom of Judah were exiled within three consecutive deportations by Nebuchadnezzar II.

- 1) The Babylonian army surrounded Jerusalem for three months and defeated the king of Judah, Jehoiachin on March 16, 597 BCE. The king, the queen mother, the high officials and leading citizens, together with an enormous booty were taken to Babylon. This was the first deportation.
- 2) After another revolt, the commander of Nebuchadnezzar's guard, Nebuzaradan led the Babylonian army and put the Jerusalem to the torch and leveled its walls, destroyed and captured it in July 587 BCE. Certain of ecclesiastical, military and civil officers, and leading citizens were brought before Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah and executed (II Kings 25:18-21; Jer. 52:24-27), while a further group of the population was deported to Babylon. The exact figure of the

second deportation/exile, according to Jeremiah, 832 persons (Jer. 52:29), probably counts only adult males, and, according to John Bright, possibly only people taken from the urban population of Jerusalem.

- 3) The third deportation took place in 582 BCE when the people of Judah were under the governorship of Gedaliah.¹
- 4) Though we mention here three deportations there are some scholars who propose four exiles. According to D. J. Wiseman, the Babylonians marched to Palestine in the year 604-603 BCE and captured many prisoners including Daniel and were sent to Babylon.² If this is reliable, then there were four deportations to Babylon.

As we found in Jer. 52:28-30, 3023 people were deported in the first exile, 832 people in the second and 745 people in the third exile. Donald Gowan's assumption that the total figures in these three exiles (4600) are approximately accurate in the sense that they represent only the adult males so that one would multiply by 3 or 4 to get the full number of the exile because the total numbers of them are either 10,000 (2 Kgs. 24:14) or 8000 (2 Kgs. 24:16).³

The Babylonians did not replace deported Jews with other people from outside, as the Assyrians had in Samaria.⁴ Not only this, it is also believed that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed only Judah and the coast, but the rest of the country were not destroyed and left as they were.⁵

Social Condition of the Jews during the Babylonian Exile

Those exiles in Babylon still continued to practice their old way of life and tradition to some extent, but their motherland, Jerusalem was still their centre of history and life. It is also believed from the life of Ezekiel that the exiles were not actual prisoners but represented a compulsorily transplanted subject population who were able to move about freely in their daily life.⁶ They were permitted to build houses and plant gardens and enjoyed their produce. They were able to marry and give in marriage (Jer. 29:5f.). They settled at Tel-abib in Babylonia. The Jews at Nippur (not far from the city Babylon) were prospered. This is also true in Babylon. As a result, they gradually reconciled themselves to their situation.⁷

Technically speaking, we can say that the Jews in the Babylonian exile had judicial autonomy especially under the Persian era. They mostly lived in villages of their own, and there is no evidence if they lived in the great cities. Even if they lived in the cities, it is believed that they would live in the special quarters that are not their own.⁸

The sons of the exile were impressively loyal to the Persian rulers Artaxerxes I and II. As a result, the kings were motivated and were given much political freedom.⁹

Religious Condition

According to the Israelites' understanding, the holy city Zion is inviolable and their God, Yahweh is the only God that no other gods can defeat the stronger gods. They also believed that God dwells only in the holy land, especially in Jerusalem (Temple). As they were taken into captivity, they felt that they were in the profane land in which there is no God, in which they cannot even worship God (Ps. 137). For those who had such belief and faith, being defeated and having seen their holy city and temple utterly destroyed was a brutal blow.

Nevertheless, they retained their religious piety even in their exile. Their religious practices such as circumcision and Sabbath observance served as a source of unity. These two institutions became a token of the difference from the Babylonians. "Thus it was in the Exile that the Sabbath and circumcision won a *status confessionis*¹⁰ which they afterwards preserved for all time."¹¹

Israel's traditions were gathered and they began to reduce into writings. The Torah was made first, then the Deuteronomic history (Joshua-Kings) was edited, and the writings of the prophets were collected.¹²

Endnotes

- ¹ John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), 275, 330, 331.
- ² D. J. Wiseman and Edwin M Yamauchi, *Archaeology and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 50, quoted in Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Archaeological Backgrounds of the Exilic and Postexilic Era Part 1 : The Archaeological Background of Daniel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137, no. 545 (January-March 1980): 4.
- ³ Donald E. Gowan, *Bridge between the Testaments: A Reappraisal of Judaism from the Exile to the Birth of Christianity* (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1980), 13.
- ⁴ Bright, *A History of Israel*, 344; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 10:184.
- ⁵ Hugo Mantel, "The Dichotomy of Judaism During the Second Temple," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 44, (1973): 66.
- ⁶ Martin Noth, *The History of Israel* (London: Adam & Charles Black, [1958], 1960), 292, 296.
- ⁷ Ronald E. Murphy, "A History of Israel," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Ronald E. Murphy (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2002), 1237.
- ⁸ Mantel, "The Dichotomy of Judaism during the Second Temple," 67.

- ⁹ Mantel, "The Dichotomy of Judaism during the Second Temple," 68.
- ¹⁰ An exceptional commitment case.
- ¹¹ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd [1962], 1973), 79.
- ¹² Murphy, "A History of Israel," *NJBC*, 1237.

CHAPTER 2

Origin of the Synagogue

Different Assumptions on the Origin

Synagogue is a place of worship for the Jews. No sacrificial rites are performed. However, it plays a very important role in the religious life of the Jews. The origin of the synagogue is crucial enough as different opinions are held by various scholars.

1) Babylonian Exile

Some scholars envisioned that the need of worship was felt in the Babylonian exile. As there is a direct evidence of the institution of annual fast-days (Zech 7:3, 5; 8:19), it is believed that there should be a kind of worship, and if there was worship, it can be inferred that there were also leaders of the worship with reading from the prophetic books or Deuteronomy, or singing hymns etc. This made scholars think that synagogue was established in the time of exile.¹ Fohrer is bold enough to argue for and said that the religious school, later to become the synagogue replaced the temple at that time. In it people assembled for a simple form of worship that comprised prayer, hymns and a lecture.²

2) Post-exilic Origin

Another view about the origin is also held by some scholars. Emil Schürer believed the origin of the synagogue and the meetings on the Sabbath in buildings erected for the purpose is only in the post-exilic period. The first traces of them are found probably during the Maccabean era. The *main object* of these Sabbath day gatherings in the synagogue was not public worship in its stricter sense, i.e. not devotion, but religious instruction, and this, for an Israelite, was above all *instruction in the law*.³

As we mentioned above, it is an institution where non-sacrificial worship took place. The synagogue served the needs of Jewish people in the Diaspora who lived at some distance from the temple. But there were synagogues in the land as well, even in Jerusalem. Some sources use the Greek word *proseuche*, meaning 'prayer, place of prayer,' to designate Jewish places of worship. If these were synagogues, we have references to them beginning in the third century BCE in Egypt.⁴

The Office of Synagogue

A synagogue official should be nominated, who should have the care of external order in public worship and the supervision of the concerns of the synagogue in general. This was the ruler of the synagogue. Such *archi-synagôgoi* (*synagogue rulers/leaders*) are found not only in Palestine, but also in Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, and the Roman Empire.⁵ This *archi-synagôgoi* had nothing to do with the direction of the community in general. His office was that of specially caring for public worship. He was not as head of the community, but as conductor of their assembly for public worship. Among his functions is specially mentioned e.g. that of appointing who should read the Scriptures and the prayer, and summoning fit persons to preach. He had to take care that nothing unfitting should take place in the synagogue, and had also the charge of the synagogue building. There was generally one synagogue leader for each synagogue building.⁶

In every congregation at least ten unemployed men must be present. But in a large town, even on week days there were sufficient number of men in the synagogue. The building, in which the congregation assembled for public worship, was called *beth hakk^enêset* or in Greek *synagogê* or *proseuchê*.⁷

Synagogues were built by preference outside the towns and near rivers, or on the sea-shore for the sake of giving everyone a convenient opportunity for performing such Levitical purification as might be necessary before attending public worship. The size and architecture were of course very various. The large synagogue at Alexandria is said to have had the form of a Basilica. It is possible, that they were sometimes built like theatres, without a roof, but this is only really testified concerning those of the Samaritans.⁸

Structure of the Synagogue

The fittings of the synagogues were in New Testament times very simple. The chief was the *closet* in which were kept the rolls of the Law and the other sacred books. These were wrapped in linen cloths and lay in a

case (*thêkhê*). An elevated place (*bêma*), upon which stood the reading-desk, was erected, at least in post-Talmudic times, for him who read the Scriptures aloud or preached. Lastly trombones and trumpets were indispensable instruments in public worship. The former were blown especially on the first day of the year, the latter on the feast days.⁹

Importance of Synagogue for the Jews both in Egypt and Palestine

1) Centre for communal life

For the Jews in Egypt, especially in the Upper Egypt where there were no *poleis* on the Greek pattern, apart from Alexandria and Ptolemais,¹⁰ the synagogues took the place of the gymnasium as the centre of their communal life.¹¹ In Sardes in the second to fourth century CE, the great synagogue appears seemingly as an integral part of the city gymnasium and thus in practice formed a building complex with it.¹²

2) A school for children

Josephus said that the Jewish children were instructed in the law, and derived this from Moses.¹³ There were 480 synagogues in Jerusalem and each possessed two houses:¹⁴

a) A School house

This is a school house for biblical instruction. According to the tradition of Rabbi, the school age was set at 6-7 years of age as in the Greek elementary schools.

b) A Teaching house

The other house is a teaching house for instruction in the Mishnah. Synagogue and instruction in the law was closely connected. Non-Jews and even Samaritans were prohibited as teachers on principle. Pentateuch was mostly held pride of place in instruction.

3) Worship

We can never miss the importance of the synagogue for both the Palestinian and Diaspora Jews as it is not possible for all to go to the only temple in Jerusalem and worship there. That is why synagogue serves the Jews well especially towards worship.

Since synagogue played a vital role in the Jewish social and religious matter, both in Palestine and the Diaspora. There was at least one synagogue in every town of Palestine, and even in smaller places. In the post-Talmudic period it was required, that a synagogue should be built wherever ten Israelites were dwelling together. In the Pre-Talmudic age, this requirement cannot be literally shown to have existed. In the

larger towns there were a considerable number of synagogues, as e.g. in Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome.¹⁵

4) More Participation for the Congregation

We can also say that the congregation, as individuals, could have more participation in the synagogue in compare with the temple. For the reading of the scriptures, preaching and prayer, members of the congregation were free to perform.¹⁶ The chief parts of the service were, according to the Mishnah, the recitation of the Shema, prayer, the reading of the Torah, the reading of the prophets, the blessing of the Priest. On Sabbaths several members of the congregation, at the least seven, who were summoned for the purpose by some official, originally indeed by the ruler of the synagogue, took part in the reading. The reading of the scriptures was followed by a lecture or sermon, by which the portion which had been read was explained and applied. The preacher used to sit (Luke 4:20) on an elevated place. The service was closed with the blessing pronounced by a priestly member of the congregation, to which the whole congregation responded (Amen). If no priest were present, the blessing was not pronounced, but made into a prayer.¹⁷ In this way, synagogue gave more participation to the members.

Endnotes

- ¹ For detail information, see W. O. E. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson, *Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development* (London: SPCK, 1961), 286.
- ² Georg Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion* (London: SPCK, 1973), 311.
- ³ Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, vol. 1, second division (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 54.
- ⁴ James C. VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 211f.
- ⁵ Schürer, *Second Division*, vol. II, 62f.
- ⁶ Schürer, *Second Division*, vol. II, 65.
- ⁷ Schürer, *Second Division*, vol. II, 68-71.
- ⁸ Schürer, *Second Division*, vol. II, 68-71.
- ⁹ Schürer, *Second Division*, vol. II, 74f.
- ¹⁰ Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period*, vol. I (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1974), 244.
- ¹¹ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 38.
- ¹² Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 68.
- ¹³ Josephus, *War*, 4:211.
- ¹⁴ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 82.
- ¹⁵ Schürer, *Second Division*, vol. II, 73.
- ¹⁶ Schürer, *Second Division*, vol. II, 62.
- ¹⁷ Schürer, *Second Division*, vol. II, 76-83.

CHAPTER 3

The Conquest of Alexander the Great

Introduction

Although a Macedonian in origin, Alexander the Great was culturally a Greek. Son of King Philip II, Alexander was born in 356 BCE. His conquest over many empires was indeed his own achievement rather than his inherited kingdom. At the age of 13 he became a pupil of the great philosopher Aristotle, from whom he acquired the art of ruling, liberal arts, philosophy, metaphysics, ethics, politics, science and medicine.¹ After the death of his father in 336 BCE, Alexander took steps to consolidate his power. He then controlled the southern and the northern parts of Macedonia. After that, he continuously approached and conquered Persia (334-331 BCE), Phoenicia, Arvad, Byblos, Berytus, Sidon, Tyre, Palestine, Gaza and Egypt (332 BCE)² and ruled over them efficiently. Frankly speaking, he had such ability, nobility, ambition and zeal through his upbringing. His secrets for such triumphant victory can be dealt as follows.

His Methods for the Extension and Consolidation of His Empire

Some of the methods which Alexander applied in his campaign and to control over his subjects are:

- 1) He established Macedonian colonies and new Greek cities all over his great empire. The Greek people were also used for this spread of civilization.³ This policy was continued by his successors. Many emigrated from the overcrowded Greek peninsula, while disbanded Greek soldiers and adventurous Greek merchants were sent far afield to become natural carriers of Greek civilization. The Greek language became the lingua franca in the Hellenistic world.⁴
- 2) He used mixed marriages between Greeks and Iranians and the other Orientals. He arranged mass marriage between his troops

and the native people⁵ in order to bind these diverse cultures into one.⁶ He himself married Roxane, the daughter of Oxyartes, whom he had taken captive in Sogdiana.⁷

- 3) He was not hesitated in placing the Persian satraps⁸ and other officers of state in important posts in preference of his own Greeks and Macedonians.⁹
- 4) He did not estrange the culture of his defeated/conquered nation.¹⁰
- 5) He also followed the native way of administration if he considered applicable. By way of administration, Alexander took over the Persian system of a division into satrapies. He also founded Graeco-Macedonian *poleis* (cities) in many places which he used as garrison, which served as a strategic purpose.¹¹
- 6) He followed religious tolerance that pacified the natives.¹²
- 7) His father's preparation for the empire¹³ and his zeal to spread Hellenic culture, ideals and institutions¹⁴ also helped him a lot for his campaign and extension.

His Attitudes

1) Superiority Complex

Alexander the Great was convinced to the complete superiority of the Greek way of life.¹⁵

2) Heroic Ancestry

His claim of heroic ancestry seems to be the foremost factor for his heroic attitude. He claimed that his forefathers were old Greek heroes on both sides of his family. According to his claim, Hercules was the ancestor on his father's side, and Achilles was on his mother's side. This heroic ancestry claims for himself divine descent.¹⁶

3) His Temper

Though he was a careful schemer and a skilled general, he was swift in anger. He has no hesitation in eliminating men who he had ceased to trust, either with or without the pretence of a fair trial.¹⁷

His Universalist Outlook

One of the Alexander's specialities is his Universalist nature. He did the task of bringing together into one the civilizations of the east and the west on the basis of that Greek culture. Leaving national, political and cultural barriers he tried to build, feel and bind people of diverse customs

and traditions that they belong together within the 'inhabited world.'¹⁸ He dreamed of a single world-wide empire based on a unity of a language, custom and culture.¹⁹ Through his ideology, particularism was replaced by the idea of the *inhabited world*, the common possession of the civilized people. Trade and commerce were internationalized, and the inhabited world bound together by a network of new routes and cities and by a common interest.²⁰

Maneuvers (Strategy)

He was a military genius who inspired his troops with supreme confidence. He used military tactics in which his soldiers were offensive rather than defensive and that made easy for rapid movement and resulted his remarkable progress in his campaigns.²¹ Figures like Achilles, Heracles and Dionysus were often in his mind. He planned to achieve his goal by transforming the army into a battle force consisting of Persians and Macedonians, and he appointed both Macedonians and native aristocrats to administrative posts in the conquered territories.²²

Conclusion

Alexander the Great truly deserved to be given the epithet 'the Great' from his birth, strategic skill, maneuver, courage, confidence and zeal. His Universalist outlook and his way of bringing all traditions without discrimination seemed to be beneficial for his reign. But it was not supported by his officers and could not be actualized according to his dream. By the way, the process of Hellenization was accelerated according to his will throughout his vast empire. While there was no region which was not influenced by the Hellenic culture, yet it was also influenced by the rivaled cultures to some extent. Similarly, many native religions also suffered its impact.

Endnotes

- ¹ D. S. Russel, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 2.
- ² Russel, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, 2f.
- ³ Russel, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, 8.
- ⁴ This Greek language is more specifically, *koine*, a simplified form of Attic (ancient Greek city) Greek. Bo Reicke, *The New Testament Era: The World of the Bible from 500 B.C. To A.D. 100* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1964), 39.
- ⁵ Bright, *A History of Israel*, 416.
- ⁶ Persian princesses with considerable dowries were offered in marriage to his own chief officers, while a handsome gift awaited every soldier who

- married an Asiatic woman. He organized the great wedding in Susa, his chief generals, and presumably at least ten thousand other Macedonians married Persian wives. H. Jagersma, *A History of Israel from Alexander the Great to Bar Kochba* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1985), 12.
- ⁷ Russel, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, 8.
- ⁸ The governor of a province in ancient Persia.
- ⁹ Russel, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, 8.
- ¹⁰ On ceremonial occasions he wore Persian dress and introduced Persian customs into his court. In this way, his subjects could see him as their protector and friend, not only from his habits but also in his convictions. Russel, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, 8, 10.
- ¹¹ Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 12.
- ¹² Like the Persian kings who had gone before him, Alexander also followed a policy of religious tolerance. The change of ruling power which followed his arrival therefore led to hardly any change in the religious community in Jerusalem. Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 12.
- ¹³ His father had long been preparing and had accumulated resources for his campaign and extension of his empire.
- ¹⁴ He also seemed to have insatiable need for Hellenic civilization to expand. He had a strong enthusiasm and almost fanatical zeal to spread Hellenic culture, ideals and institutions over the rest of the world. G. H. Box, *Judaism in the Greek Period: From the Rise of Alexander the Great to the Intervention of Rome (333 to 63 B. C.)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, [1932], 1945), 3f.
- ¹⁵ Russel, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, 2.
- ¹⁶ Russel, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, 2.
- ¹⁷ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Alexander III the Great," vol. I, 472.
- ¹⁸ Box, *Judaism in the Greek Period*, 7.
- ¹⁹ Box, *Judaism in the Greek Period*, 10.
- ²⁰ Box, *Judaism in the Greek Period*, 10.
- ²¹ Russel, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, 2.
- ²² Russel, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, 11, 12. However, Alexander did not succeed in making the Persians and the Macedonians one people because the difference in historical traditions and cultural development between the two people was too great.

CHAPTER 4

The Origin and Development of Hellenism

Origin of Hellenism

Though the spreading of the Greek culture was already started, the period brought about by the conquest of the Ancient Near East by Alexander the Great (333-323 BCE) is referred to as the *Hellenistic Period* of time. According to archaeological discoveries, Greek culture had been widely known in western Asia before the time of Alexander, as early as the seventh century BCE. Greek mercenaries and traders entered Egypt, Syria and Palestine and then spread to farther east. But Alexander accelerated this process into full swing.¹

The term *Hellenization* is used in connection with the cultural movement after Alexander resulting that the then world was dominated by Greek language and civilizations.² The first scholar to use the term Hellenism was J. G. Droysen.³ He understood Hellenism to be a mixture of the world of Greece with that of the Orient.⁴ In its actual sense, the civilization of the Mediterranean basin and the Middle East until the time of the Roman Empire is called Hellenism.⁵ The word *hellenizein*⁶ primarily meant to 'speak Greek correctly,' and secondarily to 'adopt a Greek style of life.'⁷

The Rise and Diffusion of Hellenic Culture

After 8th century, the Greeks awoke and learned the advanced civilization of their Near-Eastern neighbours, among whom the Canaanites Phoenicians played the most important role. The Greek of Ionia and the Islands borrowed the Phoenician alphabet and adapted it to Hellenic use. From c. 776 BCE, national events began to be systematically recorded in writing and a century later arose Hesiod, the first Greek writer whose work and personality are at all tangible. While Thales was inaugurating Greek philosophical thought about 600 BCE art still

remained oriental and archaic in character. After 500 BCE, Greek culture burst progressively and Greece had far surpassed the artistic and literary products of the ancient Near East.⁸

In the 5th century, the Near East witnessed many great people like Hecataeus, Herodotus, Ctesias and Xenophon. It is of no offence to give Alexander the Great credit for the wide spread of Greek culture. The Macedonian colonies which he scattered over western Asia and Egypt became the centers of an exceedingly rapid process of Hellenization. As a result, the Phoenicians became so Hellenized in the following centuries that their cities rapidly became centers of Hellenization.⁹

Soon after Alexander's conquest of Egypt the cultural center of the Hellenistic world was shifted to Alexandria. Many non-Hellenistic natives of the Near East caught the Greek spirit and pursued historical, philosophical and scientific studies in Greek style. Among the earliest of them were Egyptian historian Manetho and the Babylonian Berossus.¹⁰

The Diadochi: Development of Hellenism

Building upon the foundation of Alexander's conquest, Hellenism gradually developed during the last centuries BCE. Alexander combined and expanded the then largest cultural settings, that is, the Persian Empire, Macedonia and Greece together with their colonies. Soon Hellenism itself was enriched by this enormous territorial expansion.¹¹ After the death of Alexander (323 BCE), all his legal heirs were murdered and his vast kingdom was divided, and the power came into the hands of the Diadochi (*successors*). The term *Diadochi* denotes his Generals who proportioned all his kingdoms. The Diadochi which finally stood after their war were: Ptolemy in Egypt,¹² Seleucus in Syria-Palestine and Antigonus in the European part of Alexander's former empire. Antigonus became the governor of Asia Minor and drove out Seleucus in 317 BCE to Egypt. Demetrius, son of Antigonus was killed by the two united force of Ptolemy and Seleucus, the Generals of Alexander the Great in Gaza in 1st October, 312 BCE. After this battle, Seleucus captured Babylon and the so-called Seleucids chronology began, forming the beginning of the so-called Seleucid dynasty.¹³ After the war between Antigonus and Seleucus and his ally Ptolemy in 301 at Ipsus (in Phrugia), Alexander's kingdom was divided into the hands of Seleucus and Ptolemy, in which Seleucus was assigned Syria and Palestine. But Palestine became a bone of contention between Ptolemies and Seleucids throughout the whole of the third century BCE.¹⁴

The Ptolemies

Ptolemy arrived in Egypt in 322 BCE and won his power there in 320 BCE through military means¹⁵ and formed the Ptolemaic dynasty. The dynasty of Ptolemy in Egypt came to be known as the Ptolemies. The Ptolemies felt themselves called to be apostles of Hellenism throughout their dominions, and encouraged the use of the Greek language and the adoption of Greek customs.¹⁶ Their chief means of propagating Hellenism was founding the Greek cities. The greatest was Alexandria in Egypt with the famous library and museum. Furthermore, his successors founded many such cities throughout Asia Minor, Palestine and the adjacent islands. Though Palestine was within the portion of the Seleucids, the Ptolemies captured and ruled it for more than a century (301-198 BCE) but came to an end in 198 BCE after Ptolemy V; resulting the Seleucids to rule over Palestine, using Antioch as their centre.¹⁷

The Seleucids

Seleucus, One of the successors and generals of Alexander, was assigned Syria and Palestine. The Seleucid dynasty lasted continuously from ca. 312-64 BCE. Their era began from 1st October, 312 BCE in Syria and on the New Year Day, 1 Nisan (3 April) 311 BCE in Babylon.¹⁸ The Seleucids also followed the same policy, sometimes taking over old-established cities and converting them to Greek standards. Within Palestine itself they were to be found particularly along the Mediterranean coast and in Transjordan. Such characteristic was found in the so-called Decapolis.¹⁹ Some thirty Greek cities were known within Palestine in the Hellenistic period.²⁰ Such cities are called Greek not in the sense that they were populated by the native Greeks, but rather in the sense that they were organized according to a Greek pattern.²¹

The cities always took the form of Hellenistic in structure with the works of Greek arts. Such Hellenistic influences were found throughout Asia Minor, Syria, Mesopotamia and western Iran, as far as the Persian Gulf, and also from Phoenicia through Transjordan and Philistia to Egypt and North Africa.²²

Hellenistic influences were probably less in the rural areas while the upper classes in cities were greatly affected. Similarly, the Greek language became popular among the urban people.²³ As the language of officers, notaries²⁴, orators and citizens, *koine* Greek temporarily replaced Aramaic in the Middle East; everywhere it became the common language of politics and government, commerce and instruction.²⁵

The Seleucids' rule over Syria came to an end and became a Roman province when Pompey defeated the last Seleucid king in 64 BCE.²⁶

Hellenistic Influence on Religions of that Time

Greek and Oriental ways and beliefs were brought into close contact. In this situation, some Greeks became completely absorb into the native setting while some natives in Greek. The Seleucid dynasty which ruled Syria and the surrounding area and much of Asia Minor built large temples to Greek gods and forcibly hasten to Hellenize them. However, Syria and Asia had long been open to Greek influences. Hellenization in religion was therefore made great progressive. The language of cult commonly became Greek. At Palmyra later the vernacular was used but the architecture was Graeco-Roman. New cult-legends were made bringing these worships into relation with Greek myth and history. The Ptolemies in Egypt controlled the priesthood and promoted Greek culture in Alexandria. The native priests commonly learned Greek and accepted equations of Egyptian with Greek deities, giving the names side by side in their calendars of festivals and in Greek forms of temple oaths.²⁷

Jews were also severely invaded by Hellenism.²⁸ The Hasmonean dynasty itself was Hellenistic (they employed foreign mercenaries, struck Greek coins, assumed Greek names like Aristobulus etc). Numerous Greek and Latin loan words in the Hebrew of the Mishnah also showed the influence of Hellenism in Palestine.²⁹ According to Josephus, Greek music was performed at festivals in Jerusalem and elsewhere.³⁰

The majority of scholars, even if they reject a direct dependence of *Kohleth* on Greek philosophy and literature, would admit that, "In ideas and mood the work has contacts with the spirit of Hellenism."³¹ The *Kohleth* as a counteraction against Hellenism will be dealt separately.

Hellenistic Influence on Cultures

The Greek culture immediately spread throughout the then world. Consequently, a new form of Greek, known as the *Koine*, the 'common speech' grew up.³² Alexander's triumph spearheaded the rapid growth of Hellenization, including western Asia and Egypt became the centers of an exceedingly rapid process of Hellenization. As a result, the Phoenicians became so Hellenized in the preceding centuries that their cities rapidly became foci of Hellenization.³³ In Jewish Palestine, the young Jew who wanted to raise a stage above the mass of the simple people had to learn it.³⁴

Soon after Alexander's conquest of Egypt the cultural centre of the Hellenistic world was shifted to Alexandria. Many non-Hellenistic natives

of the Near East caught the Greek spirit and pursued historical, philosophical and scientific studies in Greek style. Among the earliest of them were Egyptian historian Manetho and the Babylonian Berossus.³⁵

One of their main strategies in their expansion was building Greek cities and rebuilding the old cities in Greek standards. The gymnasium and the *ephebeion* (*Youth Centre*) were typical Greek institutions that were found in all Greek cities.³⁶

With a special reference to the Judean culture, the name of some clothing materials such as the *stola*, the *dalmatica*, the *paragaudion*, the sweat-rag etc (Lk. 19:20; Jn. 11:44; 20:7; Act. 19:12 etc) showed the influence of Greek. A raw material, for example, hemp came to Palestine through the Greeks.³⁷ Further that, Greek words are encountered even in the Mishnah.³⁸ The use of Greek and Latin personal names was also very frequent.³⁹ The whole monetary system of Palestine was in part Phoenician Hellenistic, and in part, Greek or Roman.⁴⁰

Endnotes

¹ Russel, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, 8.

² Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 10.

³ J. G. Droysen used and popularized the term *Hellenism* to denote the culture of the period from Alexander (356–323 BCE) to Augustus (Roman Imperial rule ca. 30 BCE). Reicke, *The New Testament Era*, 37.

⁴ Hans Dieter Betz, "Hellenism," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, [1997], 1992), 127.

⁵ Reicke, *The New Testament Era*, 37.

⁶ Bauer translated the root word ἕλλην as "a man of Greek language and culture. In the broader sense, it means all persons who came under the influence of Greek, i.e., pagan, culture. Walter Bauer, "ἕλλην," in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1979), 251.

⁷ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 58, 60.

⁸ William Foxwell Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, [1941], 1967), 335.

⁹ Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 338, 339. The Phoenician origin of the colony is established by the numerous Phoenician names which appeared in its tombs during the first two or three generations after its foundation. But it speedily became so Hellenized in language that all the tomb inscriptions of the second century BCE. are in Greek and there is even a neatly written interchange of Greek notes by a lover and his mistress on the wall of a tomb.

¹⁰ Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 339, 340. Berossus put the native chronicles and king-lists into Greek early in the third century BCE.

¹¹ Reicke, *The New Testament Era*, 37.

¹² Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 17.

- ¹³ Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 17.
- ¹⁴ Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 17.
- ¹⁵ Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 17.
- ¹⁶ Bruce Manning Metzger, *The New Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965), 19.
- ¹⁷ Metzger, *The New Testament*, 35.
- ¹⁸ John Whitehorne, "Seleucus," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992).
- ¹⁹ Russel, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, 24.
- ²⁰ Rapha, Gaza, Anthedon, Ascalon, Azotus, Jamnia, Joppa, Apollonia, Caesarea, Dora, Ptolemais, Damascus, Hippus Gadara, Abila, Raphana, Kanata, Kanatha, Scythopolis, Pella, Dium, Gerasa, Philadelphia, Samaria, Gaba, Hesbon, Antipatris Phasaelis, Caesarea Panias, Bethsaida, Sepphoris, Livias, Tiberias. Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, second division, vol. I, 64-148.
- ²¹ Russel, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, 25.
- ²² These modeled Greek *polis* market places and streets laid out in a grid pattern, government building, gymnasium, theatre and the like. All of these adorned with the works of Greek art. Reicke, *The New Testament Era*, 38.
- ²³ Gowan, *Bridge between the Testaments*, 71.
- ²⁴ Somebody who is legally authorized to certify the authenticity or legitimacy of signatures and documents.
- ²⁵ Reicke, *The New Testament Era*, 40.
- ²⁶ Reicke, *The New Testament Era*, 40.
- ²⁷ A. D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), 34-36.
- ²⁸ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 52. The Jewish religion was not properly incapacitated by Hellenism until the nation was defeated by Vespasian and Hadrian. In the mean time, Hellenism touched the nation in every branch of life. Even the Maccabaeen revolt was against pagan worship and not against Hellenism in general.
- ²⁹ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 53.
- ³⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15: 8, 1.
- ³¹ R. Kroeber, *Der Prediger, Schriften und Quellen der Alten Welt* (Berlin: np, 1963), 47 quoted by Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 116. According to Hengel, a man gathering riches and enjoy life was hardly possible in Palestine between 350-300 BCE. Besides, such harsh administration, which joined the rich oppressing the poor, and of the omnipresent power of the king fit best in the Ptolemaic period. Striving for riches are shown in: 4:8; 5:10ff; 18; 6:2; 7:1 etc. Ecclesiastes' doctrine of the cyclic recurrence of natural phenomena (1:5ff) is Stoic in nature, though it probably arose from still earlier sources. Besides, the effect of Ecclesiastes' teachings on the young would be definitely Epicurean, one of the two Greek influential schools of thought. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 352.
- ³² Box, *Judaism in the Greek Period*, 10.
- ³³ Box, *Judaism in the Greek Period*, 338, 339. The Phoenician origin of the colony is established by the numerous Phoenician names which appeared in its tombs during the first two or three generations after its foundation. But it speedily became so Hellenized in language that all the tomb inscriptions of the second century BCE. are in Greek and there is even a neatly written

- interchange of Greek notes by a lover and his mistress on the wall of a tomb.
- ³⁴ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 58, 60.
- ³⁵ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 339, 340. Berossus put the native chronicles and king-lists into Greek early in the third century BCE.
- ³⁶ Russel, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, 25.
- ³⁷ Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, vol. II (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers: 1988), 70, 71.
- ³⁸ Air is termed as *anêr*, a dwarf is termed as *nannos*, a law as *nomos* etc. Schürer, II, 73.
- ³⁹ High Priests called Jason, Menelaus (during Maccabean revolt), Boethus and Theophilus (during Herodian era), Hasmonean and Herodian princes like Alexander, Aristobulus, Antigonus, Agrippa, ordinary people such as Andrew and Philip of Jesus' disciples.
- ⁴⁰ B.V. Head, *Historia Numorum* (1911) quoted in Schürer II, 62.

CHAPTER 5

Septuagint

In its simplest term, Septuagint is the Greek version of the Old Testament, translated from the Hebrew Old Testament. It means ‘Seventy’ named after the number of the translators. It is also called LXX in its short form. The translations of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek were done in several stages, and the locations of translation were not known for sure. It is believed that the translation of the earliest parts (the Torah or the Pentateuch) took place in the 3rd century BCE in Egypt during the reign of Ptolemy II (285-247 BCE)¹ and the remaining parts were translated little by little into Greek² and was completed by around 100 BCE.³ Then the name ‘Septuagint’ is extended later to cover the other parts of the OT as well.⁴

Origin of Septuagint

It is likely that the Hebrew text was first translated orally in the synagogues, but that a written translation soon developed. It is also certain that the Jewish community outside Palestine urgently needed a Greek translation of the Law.⁵ Out of this context, the LXX appeared: first the Torah, then the rest too came up slowly. Several probable theories regarding the origin of the Septuagint are developed by scholars. Because of this, it is quite difficult to know what the most reliable theory about its origin is. There are some theories of its origin which is seen below:

1) Letter of Aristeas

This is a Jewish-Alexandrian manuscript written by an anonymous Jew, in the form of a letter. It appeared that it was written to his brother Philocrates by Aristeas, a Greek in the court of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–246 BCE).⁶ This letter depicts how King Ptolemy II Philadelphus collected if possible all the books in the world. His librarian, Demetrius

of Phalerum, said that the royal library was lacking a copy of the laws of the Jews. The king then sent a letter to Eleazar the High Priest in Jerusalem requesting six learned elders from each tribe to perform the translation. The High Priest agreed the request and sent 72 elders (six each from the twelve tribes). On the arrival of the translators in Egypt, they were received immediately by the king warmly. They completed the translation work in 72 days-precisely as many as the number of the translators.⁷ The translation is read to the Jews of Alexandria, who ratify it and pronounce curses on anyone who might change anything in it (*Ep. Arist.* 308–11), after which the king hears it read and is delighted, and he charges Demetrius to take good care of it (*Ep. Arist.* 312–17). The translators are sent back to Judea with gifts (*Ep. Arist.* 318–21).⁸

Among different suggestions about the date of the letter,⁹ Schürer's proposed date, not later than 200 BCE, seems to be most acceptable,¹⁰ because the writer of the letter claimed that he himself took part in discussion with the king.¹¹ However, Aristeas' claim about some chronology cannot be accepted as historical.¹²

Despite questions about dating and purpose, a broad consensus has emerged concerning the *Letter of Aristeas* on the following points. First, the events described in it relate only to the Pentateuch which was the first part of the Jewish scriptures to be translated into Greek. Second, the translation was an official undertaking supported by Jewish authorities possibly for synagogue and instructional use, and done in Egypt probably in the middle of the 3rd century or earlier. Third, the number of translators is not certain.¹³

One controversial thing is concerning the translators. D. S. Russel, basing on the same *Letter of Aristeas*, argued that the translation works were done not by a body of learned scribes or elders from Jerusalem who came to a common agreement about it, but by separate translators in Egypt itself,¹⁴ perhaps with scrolls from Jerusalem.¹⁵ In fact, we are not in a position to know the accurate fact about this. However, some points are well noted:

- 1) Egyptian Jews were rigorously influenced to the extent of needing their holy scripture into the dominant language, that is, Greek. They were not only influenced, but were becoming part of it.
- 2) They preserved Yahwism in the midst of Egyptian polytheism.
- 3) The Egyptian-Jews were warmly welcome by the Ptolemaic rulers.
- 4) Egypt maintained intimate relationship with Palestine.
- 5) The origin of Septuagint/LXX is interestingly told.

2) Kahle¹⁶

Using the analogy of Aramaic Targumim, Kahle suggested (first in 1915 and often thereafter) that the diversity of witnesses to the text of the Greek points to the fact that there was never one original translation but rather several designed to meet the needs of specific communities. He assumed that the Aristeas story is propaganda for an official revision of earlier translations, not a description of a new one. Kahle finds evidence for his position in the Aristeas text itself, section 30 of which he believed (contrary to most scholars) alludes to the existence of other translations in Greek not in Hebrew; in the differences in the Codex Alexandrinus and Codex Vaticanus of Judges; and in the existence of the different early papyri¹⁷ about the Pentateuch.¹⁸

3) Lagarde

Paul de Lagarde and the Göttingen School developed *Urtext* theory as it is sometimes called. This theory suggests that all manuscripts of LXX can ultimately be traced to one prototype (model). In order to achieve this, Lagarde theorized that one needed to reconstruct the original forms of each of the three main recensions of LXX—the Origenian,¹⁹ the Lucianic and the Hesychian²⁰—and from them to work back to the *Urtext*. No one, not even Lagarde himself, succeeded in the reconstruction of the *Urtext* conceived in this way.²¹

4) Tov

Tov identifies four stages in the development of the text of LXX:²²

- a) the original translation;
- b) a multitude of textual traditions resulting from the insertion of corrections (mainly toward the Hebrew) in all known individual scrolls;
- c) textual stabilization in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE; and
- d) the creation of new textual groups and the corruption of existing ones through the influence of the revisions of Origen and Lucian in the 3rd and 4th centuries CE.

Several modern scholars have seen the LXX translation as arising out of Jewish community needs other than liturgical-educational, apologetical, proselytizing, and so on. It has even been proposed that Greek Torah received the official sanction because it was a part of the judicial system of the Ptolemies intended to govern the activities of the Jews.²³

Importance of Septuagint

The importance of Septuagint is immense. Though it can be said that it is the outcome of the influence of Hellenization, yet it served its purpose well among the Jews everywhere. The following summaries are worth noting:

1) It Met the Linguistic Need of the Jews

It was thought that the translation of the LXX was originally undertaken for the benefit of the Jews of the dispersion (primarily that of Egypt).²⁴ The history of their lives indicated that the Jews in Ptolemaic Egypt gave up their Aramaic and Hebrew and adopted Greek language²⁵ and a Greek way of life relatively quickly in Egypt because of their occupations as they became military settlers, merchants, craftsmen, peasants or slaves.²⁶

They also had a new taste to introduce new ideology.²⁷ As a result, their original language was kept more or less inactive, although Nash Papyrus²⁸ showed that there were still Jews in Egypt who read Hebrew in the late second century BCE. However, since they still valued their scripture, it became necessary to translate the Torah into Greek within half a century (about 250 BCE).²⁹ An evidence of Greek papyri exposes that Hebrew and Greek slowly lost its value as spoken and literary language, especially in Alexandria. In the meantime, they enjoyed cultural and religious freedom. It is also believed that they still maintained their religiosity, as we mentioned above, that led them to produce a readable scripture.³⁰ That Greek version was improved into *koine Greek* for the common use in the synagogue.³¹ So, the LXX seemed to replace the Hebrew reading in the synagogue in Egypt.³² According to the Letter of Aristeas,³³ the LXX was translated during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (282–246 BCE) and became very popular throughout the Jewish history and Christianity. So, The LXX quickly became the Bible of Diaspora Jews.³⁴

2) Spread of Judaism throughout the Diaspora

Russel assumed that the LXX, though almost negligible, was one of the vehicles of Hellenization. But in its proper uses, it is an instrument for the propagation of Judaism throughout the dispersion.³⁵ According to Caragounis, the supposed reason for *Aristeas* was to describe the origin of the LXX translation, though in reality it was to promote the Jewish faith. He claimed that this letter was not written for Greek readers but for Jewish consumption outside Palestine, in particular Alexandria.³⁶

3) Palestinian Jews too Made Use of It

Although the direct influence of the Greek way of life was relatively quicker in Egypt than in Palestine because of their occupations yet this influence in turn have had an effect on Palestine through those who returned.³⁷ The Palestinian Jews suffered the full impact of Hellenism from all sides.³⁸ Under the reign of Herod, Jerusalem became even more of a Greek-speaking city-at least as far as the upper classes were concerned.³⁹ Because of this, LXX was commonly used. It constituted the set of sacred writings for early Christians and many if not most Jews, in Palestine, in the first century.⁴⁰

4) One of the Sources of the New Testament

We cannot bypass the fact that the NT authors use the Septuagint form of the OT. In other word, we can say that the LXX is the principal source from which the writers of the NT derived their OT quotations.” Recent research into Paul’s use of the OT confirms the importance of the Septuagint since he was a native Greek speaker and wrote to Greek-speaking audiences throughout the Greco-Roman Mediterranean world.⁴¹

Endnotes

- ¹ D. S. Russel, *Between the Testaments* (London: SCM Press Ltd., [1960], 1966), 15.
- ² Eduard Lohse, *The New Testament Environment* (London: SCM Press Ltd., [1976], 1980), 130.
- ³ W. O. E. Oesterley, *An Introduction to the Books of the Apocrypha* (London: SPCK, [1935], 1946), 6.
- ⁴ Russel, *Between the Testaments*, 15.
- ⁵ Lohse, *The New Testament Environment*, 129.
- ⁶ Avigdor (Victor) Tcherikover, “Aristeas, Letter of,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, ed. Fred Skolnik (Detroit and New York: Thomson Gale, 2007), 456.
- ⁷ Melvin K. H. Peters, “Septuagint,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1096.
- ⁸ C. C. Caragounis, “Aristeas, Epistle of,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 115.
- ⁹ In general, scholars assume 200–170 BCE (e.g., Schürer, Orlinsky, Tramontano, Pelletier, Jellicoe, Shutt), 150–100 BCE (e.g., Andrews, Bickermann, Kahle, Hadas, Würthwein) and the first century BCE (e.g., Wendland, Thackeray, Riessler). The internal evidence of *Aristeas* is not decisive. The first century CE may be dismissed as too improbable for such a letter to be written at a time when the LXX was well established. Caragounis, “Aristeas, Epistle of,” *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 116f. Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, vol. III, Second Division (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 309.

¹⁰ Verses 1-27.

¹¹ Aristeas’ claim that the translation of the LXX (only the Law) took place during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (282–246 BCE) while Demetrius of Phalerum (350?-283/2 BCE) was the librarian and the philosopher Menedemos of Eretria (339/8–265 BCE) was at the Alexandrian court, is not historical. Demetrius, who was invited to Egypt by Ptolemy Soter in 297 BCE, was the founder of the museum and in all probability of the library but he never served as librarian, especially under Philadelphus. Instead, he was banished by Philadelphus at the death of his father, Soter, for having advised against his succession to the throne, and shortly thereafter he died. The first librarian was Zenodotos, who held his office in 285-270 BCE and he was succeeded by Apollonios Rhodios (270–245 BCE). Because of this, although Aristeas was more or less our source, yet all his arguments could not be taken as a historical fact. Caragounis, “Aristeas, Epistle of,” *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 115.

¹² Peters, “Septuagint,” *ABD*, vol. 5, 1096.

¹³ Russel, *From Early Judaism to Early Church*, 19.

¹⁴ Russel, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, 20.

¹⁵ Paul Kahle, *The Cairo Genizah* (London, 1947), cited in Peters, “Septuagint,” *ABD*, vol. 5, 1096f.

¹⁶ For instances papyri 957 (about 20 verses from Deut 23–38 dated-early 2nd BCE); papyri 941 (fragments from Gen 7 and 38-dated-Late 1st BCE); papyri 847 (parts of Deut 11 and 31–33-dated-early 1st CE), etc. Cf. Peters, “Septuagint,” *ABD*, vol. 5, 1097.

¹⁷ Peters, “Septuagint,” *ABD*, vol. 5, 1097.

¹⁸ This recension of the LXX is called Origen’s Hexapla. Origen was a native of Egypt and a Christian. The Hexapla, a massive six-columned work estimated to have been about 6,500 pages long, was completed between 230 and 240 CE. Origen’s chief purpose was to equip Christians for their discussions with Jews, who frequently appealed to the original Hebrew. To this end he arranged in parallel columns the following texts: (1) the Hebrew of his day; (2) the Hebrew text transliterated into Greek; (3) Aquila; (4) Symmachus; (5) LXX, and (6) Theodotion. For detail, see Peters, “Septuagint,” *ABD*, vol. 5, 1098.

¹⁹ While the Hexapla was copied in Caesarea for use in Palestine, two other revisions were in circulation. So Jerome informs said that one for use in Egypt and the other in Antioch. These recensions are identified with Hesychius and Lucian respectively. So little is known for sure about the Hesychian recension that it can only be mentioned in passing. In recent times it is argued that the codex Vaticanus text reflects this recension. Peters, “Septuagint,” *ABD*, vol. 5, 1099.

²⁰ Peters, “Septuagint,” *ABD*, vol. 5, 1097.

²¹ Peters, “Septuagint,” *ABD*, vol. 5, 1097.

²² Peters, “Septuagint,” *ABD*, vol. 5, 1097.

²³ Oesterley, *An Introduction to the Books of the Apocrypha*, 6.

²⁴ Martin Hengel, *Jews, Greeks and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the Pre-Christian Period* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1980), 93.

²⁵ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 37f., 248.

²⁶ New concepts such as the immortal soul and new ways of understanding the Jewish existence (the equating of Greek philosophy with Hebrew wisdom,

for instance, Philo of Alexandria) were introduced among the Jews. The effects of such influences are to be found in those books of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha which were composed in Greek (e.g. Philo of Alexandria). Gowan, *Bridge between the Testaments*, 158.

- ²⁷ The Nash Papyrus is a 2d-century-BCE papyrus allegedly from the Fayyum region of Egypt.
- ²⁸ Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 350.
- ²⁹ Peder Borgen, "Judaism: Judaism in Egypt," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1063f.
- ³⁰ cf. Ralph W. Klein, *Textual Criticism of the Old Testament from the Septuagint to Qumran* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 1.
- ³¹ Russel, *Between the Testaments*, 15.
- ³² This is a letter which is addressed by Aristeas to a certain person, Philocrates, describing about the translation of the Pentateuch into Greek. So, it became one of the principal sources of information about the origin of the Septuagint. The two individuals-Aristeas and Philocrates are not known to the history. Aristeas was an official of King Ptolemy II Philadelphus, and was held in high esteem by that king. Philocrates was his brother. According to Schürer, both of them were not Jews. Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, second division, vol. III (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 306f. In the meantime, R. James H. Shutt assumed that Aristeas was a Jew and he presumed that he was living in Alexandria. R. James H. Shutt, "Aristeas, Letter Of," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 381. So, it is quite difficult to affirm the nationality of Aristeas and his brother.
- ³³ Philo builds his exegesis on the Greek text of the LXX, and commented that the LXX is an exact and inspired translation of the Hebrew original. Cf. Peder Borgen, "Philo of Alexandria," *ABD*, vol. 5, 336.
- ³⁴ Russel, *Between the Testaments*, 16.
- ³⁵ Caragounis, "Aristeas, Epistle of," *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 117.
- ³⁶ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 37f., 248.
- ³⁷ To the south-west lay Egypt, the most powerful advocate of the Greek way of life; to the south lay Idumaea, whose painted tombs in Marissa, dating from the second half of the their century BCE., show ample evidence of Hellenistic culture; to the east and south-east lay Nabataea, in close contact with Egypt through commerce and trade; to the north lay Samaria with its garrison of Macedonian troops; and to the west and north-west lay Philistia and Phoenicia, with their Greek cities dotting the coastal plain.
- ³⁸ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 116.
- ³⁹ S. E. Porter, "Septuagint/Greek Old Testament," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Daniel G. Reid, Craig A. Evans, and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 1104.
- ⁴⁰ Porter, "Septuagint/Greek Old Testament," *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 1104.

CHAPTER 6

Jewish Reaction against the Hellenism

While many Jews were attracted to the Greek culture, there were others in Jerusalem who refused to accept this. Such reaction against Hellenism is discussed here though briefly. The severe most counterattack against Hellenization, that is the Maccabean Revolt, is dealt at length. The reaction sometimes appeared as a defensive force. Some of the outstanding reactions are as under:

- 1) One of the outstanding reactions against Hellenism was done by Joshua ben Sira who wrote his great book called "Ecclesiasticus" (also called *Koheleth*) in the apocrypha, around the year 180 BCE.¹
- 2) As a counter-movement to the gymnasium education and its development, a kind of movement of Scribe, who had long been associated with the temple, came up, and their main aim was the instruction of the whole people in the Torah. The culmination of this centuries-long development was the Rabbinite in the second century CE.²
- 3) The core resistance to the royal policy was formed by a group known as the Hasidim (the pious ones), from whom it probably both Pharisees and Essenes were descended.³ They took a firm stand against Hellenism and played a vital part in the religious and national life of the Jewish people.⁴ They opposed the introduction of the Greek language and all that this brought about. They protested against the Jews who wore the broad-brimmed hat which was part of the uniform of the *ephebes*,⁵ because the god Hermes was pictured wearing one. They severely opposed the erection of a gymnasium in Jerusalem, with the adjoining race track.⁶ At the later stage they withdrew themselves from the Maccabeans, but their joint resistance with them gave the inspiration for the resistant group.⁷

The Jews who had adopted foreign customs were traitors in the eyes of the Hasideans or Hasidim.⁸ When the Conservative Jews saw the young Jews doing surgery because of their circumcision in order to enjoy participation in the gymnasium, they were shocked and regarded them as apostate because Greek sports were not merely sports, but inseparable from the cult of Heracles (Roman name for Hercules) or Hermes.⁹

- 4) The Essenes also vigorously rejected gentiles and Hellenistic civilization.¹⁰
- 5) Among different games introduced by the Greeks in Palestine, *dice* (*kubeia*) was severely renounced by the stricter Jews.¹¹ In fact, theatre and amphitheatre were designated foreign to the Jewish customs.¹²
- 6) The main counter reformation against Hellenism was taken up by the Maccabees, leading to the Maccabean Revolt.¹³ Since this revolt is one of the most important landmarks in the history of Israel, we will discuss this in a separate chapter.

Endnotes

- ¹ In fact, Ben Sira was also influenced by the spirit of the age in which he lived, but refused to yield to the attractions of Hellenism. In his book, he sets himself the task of educating Jewish youths in the tenets of the Hebrew wisdom which is to be found in the fear of the Lord, and finds expression in manners and morality. Russel, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod*, 29.
- ² Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 103.
- ³ Bright, *A History of Israel*, 423.
- ⁴ Russel, *The Jews from Alexander*, 29. Also see Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 175f.
- ⁵ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 73.
- ⁶ Metzger, *The New Testament, Its Background, Growth and Content*, 19.
- ⁷ Russel, *The Jews from Alexander*, 45.
- ⁸ Metzger, *The New Testament, Its Background, Growth and Content*, 19.
- ⁹ Bright, *A History of Israel*, 420.
- ¹⁰ Hengel, *Jews, Greeks and Barbarians*, 124.
- ¹¹ Schürer, I, 36.
- ¹² Josephus, *Antiquities* 15:8:1.
- ¹³ Josephus, *Antiquities* 15:16, 67.

CHAPTER 7

The Maccabean Revolt

Introduction

The later part of the Seleucid dynasty and the Jewish struggle against them was quite interesting and important in the history of Israel religiously and politically. Between the strong exploitation and domination of the Hellenistic culture and religion, many Jews were, too, attracted to it. Several effects were witnessed in the life of the Jews which we already studied in the previous chapters. The severe-most imposition on Hellenism upon the Jews happened during the reign of Antiochus IV. This caused the rise of the Hasmonean family and religious reformation took place. After being under the foreign control for a long period of time, the Hasmonean dynasty came up and tasted the self-government once again.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BCE) was the younger son of Antiochus III. His plan was to use common culture of Hellenism to unify the diversity of the Seleucid Empire. In 167 BCE, Apollonius, his chief tax collector with 22,000 men attacked Jerusalem on Sabbath. Most of the male population was killed and the women and children were enslaved. The city walls were also destroyed. They prohibited all Jewish rites and Olympian Zeus worship was offered. A monthly check was made in which, everyone found with a copy of the Book of the Law or a child who was circumcised was put to death. In December 167 (25 Kislev), the first pagan sacrifice was performed on the altar to Zeus which had been erected over the altar of burnt offering in the temple.¹ The Jews were compelled to keep the Dionysiac festival, crowned with ivy, marching in procession as devotees of Bacchus.²

Antiochus IV issued a decree in 167 BCE (1 Macc. 1:54) within his whole kingdom that all should be one people and that all should give up

their particular customs. He too sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah and imposed to follow customs that is strange to the land, to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane Sabbaths and festivals, to defile the sanctuary and the priests, to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals, and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, 1 Maccabees 1:41-48. The sanctuary was renamed the temple of Olympian Zeus, prostitution was practiced there, animals unfit for sacrifice were also offered and the Jews, during the monthly celebration of the king's birthday, were forced to eat the impure sacrifices. They were also made to participate in a festival of the Greek god Dionysus.³

Scholars assumed that Antiochus IV did not aim to suppress the worship of Yahweh and to substitute for it the cult of another god, but only to bring the God of the Jews into identification with the high god of the Grecian pantheon and to make the Jewish religion a vehicle of the national policy. John Bright believed that most of his subjects would have complied with such a thing without objection and liberal Jewish leaders had been found who were willing to do the same.⁴ As this policy offended their monotheistic belief, the Jews could not tolerate it and it became the harshest and apex of Hellenization, causing the Jews roused against the authorities in whatever way possible.

Women who had circumcised their children were put to death with their families (1 Macc. 1:60f; 2 Macc. 6:10). Groups who sought to keep the Sabbath secretly were cut down by the soldiers when they refused either to accede to the king's demands or to defend themselves on that holy day (1 Macc. 2:29-38; 2 Macc. 6:11) many were put to death for refusing to touch unclean food (1 Macc. 1:62f.).

In fighting against this religious oppression and defilement, a priestly family, under the leadership of Mattathias rose up and declared war against the Seleucid ruler. This revolution is called the Maccabean Revolt. Mattathias and his family were later known as the Hasmonean family.

The Revolt

A family of high priests and kings descended from Mattathias,⁵ the father of Judas Maccabeus is called the Hasmonean family. They were prominent in Judea from 165 until 37 BCE and controlled it as rulers between 142 BCE and 63 BCE. The name Hasmonean is derived from that of the great-grandfather of Mattathias *Hasmon*⁶ or *Asamônaios*.⁷

They regarded themselves as the successors of the great leaders of the past—the judges and the kings of First Temple times.⁸ The family belonged to the priestly course of Joarib (= Jehoiarib, 1 Chr 24:7; Joiarib, Neh 11:10), originated in Jerusalem, but had settled before the time of Mattathias in Modein, near Lydda (1 Macc. 2:1).⁹ The revolt led by the Hasmonean family is called the Maccabean Revolt. The name Maccabees is derived from the son of the priest Mattathias, Judas whose surname is 'ho Makkabaios' from which the whole party has received the name of Maccabees. It seemed to be derived from Heb. *Maccabah* which means 'the hammer,' ascribed to, who became the leader of the revolt. This family was also known as the 'Hasmonaeans,' derived from *Hasmon*, their putative ancestor.¹⁰

The Rise of the Hasmonean Dynasty

The reaction against the anti-Jewish decrees of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167 BCE led to the rise of the Hasmonean family at Modein.¹¹ The Maccabean Revolt began not in Jerusalem, but from the country, in Modein, the home town of Mattathias.¹² Mattathias refused to obey Antiochus IV Epiphanes' commandment to offer sacrifice, and he killed the king's representative,¹³ and that chased him to flee into the hills with his five sons,¹⁴ along with other fugitives. Actually this revolt was started in 167 BCE and lasted three years.¹⁵

After the death of Mattathias, his son Judas became the leader of the rebels. The death-bed instructions ascribed to Mattathias have him declare Judas to be the people's commander who would fight their battles for them; and another son, Simon, was to act as adviser. In fact, it is obvious that Judas' overall responsibility for the nation took on both military and political aspects (1 Macc. 3:55). And after 164 BCE he organized the priests to serve in the rededicated temple service.¹⁶

Victory

He defeated the army of Antiochus IV led by Apollonius, and Apollonius was killed. Seron, the commander of the Syrian army (I Macc. 3:13) was also severely defeated by the Maccabees. Lysias, Chancellor of Antiochus IV sent three Syrian generals to Judaea. However, Judas defeated them near Emmaus. Immediately after that, Lysias himself went to Judaea with an army and encountered the Maccabees. Some sources say that Lysias was also defeated.¹⁷ But II Macc. 11 rather says that Maccabees and Lysias were negotiated because Lysias was compelled to return to Antioch because of the serious illness of Antiochus IV.

After the three years of revolt, Judas conquered Jerusalem and restored the service of divine worship. Every impure thing was carried out from the Temple. The altar of burnt-offering, which was defiled by heathen sacrifices, was wholly taken down and a new one was built in its place. The sacred garments and furniture was replaced by new ones. When everything was ready, the Temple was consecrated anew with the celebration of a great feast.¹⁸ After those events, the purification and rededication of the temple took place on 25 Kislev (about 15 December) 164 BCE, or Seleucid year 148,¹⁹ exactly on the same day (25th Kislev),²⁰ after it had been defiled by the sacrifice of swine flesh by Antiochus IV. The feast of Hanukkah is still celebrated annually to commemorate the rededication of the temple²¹ and reinstatement of sacrificial rites.²²

The Maccabean success has some reasons such as:²³

- 1) There were only few Seleucid troops in the country.
- 2) The supporters of Hellenism underestimated the Maccabean movement.
- 3) The Hassideans/Hassidim supported the Maccabean revolt.

The Aftermath

The successor of Antiochus IV, Antiochus V Eupator (164-161 BCE) came to Antioch and offered honourable and acceptable terms of peace to Judas Maccabeaus. He was guaranteed complete freedom of conscience and worship. Judas had no choice than to accept. The aim of the rebellion seemed to have been achieved.²⁴ He also granted an amnesty to all rebels who returned home and permitted the Judeans to live according to their Mosaic Law.²⁵ Meanwhile, Menelaus was killed on the orders of Antiochus and his general Lysias. So, the high priesthood remained vacant.²⁶

Demetrius came up as the contender of the throne. He was the son of Seleucus IV, (brother of Antiochus IV Epiphanes), and he killed Lysias and Antiochus V and crowned himself as Demetrius I Soter (161-150 BCE). Alcimus was appointed the high priest during his reign. The new high priest came to Jerusalem with a Syrian army under the command of general Bacchides. This situation led to a division among the Hasideans. It was thought that the essential aim of the rebellion, the re-establishment of religious liberty had been achieved. So, they could not understand why Alcimus had come with an army. Demetrius' army and Judas' army fought again and the Israel was heavily defeated in the battle of Elasa and Judas himself was dead in this battle.²⁷

After the death Judas, the survivors put the youngest, Jonathan in

place of him. Jonathan, though tried and tested in war, was an instinctive politician just as Judas had been a natural general.²⁸

The Syrian general Bacchides came to terms with Jonathan in around 155 BCE. This probably amounts to recognition by the Seleucid monarch Demetrius I of a local fiefdom.²⁹ In 153 BCE, a war broke out between Demetrius I and Alexander Balas (150-145 BCE).³⁰ Jonathan had fully utilized that opportunities to enhance his own position; the continuing rivalries among the Seleucids led them to compete with one another in offering privileges to Jonathan. Demetrius I authorized Jonathan to raise a proper army. Then Jonathan was able to occupy and fortify Jerusalem in 152, though the Akra was still in the hands of Hellenizers and Seleucids.³¹ Alexander Balas defeated Demetrius and Jonathan was given more opportunity. He combined both the civil and religious power in his own person.³² He was then appointed the provincial governor (*meridarch*).³³ Jonathan was more blessed by Demetrius II Nicator (145-138, 129-125 BCE), son of Demetrius I who succeeded Alexander Balas. He gave Jonathan three districts of Samaria whose population had remained faithful to Jerusalem and had not gone over to the Samaritans.³⁴

The Political Affairs of the Hasmonean Dynasty

1) Simon (142-134 BCE)

The history of the Hasmoneans as a dynasty in an independent Jewish state may be said to begin from the time of Simon, although the shadow of the Seleucid regime was always present.³⁵ In the year 142, "The yoke of the gentiles was taken away from Israel. And the people began to write on their records and their contracts, 'in the first year of Simon, the great high priest, general, and leader of the Jews.'"³⁶ In the next year (141 BCE) he expelled the foreign troops from the citadel in Jerusalem, thus removing the heart of the Seleucid presence from the capital.³⁷ Demetrius II, due to his rival Trypho (Diodotos Trypho, the general of Antiochus, son of Alexander Balas who was the pretender of the throne against Demetrius II), offered peace, exemption from tribute, and remission of taxes or of tax arrears. Simon's high priesthood was implicitly recognized by Demetrius; it may or may not have been a Seleucid grant in the first place. The freedom from tribute, in any case, now marked the autonomous status of Judea.³⁸

The year 140 saw another great moment: the assembled people declared Simon high priest, commander and *ethnarch*—head of the nation—of the Jews, "forever, until a trustworthy prophet shall arise" (1 Macc. 14:41). The amalgam of powers was not new, but the change lay

in the manner of their conferment; they were now internally sanctioned, and external approval was not deemed necessary.³⁹

Simon's powers were quite monarchic for he wore the purple robe and gold clasp, even though the title king was avoided. His orders were not to be opposed, assemblies were not to be convened without his consent, all on pain of punishment if disobeyed; the unanimity of the popular decision was emphasized. From the declaration inscribed in bronze, the people of Jerusalem were seemed to be highly influenced by the Hellenism just as a Greek city might do. The new Jewish state was thus visibly Hellenistic in at least some of its public forms. The rulers were also affected by this spirit.⁴⁰

Simon's death in 134 BCE indicated the end of a remarkable set of brothers who led their own troops and eventually the nation for more than thirty years. They transformed Judea from a temple state to a semi-independent nation and greatly extended its holdings and military power.⁴¹ The remainder of the story about the Maccabean or Hasmonean family comes from Josephus, primarily from his *Antiquities of the Jews*.

2) John Hyrcanus (134-104 BCE)

While some scholars said that the true Hasmonean dynasty began from Simon, but others such as J. Alberto Soggin assumed that it was from John Hyrcanus (134-104 BCE) that the real dynasty began.⁴² John Hyrcanus, Simon's third son, who had already been governor of the important fortified town of Gezer, assumed the high priesthood on his father's death. This suggests that the latter post was designated as hereditary by the "forever" of Simon's investiture decree.⁴³ He continued his father's conquests without delay. He quickly took Medaba, a fortified city in Transjordan. In 128 BCE,⁴⁴ he attacked Shechem and destroyed the temple of Mount Gerizim. He forcefully converted the Idumeans and compelled them to be circumcised. This cruel treatment of Samaria provoked a reaction on the part of those faithful to the Law. Originally the Hasidim supported the Maccabean brothers in the battle against Hellenism; but they soon realized that the policies of the Hasmoneans were taking a Hellenistic turn. This too resented the Pharisees against Hyrcanus although he was the supporter of the Pharisees.⁴

He was originally a disciple of the Pharisees, but later went over to the Sadducees probably because the Pharisees, ethically more rigorous and criticized the concentration of civil and religious power in the hand of the same person, and also his tyrannical attitudes and said that he was a Hellenistic ruler, not a Jewish priest.⁴⁶

John is described as the nation's secular authority as well as the high priest; and his regime is named an *arche*, or "rule." Under John too we see an independent coinage, although limited to bronze; it is now established that these are the first coins to be minted by any Hasmonean. Hyrcanus' coins carry two types of formulas, both written in an archaizing paleo-Hebrew script which visibly evoked the days of the First Temple. One group has "Johanan the high priest and the council (or community, Heb *heber*) of the Jews" and another group has "Johanan the high priest head of the *heber* of the Jews."⁴⁷

3) Aristobulus I (104-105 BCE)

Aristobulus succeeded John Hyrcanus. He was such a supporter of Hellenism that he changed his original name, Judas into Aristobulus that did not even have the same assonance.⁴⁸ So Josephus called him *Philhellene* (a lover of the Greeks).⁴⁹ According to Josephus, he changed the form of the national government to that of a kingdom and took the title of king, the first of the Hasmoneans to do so.⁵⁰ The most important event of his reign for religious and political history was his conquest of Galilee. He conquered Iturea and forced its inhabitants to be circumcised and live in harmony with Jewish law.⁵¹ Ever since the fall of Israel in 722 BCE, the Galilee had remained under foreign control with Aramaic population. With the help of Cleopatra III (the Red), Aristobulus succeeded this territory for the Jews. Although the larger cities remained Hellenistic, the general population kept the Jewish laws that Aristobulus had forced upon them.⁵²

4) Alexander Jannaeus (104-76 BCE)

Alexander Jannaeus, too, was hostile to the Pharisees. He had his reason for this. One year, at the festival of tabernacle, as he stood beside the altar (as he was the high priest) preparing to sacrifice, the people pelted him with fruit. Furthermore, they insulted him by saying the he was descended from captives and was unfit to hold office and to sacrifice.⁵³ He crucified eight hundred of them and their families killed before their eyes. This was the first that such punishment was carried out by Jew to other Jews.⁵⁴ The political style of the later Hasmoneans acquired, in due course, further Hellenistic traits. Jannaeus called himself king, as well as high priest, which is not supported by Jewish tradition; and he feasted in public with his concubines in a manner perhaps not totally alien to David and Solomon, but quite unacceptable in the Jewish high priesthood.⁵⁵

Jannaeus was the next after Hyrcanus to issue a major coinage. He

was less conservative, using Greek and Aramaic as well as Hebrew, and, on some types, openly advertising his kingship, either in words or with the star and diadem symbols. On his Hebrew coins, he gave his Hebrew name, Jonathan, rather than Alexander; and there were others on which he employed Hyrcanus' form of legend, referring only to the high priesthood and to the Jewish *heber* (community). He stuck coins, which bore "Jonathan the high priest and the *heber* of the Jews."⁵⁶

The Decline and End of the Hasmonean Dynasty

Alexander Jannaeus was succeeded by his widow Alexandra Salome (76-67 BCE). Before he died, Alexander proposed that he should make peace with the Pharisees.⁵⁷ This he did and Josephus says that on his death they mourned him as a just king.⁵⁸ Alexander Jannaeus left two sons, John Hyrcanus II, the older and Aristobulus, skilful and enterprising.⁵⁹ Following the advice of Jannaeus, Alexandra appointed Hyrcanus the high priest and allowed the Pharisees to do as they liked in all matters, and also commanded the people to obey them. The Pharisees did take control and also executed many of those responsible for the deaths of the eight hundred in Jannaeus' time. This caused a deep rift in society and created a forum for Aristobulus to speak against his mother publicly.⁶⁰ On the death of Alexandra, when Hyrcanus came to the throne, Aristobulus had no difficulty in making his incompetent brother give up his throne after only reigning for three months. He thus became king as Aristobulus II (67-63 BCE).⁶¹

Very soon after Aristobulus' reign, which from the outside seemed very solid, he was disturbed by a serious conflict: Antipater, the skilful governor of Idumaea, rebelled, aided by the Nabataeans of southern Transjordan. He promised them that the territory taken from them by Alexander Jannaeus would be restored. He tried to enlist Hyrcanus in his cause, inciting him among other things to revoke his abdication. He persuaded Hyrcanus for this and gained some military success and laid siege to Jerusalem. However, underlying the conflict there was also the contention between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: the Pharisees were supporters of Hyrcanus and the Sadducees of Aristobulus. However, Hyrcanus appealed directly to Pompey, who had arrived in Damascus in 63 BCE. At the same time, a delegation also arrived from Jerusalem, which asked the Romans to put an end to the rule of the corrupt and incompetent Hasmoneans. The delegation proposed a hierocratic solution: politically the country would be under the sovereignty of Rome, but internally it would be governed by the temple priesthood.⁶²

Pompey favoured Aristobulus; but Aristobulus left him, taking refuge

in his own fortress; then he, too, sought peace. He obtained peace, but on harsh conditions: he had to hand over his fortresses and the capital to Rome. He refused to hand over the capital and it was besieged; it fell after three months, in 63 BCE. The Romans penetrated the temple and Pompey himself entered the Holy of Holies.⁶³

John Hyrcanus II was nominated high priest and *ethnarch*. The title of king was dropped. Aristobulus had to follow Pompey's triumph to Rome. From then on, in fact, the country was under the sovereignty of Rome, though it was often governed by rulers who thought themselves to be more or less independent.⁶⁴

The Parthian army invaded Rome's East provinces in 40 BCE which brought a Parthian army into Jerusalem. Hyrcanus II was taken prisoner and had his ear mutilated to disqualify him from the high priesthood, while Herod fled to Rome. Mattathias Antigonus, son of Aristobulus II, was installed as king; and the Hasmonean dynasty was for a brief moment revived (40-37 BCE). He issued coins with Greek on the reverse and Hebrew on the obverse, styling himself, in Greek, King Antigonus, and, in Hebrew, Mattathias the high priest. In 37 BCE Jerusalem fell to Herod together with Sossius, the Roman general; and Antigonus was beheaded at Antioch on the orders of Emperor Antony.⁶⁵ The Hasmonean family disappeared totally in the year 7 BCE.⁶⁶

Endnotes

- ¹ Josephus, *Antiquities* 15:16, 67.
- ² Schürer, I, 208.
- ³ cf. VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 20.
- ⁴ Bright, *A History of Israel*, 423.
- ⁵ Martin Hengel asserted that Mattathias descended from the lower priesthood, cf. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 178
- ⁶ Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 58.
- ⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 12:265.
- ⁸ Hershel Shanks, ed. *Ancient Israel: A Short History from Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple* (London: SPCK, 1988), 188.
- ⁹ Tessa Rajak, "Hasmonean Dynasty," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 68.
- ¹⁰ Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 58.
- ¹¹ Rajak, "Hasmonean Dynasty," *ABD*, vol. 3, 68.
- ¹² Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 58.
- ¹³ According to 1 Maccabees 2:19-28, Mattathias proclaimed that even if all the nations obey the king's commandments, and even if everyone abandoned the religion of their ancestors, he and his sons and his brothers will continue to live by the covenant of their ancestors. He will not obey the king's words by turning aside from their religion to the right hand or to the left. When he had finished speaking those words, a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer

sacrifice on the altar in Modein, according to the king's command. When Mattathias saw it, he burned with zeal and his heart was stirred. He ran and killed him on the altar. At the same time he killed the king's officer who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar. Then Mattathias cried out in the town with a loud voice, saying: "Let everyone who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me!" Then he and his sons fled to the hills and left all that they had in the town.

- ¹⁴ John, Simon, Eleazar, Judas and Jonathan.
¹⁵ Bright, *A History of Israel*, 422, 427.
¹⁶ Rajak, "Hasmonean Dynasty," *ABD*, vol. 3, 68.
¹⁷ I Macc. 4:34f; II Macc. 1:1; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 12.
¹⁸ cf. Schürer, I, 217.
¹⁹ Schürer, I, 217. Jagersma suggested 162 BCE. Cf. Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 61.
²⁰ Schürer, I, 217.
²¹ Metzger, *The New Testament, Its Background, Growth and Content*, 21.
²² Shanks, *Ancient Israel*, 184.
²³ I Macc 4:34f; II Macc 1:1; Josephus, *Antiquities* 12. But II Macc. 11 rather says that Maccabees and Lysias were negotiated because Lysias was compelled to return to Antioch because of the serious illness of Antiochus IV. Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 60.
²⁴ J. Alberto Soggin, *A History of Israel: From the Beginnings to the Bar Kochba Revolt, AD 135* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1985), 304.
²⁵ Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 60, 61.
²⁶ Soggin, *A History of Israel*, 304.
²⁷ Soggin, *A History of Israel*, 305f.
²⁸ Rajak, "Hasmonean Dynasty," *ABD*, vol. 3, 68.
²⁹ Rajak, "Hasmonean Dynasty," *ABD*, vol. 3, 68.
³⁰ Soggin, *A History of Israel*, 306.
³¹ Rajak, "Hasmonean Dynasty," *ABD*, vol. 3, 68.
³² Soggin, *A History of Israel*, 307.
³³ Rajak, "Hasmonean Dynasty," *ABD*, vol. 3, 69.
³⁴ Soggin, *A History of Israel*, 307.
³⁵ VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 24.
³⁶ 1 Macc 13:41–42.
³⁷ VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 25.
³⁸ Rajak, "Hasmonean Dynasty," *ABD*, vol. 3, 69.
³⁹ Rajak, "Hasmonean Dynasty," *ABD*, vol. 3, 69.
⁴⁰ Rajak, "Hasmonean Dynasty," *ABD*, vol. 3, 69.
⁴¹ VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 27.
⁴² Soggin, *A History of Israel*, 308.
⁴³ Rajak, "Hasmonean Dynasty," *ABD*, vol. 3, 70.
⁴⁴ Soggin dated the destruction of the temple of Mount Gerizim as 108 BCE, cf. Soggin, *A History of Israel*, 308.
⁴⁵ Reicke, *The New Testament Era*, 66f.
⁴⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities* 13:288ff.
⁴⁷ Rajak, "Hasmonean Dynasty," *ABD*, vol. 3, 70.
⁴⁸ Soggin, *A History of Israel*, 309.
⁴⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities* 13:318.
⁵⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities* 13:301, VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*,

28.

- ⁵¹ VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 29.
⁵² Reicke, *The New Testament Era*, 68f.
⁵³ Josephus, *Antiquities* 13:327; VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 29.
⁵⁴ Soggin, *A History of Israel*, 310.
⁵⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13:380; Tessa Rajak, "Hasmonean Dynasty," *ABD*, vol. 3, 70.
⁵⁶ Tessa Rajak, "Hasmonean Dynasty," *ABD*, vol. 3, 70.
⁵⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities* 13:403.
⁵⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities* 13:187.
⁵⁹ Soggin, *A History of Israel*, 310.
⁶⁰ VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 30f.; Josephus, *Antiquities* 13:408-415.
⁶¹ Soggin, *A History of Israel*, 310.
⁶² Soggin, *A History of Israel*, 310f.
⁶³ Soggin, *A History of Israel*, 311.
⁶⁴ Soggin, *A History of Israel*, 311.
⁶⁵ Rajak, "Hasmonean Dynasty," *ABD*, vol. 3, 76.
⁶⁶ Earlier in the year, Herod had married Mariamne (Mariamme I), granddaughter of Aristobulus (through her father) as well as of Hyrcanus (through her mother), thus uniting and also superseding the two branches of the Hasmonean dynasty. Mariamne's death at the hands of her jealous husband occurred in 29 BCE, and the two sons of this marriage, Alexander and Aristobulus, fell under suspicion and were executed in the year 7 BCE, cf. Tessa Rajak, "Hasmonean Dynasty," *ABD*, vol. 3, 76.

CHAPTER 8

*The Emergence of Sectarian Judaism***HASSIDIM****Meaning and Origin**

The term Hasidim (*h^ssîdîm*) is a masculine plural form of *Hasid* (*hasîd*). This term is applied to one who practices *hesed*. A *Hasid* is a person characterized by *hesed*, a man of *hesed*.¹ So, the Hasidim can be called *the righteous people*. At the beginning of the Maccabean Revolt in 167/166 BCE there were the 'assembly of the pious' (*sunagôgê Asidaiôn* or perhaps even *q^ehal hasîdîm*) as a clearly defined Jewish party which joined Mattathias and his sons. Since they seemed to be well organized at that time, their origin is assumed at least a few years in the past. Their designation probably comes from the Aramaic equivalent to the Hebrew *hâsîd* = Greek *essênoi*, or determinative plural *hasayyâ* = *essaioi*, which probably calls the camp at Qumran the 'fortress of the faithful.' This suggests that the Essenes originated from the Hassidim.²

They were a conservative group, who strongly followed their ancestral traditions. The formation of the Hasidim was approximately between 175-170 BCE, when the Hellenistic movement was at its height. Although they joined the Maccabees, they did not fight the Greek soldiers on the Sabbath. They unconditionally surrendered to the will of God revealed in the Torah. They are the strong holder of the Mosaic Law. They rejected the introduction of the Greek language and all the Greek culture, spread by the Seleucids.

Significance of Hasidim

The Hasidim were significant mostly in two ways:

- 1) Firstly, the earliest real apocalypses, the book of Daniel came up from this circle.

- 2) Secondly, they are considered to be the common root of the two most significant religious groups of Judaism, the Essenes and the Pharisees.³

Their Main Teachings

- 1) Their non-dualism is interesting and relevant to the teaching of the New Testament. In their teaching, there is no real dualism. God is the unqualified Lord over the world and its history. Evil is caused by the disobedience of human beings (I Enoch 98:4ff.), of the nations as of Israel. The fall of the angels according to Gen. 6:1-4 and the demons who derive from them (I Enoch 15:8ff.) indicate that everything happens with God's will to purify and test God's creatures, and especially His people.⁴
- 2) The idea of individualism is found in the teaching of the Hasidim. The decision of the individual was stressed, reflecting the individual life of the Jewish history. On the other hand, they did not disregard the responsibility of the whole people who are to be called as a whole to repentance. As a result, they joined in the fighting for the existence of the people.⁵

The individual responsibility and the corporate life in terms of community in the teaching of the Hasidim and Pauline individualism and ecclesiastical teaching are closely related.

THE PHARISEES**Meaning and Origin**

Pharisaioi is the Hellenized form of the Aramaic word *p^erîsaiyya* (Heb. *parûs*; from *paraš*, to *break in two*, *divide*,⁶ or *separate*, *split*,⁷ and means 'the separated ones,'⁸ or 'the holy ones, the true community of Israel.'⁹ The name must have been given by their opponents. The Pharisees are, therefore, described by the name, *the separated*, only three times in the Mishnah, and then it is attributed to a Sadducee. The Pharisees themselves used terms which mean 'friend,' 'scribe,' or 'wise men.' In Jewish literature, the preferred term is 'wise men' or 'our wise men.'¹⁰ They were influential religious group in Judaism.¹¹

The actual origin of the Pharisee is not known. The word *pharisaioi* is found in Targum and Rabbinic literature as an adjective in the sense 'separated,' 'distinguished.' Origen said that *Phares* means among the Hebrews 'one who is set apart' for these men (the Pharisees) separate themselves from the whole people of the Jews. Its Hebrew root *prš* in Middle Hebrew in its *qal* and *pi'el* form means not only 'to separate' but 'to separate oneself' and it can give both a positive and derogative

sense. In its positive sense, it is a separation from all cultic defilement. This complex usage shows that we cannot establish *p^{er}ûsh* firmly for *pharisaïos* and that it is not possible to explain all aspects of Pharisaism in terms of the root '*prš*' and derivatives. Further, Pharisees did not call themselves *p^{er}ûsh* or *p^{er}rîshayaya* but originally this title was ascribed to them by contemporaries in a derogative sense of 'separatists' or 'sectarians.'¹²

Their first occurrences are from the time of Hyrcanus I (c. 135 BCE). Still then, they are assumed to be the descendants/successors of the Hasidim.¹³

They were for the most part men of the people, with no scribal education. But they were closely linked with the scribes that it is difficult to separate them.¹⁴ According to Josephus, there were only six thousand Pharisees in number in the time of Herod the Great.¹⁵

Religious Teachings

- 1) The main religious essence of Pharisaism is of the Law. They affirmed that God's grace is given only to the doers of the Law.¹⁶
- 2) They lived in accordance with the religious principles on tithes and purity.¹⁷
- 3) They gave significance not only in the written Torah but also to oral tradition. According to them, this tradition was inherited by word of mouth from generation to generation through Joshua, elders, prophets and teachers until it was set down in writing in the Mishnah. They regarded it as a closer interpretation and development of the Torah.¹⁸
- 4) They held the doctrine of foreordination, believed in the immortality of the soul as well as the resurrection,¹⁹ and the existence of the angels, the Devil (Satan) and intermediary beings (cf. Acts 23:8).
- 5) The Pharisaic understanding of repentance insisted that the sinner who wishes to be converted must make restitution for all the injustice which he/she has committed. So, they asserted that the tax collectors and prostitutes could not repent because they no longer knew how many people they had sinned against.²⁰

In fact, their legalism and limited repentance is what Paul knowingly preached against, and instead, he preached justification, not through Law, but by faith; and no there is no unforgivable sin, but forgiveness is universal to those who repent.

On the other hand, as Weiss stated, there is no trace of an anti-

Pharisaic attitude in Paul. In some places, he spoke as if he has a pride in his pharisaic background (Phil. 3:5f.) and did not reject the Law as a Pharisee.²¹ But it is obvious that he changed his interpretation and orientation of Law, not as factor for justification, but stresses the role of faith for the same.

THE SADDUCEES

Origin

The Sadducee is a philosophical school at the beginning of the first century CE. They traced their lineage from Zadok the High Priest.²² They were a group of aristocrats,²³ of Jerusalem and primarily held high priestly offices and members of the influential Jerusalem families.²⁴

The etymology of the name Sadducees is disputed. The older view that *saddukaïos* derives from Hebrew *zaddîq* "righteous" has now been generally abandoned. Instead, the term *saddukaïos*, *zaddîqî* goes back to the proper name *Zadôq* (Zadok)²⁵ the high priest, who held office during David and Solomon). The exact time when the Sadducean party came into being as an organized group is not known or whether it ever existed as such. According to Josephus, the Sadducees were already existed as a separate group in the time of Jonathan the Maccabee like the Pharisees and Essenes.²⁶

Religious Teachings

- 1) Their biblical exegesis was based on the literal interpretation²⁷ and did not equate the Torah with the oral tradition which the Pharisees treasured.²⁸
- 2) Their views were often contrasted with those of the Pharisees. They did not believe in angels and demons, or resurrection.
- 3) They were stricter in observing the Sabbath than the Pharisees.
- 4) Unlike the Pharisees, they could cope with the political matter and accepted gentile authorities more.²⁹
- 5) One of their dogmatic teachings says that God's working and human's action is balanced synergistically. So, they taught that God neither intervenes in history at large nor cares for the individual in particular. In their doctrine of free will, they said that good and evil, prosperity and adversity have their origin solely in the free will of human beings.³⁰

It is undeniable that the Sadducees' doctrine of freewill of human,³¹ although too strong in its pure saying, is not opposed by Paul. Rather,

Paul teaches about the initiatives accomplished by God and the response which should be done by human beings in the doctrine of justification and faith. In addition to this, the Sadducean view of politics and Pauline political understanding are not contrasting each other.

Though Lohse assumes that the Sadducees disappeared with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE that hardly any direct account of them has been preserved,³² Cohen quoted R. Yosi mentioning his contemporary Sadducee's women. If Cohen's assumption of R. Yosi is correct, then the Sadducees still existed in the mid second century CE.³³

THE ESSENES

Etymology and Origin

The origin of the word *Essene* is debated. There are some suggestions about the origin:

- 1) it might be derived from Aramaic word *hsy'* (plural *hsyy'*) that means 'pious,' the equivalent of the Hebrew *hasid*;³⁴
- 2) the Aramaic 'assy', 'that means 'healer';³⁵
- 3) Philo suggested that it was derived from the Greek *hosiotês*, 'holiness.'³⁶

Out of these proposals, the first seems to be the most reliable one. This also makes us to affirm the possibility of their origin from the Hassidim, retaining their religious piety at the heart of their hearts.

The Essenes appeared to be the earliest private association in Jewish Palestine known to us. They cut themselves from the public and the Jerusalem temple at the time of the Maccabean high priest Jonathan, i.e., 152 BCE and 143 BCE. Since the secession needed a certain time of preparation, so, the time of the secession might be between 160 to 150 BCE.³⁷ They claimed that they were the holy remnant and the true Israel.³⁸ According to Josephus, they were only four thousand in numbers.³⁹

Lifestyle and Practice

They usually wear white clothes and pay careful attention to rites of purification. They observed Sabbath very strictly.⁴⁰ The Essenes at the time of Jesus are known to have recommended celibacy, and also to have lived ascetically in various other ways.⁴¹ While they bring gifts to the temple,⁴² they were so critical of the temple worship that they rejected animal sacrifices.⁴³

The Essene community lived under the direction of leaders whose instructions were obligatory. Anyone who wished to join them received a small hoe, an apron and a white robe. The hoe was used to bury excrement in a foot-deep hole. The apron was worn to cover the private parts, and the white robe indicated purity. The candidate had to undergo a one-year probationary period. If he was found satisfactory, he was admitted and began to take part in the purity of the community. Only after two more years he was admitted to full membership.⁴⁴

Teachings

- 1) The Essenes believed in the cosmological dualism which was probably influenced by Zoroastrianism: e.g. God and Belial, light and darkness, Spirit of truth and Spirit of falsehood.⁴⁵
- 2) In the Qumran writings there are occasional references to the kingdom of God, but the Essenes had no expectation of its coming.⁴⁶
- 3) The Essenes emphasized the community life. In their understanding, the Torah of God truly expounded only in the community and its demands are really fulfilled in it only. And human is transposed to the sphere of the spirit of truth, even if he/she is still assailed by the parts of darkness in him/her. The God of Israel and the angel of truth help all the sons of light. In this way, the community becomes the eschatological community of salvation.⁴⁷
- 4) On the other hand, in contrast to the ordinary Jewish' view of entry into the congregation of the chosen primarily through birth, and secondly through the symbolical initiation of an eight-day-old infant submitted to circumcision, the Qumran Essenes insisted on the individual election, not by birth in a wholesale manner.⁴⁸
- 5) Although rigorous obedience to the law is their ideology, yet their individual soteriology and ecclesiology did not have ground in human's contribution. They believe, according to 1QS 1:15, 16,⁴⁹ in the doctrine of determinism. They taught that in such predestination, God had long ago arranged how history would happen.⁵⁰ As human is determined from the beginning either for righteousness or for judgment, redemption by acceptance into the community is grounded exclusively in God's free election.⁵¹ In their theology, community plays an indispensable role even for the purification/salvation. In the meantime, such participation in the community and redemption through it, was unmerited salvation from God, not a merited human effort even through painstaking obedience of the Law. This kind of theology of righteousness and justification of

human beings, initiated by God, but responded by human beings is found in Pauline teaching.

THE QUMRAN SECT

As we have introduced in the previous chapter who the Essenes were, they were the most conservative sectarian group who secluded themselves from the main mass of the people during the time of Jonathan the Maccabee in around 152-143 BCE. They withdrew themselves to the wilderness of Judea under the leadership of one whom they called 'the Teacher of Righteousness' who formed his followers into a well-organized religious community, taught them a new interpretation of the Scriptures and bound them together by a 'New Covenant' which pledged them to obedience to the Law of God until the dawning of the messianic age.⁵² It is strongly believed that this Essene community is the Qumran community that even produced the Dead Sea Scrolls which we will discuss separately. In this chapter, we will try to find out who were the settlers of the Qumran that left considerable amount of scriptural concern scrolls in the caves.

Archaeological evidences and traditions reveal that there were more than one community that occupied the Qumran settlement. Among those evidences, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls caught the most crucial debate and assumption about the Qumran community. There is no consensus about who were the Qumran community that wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Essene Hypothesis

The Qumran community who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls is first thought to be the Essenes. Some of the evidences for this are as follows:

- 1) **The Evidence from Pliny the Elder:** Pliny⁵³ wrote that on the west side of the Dead Sea, there was a solitary tribe of the Essenes which is remarkable beyond all the other tribes in the whole world. He said the Essenes are without women, they have renounced all sexual desire, they have no money etc.⁵⁴
- 2) **The Qumran Texts and Essene Beliefs and Practice:** the Qumran beliefs and practices such as their determinism, practice of non-use of oil, property⁵⁵ etc. make us believe that they were the Essene groups.

Non-Essene Hypothesis

But there is also a hypothesis that does not believe the Qumran

community as the Essenes because of the following:

- 1) **Entry Procedures:** Josephus' Essenes had one year longer entry procedure⁵⁶ than which is found in the Manual of Discipline.⁵⁷ This is the first point of difference.
- 2) **Marriage:** Pliny said the Essenes renounced all sexual desires, while Josephus wrote that the Essenes did not encourage sex.⁵⁸ The discovery of the Qumran cemetery with the skeleton of women and children showed that Pliny might have written on the other community other than the Essenes.⁵⁹
- 3) **The Name Essene:** The word Essene never occurs in the Qumran texts. It is thought that if the Qumranians were Essenes, they would have mentioned their name at least once.⁶⁰

However, the suggestion that the Essenes were the Qumran community who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls is the strongest assumption which we will discuss below.

The process of Hellenism was too strong, especially during 168 BCE. The pious among the Jews of Palestine left the country because a lifestyle according to the Torah was impossible in the country. Many pious Jews went underground. This was the beginning of the formation of organizational groups during those times. Among them were the Hasidim, the pious. In the year 162 BCE, Menelaus the high priest died. The Seleucid government installed a simple priest Eliakim-in Greek, Alcimus. But he died in 159 BCE. It was thought that the Teacher of Righteousness was the legitimate successor of Alcimus. But he was expelled by Jonathan from that office.⁶¹

Jonathan the Maccabees held both the kingship and high priesthood in 152 BCE and then the Teacher of Righteousness fled to Syria with the New Covenant in the Land of Damascus.⁶² He contacted all the other groups and organizations around Palestine. Numerous priests among them were from the lineage of Zadok, and served as his staff of co-workers. The Teacher of Righteousness motivated seven groups at that time. After sometimes, three groups remained with him: *first*, the members of the New Covenant in Damascus who were unwilling to return to Jerusalem; *second*, the Hasidim who were henceforth known as the 'Pharisees'; and *third*, those who were loyal to Jonathan's priesthood, who later joined together into an independent organization and were called the Sadducees. The place of this Essene union within Judea by the Teacher of Righteousness is unknown, but it is assumed as the Qumran. All of the local groups were regarded as organic parts of the union. They stood directly under the authority of the Teacher of

Righteousness and his directive powers alone. The Essenes' highest authority was the Torah, whose normative interpreter in all questions of doubt was the Teacher of Righteousness alone.⁶³

Teacher of Righteousness probably died of natural death at c. 104 BCE. Qumran Essenes continued their opposition to the Hasmonean Priest ruler in Jerusalem. The Qumran settlement was abandoned probably due to a fire, followed by an earthquake (c. 67-63 BCE) or c. 40-37 BCE-the period of the Parthian invasion/during the time of Herod the Great (37-4 BCE) because Herod did not want religious fanatics near his winter palace. There was a resettlement after abandonment from around 38 CE. As they were anti-Roman, the Qumran settlement was destroyed for the last time in 68 CE by the Romans.

This chain makes us conclude that the Qumran community that wrote the scrolls was the Essene community.

Endnotes

- ¹ M. H. Pope, "Hasidim," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 528.
- ² According to Damascus Document, the root of the Hasidim took place in 'the time of wrath,' twenty years before the emergence of the Teacher of Righteousness. The Teacher of Righteousness and his followers were separated from the temple in Jerusalem after Jonathan took over the office of high priest in 152 BCE. This indicates the formation of the Hasidim was between 175-170 BCE, when the Hellenistic movement was at its height. Although they joined the Maccabees, they did not offer resistance on the Sabbath. They unconditionally surrendered to the will of God revealed in the Torah, Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 175-178.
- ³ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 176; Lohse, *The New Testament Environment*, 77; Metzger, *The New Testament, Its Background, Growth and Content*, 40, Bright, *A History of Israel*, 423, John Kampen, "Hasidim," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, edited by David Noel Freedman, vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 67; see also William R. Farmer, "Hasideans," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 528.
- ⁴ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 190.
- ⁵ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 195.
- ⁶ Francis Brown, "רַבּ," in *The Brown-Drive-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, [1906], 2004), 828.
- ⁷ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, translated and edited under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson, 2000 Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden.
- ⁸ D. Muller, "Pharisee," in *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1975), 810.
- ⁹ Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969), 246.

- ¹⁰ Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 71.
- ¹¹ D. Muller, "Pharisee," *NIDNTT*, vol. 2, 810.
- ¹² See Rudolf Meyer, "Farisai/oj," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. IX, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 12.
- ¹³ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 176; Lohse, *The New Testament Environment*, 77; Metzger, *The New Testament, its Background*, 40, Bright, *A History of Israel*, 423.
- ¹⁴ Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the time of Jesus*, 246.
- ¹⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 17:42.
- ¹⁶ Metzger, *The New Testament, Its Background*, 41.
- ¹⁷ Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the time of Jesus*, 247.
- ¹⁸ Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 72.
- ¹⁹ cf. Metzger, *The New Testament, Its Background*, 40.
- ²⁰ Lohse, *The New Testament Environment*, 80.
- ²¹ H. F. Weiss, "Farisai/oj" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. IX, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 45.
- ²² Lohse, *The New Testament Environment*, 74.
- ²³ Gowan, *Bridge between the Testaments*, 181,
- ²⁴ Lohse, *The New Testament Environment*, 75.
- ²⁵ For detail, see Rudolf Meyer, "Saddoukai/oj," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. VII, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, [1971], 1988), 36.
- ²⁶ cf. Josephus, *Antiquities* 13:173; Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 69.
- ²⁷ Gowan, *Bridge between the Testaments*, 181.
- ²⁸ Lohse, *The New Testament Environment*, 75.
- ²⁹ Lohse, *The New Testament Environment*, 75f.
- ³⁰ Meyer, "Saddoukai/oj," *TDNT*, vol. VII, 46.
- ³¹ Josephus, *War* 2:164-165, "But the Sadducees are those who compose the second order, and take away fate entirely, and suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil; and they say, *that to act what is good, or what is evil, is at men's own choice*, and that the one or the other belongs so to everyone, that they may act as they please. They also take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades."
- ³² Lohse, *The New Testament Environment*, 74.
- ³³ Shaye J. D. Cohen, "The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis, and the End of Jewish Sectarianism," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 55, (1984): 33.
- ³⁴ Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 73,
- ³⁵ J. J. Colins, "Essenes," *ABD*, vol. 2, 620.
- ³⁶ Cf. John J. Colins, "Essenes," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 620.
- ³⁷ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 224.
- ³⁸ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. I, 227.
- ³⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities* 18:21.
- ⁴⁰ Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 74.
- ⁴¹ H. Baltensweiler, "Discipline, Prudence, Immorality, Prostitution," in *New*

International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. 1, ed. Colin Brown (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1975), 495.

⁴² Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 74.

⁴³ R. Mayer, "Feast, Passover," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 1, ed. Colin Brown (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1975), 627.

⁴⁴ Lohse, *The New Testament Environment*, 84f.

⁴⁵ J. Schneider, "God, Gods, Emanuel," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2, ed. Colin Brown (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1975), 71.

⁴⁶ B. Klappert, "King, Kingdom," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2, ed. Colin Brown (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1975), 377.

⁴⁷ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. 1, 223.

⁴⁸ In order to become the member of the Essenes, even children born to married members and brought up in their schools had to wait until their twentieth birthday before they were allowed to make their solemn vows of entry into the Covenant. Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective* (London: SCM Press Ltd., [1977], 1982), 171.

⁴⁹ 1QS 1:15, 16 "... the times of their reward. From the God of knowledge stems all there is and all there shall be. Before they existed he established their entire design. And when they have come into being, at their appointed time, they will execute all their works according to his glorious design, without altering anything. In his hands are the laws of all things and he supports them in all their affairs." Cf. Florentino García Martínez & Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, vol. 1, 1Q1-4Q273 (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, [1997], 2000), 75.

⁵⁰ James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 76f.

⁵¹ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. 1, 223f.

⁵² Russel, *Between the Testaments*, 55.

⁵³ He was the Roman geographer (23-79 CE) who wrote *Natural History*.

⁵⁴ VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, 72.

⁵⁵ Pliny mentioned that the Essene group on the west side of the Dead Sea has no money. Josephus also said that the Essenes had common ownership of property. Cf. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, 82.

⁵⁶ Josephus, *War* 2:137-138. But now, if anyone has a mind to come over to their sect, he is not immediately admitted, but he is prescribed the same method of living which they use, for a year, while he continues excluded: and they give him also a small hatchet, and the before mentioned belt, and the white garment. And when he has given evidence, during that time, that he can observe their continence, he approaches nearer to their way of living, and is made a partaker of the waters of purification; yet is he not even now admitted to live with them; for after this demonstration of his fortitude, his temperament is tried two more years, and if he appear to be worthy, they then admit him into their society.

⁵⁷ Every man, born of Israel, who freely pledges himself to join the Council of the Community shall be examined by the Guardian at the head of the congregation concerning his understanding and his deeds. If he is fitted to the discipline, he shall admit him into the Covenant that he may be converted

to the truth and depart from all falsehood; and he shall instruct him in all the rules of the Community. And later, when he comes to stand before the Congregation they shall all deliberate his case, and according to the decision of the Council of the Congregation he shall either inter or depart. Cf. 1QS column 6.

⁵⁸ Josephus, *War* 2:120-121 The Essenes reject pleasures as an evil, but esteem continence and the conquest over our passions, to be virtue. They neglect wedlock, but select other person's children, while they are pliable, and fit for learning, and esteem them to be of their kindred, and form them according to their own manners. They do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage, and the succession of mankind thereby continued; but they guard against the lascivious behaviour of women, and are persuaded that none of them preserve their fidelity to one man.

⁵⁹ VanderKam, *Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, 90f.

⁶⁰ VanderKam, *Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, 91.

⁶¹ Hartmut Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran: On the Essenes, Qumran, John the Baptist, and Jesus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 145-148.

⁶² CD 7:18-20.

⁶³ Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran*, 149-152.

CHAPTER 9

*The Rise of the Roman Empire***Introduction**

The great conquering force of the Greeks, under the kingship of Alexander the Great virtually covered all the important places in his days. The process of Hellenism also affected and supplanted the existing cultural and political features. This was the main aim of Alexander the Great, which was carried out faithfully by his successors as well. We see their successes and impacts almost everywhere, even in the oriental and the Roman provinces.

The Roman Republic

The history of Rome can be traced from 2000 BCE where Indo-European tribes were settled in Italy. Both Etruscans, the indigenous group, and the Latins were prominent during this period. According to tradition, the Rome city, along the Tiber River was a type of fortified city by 753 BCE. But archaeological evidence supports the fortification of the city much later, that is, 550 BCE. According to tradition, Rome became republic from 510 BCE to 27 BCE. In that republic, the government was headed by two magistrates, called Consuls, who were elected annually.¹

This Roman Republic (500-27 BCE) can be largely divided into two phases: the first and the second phase.

1) The First Phase

The first phase covers 500-280 BCE. By this time, Rome ascertained supremacy over central Italy. During this time, Celts invaded Rome and destroyed. But they soon recovered from that setback. At the end of this phase, the entire Italian peninsula was subjected to Rome.²

2) The Second Phase

This period covers roughly 280-27 BCE. There was a series of wars

between Rome and Carthage during this time. The wars between the two are known as the Punic Wars. There were three Punic Wars (First Punic War, 264-241 BCE; Second Punic War, 218-201; Third Punic War, 149-146 BCE). By the end of the Third Punic War, Carthage was completely destroyed and was ruled over. Simultaneously, Romans captured Macedonia and Greek states under their grip. By the end of the second century BCE, the entire Mediterranean was controlled by the Romans.³

We have just said how Romans defeated the Greek empire and ruled over them. However, we will switch our view point back to Greek empire, giving the Romans secondary place. How the Romans began to swallow Greek empire will be dealt steadily.

The Socio-Political History of the Graeco-Roman Imperial Period

The main aim of Alexander the Great is to rule the world empire. There was a great success during his reign, but his death caused a severe failure for that. Nevertheless, his successors (diadochi) tremendously sowed the seed of Hellenization everywhere. Ptolemy and his successors reigned over Egypt, together with the rest of north-eastern Africa (Lybia and Cyrenaica) and also Palestine and southern Syria and the island of Cyprus while the Seleucids Syria, southern Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and the whole of Persia and the Middle East as far as India. In fact, the period from 330 BCE to 170 CE to the imperial Roman conquest is the history of the Hellenization of the whole civilized world.⁴

The zenith of the Hellenistic dynasty and its political sovereignty was declining and gradually waned down. Rebellious movements arose in the middle of the second century BCE. In 131 BCE there was a serious revolt causing Ptolemy to flee with his cousin to Cyprus. The family life of the Seleucids was also unpleasant.⁵ The astonishing thing is that during that time, the life of the ordinary citizens continued without much disruption.

From the beginning, Seleucid kings coveted the southern Syria and Judea which both of them belonged to the Ptolemies. There was a series of wars, called Syrian Wars during the third century BCE for possession of these territories in which Ptolemies always victorious.⁶ But things were changed after Antiochus III (the Great-223-187 BCE) came on the throne as the Syrian king. The Seleucid kings began to rule Palestine from 217 BCE, but lost again in the hand of Ptolemy in 201 BCE. In fighting over the Syria and Palestine, Antiochus III defeated the Ptolemaic forces at the battle of Raphia in 217 BCE at Raphia, at the southern edge of Palestine and gained control over these regions.⁷

After some times, Antiochus was defeated by Ptolemaic general Scopas and captured Judea and stationed his troops in Jerusalem in 201 BCE. After some years, the army of Antiochus III fought back and defeated the Ptolemaic forces at the battle of Panion, and he took back Jerusalem in 198 BCE.⁸

The Emergence of Roman Force

Meanwhile, the influence and the power of the Romans were also mounting even without military intervention. The internal struggle eventually led to the total collapse of the kingdom of the Seleucids.⁹ Encountering the Hellenistic spreading forces, from around 200 BCE the Roman power forced itself into Greece. The Roman military forces appeared before Antiochus III. Rome declared war (192 BCE) with Antiochus III and they entered Greece. Antiochus III was defeated in the battle of Magnesia in 190 BCE. He was compelled to surrender his war elephants and his navy, to hand-over his refugee, Hannibal, the Carthaginian general, and other refugees to the Romans, together with twenty hostages including his son (later to rule as Antiochus IV Epiphanes). He was killed while robbing a temple in Elam to get money to pay the Romans. Antiochus III was succeeded by Seleucus IV (187-175 BCE). He was also assassinated and was succeeded by his brother Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163).¹⁰ Although he was suffering defeat from Rome, yet his successors ruled Palestine till 63 BCE.

Initially Romans divided Greece into four districts, called the *tetrarchies*, but in 148 BCE they combined them to all to one province with Thessalonica as the capital. After the destruction of Corinth in 146 BCE the rest of the Greece was also added to that province. On account of its location, Greece was strategically important to the Romans.¹¹

The Extension and Political Set Up of the Roman Empire

Edward Gibbon approximately estimated the extension of the Roman Empire as 1,600,000 square miles.¹² The territory of the Roman Empire surrounded the Mediterranean Sea on the north, east and south, including the whole Italy and the thirty-six provinces. The total population in the first or the second century is estimated as twenty to one hundred million with an average density of fewer than 34 persons per square mile.¹³

The political set up of Rome was quite systematic that they could enjoy stable government. The people's represent, the Senate and the Emperor also had a separate jurisdiction. The older and more settled provinces, e.g. Sicily and Asia, were under the administrative control of

the Senate and were called *senatorial* provinces. On the other hand, those which still required military occupation were under the control of the emperor and were called *imperial* provinces. Here, the emperor was represented by military and civilian authorities, legates, procurators and governors.¹⁴

The Roman theory was that the imperial provinces would become senatorial provinces, administered as a rule by an ex-consul or an ex-praetor with the title of *proconsul*,¹⁵ holding the office for one year; such province would not require military establishment save for the defense of their own frontiers. Here, Roman citizens such as traders, merchants, manufacturers-like the firm of leather workers etc. were settled. Throughout this vast world empire, one common language was used everywhere. Even though who spoke it only occasionally and not very well, probably understood. The widely scattered inscriptions in the *koine* (i.e. common) Greek proved its general use and understanding of that contemporary world.¹⁶

Social Structure of the Roman Empire

The population of the Roman world can be classified into the following hierarchical divisions:

1) Roman Aristocratic Families

This class is composed by the Senate. Their position was based on heredity.¹⁷ At the peak of this pyramid stood the Emperor, supported by the imperial household, then the officials of the central administration in Rome; below them were the senatorial order.¹⁸

2) The Equestrian Order

They were just below the Senate in legal rights and social dignity, but they were equal to them in wealth.¹⁹ They were wealthy landowners.²⁰

3) Decurionum or Decurions

These were the members of the families who made up the local councils and filled magistrate positions in the more the one thousand towns and cities of the empire. There were probably around 100,000 persons, i.e., 0.5% of the 50-80 million population of the empire.²¹

4) Middle Class

Basically 'middle class' here is not the literal term used by sociologists, but since they seemed middle between the aristocracy and the lower class or really poor, this term is intentionally used to describe such

people.

The great mass of the population belonged to this class. They were mostly small landowners, craftsmen, shopkeepers and the lower ranks of Roman citizens in the army, from centurions down to ordinary legionary soldiers and veterans. Stambaugh and Balch assessed that most of the Christians listed in the New Testament belonged to this group.²²

5) Really poor

The bottom most class people were those who had no property and supported themselves by piecework at the docks, in construction, or on farms.²³ Tidball particularized the lower end of the division into three groups. They were

- a) free plebs/ordinary citizens;
- b) freedmen, who were formerly slaves who had been given their freedom by their master. Some were administrators but many served in ordinary jobs as sailors or firemen;
- c) slaves: It is estimated that by the second century the Emperor possessed about 20,000 slaves.²⁴

Economic Condition of Greco-Roman World

The alluvial soil and sufficient rain in Greece caused the lower level of Greece very fertile. However, there were virtually no rivers suitable for irrigation and navigation (rivers were too shallow, too narrow and too fast for that). The agricultural and pastoral land was too limited. As a result overpopulation was a constant threat. The only possible solution could be emigration and importing food.²⁵ This served as a great connecting link between the Greeks and the Romans in their occupation especially in agriculture. In the meantime, the climate of the entire Italian peninsula²⁶ had favourable conditions for agriculture and rearing livestock.²⁷

Though hilly, Italy is suitable for agriculture. The limited number of natural harbour also led the inhabitants' agro-based livings. Therefore, unlike the Greeks, the old inhabitants of Italy were not a seafaring people but rather farmers and keepers of livestock.²⁸

The Religious History of Greco-Roman Imperial Period

Neither Greeks nor Romans could prevent their own religion exclusive from other religions for a long time. There was a great fusion of the Greek and Oriental religions after the death of Alexander. This process is called 'syncretism.' Greek gods and the oriental gods became

identified like Isis and Demeter, Osiris with Dionysus etc. Foreign deities were officially worshipped in Rome at an early date. Due to the inter-reaction and mixing up, in the sixth century BCE the old triad Jupiter-Juno-Quirinus became Jupiter-Juno-Minerva-an Etruscan²⁹ triad which was identified with the Hellenistic Zeus-Hera-Athena. From Latin neighbours came Hercules, Castor and Polux, and Diana. Greek deities were introduced early likewise, generally from southern Italy. Finally in 217 BCE, six divine couples were revered in Rome, all Greek deities with Roman (mostly Etruscan) names: Jupiter and Juno, Neptune and Minerva, Mars and Venus, Apollo (alone retaining the Greek name) and Diana, Vulcanus and Vesta, Mercury and Ceres.³⁰

Near Eastern deities also reached Rome late in the third century BCE in 204, during the second Punic War (218-201 BCE), the Senate obtained from Attalus, the holy stone of Cybele (*Mater Deum Magna*, great mother of the gods) of Pessinus in Phrygia and identified it with Cretan Rhea.³¹ In 191 BCE, her temple was also erected on the Palatine.³²

Another Egyptian triad Osiris-Isis-Horus was also found. This triad dominated the religion of Egypt in the Ptolemaic period. In the pyramid texts, the oldest religious writings known (ca. 2400-2300 BCE), Osiris was as the god of the waters, the fields, and the plants. He triumphed over the death and became the king of the underworld. From his death and resurrection, the ancient Egyptians-first the pharaohs, then the nobles and finally the commoners got their hope of a happy immortality.³³

Mitra (later *Mithra* means *compact* in Iranian) is one of the major deities of ancient Persia (Iran).³⁴ He is the guardian of the observance of contracts between individuals and covenants between nations.³⁵ He was born of a rock or out of a cave. His birth was later celebrated on 25 December, and was accompanied by special signs and by luminous epiphanies and taken as a symbol of a kind of royal initiation.³⁶

It later became the supreme god of a mystery religion throughout the Roman Empire (from the 2nd century CE on). Mithrakana, a great festival was named and dedicated after him and was celebrated annually in the seventh month of the Zoroastrian calendar. On the coins of the Kushan Empire he is named as Mioro and is depicted as a solar deity. He is also a *deity of light*.³⁷

Endnotes

¹ Amar Farooqui, *Ancient and Medieval Societies: Formation of States and Empires* (Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Open University, 1990), 45f.

- ² Farooqui, *Ancient and Medieval Societies*, 47.
- ³ Farooqui, *Ancient and Medieval Societies*, 47.
- ⁴ Frederick C. Grant, *Roman Hellenism and the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), 82f.
- ⁵ For detail, A. S. Van Der Woude, ed. *The World of the Bible: Bible Handbook*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), 338.
- ⁶ VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 16.
- ⁷ Bright, *A History of Israel*, 415.
- ⁸ VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 16f.
- ⁹ Woude, *The World of the Bible*, 338.
- ¹⁰ Bright, *A History of Israel*, 418.
- ¹¹ Woude, *The world of the Bible*, 39.
- ¹² Grant, *Roman Hellenism*, 84.
- ¹³ Grant, *Roman Hellenism*, 84.
- ¹⁴ Grant, *Roman Hellenism*, 85.
- ¹⁵ Governor of ancient Roman province: a governor of an ancient Roman province, usually a former consul.
- ¹⁶ Grant, *Roman Hellenism*, 88, 89.
- ¹⁷ Derek Tidball, *An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1983), 68f.68f.
- ¹⁸ John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), 110f.
- ¹⁹ Tidball, *An Introduction to the Sociology*, 69.
- ²⁰ Stambaugh and Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, 111.
- ²¹ Bengt Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament: An Appraisal* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 22.
- ²² Stambaugh and Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, 112.
- ²³ Stambaugh and Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, 112.
- ²⁴ Tidball, *An Introduction to the Sociology*, 69.
- ²⁵ Woude, *The World of the Bible*, 38.
- ²⁶ The climate of Italian peninsula is Mediterranean, with mild, humid winters and dry, hot summers. The amount of precipitation in the north is significantly greater than in the south; even the rainy periods are not the same. The temperature was also varying greatly, especially in the winter. (For example, the average January temperature in Milan is 1°C while 10°C on Sicily). In one year, Rome gets about 900ml of precipitation, the most in October (140mm) and the least in July (22mm). Woude, *The World of the Bible*, 40.
- ²⁷ Woude, *The World of the Bible*, 40.
- ²⁸ Woude, *The World of the Bible*, 41.
- ²⁹ Raymond Bloch, "Etruscan Religion," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Mircea Eliade, vol. 5 (1933), 182. From about the eighth to the fourth century BCE, the inhabitants of Etruria, a country occupying what is now Tuscany and part of Umbria in west-central Italy, achieved the highest civilization on the Italian Peninsula before the rise of Rome.
- ³⁰ Robert H. Pfeifer, *History of New Testament Times: With an Introduction to the Apocrypha* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1949), 147-149.
- ³¹ Mother of gods: in Greek mythology, a Titan who was the wife of Cronus and mother of the gods. *Roman equivalent* is Cybele. Microsoft Encarta 2006.
- ³² Pfeifer, *History of New Testament Times*, 149.

- ³³ Pfeifer, *History of New Testament Times*, 151.
- ³⁴ Meyer, "Mystery Religions," *ABD*, vol. 4, 943.
- ³⁵ Pfeifer, *History of New Testament Times*, 161.
- ³⁶ Gherardo Gnoli, "Mithraism," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 9, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1987), 580.
- ³⁷ Gnoli, "Mithra," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 9, 579.

CHAPTER 10

Pax Romana and the Internal Administration of the Roman Empire

After Emperor Julius Caesar was murdered in 44 BCE, Octavian and Antony became the rulers of the Roman Empire. They were then fighting against each other on account of the crown. After that two decade political unrest, Caesar Augustus became the new emperor in 27 BCE. He was a skillful and moderate ruler. He consolidated his power and the empire. Due to his skillful rule, peace had finally returned in all localities, and the Romans did not undertake any further conquest but concerned themselves with securing the stability of the empire and strengthening its borders. This peace lasted for the next two and a half centuries. This Roman political rule in the Mediterranean world in peace beginning with the reign of Caesar Augustus (27 BCE-CE 14) is called *Pax Romana*.

As a result of *Pax Romana* trade prospered throughout the Mediterranean world and extended as far as Parthia, Arabia, India, and beyond. Throughout the empire new cities were founded; temples, theatres, waterworks, and other public facilities were constructed; and most importantly, roads were built.

1) Land Routes

There is certainly a truth in the words of the saying "All roads lead to Rome." To highlight this point, it is worth noting that Dio Cassius (*Hist.* 54.8.4) tells us that in 20 BCE the emperor Augustus constructed a "Golden Milestone" (*miliarium aureum*) in the Forum in Rome and that official distances were calculated from it. The Roman world was crisscrossed by a network of some 50,000 miles of main military highways and approximately 200,000 miles of secondary roads (over

4,000 milestones along the principal roads of the Empire have been recorded). The most common means of travel on the network of overland roads would have been by foot, making a good day's journey about twenty miles. Travel by animals, either by riding them or in a drawn carriage, would have yielded a rate of about five to six miles per hour.

2) Sea Routes

The emperor Augustus (27 BCE-CE 14) declares, "I made the sea peaceful and freed it of pirates." The problem of piracy in the Mediterranean was a long-standing one which perplexed both imperial interests and those of local areas alike. Nevertheless, by the NT period, with the establishment of permanent Roman fleets at Misenum, Ravenna and elsewhere, a sense of stability in the matter had been won, and the sea lanes were open for both travel and commercial traffic (Starr gives details of this). The use of sea routes was especially important for the transport of food, such as corn from Egypt, to the major centers of population like Rome and Antioch. The sea lanes were the commercial arteries of the Roman Empire and many coastal cities, like Tyre, Caesarea and Ostia (serving the city of Rome), were dependent upon the sea traffic.

3) Postal Services

The organization of regular and reliable routes of travel also aided the establishment of a regular postal system in the Roman world. The apostle Paul, along with others, was able to use this to great effect in maintaining contact with his friends and delivery of his letters to the recipient churches (see Letters). Timothy, Tychichus and Epaphroditus are all described as couriers of Paul in this regard (1 Thess. 3:2; Col 4:7; Phil. 2:25).

Military police provided security on the Roman roads at dangerous places so that one could travel quickly and safely without anxiety about attacks from robbers; and the sea lanes were protected by Caesar's fleet, so that shipping went unmolested by pirates. Any citizen of the empire could travel about freely. The peaceful conditions throughout the Roman world also strengthened the ties between Judea and the Diaspora. Pilgrimages to the Holy City and donations by Jews everywhere to the temple were of enormous benefit to the Jerusalem economy. Rome protected the rights of Diaspora Jews to send contributions and upon reaching their destination these funds were used for the repair and development of Jerusalem, its walls, and its aqueducts, as well as for ritual purposes.

Conclusion

The realistic rule of the Greek dynasty came to an end on the emergence of the Roman power. It also had great influences and control over vast provinces. Still then, the Hellenistic spirit and tracks was the controlling force all over the Roman Empire. The cultural outlook and lifestyle, literature and language, religious lives and every realms of life was still Hellenistic. Koine Greek was the lingua franca for the contemporary world. A serious inter-influence in the field of gods and goddesses was also common among these civilizations we discuss above. They tried to implant their own deities to other cultures; but worshipped the others deities in turn. They easily imparted and revered other deities, identifying them as their gods. In fact, this is the development in terms of politics and religion for them.

CHAPTER 11

Jewish Messianism

Introduction

The English word 'Messiah' is derived from Aramaic *mesichâ*, reflecting Hebrew *masiach*, which means 'anointed.' In Greek, it is *Christos*, which is again translated as 'Christ.'¹ As the Israelites suffered a lot from their enemies times and again, they longed for the strong and peaceful, as well as prosperous and theocratic Davidic kingship. Since God promised His people the restoration of Davidic throne and salvation of His people from their enemies, they always expected their new kings to be the savior. This expectation appeared in post-exilic Judaism. The expectation of the messiah became common in intertestamental Judaism. However, not all Jews expected the messiah. In the 1st century CE many had lost faith in the Davidic dynasty, which had not ruled for 500 years; and there are Jewish books that treat of eschatological questions without ever mentioning the messiah.²

Development of Royal Messianism

There were some special people who were sent by God to save Israelites from their oppressors such as Moses, the judges, Nehemiah, Ezra. But Messianism we discuss here meant the salvific role of people as a king or kings.

1) The First Stage of Development

In the early stages of Davidic monarchy in Judah every anointed king was accepted as a savior sent by God to his people. This is seen in the oracle of Nathan (2 Sam 7; Ps 89; 1 Chr. 17). The election of David by Yahweh is seen in Ps 89:20-38. This oracle is echoed in Ps. 132. However, the oracle does not speak of any individual successor, nor does it look into the eschatological future. It simply talks about the dynasty

itself. It is an assurance that the Davidic dynasty will continue. The deliverance by David and his house does not go beyond the political salvation.³

The Royal Psalm (in particular Pss. 2; 72; 110) should be considered in this first stage of Messianism. Ps 72 may be the clearest expression of the idea of the king savior. According to this Psalm, the king is understood as the messiah. In the meantime, nowhere in the Psalms is the king presented as a future eschatological deliverer. He is the reigning successor of David and the heir to the covenantal promises made to David.⁴

2) The Second Stage of Development

There was a development in the royal Messianism in the writings of the 8th century. That was due to the failure of the successors of Davidic throne such as the wicked king Ahaz. People lost their hope of Messianic deliverer because of his ungodly reign. Isaiah proclaimed the revival of Davidic dynasty and its permanence. Yahweh would soon raise up a successor of David who would be worthy of the name of Davidic king, a charismatic power, just as David.⁵ That one would establish justice, build a vast empire and bring peace to it (Is. 9:5).

The hope for a revival of the dynasty was also proclaimed by Micah (Mic. 5:1-6), a contemporary of Isaiah. He saw a new David coming from Bethlehem to give his people security against the Assyrian threat. The restoration of the dynasty appears also in Jer. 30:9, 21. However, they do not emphasize the function of the king savior as an eschatological and supra-mundane.

3) The Third Stage of Development

The fact that the Davidic line no longer ruled after the exile caused an intense shift in Messianism. Before the exile the ideal king who would restore the vigor of the Davidic line could always be thought of in terms of the next generation of a reigning dynasty. But now there could be no ideal king until the Davidic throne would be restored. Thus the expectations began to move toward the indefinite future; and rather than centering of one monarch in a continuing line of rulers, these expectations came to center on one supreme king who would represent Yahweh's definitive intervention to save his people. It is in this period that we may begin to speak of the messiah in the strict sense. Earlier scripture (royal Psalms) was now reread with this new messianic understanding in mind.⁶

Although there is not clear evidence that the messiah was thought

of as a transcendental figure yet his work would be the manifestation of the power of Yahweh that would represent the direct saving act of Yahweh. That Messiah would be Yahweh's representative in saving His people. Because of this, it would not be the work of ordinary human, but the kind of visible inbreak of Yahweh's power into history as it was seen in the exodus.⁷

We can summarize that in the course of 1000 years Israelites Messianism developed from human king-savior to the heavenly being. While this king-savior would be a political savior, he would be a savior by the power of Yahweh, and so his saving acts would never be merely political. In his reign, the messiah would bring to Israel the ideal rule of Yahweh.

The Messiah as Heavenly Being

The expectation of the messiah as a human, being a Davidic king or charismatic leader seemed to be gradually abandoned during this time. One can conjecture that the Jews were frustrated due to the failure of all the Davidic or any other rulers to save their nations from their yoke. As a result, the expectation of the direct intervention of God in history developed. This is found in several writings.

Russel strongly negated the interpretation of the 'one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven' (Dan. 7:13) as the Messiah. He also affirmed that his is not an individual but rather a symbol for the glorified Israel in the coming eschatological kingdom.⁸ But this claim is not convincing. It seems that this is the beginning of the Messianic expectation from directly from heaven. This Daniel's 'son of man' is related times and again in other writings. In II Baruch 27-30⁹ Messiah is seen as a heavenly being, and in his advent, the dead shall rise again.

The Ethiopic Book of Enoch also says that the 'son of man' is a heavenly figure who will be a staff to the pious and a judge of the ungodly.¹⁰ The Messiah is also pictured as a King over the united humanity who will no longer know sin.¹¹

The Qumran people expected two Messiahs: the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel. The Messiah of Aaron would be the anointed High Priest, and the Messiah of Israel would be the anointed Davidic king.¹² Similarly, the idea of two Messiahs was found in *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*¹³ and among the medieval Karaites, a sect influenced by Qumran thought.¹⁴

But the idea or theory of more than one Messiah is not a popular expectation among the Jews. This is clearly seen in the apocalyptic

book of the OT Daniel (Dan. 7:13). Daniel, in the night vision, saw like the 'son of man' who came with the cloud. This 'son of man' is no other than the awaited Messiah. He is no longer an earthly king but one with supra-mundane power.

In those days, they could not win victory over God's enemies on the field of battle, as in the days of the Old Testament, it is assumed that the battle had to be joined in the spiritual realm. As they were in such desperation, they believed that only God's direct intervention in history in terms of the Messiah could save the saints of God. Therefore, ultimate victory belonged to God's saints, no matter how dark the present situation might be. As a result, the Messiah whom they were waiting for occupied more important place in those days.¹⁵

The Suffering Messiah

Did Judaism expect suffering Messiah? This is a difficult question. However, some scholars, such as Joachim Jeremias, claimed that such expectation is probable in the late Judaism. In their assumption, the Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah (Is. 42:1ff.; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; and 52:13-53:12) are applied to the Messiah.¹⁶ This idea was pre-New Testament. It is assumed that this suffering was thought of as for the atonement of Israel's sins. However, the idea that the Messiah would be rejected by His own people was entirely unthought of at that time.¹⁷

In fact, Messiah to suffer and the Servant of Yahweh in Deutero-Isaiah as the suffering Messiah is of late date. It can be a Christianized Christology that identified the Suffering Messiah and Jesus. Such identification can be found in many passages in the New Testament, especially in the Gospels.

The Zealots and Their Messianic Expectation

In 6 CE, the Romans turned Judea into a Roman province and conducted a census in preparation for tax assessment. In some Jewish circles this resistance evoked especially within a group of Pharisees who had separated themselves from the pharisaic society. They were zealous for the Law, and refused to obey the Romans. This group was known as the Zealots.

In response against to the Roman order, Judas the Galilean called for non-cooperation with the census and incited people to rebellion against Rome. He viewed that the land belonged to God, and the Romans had no right to claim the ownership implied by a census. Judas

rebuked his countrymen for being willing to submit to Roman slavery and for giving up the freedom they had fought so hard (under the Maccabees) to obtain.

Judas and his followers opposed Jews who cooperated with the census, for they considered cooperation with Caesar to be an idolatrous transgression of the First Commandment to have "no other lords before me." They straightforwardly refused to submit to the rule of the Roman emperor and to call him 'Lord.'

They were not willing to wait patiently, as the Pharisees did, for the future messianic transformation, but wished to determine the course of history by their own active involvement. Judas' small and unsuccessful revolt was carried out in the belief that if the Jews were faithful to the covenant, God would honor their cause by bringing victory in the struggle against Rome. Judas was apparently killed as a result of his actions.

Messianic Expectation and the Birth of John the Baptist

The birth of John the Baptist was unnatural because Elizabeth was considered barren, and the couple were both old age. Besides, people witnessed the situation of Zachariah how he saw a vision in the temple. When their son was named John, immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. All who heard that thing were wondered and said, "What then will this child become?"

The supernatural birth and his life in the wilderness that made people to think that he might be Elijah to come, as well as his wonderful ministry (baptism of repentance) motivated the Jewish people to think that he might be the Messiah. As a result, the Sanhedrin sent priests and Levites to verify if he were the Messiah.

This clearly indicated that they were eagerly waiting for the appearance of the Messiah. He then confessed that he is not the Messiah, but the forerunner of the Messiah (Jn. 1:20; 3:28). Baptist did not directly use the title 'messiah' to describe Jesus. He said that the Coming One will baptize with the Holy Spirit. In fact, the outpouring of God's Spirit is one of the elements of the messianic age when the messianic King will reign in righteousness and prosperity, and justice and peace will prevail (Is. 32:15).

He too announced that this should be fulfilled through Jesus. This implicitly tells that the Baptist declared that Jesus is the Messiah. In this way, we can say that the birth of John the Baptist inaugurated the fulfillment of the promises given to Israel. In turning many of the children of Israel

to the Lord, John preaches the good news of salvation (Lk. 1:16–17, 68, 73, 77).

The Birth of Jesus-the Fulfillment of Jewish Messianic Expectation

John the Baptist denied that he is the Messiah. Rather, he testified that Jesus is the Messiah who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. Jesus as the Messiah is implicitly seen in the Gospels. When Peter proclaimed that he is the Christ (Messiah, Mk. 8:29) Jesus accepted this but commanded them not to tell anyone. He is not only Messiah; he is the Messiah who is also the Son of God (Jn. 20:31; 1:49; 11:27). He is the Messiah in the sense that he fulfills the Old Testament hope of a coming deliverer (Jn. 1:45).

Jesus, as the Messiah, began to proclaim about the Kingdom of God. It can be said that Jesus' main mission is about the Kingdom of God, preached and acted. The ministry of Jesus, from the beginning, is a ministry of conflict with the demonic forces. The devil took control over all aspects of life, even to the extent of religious life. Since the work of Jesus was to overcome the demonic kingdom and to establish the Kingdom of God, the two forces encountered each other in every aspect of life. As a result, Jesus did not leave any part of life untouched. He counteracted the work of the devil directly and indirectly by means of healing and casting demons from the demon possessed. He challenged and argued against the religious authorities, conflicted against the existing culture and political authorities.

The theme of Jesus' ministry 'the kingdom of God' is a translation of the Greek term, '*He Basileia tou Theou*.' The literal meaning in Greek is 'kingship,' 'royal rule' or 'sovereignty.' The OT also speaks about it. In Hebrew, it is 'malkuth' which also means the 'kingdom of God,' 'God's sovereignty.' His reign is eternal and therefore beyond time. The Jews dreamt of the blessed time when the living God would finally rule, overthrow the power of evil and rule with mercy over His faithful people. The same idea and understanding of the kingdom of God is found in the NT. But it is not a geographical territory where God is the king outside which someone else rules. Rather, it is the kingdom where the Rule of God is found in human heart. Therefore, a preferable translation might also be a 'kingly rule,' 'reign' or 'sovereignty.' All these expectations are fulfilled in the life, work and teaching of Jesus the Messiah.

Endnotes

¹ R. E. Brown, "Aspects of Old Testament Thought," in *New Jerome Biblical*

- Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2002), 1310.
- ² Brown, "Aspects of Old Testament Thought," *NJBC*, 1310.
- ³ Brown, "Aspects of Old Testament Thought," *NJBC*, 1310.
- ⁴ Brown, "Aspects of Old Testament Thought," *NJBC*, 1311.
- ⁵ Brown, "Aspects of Old Testament Thought," *NJBC*, 1311.
- ⁶ Brown, "Aspects of Old Testament Thought," *NJBC*, 1311.
- ⁷ Brown, "Aspects of Old Testament Thought," *NJBC*, 1311.
- ⁸ Russel, *Between the Testaments*, 131.
- ⁹ English translation by R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, quoted in Salo W. Baron and Joseph L. Blau, *Judaism: Postbiblical and Talmudic Period* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc., 1954), 18-20.
- ¹⁰ Enoch, 46:1-3, as quoted in Werner Foerster, *From the Exile to Christ: A Historical Introduction to Palestinian Judaism*, trans., Gordon E. Harris (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 80.
- ¹¹ Enoch, 90:18-38, quoted in Foerster, *From the Exile to Christ*, 195.
- ¹² 1QS 9:11as quoted in Brown, "Apocrypha; Dead Sea Scrolls; Other Jewish Literature," 1077.
- ¹³ For detail, see G. R. Beasley-Murray, "The Two Messiahs in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," *Journal of Theological Studies* 48, (1947): 1-12.
- ¹⁴ Brown, *NJBC*, 1077.
- ¹⁵ C. T. Fritsch, "Pseudepigrapha," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 964.
- ¹⁶ Joachim Jeremias, "Παῖς Θεοῦ" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 5, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, [1967], 2006), 676.
- ¹⁷ Foerster, *From the Exile to Christ*, 200.

CHAPTER 12

The Spreading of the Gospel

Jesus, before his ascension, ordered his disciples not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. He told them that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit within some few days. He told them that they you would receive power when the Holy Spirit had come upon them; and they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

The would-be coming 'power' implies the ability to work miracles, and such ability, according to contemporary ideas, was the chief evidence expected of witnesses of Jesus. That was the promise of Jesus for his disciples. The widening circle-Jerusalem-Judea-Samaria-the end of the earth-suggests the plan of universality of the Gospel. Actually this is the main mission of Jesus.

According to the Jewish particularity, the Messiah is the Messiah of the Jews, their savior from oppression. He will be the exclusive Messiah of the Jews. But the true Messianic salvation plan was inclusive: the Jews and the gentiles, from Jerusalem to the end of the earth.

This came true since the event of the day of the Pentecost. They were filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues and were completely changed. In Luke's thinking the Holy Spirit institutes and empowers the church. He sees the coming of the Holy Spirit as the fulfillment of the words of the prophet Joel, who along with other OT prophets had predicted a universal outpouring of the Holy Spirit on God's people in the age of final redemption (Joel 2:28–32;). This incident can be counted as the real beginning of the organized church.

The mission of the organized church was the spreading of the gospel, which was also the commission of Jesus right before his ascension. Following this, the church extended its mission from Jerusalem to the gentiles in and outside Palestine.

CHAPTER 13

The Jew-Gentile Controversy

1) The Jerusalem Council

The primitive Christian church, at the beginning, did not have proper administrative and structural set up. In the beginning, they were part and parcel of Jews. They still used the Jewish bible as the scripture, attended the synagogue, observed Sabbath and were still circumcised. When they were completely separated from the Jews also they were very much confused in their rites and traditions. As most of the first Christians were Jewish converts, they were deeply influenced by their Jewish traditions. As a result, a severe confusion was there regarding the admission of the gentile Christians into the church. While there were some Christians who insisted circumcision on the newly converted gentiles, there were other Christians who did not feel the need to do so. They could not settle this issue in the church all of a sudden. It led to the general meeting of the church in Jerusalem which was known as 'Jerusalem council.'

It is traditionally believed that the council was held in about 48/49 CE in Jerusalem. Acts 15 and Gal. 2 tell a detail about this council. According to this, it is clear that the council was initiated by the Antioch church.¹

2) The Issue Involved

The Jerusalem Council (48 or 49 CE) is presented as a response to a dispute on circumcision as essential for salvation. Paul, together with Barnabas and Titus, went to attend this council. James, Peter, and John were the Jerusalem apostles at that time. The main issue involved in this council is about the demand of circumcision on the gentile Christians. Paul knew that the demand for circumcision was already causing

disorder among his converts (Acts 15:1–3; cf. Gal 1:7; Phil 3:2). If this demand had the support of the Jerusalem church, the problem would be multiplied many times. Another possible danger that Paul feared was the splitting of the church. Paul would, of course, continue to preach the gospel (1 Cor. 9:16), but the church would be irreconcilably divided which, in fact, was no gospel at all (Gal 1:6–7), and they might not even be able to be considered a true church. The mother church would itself have become apostate. Paul also feared that the divine purpose of uniting Jew and Greek and the destruction of the dividing wall through the death of Christ might be let down.²

In Galatians 2:1 Paul states that he brought with him to Jerusalem an uncircumcised believer named Titus. A question is, “Did Titus have to be circumcised in order to be saved?” Although some did demand his circumcision, the decision of the Council was that he did not need. The Council agreed that salvation is through faith alone.

3) The Results of the Council

- a) **Salvation apart from Circumcision:** The results of the Jerusalem Council were victory for Paul. The church with one voice recognized that salvation was by grace alone. The Gentiles needed only believe but no circumcision. Those who were troubling them and demanding their circumcision were refuted (Acts 15:14–21; Gal 2:3–5).
- b) **The Apostolic Decree:** Luke records that a decree was sent out to the Gentile churches which summarized the conclusions of the Council (Acts 15:19–21, 23–29). The decree recognized that circumcision was not required of the Gentiles (Acts 15:19, 24–28). On this issue the freedom of the gospel Paul preached to the Gentiles was vindicated (Gal 2:2).
- c) **Partial Agreement with Paul:** Jerusalem church did not adopt Paul’s gospels in its entirety and all its logical implications.³ In spite of the church’s decree in favour of Paul’s tenet (Acts 15) it is clear that the Jewish Christians were more authoritative and were mentally bounded by the Jewish religious traditions such as abstention from blood from the meat of strangled animals (Acts 15:20, 29). They did not completely abandon their conjunction with their socio-religio-cultural Jewish identity.

Bornkamm critically pointed out that though Paul and Barnabas were the actual speakers or deciding factors in the making of the resolution yet they became only as narrators of the works of God among the Gentiles. As we have mentioned above, Apostolic Decree was made

and emissaries were sent to deliver that decree to the churches. Paul and Barnabas were ALONG WITH those emissaries (Acts 15:25). They were from the Antiochian church. At the end of the council, Jerusalem church took the leadership and its apostles were exalted at the expense of the church at Antioch.⁴

Endnotes

- ¹ Günther Bornkamm, *Paul* (London, Sydney, Auckland and Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), 36.
- ² Robert H. Stein, “Jerusalem,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove and Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 468f.
- ³ Bornkamm, *Paul*, 39.
- ⁴ Bornkamm, *Paul*, 36.

CHAPTER 14

Paul's Missionary Journeys and the Establishment of Churches

As apostle to the Gentiles, Paul traveled to proclaim the gospel. As he writes in 1 Corinthians 9:16: "An obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not preach the gospel." This compulsion led Paul to travel across the ancient world to preach the gospel. He had several reasons to travel and preach the gospel.

1) Reasons for Paul's Travel

- a) To preach the gospel and to establish churches (Rom. 10:14–15; 2 Cor. 2:14, 10:14–16; Col. 1:25–29).
- b) To nurture and encourage his churches that they might be firmly established. Paul often expressed his longing to see a congregation that he may supply what was lacking in their faith (1 Thess. 3:10; see also 1 Cor. 16:5–7; 2 Cor. 13:9–10).
- c) Paul also traveled extensively in order to settle some problems in the church (e.g. the church at Corinth).
- d) He too wanted to travel to places which he did not visit in order to strengthen and enrich Gentile believers (e.g. the church in Rome-Rom 1:11–12; 15:15–16).

When Paul travelled, he was nearly self-sufficient which he was so proud because it was not easy to move from place to place carrying their tools with them.¹ As we are informed, Paul's profession was tentmaking (Acts 18:3). He carried out his profession without putting others into burden asking for aid. Though they would happily do it but he wanted to live that live in order to set his life an example for others. His principle is "Anyone unwilling to work should not eat" (2 Thess.

3:10).

2) Paul's Missionary Journeys

Luke recorded Paul as having three missionary journeys:

- a) **First Missionary Journey:** Antioch, Seleucia, Salamis to Paphos on Cyprus, Perga, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch, Perga, Attalia, Antioch in Syria (Acts 13:1–14:28).
- b) **Second Missionary Journey:** Antioch, Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra, the Phrygic-Galatic territory, opposite Mysia, Troas, Samothrace, Neapolis, Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Cenchreae, Ephesus, Caesarea, Jerusalem, Antioch (Acts 15:36–18:22)
- c) **Third Missionary Journey:** Antioch, the Phrygic-Galatic territory, Ephesus, Macedonia, Greece, Philippi, Troas, Assos, Mitylene, Samos, Miletus, Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Tyre, Ptolemais, Caesarea (Acts 18:23–21:14).

Assessing from his journeys and ministries, Paul is called as a 'city person.'² Paul travelled among the urban centers, in which he preached publicly and tried to make converts in synagogue and market places and private dwelling places. Such method of religious attraction was common in the Greco-Roman world. Many other Greek travelling preachers were also found (they were often Greek philosophers) during those days. However, Paul's travel was different from other travelers because he travelled within a definable area, focusing the church which was unlike the other travelers. In this way, Paul's travelling strategy was quite successful.

3) Church Planting

It is known that there were other travelling preachers even from the Christians (itinerant charismatic) during Paul's days. They constantly travelled here and there and they did not form a community. Unlike them, Paul can be called as a 'goal-oriented community organizer' because Paul organized people and he planted churches where he travelled.³ Paul's method was more successful because well organized churches and community of believers increased in numbers. Such planting of church happened in Thessalonica in c. 50 CE. As they made a number of converts in the city (Acts 17:1-10), they needed a church in which they could worship together. Paul clearly saw the necessity to organize believers other than staying individually. Therefore, a well structured church, even if they were small in number, was formed in

several places. There are some evidences of churches meeting in houses. Such church is called a house church (a church, small in number, gathering together in one of the members' house).

As we already discussed, one of the main reasons of Paul's travel is church planting, establishing and nurturing the churches he planted.

Endnotes

- ¹ Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 17.
- ² Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 9.
- ³ Theissen labeled Paul as 'goal-oriented community organizer'. Quoted in W. Paul Bowers, "Mission," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove and Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 611.

CHAPTER 15

Paul's Kerygma

Introduction

In his letter to Corinthians, Paul declared the priority of preaching in his ministry, "For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel (1 Cor. 1:17). Actually 'preaching' was not what Paul had chosen for himself, but he was compelled to preach. In this way, Paul said his preaching (kerygma) was the main purpose of his ministry.

The Term Kerygma

Paul used two major verbs for preaching: 'kerysso' and 'euangelizomai'. These two verbs have different emphasis: 'kerysso' tends to emphasize the **activity of preaching** while 'euangelizomai' indicates the **quality of the message**. So, the word 'kerygma,' in Pauline usage, comes from the Greek verb 'kerysso' to emphasize the activity of Paul's preaching. However, the term 'kerygma' seems to be used in different ways by different scholars. C. H. Dodd used it to denote the *content of what was preached* in the early Christian preaching while Bultmann used it to emphasize *the act of proclaiming* rather than the content of what is proclaimed.¹

Summary of Pauline Kerygma

Pauline concept of kerygma can be seen in 1 Corinthians 15:1ff., Romans 1:1-4 and Romans 10:8-9. Pauline kerygma can be summarized as follows:²

- 1) Prophecies had been fulfilled and the new age inaugurated;
- 2) Jesus was born of the seed of the seed of David;
- 3) He died, according to the Scriptures, to deliver human beings from this present age;

- 4) He was buried;
- 5) He rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures;
- 6) He has been exalted as Son of God and as Lord of the living and the dead;
- 7) He will return as judge and savior.
- 8) The present age would be consummated by the return of Christ.

The word *kerygma* is derived from the Greek root, *kêryx*. This word is frequently used by the philosopher and writer Homer. The term *kêryx* denotes the man who is commissioned by his ruler or the state to call out with a clear voice some item of news and so to make it known.³ We can simply translate it as the 'herald.' Subsequently the verb from *kêryssô* is derived from it to mean 'the activity of the herald.' The addition of *-ma* (*kêrygma*) to the stem *keryg-* the noun was later formed to describe either 'herald's voice, the act of crying aloud,' or, on the other hand, 'the content of the proclamation thus made, the announcement, edict.'⁴

According to Homer, the *kêryx* are the attendants of a prince who perform duties which are in keeping with the role of senior court officials, whose task is to care for the personal well-being of the prince and of his guests (like cupbearer, adjutant, steward, e.g. *Od.* 1, 143 ff.). They are of higher status in one way. The herald's staff, a kind of scepter, in their hands (*Il.* 18, 505; *Od.* 2, 38) makes it clear, as they carry out their commission, that they are authorized by the prince.⁵ According to this, a *kêryx* is an authorized envoy for specific mission. The authority he carries is from the higher authority, that is, the King/prince.⁶

In the period of the Greek *polis* (the democratic city-state), there were heralds of the city, of the archons, of the council, of the court, and even of the mysteries and of the gods. Basically they were servants (messengers or spokesmen) of certain authorities, whose chief qualification for office was a loud and clear voice; but it was the heralds also who called the soldiers to battle and the full citizens to the assembly. They were responsible for good order in the assembly, and opened it with prayers and sacrifices and announced its end. In public court hearings heralds announced the result of the drawing of lots for the judges, called on the judges to cast their votes, and beforehand asked the people whether anyone had objections to raise about the procedure of the statements of the witnesses. Thus they were, so to speak, responsible for the maintenance of the laws, and so for political and religious order generally. The herald who brought messages/information to the enemy especially in time of war invited the wrath not only of the one who sent him, but also that of the gods, since it would be a transgression of the religious and moral order.⁷

The Work of the *Kêryx*

The summary of the work of the *kêryx* is as follows:⁸

- 1) The *kêryx* was always under the authority of someone else, whose spokesman he was.
- 2) He himself was protected.
- 3) He conveyed the message and intention of his master.
- 4) He had no liberty of his own to negotiate with anyone else.
- 5) His office had in every case an official character, even when he appeared in the market-place as a public middleman or auctioneer.
- 6) He was, therefore, also the announcer of judicial verdicts.
- 7) What he announced became valid by the act of proclamation.

Paul clearly understood that the gospel had been entrusted to him by God (Tit. 1:3). As we have mentioned above³, the ancient Greek 'keryx' or 'herald' would proclaim to the people exactly what the king/prince wanted to make known. To add or subtract from that message was considered treason (betraying the king). In the like manner, Paul served as the ancient 'keryx' and he preached the gospel exactly as he received from God. He served as an ambassador for Christ through whom God has made known the message of reconciliation.

Paul wanted to give stress that his message was what he received, the tradition which had been given to him and which he passed along to the churches (1 Cor. 15:3; 11:23). This says that there was strong continuity between his preaching and that done by others. In other words, Paul did not preach a new or different gospel. He strongly claimed that it is a revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:12) and he condemned anyone preaching a different gospel (Gal. 1:8–9).⁹

According to Dodd, the *kerygma* basically means the messages and the content of what was preached. However, Dodd firstly picked up his argument from Peter's speech in Acts. On one hand, Pauline *kerygma*, as we listed out above, can also be the content of what was preached about Jesus. On the other hand, Paul's ministry and his strategy, as well as his life are more suited with Bultmann's interpretation, the act of preaching. Paul's *kerygma* should also be approached in this manner.

As the word *kerygma* indicates, the activity of Paul's preaching, his missionary activity also involved hard working. He considered himself as a servant of the gospel (Col. 1:23). This involved hard work, strong opposition and even imprisonment. However, he was still eager to preach the gospel especially in places where it had not been heard (Rom. 1:5 etc.).

Paul's kerygma was not dependent on eloquence or superior wisdom (1 Cor. 2:1). Paul was relied on faith and he served as the human instrument in the process of salvation of the hearers through Christ. Apart from God's active involvement in preaching, the message would become a stumbling block to the Jews (who demanded miraculous signs) and foolishness to the Gentiles (who looked for wisdom). Only those who believe, the preaching would bring salvation.

Endnotes

- ¹ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Secundarabad: OM Books, 2003), 57, 736.
- ² Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 57f.
- ³ L. Coenen, "Proclamation, Preach, Kerygma," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, [1967], 1971), 48.
- ⁴ Coenen, "Proclamation, Preach, Kerygma," 48.
- ⁵ Coenen, "Proclamation, Preach, Kerygma," 49.
- ⁶ Coenen, "Proclamation, Preach, Kerygma," 49.
- ⁷ Coenen, "Proclamation, Preach, Kerygma," 49.
- ⁸ Coenen, "Proclamation, Preach, Kerygma," 49f.
- ⁹ Fred B. Craddock, "Preaching," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

CHAPTER 16

Imminent Eschatology at Thessalonica

Thessalonica was a Roman province in Macedonia. It was founded by the Macedonian king Cassander in about 315 BCE, and named after his wife (a half-sister of Alexander the Great).

In Thessalonica there was a large Jewish community with its synagogue, which Paul and his friends attended according to their custom. Paul in particular participated animatedly in the services, especially in the exposition of the scripture lessons. Some members of the congregation were persuaded—Jason, for example, whose hospitality the missionary party enjoyed in Thessalonica, and Aristarchus, later to be Paul's traveling companion and fellow-prisoner (cf. Col. 4:10; Phlm. 24; Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2). Several converts were also made among the fringe of Gentile God-fearers who attended the synagogue; these included several ladies of good family, wives of leading citizens.¹

These adherents formed the nucleus of the church in Thessalonica. Their numbers were soon increased by converts from pagan religion. After three Sabbath days the synagogue authorities decided that they had had enough of the missionaries and their message. The missionaries therefore made a direct approach to the rank and file of the citizens, many of whom "turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9). The church of Thessalonica was thus established, comprising a majority of former pagans. Paul and his colleagues gave the members of the young church such instruction in the Christian faith and way of life as they were accustomed to give their converts elsewhere. But their stay in Thessalonica was interrupted.²

To protect his friends, Paul had no option but to leave, but he left most reluctantly. He believed that the new Christians in Thessalonica

had received insufficient instruction to prepare them for the life which they would henceforth have to lead.³

The eschatological interest in the Thessalonian church is reflected in large amount of space in these two epistles. The nearness of the coming seems to be central in Paul's thought in these epistles, and this is clearly seen in 1 Thessalonians 4:13ff. It is assumed that from 1 Thessalonians to Romans, Paul's burning commitment is focused not on the past but rather on the immediate future; his gospel proclaims the coming or returning Christ, whose resurrection signaled the imminent redemption and transformation of the world.⁴

The Thessalonians knew not only that Jesus was risen and alive but that he would return: they had been taught to expect his coming from heaven. They had been taught, too, that his coming would be sudden, like the coming of a thief by night (1 Thess. 5:2). But some uncertainty remained in their minds.

The Thessalonians received some eschatological instruction while the missionaries were with them. They were taught to expect the Advent from heaven of the Son of God who had been raised from the dead; by his coming they would be saved from the end-time retribution to be experienced by the ungodly (1 Thess. 1:9, 10; 5:9, 10) and would receive a share in his kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2:12). But the missionaries had to leave the city before the teaching necessary for their converts' equipment had been completed; some questions therefore were left unanswered in their minds. What would be the relation of the Lord's Advent to the condition of "the dead in Christ"? Would believers who died before the Advent be at some disadvantage as compared with those who survived to witness the great event?

In the relatively short interval since the missionaries' departure from Thessalonica some members of the church had died. The others were concerned about the status of these departed friends at the Parousia. Would they in some way forfeit the glory of being associated with their returning Lord? They wondered if those departed friends might not miss something to which survivors until the Lord's Advent could look forward—some participation in the glory of the occasion perhaps.⁵

Although it is not explicitly stated the Parousia is expected within the lifetime of most Christians then living, including Paul. He wrote, "We who are alive, who survive until the Lord's advent." Paul counts himself with those who will live to see the Parousia, referring to himself in the first person plural 'we', whereas "those who have fallen asleep" are referred to in the third person. By the time 2 Corinthians was written,

however, Paul explicitly associated himself with those who would die before the *Parousia* and would have to be raised from the dead (cf. 2 Cor. 4:14).⁶

Since the Thessalonians believed in the imminent *parousia* in which the believers would have met Jesus Christ while living, and since certain believers began to die, an over-realized eschatology was advocated by at least some in the Thessalonian church. They began to believe that the present life is the already resurrected life that Jesus has already been returned. Some members of the community had already died, and those remaining were unsure how the dead could benefit from Christ's return (1 Thess. 4:13–18). In this situation some of the community had perhaps found comfort in believing that the expected eschatological return had, in some sense or another, already occurred (2 Thess. 2:1–3).⁷

But Paul's teaching is that there is an imminent *parousia* which is still lying ahead of time that the expected eschatological return has not yet come. However, as the resurrection hope, for Paul, was grounded in the saving work of Christ, the question *when* it would be realized was of secondary importance. He nowhere claims to know the time of the expected Advent of Christ, so he could not know whether he would be alive or not when it takes place. If, in his earlier letters, he associates himself with those who will survive to the great event and, in his later letters, with those who will then be raised from the dead, this was a natural shift in perspective arising from advancing years and changing circumstances. The so-called "delay of the *parousia*" was no problem for Paul.⁸

Endnotes

- ¹ F. F. Bruce, *Thessalonians: Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 45: 1 & 2 (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1998).
- ² Bruce, *Thessalonians: WBC*, vol. 45.
- ³ Bruce, *Thessalonians: WBC*, vol. 45.
- ⁴ Karl Paul Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 14.
- ⁵ Bruce, *Thessalonians: WBC*, vol. 45.
- ⁶ Bruce, *Thessalonians: WBC*, vol. 45.
- ⁷ J. W. Simpson Jr., "Thessalonians, Letters to The," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 935f.935f.
- ⁸ Bruce, *Thessalonians: WBC*, vol. 45.

CHAPTER 17

*Status of Women in Paul***Introduction**

The attitude of Paul in the Epistles is very difficult to summarize because of the variety of teachings found here and there. According to Gal. 3:25-29 there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus (v. 28). This context shows that Paul was speaking of the new relationship that comes through faith and baptism. This 'male and female' echoes Gen. 1:27 where both man and woman are made in God's image. However, Paul still seemed to maintain difference between male and female that Gal. 3:28-29 is often interpreted as the abolition not of sexual differences between men and women but their religious inequality.¹

Texts Concerning Women Issue

There are two most important texts in 1 Corinthians that deal with women issue, which are variously interpreted:

1) About Head Covering (1 Cor. 11:2-16)

Paul argues that a man should pray with his head uncovered, and a woman with her hair covered. A woman covering her hair is not clear whether Paul is prescribing the wearing of veils or that women arrange their long hair decorously on top of their heads or metaphorically Paul intended to mean women's married state.

One has to know that Paul writes out of the background of the patriarchal Jewish family. And moreover, he addresses people who live in the midst of a Greek city with fixed customs.² Women's hair was a prime object of male's lust in the ancient Mediterranean world. Societies which employed head coverings viewed uncovered married women as unfaithful to their husbands, that is, seeking another man. Virgins and prostitutes, conversely, were expected not to cover their heads, since

they were looking for men. Women who covered their heads could thus view uncovered women as a threat; uncovered women, however, viewed the covering custom as restrictive. Statues show that well-to-do women pursued fashionable hairstyles and uncovered heads, styles that poorer women probably considered seductive.³

There can be at least two approaches to interpret this idea:

a) Paul's Reservation to Sexism

At Corinth some women were assuming leadership roles and Paul seems to have had no hesitation about working with them. Elsewhere there appears to have been no problems (e.g. Philippi, Colossae, Laodicea), but in Corinth there was some difficulty. The immediate difficulty seems to have arisen in connection with public worship. There is no question that women were engaged in prayer and prophecy in public worship in Corinth. But Paul maintained his fundamental proposition that at the top is God, who is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman. Paul seemed to have reservations within sexism.⁴

A woman who participates in Corinthian worship leadership ought to exercise her freedom responsibly. So, the wife ought to lead in public worship in such a way that she will not bring disgrace or dishonour to her husband.⁵

b) Equality between the Sexes

In Judaism, woman had a very minor place (also in worship); they were not even counted in the required for a synagogue (ten males). Christianity, however, gave them a new and significant place, and their head-covering is a mark of their new authority.⁶ Though some scholars assume veiling/long hair merely as indication of women's married state, which reflects their relationship with their husbands⁷ it is more appropriate to assume as really putting on head-covering or long hair. However, it is far from being a symbol of the woman's subjection to man. Therefore, woman's head covering is what Paul calls it-authority: in prayer and prophecy she, like the man, is under the authority of God.⁸ Women are not to be regarded as an inferior species, as was in the ancient world. So, Paul also insisted on equality. For that they need authority and he is saying that their head covering is their sign of authority just as respectable Greek women wore a head covering in public places.⁹

Thus, Paul's main intention is to engage the issues with which his congregation is struggling, including gender issues from the culture. He also maintains the importance of the Christian family and church unity.

As a result, he tried to persuade the woman who hears his letter read in the church to keep these arguments in mind without questioning her right to dress as she will (1 Cor. 11:10). Above all, Paul nowhere in this text subordinates the woman.¹⁰

2) The Silence of Women (1 Cor. 14:33b-35)

Paul told women to keep silence in the church as be subordinate: "If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home," it is not clear whether women are here prohibited from all public speaking or only from chattering. Many scholars attempt to interpret this passage in different ways:

- a) Many commentators suspect this portion of being non-Pauline. Some scholars, however, assume that it is genuine Pauline and that Paul is permitting women to pray and prophesy, but not to disturb the congregation with unnecessary questions.¹¹
- b) It is general that in the first century, women were uneducated. The Jews regarded it as a sin to teach woman, and the position was not much better elsewhere. Accordingly, it can also be assumed that the Corinthian women should keep quiet in the church because they could have had little or nothing worth to say. However, Christianity opened a way that women would learn as freely as men. Paul's concern here is also with the way women should learn. He simply said that they should ask questions to their husbands at home so that they would not disturb the assembly.¹²
- c) As we already said in 11:5, Corinthians women had the gift of prophecy. The passages here indicate that some of them desired to prophesy in the services. Paul's aim is to restrict that women should not prophesy at all in the services. Women are allowed to prophesy but not where the congregation officially meets. Women, who have received the gifts of prophecy, are not to use their authority in the meetings of the church. If this is the case, this seemingly prohibition is not to prohibit women to speak in the church. But just to let them know the right time.¹³
- d) Paul's word that woman should ask their husbands can also be interpreted as the responsibility of the husband to be able and willing to answer their wives' questions.¹⁴
- e) Others interpreted that the intent of the command of this pericope is to maintain situation in which wives publicly contradict what their husbands say or think or embarrass them by an interchange of conversation.¹⁵ However, this argument does not seem supportive comparing to other arguments above.

Thus, we can summarize that although some scholars supposed Paul as a misogynist because of the above seemingly restrictions of women yet this is absolutely misinterpretation. He is deeply concerned with orderliness, and it is in this context that he gave his advice to the church. Similarly, 1 Cor. 11:8-9 also does not mean hierarchical relationship with man as the dominant sex but holds that the sexes are complementary.¹⁶

Endnotes

- ¹ F. F. Bruce, *Epistle to the Galatians: NIGTC* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 187-191.
- ² Clarence T. Craig, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al., vol. X (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), 142.
- ³ C. S. Keener, "Man and Woman," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 585.
- ⁴ William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, *1 Corinthians: The Anchor Bible*, vol. 32 (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976), 262.
- ⁵ Orr and Walther, *1 Corinthians: AB*, vol. 32, 264.
- ⁶ Leon Morris, *First Epistle to the Corinthians an Introduction and Commentary: Tyndale New Testament Commentary* (Leicester and Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press and William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, [1985], 2001), 152.
- ⁷ Orr and Walther, *AB: 32*, 264.
- ⁸ Morna D. Hooker, "Authority on Her Head: An Examination of 1 Cor 11:10," *New Testament Studies* 10, no. 3 (1964): 416.
- ⁹ Morris, *1 Corinthians: TNTC*, vol.7, 152.
- ¹⁰ Keener, "Man and woman," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 586.
- ¹¹ R. B. Edwards, "Woman," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 1095.
- ¹² Morris, *1 Cor.: TNTC*, 7, 198.
- ¹³ F. W. Grosheide, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, [1953], 1984), 341f.
- ¹⁴ Grosheide, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, 343.
- ¹⁵ Orr and Walther, *1 Corinthians: AB*, 313.
- ¹⁶ Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 179.

CHAPTER 18

*Collection for the Saints***Introduction**

The specific campaign which Paul led to collect funds to relieve the poverty of the Jerusalem church is commonly called “the collection for the saints.” Paul calls the collection a “fellowship” (Rom 15:26), “service” (Rom. 15:25, 31; 2 Cor. 8:20; 9:1, 12, 13), “gift” (1 Cor. 16:3; 2 Cor. 8:6, 7, 19), “generous gift” (2 Cor. 9:5), “collection” (1 Cor. 16:1), “liberal gift” (2 Cor. 8:20) and “service that you perform” (2 Cor. 9:12).¹

The Historical Context for the Collection**1) Conditions in the Jerusalem Church**

It is accepted that the Jerusalem church was poor at that time. Scholars have traced several possible causes of this poverty:

- a) The relief of more and more widows (Acts 6:1–7);
- b) The pilgrimages to Jerusalem of both the elderly and Galileans, who burdened the communities;
- c) The potential problems arising from Jerusalem’s early experimentation with communal life (Acts 4:32–5:11);
- d) The economic hardships caused by famine (Acts 11:27–30); and
- e) The personal stresses due to economic persecutions (cf. Jas 1:9; 2:6–7; 5:1–6).

Whatever the underlying reasons, one thing remains sure: the churches in Jerusalem were poor and in need of relief.

2) Administration of the Collection

The precise mode of administering funds to the mother church seems to have been similar to the procedures of the Jewish Temple tax and its

attendant gifts that were annually offered at the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. We now know that Diaspora Jews regularly helped support the Jerusalem Temple by sending in the annual two-drachma tax. It is conjectured that the funds Paul was collecting were related somehow to this Temple tax payment.

The Purpose of the Collection

Scholars have debated vigorously the precise purpose of Paul’s campaign to collect funds for the saints in Jerusalem. Of the various proposals, four can be mentioned.

1) Help for the Poor

The traditional viewpoint has been that Paul wanted to help the poor Christians in Jerusalem (cf. Gal. 6:10) as a demonstration of the love of God that the Gentiles had found in Christ (2 Cor. 8:8–9, 19; 9:12–15). In general, the collection was charity in that it might create “equality.”²

2) Centralization of Jerusalem Church

One has to carefully think Paul’s word ‘saints’ to mean the believers in Jerusalem church (Rom. 15:25f.). By ‘saints’ Paul intended to say the Jerusalem church. This implies that the Jerusalem church held a central place among all the churches, particularly in the continuity it provided between the ‘saints’ of Israel in the past and the ‘saints’ of the Diaspora churches.³

3) Unity of the Church

Scholars have recognized that Paul’s collection was motivated by more than providing aid for the poor (though that would have been motivation enough). Hand in hand with providing aid, Paul was motivated to demonstrate to Jerusalem that, just as there was one Lord and one gospel, so there was one church. That church was comprised of both Gentiles in the Diaspora and Jews in Judea. Paul wanted to show that his gospel was in harmony with the Jerusalem churches, and so a gift from his churches would demonstrate their thanksgiving to God for the covenant he had made with Israel. This perspective on the collection is explicitly stated in Romans 15:27: “For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews’ spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.”⁴

Accordingly, Paul urged his churches to give voluntarily (1 Cor. 16:1; 2 Cor. 8:3, 8, 11–12; 9:1–5) and generously (2 Cor. 8:2–4; 9:6–15) as a demonstration to the Jerusalem churches that the Gentile Christians

of the Diaspora wanted to be involved in the relief efforts and, in so doing, to show to the mother church (Acts 24:17) their thanksgiving for their spiritual heritage (Rom 15:27).

4) Substitute for Jewish Entry Rites

Although this view has not been held by many, K. Berger argues that the collection itself was seen as almsgiving on the part of the Diaspora Gentile church and, as such, was seen as a substitute action for their sacrifices and circumcision. Money gifts for Israel were seen as the act whereby the Gentile demonstrated his or her allegiance to the covenant of Abraham and to the people of Israel. According to this hypothesis, the collected funds and gifts were a symbol of the Gentile commitment to Israel and its Law, a visible sign of their recognition of the priority of the Jewish nation in salvation-history.⁵

5) Eschatological Provocation

The unbelief of Israel was problematic to Paul, and he looked and longed for the day when Israel would turn to its Messiah, Jesus Christ. Paul did not doubt that that day would come (Rom. 11:25–26). Paul believed, furthermore, that the salvation of the Gentiles would turn out for the conversion of Israel (Rom. 11:11–24; cf. 11:9–11). Thus the collection was for Paul an eschatological provocation of Israel; by it he hoped to convert Israel to faith in the Messiah.⁶

6) Paul's Climactic and Concluding Concern

Paul purposefully concluded his letter (Romans) with the collection made for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25-32). It can be said that Paul regarded making contribution to needy saints in the birth place of faith as the climax of his ministry.⁷ Above all, Paul regarded helping the poor is the true characteristic of the church.

The Results of the Collection

Neither Luke nor Paul tells of the results of the offering of the collection. However, Luke records the trip and the period during which the collection was handed over to the leaders. His first few lines may reveal that the collection was received with profound gratitude. Acts 21:17–26 speaks of the church receiving them “warmly” (Acts 21:17).

Some scholars, however, have argued that the collection did not accomplish its purposes. The saints remained poor in spite of those acts of charity; the tension between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians continued; and the conversion of Israel never took place. In the meantime, we must also say that it is not entirely clear that Paul saw

the conversion of Israel as a major motivation for his collection. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Paul thought all forms of poverty would be eliminated. Paul was realistic enough to realize that his collection of funds, as large as it may have been, would not alter permanently the economic conditions of Christians. Although relations between Jewish and Gentile churches probably remained in tension, but we must also it is acceptable that the majority of Judean Christians would have been greatly impressed by the generosity of the Diaspora Christians and, therefore, would have drawn the conclusion that the church has one gospel, one Lord and one Spirit—even if that same church was characterized by a considerable amount of diversity.⁸

Endnotes

- ¹ Scot McKnight, “Collection for the Saints,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G Reid (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 143.
- ² McKnight, “Collection for the Saints,” 145.
- ³ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grant Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 708.
- ⁴ McKnight, “Collection for the Saints,” 145.
- ⁵ McKnight, “Collection for the Saints,” 145.
- ⁶ McKnight, “Collection for the Saints,” 146.
- ⁷ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 707.
- ⁸ McKnight, “Collection for the Saints,” 146.

CHAPTER 19

Righteousness and Salvation: Justification not by Works but by Faith in Christ

Introduction

In the Pauline corpus the teaching about the righteousness of God and the related doctrine of the justification of the sinner hold an important place. The noun “righteousness” (*dikaïosyne*), its related adjective “righteous” (*dikaïos*), and the verb “to justify,” “to pronounce/treat as righteous” or “put right” (*diakioō*) are found in the Pauline writings over 100 times. But the key term for righteousness and salvation is found in the phrase ‘righteousness of God’ as found in Romans and Philipians.

The Righteousness of God (*dikaïosyne theou*)

The most important and the key link between God and the salvation of the sinner human beings has taken place in the manifestation of God’s righteousness to human beings. This is the nucleus of Paul’s teaching of salvation. The concept of God’s righteousness, its nature, function and result, is central to Paul’s teaching on the justification of the sinner. Paul said in genitive construction form, *dikaïosyne theou*, “righteousness of God” (Rom. 1:17; 3:5, 21, 22; 10:3; 2 Cor. 5:21). Most of these phrasal studies are located in Romans, Paul’s fullest discourse on God’s redemptive work in Christ.

Romans 1:16–17 is foundational for understanding the meaning of this concept. For Paul the gospel—the event of the life, death and resurrection of Christ—is the historical manifestation of divine redemptive power. In that gospel “God’s righteousness is revealed.”

The Righteousness of God is Manifested

What does the righteousness of God mean? It does not mean the

personal righteousness of God only, but God is righteous and acts, judges and justifies justly and rightly. This righteousness is not inaccessible, but manifested through Jesus Christ for all who believe (Rom. 3:21f.).

In contrast to human faithlessness and wickedness (Rom. 3:3–5), God remains faithful, and in that faithfulness God’s righteousness is manifested.

From Rom. 3:21, 22; 4:11-13 and 9:30, 31 we come to know that Paul introduced justification of the sinners in terms of God’s activity to save the sinners. Paul has intimated to his hearers that no one is saved by any ritual or ceremonial efforts, but saved only through faith. Since Paul did not create a pure new theology of his own, he utilized Old Testament covenantal relationship as his background. Human, through sin, had broken his/her relationship with God that he/she would be penalized. Meanwhile, God is holy and righteous ever.

Human beings are justified both in a legal sense and rebuilding covenantal relationship between God and human. This covenantal relationship can be best understood from the whole of Israelite’s life, wherever they found themselves in mutual relationship.¹ What upholds the relationship is ‘righteous’ and what destroys the relationship is ‘unrighteous.’ Similarly, to be ‘made righteous’ means to be put into, or restored to, a positive relationship with someone. A human being is ‘made righteous’ when he/she is put in that restored relationship to God.² Achtemeier interpreted that this rebuilding of relationship demands submission to God’s Lordship, and it can be done only by God in which Christ is the representative of God and is the only way to the relationship. That submission to God is what Paul calls ‘faith.’³

When God proclaims human righteous God creates a new situation; God brings human into a new relation with Himself/Herself; God gives human access to God; allows human to call Father/Mother. God acts effectively to establish a new relation between God and the believer. God creates a new condition of life by bringing human into the sphere of action of Jesus Christ and endowing him/her with the free grace communicated by the Holy Spirit. In this sense, the believer is a new creature.⁴ This new access is revealed through Jesus. According to Paul, this can be achieved only through faith in Christ. It has nothing to do with work or perfecting the Law, but by faith only.

As God is inaccessible for the guilty human, God, out of love, has revealed/manifested His/Her righteousness in Jesus Christ so that human can receive justification. Paul used a controversial term and grammatical

construction in order to proclaim this good news. What has been manifested? Where is this manifestation happened? How can one receive this manifested thing? For whom has this been manifested? Our answers to these questions are not difficult.

God's righteousness has been manifested. The subjective genitive construction is found the most appropriate interpretation in this regard. However, it is not a God's personal nature only and distributive righteousness as Luther formerly understood (God justifies those who are righteous and condemns those who are guilty because God is the righteous God). It says that God is righteous and human is guilty. In order to rebuild the lost relationship, as human cannot make the relationship right, God takes initiative by manifesting His/Her righteousness.⁵ The *righteousness* should not be understood as an entity that has done something of its own. Righteousness is not something that comes out from God and does something apart from God and Jesus Christ. It should be understood as subjective genitive because it is of God. Meanwhile, it is not inaccessible because God has already manifested His/Her righteousness.

Where is the Righteousness of God Manifested?

The answer is that it is revealed in Jesus Christ. This faithfulness (or righteousness) is manifested in the sacrificial atonement of Christ's death (Rom. 3:24–25). It is explicitly stated that in this redemptive act God's righteousness has been manifested (Rom. 3:21, 25, 26). Some scholars argue that the righteousness of God is manifested in the faith of Christ or in the faithfulness of Christ. But the best interpretation is that the righteousness of God is manifested in the life and redemptive works of Jesus Christ.

How the Sinner Human is Saved or Justified

We can directly say that the sinner human is saved or justified only through faith in Christ (Rom. 3:21, 22). This is found in all three passages in Romans (Rom 1; 3; 10), as well as in Philippians 3:9.

The inaccessible righteous God has to become accessible so as to rebuild the lost relationship. Human cannot reach God unless God manifested Him/Herself. This has been done not in the faithfulness or activities or death of Jesus Christ, but in Jesus Christ himself in whatever way he is.⁶ The righteousness of God has been manifested and demonstrated, and the sinners are declared righteous by the righteous God. The broken relationship has been restored between God and human with the initiation of God by validating God's righteousness. We can say that the *righteousness of God has been manifested in Christ* and this righteousness can be achieved through *faith in Jesus Christ*.

Those who achieve righteousness are those who are justified.⁷

However, the achievement of righteousness or justification, in this sense, is not a merit, but God acquitting the sinners not because they deserve, but because of grace and love. What is comprehensible now is God, manifesting His/Her righteousness accessible for human beings in Christ, acquits and declares the sinners righteous. In a better sense, God rightwises human and accepts as righteous. God restores the relationship without having any hindrance now. This has been manifested in Christ, not in the faithfulness or obedience of Christ, although Jesus' fulfillment of the manifestation is suffering, which some scholars called propitiation. The next step is how this God's initiation is to be responded or achieved. For this process, Paul introduces to us FAITH *by or through* which God's gift is to be received.

The righteousness of God has been manifested and demonstrated, and the sinners are declared righteous by the righteous God. The broken relationship has been restored between God and human with the initiation of God by validating God's righteousness. Though the context does not permit us to say that the *righteousness of God has been manifested in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ* yet we can say that the *righteousness of God has been manifested in Christ* and this righteousness can be achieved through *faith in Jesus Christ* (objective genitive). Those who achieve righteousness are those who are justified. However, the achievement of righteousness or justification, in this sense, is not a merit, but God acquitting the sinners not because they deserve, but because of grace and love. What is comprehensible now is God, manifesting His/Her righteousness accessible for human beings in Christ, acquits and declares the sinners righteous. In a better sense, God rightwises human and accepts as righteous. God restores the relationship without having any hindrance now. This has been manifested in Christ, not in the faithfulness or obedience of Christ, although Jesus' fulfillment of the manifestation is suffering, which some scholars called propitiation. The next step is how this God's initiation is to be responded or achieved. For this process, Paul introduces to us FAITH *by or through* which God's gift is to be received.⁸

We can sum up that the righteousness of God has been manifested in Christ, and only those who believe in Christ or who have faith in Christ receive this righteousness of God. This also means that Jesus Christ makes the righteousness of God accessible and effective for human beings. This is to be achieved through faith in Jesus Christ. God initiates, this is found in Jesus Christ and it is to be achieved through faith in Jesus Christ, in whom God has manifested His/Her righteousness.

Endnotes

- ¹ Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. I, 373.
- ² Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans: Interpretation, a Biblical Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1985), 62f.
- ³ Achtemeier said that that covenant is not an agreement between equals. It is a covenant in which God is Lord, and to break the covenant (sin) means to reject God as Lord and to take upon oneself some other lordship. To be made righteous, in this sense, means to accept the lordship of God, only. So, Achtemeier argues that Christ is the means by which a restored relationship is offered to human beings. He continues that human beings are responsible for the broken relationship (sin) with God, and that it is up to God to make the next move. It is at God's hand whether to uphold or to end the relationship. Meanwhile, Christ represents God's decision to uphold the relationship and give humanity a new chance to enter into it. This is not because human deserves it, but God decided to uphold human. Only on such terms human beings can enter the renewed relationship. Paul calls this term as 'faith.' Only when one admits, through faith, the lordship of God and the restoration of the relationship with God, one can enter that positive relationship offered through Christ. This means 'righteousness' is not a 'quality' or conformity to some legal norm; rather, it is a positive relationship to God. Achtemeier, *Romans*, 63f.
- ⁴ Franz J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1961), 56f.
- ⁵ Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969), 174, 180.
- ⁶ H. Joseph Lalfakmawia, "Justification by Faith, with Special Reference to Romans 3:21, 22; 4:11-13 and 9:30, 31 from a Mizo Christian Setting" (North India Institute of Post Graduate Theological Studies, 2009), 97.
- ⁷ Lalfakmawia, "Justification by Faith...", 101f.
- ⁸ Lalfakmawia, "Justification by Faith...", 102.

CHAPTER 20

The Role of Christ in His Church: The Church as the Body of Christ

The Concept of the Body of Christ

There have been many suggestions regarding the possible sources of Paul's "body of Christ" idea:

1) Corporate Personality

Paul was familiar with the Hebrew concept of "corporate personality," its relationship between the individual and the corporate, and its idea of the inclusion of the many in the one: a figure standing at the head (e.g., Adam, Abraham, Noah, Moses).¹ Paul used 'to baptize into' that denotes that the one baptized is brought into relation with an already existing person or unity (cf. 1 Cor. 10:2; Gal. 3:27). This also means incorporation into an already existing body, namely, the communion of those who have been baptized into Christ.² In this understanding, it is thought that Paul, using Christ as the head, described about the union of the believers with Christ. In this body, the head is Christ and the body is the church.³ This idea is implicitly given in Rom. 5-8, in the Adam Christology. The best example can be seen in Paul's use of Abraham as the archetype of faith (Rom. 4). Abraham is the father of faith of all. The true believers are the true children of Abraham, not by biological relationship but by faith.⁴

2) The Idea of Solidarity between Christ and His People

Paul experienced the risen Lord's identification of himself with his persecuted people (Acts 9:4). He came to know that the believers or the members of the church are no other than Jesus. This is a perfect unity. In this unity, Christ is the head and the believers are inseparable body. In this way, the church as the body of Christ indicates the perfect solidarity between Christ and his people. This also tells that this term may be

Paul's own term, based on the Hebrew concept of corporate personality, with the words of the risen Jesus to Paul on the Damascus road.⁵

3) Sacramental Usage

This understanding is found in 1 Cor. 10 and 11. Paul seems to connect the broken bread (Christ's body) and the church as one body. Paul continued to say 'one bread, therefore, one body.' In this way, the new community has the body character.⁶ When Jesus compared his body and bread, partaking the bread also means partaking his body. This is the sacramental saying of Jesus, using the bread as the metaphor of his body. Similarly, Paul tells that every individual member of the church is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27). Anyone within the church is the part and parcel of sacramental body of Christ.

4) Unity in diversity

Paul tries to emphasize unity of a community despite the diversity of its members (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:14-26 etc.). The Christian assembly is a body, like the secular body politic, but it is different precisely because its distinctive and identifying feature is that it is the body of Christ.⁷ The church as the body of Christ does not only mean the unity between the head, Jesus Christ and the believers/members but also unity within the members in the midst of multi socio-cultural diversity.

The Concept in Paul's Usage

Two stages may be distinguished in Paul's use of the body concept in reference to the church: it is used largely as a simile in 1 Corinthians and Romans (the church is like a body), and as a metaphor in Colossians and Ephesians (the church is the body of which Christ is the head).

The Body of Christ in Colossians and Ephesians

In Colossians 3:15 the believers in Colossae are described as having been called "in one body": they are thus members of a single organism. If this organism is identified with the body of Christ, then the head is no other than Christ. In Colossians 1:24 the body of Christ is definitely identified as the church; and in 1:18 Christ is called "the head of the body, the church."

In Ephesians 4:12-16, where the church is again designated the body of Christ (Eph 1:21f.), the unity of the church is again described in terms of individual members, and their mutual dependence. The church as the body of Christ does not tend to convey the superiority over others but about the unity of the members and the head, Christ. The church as

the body also implies unity in diversity of the members.

Summary

Paul's use of the concept of the body of Christ as a designation of the church can be summarized as follows:⁸

- 1) The figure of the body of Christ is applied by Paul to a local congregation, to Christians in its totality, as well as all believers in Christ.
- 2) The church as the body of Christ is a living organic unity composed of a multiplicity of members (i.e., individual believers, not individual congregations), each necessary to the other and to the growth of the whole (1 Cor. 10:16-17; 12:12-27; Rom. 12:4-5; Col. 1:24; 3:15; Eph. 4:16).
- 3) This "horizontal" dimension of unity is based on the "vertical" unity between the church as the body of Christ and Christ as the head of the church.
- 4) The church grows as its members are properly related to Christ the head and to one another as members of the same body (Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:16).
- 6) The image of the church as the body of Christ looks inward (to the mutual relationship of believers as members of the body) and upward (to the relationship between the body and its head) but not outward (to the relationship between the church and the world).

Relevance of the Body of Christ Metaphor for the Church in India

The church as the body of Christ, as we have discussed above, has multi dimensions. This metaphor is suitable for Indian context as mentioned below:

- 1) The Pauline church, as the body of Christ, consists of diverse members having a great variety of gifts. Similarly the Indian church is rich in regional, cultural, social and economic diversity.
- 2) Such multiplicity of members should not cause disintegration within the church because the body of Christ implies organic unity. The members of one church (like Pauline local congregation), the church members in one city and the members as a whole should have solidarity and oneness because the body of Christ is not divided. Unity is the main focus here.
- 3) The leaders of the church must not misuse the authority in order to overlord the members because they are meant to be the leaders, not the rulers. Every member has to remember that Jesus Christ is

the head of the body, the church.

- 4) As we experience divisions within the society in terms of class and caste in India, the church suffers disintegration today. In the body of Christ, there is no division and distinction. In such a way, the church members in India must look inwardly (mutual relationship).

The clergy, as well as lay people should look upward because the church has relation to the head Jesus Christ. One has to remember that the head is Christ, neither the church leaders/clergies nor the political leaders. One should not be led astray by the hierarchical order of the church.

Endnotes

- ¹ Ronald Y. K. Fung, "Body of Christ," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove and Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 78.
- ² Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans., John Richard de Witt (London: SPCK, 1975), 372.
- ³ Fung, "Body of Christ," 78.
- ⁴ Cf. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 534.
- ⁵ Fung, "Body of Christ," 78.
- ⁶ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 550.
- ⁷ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 550f.
- ⁸ Fung, "Body of Christ," 80f.

CHAPTER 21

Place of Christ in History and the Universe

In Pauline writings, Christ is affirmed as the progenitor and origin of the universe. This affirmation is seen best in his letters to the Colossians (Col. 1:15-20). The weight of NT scholarly opinion today considers that Colossians 1:15–20 is a pre-Pauline “hymn” inserted into the letter’s train of thought by the author.¹ The Gnostic heretic at Colossae taught that the gulf between the infinite God and finite man was bridged across by subordinate angelic agencies.

In contrast to this, the apostle teaches that the gulf is bridged by Jesus Christ, who, being both God and Man, touches both and is the Reconciler of God and human. He shows that Christ has a double sovereignty, a twofold mediatorial function — in relation to the universe and in relation to the Church. Thus we have a most pregnant statement concerning the doctrine of the person of Christ with the view of showing that there is a real mediation between God and creation. The following discussion clearly shows that Christ occupies the absolute and entire significant roles in history and the universe.

The Superiority of Christ in Creation

Paul described Jesus Christ as the ‘first-born’ of all creation (Col. 1:15). The term ‘first-born’ can be understood either (i) in the sense of priority to creation in terms of the pre-existence of Christ, or (ii) in the sense of supremacy over creation.² As the pre-existent Christ, he is supreme over creation. He is not the greatest among the multitude of other creatures. There is no suggestion that Paul had this in mind. He was clearly placing Christ above all creatures. Paul is using a sharp expression in Col. 1:16, where God created all things ‘in him’, ‘through him’ and ‘for him.’ There could be no clearer way to have set Christ at the very centre of creation than this. There is no more explicit terms

could Paul have asserted his superiority.³

Here we can see that Christ is at the centre of creation and his superiority is strongly affirmed. God's creation, till now rebellious, will be brought in submission at the feet of God's exalted one.⁴

Christ is the Sustainer of the Universe

In the following verses, the creation is still mentioned. However, a new idea is introduced here, that is, all things 'hold together' in Christ. "And by him all things consist." The continued existence, as well as the creation, of all things, depends upon him. "My Father is still working, and I also am working (Jn. 5:17). He "upholds all things by the word of his power" (Heb. 1:3). According to this understanding, all things are upheld by Christ's power. Paul introduced this idea in Col. 1:17-18a. Paul said that all things *hold together in Christ*. This negates the idea of Christ as an absentee creator or as being uninterested in the creation. Paul apparently affirmed the lordship of Christ over creation, not only in the past (in the creation) but also in the present as the sovereign lord of the creation.⁵

Christ is the Actual Creator of all Things

"For in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." These words justify the title of "Firstborn of all creation." They were all created "in him," not merely "by him" – as if the germ of all creative power and wisdom lay in his infinite mind, as the sphere of their operation. The words impliedly exclude the Gnostic idea that Christ was an inferior agent of the infinite God. He was the creative centre of the universe.

Christ is himself the End or final Cause of creation

"All things have been created through him and for him." All things were created by him as well as for him — for the manifestation of his glory. "He that was the first Cause must be the last End." The final destination of the universe is referred to the Son, just as it is elsewhere ascribed to the Father (Romans 11:36). The Son is the Centre of the world's final unity.

Endnotes

¹ Peter T. O'Brien, *Word Biblical Commentary: Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 44 (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1998).

² C. F. D. Moule, *Colossians and Philemon*, 66, quoted in Guthrie, *New*

Testament Theology, 356.

³ Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 356.

⁴ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, [1974], 1993), 456.

⁵ Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, 356.

CHAPTER 22

The Development of the Church Order

Although there was a just beginning church structure in the pre-65 period, it was neither uniform nor properly organized. Between the years from 62-96 CE the church entered upon a new stage of development. As the eyewitnesses and the apostles were dying and as false teachers came up, the church began to establish the leaders for its further development and administrations, as well as to regularize the church order. The Pastoral Epistles deal chiefly with the internal government of the church and office in order to take care of the needs of the members. The apostles were no doubt the first and the foremost leaders of the church. They were the highest authority as long as they lived. However, other church orders such as elders were formed even during their lifetime.

APOSTLES**Backgrounds****Secular Background**

Apostello, a compound of *stello* (put up, make ready) and the preposition *apo* (from, away, back) means 'send, send away, chase away, send off.' Where delegation for a particular purpose is involved, the cause for sending is often particularly stressed.¹

Since the envoy (ambassador) has full powers and is the personal representative of the one sending him, a close connection is established between the sender and the recipient. This is particularly stressed by the use of *apostello*, while *pempo*, send, which is much commoner in secular Greek, stresses the mere fact of sending. *Apostello* also occurs as a technical term denoting divine authorization.²

Apostolos is derived from *apostello* first as a verbal adjective and then as a noun. It is first found in maritime/seafaring language, where it

means a cargo ship, or the fleet sent out. Later it denoted a commander of a naval expedition, or a band of colonist sent overseas. It was probably only later in Gnostic circles that *apostolos* came to convey the concept of emissaries as mediators of divine revelation. There, according to the system it could be used in the singular for a heavenly savior, or in plural for a number of saving persons or 'spiritual men.'³

OT Background

The LXX uses *apostello* and *exapostello* some 700 times. They are used almost exclusively to render *salach*, stretch out, send. The *saliach* was a surrogate (substitute) commissioned and sent either by a private individual—for example, to negotiate a marriage or as an agent representing the religious authorities in Jerusalem to Jews of the Diaspora. The LXX, following the Hebrew Text, uses *apostello* and its cognates to denote not the institutional appointment of someone to an office, but the authorization of him to fulfill a particular function or task which is normally clearly defined.

In the New Testament

Apostello is used 131 times in the New Testament. Luke applies *apostolos* expressly to the Twelve. They had been called by the historical Jesus to their office (Lk. 6:13). They had been with him throughout his ministry from the time of John's baptism. The risen Lord had met them in various appearances (Lk. 24:36 ff.; Acts 1:3). And so they had the best possible knowledge of what Jesus had said. According to Luke, there could be no other independent authorities beside the apostles. They had to make or confirm every important decision (cf. Acts 15). Luke never calls Paul an apostle. He clearly did not fulfill the preconditions for the office of an apostle which were fulfilled by the Twelve.⁴

Paul's Understanding of Apostleship

It is no longer clear whom Paul reckoned as apostle. To him, the call and commissioning to lifelong service of an apostle is not through men but 'through Jesus Christ and God the Father' (Gal. 1:1; cf. Rom. 1:5; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:2). It comes about through meeting with the risen Lord (1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:16) who himself gives apostle the message of the gospel (1 Cor. 11:23; 2 Cor. 4:6; Gal. 1:12). So, he certainly belonged to their number. This is affirmed in the Pauline letters. In fact, the term *apostle* represented no office in Paul's time, but it pointed to functions that carried authority in the missionary activities of the Christians.⁵ Apostleship, during that time, was not an authoritative office, but a kind of title specially meant for the authorization of missionary activity.

Then Junias, Andronicus (Rom. 16:7) and Barnabas were counted as apostles (cf. Acts 14:14; Gal. 2:1, 9, 13). There is no explicit reference for considering James, the Lord's brother, as an apostle, so also is Silvanus (2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thess. 1:1). At any rate Paul never applies the title of apostle to the Twelve as a definite group.⁶

There is no doubt that Paul and his companions did not accompany Jesus from his baptism to the ascension. Therefore, his apostleship is not exactly the same way as the Twelve were; however, it is obvious that their apostolic ministry was very much the same with other twelve apostles. The most outstanding difference between Paula and his companions and the Twelve is that they (Paul and his companions) did their ministry mainly but not exclusively to Gentiles.⁷

An apostle was unique in his commissioning, a figure apart from all other ranks of ministers in the church, but he was essentially *prebyteros*. The apostle differed from the presbyter-bishop in that his presbyteral ministry was derived directly from Christ himself while the presbyter's ministry was derived from Christ through the instrumentality of the apostle who commissioned him.

PREBYTEROS (BISHOP OR ELDER)

In the absence of an apostle the local churches were placed under the pastoral rule of *presbyteros* or *episkopos*. In apostolic days these word appear to have been two names for the same office-bearers. In the New Testament the word *prebyteros* is translated as 'elders.' The earliest Palestinian church was administered collegially by a board of such elders. An early responsibility of the elders was to supply presbyters for the churches established through Paul's missionary endeavors.

In the early church, *presbyteroi* are to be appointed in every town and they are to have the *episkopos* function (bishop, overseer, supervisor). That function includes checking the religious and ethical behavior of community members, caring for the needy out of common goods, and above all ensuring sound doctrine.⁸

Several NT passages indicate that in the earliest period of the church the *presbyter* or *elder* was an 'overseer' or 'episkopos' (Acts 20:17f; Phil. 1:1; Tit. 1:5, 7). In the earliest period the elder was the presiding bishop of a local congregation. While elders are not mentioned in the Pauline epistles, in the Pastoral Epistles, they were governed by teaching, preaching and pastoral ministry. They are anointed and empowered through the laying on of hands (1 Tim. 4:14). These functions of the elder closely parallel the functions of the priesthood in Israel. By the second century a distinction developed between the bishop who

presided over a council of elders and the elder whose authority was derived from the bishop. Not until the second and third centuries, however, did the church distinguish clearly a threefold pattern of ministry-bishop, elder, and deacon. After the decease of the apostles, by the middle of the second century, the church felt necessary to distinguish a presiding officer (*episkopos*) from the *presbyteros*. The *episkopos* became known as the bishop while the *prebyteroi* were the **elders**.

The Pastoral Epistles reflect a time when apostle and prophet have been succeeded by the Bishop or Elder in a proper church organization. The local churches are no longer lay churches. The chief function of the Bishop is to transmit and maintain the true faith. Presbyter/Elders (*presbyteroi*) were to be appointed in every town and they were to have the *episkopos* function (Bishop or overseer or supervisor). The terms *Bishop* and *Elder* were probably interchangeable. 'Bishop' or 'overseer' describes the activity of the person; 'Elder' describes his position of seniority. They apply to the same office, differing only in the aspect emphasized. The Elders were teachers, pastors and preachers who were responsible for the instruction and guidance of the church. The position of the Elder exposed him to danger both from the external world and from the inner community. Their function also included checking the religious and ethical behavior of community members, caring for the needy out of the common goods, and above all to maintain sound doctrines. They are to hold on to what they received (Tit. 1:5-9), correcting false teachers. Thus, they constitute a chain preserving apostolic teaching and authority. One of the most important functions of the presbyter/bishop was to rule and teach (1 Tim. 5:17f.).

DEACONS

The Greek term *diakonos* means 'servant' or 'minister' but usually translated 'deacon' in English versions. Paul introduced Phoebe, (their) sister as '*diakonos*' (Rom. 16:1). While some Bible versions translate this as 'servant' (KJV, NIV), other translate it as 'deacon/deaconess'. It is believed that this term *diakonos* represents an 'office' or whether it means 'missionary' or more generally 'helper' is not very certain especially in this given text.⁹ In the early second century the order of deacons was already developed in the time of St. Ignatius, who constantly refers to the bishop, the *presbyteros* and the deacons. Deacons are selected on the basis of personal qualities. They served under the bishop in charitable work and secular concern. It is one of the orders of ordained ministry in the polity of certain churches. The NT origins of

deacons as a distinct ministry are difficult to trace with clarity. In the post-NT church the deacon was attached to the bishop. The deacon performed liturgical functions such as reading the epistles and gospel lesson at the Eucharist, receiving the alms offerings, and performing pastoral functions such as visiting the poor, needy and ill. The servant role was threefold: service to the bishop (administrative), service to the congregation (liturgical) and service to the world (pastoral-social).

After the NT times deacons became an order of great importance and honour; they were the personal assistants of the bishops both in the liturgy and in the administration of the church affairs and discipline. By the end of the NT period there had emerged three orders in the church's ministry, those of bishops, presbyters and deacons.

Endnotes

- ¹ E. von Eicken and H. Lindner, "Apostle," in *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, vol. 1, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, [1967], 1986), 126.
- ² Eicken and Lindner, "Apostle," *NIDNTT*, 127.
- ³ Eicken and Lindner, "Apostle," *NIDNTT*, vol. 1, 127.
- ⁴ D. Müller, "Apostle," in *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, vol. 1, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, [1967], 1986), 129.
- ⁵ Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 131.
- ⁶ Müller, "Apostle," *NIDNTT*, vol. 1, 130.
- ⁷ C. G. Krusec, "Ministry," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000).
- ⁸ Brown, "Early Church," 1345.
- ⁹ Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 60.

CHAPTER 23

The Catholic Epistles

Introduction

There are twenty-one Epistles in the Bible. Thirteen of them are ascribed to Pauline and the rest are written by the others. We shall study seven Epistles in this paper, which are collectively called Catholic Letters namely, the Letter of James, the First and the Second Letter of Peter, the First, the Second and the Third Letter of John and the Letter of Jude. Unlike Pauline Letters which bear the names of the addressees, they are named after the authors. I John was the first to receive the designation, "Catholic Epistle," which was supposed to characterize the indefiniteness and the broadness of its address, and then this designation flowed to the entire group of epistles. The term "catholic" meant to the earliest Greek ecclesiastical writers not "recognized in the catholic church," but rather the term "catholic" meant to them "intended for the catholic church." But the designation preferred in the West was "Canonical epistles."¹ This paper will deal the sociology involve in these Letters as brief as possible due top the limitation of the size of the paper.

The Letter of James

The Letter of James was supposed to be written during (c.a.) 90 CE² or 80-130 CE.³ A special sensitivity for the poor, knowledge of the Jesus tradition, reference to the early and late rain typical of Palestinian climate (5:7) suggested Jerusalem or Palestine as the place of origin of the Letter of James.⁴ Others proposed somewhere within Palestine-Syria, e.g., Caesarea.⁵

Among different probable writers,⁶ "James the brother of the Lord," who figured prominently in the first generation of the Christian movement as one of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem has the heaviest weight (Mark 6:3; Acts 12:17; 15:23-29; 21:20-25; 1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19; 2:9, 11-14).⁷

The use of Greek, of the LXX, and the reference to Diaspora (1:1) suggest an audience beyond Palestine.⁸ If taken literally, “the twelve tribes in the dispersion” in the greeting would refer to Jewish Christians outside Palestine; if taken metaphorically, the original readers could be regarded as those who are spiritual heirs to Israel and sojourning away from their heavenly homeland. In either case, we learn nothing about the specific circumstances of the first readers.⁹

In those days (last halves of the first century), economic riches was found in the urban places. Even for the Jews, trade became the quickest means of becoming wealthy. Outside the urban centres agriculture remained the main activity of the people. The James’ church was also invaded by materialism and the merchants began to ignore God and boast of their wealth. In pre and post 70 in Palestine, the majority of population consists of peasants subsisting on a small plot of land. Many of the landless peasants became hired labourers or tenant farmers and were exploited by the wealthy people. The rapaciousness of the leading political figures, including the family of the priest, was notorious during this time. The weight of heavy taxation and misgovernment added to the other economic burdens.¹⁰ The rich are mostly hostile to Christianity and are oppressor of the poor through the courts and by other methods (2:6f; 5:4). The oppression here is from the rich (5:1-6). These Palestinian Jewish Christians formed an established religious body, with a regular meeting for instruction and for worship, of which no secret was made and which outsiders were more than welcome to visit. They were numerous enough to be called community in which social vices and virtues could exist. They had Elders (5:14), but there is no mention of bishop.¹¹ During the last decade of this period even the temple clergy were at odds, the wealthy high-priestly families siding with the Romans and depriving the lower clergy of their tithes, while the power were impoverished and sided with the Zealots.¹²

The Epistles of John

Traditionally it was assumed that the same writer composed John and the three Epistles of John.¹³ In the meantime, E. A. Brooke regarded John, the author of John Gospel as the author of the First Epistle of John in case the Epistle is earlier than the Gospel.¹⁴ Due to some reasons¹⁵ there is also a suggestion that the same person may not be the writer of the Epistles and the Gospel. It has been suggested that at least four figures appear as the writers of the Gospel and the Epistles: the Beloved Disciple (who was the source of the tradition), the evangelist who wrote the body of the Gospel, the Presbyter who wrote the Epistles, and the

redactor of the Gospel.¹⁶ C. H. Dodd estimated that the three Johannine Epistles were written in the province of Asia, between 96 CE and 110 CE by one of the ‘Presbyters’ who are known to have lived in that province at that period.¹⁷

I John

Since I John was known by Polycarp (c.a. 69-c.a. 155 CE) and Justine Martyr (c.a. 100-c.a. 163/5), I John had been certainly existed before 150 CE. While most scholars think Johannine Epistles were written after the Gospel, R. E. Brown put it ca. 90 CE, but before the redaction of the Gospel, just after 100 CE.¹⁸

The general character of the Epistles show that they are almost certainly addressed to a definite church, or group of churches, the circumstances and difficulties of which were well known to the writer, or writers of the Letters. The author of the First Epistle writes to Christians whom he knows, with whose needs he is fully acquainted, whom he has the right to help, and who acknowledge his right. There is nothing to affirm the destination of the Letters other than the universal tradition which says Ephesus, or at least Asia Minor.¹⁹

II and III John

II and III John are alike in their letter format, especially in their Opening and Closing. Strecker thinks II and III John were written at Ephesus around 100 CE and that I John were written later and then independently by other members of the Johannine School.²⁰ The similarity of their style and the parallelism of their structure clearly indicated the common authorship as well as nearness of date.²¹

The Letters of Peter:

I Peter

Peter died during Nero’s persecution. If Peter wrote this Letter, it must be earlier than 64–65 CE; if it is not, then the Apostle Peter cannot be the author.²² Regarding the authorship, the Greek prose of 1 Peter is quite sophisticated and the syntax is fairly complicated. This makes a question that Simon, the Galilean fisherman, could hardly be capable of writing Greek of this sophistication.²³

The date of I Peter is estimated around 90 CE.²⁴ Some scholars believed that the letter was written after Peter’s death but in Peter’s name.²⁵

This epistle is directed to a circle of churches located over a wide geographical area which is far away from the author and his own

congregation means that he may not have known specifically the ethnic and social composition of his audience. The clear impression is that the readers of the epistle are Jewish Christians.²⁶ Eusebius claimed I Peter was written to those of the Hebrews in the Dispersion of Pontus and Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Yet in the face of all this evidence, there is a near consensus that 1 Peter was in fact directed to a mainly Gentile Christian audience.²⁷

II Peter

II Peter 3:4 alone enables us to date II Peter with considerable probability ca. 80–90 CE.²⁸ The date for 2 Peter is disputed. It ranges from the 60s (if written by the apostle Peter) to the mid-second century (if pseudonymous). Watson preferred 80–90 CE as the earliest probable time for the writing of 2 Peter.²⁹

Endnotes

- ¹ Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1965), 283.
- ² Bo Reicke, *The Epistle of James, Peter and Jude: The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1964), xxxii.
- ³ Martin Dibelius, *James: A Commentary on the Epistle of James* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, [1964], 1981), 45. Reicke dated it 90 CE (cf. Reicke, *The Epistle of James, Peter and Jude*, 6.)
- ⁴ Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction the New Testament* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2007), 742.
- ⁵ James Hardy Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James: International Critical Commentary* (Edinburg: T & T Clark, [1916], 1978), 49.
- ⁶ (1) About *James son of Alphaeus* all that is known for certain is his place in the lists of the Twelve; (2) *James the son of Zebedee*. His early martyrdom, according to Acts 12:2, virtually excludes him from consideration when the question of his continuing role in early Christianity is asked. There is no reason to link him with the letter written by “James.” (3) We are left with *James “the Lord’s brother”* as a final candidate, though it is possible that the James of 1:1 in the letter may be an unknown, either with or without ties to connect him with James of the holy family.
- ⁷ Ralph P. Martin, *Word Biblical Commentary: James*, vol. 48 (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1998). Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James: The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. XII (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 177.
- ⁸ Brown, *An Introduction the New Testament*, 742.
- ⁹ Johnson, *The Letter of James: The New Interpreter’s Bible*, 177.
- ¹⁰ Peter H. Davids, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Epistle of James, a Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1982), 30-32.
- ¹¹ Ropes, *James: ICC*, 40-42.
- ¹² Davids, *James, a Commentary on the Greek Text*, 33.

- ¹³ Brown, *An Introduction the New Testament*, 389.
- ¹⁴ A. E. Brooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles: International Critical Commentary* (Edinburg: T & T Clark, [1912], 1980), xix.
- ¹⁵ For detail, see Brown, *An Introduction the New Testament*, 389 and Brooke, *Johannine Epistles: ICC*, xiii-xv.
- ¹⁶ Brown, *An Introduction the New Testament*, 389.
- ¹⁷ C. H. Dodd, *The Johannine Epistles* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, [1946], 1961), lxix.
- ¹⁸ Brown, *An Introduction the New Testament*, 390.
- ¹⁹ Brooke, *Johannine Epistles: ICC*, xxx.
- ²⁰ G. Strecker, *Hermeneia*, (1996) quoted by Brown, *An Introduction the New Testament*, 392.
- ²¹ Brooke, *Johannine Epistles: ICC*, lxxiii.
- ²² J. R. Michaels, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, vol. 49 (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1998).
- ²³ David L. Bartlett, *The First Letter of Peter: New Interpreters Bible*, vol. 12 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 228.
- ²⁴ Bartlett, *The First Letter of Peter: New Interpreters Bible*, vol. 12, 228.
- ²⁵ Bartlett, *The First Letter of Peter: New Interpreters Bible*, vol. 12, 228.
- ²⁶ Michaels, *1 Peter: WBC*, vol. 49.
- ²⁷ Michaels, *1 Peter: WBC*, vol. 49; J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary of the Epistles of Peter and Jude* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1969), 3.
- ²⁸ Richard J. Bauckham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Jude, 2 Peter*, vol. 50 (Dallas: Word Books Publisher 1998).
- ²⁹ Bartlett, *1 Peter: NIB*, vol. 12, 325.

CHAPTER 24

Similarities and Dissimilarities Between Synoptics and John

As we are now aware, the first three gospels are called the Synoptic Gospels because of their remarkable similarities. The Fourth Gospel and John Gospel is quite distinct from the synoptic Gospels in various aspects. In the meantime, as all were the product of the first century CE comprising the life, work and teaching of Jesus, there are considerable similarities also. We will deal with both the similarities and differences between the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel in this chapter.

Similarities

1) Topography

According to Synoptic Gospels, Jesus' main ministry is concentrated in Galilee. His only ministry in Jerusalem was in the week leading to the Passover, that is his passion. In the Fourth Gospel the scene of Jesus' ministry is almost entirely in Jerusalem and Judea; the only description of ministry in Galilee is of three signs in John 2:1–11; 4:43–54; and chapter 6.¹

In the meantime, we know that he had opposition from the other religious groups. If Jesus were not doing his ministry in Judea or Jerusalem before his ministry in Galilee, he would not have such hostility with them. The frequent presence of Jesus in Jerusalem and the intense opposition to him from the Pharisees and Jewish authorities described by John, shed light on the Synoptic references to the early hostility to Jesus of the scribes and Pharisees, as well as his frequent mention of the destiny that awaited him in Jerusalem (see e.g., Mk. 8:31 par.; Lk. 13:33).²

So, the relationship between the Synoptic Gospels and John is

implicit. The differences are the internal relationship among them. At the same time, there are scholars who see the peculiarity of John in this issue.³

2) Ministry of John the Baptist

Both the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel narrate John the Baptist at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. This is one of the outstanding similarities between them.

3) The Passion and Empty Tomb

The passion is the climax of both, and these are the concluding narrative of both the Synoptic Gospels and the Fourth Gospel.

Dissimilarities

1) Chronology

a) Beginning of Jesus' Ministry

Whereas in the Synoptic Gospels the ministry of Jesus and the call of the first disciples is set after the imprisonment of John the Baptist (Mk. 1:14–20), in John's Gospel Jesus commences his ministry in Judea during the period of John's work, and his earliest disciples appear to be disciples of the Baptist (Jn. 1:35–51).⁴

b) Length of Ministry of Jesus

The length of the ministry of Jesus according to the Synoptic Gospels is difficult to decide, but his one and only visit to Jerusalem for the Passover makes scholars think that it is only one year.⁵ In the meantime, the Gospel of John mentioned three Passovers. Due to this, the ministry of Jesus could have extended over two to three years,⁶ or even possibly four years.⁷

c) Time of Cleansing of the Temple

The cleansing of the Temple in the Synoptic Gospels occurs on Jesus' visit to Jerusalem at the Passover season (Mk 11:15–18). In John, however, it is set at the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus, immediately following the record of the turning of the water into wine at Cana (2:13–22). This has led many to assume that Jesus cleansed the Temple twice. Others have championed the Synoptics over against John, or John over against the Synoptics.⁸

d) The Date of the Last Supper

The Synoptic Gospels indicate that the last meal of Jesus with his disciples was a Passover celebration (cf. Mk. 14:12; Lk. 22:15). John

states that the meal took place on the eve of the Passover (Jn. 13:1; 18:28), and that Jesus died immediately prior to the Passover (19:31). How to deal with this clash of evidence has taxed the minds of scholars for generations.⁹

2) The Teaching of Jesus

a) Johannine Style

While short discourses and teaching parables are very common in the Synoptic Gospels, John has longer discourses and dialogue rather than parables.¹⁰ In other words, while Synoptic Gospel writers employed short style John used longer discourses in his own style.¹¹

b) Thematic Contrast

The supreme theme of the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels is summarized in Mark 1:15: It was God's good news that the time of waiting for the fulfillment of his promise was over; his kingdom was upon people and all must repent to receive it. John's emphasis is "life" or "eternal life," which is life in the kingdom of God (20:31).¹² In short, while Synoptic Gospels' Jesus' main mission is the 'Kingdom of God' Johannine main theme is 'eternal life.'

3) Other Contents

- a) While John Gospel has no diabolic possessions¹³ Synoptic Gospels have this (Legion-Mk. 5:9ff.; Lk. 8:30; Mt. 8:16; 15:22; Mk. 1:32; 5:18; 7:25).
- b) While Jesus did many miracles in Synoptic Gospels, there are only seven (?) miracles/signs in John.
- c) Synoptic Gospels use *dunamis* to mean *miracles* but John purposefully uses *semeia* (sign) to mean the *miracles*. John does not mean to emphasize the miracles as wonder working but a sign that Jesus is the unique Son of God, the Messiah.

4) Literary Relations

a) Dependence of John

Traditionally it is believed that John knew Synoptic Gospels. Since it is the latest of the Gospels, it is spontaneously thought that it is the conclusion or revised version of the Gospels. It is also believed that John certainly used Mark, probably Luke, less certainly Matthew. In the meantime, it is also certain that the Fourth Gospel is very much distinct from the Synoptic Gospels. Therefore, scholars also have in mind that none of the Synoptic Gospels became the basis of John's Gospel. Most

probably he used them from memory.¹⁴

b) Independence of John

The previous view was challenged by P. Gardner-Smith on two grounds: (1) the critics have overlooked the continued existence of oral tradition at the time when John was written; (2) they are blinded by the similarities between John and the Synoptics to see the differences between them.¹⁵

5) Theological Differences

a) Realized Eschatology

While the eschatology is more futuristic in the Synoptic Gospels the Fourth Gospel is more present or realized. C. H. Dodd quoted Jesus' word 'Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live' (Jn. 11:25) to mean realized/present eschatology. He claimed that the believer possesses *eternal life* here and now. According to him, John's emphasis is the qualitative aspect of life rather than quantitative aspect. It is not about the endlessness of time but quality of life.¹⁶ So, the eternal life, according to John, which is properly a future aspect, becomes a *present realization of the future* in Christ.¹⁷

b) Kingdom of God and Eternal Life

While the Kingdom of God is the central theme in the Synoptic Gospels, almost altogether disappeared from Jesus' teaching in John. The concept of eternal life becomes Jesus' central message.¹⁸

c) I Am Sayings

One of the most distinctive features of John is the I Am Sayings (*ego eimi*-I am the bread of life [Jn. 6:35]; the light of the world [Jn. 8:12] etc.) that are lacking in the Synoptic Gospels.

Endnotes

- ¹ G. R. Beasley-Murray, "Synoptic and John," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 793.
- ² Beasley-Murray, "Synoptic and John," 793.
- ³ Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 364.
- ⁴ Beasley-Murray, "Synoptic and John," 793.
- ⁵ Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans., John E. Alsup, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 293.
- ⁶ Beasley-Murray, "Synoptic and John," 793.
- ⁷ Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, 293.
- ⁸ Beasley-Murray, "Synoptic and John," 793.

- ⁹ Beasley-Murray, "Synoptic and John," 794.
- ¹⁰ Brown, *An Introduction the New Testament*, 364f.
- ¹¹ Beasley-Murray, "Synoptic and John," 794.
- ¹² Beasley-Murray, "Synoptic and John," 794.
- ¹³ Brown, *An Introduction the New Testament*, 365.
- ¹⁴ Beasley-Murray, "Synoptic and John," 794.
- ¹⁵ Beasley-Murray, "Synoptic and John," 794.
- ¹⁶ C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 148.
- ¹⁷ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, vol. 2 (London: SPCK, 1993), 215.
- ¹⁸ Cf. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 251.

CHAPTER 25

Divorce Controversy: Men-women Relationship

Jesus seems to either break or nullify the laws especially regarding the sabbatical laws. He also seems to replace the Old Testament laws by saying “You have heard...but I say to you...” (Mt. 5:21-43). However, Jesus is stricter than the so-called conservative and hardcore followers of Judaism or the so-called champions of legalism especially regarding the matter of relationship. One of such teachings is dealt in this chapter. The Pharisees asked Jesus if it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife (Mk. 10:2). This question that the Pharisees addressed to Jesus is still a troubling one today.¹

Divorce in the Old Testament

The great debate over divorce among the rabbis of Second Temple Judaism focused on two OT texts: Gen. 2:22–24 (with 1:27) and Deut. 24:1–4. Gen. 2:22–24 teaches that God created males and females (Gen. 1:27) in order to re-create them into an inviolable union. Marriage thereby establishes a new physical relationship (“one *flesh*”) comparable to other familial relationships, held together by a natural (i.e., hereditary) and therefore indissoluble covenant.²

However, the prohibition of remarriage (Deut. 24:4a) is also there. In this verse, remarriage is prohibited if she is **defiled or unclean**. But this prohibition was a practice regulated by unknown customs or rules. In Deut. 24:1, it is said that men could officially divorce his wife on condition that she does not please her husband. Indeed, the practical issue in the debate between rabbis was to explain the grounds for divorce, centering on the meaning of the vague phrase (Deut. 24:1) “an indecent thing,” which when found in a woman brought her into disfavour

with her husband and gave him reason to issue her “a bill of divorcement.” Two schools of rabbinic interpretation establish the range of possible meanings of this ‘indecent thing.’ The school of Shammai contended that the phrase referred to unlawful sexual behaviours. The school of Hillel contended for a much broader definition which included childlessness, cultic offenses, and even failure to complete household tasks.³

Divorce in the New Testament

Jesus’ teaching on divorce (Mt. 5:31–32; 19:3–9; Mk. 10:2–12; Lk. 16:18) can be understood from the background of this rabbinic discussion of the deuteronomic text as well as the “one flesh” ideal of the creation narrative. The Lukan version seems to be the most significant. Looking from the male perspective of Palestinian Judaism, Jesus challenges that the man who initiates a divorce, who marries a divorced woman, or who then remarries another woman commits adultery. Although his teaching was similar to that of the Qumran Essenes, it was dissimilar to current, mainstream rabbinic teaching in three ways: (1) it prohibited remarriage, even to the woman with a bill of divorcement; (2) it broadened adulterous behavior to include a man’s infidelity (cf. Mk. 10:11) and a woman’s remarriage; and (3) it ruled out serial monogamy.

Jesus’ Teaching on Divorce as Found in Mark 10:2-12 and Matthew 19:3-12

The debate during Jesus’ lifetime focused on the acceptable grounds for divorce.⁴ It also appears from Matthew that the question addressed to Jesus was asked in a framework of the rabbinic debates on divorce. These debates centred around Deut. 24:1-4 and the question of what the words “some indecency in her” signified.

There is a misinterpretation in these passages even by the Pharisees. It is apparent that the passage in Deut. 24:1-4, which originally was meant to protect the wife and give her certain safeguards: possession of divorce papers, right to remarry, prevention of the former husband from interfering in a subsequent marriage, and so on. But this was viewed from the perspective of how one could divorce his wife. As a result the major concern of the debate seemed to involve defining what constituted “an indecency.” In their mindset, they thought that it is lawful to divorce on justifiable grounds, which even Moses did not clearly write. Due to this unobvious cause, the Jews began to interpret for men’s advantages against women.

The Interpretation of Jesus’ Teaching on Divorce by Matthew

The context in which Jesus uttered this was one in which a man could divorce his wife for such causes as her burning his supper, his finding a prettier wife, and so forth. It would appear therefore that Jesus, here, exaggerates or overstates his point in order to reveal how contrary the whole concept of divorce is to the divine purpose. Jesus in his teaching sought to reveal that divorce is contrary to God’s intention. Marriage is for Jesus “until death does you part.” Yet Matthew teaches that there is at least one instance in which divorce is permissible. In the case of adultery divorce is permissible. It is not mandatory, but it is permissible.⁵

For the disciple, who seeks to live a life “more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees” (5:20), neither the hardness of heart (cf. 5:28) which made the deuteronomic legislation necessary (19:8a) nor the adultery which makes divorce possible can be permitted. Thus, while Matthew apparently allows divorce if adultery is found, such a possibility is debatable for the righteous disciple. Clearly, the sum of the synoptic tradition argues that Jesus’ teaching intended to create among his disciples intolerance for divorce even though Jewish law tolerated it.⁶

The Interpretation of Jesus’ Teaching on Divorce by Mark

Among the Jesus’ sayings on divorce, Markan account (10:1-12) is peculiar from others. Matthew and Luke added exceptional clause, a condition for divorcing wife (if they are indecent). But Mark does not have this exception on any ground. Mark’s Jesus simply said, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery (Mk. 10:11, 12). Scholars assume that the other Evangelists (Matthew and Luke) furnish Mark, their source and added this exception. Thus, Mark’s account seems to be the most authentic.⁷

For Mark, there is no point for divorce. Jesus did not accept the current Jewish tradition that accepts divorce. Instead, he interpreted that Moses permitted them official divorce due to their hardness of hearts. The purpose of God is to become one, but not separation on any ground.

Application in Our Own Context

Matthew and Paul list two instances in which divorce is permissible even if not mandatory: adultery, and desertion by an unbelieving spouse.

The emphasis of Jesus is not on the “exceptions” (in case of adultery or marrying unbelieving spouse) in which divorce is permissible. Rather, he seeks to emphasize the permanence of marriage. The divine intention is a marriage “until death us do part.” A divorce, any divorce, reveals a

failure of the divine purpose of marriage. Divorce, for whatever the cause, witnesses to a failure somewhere of what God originally ordained for his creation. The ideal is a lifelong, monogamous marriage that resembles the love affair of Christ and his Church (Eph. 5:22-33).

Yet divorce does happen among Christians. What should the Church do in this regard? The Church would never forget that God delights in forgiveness. A divorce signifies the failure of the divine purpose in the life of the couple. The Church need not minimize the failure that divorce signifies, but it needs to assure both divorced sinners and non-divorced sinners that God delights in forgiveness and that God forgets. Then it must seek to help in every way possible to make any subsequent marriage an example of the divine ideal.

Although the Jewish tradition permitted divorce on some arranged fictitious grounds Jesus did not follow this tradition. In his new community, Jewish patriarchy that violates men-women relationship, especially women's rights regarding easy divorce on certain small and irrational causes, does not occupy place. Instead, Jesus prohibits any form of divorce. He rather promotes permanence of marriage as it is the purpose of God.

Endnotes

- ¹ Robert H. Stein, "Is It Lawful for a Man to Divorce His Wife?," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 22, no. 2 (June 1979): 115-121.
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- ⁵ Stein, "Is It Lawful For a Man to Divorce His Wife?" *JETS*, 119.
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CHAPTER 26

Sabbath Controversy

Background of Sabbath

Ex. 16:23 is where the word 'Sabbath' is used for the first time in the Bible. It can be translated as 'God's stop.'¹ This occurred in the wilderness when Moses gave instruction about the manna. As God stopped his creation on the seventh day, so would the Israelites on the seventh day picking the manna. That was on account of keeping the Sabbath holy as God stopped working and made that day holy. That is the original background of Israelites observing the seventh day, that is, Sabbath day.

The form of the Ten Commandments in Ex. 20 states that the Sabbath is a memorial, a sign of creation, in which human rest imitates, or recapitulates, the divine rest after the acts of creation. In addition to that, in the Deuteronomic form of the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath is also presented as a memorial of Egyptian bondage and the exodus.² Therefore, Sabbath is too profound to violate for the conservative Jews.

Jesus Breaks Sabbath Law

Jesus, though born and brought up in a Jewish family within the circle of conservative Judaism, purposefully broke the Sabbath law. He called himself the Lord of Sabbath (Mt. 12:8; Mk. 2:28; Lk. 6:5). However, Jesus did not randomly violate Sabbath but he has a greater care on humanity than ritualistic observation of Sabbath. Since his opponents were always Pharisees and Sadducees who painstakingly observed Sabbath he is always charged against the Jewish rite and tradition. The most important Sabbath controversy between Jesus and his opponents can be seen when Jesus and his disciples went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and

to eat (in Mt. 12:1-13 and Mk. 2:23-28). As they were charged by the Pharisees, Jesus defended his disciples as the Lord of Sabbath.

In order fully to understand this story about plucking grain on the Sabbath, we must read the story in a variety of contexts, beginning with its place in the immediate context of Mark. In Mark 2:1-3:6, two healing stories (2:1-12; 3:1-6) frame three pronouncement stories (2:15-17; 18-20; 23-28). The five stories share a common conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders, a conflict that increases the intensity of the conflict on Sabbath observance causing the Pharisees and Herodians to find some way to destroy Jesus (3:6). Thus, Mark 2:23-28 is an integral part of Mark's attempt to explain the reason for the on-going conflict between Jesus and his followers and the religious establishment of first-century Judaism.

Jesus' Humanitarianism over Against Legalism

The story begins as Jesus was going through a grain field on one Sabbath day (Mk. 2:23a). The trouble starts when his disciples are "making their way" by plucking heads of grain (2:23b). Pharisees appear to accuse the disciples of "doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath" (2:24), evidently a reference to the various prohibitions against harvesting grain on the Sabbath (Ex. 34:21). It is the disciples' behaviour and not Jesus' conduct or teaching that is under scrutiny here. Jesus, as their leader, is nonetheless implicated by the accusation, since in ancient thought the master is responsible for the behaviour of the disciples. So Jesus offers a defence in behalf of his followers.³

We have a very interesting thing here. There is the question of how far Jesus and his disciples are from some town or settlement when this dispute occurs, because according to the Jewish law, there is a set limit outside of which one was not allowed to walk on the Sabbath. In the Mishnah, that limit is two-thousand cubits (roughly one-thousand yards). It is not strange if one asks why the disciples did not simply go into the nearby settlement to ask for food if they were hungry.⁴ It is also strange that the Pharisees popped up out of nowhere and criticized against Jesus because plucking the heads of the grain (Mk. 2:23).

Jesus responds by citing a scriptural passage. When David and his companions were hungry, David entered the temple and ate the bread of presence, giving it also to his companions to eat (1 Samuel 21:1-6). Clearly here was a case where the urgency of human need, in this case hunger, took precedence over strict Sabbath observance.

In his appeal, Jesus draws on a well-established tradition, grounded in the Jewish scriptures (Ex. 23:12; Deut. 5:14) that understands the law

to have a humanitarian intent to challenge another Jewish tradition that is more legalistic. This view of the law's humanitarian function continues in post-biblical Judaism. For example, in the Mekilta on Ex. 31:14 we read: "The Sabbath is handed over to you, not you to it."⁵

Certainly this passage affirms the claim that meeting human need takes priority over strict observance of religious ritual, and as we have seen, this assertion is grounded in Jewish thinking of Jesus' day. But this story is *not* therefore to be taken exclusively or even primarily as a celebration of human freedom over tradition.⁶ To Jesus, service to humanity is prior to legalism; compassion is more important than tradition.

Sabbath Healing

When Jesus healed on Sabbath, not one of them suffered from life-threatening sickness who cannot wait for the next day (Mk. 3:1-6; Lk. 13:10-17; 14:1-6). According to the Jewish law, he should not have to heal on the Sabbath. When Jesus healed them in the Sabbath day, the synagogue leader angrily scolded them to come on the other six days and get healed but not on Sabbath. The synagogue leader had rightly done his job, from the perspective of the Sabbath law. They blindly wanted to observe Sabbath that they did not have compassion on their fellow human who suffered. Jesus intentionally violated Sabbath by healing the sick. He challenged the existing religion and its understanding because the way they worshipped God and the observation of the Sabbath were not from divine, but from human. He conflicted against the blind religion which was influenced by the demonic power and instead established the kingdom of God in which God is worshipped from within.

Christological Emphasis

Mark 2:27-28 beautifully conveys Jesus divinity: The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath. In this artistic saying, there is a missing premise:

Major premise: "The Sabbath was made for humans" (27a) with its opposing corollary: "not humans for the Sabbath" (27b)

Conclusion: "So the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (28).

The missing premise or principle here is something like, "I am no ordinary human, but a figure like the Son of man, who came to serve and not to be served, and through that service will express my authority and Lordship" (cf. Mark 10:41-45). As such, Jesus is more than the receiver of the Sabbath, he is also its Lord, and he has the authority to allow his disciples to break the Sabbath.⁷

The appropriate response to this story by the follower of Jesus, then and now, is not to insist on the right and freedom to do something because we could, but rather to submit oneself wholly to the Lordship of Christ. We are not called to be Lord of the Sabbath; that role is reserved exclusively for Christ.⁸

This kind of legalism and traditionalism can be the deadlock of the true Gospel anywhere. Doctrinal polemic and dogmatic war frequently divide churches all over the world today. Doctrinal superiority complex tears the church apart and numerous denominations arouse. Tradition and interpretation supersede compassion on our fellow human. Jesus' mission to human should be imparted in our church today.

Endnotes

- ¹ Stephen A. Geller, "Manna and Sabbath: A Literary-Theological Reading of Exodus 16," *Interpretation* 59, no. 1 (January 2005): 7.
- ² Geller, "Manna and Sabbath: A Literary-Theological Reading of Exodus 16," 15.
- ³ Mikeal C. Parsons, "Mark 2:23-28," *Interpretation* 59 no. 1 (January 2005): 58.
- ⁴ John P. Meier, "The Historical Jesus and the Plucking of the Grain on the Sabbath," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 66 no. 4 (2004): 574.
- ⁵ Parsons, "Mark 2:23-28," 58.
- ⁶ Parsons, "Mark 2:23-28," 58.
- ⁷ Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 144.
- ⁸ Mikeal C. Parsons, "Mark 2:23-28," *Interpretation* 59 no. 1 (Jan. 2005): 59.

CHAPTER 27

Political Theology in the Book of Revelation

The Book of Revelation was written to encourage the Christian churches which were threatened by destructive persecution to resistance and to perseverance, and to assure them of Christ's early victory over the powers of the antichrist.¹ The clearest internal evidence indicates a date after 70 CE. Since the internal and external evidences do not point to a precise date, either Ireneaus' suggestion (96 CE)² or Kümmel's estimation, 90-95 CE³ or 90-96⁴ are reliable to a great extent.

Sociological Factors for Suffering

An assumption that the Book of Revelation was written to give and comfort to Christians in Asia Minor in time of trouble⁵ seems to be well fitted when we closely examine the text and the messages in it. A. Y. Collins suggested that the Book of Revelation does not reflect an already existing, organized community. She says that John wished to create a like-minded community and wished them to understand the current crises as presented it and to respond to it in a particular way. In her studies, John's intention was to set forth, for his community, a dualistic term: a struggle between God and Satan; Christ and the Beast. She presented the community's enemies (hostile Jews, Roman authorities and perhaps all who are outside the group) are the followers of Satan and the Beast.⁶ This sociological clash, i.e., the dualistic encountering bodies (Christians and the Roman authorities) squashed the weaker section, Christians suffered decisively.

Social Defenselessness of Christians towards the End of the First Century

In the first century, especially in the later part, the Christians were socially

defenseless/helpless to a variety of legal charges.⁷ The political situation was so bad that the Christians, even the Jewish Christians like John, could not claim the Jewish political privileges.⁸ In Roman law any religion was illegal or unauthorized outside its country of origin, though this was not enforced unless there was anti-social behavior.⁹ However, Jews has the privileges of practicing their religion in any part of the empire since they were spread around and were exempted from military services and the imperial cult. Though Christians at the beginning as a sect within Judaism enjoyed this privilege lost it from the moment they cut their tie with Judaism.

Endnotes

- ¹ Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 329.
- ² David Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary: Revelation 1-5*, vol. 52a (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1998), lxi.
- ³ Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 329.
- ⁴ Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Political Perspective of the Revelation to John," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96, no. 2 (1977): 246.
- ⁵ David Barr, "The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation of the World: A Literary Analysis," *Interpretation* 38 no. 1 (1984): 39.
- ⁶ Adela Yarbro Collins, "Revelation of John: An Apocalyptic Response to a Social Crises," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 8, no. 1 (1981): 12.
- ⁷ Adela Yarbro Collins, "Reading the Book of Revelation in the Twentieth Century," *Interpretation* 40 no. 3 (1986): 240.
- ⁸ Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, "The Follower of the Lamb: Visionary Rhetoric and Social Political Situation," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 137.
- ⁹ John Sweet, *Revelation* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1990), 28.

CHAPTER 28

Resistance in the Revelation to John

Protest

It is viewed Johannine messages in the Book of Revelation as the protest and struggles within the society.¹ According to his understanding, the coming of the Kingdom of God in Revelation marks the great climax of history which is full of oppression and suffering.² The Christians also protested the Roman Empire due to the imperial rule. They resisted the state, not by its authority, but due to the emperor worship. The supreme protest of the Christians, seems to be against the imperial cult.³

This imperial cult was seen by means of people's allegiance to the religious, social and political strategies of the empire. The Johannine community protested against all forms of sacrifice, either to emperor or to any other person.⁴ In that situation, even their identity as Christians was at stake. Sacrifice made to worship the emperor was expected and required also of Christians. Refusal meant death for the followers of the lamb (13:15). Thus, for the Christians, the imperial cult, which represented a total submission to the empire, a submission that is due only to God was the major problem.⁵ When John saw that the Christians were compromising to the Roman environment in order to avoid persecution and oppressions, he uttered against their compromising attitude with the imperial cult.

Holy War and Passive Resistance in the Revelation to John

The first point to be made is that the holy war imagery is used in such a way as to encourage a passive acceptance of suffering in the eschatological conflict. In the paradigmatic narrative of chap. 12, the child and the woman are rescued from the attacks of the adversary. The story does not advocate or reinforce a program of active resistance or even self-defence, but awakens trust in the power of heaven to protect

and rescue. This holy war does not call for military war. So, Rev. 13:10 is an explicit rejection of the militant option. In either case it is clear that the elect are given a passive role in the eschatological conflict.

No major role is taken by the elect in the final stage of the eschatological conflict; rather the adversaries are defeated by the risen Christ and other heavenly beings.

Martyrdom in the Revelation to John

The terminological question regarding the process in which *martyr* comes to mean “blood witness,” i.e., someone who has died for the faith, is not relevant to this study. But it means a voluntary death in the context of persecution.

In the seven messages there is a repeated emphasis on the virtue of endurance or steadfastness. In most cases the reference is not to a general characteristic of the life of faith, but to the stance to be taken in the context of persecution which is seen as the tribulation of the end time. This example can be seen in Rev. 2:3, 10, 13, 19, 25; 3:8-11 etc.

The souls under the altar (Rev. 6:9-11) address the holy and true ruler saying, “How long until you will pass judgment and avenge our blood upon those who dwell upon the earth?” The association of the souls with the heavenly altar seems to imply that their deaths are conceived of as sacrifices offered to God. The expectation that God would avenge innocent blood is attested elsewhere.

The cry of the martyrs is immediately followed by the final battle against the kings of the earth. This sequence suggests that for the author of Revelation the eschatological battle is to be an act of divine vengeance for the blood of the martyrs.

We began by raising the question about what stance Revelation advocates over against the contemporary ruling power. That question has been answered on one level, i.e., what *action* is to be taken. The readers are not to take up arms in active resistance, not even in the final battle. Rather they are to endure persecution including death and to hope for ultimate salvation (chap. 12; 2:10; 13:10). The death of each martyr brings the end time nearer.

Martyrdom and Political Critique

Martyrdom in Revelation, however, is not simply a matter of individual salvation. As noted above, the deaths of the martyrs bring the end nearer. The eschatological process for Revelation involves destruction of the earth, torture and destruction of the dwellers on earth, and suffering and

death for the martyrs. These various manifestations of the wrath of God which amount to the destruction of his creation are seen as necessary by the author because of his perception of the cosmos as pervasively corrupted.

The fact that the 144,000 martyrs in 14:1-5 is called the first fruits indicates that they are to be understood as those who have died as a result of their faith. The way that this group is described in vv. 4-5 especially indicates that they are conceived of as a special group, set apart. They represent purity over against the defiled earth. Death has a purifying significance for themselves (7:14) and, as part of the eschatological process, contributes to the coming of the new creation. So, martyrdom does not simply mean individual death but the high call for God and the nearness of vengeance over against the oppressors.

Summary

The Revelation to John makes use of holy war traditions to interpret the situation of its first readers. In doing so it advocates passive resistance. The faithful are to suffer persecution and death in the present. They expect a violent resolution of the conflict in which heavenly forces will defeat their adversaries. Their contribution to this outcome may be made in the form of a martyr's death, which hastens the end, because a fixed number of martyrs must die before the eschatological battle can be initiated. The value of the martyr's death is greatly enhanced by the example of Christ. Thus martyrdom in Revelation is part of the eschatological process. To John, the rule of Rome is incompatible with the rule of God.⁶

Endnotes

- ¹ Peter A. Abir, “A Theology of Protest in the Book of Revelation,” *Indian Theological Studies* 33 no. 1 (1996): 43.
- ² Abir, “A Theology of Protest in the Book of Revelation,” 45.
- ³ Abir, “A Theology of Protest in the Book of Revelation,” 49.
- ⁴ S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: np, 1984), 241, 243, cited in Abir, “A Theology of Protest in the Book of Revelation,” 49.
- ⁵ Abir, “A Theology of Protest in the Book of Revelation,” 50.
- ⁶ Collins, “The Political Perspective of the Revelation to John,” 246.

CHAPTER 29

Allegiance to Rulers and the Question of Payment of Taxes

Paul, like Jesus in his earthly ministry, is not an ardent rebel against the government. He is a good citizen of the good government. He also teaches an optimistic view on and the civil authorities. Civil authority is the centralized control in society whose power to formulate and to enforce the basic formal rules of the society is granted to it by the groups which possess social power. The civil authority ranged from the emperor to governors (proconsuls, procurators and kings) (representing the emperor) to civil magistrates carrying out local rule.

The occasion for Paul's mention of civil authority in Romans 13:1–7 most likely was a recurring problem faced by him in his missionary preaching: the temptation of some to use their Christian freedom in a way deemed to violate responsible social relationships with respect to marriage, labor and slavery, or to see themselves as freed from moral codes.¹

It was the consistent and official teaching of the Christian church that obedience must be given to, and prayers made for, the civil power, even when the wielder of that civil power was a Nero. Paul's attitude towards the civil government and rulers is not rebellious but optimistic. There can be several reasons for this.

1) In Paul's case there was one immediate cause of his stressing of civil obedience. The Jews were notoriously rebellious. Palestine, especially Galilee, was constantly furious with insurrection. Above all there were the Zealots; they were convinced that there was no king for the Jews but God; and that no tribute must be paid to anyone except to God. Their idea of the establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah is only through arms. They believed that God would not be helping them

unless they embarked on violent action to help themselves. Their aim was to make any civil government impossible. They were known as the dagger-bearers. They were fanatical nationalists sworn to terrorist methods. Not only did they use terrorism towards the Roman government, they also wrecked the houses and burned the crops and assassinated the families of their own fellow-Jews who paid tribute to the Roman government.

In this Paul saw no point at all. It was the direct negation of all Christian conduct. And yet, at least in one part of the nation, it was normal Jewish conduct. It may well be that Paul writes here with such inclusive definiteness because he wished to dissociate Christianity altogether from insurrectionist Judaism, and to make it clear that Christianity and good citizenship went necessarily hand in hand.

2) According to Paul, no one can entirely dissociate oneself from the society in which one lives and has a part. No one can opt out of the nation. As a part of it, he/she enjoys certain benefits which one could not have as an individual; but one cannot reasonably claim that all the privileges and refuse all the duties. As he/she is of the part of body of the church, he/she is also part of the body of the nation; there is no such thing in this world as an isolated individual. One has a duty to the state and must discharge it even if a Nero is on the throne.

3) To the state, one owes protection. A state is essentially a body of people who have covenanted together to maintain certain relationships between each other by the observance of certain laws. Without these laws and the mutual agreement to observe them, the bad and the selfish strong one would be supreme; the weaker would always suffer. Carrying out such order and care is the work of the state/authority. The citizens are safe only under the guardianship of the state. That is why, one should be faithful to the state and should allow him/herself to be protected. Every ordinary one owes one's security to the state, and is therefore under a responsibility to it.

4) To the state ordinary people owe a wide range of services which individually they could not enjoy. It would be impossible for everyone to have his/her own water, light, sewage, transport system etc. these things are obtainable only when people agree to live together. And it would be quite wrong for anyone to enjoy everything the state provides and to refuse all responsibility to it. That is one compelling reason why the Christian is bound in honor to be a good citizen and to take his/her part in all the duties of citizenship, be it paying taxes or not.

5) Above all, Paul's main view of the state was that the Roman

Empire was the divinely ordained instrument to save the world from chaos. Take away that empire and the world would disintegrate into many fragments. It was in fact the *Pax Romana*, the Roman Peace, which gave the Christian missionaries to do their works. Thus, the citizens or Christians should be bound together by Christian love; but they are not to negate the government.

6) “Then the children are free”

The collectors of the temple tax came to Peter and asked if Jesus paid the temple tax. Peter answered he did. Jesus’ response here is that just as the royal sons did not pay to their father, kings, so also is Jesus, the unique son of God in paying the temple tax. Although the point is disputed, the *didrachma* (lit., “two drachmas”) was probably not a civil tax in support of Rome but a Jewish “tax” levied on every male Jew between the ages of twenty and fifty in support of the temple and its services.

The point is that, just as royal sons are exempt from the taxes imposed by their fathers, so too Jesus is exempt from the “tax” imposed by his Father. In other words Jesus acknowledges the temple tax to be an obligation to God; but since he is uniquely God’s Son, therefore he is exempt (v. 26). The focus of the pericope is thus supremely Christological. Exempt though he is, Jesus will pay the tax so as not to offend. Thus he sets an example later followed by Paul (1Cor 8:13; 9:12, 22). Breaking the laws is not Jesus’ mission, but to fulfill it. Thus Jesus says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill (Mt. 5:17).

Paul saw in the state an instrument in the hand of God, preserving the world from chaos. Those who administered the state were playing their part in that great task. Whether they knew it or not they were doing God’s work, and it was the Christian’s duty to help and not to hinder.

Endnotes

¹ Stephen Charles Mott, “Civil Authority,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 141f.

CHAPTER 30

Resistance to Evil Rulers (Rom. 13:1-7)

We have just discussed above that Paul was having a positive view on civil government. He did not reject the authorities even when they are tyrants and cruel rulers. In the matter of exercising political authority, rulers are “servants of God”. Their power is not their own; it comes from God. To resist them, therefore, in the exercise of their God-given responsibility is to resist God and so to incur his judgment and wrath (vv 4–5). Hence Paul can even say that submission to political authority should be motivated not simply by fear of retribution but by concern for a good conscience—not simply a matter of accepting the harsh realities which cannot be changed, but a matter of theological principle. Such orderliness is part of the creative purpose of God. To cooperate in and submit to its working is all of a piece with the creature’s acknowledgment of the Creator.¹

This is not to mean that Paul encourages evil rulers or the tyranny itself. The prophetic ministry in the OT such as Nathan against David (2 Sam. 12:1-12), Jonah to Nineveh, Amos and Jeremiah was the ministry of conflict against the kings and the high priests who went against God’s way. Jesus also numerously conflicted against religious leaders. He even called Herod as ‘fox’ when he found fault in him (Lk. 13:32). As passive resistance is insisted during the Christian persecution during Nero in Rome Paul also exhorts his audiences in Rome to persevere and pay allegiance to the civil authority or government. However, this principle has been misused in order to subjugate and oppressed others. One of the best examples can be seen in South Africa. The absolute majority Black were ruled and oppressed by the minority white by misinterpreting Rom. 13:1-7. That oppressive system is called Apartheid. The South African church leaders, in reaction against that apartheid, produced a document called the ‘Kairos Document,’² which was

published on 25 September 1985 Johannesburg, and they reread Roman 13:1-7. This is a true prophetic ministry against the evil and oppressive form of authorities which was done by the OT prophets and Jesus himself.

The Kairos Document Preface

The KAIROS document is a Christian, biblical and theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa. It is an attempt by concerned Christians in South Africa to reflect on the situation of death in is S. Africa. In June 1985 as the crisis was intensifying in the country, as more and more people were killed, maimed and imprisoned, as one black township after another revolted against the apartheid regime, as the people refused to be oppressed or to co-operate with oppressors, facing death by the day, and as the apartheid army moved into the townships to rule by the barrel of the gun, a number of theologians who were concerned about the situation expressed the need to reflect on this situation to determine what response by the Church and by all Christians in South Africa would be most appropriate.

As Rom. 13:1-7 was misused by the oppressors the Kairos Document reread and interpret it according to their context. This interpretation is very relevant especially for the third world countries.

Interpretation of Romans 13:1-7

As we have discussed above, according to Rom. 13:1-7, the citizens are to obey and pay allegiance to the civil authorities because they are ordained by God. Even if the rulers are like Nero, Paul said that the authority itself is God's ordained office. As a result, it has to be obeyed. The abuse is from the ruler's side, but the people's responsibility is to cope up with the government. But we need to know how far sin or evil has to be counteracted or tolerated. Did Paul try to legitimize an attitude of blind obedience and absolute servility towards the state by quoting this text?

In this text Paul is presenting us with the absolute and definitive Christian doctrine about the State, in other words an absolute and universal principle that is equally valid for all times and in all circumstances.

What has been overlooked here is one of the most fundamental of all principles of biblical interpretation: every text must be interpreted in its context. The context in these passages is not only the chapters and verses that precede and succeed this particular text nor is it even limited to the total context of the Bible. The context includes also the

circumstances in which Paul's statement was made. Paul was writing to a particular Christian community in Rome, a community that had its own particular problems in relation to the State at that time and in those circumstances.

Many authors have drawn attention to the fact that in the rest of the Bible God does not demand obedience to oppressive rulers. Examples can be given ranging from Pharaoh to Pilate and through into Apostolic times. The Jews and later the Christians did not believe that their imperial overlords, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks or the Romans, had some kind of divine right to rule them and oppress them. These empires were the beasts described in the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelations. God allowed them to rule for a while but God did not approve of what they did. It was not God's will. His will was the freedom and liberation of Israel. Rom 13:1-7 cannot be contradicting all of this.

But most revealing of all is the circumstances of the Roman Christians to whom Paul was writing. They were not revolutionaries. They were not trying to overthrow the State. They were not calling for a change of government. They were, what has been called, 'antinomians' or 'enthusiasts' and their belief was that Christians, and only Christians, refused from obeying any State at all, any government or political authority at all, because Jesus alone was their Lord and King. This is of course heretical and Paul is compelled to point out to these Christians that before the second coming of Christ there will always be some kind of State, some kind of secular government and that Christians are not exonerated from subjection to some kind of political authority.

Paul is simply not addressing the issue of a just or unjust State or the need to change one government for another. He is simply establishing the fact that there will be some kind of secular authority and that Christians as such are not exempted from subjection to secular laws and authorities. He does not say anything at all about what they should do when the State becomes unjust and oppressive.

Law and Order

The State makes use of the concept of law and order to maintain the status quo which it depicts as 'normal.' But this law is the unjust and discriminatory laws. This kind of example happened in South Africa in which the law of apartheid was made. This law and order is the organized and institutionalized disorder of oppression. Anyone who wishes to change this law and this order is made to feel that they are lawless and disorderly. In other words they are made to feel guilty of sin because the authorities used Romans 13:1-7 that those who stood against the

government break God's commandment.

Another example can be given when the *prevention of forceful conversion* bill was passed in the Tamil Nadu state in 2002 (?) by the government of Jayalalitha. They interpreted all the possibilities of converting others from one religion to another as forceful conversion. If that bill was followed by the churches in Tamil Nadu, there was no other way to reach the people of other faith. The then bishop of Madras Diocese said that the church prayed a lot to God to change that step.³

It is indeed the duty of the State to maintain law and order, but it has not divine mandate to maintain any kind of law and order against God. Something does not become moral and just simply because the State has declared it to be a law and the organization of a society is not a just and right order simply because it has been instituted by the State. The concern of Christians is that there should be a just law and a right order.

Reconciliation or Compromise to Evil

An example can be cited again from the South African context in which there was a talk about the need for reconciliation between white and black, or between all South Africans. The minority White called for: "We must be fair. We must listen to both sides of the story. If the two sides can only meet to talk and negotiate they will sort out their differences and misunderstandings, and the conflict will be resolved." On the face of it this may sound very Christian. But internally this is not fair and just.

In a private quarrel between two people or two groups whose differences are based upon misunderstandings, it would be appropriate to talk and negotiate to sort out the misunderstandings and to reconcile the two sides. But there are other conflicts in which one side is right and the other wrong. There are conflicts where one side is a fully armed and violent oppressor while the other side is defenseless and oppressed. There are conflicts that can only be described as the struggle between justice and injustice, good and evil, God and the devil. This is the situation in African apartheid afflicted people, as well as the Christian missionaries in Tamil Nadu as said above. To speak of reconciling these two is not only a mistaken application of the Christian idea of reconciliation, but it is a total betrayal of all that Christian faith. Nowhere in the Bible or in Christian tradition has it ever been suggested that we ought to try to reconcile good and evil, God and the devil. We are supposed to do away with evil, injustice, oppression and sin—not come to terms with it. We are supposed to oppose, confront and reject the devil and not try to sup with the devil just as the prophets Nathan, Amos, Jonah etc. did in the OT, and Jesus and John the Baptist in the NT.

In this sense, resistance to evil rulers is implicitly taught by Paul in his letter to Romans (13:1-7). We are not taught to blindly follow the rulers and authorities who go against the will of God. It is the rightful duty of the church to play a prophetic role to correct the wrong doings of the civil authorities. We should not sit still and watch how the government is going in the evil way because there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God (Romans 13:1). It is not a suggestion to raise arm but to protest against evil rulers non-violently just as the churches in Tamil Nadu prayed for the establishment of the will of God rather than the enactment of the *prevention of forceful conversion act* and succeeded.

Endnotes

- ¹ James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans 1-8*, vol. 38a (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1998).
- ² Kairos Document: Challenge to the church, A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa, issued on 25 September 1985 Johannesburg.
- ³ Inducement (promise of heaven to the poor), Threat (eternal punishment of the sinners), Fraud (healing ministry) and Attempt To Convert (any attempt) are forceful conversion according to that act. This is the word of Right Rev. Bishop Devasahayam, Bishop of Madras Diocese, Church of South India on 11th December, 2005 in his residence when the author (and his fellow students) had a dinner with him.

CHAPTER 31

The History of the Formation of the New Testament Canon

The word 'canon' is a transliteration of a Greek word, 'kanon', which is derived from a Semitic word for 'reed' (*qanû* in Assyrian, *qaneh* in Hebrew, *qn* in Ugaritic). In its classical meaning, *kanôn* was a straight rod or bar – a tool used for measuring. A mason's or carpenter's measuring stick, *kanôn*, metaphorically connoted a rule, norm, or standard (of excellence). Apart from this, it is also used in different way. The plural word, *kanones* is used in terms of chronology to mean the principal eras or epochs in history. The singular form *kanon* is used to designate a chronological table. Occasionally *kanon* simply meant 'SERIES' or 'LIST.'¹

In a Christian context the canon is the list of those writings which are acknowledged by the church as documents of the divine revelation. More generally the word has come to mean the list of writings comprised in the sacred scriptures of any religious body. The use of the word to denote the list of biblical books is first attested in Athanasius (367 CE). Before that, "canon" had already been used in the church for the "rule" of faith, the standard by which the adequacy or inadequacy of statements of Christian belief was assessed.²

In its simplest sense, though it may not be the fullest and flawless, the term *canonization of the New Testament* can be defined as the 'process of the compilation of the early Christians writings to be accepted as the Scripture/Bible.' In its wider sense, the term *canonization* in general can be defined as the 'process of the compilation of the books to be accepted as the Scripture/Bible.' Thus, the term 'canon' also means the 'book(s) that is/are accepted as the Scripture/Bible.

Strictly and fundamentally speaking, according to Bruce, one should

use the term canon only with reference to a closed list of authoritative writings, "to which nothing may be added and from which nothing may be taken away" (a recurring expression) but one may speak of an incipient canon or a canon in process of formation.³

Criteria for Canonization

We are pretty sure that there were several Christian writings during the first century CE. Not all those books are preserved and accepted for the Scripture. To add certain books in the Scripture/New Testament, or to accept certain books for the Scripture, certain requirements must be met. Only some few books passed through such requirements while many others were disqualified. Below are some of the most important criteria though none of them is absolutely definitive. Those criteria can be summarized as follows:

1) Apostolic

The book should be of apostolic origin. As a result, Revelation and Hebrews were crucial to canonize because it was doubted whether they were written by John and Paul respectively.⁴ But this does not strictly mean that the author(s) should be the Apostles since Luke and Mark were also not the direct disciples of Jesus. Rather it also means:

- a) The author must be either the apostles or the close companion of the apostles (thus Luke, companion of Paul and Mark, companion of Peter);
- b) It should be written in the apostolic era (the earliest times of the church);⁵
- c) The teaching of the book/epistle should be in accordance with the apostolic teachings.

2) Historicity and Importance of the Community Involved

Most of the NT works were addressed to particular Christian communities. So, the historicity and importance of the community of the book or letter or Gospel are very important to accept them as unique and authoritative. For example, the churches of Greece and Asia Minor seem to have preserved the largest portion of the NT material, that is, the Pauline, the Johannine and perhaps Lucan writings. The church of Rome preserved Mark, Romans and Perhaps Hebrews.⁶

We can also say that it should be traditionally used for quite a long time in the church. It should also be widespread within the circle of the early church. As a result, Pauline epistles and the canonical Gospels meet these criteria. Some other older and widespread books such as

Shepherd of Hermas, Didakhe etc. were not canonized due to some other criteria.

3) Orthodoxy

“No document could be acknowledged as authoritative unless it conformed to, or at least did not contradict, what the church took to be its proper teaching.”⁷ The writing(s) should have conformity with the rule of faith. The Book of Revelation was suspected because of its millenarianism. Some apocryphal gospels like *Gospel of Peter* were rejected because of doctrinal danger.⁸ This Gospel is supporting the docetic teaching that says that Jesus was not truly human. As a result, Serapion, the bishop of Antioch (ca. 190 CE) forbade the church using it.⁹

4) Catholicity

It should be useful for the wider community. The writing should be relevant to the church at large,¹⁰ and not too individual. In the meantime, care should also be given to Paul's epistle to Philemon, which looks very individual.

The Collection and Circulation of Pauline Letters

The first collection of letters attributed to Paul probably consisted of nine letters (1, 2 Thessalonians; 1, 2, Corinthians, Romans, Galatians; Philippians; Colossians; and Philemon) with a tenth, Ephesians, added as a covering letter to the whole collection. In the course of time the Pastorals and Hebrews were added to the collection. The Pastorals were added sometime in the second half of the second century. With the general acceptance of Hebrew as part of the Pauline corpus, this aspect of the New Testament was complete. Other letters circulated in the name of Paul, but these were not accepted. Brown suggested that by the end of the second century CE, thirteen letters of Paul were increasingly accepted in the west and fourteenth (Hebrews) was added in the East.¹¹

The Acceptance of the Four Gospels

There were a comparatively large number of gospels written in the early church, some covering in a more legendary fashion much the same ground as the four that became canonical. These competed with the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the early church. The earliest testimony to the four gospels as 'scripture' comes from the middle of the second century.¹²

The Influence of the Heretic Marcion

The next step in the formation of the New Testament canon was taken by a heretic, Marcion.¹³ Marcion flourished in the middle of the second century. He was strongly influenced by Gnosticism, so that he came to believe that the creator God of the Old Testament was an inferior deity and that Jesus had revealed the supreme God, the God of love, previously unknown. He further came to believe that the revelation by Jesus had been corrupted by the Twelve but preserved by the one true apostle, Paul. In support of his teaching Marcion constructed the first Christian canon, consisting of ten letters and an edited version of the gospel of Luke. The ten letters of Paul were the extent of the Pauline corpus on his day, and the gospel of Luke was accepted because it was attributed to a companion of Paul. Marcion apparently edited his text of the gospel of Luke and perhaps also that of the Pauline letters.

Marcion was extraordinarily successful. Although he was condemned by the Orthodox Church as heretic, he attracted a wide following.

The Formation of a Canon of the NT as Distinct from the OT

Marcion severely repudiated the Jewish scriptures and substituted for them a new Christian scripture, consisting of the 'gospel' and the 'apostle'-the gospel of Luke and the letters of the apostle Paul. The orthodox churches were ultimately successful in their struggle against Marcion, but in Christianity the Jewish scriptures were henceforward separated from the Christian.¹⁴

The New Testament as the Gospel and the Apostle

Marcion's division of the Christian scriptures into gospel and apostle also survived the orthodox struggle against him. The orthodox churches did not repudiate this division but added to it. They fought to add other gospels to that of Luke, and other letters to those of Paul, including the Pastorals, written in the name of Paul and representing the viewpoints of emergent Catholicism rather than that of Marcion. The division of the Christian canon into 'gospel' and 'apostle' became tradition.¹⁵

The Muratorian Canon

The fragment discovered in 1740 by L. A. Muratory, librarian in the 'Bibliotheca Ambrosiana' in Milan is called Muratorian Canon. This is a manuscript of the eighth century. This fragment reproduces a text most probably translated from the Greek into barbarous Latin, which is mutilated at the beginning and perhaps also at the end. The text begins

with the last words concerning Mark. Since it then designates Luke as the third and John as the fourth Gospel, the mention of Matthew as the first Gospel has been broken off.¹⁶

It can be said that this canon consists of the four gospels, Acts, thirteen letters of Paul (including Pastorals but omitting Hebrews), Jude, 1 and 2 John, the Wisdom of Solomon and the two apocalypses (Revelation and the apocalypse of Peter).

The Canon in the Third Century

This century can be represented by Tertullian and Origen. By the time of Origen (185-254 CE), all the books that finally constituted the canon of the NT were known and in circulation, but some were disputed. Origen is the first writer to mention the letter of James. The most disputed book was the book of Revelation between the western and the eastern churches.¹⁷

Further History of the Canon

From the fourth century onwards twenty-six books (except Revelation) were widely and authoritatively accepted. In the western church (Latin church), Revelation was accepted earlier than that eastern Greek church. By the beginning of the fifth century, the question of the canon was decided with the word of Pope Innocent I (he cited Athanasian canon—the current 27 NT canonized books).¹⁸

Endnotes

- ¹ Raymond F. Collins, "Canonicity," in *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Ronald E. Murphy (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2002), 1035.
- ² F. F. Bruce, "Canon," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospel*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove and Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 93.
- ³ Bruce, "Canon," 93.
- ⁴ Collins, "Canonicity," 1044.
- ⁵ Harry Y. Gamble, "Canon: New Testament," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992).
- ⁶ Collins, "Canonicity," 1044.
- ⁷ Gamble, "Canon: New Testament."
- ⁸ Collins, "Canonicity," 1044.
- ⁹ Brown, *An Introduction the New Testament*, 11.
- ¹⁰ Gamble, "Canon: New Testament."
- ¹¹ Brown, *An Introduction the New Testament*, 12.
- ¹² Norman Perrin, *The New Testament: An Introduction* (New York, Chicago, San Francisco and Atlanta: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1974), 330f.
- ¹³ For Marcion and his efforts for his own collection, see Kümmel, *Introduction*

to the New Testament, 338.

- ¹⁴ Perrin, *The New Testament*, 330.
- ¹⁵ Perrin, *The New Testament*, 331.
- ¹⁶ Kümmel, *Introduction*, 345, 346.
- ¹⁷ Perrin, *The New Testament*, 333.
- ¹⁸ Perrin, *The New Testament*, 334.

CHAPTER 32

Inspiration of the Bible

The description of Scripture as inspired means not that it is inspiring (although it is) but that it is 'God-breathed' (*theopneustos* 2 Tim. 3:16), a product of the creator-Spirit's work. Both testaments view the words of Scripture as God's own words. OT passages treat Moses' law as God's utterance (1 Kgs. 22:8–16; Neh. 8; Ps. 119; *etc.*); NT writers view the OT as a whole as 'oracles of God' (Rom. 3:2), prophetic in character (Rom. 16:26), written by men whom the Spirit moved and taught (2 Pet. 1:20–21; *cf.* 1 Pet. 1:10–12).

Jesus and the NT constantly quote OT texts not merely as recording what men such as Moses, David or Isaiah said through the Spirit (Mk. 7:6–13; 12:36; Rom. 10:5, 20; 11:9), but also as recording what God has said through men (Mt. 19:4–5; Acts 4:25; 28:25; 1 Cor. 6:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 1:5–13; 8:5; 8), or what the Holy Spirit says (Heb. 3:7; 10:15).

Since the God who created Scripture by sanctifying the author's efforts biblical infallibility becomes an article of faith.¹ However, scholars' ideas on account of inspiration of the scripture vary extensively. Some of the most important approaches can be seen under.

1) Human Achievement

J. G. Herder (1744-1803) suggested that the most appropriate model for biblical inspiration was provided by works of art. Just as one might speak of a great novel, poem, or painting as inspired, so the same idea can be applied to scripture. In his assumption, inspiration is seen as a human achievement, rather than a gift of God.²

2) Dictation Theory

According to this theory, the Holy Spirit dictated the word of God and the human writers wrote it as the Holy Spirit dictated. This idea was found in

the idea of St. Augustine. According to this theory, God used human writers just as a machine. As it is the word of God directly dictated by God, there is no human involvement resulting absolute inerrancy of the scripture. God used human writers just as human uses pen to write what he/she wants to write. Thus, human has no responsibility on the words.

3) God the Author

Reformer like John Calvin had this view. The first official church usage was in a profession of faith for future bishops in the so-called Ancient Statutes of the Church (400-500 CE): "There is one and the same author and God of the New and Old Testament, that is, of the Law and Prophets and Apostles." The author formula indicates that God is the ultimate source of both Testaments but does not necessarily ascribe *literary* authorship to him. Latin word *auctor* has a much broader range of meaning than English *author*, describing one who produces something, whether a building, a bridge, or a literary work. It means *source*.³

4) Plenary Verbal Inspiration

The most influential fundamentalist about inspiration of the Bible is B. B. Warfield (1851-1921). He cleverly claimed the absolute absence of error in the scriptures 'as originally given.'⁴ But in one way they are right to accept 2 Tim 3:16 that "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for correction and for training in righteousness." On the other way, the fundamentalists acknowledged only 39 books of the OT and the 27 books the NT as found in the protestant canon as canonical scripture, and reject the 7 books of the OT (Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, 1 & 2 Maccabees) which the Catholics accepted as canonical even though a secondary order.⁵

The fundamentalists hold the theory of verbal inspiration of the Bible.⁶ Verbal inspiration theory insists that the influence of the Holy Spirit extends beyond the direction of human thoughts to the selection of words used to convey the message. The work of the Holy Spirit is so intense that each word is the exact word which God wants to use at that point to express the message.⁷ They refuse to admit that the inspired word of God has been expressed in human language and that this word has been expressed, under divine inspiration, by human authors possessed of limited capacities and resources.⁸

This theory has significant consequences in the practical order:

- a) Every scripture is the word of God.
- b) Since God is not false, every word in scripture must be true.

- c) The truth of the Bible is ultimately propositional.
- d) The unity of the Bible bars any real contradictions among the biblical texts.
- e) At the least for some conservative Protestants, the Bible does not simply contain or bear witness to revelation; rather, the Bible itself is revelation.

5) Dynamic Inspiration

According to this theory, God abides with and dwells with the authors and their writings. God helps and strengthens the human writers in order to write the word of God. In the meantime, the human authors used their skill and abilities. As a result, their personal characteristics and human nature are not abolished. Thus, there is a possibility of making mistakes and errors in the words. However, God, along with those mistakes and inconsistencies, inspires the scripture.

Endnotes

- ¹ J. I. Packer, "Inspiration," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988).
- ² Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2001), 176.
- ³ Collins, "Inspiration," 1027.
- ⁴ James Barr, *Escaping from Fundamentalism* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1984), 141. Warfield meant that the original copies, as written by Moses, Isaiah or St. Paul or whoever it was, were without error, but this perfection did not extend over the later transmission: there may have been errors in the later copying process of manuscripts or in the translations into other languages. James Barr argued against this that it is practically impossible, artificial and unreal because the original copies do not exist and will never be recovered. So, he does not see the necessity of a perfectly inspired Bible if no one knows exactly what is in it.
- ⁵ R. J. Raja, "Biblical Fundamentalism: An Enquiry," *Indian Theological Studies* 34, no. 1 (1997): 127f.
- ⁶ M. T. Cherian, *Hindutva Agenda and Minority Rights: A Christian Response* (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2007), 18.
- ⁷ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, [1983], 1985), 207.
- ⁸ Raja, "Biblical Fundamentalism: An Enquiry," 131.

CHAPTER 33

Historical Critical Approach

The original purpose of historical criticism was to achieve a historical understanding of the NT. To accomplish this, the NT documents had to be viewed in their historical and cultural context. The critics were concerned with historical events, and the literature of the NT was used in historical reconstruction. Actually, the reconstruction had two foci:

- 1) The historical situation which the text described. Here, attention was given to parallels in contemporary literature and the religious environment.
- 2) The historical situation of the author and recipients of the NT books. In this aspect, attention was given to the traditional introductory questions: authorship, date, piece of writing, recipients.

Religionsgeschichte

In order to study the background of the New Testament, scholars took up the religious background studies. *Religionsgeschichte* (usually translated “history of religions”) was developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by the members of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*. The leading adherents of the “history of religions school” included Johannes Weiss, Wilhelm Bousset, Hermann Gunkel, and William Wrede. These scholars carried on the earlier concern to study the religion of the NT in its historical context; their approach was sometimes called the method of “comparative religion.” In their understanding, the New Testament world view and the accounts can only be understood from the knowledge of the other historical context. They studied other cultural history, religions and practices. They saw many influences on Christianity and its teaching. We can say that the Scripture, according to historical criticism, functions as the window through which the outer world can be seen. The text should not be

interpreted from the text itself but from the historical context on which things happened or said or done.

Form Criticism

Historical critical method also covers form criticism. Form criticism attempts to go behind literary criticism to the study of the oral tradition. Literary criticism, which had been investigating the *written* sources of the gospels, had concluded that Mark was the earliest. It does not go beyond the written form. Wrede had shown, however, that Mark was not a historical record of the life of Jesus but an expression of the theological confession of the author. The quest for the historical Jesus, therefore, would have to go beyond the written material to earlier oral sources which could be identified and isolated in the existing written sources. This is beyond the Markan or any other written materials. It deals with the oral tradition of how Jesus was spoken of.

Scholars agreed that the earliest memories of Jesus (his sayings and stories about him) were circulated by word of mouth. As the stories about Jesus were circulated, they were shaped into forms according to principles of oral communication—miracle stories, parables, etc. As these stories were told and retold they took on additional details and emphases, and new stories were created to meet the ongoing needs of the believing community. The intent of the form critic was to find the *Sitz im Leben*, the “situation in life” where such oral forms originated and developed. Although some of the earliest oral units were thought to go back to Jesus himself, many of the traditional forms were created and shaped by the community itself. The evangelists were viewed by the form critics primarily as collectors or editors of these traditional units.

Tradition Criticism

Form criticism has been supplemented by tradition criticism or the history of the transmission of traditions. Its intent is to analyze the origin and development of units of tradition which are cited within the literature of the NT. For example, Paul presents hymns (Phil. 2:6–11), confessions (1 Cor. 8:6), and liturgical formulae (1 Cor. 11:23–25) which were recited in the pre-Pauline churches. They tend to find out how the authors (for example Paul) use and adapt those materials to their own purposes. In other words it studies beyond the text as it is seen in the NT literature.¹

Endnotes

¹ William Baird, “Biblical Criticism: New Testament,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

CHAPTER 34

Literary Criticism

Literary criticism was at one time called 'higher criticism' because it presupposed the findings of 'lower' or textual criticism. Higher criticism was concerned with three issues: literary structure, date and authorship. We can also say that one of the first bases of literary criticism is source criticism. It is a comparative study with the former or the source of what is being studied.

Source Criticism

For literary criticism, knowledge of the source is quite important. Source criticism can be pursued with greater certainty when a documentary source of a later work has survived along with the work which has drawn upon it. For example, in the OT this is the situation with regard to the books of Chronicles. The sources of the Chronicler were the books of Samuel and Kings, and as these have survived we can reach fairly definite conclusions about the Chronicler's use of them. In the NT Mark's Gospel is usually believed to have been a principal source of the other two Synoptic Evangelists; here, too, the source survives alongside the later works which incorporated much of it, so that we can study the way in which Matthew and Luke used Mark.

Where the sources are no longer extant, source criticism is much more uncertain. If, for example, our four Gospels in their separate form had disappeared, and we had to depend on Tatian's *Diatessaron*—a 2nd century compilation which unstitched the contents of the Gospels and rewove them into a continuous narrative—it would have been impossible to reconstruct the four Gospels on its basis. If we study *Diatessaron*, it might not be difficult to distinguish between the Johannine and Synoptic material in it; but to separate the three Synoptic narratives would be impossible.

Dating the Source

The criteria for dating an ancient work are partly internal, partly external. If a work is quoted or otherwise alluded to by a reliable and datable writings we conclude that it must have been composed earlier. For instance, some parts of the OT can be dated because of their references to persons or incidents of Egyptian or Mesopotamian history. It may, of course, date itself; thus some of the prophetic books of the OT indicate the actual year in which this or that oracle was uttered, or the reign or reigns within which a prophet prophesied.

When we are trying to date a genuine piece of predictive prophecy, we shall regard it as earlier than the events it predicts, but not earlier than those which it refers to as having taken place, or presupposes as its historical background. On this basis we should date Nahum's prophecy before the fall of Nineveh in 612 BCE, which it foretells, but later than the fall of Thebes in 663 BCE, to which it refers as a past event (Na. 3:8f.).¹

The New Literary Criticism

This criticism attempts to view the NT exclusively as literature. It goes against the traditional historical critical method. For historical critical method, the concern was to reconstruct the history in which the text was written and to distinguish the meaning the text had in that historical situation. For the new criticism, the text is not to be used as a device for historical or theological reconstruction; the text itself is the sole object of investigation. Once a text has been written, it has a life of its own, independent of its original setting. Thus the text is autonomous; it has its own meaning; it must be interpreted exclusively on its own terms. The original intention of the author, so dear to the historical critics, is for the new criticism unimportant. A Pauline epistle, for instance, may convey meaning which Paul did not intend.²

The critic, therefore, is concerned with what is called the "world" of the text. By this term, the new criticism means the awareness of reality which the text assumes. A fable, for example, may assume a world in which animals talk. Whether or not the world of the text corresponds to the actual world in which the author lived, or the world in which the interpreter works, is of no moment. According to a favorite metaphor, the text should not be seen as a window which reveals something outside. That is, the text should not be viewed as a means for describing something else, for instance, history or doctrine. Instead, the text must be seen as a mirror which has its meaning locked in. That is, the interpreter must be concerned exclusively with the meaning which is held within the text itself.³

The new literary critics study the text as a whole, and thus are concerned with genre. Consequently, the new criticism has certain similarity with genre criticism, though its concerns are broader. The new critics also analyze style and literary forms within the text—sentence structure, metaphor, etc. Attention is especially given to the function that the various literary techniques perform within the pattern of the whole literary document. From the perspective of the new criticism, a book like Revelation can be viewed as a work of art—a dramatic presentation, using liturgical and symbolic forms of expression.⁴

Endnotes

- ¹ Baird, "Biblical Criticism: New Testament."
- ² Baird, "Biblical Criticism: New Testament."
- ³ Baird, "Biblical Criticism: New Testament."
- ⁴ Baird, "Biblical Criticism: New Testament."

CHAPTER 35

*Sociological Approaches***Introduction**

Since the latter part the 20th century, scholars discovered the inadequacy of the understanding of the New Testament on theological ground alone. They came to realize that the social setting of the New Testament and the early Christianity are indispensable sources for proper interpretation. They tried to clarify the social situation of the original readers of the New Testament writings by analyzing the different groups within which the church emerged. In short, they study the social dimension of the early Christianity for New Testament criticism.

This sociological analysis for NT studies is called social criticism or social-scientific criticism. The most prominent social critics are E. A. Judge, Derek Tidball, Gerd Theissen, John Gager, Wayne Meeks, Abraham Malherbe, Eisentadt, Lenski, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, John Elliott, Bruce Malina, Jerome Neyrey, and John Pilch etc.

Principles of Social Criticism

Robert Mulholland proposes five general principles of social criticism in the New Testament interpretation:¹

- 1) The preliminary level is the study of the social setting of the New Testament. This level is almost entirely descriptive, defining from textual, archaeological, political, economic, cultural, religious, social, educational and communal structure of the New Testament period.
- 2) The second one is more analytical than the first. It is the description of the sociological dynamics of the New Testament world, understanding the interaction between the various social structures. Every minute thing must be taken care that any compact and well framed concluded materials that discard the social realities should be taken note because balance and imbalance, growth and decline,

old established structures and new emergent structures can and often do exist in the sociological atmosphere.

- 3) The third principle is both descriptive and analytical. It analyzes the ways in which groups and individuals exist and function within the complex sociological context of their world. It deals with the relationship between individuals, the relationships between individuals and groups, the relationships between groups, the structures of groups and the social stratification of the culture.
- 4) This process grasps the sociological matrix of the New Testament world and the dynamic Christian movement. The text of the New Testament is studied within the sociological context of Christian communities in the Roman world of the first century.
- 5) In this step, the interpreter should draw out the situation of life of the text and its community of faith and should bring out the meaning of the text accordingly.

The contribution of the Sociological Criticism in Writing the New Testament

Jonathan Smith outlined four areas in which sociology illuminates the New Testament. Firstly, it can describe the social facts of early Christianity and place it in its social context. Secondly, it can construct a social history of Christianity. Thirdly, it can examine the social forces which led to Christianity and the social institutions which resulted from its foundation. Fourthly, it can investigate the creation of the Christian world view, its social construction of reality and the structures which maintained that world view as plausible.²

Derek Tidball supports that sociology can make our understanding of the New Testament correct. It also helps us to understand the growth and development of Christianity as a social movement bearing in mind as we do so the types of authority it demonstrated.³ He suggested that the aim of the sociologist is to attempt to understand human's behavior. S/he cannot do by standing at a distance with his presuppositions already formed and by making superficial pronouncements on a given piece of behavior. S/he has to aim for objectivity and must put him/herself in the place of the person who is engaged in it. Secondly, it is not the concern of sociology to judge whether any particular belief of behavior is right or wrong, valid or invalid, truth or false. He/she can describe the social origin and social effect. He/she can say whether such belief or behavior is beneficial or not for human beings. But, according to Tidball, such value judgment is not within the scope of his discipline.⁴

The Method of Sociological Criticism by Gerd Theissen

In his book *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*, Theissen seeks to determine how “the Jesus movement” contributed to the resolution of the troublemaking stresses caused by Roman rule in 1st century Palestine. Theissen said that the earliest Christianity began as a renewal movement within Judaism which was brought into being through Jesus. This Jesus movement was a Palestine phenomenon which spilled over into the neighboring regions of Syria and Palestine between 30 CE and 70 CE.⁵

Theissen puts the Jesus Movement in a central position in his quest for the sociological realities of the early period of Christianity. He always employed three significant methods to rediscover the sociology of the Jesus Movement:⁶

a) Constructive conclusions: They are drawn from an evaluation of pre-scientific statements which give either prosopographic⁷ information about the origin, property and status of individuals or sociographic information about the programme, organization and patterns of behavior of whole group.

b) Analytical conclusions: They are drawn from texts which afford an indirect approach to sociological information. Statements about recurring events, conflict between groups or over ethical and legal norms, literary forms and poetic modes of expression (e.g. parables) are all illuminating in this respect.

c) Comparative conclusions: They are drawn from analogous movements to be found in the world of the time.

Conclusion

Form and redaction criticism have long been useful criticisms towards the in-depth study of the New Testament studies. But they always missed out one of the lifelines of the NT critical studies that are the social life setting of the first Christian era and their social aspects. Since human beings are always influenced by our environments, our thought form and ideology are often moulded by our experiences. So also is the case of the early Palestinian Christians that are formed and influenced by their cultural, religious and social lives. So, the social criticism tries to study these entire primordial contexts in order to bring out the real and authentic messages of the Bible. Further, true knowledge and meaningful interpretation of the Bible only come from the knowledge of the first century CE.

Besides that, what changes and developments were there during those times, how did their surrounding cultures react or did they have such kind of things parallel to them etc make the New Testament interpretation more interesting and clearer. This study is systematically done by many modern scholars. It really helps us to have a more accurate understanding of the New Testament.

Endnotes

- ¹ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., “Social Criticism,” in *New Testament Criticism & Interpretation*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 304f.
- ² Tidball, *An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament*, 14.
- ³ *An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament*, 14.
- ⁴ Tidball *An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament*, 16.
- ⁵ Tidball Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 1.
- ⁶ Thiessen *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* 3.
- ⁷ **Collection of biographical sketches:** a collection of biographical sketches used by social and political historians studying a particular historical period.

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