

*Challenging Common Conceptions
of Early Christianity*

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ISSN 0883-4970

Forum, a biannual journal first published in 1985, contains current research in biblical and cognate studies. The journal features articles on the historical Jesus, Christian origins, and related fields.

Manuscripts may be submitted to the publisher, Polebridge Press, Willamette University, Salem Oregon 97301; 503-375-5323; fax 503-375-5324; westar@westarinstitute.org. A style guide is available from Polebridge Press. Please note that all manuscripts must be double-spaced, and accompanied by a matching electronic copy.

Subscription Information: The annual *Forum* subscription rate is \$30. Back issues may be ordered from the publisher. Direct all inquiries concerning subscriptions, memberships, and permissions to Polebridge Press, Willamette University, Salem Oregon 97301; 503-375-5323; fax 503-375-5324.

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Preface

All the essays in this issue seek to resolve longstanding conundrums and/or to challenge reigning assumptions pertaining to early Christianity. Some, such as Dennis MacDonald's "John's Radical Rewriting of Luke-Acts" and Dennis Smith's "How Acts Constructed the Itinerary of Paul" do so in new and inventive ways. Each paper was presented during a session of Westar's ongoing Christianity Seminar, begun in the spring of 2013. And each one contributes to the Seminar's goal of the re-evaluation of early Christianity.

Dennis MacDonald turns to redactions of episodes of Homer's *Odyssey* to answer the question of the relative chronology of the canonical gospels of Luke and John. MacDonald first argues for evidence of Mark's redaction of *Od.* 19 in John's gospel (Mark 14; John 12), indicating John's reliance upon Mark. MacDonald then indicates John's dependency on Luke's anointing scene for his own similar account (Luke 7:37–38; John 11:2; 12:3), and then how John is also indebted to Luke's imitations of Homer's *Od.* 24 (Luke 24; John 20) for his narrative of the revelation of the risen Jesus. Evidence of Luke's redaction of Homer in John's Gospel provides a good indication that John in fact post-dates Luke.

The papers by Richard Pervo and Dennis Smith both deal with the canonical book of Acts. Having already argued at length in his *Dating Acts: Between the Apostles and the Evangelists* for a composition date of c. 115, Richard Pervo turns in his essay "Acts in Ephesus (and Environs) c. 115" to an exploration of provenance from the perspective of the work's author. Clues from other NT writings suggest that Ephesus is a likely location for Acts. According to Pervo, the book of Revelation evinces a "liberal Paulinist group" in Western Asia during the first decade of the second century. Shared themes between Acts and the Pastoral Epistles, known for their association with Ephesus, provide additional evidence of Ephesus as Acts' origin. Both the Pastoral Epistles and Acts show a concern to suppress heretics, indicate the presence of questionable teachings in Ephesus, and similarly describe the roles of church leaders.

Contrary to much scholarship on the book of Acts that denies Acts' knowledge of Paul's letters, in his "How Acts Constructed the Itinerary of Paul" Dennis Smith convincingly argues just the reverse. The author of Acts knew of and indeed relied upon Paul's letters to construct an itinerary for Paul, one that conforms to Acts' favorite themes.

Jason BeDuhn's cogent essay causes a rethinking of traditional assumptions about Marcion. BeDuhn argues convincingly that the view that Marcion muti-

lated biblical texts to conform them to his heretical theology is not tenable, as the texts preserved by him do not support the heretical views attributed to him. Marcion should instead be seen as someone who preserved and compiled a series of texts that came into his possession. Marcion's work in compiling these texts—the first known Christian to have done so—served to relocate authority into fixed texts.

The final two papers of this issue are companion pieces and deal with Nag Hammadi texts. They serve as a preview for an upcoming issue of *Forum* dedicated exclusively to the topic of Gnosticism. In her essay "Social Fragmentation and Cosmic Rhetoric: Interpretations of Isaiah in the Nag Hammadi Codices," Maia Kotrosits challenges the traditional understanding that Gnosticism is a viable category and, as a distinct entity, is focused on otherworldly subjects and concerns. Based on her analysis of four Nag Hammadi texts, *The Reality of the Rulers*, *The Secret Revelation of John*, *On the Origin of the World*, and *Apocalypse of Adam*, Kotrosits argues instead that these texts are, like Second Isaiah, diasporic productions produced in response to displacement and colonialization. Like Second Isaiah, the Nag Hammadi texts are concerned with the social and political issue of how groups redefine themselves as "Israel" in the wake of war, displacement, and colonial powers.

In his "Second-Century Imaginations of Social Unity," Hal Taussig places the canonical post-Pauline Letter to the Ephesians in dialog with several other Nag Hammadi texts: *The Gospel of Truth*, *The Letter of Peter to Philip*, and *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*. Like Kotrosits, Taussig also implicitly questions the category of Gnosticism with its otherworldly emphasis. Taussig argues that this group of texts seen together provides indications of a response to various types of societal violence that likely dates to the second century CE. *The Letter of Peter of Philip*, for example, evinces a threat of Roman rule and in contrast to its reading under the rubric of Gnosticism has a this-worldly orientation. Taussig is interested to explore ways in which experiences of various types of violence prompted visions of social unity.

—Nina E. Livesey

John's Radical Rewriting of Luke-Acts

Dennis R. MacDonald

When asked to present a paper for the Jesus Seminar on "Which came first, Luke or John?" I hesitated. I long had been convinced by Gilbert Van Belle, and especially Manfred Lang, that John freely redacted Luke.¹ So why are we still debating this issue? On second thought, however, it seemed that this presentation might help resolve an issue that for many scholars remains unsettled.

Rowan & Littlefield published three books relevant to this topic, each of which argues for imitations of classical Greek literature on NT narratives by applying criteria designed to identify mimesis, a methodology that has come to be called Mimesis Criticism: (1) *The Gospels and Homer: Imitations of Greek Epic in Mark and Luke-Acts*; (2) *Luke and Vergil: Imitations of Classical Greek Literature in the Aeneid and Luke-Acts*; and, (3) a less technical trade book entitled *Mythologizing Jesus: From Jewish Teacher to Epic Hero*. I also have completed another, *John and Euripides: The Dionysian Gospel*, much of which is directly related to the question, "Which came first, Luke or John?"

The *Gospels and Homer* argued that Mark and Luke created many of their narratives by imitating Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*:

The Spirit Descending like a Dove (John 1:32–34 and Mark 1:9–11 [Luke 3:22])

Athena's descent as a bird to Telemachus in *Od.* 1;

Purging the Temple of Merchants (John 2:14–17 and Mark 11:15–17)

Odysseus rids his house of suitors in *Od.* 22;

Feeding Five Thousand Men (John 6:1–13 and Mark 6:32–44)

Nestor feeds 4500 men at the shore in *Od.* 3;

Walking on Water (John 6:16–21 and Mark 6:45–51)

Hermes walks on water in *Il.* 24;

Raising the Dead (John 11:3–44 and Mark 5:21–24, 35–43)

Apollo heals Glaucus' wound in *Il.* 16;

Anointing by a Woman (John 12:1–8 and Mark 14:3–5 [Luke 7:37–38])

Eurycleia recognizes Odysseus while washing his feet in *Od.* 19;

Entering Jerusalem on a Donkey (John 12:12–15 and Mark 11:1–10)

Odysseus enters the city of the Phaeacians in *Od.* 6 and 7;

Jesus' Soul is Troubled (John 12:27 and Mark 14:33–36)

Odysseus despairs of life when he learns that he must go to Hades in *Od.* 10;

1. Lang, *Johannes und die Synoptiker*; Van Belle, "Lukan Style in the Fourth Gospel," 351–72.

- Peter and the Cock (John 13:37–38 and Mark 14:26–31)
 Eurylochus vows not to slay the cattle of Helios in *Od.* 12;
 Judas the Betrayer (John 6:70–71 and 18:3, 10 and Mark 6:16; 14:43–49)
 Melanthius, Odysseus' treacherous slave, arms Penelope's suitors in *Od.*
 17–22;
 Peter's Denial (John 18:13, 15–18, 25–27 and Mark 14:65–15:1)
 Eurylochus breaks his vow in *Od.* 12;
 Barabbas rivals Jesus (John 18:39–40; 19:2–3, 16a and Mark 15:2–20a)
 Irus the beggar rivals Odysseus in *Od.* 18;
 Joseph of Arimathea (John 19:38, 41–42 and Mark 15:42–46 [Luke 22:50–52,
 53b–54])
 Priam, Hector's father, bravely asks Achilles for the body of his son in *Il.* 24;
 The Stone at the Tomb (John 20:1; Mark 16:2–4)
 Polyphemus hefts a stone to protect the door of his cave in *Od.* 9;
 Mary Magdalene at the Tomb (John 19:25; 20:11–18 and Mark 15:40–41; 16:2–8
 [Luke 24:1–12])
 Andromache mourns Hector in *Il.* 22 and 24
 Jesus reveals his identity to two disciples (John 20:19–28; Luke 24:3–43)
 Odysseus reveals his identity to his father Laertes in *Od.* 24.

The presence of these Homeric imitations in John should leave little doubt that John knows the Synoptics, especially Mark. The study at hand investigates two examples.

The Anointing at Bethany

According to Homer, Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, reassured Penelope that her husband soon would return and slay the pesky suitors. His wife was not convinced but in gratitude ordered Eurycleia, his old nurse, to wash his feet:

Vry early in the morning, bathe and anoint him.
 ...
 If one is noble and is of noble heart,
 strangers [given hospitality] carry one's fame far and wide
 to all peoples, and many speak of one's excellence.
 (19.320, 332–34)

For his part, the hero did not trust the younger women to touch him, lest they recognize him and blow his cover, but he knew that he would be safe with Eurycleia. He told Penelope:

"Washings of feet do not please my heart,
 and no woman shall touch my feet
 of those who are female slaves in your halls,
 unless there is an old woman, a good care-giver,
 who has suffered in her breast as much as I.
 I would not object to a woman like this touching my feet."
 Then wise Penelope said to him again,
 "Dear stranger, never before has a man so smart

of dear strangers from afar come here to my house,
so thoughtfully wise as you are in everything that you say.
I have an old woman with a sensible heart in her breast,
who nursed well and cherished that unlucky man;
she took him in her arms first, when his mother birthed him.
She will wash your feet, though she is frail.
Wise Eurycleia, arise now and come;
bathe this man who is the same age as your lord; Odysseus
perhaps now has similar hands and similar feet,
for quickly mortals grow old because of hardship." (19.343–60)

As the old nurse started her chore, she noticed just such resemblance:

"Many weary strangers come here,
but I say that I have never seen anyone here so similar,
for you resemble Odysseus in shape, voice, and feet."

...

And the old woman took the gleaming basin
to wash his feet, and poured into it lots of cold water,
and then drew the hot. But Odysseus
sat at the fireplace ...

...

So she approached and began to wash her lord. Immediately she recognized
the scar that a boar long ago had gouged with a white tusk.

...

The bronze basin tipped over, and the water spilled onto the ground.
Simultaneously joy and anguish overwhelmed her heart; both of her eyes
filled with tears, and her voice stuck in her throat.
After touching Odysseus' beard, she said,
"You most surely are Odysseus, dear child! I did not
recognize you before, not until I touched the whole body of my lord."
(19.379–81, 386–89, 392–93, 470–75)

The Markan Evangelist told a similar tale:

³And while he was in Bethany, at the house of Simon the leper, and as he
was reclining at dinner, a woman entered who brought an alabaster jar of
very costly ointment of pure nard. She broke the alabaster jar and poured
the ointment over his head. ⁴Some people expressed with each other their
indignation: "Why this waste of ointment? ⁵This ointment could have been
sold for more than three hundred denarii and donated it to the poor!" And
they scolded her harshly. ⁶But Jesus said, "Let her be! Why do you trouble her?
She has committed a beautiful act for me. ⁷For you always have the poor with
you, and when you wish, you can do good for them, but you do not always
have me. ⁸She offered what she had; she anticipated the anointing of my body
for burial. ⁹I tell you truly, wherever the good news is proclaimed throughout
the world, what this woman has done also will be mentioned in her memory."
(14:3–9)

This unnamed woman in Mark did not anoint Jesus' feet but poured perfume over his head, an act that Jesus interpreted as an anointing for his death. That is, she apparently recognized something about him that had escaped his disciples: the necessity of his suffering. Eurycleia, too, lamented the sufferings of her lord. Mark emphasizes the extravagance of the woman's action by having her break a stone jar to release the oil. Eurycleia dropped her brass basin and spilled the water when she recognized Odysseus.

In the epic and the Gospel a woman anoints a stranger in an act of hospitality while he sits in the home of his host. Whereas the epic contrasted Eurycleia's hospitality with the hostility of the suitors, the Gospel contrasts the hospitality of the woman at Bethany with the stingy response of the disciples, who objected to this costly show of affection. "In both myths a female follower anoints the king shortly before events reach a crisis ... In the Gospels it is not a prophet who anoints him [as one might find in the Jewish Bible] but, as with Eurykleia and Odysseus, a woman."²

Here is an overview of the parallels.

Od. 19

- Odysseus went to Penelope and sat.
- Penelope, in private, questioned her husband in disguise.
- Odysseus answered and gave her signs that he had seen her husband and that he would soon return.
- After giving his prophecies to Penelope, Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, sat by himself.
- Eurycleia came in with a bowl of water and washed his feet; later she "anointed him generously with oil."
- When she recognized her master, she dropped his leg into the brass vessel, spilling the water.
- She alone recognized her king.
- Melanthe had objected to Penelope's generosity to a poor beggar.

Mark 13:1–4, 28–37; 14:1–11

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives and sat.

Four of the disciples, in private, asked him about the destruction of the temple.

Jesus answered and gave the sign when he would return.

After giving these prophecies to four disciples, Jesus sat at table in the humble home of a leper.

A woman came in with an expensive stone jar of ointment and poured the contents on Jesus' head.

She broke the jar to release the oil.

She alone recognized that Jesus soon would die.

People at the meal objected to the woman's extravagant anointing; the ointment could have been sold and the money given to the poor.

2. Louden, *Homer's Odyssey and the Near East*, 269–70. Eurycleia's recognition and Odysseus' silencing of her also seems to have been Mark's model for Peter's recognition of Jesus as the Messiah and Jesus' insistence that the disciples tell no one.

I have delayed the most strikingly unusual similarity until now. Jesus praised the woman by saying, "Wherever the good news is proclaimed throughout the world, what this woman has done also will be mentioned in her memory" (14:9). That is, this woman will have far-flung renown; she will be *eurykleia*, "Renowned-far-and-wide." The significance of the name Eurycleia was noted by an ancient reader: "Eurycleia, she who had far-flung [εὐρύ] and great fame [κλέος]."³

The promise of eternal fame to the anointing woman in Mark is a flag to Eurycleia, and the juxtaposition of Jesus' prophecies of his return in the third person followed by a wise woman anointing him surely issues from mimesis, and Byzantine readers saw the resemblance. When the poets of the *Homeric Centos* retold the story of Jesus' anointing, they used lines from *Od.* 19 to do so, including the wordplay on the name Eurycleia: what the woman did for Jesus would earn her "far-flung fame."

Hom. Cent. 1.1321–26

(= *Od.* 19.348) "I would not object to a woman like this touching my feet.

(= *Od.* 19.107) Woman, no mortal on the boundless earth

(= *Od.* 19.108) would reprove you, for your renown [κλέος] extends to the far off [εὐρύ] sky,

(= *Od.* 19.109) like that of a faultless king, who, god-fearing,

(= *Od.* 19.110) rules over many valiant men,

(= *Od.* 19.111) maintaining justice, and the black earth brings him ..."

The Johannine Evangelist also tells this story and at first relies heavily on Mark's account. The unnamed woman now is Mary.

Mark 14:3b, 5

[A] woman entered who brought an alabaster jar of ointment of pure nard [μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς πολυτελοῦς].

...

⁵"She could have sold this ointment for more than three hundred denarii and donated it to the poor [τοῦτο τὸ μύρον προαθῆναι ἐπάνω δηναρίων τριακοσίων καὶ δοθῆναι τοῖς πτωχοῖς]!"

John 12:3, 5

Then Mary took a pound of very expensive ointment of pure nard [μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς πολυτίμου].

...

⁵"Why did she not sell this ointment for three hundred denarii and give it to the poor [τοῦτο τὸ μύρον οὐκ ἐπράθη τριακοσίων δηναρίων καὶ ἐδόθη πτωχοῖς]?"

Luke's account of Jesus' anointing is a free redaction of Mark 14:2–9 to which he added, among other things, a reference to the woman wetting his feet and drying them with her hair. A similar episode appears in John 12:1–8, but the evangelist anticipates it by explaining that Lazarus' sister Mary was the woman

3. Scholion to *Od.* 1.429.

in question. It would appear that he expected his readers already to be aware of the story, even though he had not yet told his version of it!⁴ In any case, the verbal affinities with Luke are striking.

Luke 7:37–38

And a woman, who was a sinner in the city, learned that he was reclining in the house of the Pharisee, brought an alabaster jar of ointment [μύρου],³⁸ stood behind his feet, wept, with her tears began to wet his feet, wiped them with the hair of her head, kissed his feet [τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ καὶ ταῖς θριξίν τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς ἐξέμασσαν καὶ κατεφίλει τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ], and anointed them with the ointment [μύρω].

John 11:2

And it was Mary who anointed the Lord

with ointment [μύρω]

and wiped his feet with her hair [ἐμάξασα τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ ταῖς θριξίν αὐτῆς].

The verb ἐκμάσσω appears only five times in the NT: twice in Luke 7 in connection with the repenting woman; twice in John in connection with Mary (here and in the narration of the anointing per se in 12:3), and once in John's account of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples in 13:5.

When the Johannine evangelist gets around to tell his own version of the anointing, he displays indebtedness to Luke, not Mark.

- Only the accounts in Luke and John clarify that Jesus was eating with others at the time (Luke 7:36; John 12:1–2).
- According to Mark and Matthew, the woman anoints Jesus' head, but in Luke and John she anoints his feet.

Luke 7:38

[A woman] stood behind his feet, wept, with her tears began to wet his feet, wiped them with the hair of her head, kissed his feet [τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ καὶ ταῖς θριξίν τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς ἐξέμασσαν καὶ κατεφίλει τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ], and anointed them with the ointment [ἤλειψεν τῷ μύρω].

John 12:3

[Mary] anointed the feet of Jesus

and wiped his feet with her hair [ἤλειψεν τοὺς πόδας τοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ ἐξέμαξεν ταῖς θριξίν αὐτῆς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ]. And the house was filled with the odor of the ointment [τοῦ μύρου]

- Mark and Matthew both place the objections to her action on the lips of multiple unnamed people, but Luke and John both refer to a named

4. See Bauckham, "John for Readers of Mark," 147–71.

individual: "The Pharisee who had invited him" (Luke 7:39); "Judas Iscariot ... who was about to hand him over" (John 12:4).

- Immediately after this story in Luke the Evangelist names three women, among whom is Mary Magdalene, who "served [δμηκόνου] Jesus and the disciples (8:2–3). John gave the name Mary to the woman who anointed Jesus, while her sister Martha "served [δμηκόνει] dinner" (12:2; cf. Luke 10:39–42).

If one grants that Mark created the anointing at Bethany after Odysseus' anointing by Eurycleia, the presence of the tale in John surely requires knowledge of the Synoptics, but, as we have seen, his retelling actually has much in common with Luke's retelling of the story in 7:36–50. Those who would argue for Luke's knowledge of John would have to claim that the Lukan Evangelist knew two versions of the story (Mark's and John's), vacillated between them, and expanded his version into his tale of the sinful but contrite woman. This history of tradition, though unnecessarily complex, is not impossible, but it cannot explain the second example insofar as the parallels between Luke and John have no equivalent in Mark. Here one must decide whether Luke or John imitated another episode of the *Odyssey*.

The Recognition of Jesus by his Wounds

The Gospel of Luke tells the following tale about two disciples on their way to a village called Emmaus who failed to recognize their risen Lord.

¹⁵It so happened that while they were talking and looking for answers, Jesus himself was approaching and joined them in their journey. ¹⁶Their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, "What were these sayings that you were discussing with each other while you were walking?" And they stopped momentarily, full of gloom. ¹⁸And the one named Cleopas replied and said to him, "Sojourner, are you the only one in Jerusalem who does not know what has happened in the city during these days?" ¹⁹And he said to them, "What things?" They said to him, "Things that happened to Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and rulers handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him." (24:15–20)

²⁸As they approached the village where they were headed, he pretended to be walking on beyond it. ²⁹They prevailed on him and said, "Stay with us, for it is almost evening and the day already is far spent." He went in to stay with them. ³⁰While he was reclining with them he took the bread and blessed it; having broken it, he gave it to them. ³¹And their eyes were opened and they recognized him. He then vanished from them. ³²And they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking with us on the road as he opened the scriptures for us?" (24:28–32)

For this famous story Luke borrowed from the last book of the *Odyssey*. After slaying the suitors and revealing his true identity to Penelope, Homer's hero went to Laertes' farm "far from the city" and told Telemachus to go to the old man's home to prepare a meal. "I will test my father,

whether he will recognize and perceive me with his eyes
or not recognize me because I was gone for so long."

...

He found his father alone in his well-tended orchard.

...

When the much-enduring, glorious Odysseus saw him,
exhausted with age and laden with profound sorrow in his heart,
he stopped under a tall pear tree and shed a tear.

(*Od.* 24.216–18, 226, 232–34)

The hero was tempted to reveal his identity at once, but decided to proceed with his test. He went to him and said,

Old man,

...

you are not taking good care of yourself but show signs of miserable old age;
you are quite filthy and wear rags.

...

Whose slave are you? Whose orchard do you tend?

(24.244, 249–50, 257)

Similarly in Luke, Jesus does not reveal himself to his two disciples, whose "eyes were kept from recognizing him" (24:16). Compare this with Odysseus' desire to know if his father would "recognize and perceive me with his eyes / or not recognize me because I was gone for so long" (*Od.* 24.217–18).

In the epic, Odysseus went on to say that he was hoping to find the island of Ithaca and receive hospitality from an old acquaintance. "And his father responded to him, shedding tears, / 'Stranger, you have indeed arrived at the land about which you asked, / but insolent and wicked men now have it'" (*Od.* 24.280–82). In the gospel one reads, "And the one named Cleopas replied and said to him, 'Sojourner, are you the only one in Jerusalem who does not know what has happened in the city during these days? ... Our chief priests and rulers handed Jesus over to be condemned to death and crucified him'" (Luke 24:18–19).

Odysseus told yet another lie in which he claimed to have seen Laertes' son just five years earlier. At the mention of his son, the old man broke into sobs, and the hero no longer had the stomach to prolong the agony. He kissed his father and said, "Father, I here am that man whom you seek; / I have come to my homeland in the twentieth year" (*Od.* 24.321–22). Laertes had his doubts:

"If you are indeed my son Odysseus who has come home,
tell me now some recognizable sign so that I may be persuaded."

In response, crafty Odysseus told him,
 "First, consider with your eyes this scar
 that, when I went to Parnassus, a boar
 gouged with a white tusk." (24.328–33)

The hero also described in detail the planting of orchards and vineyards when he was a lad. "So he spoke, and the knees and dear heart of Laertes / melted when he recognized the sure signs that Odysseus showed him. / Then he threw both arms around his dear son" (24.345–47). The hero then made this proposal:

"Let us go to your home that sits beside the orchard.
 Earlier I sent Telemachus, the cattleman, and the swineherd there
 so that they might quickly prepare a dinner."
 So spoke the two of them and went off to the good house.
 And when they arrived at the well-situated house,
 they found Telemachus, the cattleman, and the swineherd
 carving large quantities of meat. (24.358–64)
 Then from the fields, ready for dinner, came the slaves.
 And when they saw Odysseus and recognized him in their hearts,
 they just stood there in the halls—astonished. Then Odysseus
 ordered them with gentle words:
 "Old man, sit down to dinner; and you servants, rid your minds of wonder."
 ...
 When he had so spoken, Dolius spread both hands, made straight for him,
 took Odysseus' hand, and kissed his wrist. (24.391–94, 397–98)
 By the end of the epic, Odysseus once again ruled as king of Ithaca.
 (24.483)

In both the last book of the *Odyssey* and the last chapter of Luke, recognition scenes involve meals. Odysseus invited Laertes back to his father's own home, where a feast was awaiting them (*Od.* 24.358–61). Cleopas and his companion "prevailed on Jesus and said, 'Stay with us, for it is almost evening and the day already is far spent.' He went in to stay with them" (Luke 24:29). Jesus could not play host in Luke, so the roles are reversed from the epic: the disciples, who otherwise play a role similar to that of Laertes, invite Jesus to stay with them.

The signs of Odysseus' identity were his scar and his memory of planting trees. The sign of Jesus' identity was the breaking of bread. "While he was reclining with them he took the bread and blessed it; having broken it, he gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him. He then vanished from them" (Luke 24:30–31). Laertes' heart melted when he recognized his son. So also in Luke: "The disciples said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking with us on the road as he opened the scriptures for us?' They rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and those with them gathered together" (24:32–33).

In the epic, father and son go off to Laertes' home, where "they found Telemachus, the cattleman, and the swineherd / carving large quantities of meat" (*Od.* 24.363–64). In Luke the two disciples "returned to Jerusalem and found the eleven" (Luke 24:33).

³⁶As they were saying these things, Jesus himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace to you." ³⁷They were startled and terrified—they thought they were seeing a spirit. ³⁸And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do misgivings arise in your hearts? ³⁹See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and look: a mere spirit does not have flesh and bone as you see that I have." ⁴⁰Having said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹While they were still amazed and in disbelief for joy, he said to them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" ⁴²They gave him a portion of broiled fish; ⁴³he took it and ate it before them. (24:36–43)

Jesus' wounds play the role of Odysseus' scar that enabled Laertes to recognize him. "First, consider with your eyes this scar / that, when I went to Parnassus, a boar / gouged." (*Od.* 24.331–33). Odysseus then gave Laertes a second sign in addition to his scar: knowledge of the trees they had planted long ago. Jesus, too, gave a second sign in addition to his wounds: he ate a piece of fish to prove he was no mere spirit. The recognitions of Odysseus and Jesus both produced jubilation.

Finally, Luke dropped lexical clues that point to the ending of the epic. Several villages in Palestine were named Emmaus, but no archaeological site precisely corresponds to his description of the village "sixty stadia from Jerusalem." Eumaeus, of course, is the name of Odysseus' servant who earlier had recognized him by his scar. The name Cleopas is exceedingly rare, and appears nowhere else in the NT. As we have seen, the name Eurycleia is a compound of εὐρύ, "far and wide," and κλέος, "renown." Cleopas trades on the same word for renown and means "all-fame." Surely it is no accident that "Far-flung-fame" (Eurycleia) and "All-Fame" (Cleopas) both recognized the identities of their lords.

Here is a comparison of the similarities:

***Od.* 24.216–394**

- Odysseus, thought dead, returned alive.
- Odysseus went to his father's farm, outside the city, to see if he would recognize him "with his eyes."
- Laertes was sad as he worked his garden.
- The "stranger" began asking questions.
- Laertes expressed his sadness over the death of his son and the violence

Luke 24:13–43

Jesus died but returned alive.

Jesus met the disciples on the road, outside Jerusalem, but "their eyes were kept from recognizing him."

The disciples were sad as they walked.

The "sojourner" began asking questions.

Cleopas expressed sadness over Jesus' death and the violence of the Jewish

of the suitors.

- Odysseus spoke with his father about himself in the third person, but the old man still did not recognize him.
- Odysseus revealed himself by means of his scar and knowledge of the trees, and there was a meal at another venue.
- Odysseus had told Laertes to look at the scar on his leg for proof. ["I here am that man!"]
- Those who recognized Odysseus were astonished, and he comforted them.

authorities.

Jesus spoke with his disciples about himself in the third person, but they still did not recognize him.

Jesus revealed himself by breaking and distributing bread at a meal at another venue.

Jesus told the disciples to look at the wounds on his hands and feet: "It is I myself." (cf. John 20:20a)

On recognizing Jesus, the disciples were terrified, and he comforted them. (cf. John 20:20b)

If Luke's readers picked up these clues and compared the last chapter of the gospel with the last book of the epic, they should have seen significance to the story invisible on the surface. Odysseus visited Hades without dying; Jesus died and returned from the dead. Odysseus' wound came from a hunting accident; Jesus' came from his execution. The recognition of Odysseus by Laertes demonstrated that the hero had returned home. The recognition of Jesus by the disciples demonstrated his status as the Messiah who conquered death. Here again, Luke does not merely imitate Homer, he rivals him by exalting Jesus over Odysseus.

If one attributes the disciples' recognition of Jesus by his wounds to Lukan redaction under the influence of *Od.* 24, the following parallels between Luke 24 and John 20 must be attributed to John's knowledge of Luke:

Luke 24:13, 36–41

Two of them on that day [ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ] ... ³⁶As they were saying these things,

Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them ,

"Peace to you [ἔστι ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· εἰρήνη ὑμῖν]."

³⁷They were startled and terrified—they thought they were seeing a spirit. ³⁸And he said to them, "Why are you troubled and why do misgivings arise in your hearts? ³⁹See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and look: a mere spirit does not have flesh and bone as you see that I have."

John 20:19–23

When it was evening on that very day [τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ], the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut for fear of the Jews at the place where the disciples were,

Jesus himself stood in their midst and said to them,

"Peace to you [ἔστι εἰς τὸ μέσον καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· εἰρήνη ὑμῖν]."

⁴⁰Having said this, he showed them his hands and his feet [καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἔδειξεν αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τοὺς πόδας].

⁴¹While they were still amazed and in disbelief for joy [χαρᾶς], ...

[Jesus then says that forgiveness of sins (ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν) must “be proclaimed to all peoples” and promises to send them the Holy Spirit (24:47–48).]

²⁰Having said this, he showed them his hands and his side [καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἔδειξεν τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τὴν πλευρὰν αὐτοῖς].

Then, when the disciples saw the Lord, they rejoiced [ἐχάρησαν] ...

[Jesus then breathes on them, tells them to receive the Holy Spirit, and grants them authority to forgive sins (ἄφητε τὰς ἁμαρτίας) (20:21–23).]

Conspicuously absent in the Johannine account is Jesus’ invitation that the disciples investigate his hands and touch him. The physicality of Jesus’ resurrection was hotly contested in the early church, even in the Johannine epistles.

John and Euripides will propose that Jesus’ second appearance to the disciples in John 20:24–28 was the work of the final redactor. What is most amazing about the following parallels is the emphasis on Jesus’ invitation to observe his hands, which in the earlier appearance was strategically omitted! Whereas the Johannine Evangelist refused to redact Luke 24:37–39, the final redactor made it the center of attention, and by so doing retained what made Luke’s account most like the recognition of Odysseus: the revealing of his scar.

Luke 24:13, 36–41

Two of them on that day [ἡμέρα] ...

³⁶As they were saying these things,

Jesus himself stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace to you [ἔστη ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· εἰρήνη ὑμῖν].”

³⁷They were startled and terrified—they thought they were seeing a spirit.

³⁸And he said to them,

“Why are you troubled and why do misgivings arise in your hearts? ³⁹See my hands and my feet [ἴδετε τὰς χεῖράς μου], that it is I myself. Touch me and look: a mere spirit does not have flesh and bone as you see that I have.” ⁴⁰Having said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹While they were still amazed and in disbelief [ἀπιστοῦντων] for joy, ...

John 20:26–28

And after eight days [ἡμέρας], his disciples again were inside and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut,

Jesus came, stood in their midst, and said, “Peace to you [ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον καὶ εἶπεν· εἰρήνη ὑμῖν].”

²⁷Then he says to Thomas,

“Bring your finger here and see my hands [ἴδε τὰς χεῖράς μου], and bring your hand and push it into my side,

and do not be unbelieving [ἄπιστος] but believing [πιστός]. ²⁸Thomas responded and said, “My Lord and my God.”

These parallels provide the strongest evidence that John knew the Lukan gospel, and, for that reason, it also has become the center of the controversy (see Lang, 1999, and Van Belle, 2005). What makes my proposal definitive is Luke's mimetic indebtedness to the *Odyssey*. John even retains Homeric motifs, such as the display of tell-tale wounds.

These parallels did not escape the attention of Byzantine poets. The poet of the first recension of the *Homeric Centos* borrowed from four of Odysseus' most famous recognition scenes to narrate the episode concerning doubting Thomas, a Johannine imitation of Luke 24:36–41. The doubting apostle thus asks for a sign, borrowing a line from Laertes (1.2300).

(= *Od.* 24.329) "Show me now some sure sign so that I may be certain."

Jesus then agrees to produce a sign by borrowing lines from Odysseus to his servants and Laertes.

***Hom. Cent.* 1.2309–11, 2313, 2315–16**

(= *Od.* 21.212) "But to you two [!] I will declare the truth, what will happen:

(= *Od.* 21.217) and if you come, I will display another sure sign,

(= *Od.* 21.218) that you may recognize me well and be certain in your heart."

...

(= *Od.* 21.221) Having said this, he pulled back his rags from his large scar.

...

(= *Od.* 24.331; to Laertes) "First, consider with your eyes this scar,

(= *Od.* 22.373) that you may recognize me in your heart."

The voice of the narrator then adopts a line from Eurycleia's recognition (1.2319).

(= *Od.* 19.391) He recognized the scar, and the truth came to light.

Thomas's response is an amazing rearrangement of lines from Penelope's recognition that the beggar who had slain the suitors was indeed her husband.

***Hom. Cent.* 1.2321–22, 2324–29**

(= *Od.* 23.225) "And now, since you already have revealed sure signs,

(= *Od.* 23.230) you are convincing my heart, even though it is hardened.

...

(= *Od.* 23.175) I am not overly amazed, and I know well who you are.

(= *Od.* 23.213) So do not now be angry or indignant with me

(= *Od.* 23.214) because when I first saw you I did not obey you.

(= *Od.* 19.475; by Eurycleia) But I did not recognize you earlier, before I felt all the body of my Lord,

(= *Od.* 23.215) for the dear heart in my breast always

(= *Od.* 23.216) shuddered that some mortal would deceive me with words."

The poets responsible for the second recension of the *Centos* borrowed four lines from Odysseus' revelation to Laertes, including the reference to his scar as a token of recognition.

Hom. Cent. 2.1895, 1898–99, 1903–4

(= *Od.* 24.400) [Thomas:] “O friend, since you have returned to us who have longed for you ...”

...

(= *Od.* 24.248) But I will tell you something else, and do not hold resentment in your heart,

(= *Od.* 24.329; Laertes’ request for a sign) show me a clear sign so that I may be persuaded.”

...

(= *Od.* 11.126) [Jesus:] “I will show you a clear sign; it will not escape you;

(= *Od.* 24.331) first, consider with your eyes this scar.”

This paper has argued that John retains evidence of Mark’s Homeric imitations. This shared content thus does not witness to independent tradition but knowledge of the Synoptics. It also argued that the Fourth Gospel retains evidence of Luke’s Homeric imitations, so that parallels between Luke and John must point to John’s use of Luke.

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Acts in Ephesus (and Environs) c. 115

Richard I. Pervo

The purpose of this essay is to examine, refine, tighten, revise, expand, and update my views about the date and provenance of the book of Acts. Otherwise stated, this is a commentary upon two pages written over a decade ago.¹ Provenance and date need not be linked. I suppose that I have been inclined to associate Acts with Ephesus for forty years, but, when I first mentioned it in 1989, Ephesus was equipped with a “perhaps.”² For three decades I dated Acts c. 100. When, in connection with the Acts Seminar, I began to investigate the date, it transpired that this should be advanced by more than a decade, at least. The most surprising discovery was that neither date nor provenance had received much attention. The work of the Acts Seminar has generated some good discussion and exposed the intellectual poverty of “refutations” that consist of claims that an argument has few adherents or that it is “unconvincing.”³

Provenance fares even worse. Three major commentaries published since the advent of the modern era—the epiphany of my commentary on Acts—serve as examples. Daniel Marguerat’s contribution to the CNT series will be about 1000 pages long. On the question of provenance he offers a paragraph of twelve lines, seven of which discuss the audience. The eastern part of the Mediterranean basin takes the prize. Five lines are consigned to the paragraph on date, placed c. 85, as “the canon of Pauline epistles was created between 95 and 100.”⁴ Darrell Bock’s 848-page commentary expends two of them on the date (25–27) and seven lines on location, governed by the memorable sentence: “We really do not know where Acts was written.”⁵ Craig Keener requires much of two pages, notes the Aegean focus, finds Ephesus plausible, but also identifies problems: “Luke devotes so much space to Ephesus because it constitutes the climax of Paul’s precaptivity ministry; the length of time Paul spent in Ephesus and the

1. Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 204–5.

2. Pervo, *Luke’s Story of Paul*, 13.

3. The massive work in progress of Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*. Vol. 1: Introduction and 1:1–2:47, devotes eighteen pages (383–401) to date. Pages 396–400 take up my argument in *Dating Acts*. This is more of a rejection based upon limited support from other scholars than a refutation of the arguments, but Keener did not ignore them.

4. Marguerat, *Les Actes des Apôtres (1–12)*, 20.

5. Bock, *Acts*, 27.

achievements are sufficient cause for this attention."⁶ These persons are fine scholars. One can only explain the general tendency to give these questions minimal attention because they are deemed either unimportant or insoluble. Solution may be difficult, but only those who have spent a great deal of time and effort may claim that a problem is intractable. At present it may be said that the argument for dating Acts c. 115 has been opposed, but not refuted. This does not mean that it has been established.

For more than a few scholars, inattention to date and locale is justified by their presumed lack of importance. For purely literary studies this may be somewhat true; for historical studies these questions are nearly paramount.⁷ Believing that the questions are important, I address them in tandem, with the object of locating Acts within early Christian history. This is not to imply that the cases stand or fall together. They were formulated separately and remain separable.

With regard to date, the most secure *external* evidence is an explicit declaration by or within a datable author or text that such and such a document exists. In the case of Acts that evidence is provided by Irenaeus of Lyon, c. 180, who cites Acts as an authoritative book. The earliest recognized possible indirect allusion is found in Polycarp of Smyrna, c. 130–35. This attestation, which I accept, preferring to err on the side of caution, would indicate that Polycarp was familiar with at least part of Acts, but it says nothing about the status or authority of the book.⁸ In the decade since I worked on *Dating Acts*, the possibility that the Pastor (author of 1–2 Timothy, Titus) knew Acts has gained strength. This would drop indirect allusion down to c. 120–25, again with no hint about status. You don't have to admire that from which you steal, particularly when no acknowledgement of borrowing sullies the page.

For *internal* attestation the criterion is that a work cannot be earlier than the latest datum of its integral text. "Integral" excludes subsequent additions or interpolations, such as John 21. So, for example, if you read the statement, "I googled that term yesterday," you would ascertain that the text had not been written before 2002.⁹ Another internal criterion is the use of datable sources. Since ancient authors tended not to identify their sources, such as, "The *New York Times*, 14 November 1943," this can be difficult. Three important principles utilized are: 1) an explicit, methodologically sophisticated intertextual method, 2) economy, which privileges proposals that require fewer hypothetical sources,

6. Keener, *Acts*, 429–30.

7. Critics are by and large loath to abandon any interest in where and when works of literature were written.

8. The observation looks trite, but assumptions, such as "*Hermas* apparently cites Ephesians proving that it was written by Paul and part of the canon of Scripture ..." are not infrequent implicit accompaniments to discovery of an allusion.

9. This was verified by searching under "Google as a verb" via the Google search engine on 9 August 2013.

and 3) simplicity, where solutions that solve more problems than they create are preferable.

Although NT scholars are prepared to engage in creative reflection in pursuit of allusions to scripture in Paul,¹⁰ the rules for allusions to Paul are more rigid. The field has moved on from the analogy of engaging in source criticism with a gospel synopsis, however. The major reason for the hypothesis that Luke was not familiar with the letters of Paul is that he would have used them as would modern historians and got Paul's theology better. The data indicate Lucan familiarity with so many letters, including the Deuteropauline Ephesians, that one may reasonably postulate that he utilized a collection. Efforts to refer all of these possible allusions to hypothetical liturgical traditions or the common vocabulary of early Christianity run up against criterion (2), and can be tested with the help of the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae database, which often shows no other uses of this phrase or that expression. The third criterion, simplicity is potent here, for explaining how Luke did not know of Paul's letters or, if he did, why he did not refer to them, requires an argument of baroque convolutions.

The question of Flavius Josephus generates similar concerns. One must decide either that Luke had access to another Jewish historian who nonetheless shared the biases and views of Josephus or deem it highly probable that Luke had access to at least some of his writings. The question does not involve certain cribbed phrases but a range of shared incidents, views, interests, and techniques. Again, Luke does not use Josephus as we would. One of the difficulties of this hypothesis is that it removes from the board one author often utilized in comparisons with Luke, since, if Josephus served as one source and a model, he can no longer constitute a parallel.¹¹

My detailed study devoted about 150 pages to Luke's use of Paul and Josephus, proposing certainty in the former case and near certainty in the latter.¹² For the purpose of dating, these investigations established the earliest date at c. 100.¹³ The subsequent chapters attempted to show the affinities of Luke and Acts to the Apostolic Fathers, arguing that it belonged to roughly the second

10. E.g., Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*.

11. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*.

12. Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 51–199. For an update, as it were, see Pervo, "Acts in the Suburbs of the Apologists," 29–46.

13. *Ant.* 20.267 indicates that the work was concluded in 93–94. Book 20 contains some material that Luke evidently used (Pervo, *Dating*, 197). It is therefore possible that Luke could have had access to the material in the Aegean region by 95. The probability that Luke utilized a collection of Pauline letters rather than individual texts is quite high. (Had he used individual copies, he would almost certainly have had to do so in Ephesus.) That collection was not formed before c. 100. Reasons for this include that it was not known in Rome at the time of *1 Clement* (c. 100). The editor of the collection shared some views with Ephesians, but had sufficient distance from it to include both Colossians and Ephesians. The latter sought to replace Colossians. The year 100 seems to be the earliest logical time for the editing of the collection.

decade of the century. These data were generally social in nature, and it is to them that I shall presently turn, after a look at provenance.

Previously it was noted that commentators rarely give the question of provenance an entire paragraph. One must now also consider the questions of narrator and viewpoint. Although Dante's *Inferno* is set in Hell and reveals a great deal of local knowledge, critics do not presume that it was written there. An extensive discussion is not called for in the present case. It is quite likely that the geographical perspective of the third-person narrator of Acts is that of the author, from the perspective of Ephesus and/or adjacent regions. In 1933 Henry Cadbury observed that "the upper regions" of Acts 19:1 was the "hinterland from perspective of Ephesus."¹⁴ At the close of an interesting comparison of the geographic perspectives of Philo and Luke, Peder Borgen states: "The horizon of Luke-Acts may be defined as the geographical perspective of the world as seen from the standpoint of pagans, Jews, and Christians in Ephesus."¹⁵ Vern Robbins concludes: "[T]he social location of thought appears to lie among a cosmopolitan population mixture somewhere between the western coast of Asia Minor and Syria."¹⁶ The catalogue of peoples in Acts 2:9-11 reflects the perspective of Hellenistic Antioch.¹⁷ Verses 10c-11, however, "... visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs ..." is redactional. Joseph Fitzmyer observes that "Cretans and Arabs" represents the West and the East.¹⁸ This is the perspective of Roman Asia. It would not be suitable for Antioch or for Corinth.

The Aegean region is without doubt the center of interest. The "we" narrator emerges in this region. In contrast to Cyprus and locations in southern and central Asia Minor, specifics appear for Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, and, above all, Ephesus. Quantitatively, seventy verses, some 7% of the text, take place in or are related to the Asian metropolis (18:19-19:40 [less 18:22-23, 28]; 20:16-38).¹⁹ This could be met by Keener's previously noted objection that Ephesus receives the attention it does because it was Paul's longest and most important missionary base. That does not account for the particular data. Granting that everyone knew about Ephesian Artemis and excluding what could be derived from the epistles, one observes the "Hall of Tyrannus" (19:9), a civic assembly that meets in a theater (19:29, not unique), the divine origin

14. Cadbury and Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, 4.236.

15. Borgen, *Philo, John and Paul*, 273-85, citing 282. Borgen says that Ephesus played a role for Luke similar to Alexandria for Philo. See also Löning, "Paulinismus in der Apostelgeschichte," 202-34, esp. 205-9.

16. Robbins, "The Social Location of the Implied Author of Luke-Acts," 305-32, citing 318.

17. Pervo, *Acts*, 66-68.

18. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 243.

19. Lambrecht, "Paul's Farewell-Address at Miletus, Acts 20, 17-38," 307-37, esp. 330: says "There can be no doubt that, in Luke's view, Ephesus dominates the whole third missionary journey of Paul."

of Artemis' image, the title "Neōcoros," the "Executive Secretary" (both 19:35), and an organization of silversmiths (19:25). By comparison with other sites, Acts displays intimate knowledge about Ephesus and, more importantly, the interest in utilizing it effectively in the construction of the plot.

It is from Ephesus that Acts looks toward the future, to post-Pauline conflicts. Ephesus is the navel of the Deuteropauline universe. For this reason it is otiose to argue for Ephesus as the physical location of the author. Ephesus is the center of the Pauline past, the focus of subsequent conflicts, and the hope of a Pauline future. Acts is engaged in the battle for Paul's heritage in Asia. To that subject I shall now turn.

Excursus: Ephesus²⁰

Ephesus was an old (c. 900) Ionian foundation in central southwestern Asia Minor on the Cayster river.²¹ The old Ionian city fell to Croesus c. 555.²² Within a decade Cyrus had taken Ephesus, which sat out the Ionian revolt against Persia (499–494). Subsequent to the Persian wars, Ephesus was part of the Delian League, an Athenian concoction, from which it defected c. 412 to join Sparta. The peace of 386 restored Persian hegemony.

Lysimachus controlled the region after Alexander and built a wall around Ephesus.²³ In 197 Antiochus III captured the region and made Ephesus a second capital. By 190 Eumenes had taken Ephesus, and it remained under the Attalids until its absorption (via inheritance) by Rome in 133, which made it the provincial capital. Ephesus thrived under Roman rule and attained a population of c. 200,000, probably the third largest city of the empire. Although commerce and industry remained important (although the harbor suffered from silting), Ephesian prosperity owed more to its governmental than to its commercial standing.

Information about the Jewish community at Ephesus is relatively scanty. Paul Trebilco reviews it in detail, teasing out whatever cautious generalizations can be made. Jews probably lived in Ephesus from the early third century onward. The last fifty years preceding the common era witnessed conflict with civic officials over various rights and privileges, in which the Jews were supported by Rome. (Josephus had no interest in minimizing either the numbers of Jews or their success in maintaining their way of life. His claims require acute scrutiny.) The number of synagogues is uncertain, and it is not clear whether there was a central Jewish organization (as in Alexandria) or not (as at Rome).

20. For bibliography, see Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 132–33; Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* and Pervo, *Acts*, 462 n. 2. Trebilco reviews the locality and its history, 11–52. He is comprehensive, cautious, and thorough. Günther, *Die Frühgeschichte des Christentums in Ephesus* is more critical and less comprehensive. Thiessen, *Christen in Ephesus* has valuable insights on the circumstances of the PE. For a survey of development of civic architecture during this period, see Scherrer, "The City of Ephesos," 2–25.

21. For the foundation, see Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 8.361 (Murphy-O'Connor, 47–48).

22. Herodotus 1.26 (Murphy-O'Connor, 67).

23. C. 287 (Strabo 14.1.21 [Murphy-O'Connor, 17]).

The cult of Artemis (originally a pre-Greek Cybele) was world famous, as was her shrine. Acts correctly portrays her economic and civic importance. Crossing Artemis was unwise. The imperial cult was also prominent.

Christian History in Ephesus

This section, the core of the essay, does not attempt a narrative account of the Jesus movement at Ephesus during its first eight decades. The goal is to illuminate the movement through examination of texts and leaders, with the object of exploring a place for Acts in the Deuteropauline milieu. Material prior to 100, the earliest possible date of Acts, is merely outlined.

1. 52–55. Paul’s mission to Asia. One must ask whether Luke seeks to make Paul appear to be the founder of the movement in Ephesus or to protect him from responsibility for what happened.

2. Mission of Apollos (?), “Followers of John the Baptizer” (Acts 18:24–19:7). These difficult episodes may seek to show the presence of rival movements.²⁴

3. Colossians, c. 70–75. “Left-wing” Paulinism detaching itself from Judaism and engaging in speculative, cosmic theology.²⁵

4. Ephesians, c. 90–95. Conservative, comprehensive Paulinism that stresses the Israelite background.²⁶

5. Revelation, c. 100–110.²⁷ Although Revelation is quite non-, even anti-Pauline, links with the Pauline orbit are apparent. The milieu is that of Paul’s Asian mission. Not only does the author use the Pauline form of letters to churches, he frames the entire work with Pauline formulae: 1:4–5 (Ἰωάννης ταῖς ἐπτά ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ· χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη), and 22:21 (Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ μετὰ πάντων).²⁸ John, like Paul, does not ground authority in association with the historical Jesus or in his precepts but in revelation from the heavenly Christ. By the middle of the second century those who viewed the

24. See Pervo, *Acts*, 458–70.

25. For a survey of Colossians in its Deuteropauline context, see Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 64–71.

26. Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 71–77.

27. Since Irenaeus (*A.H.* 5.30.3) dates Revelation toward the end of the reign of Domitian, he is generally followed, given the propensity to date writings as close to apostolic times as possible, which would locate it during the reign of Nero. Because Domitian was viewed as a persecuting emperor, he was a natural choice for a work viewed as late. In short, Revelation may belong to the early second century, during the reign of Trajan. For a canvas of opinions, see Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 294.

28. The letters of Revelation 2–3 do not conform to ecclesiastical correspondence. One is tempted to speculate about the universal significance of the number seven. One edition of the Pauline corpus contained seven letters to seven churches. Of both John and Paul it was said that in writing to one, they wrote to all. On Paul see Tertullian, *Adv. Marcionem* 5.17; this becomes a commonplace. The aphorism is applied to both in Muratori, ll. 47–48 (Paul), ll. 57–59 (John). See also Victorinus of Pettau, *Comm. In Apoc.* 1.7 (ad Rev 1:20), who makes the claim for both. One can speculate that one collection of seven inspired the other. Less speculative is the appearance of two collections of seven in the environs of Ephesus.

heavenly Christ as the sole basis of revelation were moving along paths that would be declared “heretical.”

Paul and John were not viewing the same heavenly revelation cable channel, as their theologies, orientation, politics, and ethics strongly differ. An example of the last is John’s abhorrence of consuming food associated with idolatry (Rev 2:14, 20). This term refers, in the most scrupulous sense, to anything purchased from a butcher, least scrupulously to participation in cultic meals. On this matter, if almost no other,²⁹ Acts agrees with Revelation, but this activity quickly became an identification badge between the faithful proto-orthodox and the lax proto-heretical (probably because consumption of sacrifices to the emperor was used as a test).³⁰

The letters to the churches indicate tensions over authority. That to Ephesus commends the community for testing alleged “apostles” and rejecting them.³¹ “Apostle” here evidently means “itinerant teacher” (*Did.* 11.3–6). The passage breathes the atmosphere of the Johannine epistles.³² Verse 6 introduces the Nicolaitans, who are also mentioned in the Pergamene letter (2:15). This represents a real group, possibly named for a leader.³³ The text of 2:14–15 apparently identifies the “teaching of Balaam” with this group. The charges approaching specificity are eating idolatrous food and engaging in fornication (*πορνείω*). The “Apostolic Decree” (Acts 15:29) touches upon both. “Fornication” can refer to a wide range of matters related to sexual purity (including marriage within prohibited degrees of consanguinity and sexual relations in improper circumstances) or, metaphorically, to idolatry. A third possibility is that it embraces both. In the majority of instances the metaphorical meaning is certain for Revelation (e.g. 17:2), and probably applies here.³⁴ Those in Thyatira (2:20–24) associated with Jezebel are subject to the same charges. The attempts of later heresiologists to characterize their theology/ies lack historical value.³⁵ The

29. Revelation also expresses conflict with and antagonism toward the synagogue: 2:9; 3:9.

30. Pervo, *Acts*, 377–78 nn. 103–4. For such offerings used as a test, see Pliny, *Ep.* 10, 96.5. (Although the term “meat offered to idols” has become standard in English [from a time when “meat” had a wide range of meaning], the Greek word refers only to sacrificial offerings.)

31. Ignatius will say much the same. See below.

32. See below. (The nature of the testing is not described.)

33. For bibliography on the Nicolaitans and a succinct discussion, see Aune, *Revelation*, 148–49. Trebilco has a lengthy and thoughtful discussion, *Ephesus*, 307–35.

34. Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 311–12.

35. Irenaeus, *A.H.* 1.26.3 refers only to Rev 2:6. He interprets the passage to mean that they made no distinction between fornication and consuming idol meat. He thus characterizes them as lax: “Nicolaitae autem magistrum quidem habent Nicolaum, unum ex VII qui primi ad diaconium ab apostolis ordinate sunt. Qui indiscrete vivunt. Plenissime autem per Iohannis Apocalypsin manifestantur qui sint, nullam differentiam esse docents in moechando, et idolythyum edere. Quapropter dixit et de his sermo: ‘Sed hoc habes quod odisti opera Nicolaiturum, quae et ego odi’” (Rev 2:6). His association of them with Cerinthus (below) is probably erroneous.

group may have appealed to Paul as an authority (below). In any case they were viewed as morally and therefore theologically loose.

From the embedded letters it appears that the communities at Pergamum (2:14–16) and Thyatira (2:20) contained/tolerated the Nicolaitans, but that those at Ephesus rejected them. The two leaders identified by nicknames (Balaam, Jezebel) may have been itinerants. Jezebel could have been an itinerant prophet given hospitality. An alternative is that one or both of these persons could have headed a house church within their respective communities.³⁶

Both these persons are associated with the same charges. Reference to a *didachē* (διδασχῆ, 2:15) could suggest particular doctrines.³⁷ Of "Balaam it is said: ἀλλ' ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ ὀλίγα ὅτι ἔχεις ἐκεῖ κρατοῦντας τὴν διδασχὴν Βαλαάμ, ὃς ἐδίδασκεν τῷ Βαλακ βαλεῖν σκάνδαλον ἐνώπιον τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυστα καὶ πορνεῦσαι (2:14). The biblical material in Numbers 22–25, 31 was interpreted in later times to present Balaam as the patron demon, so to speak, of syncretistic religion.³⁸ By using this nickname John was not attempting to flatter his colleague. The Jezebel of 1–2 Kings was no friend of the prophets. In addition to her enmity toward legitimate prophets, her introduction of foreign gods probably inspired this not particularly complimentary sobriquet.³⁹

Although John despises Jezebel's views, he does not denounce her as a woman. The Pastor would have needed to say no more (1 Tim 2:9–15). Luke does not object to women prophets; he merely does not allow them to prophesy. In Luke 1:26–56 Mary, in particular, and Elizabeth play prophetic roles. Once they have delivered their children, this activity ceases. Luke 2:21–38 introduces two prophets, Simeon and Anna (although only the latter is identified as such). At the scene's close the score reads: Simeon: two prophecies, Anna: zero. When Paul arrives at Philip's with his entourage, it transpires that the evangelist has or has acquired four prophesying daughters. Given the rather foreboding atmosphere, readers eagerly await to discover what they have to say. In vain, for the narrator imports the previously utilized Agabus from Jerusalem to deliver the requisite dire forecast (Acts 21:8–14). Women prophets played a major role in the New Prophecy, with roots reaching back to Ammia of Philadelphia, recognized by all Christians as a link in the succession of prophets (Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.17.4). Pauline practice is continued in the *Acts of Paul*, where women prophesy (e.g. 13.5).

36. Cf. Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 309.

37. See, however, the *Didache*, which focuses upon "moral" and "practical" issues, title notwithstanding.

38. Philo, *Vit Mos* 1.53–55; 263–304; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.126–30; Ps.-Philo, *LAB* 18.13. Cf. Jude 11–12; Pet 2:15–16. See the discussion by Aune, *Revelation*, 187–88; Vermes, "The Story of Balaam," 7.

39. For those keeping score, Jezebel was related to the historical character known to us (via Virgil) as Dido.

Revelation 2:24 claims that Jezebel taught “the deep things of Satan” (τὰ βαθέα τοῦ σατανα). “Deep things” evidently refers to the more profound subjects in contrast to elementary teaching.⁴⁰ This would, if taken literally, endow believers with the power to vanquish diabolic forces. It is more likely that this language is polemic against claims that this advanced teaching involved “the deep things of God.”⁴¹ If this Theology 201 applies, as seems likely, to the question of dietary scruples and engagement in civic life, the supporters of “liberal conduct” based their actions upon knowledge, almost certainly the awareness that the gods and demons do not exist. This introduces noteworthy parallels between the Nicolaitans and “the strong” who were inspired by Paul.⁴² See 1 Cor 8:1–9:23 and 10:23–11:1, in which the consumption of food associated with other gods is authorized by “freedom” and “knowledge.” Paul, Jezebel might well have noted, wrote of “the depths of God” (τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ; 1 Cor 2:10).⁴³

Although the Nicolaitans in Asia were probably socially similar to the “strong” discussed by Paul in 1 Corinthians and Romans—persons whose occupations, status, and aspirations inclined them toward accommodation with civic culture and life and whose livelihoods may well have been imperiled had they followed the path of rigorous separation⁴⁴—it is not likely that they represent a continuity of or a coincidental parallel to those strong. To me it seems more likely that they were Paulinists, probably heirs of the Pauline tradition, and certainly readers of 1 Corinthians (the most widely circulated of Paul’s letters), if not other texts. A potential interest in speculative theology (“depths of God”) would find Colossians congenial, for example. The Nicolaitans appear to have represented a continuation of “left-wing” Paulinism that would later manifest itself in some gnostic groups, and, not least, in the work of Marcion. If John has provided few details, they add up to rather more than Luke and the Pastor combined, and they are conducive to assignment within a Pauline milieu. One may therefore posit the existence of “liberal” Paulinists in Western Asia during the first decade of the second century, even if, as John the Seer asserts, they had been suppressed in Ephesus itself.

6. 120–130, the Pastoral Epistles (=PE) (1–2 Timothy, Titus). My proposal is that Acts fits into Ephesus between Ephesians and the PE, closer in time to the PE, (probably less than a decade) as indicated by institutional structure and rival movements, but within Deuteropauline trajectories.⁴⁵ All but the most

40. Cf. 1 Cor 3:2; Heb 5:12.

41. On the term, see Heinrich Schlier, *βάθος*, *TDNT* 1.517–18; Aune, *Revelation*, 207–8.

42. Paul’s intellectual sympathies lie with the “strong,” but he criticizes them for failing to understand the importance of love, of not needing to attempt to dominate with one’s superior knowledge. The importance of this observation is that the strong were not Paul’s opponents.

43. Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 118–26.

44. See the argument of Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 319–22.

45. For a survey, see Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 63–81.

conservative scholars view this collection as Deuteropauline, and its association with Ephesus is scarcely disputable.⁴⁶ Areas of agreement between Luke/Acts and the PE are sufficiently broad to have generated the proposal that Luke composed those epistles.⁴⁷ This hypothesis neglects some substantial differences between the two.⁴⁸ This essay attends to two areas: statements about false teachers and church offices.

Luke never portrays Paul engaged in struggles with rival members of the Jesus movement. The closest episode to an exception is associated with Ephesus: that strange tale of the followers of John the Baptizer in Ephesus (Acts 19:1–7). Ernst Haenchen took a stab: “Paulus überwindet die Sekte.”⁴⁹ This desperate conjecture may well have been based upon the recognition that trouble is in the forecast for Ephesus. That forecast emerges at the close of Paul’s address to the presbyters of Ephesus (20:29–30). Specifics are lacking. The preview indicates that some opponents, “the wolves,” will invade from outside (v. 29), while others (v. 30) will come from within. First Timothy’s Ephesian opponents are generally characterized as insiders; in Crete Titus must deal with external threats (e.g. Titus 1:10–16). Luke uses the (enduring) metaphor of the church leader as shepherd.⁵⁰ The PE do not use this imagery, for their ecclesial model is the household rather than the flock, and the method is educative rather than “pastoral” in the literal sense, which assumes that sheep are uneducable.⁵¹ The primary domestic concern is for good health. Behind this notion of proper hygiene (albeit at some distance) is the Pauline understanding of the church as a body.⁵²

Both Luke and the PE transform the old eschatological threat of the appearance of wayward teachers in the terrible last days⁵³ into predictions that the bad guys will erupt once *Paul* is off the scene (rather than all of the apostles, for example⁵⁴). The Pastor has no apparent difficulty balancing this dogma-driven

46. Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 205–9. For detailed references, see Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 309–10 nn. 162–70.

47. On this, see Pervo, “Romancing an Oft-neglected Stone,” 25–47.

48. A theological difference is that, whereas Luke stresses the continuity between Israel and the church, for the Pastor the Jewish roots lie in the remote past and salvation history is ignored. Advocates of the Israelite heritage are numbered among the opponents. A practical difference is that, whereas the Pastor makes marriage essentially a requirement, Luke opposes it. Advocates of celibacy can be found in the ranks of the Pastor’s opponents. One difference in personnel is that the PE include a letter to Titus, who is for Luke an “unperson.”

49. Haenchen, *Die Apostleschichte*, 492.

50. On this image, often coupled with that of wolves, see Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 204–8.

51. This does not intend to suggest that the Pastor is neither direct nor directive.

52. The verb “be healthy” occurs at 1 Tim 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 1:13; 2:12; and the adjective in Titus 2:8. Note also the metaphor of “gangrene” (which has a wider reference than in our usage) in 2 Tim 2:17. On the use of medical imagery in the PE, see Malherbe, “Medical Imagery in the Pastoral Epistles,” 121–36.

53. Examples include Mark 13 (and parallels; Jude 14–19; *Didache* 16).

54. Eusebius’ famous scheme requires the departure of the entire apostolic generation before the church can lose its virginity: *H.E.* 3.32.7–8.

scheme with his more general perspective that these teachings are disrupting the community in the present. Neither author seeks to stress the imminence of the end through this eschatological vocabulary (see Table 1).

Table 1: Trials of the Last Days

Acts 20:29–30

ἐγὼ οἶδα ὅτι εἰσελεύσονται μετὰ τὴν ἄφιξίν μου λύκοι βαρεῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς μὴ φειδόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου,³⁰ καὶ ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν ἀναστήσονται ἄνδρες λαλοῦντες διεστραμμένα τοῦ ἀποσπᾶν τοὺς μαθητὰς ὀπίσω αὐτῶν.

1 Tim 4:1

Τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ῥητῶς λέγει ὅτι ἐν ὑστέροις καιροῖς ἀποστήσονται τινες τῆς πίστεως προσέχοντες πνεύμασιν πλάνοις καὶ διδασκαλίαις δαιμονίων,

2 Tim 3:1

Τοῦτο δὲ γίνωσκε, ὅτι ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις ἐνστήσονται καιροὶ χαλεποί·

2 Tim 4:3–4

Ἔσται γὰρ καιρὸς ὅτε τῆς ὑγιαίνουσης διδασκαλίας οὐκ ἀνέξονται ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας ἑαυτοῖς ἐπισωρεύσουσιν διδασκάλους κνηθόμενοι τὴν ἀκοὴν⁴ καὶ ἀπὸ μὲν τῆς ἀληθείας τὴν ἀκοὴν ἀποστρέψουσιν, ἐπὶ δὲ τοὺς μύθους ἐκτραπήσονται.

Luke does not provide any details about the forthcoming falsity. The Pastor does, and some of them are possibly applicable. Any who contradicted the messages proclaimed in Luke and/or Acts would qualify, to be sure, but that is too general to be of use. Acts 20:20 could be construed as a claim that Paul did not engage in private teaching. Ancients did not believe that those who did not publish perished. Oral instruction to one's intimates, such as John 13–17, was considered superior to the vulgar productions issued in writing. Secret teaching could both a) claim superiority and b) not be controlled. Later writers, closely associated with the tendencies that would constitute orthodoxy, rejected the possibility of valid secret teaching attributed to Jesus or Paul (and other early leaders). The less orthodox had access to entire libraries of Jesus' and others' secret teachings. Acts 20:27 asserts that Paul proclaimed "the entire plan of God." If this means that he did not tailor his message for various groups, it amounts to self-defense.⁵⁵ Similar reservations apply to verses 33–34. Greed was one of the most common claims made against opponents. The historical Paul was suspected of misappropriating funds raised for the collection.⁵⁶

55. "Plan" need not mean anything more than the same general demands for repentance and belief in Jesus laid upon both Jews and gentiles.

56. See Pervo, *Acts*, 527–28.

The Pastor is much less reserved.⁵⁷ Is this contrast due to the difference in genre or temperament, or is it a result of time? The question is important. I doubt that these two authors would describe the situation in Ephesus in very similar terms were they not talking about similar phenomena. This similarity is noted by some authors who incline to date Acts a good generation earlier than I do (see the close of this sub-section).

Ancients were not unduly innocent of the art of vituperation. Much of what the Pastor said about his opponents was boiler plate polemic and of limited value. One well-developed means for discrediting a movement was to allege that it targeted women, ill-prepared and thus easily seducible and consequently off limits. Yet the picture of women as missionaries for these opponents in 2 Tim 3:6 and 1 Tim 5:13 is not standard polemic, and, in the light of the virile misogyny of 1 Timothy, it is reasonable to suspect that those whom the Pastor opposes have an emancipationist program. On the question of gender-based roles, Luke is ambivalent (above) and a witness to the decline in female leadership (in what would become the dominant circles [in Ephesus]).

Both 1 Tim 1:3–7 and Titus 1:10 focus upon the Jewish dimension of the rival doctrine. The latter speaks of actual Jews, although this may relate to the requirements of pseudonymity. To characterize a method as “Jewish” is, in this milieu, to denounce it. First Timothy’s references to “myths/stories” and “genealogies” readily generate a hypothesis that these opponents engage in speculative exegesis of Genesis. Speculation on the creation story stands behind the presumably pre-Pauline Gal 3:28 and becomes a foundational principle in much of what is called Gnosticism. The Pastor’s solution is to avoid such activity as speculation (conversation, dialogue, and thought).

Knowledge is a central concept. The opponents claim to know God (Titus 1:16). Contrasted with the famous “falsely named knowledge” of 1 Tim 6:20 are four uses of the expression “ἐπίγνωσις ἀληθείας” (“firm knowledge of truth”; 1 Tim 2:4; 2 Tim 2:25; 3:7; Titus 1:1). The parallel structure of 2 Tim 2:19 and 1 Tim 6:20–21 link “gnosis” to the claim that believers enjoy the benefits of resurrection. (On this point the Pastor maintains the Pauline position, against Colossians and Ephesians, both of which speak of resurrection in the present,⁵⁸ 2 Tim 2:11: πιστός ὁ λόγος· εἰ γὰρ συναπεθάνομεν, καὶ συζήσομεν; cf. Rom 6:5.) What is one to make of the unusual term “antitheses” in 1 Tim 6:20? The proposal that it may have been inspired by Marcion has arisen from time to time.⁵⁹

57. For a survey of the Pastor’s opponents and research on the subject, see Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 209–36.

58. Col 2:12; Eph 2:6.

59. Cf. Tyson, *Marcion*, 30.

Table 2: Gnosis and Present Resurrection

2 Tim 2:19

οἵτινες περὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἠστόχησαν,
λέγοντες [τὴν] ἀνάστασιν ἤδη
γεγονέναι, καὶ ἀνατρέπουσιν τὴν
τινῶν πίστιν.

1 Tim 6:20–21

ὦ Τιμόθεε, τὴν παραθήκην φύλαξον
ἐκτρεπόμενος τὰς βεβήλους
κενοφωνίας καὶ ἀντιθέσεις τῆς
ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως, ²¹ ἣν τινες
ἐπαγγελλόμενοι περὶ τὴν πίστιν
ἠστόχησαν.

In the practical realm, the opponents oppose marriage and prohibit certain foods (1 Tim 4:3). The latter is probably ascetic rather than motivated by *kashrut*, judging from the well-known 1 Tim 5:23: Μηκέτι ὑδροπότει, ἀλλὰ οἴνω ὀλίγω χρῶ διὰ τὸν στόμαχον. On diet the Pastor is scarcely less liberal than Paul and tenders not a hint of concession to the weak: 1 Tim 4:3–5; Titus 1:15. These passages lend no support to a prohibition against eating food contaminated by idolatry.⁶⁰ By comparison, Luke would stand closer to the opponents on marriage and differs somewhat with the Pastor on matters of diet.⁶¹ Nothing explicit emerges about docetism, an issue that will concern the figures and writings to be encountered subsequently in this paper.

The radical social notions of celibacy and women's freedom, as well as the ascetic diet, are shared by the *Acts of Paul*, making its Thecla chapters an ideal foil to the Pastor and a g-dsend to NT teachers since Dennis MacDonald showed the way some thirty years ago.⁶² That work does not share the theology of the Pastor's opponents, however; the claim that the resurrection has already taken place is uttered by malicious rascals consumed by envy.

From what can be inferred, it appears that, if the Pastor's opponents represent a more or less single movement, its basis is Pauline, that is, the PE are ranged against rival interpreters of Paul. The exception to this is the influence of Jewish thought, which appears to resemble what some of Paul's rivals taught (cf. Galatians and 2 Corinthians). Colossians and, in particular, Ephesians show an entrée of Jewish speculative theology into a Pauline milieu (at Ephesus in fact). Luke participated in this appropriation of Jewish thought to erect his model of salvation history. The speculative component was of no interest or value to him. The Pastor admitted neither into the household of faith, but Luke and the Pastor have a great deal in common. In the course of wrapping up his study of Luke's anti-heretical orientation, Charles Talbert notes eight points of

60. Note, however, Pervo, *Dating*, 247–49, who points out that the Pastor moralizes.

61. On marriage, contrast Luke 29:34–36 to Mark 10:25. See also Pervo, *Profit with Delight*, 181 n. 79.

62. MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle*.

comparison, concluding: "These obvious similarities between the picture of Paul that we get from Luke-Acts and the Pastorals seem to relate naturally to the problem of the apostolic defense against heresy."⁶³ Paul Trebilco concludes his examination of the polemic of the Pastorals with this observation: "We can ... make a connection between Acts 20:30 and the opponents in the Pastorals."⁶⁴ With reference to offices, the linkage between Luke and the Pastor is quite apparent in the realm of church offices and the relevant ceremonies of authorization (for the latter, see the end of this subsection).⁶⁵

Excursus: Office, Officer, Order

Power is the capacity to achieve an object. *Authority* is power recognized by a formal or informal body and may be incorporated in writing. For example, a thief brandishing a handgun has the *power* to command obedience; police *officers* are *authorized* to bear handguns in the course of their duties. Office provides a formal link between a person and authority.

Church offices have long entailed certain formal characteristics:⁶⁶

1. Permanency (unlike Greek priesthoods, e.g., which were often annual).
2. Recognition by the church, often in an established title.
3. Distinct status, eventually marked by seating position, later by dress, etc.⁶⁷
4. Ceremony of commission (as contrasted with divine calls). In ecclesiastical terms, ordination is the formal endorsement of a vocation (see Table 3).
5. Legalization. This may involve placing the officer's name on an official roster or some other means of legal endorsement.⁶⁸
6. Letters of commendation may be required, for example, in the case of relocation. (To this category one might add giving or refusing hospitality.)
7. Remuneration of some sort is a common feature.

In not infrequent competition with the foregoing, and vastly stimulating the growth of formal structures, were those who sought to acquire authority through their gifts: healing, intellectual, prophetic, and the like. Many of these persons were itinerant; they constitute a substantial number of the opponents of many of the authors and texts examined in this essay.

63. Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostics*, 114.

64. Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 235.

65. For this section I have borrowed freely from an unpublished paper, "Luke and the Bishops," delivered at the SBL Book of Acts, San Francisco, 21 November 2011. (*Caveat lector!* This paper received no serious criticism and even less commendation.)

66. On these characteristics, see Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 109–10. (Holmberg was indebted to Ulrich Brockhaus, *Charisma und Amt. Die paulinische Charismenlehre auf dem Hintergrund der frühchristlichen Gemeindefunktion*, 2d ed., 1975.)

67. The distinction between "clergy" and "laity" does not emerge until the third century, however.

68. Those who witness for the first time the ordination of a bishop of the Episcopal Church, e.g., may be surprised at the number of legal features required to attest the validity of the election and consent of other dioceses.

“Order” is used in two senses: one to characterize the various offices, whence “ordained” and “Holy Orders,” another for bodies, such as the “Order of Widows.”⁶⁹

The respect to terminology, the offices that receive attention here are ἐπίσκοπος/οι, πρεσβύτερος/οι, and διάκονος/οι.⁷⁰ For convenience they are semi-translated “bishop,” “presbyter,” and “deacon.” “Overseer,” “elder,” and “servant” are possible alternates. “Bishop” occurs in various secular contexts for officers with supervisory or oversight responsibility. “Deacon” is a common Greek term for “one who serves,” but it can be used for those who play prominent religious roles.⁷¹ “Presbyter” refers to one who possesses seniority. The “elders” of a group often form a conciliar or legislative body. “Senior” status can be transmitted. In Roman history one refers to “Senatorial families,” families whose sons would enter the Senate. Although it is often claimed that “presbyters” were a synagogue office adopted by Christians, the evidence for this is perilously thin. Two other uses of the word do not refer to a continuing office: “the presbyter” as an evident honorific nickname, and as a group of important tradents, “the elders.”⁷²

The eventual system of bishop, presbyter, and deacon is strongly recommended by Ignatius. In the churches he addressed, the authority of a single bishop was apparently accepted. The images Ignatius employs to illustrate the roles of each order reveal that presbyters have been imposed upon a deacon-bishop structure.⁷³ He likens the bishop to God or God’s grace (*Magn.* 6.1; 2.1) or commandment (*Trall.* 13.2), to the father (*Magn.* 3.1; *Trall.* 3.1; *Smyrn.* 8.1), to the lord (*Eph.* 6.1), or to Jesus Christ (*Trall.* 2.1). The πρεσβυτέριον (“presbytery, council”) is compared to the apostles (*Magn.* 6.1; *Trall.* 2.2; 3.1; *Phld.* 5.1; *Smyrn.* 8.1), and the law of Jesus Christ (*Magn.* 6.1; *Trall.* 3.1), and a divine commandment (*Smyrn.* 8.1). Deacons are routinely compared to Christ. The odd group is the presbyters, always characterized as a body, compared to a body, the apostles, and to the function of judgment and rule.

The pattern of bishop/deacon is associated with the *Didache*, which lacks the word presbyter. This may reflect church organization in the region of Antioch before Ignatius.⁷⁴ It is also Pauline (Phil 1:1). Luke is aware of this model. The parable in Luke 17:7–10 (Τίς δὲ ἐξ ὑμῶν δοῦλον ἔχων ἀροτριῶντα ἢ ποιμαίνοντα, ὃς εἰσελθόντι ἐκ τοῦ ἀγροῦ ἐρεῖ αὐτῷ· εὐθέως παρελθὼν

69. The source of this ambiguity is Roman legal language, which used *ordo* to refer to a social body, like a “class,” and for one’s social standing.

70. Officers not considered include “teachers” “prophets,” and “evangelists.”

71. Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 27–32.

72. See Brown, *Epistles*, 647–51, who regards the group as “disciples” of the disciples of Jesus.

73. See Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 217 and 427 nn. 89–90.

74. See Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 200. Both words are in the plural, as in Phil 1:1. That the community is to choose their officers does not conflict with Ignatius.

ἀνάπεσε, ⁸ ἀλλ' οὐχὶ ἐρεῖ αὐτῶ· ἐτοίμασον τί δειπνήσω καὶ περιζωσάμενος **διακόνει** μοι ἕως φάγω καὶ πῖω, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα φάγεσαι καὶ πίεσαι σύ; ⁹ μὴ ἔχει χάριν τῷ δούλῳ ὅτι ἐποίησεν τὰ διαταχθέντα; ¹⁰ οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς, ὅταν ποιήσητε πάντα τὰ διαταχθέντα ὑμῖν, λέγετε ὅτι δούλοι ἀχρεῖοί ἐσμεν, ὁ ὠφειλομέν ποιῆσαι πεποιήκαμεν) is not a congeries of rustic images. The first verbs are images for missionary (agricultural) and pastoral labor, while the third refers to the ministry of service. Since mission and pastoral care are equated here, this is a two-fold model, as is that proposed in Acts 6:1–4. In general, Luke prefers to characterize ministry in functional terms, with such words as ἀποστολή and ἐπισκοπή, as well as διακονία, all used in the important narrative of Acts 1:14–26. This continues Pauline usage.⁷⁵ Neither Luke nor others, however, have a term like *πρεσβυτέρια* (“seniority”). When describing the Pauline churches in Acts, however, Luke identifies one order: the presbyters (11:30; 14:23; [15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4]; 20:17; [21:18]⁷⁶). Similarly *1 Clement*, which speaks of “bishop and deacons,”⁷⁷ refers only to presbyters when describing the governance of the church at Corinth. Luke is not the only writer who seems to use “bishop” and “presbyter” almost interchangeably (Acts 20:28).

The PE present a particularly difficult case. Attempts to sort out and refine the distinctions between uses of the two words “bishop” and “presbyter” have been diligent and ingenious.⁷⁸ Fortunately for at least one scholar, this essay does not require solving the problem so much as identifying the issues and usages. The PE can employ both “bishop” and “presbyter” of church leaders. Luke equates presbyters with bishops and may well dislike the latter title. In the literature of this period “presbyter” appears only in the plural; “bishop” may be singular.⁷⁹ Where Luke and the PE agree is that a leading responsibility of pastors is the suppression of suspect teaching. Luke, the Pastor, and Ignatius identify false teaching in Ephesus: Acts 20; 1 Tim 1:3–11; 4:1–4; 6:2b–10; Ignatius, *Ephesians* 7–9, 16–17. Strong leadership will be required to defeat heresy. The PE appear to prefer a single leader of the community, a role played by Timothy and Titus.

Similarity between Luke and the Pastor is, as stated, quite apparent in their depiction of “ordinations.”

75. ἀποστολή: Act 1:25; Rom 1:5; 1 Cor 9:2; Gal 2:8. διακονία appears in Luke 10:40, eight times in Acts, including 1:17, 25, twenty-one times in Pauline and Deuteropauline letters (including Hebrews), and once in Rev 2:19 (a letter). ἐπισκοπή is Deuteropauline: Acts 1:20; 1 Tim 3:1; *1 Clem.* 44.1, 4; 50.3; Ignatius, *Polycarp* 8.3.

76. The bracketed references apply to Jerusalem, the elders of which community are probably not equivalent to those of, e.g., Ephesus.

77. “Bishop,” sing., 59.3; “bishops” and “deacons,” pl., 42.5.

78. See the survey and proposals of Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 448–60.

79. In the PE “bishop” is only singular (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7).

Table 3: Authorizing Acts (and Pastorals)⁸⁰

Acts 13:1–3

Ἦσαν δὲ ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ κατὰ τὴν οὖσαν ἐκκλησίαν **προφήται** καὶ διδάσκαλοι... Λειτουργούντων δὲ αὐτῶν τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ νηστευόντων εἶπεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον· ἀφορίσατε δὴ μοι τὸν Βαρναβᾶν καὶ Σαῦλον εἰς τὸ ἔργον ὃ προσκέκλημαι αὐτούς. **ἅ τότε νηστεύσαντες καὶ προσευξάμενοι καὶ ἐπιθέντες τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῖς ἀπέλυσαν.**

Acts 6:6

οὓς ἔστησαν ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀποστόλων, καὶ **προσευξάμενοι ἐπέθηκαν αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας.**

Acts 14:23

χειροτονήσαντες δὲ αὐτοῖς **κατ' ἐκκλησίαν πρεσβυτέρους, προσευξάμενοι μετὰ νηστειῶν** παρέθεντο αὐτούς τῷ κυρίῳ εἰς ὃν πεπιστεύκεισαν.

1 Tim 4:14

¹⁴ μὴ ἀμέλει τοῦ ἐν σοὶ χαρίσματος, ὃ ἐδόθη σοι **διὰ προφητείας μετὰ ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν** τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου.

1 Tim 1:18

Ταύτην τὴν παραγγελίαν παρατίθεμαί σοι, τέκνον Τιμόθεε, κατὰ τὰς προαγούσας ἐπὶ σὲ **προφητείας, ἵνα στρατεύῃ ἐν αὐταῖς τὴν καλὴν στρατείαν**

2 Tim 1:6

Δι' ἣν αἰτίαν ἀναμνήσκω σε ἀναζωπυρεῖν τὸ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὃ ἐστὶν ἐν σοὶ **διὰ τῆς ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν** μου.

1 Tim 5:22

χεῖρας ταχέως μηδενὶ ἐπιτίθει μηδὲ κοινώνει ἀμαρτίας ἄλλοτρίαις· σεαυτὸν ἀγνὸν τήρει.

Tit 1:5

Τούτου χάριν ἀπέλιπόν σε ἐν Κρήτῃ, ἵνα τὰ λείποντα ἐπιδιορθώσῃ καὶ καταστήσῃ **κατὰ πόλιν πρεσβυτέρους,** ὡς ἐγὼ σοὶ διεταξάμην,

In conclusion, both Luke and the PE note the presence of what they view as questionable teaching in Ephesus. Both view Paul's teaching as the proper antidote. Both regard leaders as responsible for attacking false teachers and teaching and see this as a major task of those leaders. Finally, both reflect an era when "bishop" and "presbyter" were acceptable titles for the chief officer(s), and they reflect a common understanding of the rites Christians of a few generations later would call "ordination."⁸¹

7. Cerinthus, c. 120–130 (?). Cerinthus was a Jewish-Christian of dualistic bent. Irenaeus presents Cerinthus, the Ebionites, and the Nicolaitans in that order (*A.H.* 1.26). Because of the citations in Hippolytus (*Ref.* 7.33–34; 10.21–22), the Greek text of Irenaeus, *A.H.* 1.26.1 can be reconstructed with some assurance. He states:

80. This is from Table 6.3 "Ordinations" in Pervo, *Dating Acts*. See pp. 214–16 for comments.

81. Acts 14:23 uses *χειροτονέω*, which will become the standard verb for "ordain."

A certain Cerinthus taught in Asia that the world was not made by the first God, but by some Power which was separated and distant from the Authority (αὐθεντία) that is above all things. He proposes Jesus, not as having been born of a Virgin—for this seemed impossible to him—but as having been born the son of Joseph and Mary like all other humans, and that he excelled over every person in justice, prudence, and wisdom (δικαιοσύνη, σωφροσύνη, σύνεσις). After his baptism Christ descended on him in the shape of a dove from the Authority that is above all things. Then he preached the unknown Father and worked wonders. But at the end Christ again flew off from Jesus. Jesus indeed suffered and rose again from the dead, but Christ remained impassible, since he was spiritual.⁸²

This is characteristic of a number of theologies associated with Marcion and/or Gnosis. Features include the assignment of creation to an inferior (but not specifically wicked) power, an adoptionist and strongly docetic christology, and the ἄγνωστος θεός (the true God was unknown prior to Christ and cannot be discovered through the use of reason or the investigation of nature). Although Christ left Jesus at the cross, the latter did, according to Cerinthus, rise from the dead.

Eusebius (*H.E.* 3.28.2–4) states that Cerinthus was a chiliast, attributing his information to the anti-Montanist Roman presbyter Gaius of the late second century, as well as the more recent Dionysius of Alexandria. Irenaeus may have neglected to develop this feature (if he were aware of it) because he did not find it abhorrent, as did Eusebius. Charles Hill argues that Cerinthus *was* a chiliast and that, like Marcion, he envisioned parallel fulfillments for Jews and true believers, the former of a decidedly material sort.⁸³ Those who look for “Gnostic” influences upon Marcion ought not neglect Cerinthus.

Irenaeus’ first account speaks of the pre-baptism Jesus as surpassing “... every person in justice, prudence, and wisdom.” This catalogue of three of the cardinal virtues evokes Luke 2:52 (cf. also 1:80; 2:40), suggesting that Cerinthus may have known the third gospel with the first two chapters (an alternative, that he was the source of 2:52, is less likely). Cerinthus is normally linked with John the Evangelist and John the Seer (note Irenaeus, *A.H.* 3.11.1).

Hanc fidem annuntians Johannes Domini discipulus, volens per Evangelii annuntiationem auferre eum, qui a Cerintho inseminatus erat hominibus errorem, et multo prius ab his qui dicuntur Nicolaitae, qui sunt vulsio eius quae falso cognominatur scientiae, ut confunderet eos, et suaderet quoniam unus Deus et Omnia fecit per Verbum suum ...⁸⁴

82. Irenaeus, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heresies*, 1.90, *alt.*

83. Hill, “Cerinthus, Gnostic or Chiliast?” 135–72.

84. “John the Lord’s disciple, proclaimed that faith. By preaching the Gospel he wished to remove the error that was disseminated among the people by Cerinthus, and long before by those who are called Nicolaitans, who are an offshoot of the falsely called ‘knowledge.’” Irenaeus, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heresies*, 3.52.

This is the famous claim that John composed the Fourth Gospel in order to refute Cerinthus, whose views were like those of the “much earlier” Nicolaitans. Since Irenaeus himself locates the Nicolaitans in the 90s, Cerinthus would seem to be not much earlier than c. 125. In addition he invokes the PE by alluding to 1 Tim 6:20.

Irenaeus relates two adjacent anecdotes associated with Polycarp (*A.H.* 3.3.4):

There are those who heard him [Polycarp] say that when John the disciple of the Lord was at Ephesus and went to take a bath, on seeing Cerinthus there, he rushed out of the bathhouse without having bathed. “Let us flee,” he explained, “lest even the bathhouse collapse because Cerinthus the enemy of the truth is in there.”

Polycarp himself, when Marcion met him on one occasion and said, “Recognize us!” gave this reply” “I do recognize you as the first-born of Satan.”⁸⁵

Irenaeus gives limited endorsement to the former apophthegm while treating the latter as authentic. He views both, in his subsequent comment, as examples of the Pastor’s admonition to avoid speaking with heretics. John, Marcion, and Polycarp in Asia are more or less contemporaneous. How we should have liked to be there! The most important observation about Cerinthus is that he attests the presence of a dualistic system in Asia at the time of Polycarp. Although he may have used Luke, the Ephesus of his era—as described by later orthodox writers—witnessed the rise of the figure of John.

8. The Johannine Circles and Tradition. By the final quarter of the second century Paul’s name had (despite his letters, Acts, the Pastorals, Polycarp, and Ignatius) been effectively erased from the foundation stone of the Ephesian church, to be replaced by that of the apostle John. Helmut Koester invokes an impressive list of witnesses from the middle third of the century who did not associate John with Ephesus, if anywhere: Ignatius, Polycarp (both of whom mention Paul), Justin, and Papias.⁸⁶ Both Polycarp and, according to Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.39.17, Papias cited 1 John. Papias knew two persons named John, one a member of the twelve, the other “the Presbyter” (*H.E.* 3.39.4), a term that was evidently used for “disciples” of the disciples of Jesus.

Koester concludes that Irenaeus was responsible for attributing the Fourth Gospel and Revelation to the apostle John (*A.H.* 2.22.5; 3.3.4; 5.30.3).⁸⁷ Irenaeus’ claim (according to Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.24.16) that Polycarp had associated with the apostle John is certainly fictitious. In the late second century, Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus could write to Bishop Victor at Rome (whose own see did

85. Irenaeus, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heresies*, 3.34.

86. Koester, “Early Christian Literature,” 135–37. Papias’ list of apostles in Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.39.3–4 suggests that he knew John. He may have elected not to discuss it or his observations may not have been acceptable to Eusebius.

87. Koester, “Early Christian Literature,” 138.

not lack apostolic real estate of high value) about the beloved disciple John, whose tomb was at Ephesus (Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.31.3). The *Acts of John*, written in the late second century, utilizes the association of the apostle John to support its argument.⁸⁸

Richard Bauckham argues that Polycrates believed that John the Presbyter wrote the Fourth Gospel.⁸⁹ An evidently fatal flaw in this elegant hypothesis is that, while Bauckham explains the identification of Philip the Evangelist with the apostle of the same name as an example of typical practice, he denies it in the case of John. This seems highly improbable. The tenor of the letter is to present the largest and brightest galaxy of witnesses that Polycrates can muster in support of the Quartodeciman calendar. Identification of the Fourth Gospel as a Johannine composition is lacking before the closing decades of the second century in Western Asia, although it was known to the New Prophecy, for example, which used the term "Paraclete," and to Irenaeus, who, by bestowing apostolic credentials upon it and reading the text through the lens provided by 1 John, secured it, to his everlasting credit, for orthodoxy. The claim that the gospel was written to refute Cerinthus testifies to its appeal to theologians of a more speculative bent. (The figure of the apostle John, son of Zebedee, as the evangelist enters the picture later than the period under consideration here.)

The earliest attestation of the Fourth Gospel in Asia may be Luke in its canonical shape. Luke 24, as it exists, exhibits a number of parallels with John 20, most notably the disputed v. 12. If the close of Luke was re-edited for one reason or another, that editor evidently made use of John 20.⁹⁰

9. Papias of Hierapolis. Hierapolis lies at the fringe of the region under consideration. Although the Lycos valley was part of the orbit of Paul's Ephesian mission, the surviving fragments of Papias, who was not well handled by his later readers, show no sign of Pauline influence. Links with the apocalyptic revival in Asia, of which 2 Thessalonians may be the earliest known witness and the New Prophecy the mature heir, are apparent. If Papias had anything to say about the gospels of Luke and John, it has not survived. In *H.E.* 3.36.1–2 Eusebius states:

At this time (Trajan) there flourished in Asia Polycarp, the companion of the Apostles, who had been appointed to the bishopric of the church in Smyrna by the eyewitnesses and ministers of the Lord. Distinguished men at the same time were Papias, who was himself bishop of the diocese of Hierapolis, and Ignatius, still a name of note to most, the second after Peter to succeed to the bishopric of Antioch.⁹¹

88. Cf. Pervo, "Johannine Trajectories in the *Acts of John*," 47–68.

89. Bauckman, "Papias and Polycrates on the Origin of the Fourth Gospel," 24–69.

90. On these parallels, see Brown, *The Gospel according to John. XIII–XXI*, 1000–1001; Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts*, 44–47, 100–9; as well as the just launched BeDuhn, *The First New Testament*.

91. Eusebius, *H.E.*, 1.281.

Most of this information is demonstrably erroneous. If one accepts the least tenuous element, that Papias was the contemporary of Polycarp and Ignatius, he is to be dated c. 130.⁹² One can explain most of Eusebius' fantasies and anachronisms by reference to his wishes, but a good reason for him to place Papias twenty years' late is not readily detectable.

10. Polycarp of Smyrna, c. 130–135 (proposals range from 120–135).⁹³ Polycarp is a fascinating figure. His life reached back into the foothills of the apostolic era and forward into the heyday of the apologists. With that most interesting span comes a compact but rich dossier: a letter from Ignatius, correspondence to Philippi, and a famous, moving martyrdom. Polycarp shows that the PE are at home in the realm of the Apostolic Fathers, for his correspondence has so many similarities with them that Hans von Campenhausen proposed that Polycarp wrote the PE.⁹⁴ This is unlikely, since Polycarp displays no trace of the Pastor's epiphany christology. Polycarp is therefore probably the first witness to the PE, as he may be the first witness to Acts, since they share a mellifluous, albeit obscure, phrase to describe the resurrection:⁹⁵

Table 4: Acts and Polycarp

Acts 2:24

ὅν ὁ θεὸς ἀνέστησεν λύσας τὰς ᾠδῖνας τοῦ ᾄδου

Polycarp *Phil* 1.2

ὃν ἤγειρεν ὁ θεὸς λύσας τὰς ᾠδῖνας τοῦ ᾄδου

[Jesus] whom God raised, having loosed the pangs of Hades [death]

The foregoing comparisons of Acts and the PE indicate that, if Polycarp shows that the PE rest comfortably in the world of the Apostolic Fathers, then something uncomfortably similar must be said about Acts.

Polycarp warns the Philippianians about the dangers of docetism (as Ignatius did for the Smyrnaeans: *Smyrnaeans* 2–3; cf. *Trallians* 10). The language of *Phil.* 7.1 uses words evidently drawn from 1 John 4:2–3 (cf. 3:8). Polycarp is thus the first witness to Johannine literature in western Asia. Despite Irenaeus' effort to link Polycarp to John, he names (and reveres) but one apostle: Paul (9.2; 11.2). His letter says nothing specific about Marcion.⁹⁶ This does not mean that Polycarp was unaware of the threat. Another anecdote has him confront Sinope's most famous Paulinist (see above).

92. On the early date (c. 110) for Papias, see MacDonald, *Two Shipwrecked Gospels*.

93. Recent surveys include Holmes, "Polycarp of Smyrna, *Epistle to the Philipppians*," 108–25; Dehandschutter, "The Epistle of Polycarp," 117–33. Cf. also Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 139–43.

94. Campenhausen, "Polykarp von Smyrna und die Pastoralbriefe," 197–252.

95. See the discussion in Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 17–20 (against N.-A.²⁸ I prefer to read "Hades" rather than "death" in Acts; see Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 81–82).

96. Polycarp, *Phil.* 7 does not appear to be directed at Marcion. See Schoedel, *Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Fragments of Papias*, 23–26; Paulsen, *Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia und der Polykarperbrief*, 120–21. The expression "firstborn of Satan" (7.1) may have been the source of the anecdote in Irenaeus, *A.H.* 3.3.4, #7, above.

11. Ignatius of Antioch.⁹⁷ Recent scholarship tends to move Ignatius' martyrdom forward from the Trajanic date proposed, without substantive support, by Eusebius (*H.E.* 3.22; 3.34–36) to the second quarter of the century, perhaps 130–135.⁹⁸ At the time of his letters, the churches of Asia with which he communicates have accepted, with varying degrees of consensus and enthusiasm, the idea that each will have a single leader, the bishop. These epistles, written in difficult circumstances in the course of his journey to martyrdom at Rome, are like a star shell, providing a brief but brilliant glimpse of the communities addressed.

The focus of the following paragraphs is what light Ignatius' letter to the Ephesians sheds upon the situation in Ephesus at his time.⁹⁹ Ignatius intended to write to the entire Christian community at Ephesus.¹⁰⁰ As his guards did not stop there, his information about the community comes from a visit by Bishop Onesimus and four others (1.3; 2.1). Presuming that Onesimus was human, he probably did not include his most ardent opponents, any docetists, or a hard-shell presbyterian in the group. *Ephesians* is Ignatius' longest letter, suitably florid for the metropolis of the province, from the bishop of a community in another capital (Antioch).

The "wolves" (actually feral dogs; 7.1) are out there, but Ignatius says that they have not gained a foothold. In 9.1 he intimates that the representatives of evil teaching are itinerant. Since one of Ignatius' tactics is to say "good for you for not doing such and such" in the sense of "don't even *think* about doing such and such,"¹⁰¹ one can't be absolutely certain, but he is much less concerned about Onesimus' protégés being seduced by false teaching¹⁰² than

97. Two recent surveys of Ignatius are Foster, "Ignatius of Antioch," 81–107, and Hermut Löhr, "The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch," in Pratscher, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers*, 91–115. Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 628–711, displays his customary thoroughness and sense.

98. See Barnes, "The Date of Ignatius," 119–30, who, among other data, argues for two anti-Valentinian references in the letters, Paul Foster (see note 97 above) 84–89, who bases his doubts about Eusebius' dating on the grounds of church development, and Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 134–35, who criticizes Eusebius' inferences.

99. The commentary of Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 37–100, is an invaluable guide to the understanding of Ignatius' *Epistle to the Ephesians*.

100. Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 643. Schoedel (*Ignatius*, 37) shows that the inscription to the letter contains many possible allusions to Ephesians, concluding: "It is tempting to think that (in spite of no references to Paul's Ephesians in *Eph.* 12.2, where it may have been expected) Ignatius felt it appropriate to address the Ephesians with language from an apostolic writing regarded as directed to them." If one yielded to this temptation, it would constitute the earliest known evidence for "Ephesians" in the address of that letter, which was known to Marcion as "Laodiceans." Some important witnesses (P⁴⁶ a* B* 424^c 1739) and others known from patristic citations omit "At Ephesus."

101. Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 634–35.

102. In 6.2 Ignatius states: ἐν ὑμῖν οὐδεμία αἵρεσις κατοικεῖ. To render this "No heresy dwells among you" is a bit anachronistic. "Faction" is preferable, both because for Ignatius (as for good conservative Romans) faction is the major problem, and because "heresy" cannot exist until there is a defined "orthodoxy." See Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 58.

by those who absent themselves from the community assembly (e.g. 4.1; 13.1; 20.2, positively; 5.2, negatively). As often, Ignatius pleads frequently, fervently, and eloquently for unity, that is, assembly under the direction and leadership of Onesimus. Nothing specific about the nature and contents of the opposed teaching emerges.¹⁰³ Elsewhere the good bishop attacks Judaizers and docetists, probably two different groups.¹⁰⁴ Nowhere does Ignatius address teachings that are particularly characteristic of Marcion.

The text of 6.1 raises another issue: the “silence” of Onesimus. This is presumably a euphemism for a lack of verbal facility, quite possibly aptitude, in debate with representatives of dubious doctrines. Those who don’t “hang out with the bishop” may find him rather dull. Ignatius makes a virtue of this necessity.¹⁰⁵ Onesimus was presumably chosen for other gifts than eloquence, a choice that may have disappointed some at the time of his election and later. (Onesimus was probably not the first church leader to learn that one cannot please all of the faithful all the time.)

Ignatius, who views himself as did Polycarp and the Pastor as a leader in the mold and tradition of Paul, identifies his readers as, with him, “fellow initiates of Paul,” who mentions the Ephesians “in every letter” (12.2).¹⁰⁶ He assumes that all the hearers of his letter will approve of this comparison and not hiss at the mention of Paul’s name. Unless Onesimus and his delegation were the most deceiving of rascals or equipped with the pre-spectacles equivalent of lenses tinted in the most lavish shade of fuchsia—both are possible—things at Ephesus were looking up for Ignatius, perhaps a decade later than the Pastor. This is no tableau of warring, fissiparous factions—which is not to mistake it for the Garden of Eden.

Conclusion

Within four clearly crucial decades the most apparent change at Ephesus has been structure, stimulated by the clearest continuity: doctrinal dispute. The Seer John attacks persons. The authority used to straighten them up is the heavenly Christ. Both John and Ignatius praise the Ephesians for fending off false teachers; for Ignatius it is unity under the bishop that brings this about. Teaching opposed has ranged from liberal Paulinism (Revelation) to a Paulinism influenced by speculative exegesis (PE) to docetism (Polycarp, Ignatius). The course of the “anti-heretical” trajectory is toward strong, single leadership. Even Luke, no admirer of the emerging Ignatian bishop, charges leaders with this responsibility.

103. Note, however, the paradoxical creedal assertions in 7.2, which would be anathema to a good docetist.

104. Trebilco, *Ephesus*, 689–90.

105. Note 15, which extols the merits of silence. See Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 56–57.

106. “Every letter” is a bit of flattery. The phrase intimates the existence of a collection. Cf. 2 Thess 2:17.

Attitudes toward Judaism range from viewing Jews as antagonists (Luke/Acts, Revelation) to appropriation of salvation history and sacred texts (Luke/Acts), to opposing “Judaizing” movements (PE, Ignatius), to gentile Christianity with no particular fondness for the Israelite past (PE).

Plausible reconstructions and patristic statements notwithstanding, the Johannine tradition has not penetrated the Ephesus of Ignatius. Polycarp finds 1 John useful against docetists, but he does not identify the citation. Paul is the only apostle named. If Johannine circles were prominent at Ephesus—and it is reasonable to credit the opponents of 1 John with putting docetism onto the Asian map—they were all, docetists (expectedly) and incarnationalists (inappropriately), essentially invisible. Cerinthus is no more than a vague candidate for the role of an opponent to the Pastor. In short, two boxes of data exist, that of the texts, which reveal mainly Pauline influences, and another composed of patristic references, which include John and Co., Cerinthus, and Marcion.

Trajectories are barely traceable: from Galatians to Colossians through those opposed by John the Seer to radical Paulinists culminating in Marcion, another from Romans to Ephesians to Luke and Acts ... to Irenaeus, in one direction, from Ephesians to Valentinus in another. These will include gaps and a faint web of interconnections.

If one grants, for the sake of argument, that the foregoing has demonstrated that Luke fits into the Ephesian milieu roughly at the threshold of the PE and at least a decade before Ignatius, it remains possible for those who date Ignatius 105–115 and the PE 80–100, to say, “We agree. Luke *does* belong in proximity to the PE and in the period leading up to Ignatius (although our arguments for the date of Acts do not use data of this nature).” What is this poor old scholar to do? Has he devoted all of this time and effort only to support a date scarcely later than 95?

The telescope approach is not without its difficulties. Those who promote it¹⁰⁷ must posit a period of very rapid development between the composition of the gospels and the catholic epistles, all of which would have had to be in print, so to speak, by c. 80, followed, after the explosion, by a generation in which nothing happened. Rome would wait for nearly four decades to get a proper episcopal system in place. Marcion and Valentinus would spring up in a parched and somnolent garden. Granted that development does not take place at a uniform pace, what this chronological scheme requires places Asia well out of synch with other Christians. The developmental argument will lack appeal for some scholars, who may choose not to regard it as “hard” evidence, but it does possess weight. The single, most incontrovertible obstacle to this scheme is the bishop of Smyrna. Polycarp did interact with Ignatius and he holds a place close to the PE, but no one nowadays would try to place him c. 105–110,

107. Trebilco does commend most of these early dates, but he does not erect a theory of church history upon them.

for he was martyred c. 156–157, possibly two decades later than that—a fifty-year stretch between seeing Ignatius on his way and writing to Philippi before martyrdom is too much to ask of anyone, even a saintly old pastor. He is the lynchpin. The dates proposed above have greater probability, and, in sum, Acts is at home in Ephesus during the second decade of the second century.

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How Acts Constructed the Itinerary of Paul

Conclusions Excerpted from the *Acts Seminar Report*

Dennis E. Smith

Acts has long been used as a resource for reconstructing the itinerary of Paul. Such usage is supported by the presupposition that the author of Acts did not use the collection of Paul's letters as a source. Building on this presupposition, many scholars have concluded that the author of Acts had an independent "itinerary source" which he used to provide a basic framework for telling the story of Paul. The Acts Seminar, however, became convinced that the author of Acts *did* have access to Paul's letters and made use of them as major resources. This means that the burden of proof has shifted, particularly in regard to hypotheses about proposed sources of Acts. When one works from the perspective that the author had access to the itinerary data in Paul's letters, the evidence for a separate itinerary source is not only seriously undermined, it evaporates. It is now possible virtually to look over Luke's shoulder and watch him in action creating his itinerary out of bits and pieces of itinerary material in Paul's letters.¹

Paul's Journey to Greece

The Itinerary According to Paul²

For you know from your own experience, friends, that our stay among you was not without power, but despite having just been assaulted and insulted in Philippi, as you know, God gave us the courage to speak God's world-transforming message to you in the face of great opposition (1 Thess 2:1-2).

Therefore, since I couldn't leave Athens, we decided to send Timothy, a dear friend and fellow advocate of our message about the Anointed, both to bolster you and to allay the threats to your confidence in God so that none of you would be shaken by these attacks (1 Thess 3:1-2).

I will come to see you once I have made my way through Macedonia, because I am planning to go through Macedonia ... (1 Cor 16:5).

1. This paper is based on conclusions excerpted from Smith and Tyson, eds., *Acts and Christian Beginnings: The Acts Seminar Report*, where the research resources supporting these arguments are also found.

2. Quotations from Paul are taken from Dewey, et al., eds., *The Authentic Letters of Paul*.

The Itinerary According to Acts³

We sailed from Troas on a straight course to Samothrace and came to Neapolis the next day. From Neapolis we went to Philippi, a city of the first district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We spent several days in that city. On the Sabbath we went beyond the city gate to the riverside, where we thought there would be a place for prayer (Acts 16:11–13).

After leaving Philippi, Paul and Silas took the road through Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. As was his normal practice, Paul visited the congregation (Acts 17:1–2).

As soon as darkness fell, the believers sent Paul and Silas on to Berea. When they got to Berea, they entered the synagogue. Now the Jews there were of a better quality than those at Thessalonica (Acts 17:10–11).

The believers immediately sent Paul to the seacoast, while Silas and Timothy remained behind. After those who were conducting Paul had got him to Athens, they returned with instructions for the other two to join him as soon as possible (Acts 17:14–15).

After his encounter with the Areopagus, Paul left Athens for Corinth, where he came upon a Jew, Aquila, from Pontus, and his wife Priscilla, who had recently arrived from Italy because the Emperor Claudius had ordered all Jews out of Rome. Paul presented himself to this couple and came to live with them because they, like him, crafted with fabrics. So Paul went to work (Acts 18:1–3).

Deconstructing the Acts Itinerary

Based on the bits of data in Paul, namely, traveling from Philippi to Thessalonica to Athens, Acts adopts an itinerary in which Paul travels into Greece by the northern route through Macedonia. Notably, this was also the route Paul chose for his second trip to the region (1 Cor 16:5). How Paul actually gets to Macedonia is Luke's creation and has a clear literary purpose. As Acts has it, Paul went to Macedonia because it was God's idea that he do so, a motif that drives the plot in Acts. In Troas, Paul has a vision of a Macedonian (how does he know it is a Macedonian?) calling for him to come into Macedonia. Why Troas? As Dennis MacDonald has pointed out, Troas was associated in antiquity with ancient Troy. Paul's sea voyages throughout Acts will be reminiscent of the voyages in Homer's *Odyssey*. Like the *Odyssey*, this voyage is recounted using the first person "we" (16:10–17).

Paul's first stop is Philippi (Acts 16:11–13; 1 Thess 2:1–2). In the Acts story, following a pattern found throughout its story of Paul's journeys, Paul first finds a Jewish meeting place. In this case, instead of a synagogue it is a *pro-seuche*, perhaps chosen for his story because the author will populate this particular meeting place with women. Following the conversion of a certain Lydia,

3. Quotations from Acts are taken from the Richard Pervo translation as utilized in *Acts and Christian Beginnings*.

Paul and Silas end up in prison from which they will eventually miraculously escape. The story is Lukan throughout.

Paul then traveled to Thessalonica before turning south toward Athens, passing through Beroea on the way. This route too was constructed out of comments in Paul's letters. He wrote to the Thessalonians that he had already been in Philippi, and had been shamefully treated there, before arriving in Thessalonica (1 Thess 2:1–2). His next stop was Athens (1 Thess 3:1). Luke simply adds other cities to the route that Paul does not mention. The road from Philippi to Thessalonica is the Via Egnatia, and any traveler on that road would pass through Amphipolis and Apollonia. To go south, however, one would have to leave the Via Egnatia and travel to Athens either by a sea route or by a coastal road. Luke prefers the coastal road option, and this allows him to create a stop in Beroea.

Nothing about the rest of Luke's narrative in this segment of Paul's journey matches anything from Paul's letters. According to Paul, the opposition he met was in Philippi, not Thessalonica. In contrast to Acts, Paul's letter to the Thessalonians assumes a gentile community with whom he had built a close relationship (1 Thess 1:6–10); there is no hint of trouble there except for 1 Thess 2:13–16, which is a vague reference to the Thessalonian community having been "harassed by your fellow citizens" (1 Thess 2:14).⁴ If this is the source for the story in Acts, it has been reset as a story about Paul utilizing typical Acts themes. According to Acts, Paul escaped from the persecution in Thessalonica and went next to Beroea, but there is no mention of Beroea in Paul's letters or anywhere else in the NT.

On the other hand, Luke's narrative is constructed out of favorite themes found elsewhere in his story of Paul. As is common in Acts but not in Paul's letters, Paul begins his preaching in the synagogue, both in Thessalonica and Beroea. He faces fierce opposition from Jews in Thessalonica, is carried before the magistrates by an unruly mob, and has to leave under duress. In this case, the Jewish response is all Luke wants to talk about. Though he mentions that there were Greek converts, there is little information about them. According to Paul, the community of believers in Thessalonica became renowned throughout Macedonia and Achaia. According to the story in Acts, it was the Jewish opposition that became renowned. The Acts version, since it is built out of favorite narrative themes of Luke, is simply not credible as history.

The entire sojourn in Beroea seems to have been created by Luke to expand on the adventure tale he is constructing. The escape by night is a favorite device of Luke (see, e.g., Acts 9:23–25). Beroea is handy as the nearby city to which he could escape. In Beroea, Paul followed standard practice according to Acts and preached in the synagogue. Luke's emphasis that the Jews were friendlier in

4. Many scholars consider 1 Thess 2:13–16 to be an interpolation; see further Dewey, et al., eds., *Authentic Letters of Paul*, 25.

Beroea fits the contrast that the narrative needs; that is, Beroea functions best narratively as an escape route if in fact Paul is safe there. And he *is* safe, at least until the rabid Jews from Thessalonica pursue him there. Then Paul has to escape surreptitiously again. According to the Acts story, Paul could hardly have had time to catch his breath. How could he have overlooked saying something about those events in his letter to the Thessalonians? The answer is, because they never happened. Luke made them up.

The detail that Paul visited Athens is historically accurate. Paul tells us that himself. After leaving Thessalonica, after a “short time” he sent Timothy back to visit the Thessalonians while Paul waited in Athens (1 Thess 2:17; 3:1–2). After Timothy reported back, Paul wrote them the letter we know as 1 Thessalonians (1 Thess 3:6). By that time, Paul may have been in Corinth, the next stop in his travel itinerary. Luke’s source for a visit to Athens is undoubtedly 1 Thessalonians, especially since he includes the unusual detail that Paul was in Athens without Timothy. But Luke tells a different story about Paul’s coworkers. According to Acts 17:15, Paul arrived in Athens after fleeing in haste from Beroea, but Silas and Timothy remained behind, intending to join him later. They only catch up with him in Corinth (18:5). Luke omits the detail that Timothy was dispatched by Paul from Athens to check up on the Thessalonians (1 Thess 3:2). Such an intentional omission must have a reason. It is one of many examples in Luke-Acts in which the author changes details in his sources so as to follow his own agenda. Here leaving the coworker behind adds to the drama of the adventurous escape from Beroea.

It is not entirely unlikely that Paul preached in some form while in Athens, but, if so, he himself makes no mention of it. In fact, in his recounting of his itinerary, Athens seems to be no more than a stopover for him. In any case, the story in Acts is not reliable in any of its details: both the speech and the list of converts are Lukan creations. According to Paul, his first converts in Achaia were not in Athens but in Corinth (1 Cor 16:15; see also 1:16).

Paul’s Ephesian Itinerary

The Itinerary According to Paul

I planted, Apollos watered, but God’s power is what made it grow (1 Cor 3:6).

But I’m going to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, because a large and promising door is open to me even though we have many opponents (1 Cor 16:8–9).

The communities of the Anointed in Asia send their greetings. Aquila and Prisca send their warm fraternal greetings to you as does the gathering that meets in their house (1 Cor 16:19).

The Itinerary According to Acts

Paul stayed on for a number of days before saying his farewells to the believers and sailing off to Syria with Priscilla and Aquila. At the Corinthian port of

Cenchreae he had his hair cut off, because he had undertaken a vow. When they reached Ephesus, Paul separated from the couple. He himself went to the synagogue and engaged the Jews. They asked that he spend more time, but he could not agree, and bade them farewell, promising, "God willing, I shall come back to you at another time." Leaving Ephesus by ship, Paul arrived in Caesarea and went from there to Jerusalem, where he paid his respects to the church before continuing on to Antioch. He spent some time there and then set out again, moving through Galatian territory and Phrygia, strengthening all the believers in each community as he traveled (Acts 18:18–23).

An Alexandrian Jew by the name of Apollos came to Ephesus. Apollos was an eloquent fellow who knew how to make effective use of the scriptures. He had received instruction in the way of the Lord, could speak with spiritual ardor, and propound the story of Jesus with precision, but he was aware only of the baptism proclaimed by John. Apollos launched a vigorous preaching mission in the synagogue. After Priscilla and Aquila had heard him, they took him aside and expounded the Movement more fully. When Apollos expressed a desire to go to Achaia, he received support from the believers, who wrote to encourage the disciples there to receive him. After his arrival he was of considerable value to those who had come to believe through grace, for he decisively routed the Jews in public debate, demonstrating from the scriptures that the Messiah is Jesus (Acts 18:24–28).

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul made his way by the inland route to Ephesus ... Paul devoted the next three months to preaching in the synagogue, where he vigorously sought to persuade people about the nature of God's dominion. Since some of his hearers stubbornly refused to be convinced and publicly maligned the Movement, he withdrew, and, taking the followers with him, continued his daily presentations in the facility of Tyrannus. This lasted for two years, with the result that everyone in Asia, Jews and Greeks alike, heard the message about the Lord (Acts 19:1, 8–10).

Deconstructing the Acts Itinerary

After a lengthy and significant stay in Corinth, Luke inserts a convoluted, brief travel narrative prior to what will be a lengthy and significant stay in Ephesus (Acts 19). He already knows Ephesus is in the future; he gets that from 1 Cor 16:8. So he has Paul travel directly to Ephesus, but on this first visit Paul does not stay there. Instead he takes a long, seemingly inconsequential detour that takes him to Jerusalem and Antioch before he finally arrives once more in Ephesus for a longer stay (Acts 19:1). To better discern why Luke tells his story in this way, we need to reconstruct what he started with.

Luke starts with three pieces of data, all of which he gets from 1 Corinthians. First, 1 Cor 16:8 tells him that Ephesus was visited after Paul left Corinth. Second, 1 Cor 16:19 tells him that Priscilla and Aquila settled in Ephesus. Third, 1 Cor 3:6 tells him that Apollos arrived in Corinth after Paul had left. With these building blocks, Luke creates the travel narrative in Acts 18:18–28.

Luke's fingerprints on this narrative can be seen in the underlying purpose for all of the details. First, Paul stops in Cenchreae, the port city of Corinth and a necessary component of a journey to Ephesus. It did not have to be mentioned; after all, Luke is often vague about how Paul gets from place to place. Luke could have learned from Rom 16:1–2 that Paul had made converts in Cenchreae, one of which was a prominent woman, Phoebe. However, he did not use this information. Rather, Luke's reason for the stop in Cenchreae is to insert the note that Paul shaved his head for a vow. The alert reader would recognize that this is a Jewish vow. Second, when he arrives in Ephesus, Paul goes directly to the synagogue, by now a practice easily recognizable as a mark of Lukan creativity. Third, he makes an unlikely stop in Caesarea and visits a Christian group there, followed by a quick visit to Jerusalem, which is likely to be the only reason for such a roundabout detour. Fourth, he next goes to Antioch. After that, he makes an unremarkable overland trip back to Ephesus. The vow and the synagogue visit remind the reader of Paul's Jewish *bona fides*. The visits to Jerusalem and Antioch remind of Paul's subservience to these two cities and their leadership. These are themes distinct to Acts. Adding these details at this point in Luke's story is simply a way to reinforce such ongoing themes.

Certainly one can propose that Luke is using here an independent travel itinerary for Paul, but, if so, one can only reconstruct from such a source the raw data that Paul traveled from A to B. What happened on the journey from A to B is clearly attributable to Luke's own narrative interests. But the existence of such an itinerary without any accompanying narrative is highly unlikely, and the pertinent information is readily available in 1 Corinthians. On the other hand, using such plausible geographical details as a context for creating new stories about Paul is a recognizable mark of Luke's attention to verisimilitude.

In Acts 19, Ephesus emerges as a major center of the Pauline mission, which is remarkable since Paul only makes brief references to Ephesus, all of which are in 1 Corinthians. He identifies it as the location from which he writes 1 Corinthians and where Aquila and Prisca have settled down (1 Cor 16:8, 19), and it is a location where he had a trying experience that he describes metaphorically as having fought "wild beasts" (15:32). Paul provides little information about a mission in Ephesus, but Acts provides a great deal. As a result, the stories in Acts about Ephesus have been highly influential in most reconstructions of Paul's mission.

Luke has promoted Ephesus as the site of healings, of the defeat of magic, of success over against the great goddess Artemis, and of friendly judgment, almost endorsement, by the city officials—all of which are identifiable themes in the Acts saga. There should be no doubt at this point in Luke's story that Ephesus has emerged as the pinnacle of the Pauline mission. And just in time, for it is the last major missionary endeavor of Paul in Acts. From this point on, he will be on a journey that will end with his imprisonment in Rome.

Paul's Trip to Jerusalem and on to Rome

The Itinerary According to Paul

But I'm going to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, because a large and promising door is open to me even though we have many opponents (1 Cor 16:8-9).

The communities of the Anointed in Asia send their greetings. Aquila and Prisca send their warm fraternal greetings to you as does the gathering that meets in their house (1 Cor 16:19).

Now about the money we are collecting for God's people in Jerusalem, you should follow the directions I gave to the communities of the Anointed in Galatia. On the first day of every week each of you should put aside and save up whatever your prosperity may permit, so that contributions need not be solicited when I come. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you have approved, with letters of introduction, to convey your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems worthwhile for me to go also, they will go with me. I will come to see you once I have made my way through Macedonia, because I am planning to go through Macedonia, and I may possibly stay with you a while or even spend the winter with you, so that you may help to send me on my way wherever I may go. I don't want to see you right now just in passing, because I am hoping to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits it. But I'm going to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, because a large and promising door is open to me even though we have many opponents (1 Cor 16:1-9).

This is why I have repeatedly been prevented from coming to visit you. But now, since there are no more good locations [for my mission] in these areas, and since for many years now I have wanted to pay you a visit, I hope to see you while I am passing through on my way to Spain and to have your support for my travel there – but only after I have had the time to fully enjoy your company. However, before I come to see you, I am going to Jerusalem on a mission for the people of God there. I am going there because [the Anointed's people in] Macedonia and Achaia want to express their sense of community by aiding the needy among Jesus followers in Jerusalem (Rom 15:22-26).

The Itinerary According to Acts

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul made his way by the inland route to Ephesus ... Paul devoted the next three months to preaching in the synagogue, where he vigorously sought to persuade people about the nature of God's dominion. Since some of his hearers stubbornly refused to be convinced and publicly maligned the Movement, he withdrew, and, taking the followers with him, continued his daily presentations in the facility of Tyrannus. This lasted for two years, with the result that everyone in Asia, Jews and Greeks alike, heard the message about the Lord (Acts 19:1, 8-10).

In the wake of these accomplishments Paul resolved, with the guidance of the Spirit, to travel through Macedonia and Achaia and then on to Jerusalem.

"After I have been there," he said, "I must see Rome as well." He sent two of his assistants, Timothy and Erastus, on to Macedonia, but he himself spent some more time in Asia (Acts 19:21–22).

Once the uproar had died down, Paul summoned the followers for an uplifting farewell speech before setting out for Macedonia. He traveled through those regions, delivering many an uplifting message, arriving eventually in Greece, where he spent three months. As he was about to take ship for Syria, a Jewish plot against him led to a change of plans, and he returned by way of Macedonia. Associated with him were Sopater the son of Pyrrhus, from Beroea; Aristarchus and Secundus, both Thessalonians; Gaius of Derbe; Timothy; and the Asians Tychicus and Trophimus. They had gone ahead and were awaiting us in Troas. We sailed from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread and joined them in Troas five days later. There we remained for a week (Acts 20:1–6).

We, meanwhile, had gone ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos, where we intended to take Paul on board, for he had told us to do so, intending to travel by land, himself. He did meet us at Assos, so we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. From there we sailed on the following day to a point opposite Chios, and on the next we crossed to Samos, arriving in Miletus the day after, for Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that, if the possibility permitted, he would not spend too much time in Asia. He was in a hurry to be in Jerusalem at Pentecost, if that were at all possible. He did, however, send a message from Miletus to Ephesus, directing the presbyters of that church to report to him. When they had arrived, he addressed them (Acts 20:13–18).

Deconstructing the Acts Itinerary

The itinerary data presented in Acts 19:21–22 allow us to look over the author's shoulder and see how he works. Once again, his primary source is 1 Corinthians 16. At the time of the writing of the letter, Paul is in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8) but plans to go to Jerusalem with the collection (16:3), a journey that will take him first to Macedonia, then Corinth (16:5). Luke also used Romans 15–16, from which he got the rest of his itinerary data. Here Paul adds the detail that he will travel to Rome after he has visited Jerusalem, using a phrase that is repeated almost verbatim in Acts. Compare "I hope to see you [the Christians in Rome] while I am passing through ... However, before I come to see you, I am going to Jerusalem" (Rom 15:24–25) with "After I have been there [Jerusalem] ... I must see Rome as well" (Acts 19:21). This is one of the few times Luke puts words in Paul's mouth that actually came from Paul. Finally, while Luke was delving into Romans for itinerary data, he likely picked up the names "Erastus" (Rom 16:23; Acts 19:22) and "Gaius" (Rom 16:23; Acts 19:29), although he created a different identity for each of them.

From chapter 20 to the end of Acts, Paul is on a farewell journey which will eventually take him to Jerusalem and then to Rome. As noted above, Luke has derived from Paul's letters the building blocks of the itinerary he is following

for this journey. What Luke does not get from Paul is the story of an arrest and imprisonment in Jerusalem, with the result that, according to Acts, Paul will arrive in Rome as a prisoner.

Luke's story of Paul's arrival and imprisonment in Jerusalem and eventual journey to Rome as a prisoner is Luke's own creation. This is seen from the many details that are characteristic of Luke's themes throughout Acts: Jewish plots, a variety of trials, numerous speeches by Paul and others, a first person account of a sea voyage to Rome that includes a shipwreck, and an arrival in Rome where Paul's only business is to settle accounts with Jewish leaders. Since the story is built throughout out of Lukan themes and since the idea of an independent itinerary of Paul's journeys has been discounted, it is highly unlikely that Luke's story of the journey to Rome is built out of any reliable data other than Paul's plans for the future in Rom 15:22–26. This may apply as well to the assumption that Paul died in Rome, an assumption promoted by Acts 20:25 and 21:10–11. Why Acts does not relate the death of Paul in Rome has been much debated, usually based on the assumption that Acts knew that Paul had died there and intentionally decided to omit it. This assumption is based on the elusive idea that, in this case, Acts had access to reliable historical tradition. However, since Acts has proven to be unreliable in so many other details, there is no reason to privilege Acts in this instance. The issue of the death of Paul deserves a thorough re-examination.⁵

Conclusion

The work of the Acts Seminar, as presented in *Acts and Christian Beginnings: The Acts Seminar Report*, has established a new paradigm for the study of Acts as history. The burden of proof has now shifted so that Acts must be considered unhistorical unless proven otherwise. In particular, the itinerary of Paul presented in Acts can no longer be considered reliable in any of its details. Even those details derived from Paul's letters have been compromised; that is to say, Acts is an unreliable interpreter of Paul. In the future, only the authentic letters of Paul can be used as reliable resources for his life and thought.

5. See also Koester, "Paul and Philippi: The Evidence from Early Christian Literature," 49–65; Callahan, "Dead Paul: The Apostle as Martyr in Philippi," 67–84.

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The New Marcion

Rethinking the "Arch-Heretic"

Jason BeDuhn

It seems we are always rethinking Marcion; and each new Marcion reflects a remapping of our understanding of broader developments in early Christianity. Several rethinking, from Adolf von Harnack's portrait of Marcion as a biblical theologian and proto-Luther,¹ to more recent attempts to highlight possible connections to gnostic trends, have been undertaken on the same familiar data we have had for more than a century. Indeed, not a single new source on Marcion has come to light since Harnack's definitive study of the 1920s. Perhaps because those sources remain overwhelmingly polemical, it has remained tempting for some to merely surrender to them and revive the traditional image of Marcion as the "arch-heretic," a man accurately characterized by his enemies in both his deeds and motives. Yet we need not surrender our critical judgment of these sources or despair of discerning anything new in them. The long familiar sources may still have some genuinely new data to offer, provided that we approach them with fresh perspectives and resist imposing our expectations on them. Marcion's scriptural canon—consisting of the *Evangelion* and the *Apostolikon*—has a story to tell if we reopen the question of Marcion's exact relationship to these texts.

The state of that question has been a key indicator of shifts in the course of scholarship on Marcion in the last two centuries. Before Harnack, Marcion's biblical texts held more interest than Marcion himself. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries they were considered a possible window into early stages of composition and redaction prior to the emergence of the catholic versions;² and then, in the conservative reaction that set into Marcion scholarship in the second half of the nineteenth century, they were dismissed as bastardized products of the heretic's redactional knife. Harnack was more interested in Marcion than in his Bible, and was willing to accept the traditional polemical charge that he edited the Gospel of Luke and Paul's letters, because by doing so he acquired precious data on Marcion's thinking. After all, quotations from

1. Harnack, *Marcion*.

2. Throughout this article I use "catholic" to refer to the version of biblical texts used in mainstream non-Marcionite Christian communities, and found in modern New Testaments.

Marcion's only known composition, the *Antitheses*, were few, but every edit of Luke or Paul potentially helped to map the topography of Marcion's positions. Critics such as Tertullian and Epiphanius provided a starting point as they posited Marcion's motives for "mutilating" or "cutting" the text. Yet they remained puzzled by some of his apparent choices, and beginning with Harnack it has become a favorite pastime of Marcion researchers to come up with explanations and underlying theological motives for each and every textual variant between Marcion's biblical texts and the catholic versions. This exercise has continued despite mounting evidence of its fundamental folly: the discovery of more and more "Marcionite" readings in catholic biblical witnesses, the recognition that no proposed theological motives could be shown to have been consistently applied throughout Marcion's texts, and the general critique of "if I were a horse" speculative methodology.

Harnack's interests influenced subsequent researchers to look upon the *Evangelion* and *Apostolikon* as products of Marcion's handiwork, to be read in light of his views. But such an approach assumes what still needs to be proven, because we really do not know the exact relationship Marcion had to these texts other than his decision to include them in the sacred scriptures of his community. We have only the word of his enemies that he had a hand in editing them as well, and such a charge needs to be critically assessed. In order for such an assessment to be made, the *Evangelion* and *Apostolikon* need to be approached in their own right, as "anonymous" texts, so to speak, and compared with catholic versions of the same works, in order to inventory their distinctive themes and emphases and determine whether they correspond to Marcion's views. When that effort is made, it quickly becomes apparent that Marcion's critics cannot have been right, and we consequently need to reverse the historical relationship that has been imagined between Marcion and the *Evangelion* and *Apostolikon*: thinking of Marcion not as their editor, but as their reader, interpreter, and canonizer. We can no longer look upon these texts as the editorial outcome of Marcion's ideology, but rather must consider them to be the textual basis from which that ideology arose, by the same selective and creative reading by which other Christianities arose around Marcion on the basis of similar textual (and, before Marcion, predominantly oral) resources.

I do not come to this proposal arbitrarily, but do so in the face of a major historical problem. Because the fact is that, if Marcion is responsible for these texts as their editor, then we will be forced to question everything we think we know about his theology, and dismiss nearly everything his opponents claim about it. In their contents, the *Evangelion* and *Apostolikon* do not reflect a "Marcionite" world-view and retain elements directly at odds with what is reported of Marcionite teaching. On the other hand, there would be nothing at all out of the ordinary for a man of Marcion's time to accept the authority of texts he had no hand in crafting, and simply interpret them in accord with his distinctive views. We have ample examples of the latter among Marcion's

contemporaries and later Christian leaders. Of course, we must be prepared as well to rethink Marcion's ideology as his enemies report it; but that is not the issue here. Instead, by dispensing with the myth of Marcion as a "mutilator" of biblical texts and placing the origin of the *Evangelion* and *Apostolikon* in their true historical setting before Marcion canonized them, we are able to refocus attention on those things we can be sure Marcion actually did: shift Christian authority from a personal to a textual basis through the creation of the first Christian scriptural canon.

Marcion as a Receiver—not a Redactor—of Texts

Those opposed to Marcion, including groups ancestral to later Christian orthodoxy, produced a string of writings against him, his teachings, and his NT—more than against any other rival form of Christianity prior to the fourth-century christological and Manichaean controversies.³ These polemical writings report a number of specifics about Marcion's theology, of which the core appear to be three: (1) he believed that the God of Jesus was a different, higher, deity than the creator God of the Jewish religion; (2) he believed that Jesus was a divine being who came to earth to invite people to the blessed realm of this higher God; and, (3) he believed that the exit from this earth did not involve either physical resurrection or judgment (other characterizations of his views may be largely deductions on the part of anti-Marcionite writers based on these three positions). None of these three core beliefs are reflected in any obvious way in the *Evangelion* or *Apostolikon*. More to the point, given the accusation made by some (not all) critics that he "mutilated" these texts in order to make them conform to his views,⁴ they contain explicit references to God as creator, to Jesus as a human being, and to physical resurrection and judgment. Something appears to be amiss.

3. Eusebius of Caesarea's list of anti-Marcionite works (*Hist. Eccl.* 4.24–25) includes compositions by Dionysius of Corinth, Theophilus of Antioch, Hippolytus of Rome, Philip of Gortyna, and Modestus, as well as additional references to Justin Martyr (4.11, 18; cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 4.6.2) and Rhodo (*Hist. Eccl.* 5.13). All of these works are lost. Jerome's report of anti-Marcionite writings depends largely on Eusebius, and in most cases he probably had not personally read the treatise in question. We should probably add to this list of anti-Marcionite writers Ammonius of Alexandria, of whom Jerome reports a treatise, "On the Harmony of Moses and Jesus" (*Vir. Illus.* 55). The list can almost certainly be expanded by the inclusion of several pseudepigraphical works that likely have an anti-Marcionite purpose. On this topic, see esp. Rist, "Pseudepigraphic Refutations." With respect to the Pastoral Epistles, Hoffman, *Marcion*, 291–95, effectively marshals the evidence of their anti-Marcionite subtext.

4. Many other critics of Marcion (e.g., Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Ephrem Syrus) say nothing about any tampering with texts, as noted by Gregory, *Reception of Luke*, 183–92, who astutely observes that "Irenaeus and Tertullian may in fact be unrepresentative" (185) in this regard, due to their particular interest in establishing the fourfold gospel—a concern not shared by earlier figures or by representatives of eastern Christianity where the fourfold gospel was not so closely identified as the hallmark of orthodoxy (185ff.).

Naturally, it was easy within later Christian orthodox discourse to believe that a “heretic” would be capable of editing “scripture” to suit his own views. By definition, those views were in error, and therefore he would have to manipulate his sources in order to get them to support his error. Yet other heretics largely escaped this charge (until the Manichaeans). If this was a polemical false accusation, why was it not used more widely? The answer may be related to just how early a figure Marcion was and his preservation of gospel and epistle texts in a form prior to their second-century standardization. Tertullian, writing three generations after Marcion, assumed that he had taken an already existing set of Christian scriptures, matching the set in use in Tertullian’s community, and had rejected some of them, while retaining only those suited to his heresy. But we are able to recognize immediately the anachronism in Tertullian’s assumption, which wrongfully superimposes the state of the Christian scriptures in his own time onto Marcion’s.⁵

Take Marcion’s *Apostolikon*, for instance. Having assumed that the thirteen epistles of Paul accepted in his own community had already been established as “scripture” in the time of Marcion, Tertullian naturally concluded that Marcion had deliberately omitted Paul’s Pastoral Letters (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus). But we now know that Marcion’s Pauline collection contained the same ten letters circulating among many non-Marcionite churches of his time, without the Pastorals, whose earliest certain citation occurs only a generation or two after Marcion. On the other hand, Tertullian made no comment on the order of letters in the *Apostolikon*, because he wrote at a time when no fixed order for them had been set (outside of the Marcionite community) that would serve as a point of contrast. By the time of Epiphanius, however, Paul’s epistles had come to have a standard order (from longest to shortest), and with it came a new point of contrast to be read back anachronistically into Marcion’s supposed motives for “rearranging” them. Modern researchers have followed Epiphanius ever since in suspicions about Marcion’s motives for giving priority to Galatians in the *Apostolikon*. This priority of Galatians, however, now has been shown to have occurred also in the ten-letter Pauline collection circulating among non-Marcionite Christians in Syria, undercutting the assumption that Marcion was responsible for it.

Marcion’s opponents, including Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Epiphanius, likewise assumed that their communities’ manuscripts of Luke and Paul’s epistles preserved the “original” text, and any difference found in Marcionite manuscripts was due to Marcionite duplicity. They noted, for example, that Marcion’s *Evangelion* was shorter than the Gospel of Luke, to which it had an obvious

5. It is one of the weaknesses of Harnack’s study that he follows Tertullian’s presumptions, at least as far as a pre-Marcionite four-gospel canon is concerned. Campenhausen criticizes Harnack’s mistake and notes that John Knox had already effectively corrected it (Campenhausen, *Formation*, 149 n. 6; see also the extensive n. 40 on 156–59).

literary relationship, and accused him in the words of Irenaeus of “removing all that is written [in Luke] respecting the generation of the Lord, and setting aside a great deal of the teaching of the Lord, in which the Lord is recorded as most clearly confessing that the maker of this universe is his Father.”⁶ Tertullian and Epiphanius were honest enough to admit that what Irenaeus claimed was not altogether true: despite the fact that Marcion’s texts were shorter, they still contained many passages that contradicted Marcion’s views.⁷ That fact did not cause them to rethink the accusation, however; they merely concluded that Marcion had been inept in his efforts to purge the catholic text of its confirmation of orthodox views. At the same time, Tertullian and Epiphanius often labored to explain why a passage had been omitted (e.g., the Good Samaritan story), when it did not seem to have any consequence for or against Marcion’s views.

The mistake made by Harnack and other modern researchers has been to take Tertullian’s and Epiphanius’ guesswork as informed. The hypothetical nature of their comments makes it clear, however, that they had not a single word from Marcion about his supposed editorial decisions—no comment at all about “omitted” passages, and only theological interpretation and application of the “retained” content. Modern scholarship has been laboring under the vain illusion that Tertullian and Epiphanius might know things about Marcion’s editorial principles that we cannot know directly, because they had access to Marcion’s original writings. Whatever Marcion wrote—in the *Antitheses*, for example—apparently did not include anything about choosing or redacting texts. None of our sources quote words of Marcion where he actually claims to have “corrected” or “restored” an original text from a “corrupted” version. A passage highlighted by Harnack, where Marcion is paraphrased referring to an “interpolation” at the hands of “pseudo-apostles,” does not refer to texts at all but to the “gospel” as the Christian *kerygma*, which Marcion found to be ideologically compromised with Judaism in the practice of the Roman Christian community, where everything was being interpreted in the context of deep engagement with the Jewish scriptures: “that gospel ... that Marcion by his *Antitheses* accuses of having been falsified (*interpolatum*) by the upholders of Judaism with a view to its being so combined in one body with the law and prophets that they might also pretend that Christ had that origin.”⁸ It is Tertullian himself who anachronistically reframes Marcion’s comments by taking them as referring to a gospel text, which he merely hypothesizes to be Luke: “If that gospel which among us is ascribed to Luke is the same (gospel) that Marcion accuses

6. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.27.2.

7. Irenaeus did observe generally how little Marcion’s texts supported his positions (*Adv. Haer.* 1.27.4).

8. *id. evangelium ... quod Marcion per Antitheses suas arguit ut interpolatum a protectoribus Iudaismi ad concorporationem legis et prophetarum* (*Adv. Marc.* 4.4.1–5, Evans translation).

in his *Antitheses* ...” Clearly, then, Marcion did not name Luke in his work, nor in any way identify it by a specific comparison of textual content. Otherwise, Tertullian would not be forced to hypothesize. Yet a surprising number of modern researchers, beginning with Harnack, treat Tertullian’s guesswork as fact, and suppose that Marcion had indeed commented on interpolated gospel texts that he restored to ideological purity by his editorial work.⁹

Despite a number of questioning voices going back to the very beginning of modern critical study of the Bible, most have simply accepted the polemical claim that Marcion edited out portions of the texts he received. When it comes to the evidence contrary to this claim, modern commentators have either embraced Tertullian’s answers—that Marcion was an incompetent editor or cleverly left in passages contrary to his views to allay suspicions that he had tampered with the text—or have worked to come up with ideological motivations for Marcion’s editorial decisions that went unrecognized by Tertullian and others. The common supposition has been that the polemical testimony to Marcion’s editorial activity is basically reliable, and fundamental, and everything else is to be explained in accord with it. Few researchers seem to have considered the fact that writers such as Tertullian were in no position to know the state of texts in or before the time of Marcion, nor did they have any independent information that would have told them whether Marcion’s or their versions of these writings were the earlier one.¹⁰ Even Tertullian himself acknowledged that he could not actually prove the priority of his community’s versions of the texts over Marcion’s. For his part, Harnack too was forced to admit that, “No definite statements by Marcion exist concerning the grounds for proceeding as he does in his critique of individual passages from the Gospel or Apostle.”¹¹

9. Harnack’s assertion that “Never and nowhere has M[arcion] asserted that he *discovered* anew the unfalsified gospel in an exemplar, but always only that he has *restored it again*” (Harnack, *Marcion*, 250, with his original italics), can only be characterized as a figment of Harnack’s imagination. The use of “always” suggests a plurality of passages where Marcion asserts such a restoration, but in fact Harnack has in mind only the single passage from Tertullian discussed here. Moreover, in quoting the passage he leaves off the conditional “if” (*si*), and quotes Tertullian’s words selectively as “the Gospel, said to be Luke’s which is current amongst us . . . , Marcion argues in his *Antitheses* was *interpolated by the defenders of Judaism*, for the purpose of a conglomeration with it of the law and the prophets” (Harnack, *Marcion*, 41 n. 4, trans. Steely and Bierm, 149 n. 6). This is scarcely a creditable way to use historical sources.

10. Already noted by researchers in the mid-nineteenth century, the same point has been made in more recent times by Robbins, “Socio-Rhetorical Look,” 92; and Gregory, *Reception of Luke*, who hypothesizes that “the tradition of Marcion as a mutilator of Scripture arose only later because Irenaeus and Tertullian assumed that Marcion must have received his copy of *Luke* in the same form that they received theirs and, consequently, that he had reduced his to suit his own purposes” (p. 295; cf. his full discussion of the issues in 173–96). Joseph Tyson similarly has stressed the anachronistic and heresiological assumptions governing the viewpoint of our sources that makes their testimony on this question meritless (Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts*, 39).

11. Harnack, *Marcion*, 64 n. 1, trans. Steely and Bierm, 150 n. 19; English slightly corrected according to Harnack’s original German.

There is nothing inherently implausible about the idea that Marcion could have edited his scriptural texts to make them more representative of what he valued and considered important. In fact, he lived at a time when gospels were still being actively composed, often by reworking, merging, and elaborating on earlier gospels. The problem with attributing this sort of authorship to Marcion comes from an examination of the *Evangelion* and *Apostolikon* themselves, which simply do not show themselves to be texts carefully tailored to Marcionite positions.

In the *Evangelion*, for instance, only one God is mentioned, and nothing is said of a distinct demiurge responsible for this world, as found in Marcionite belief. Moreover, God plays a direct role in managing the earth: he feeds the ravens (12:24)¹² and clothes the grass (12:28) gratuitously, and so can be relied upon to feed and clothe human beings, too. He knows people's mundane needs and will supply them without being asked (12:29–31). Jesus discusses the resurrection from the dead (20:35), and his own resurrection has a physical character (24:39, 41–42), in contrast to Marcionite rejection of the idea of physical resurrection. Jesus repeatedly presumes a judgment to which people will be subject (6:24–25; 11:4; 12:5; 12:8–10; 12:47–48; 13:27–28; 16:22ff.; 17:2; 21:34–35; 22:22), even though the Marcionites refused to associate God or Jesus with any sort of judgment. In apparent disjunction with Marcionite ideology, Jesus advocates or affirms Torah law repeatedly (5:14; 10:26–28; 16:19ff.; 17:14; 18:20–22). When Jesus and his followers violate Torah law, such as Sabbath restrictions, it is not presented as a denial of the validity of such restrictions, but as a qualification of them supported by precedent from elsewhere in Jewish scripture (6:3) or by a supervening principle (6:9) in typical rabbinic fashion. Jesus also observes Passover (22:8; 22:15) and speaks positively of “the prophets” (6:23; 11:47–48). He refers to John the Baptist (although his baptism of Jesus is not reported) as “a prophet and more than a prophet” (7:26), who explicitly fulfills the prophecy in Mal 3:1 (7:27), and whose authority implicitly derives from the same sources as Jesus’ (20:3–8), an idea sharply at odds with Marcionite views. Jesus cites David’s actions (6:3) and words (20:42) as authoritative, and Elisha likewise serves as an exemplar (4:27, placed between 17:14a and 17:14b in the *Evangelion*).

Similarly, in the *Apostolikon* Paul directly quotes Jewish scripture authoritatively no less than twenty-five times. The experience of Moses and Israel from Exodus and Numbers, including its identification of Christ with the rock that traveled with them, remains in place (1 Cor 10:1–10). Likewise, Christ is identified as the Passover sacrifice (1 Cor 5:7). God is creator of all things (1 Cor 8:6), fashioner of the human body (1 Cor 12:24) and of animal and plant bodies (1 Cor 15:38). The God of Genesis is the same God who shines in the hearts of believers (2 Cor 4:6). There appears to be no alteration of Paul’s description of

12. The versification of Luke is used to refer to the parallel content of the *Evangelion*.

his cooperation with the Jerusalem leadership and their partnership in a dual mission to Jews and gentiles in Gal 2:1–10. Believers are true Jews (Rom 2:28–29) and need to join Israel to be reconciled with God (Laod[= Eph] 2:11ff.). The Law is sacred, spiritual, just, *and* good (Rom 6:12–14), and the Ten Commandments are cited twice (Rom 13:19; Laod[= Eph] 6:2).¹³ Christ brings retribution (2 Thess 1:8) and God sends error, misleading people so that they might be judged (2 Thess 2:11). If Marcion did edit these texts but found nothing problematic in such themes, perhaps we have been misinformed about his views. On the other hand, if his views have been reported more or less accurately, then clearly he did not edit these texts in light of them.

What exactly is missing from the *Evangelion* relative to Luke and the *Apostolikon* relative to the catholic version of Paul's letters? What makes the shorter versions of these texts found in Marcion's canon different? The *Evangelion* contained no birth story—a tendentious edit in favor of Marcion's high christology? One can scarcely assume so, given that two of the four canonical gospels likewise lack birth stories. It also lacked Jesus' baptismal encounter with John, his reading from Isaiah in the synagogue, some of the more developed stories Jesus tells (such as the Good Samaritan and Prodigal Son), and several other short passages. But no clear or consistent ideological element connects the missing passages, and arguably no concept found within them is omitted in what remains in the *Evangelion*. We see in the latter, as in Luke, the same interest in women, concern for the lower classes, and radical ethic. In the *Apostolikon*, Marcion's text lacked the bulk of Romans 9–11 and all of 15–16, and a few shorter passages, some (not all) of the discussion about Abraham in Galatians, as well as a brief set of clauses from Colossians. On its own, the omission of Romans 9–11 could be interpreted in light of Marcion's views, but the other absent passages fail to sustain this impression, and do not distinguish themselves ideologically from content that remains.

The differences in Marcion's texts, however, quite often correspond with passages where modern scholarship has either proposed a possible secondary addition to the canonical text or found rather striking aporias in the sense. Researchers have identified the passages as problematic in some way or otherwise distinct from their context, quite apart from any consideration of the evidence of Marcion. Luke's birth narrative shows some continuity of themes with the rest of the gospel, but is written in a very different style, with an anomalous degree of literary dependence on the Septuagint, and has long been suspected of being a late addition to the gospel. Paul's discussion of the Jewish people in Romans 9–11 has struck many as a separate set piece appended to an argument essentially completed in Romans 8. Examples such as these suggest that the dif-

13. The abbreviation Laod refers to the Epistle to the Laodiceans, by which name Marcion knew the epistle found in modern New Testaments as the Epistle to the Ephesians.

ferences between Marcion's version of the texts and those found in today's NT have their explanation in ideologically neutral literary development occurring in early Christianity, as gospel texts were revised and expanded with additions and the familiar letters of Paul were assembled from various epistolary selections and fragments.

Why not press on, then, to argue that Marcion preserves more original versions of these texts and that the catholic texts of Luke and Paul represent second-century ideological, anti-Marcionite redactions? There are two reasons why I do not think we can do this, one general and the other based upon very specific details in the texts.

The general objection is the problem why the supposed additions to Luke and Paul are not more clearly anti-Marcionite in character. Since other pseudonymous writings of the period, while avoiding anachronistically naming Marcion, direct more or less transparent attacks upon him, why would a mid-second-century redaction of Luke and Paul not similarly offer prophetic criticism of future heretics who will deny that God is the creator or that Christ had a physical resurrection? It is true that adding more quotes of the OT, a birth narrative, and certain details to the resurrection narrative may subtly work in this direction. But subtlety was not a hallmark of most second-century Christian literature. The catholic versions have relatively more material that would make sense primarily to a readership steeped in the Jewish religion than do Marcion's versions, and that is all we can really say.

The second argument has to do with the problem of harmonizations in the text of the *Evangelion* and Luke. By using Marcion's text for comparison, we are able to identify a number of passages where the text of Luke has been conformed to that of Matthew, while the text of the *Evangelion* shows greater independence. Since the historical trend is for independent readings to precede harmonized ones, this evidence would support the idea that Luke represents a later edition of the *Evangelion*. However, there are also a number of passages where the reverse is true, where it is the wording of the *Evangelion*, not that of Luke, that appears to be brought into harmony with the wording of Matthew.¹⁴ Once we have ruled out likely misquotation by our sources (by comparison with how they quote the same passage elsewhere), it is impossible to account for Luke not sharing these harmonized readings if it were based on the *Evangelion*, which already contained them.¹⁵ It seems, therefore, that Luke and the *Evangelion* were subjected to separate and independent harmonizing textual influence, which would mean, as John Knox surmised, that the derivation of

14. Harnack enumerated thirty-four harmonizations to Matthew and Mark in the *Evangelion* not found in witnesses to Luke. Wilshire, "Canonical Luke," 252–53, lists thirty-two.

15. This problem is highlighted in Wilshire, "Canonical Luke."

either text directly from the other seems to be ruled out on strictly text-critical grounds.¹⁶ They must represent the end products of two lines of transmission going back to a common foundation.

Already in 1783, Johann Salomo Semler made such a proposal, that both the *Evangelion* and Luke go back independently to a common proto-Luke.¹⁷ Semler put forward the intriguing suggestion that the version that Marcion adopted as the *Evangelion* arose in the context of the gentile mission and that its relatively lesser Judaic material compared to Luke finds its explanation within the context of this intended audience. The lack of clear ideological differences between the two recensions, or any clear agenda of “correction” from one to the other, suggests that some such pragmatic cause, rather than an ideological one, explains the co-existence of two versions of the gospel. It is a bad habit of the historical study of Christianity to imagine that everything in the development of distinct varieties of Christianity was ideologically driven. Issues of practice or even ethnic and cultural differences played a role in initiating divergent forms of Christianity. A pragmatic differentiation of the gospel text into two versions, intended for audiences with different cultural backgrounds and locations, could subsequently have consequences in the development of disparate ideologies. In this scenario, the *Evangelion* helps to explain the background and basis of Marcion’s views, rather than representing an outcome of them.

Of course, there are many passages in the *Evangelion* and *Apostolikon* that either explicitly support Marcionite views and practices or can be read in their favor with a little exegetical imagination—all of which also appear in the catholic versions of Luke and Paul’s epistles. Here is where I think there is still much to be done to free our readings of early Christian literature from the eisegetical burden of later orthodoxies. Marcion could with justice point to various elements of the Jesus traditions and the writings of Paul that favored his positions over those of his rivals in the battle over the Christian movement. Each side was reading the texts selectively, highlighting certain elements and subordinating or eliding others in light of their respective dominant oral traditions.

Marcion himself may have been merely a capable organizer of a wing of the Christian movement in existence before him and around him, and that would best explain his rapid success. He may have been the product of a gentile Christianity already separated to a large degree from its Jewish roots, rather than an innovator in that direction. Or should we rather think that Paul’s ef-

16. Knox, *Marcion and the New Testament*, 156. Yet Knox suggests that the *Evangelion*’s apparent harmonizations to Matthew and Mark might not be harmonizations at all, but might reflect an original text more closely dependent on the common Synoptic tradition, while Luke represents a text worked over literarily, polished and rephrased in a way that de-harmonized it, so to speak (156 n. 42).

17. Semler, *Neuer Versuch*, 162–63. A modification of this hypothesis, retaining the notion of some editorial activity by Marcion on a proto-gospel from which Luke also derives, is found in Knox, *Marcion and the New Testament*; Gregory, *Reception of Luke*, 193–96.

fort to sharply separate and insulate his gentile communities from the influence of Jewish-Christian apostles had failed utterly and that Paul's legacy had been all but forgotten until Marcion revived its fortunes? I think not. Just as a comparison of Luke and the *Evangelion* suggests that the latter had a prehistory before Marcion, so the evidence regarding the letters of Paul in relation to the *Apostolikon* points to a pre-Marcionite interest in assembling a corpus of Paul's writings that Marcion inherited rather than created. These literary resources apparently originated and had readers among gentile Christians who took seriously the words of Jesus that "the Law and Prophets were only until John" and Paul's insistence that "Christ is the end of the Law." But the theological and metaphysical setting of such ideas awaited a systematizer like Marcion, just as other Christian communities awaited alternatively a Valentinus or an Origen. Meanwhile, such texts as they had on hand played a secondary role relative to a dominant—and considerably fluid—oral tradition. Marcion set out to change that.

Marcion as a Canonizer of Text(s)

It has long been understood that Marcion resolved certain ambiguities he found in Christianity through the bold polarities of his theology. But it remains underappreciated just how much the authority he placed in texts subverted all prior expectations of the Christian movement. Nothing necessitates that a religion, founded by individuals and spread through personal contacts, develop a written sacred literature or that such a literature assume an authority superior in theory to any living voice of the faith. In past ages where illiteracy predominated, a written codification of a religious community's faith would have remained directly accessible to few, and treated by the rest more as a symbol and reference point for the tradition rather than something they regularly consulted. The earliest Christians lived in an oral society that only flirted with literacy, and transmitted the teachings of Jesus and the exemplary stories about him primarily by word of mouth. The written word entered their world only sporadically, and even then only as a script to be read aloud. There were always a small number of more literate followers of Jesus who sought to put his ideas into conversation with textual traditions, but they could hardly be representative of the spirit of the larger movement.

Its fixity and referentiality gives text distinct advantages in shaping our perception of the time and place from which it comes, with the result that the writer, however idiosyncratic in his or her own time, wins out historically over the now silenced voices of illiterate contemporaries. The study of early Christianity continues to suffer from this bias towards text, because that is literally all we have. But our conceptualization of what early Christianity was like needs to compensate for it by comparison to other religious clubs and associations of the Roman world. Against this comparative background, the conscious,

deliberate adoption of text as a defining feature of a religious community marks an atypical, dramatic transition in the shape of belief and the character of authority over it.

One window into the predominantly oral form taken by authoritative traditions in earliest Christianity can be obtained, ironically enough, from the texts produced by other Christians roughly contemporary with Marcion's own lifetime. When those writings make reference to the teachings of Jesus, "the custom is to refer not to documents" but to free-standing sayings known and remembered in the community, "applied rather than quoted, in the strict sense of that word; and never are they explained or 'expounded' in their fixed form like a sacred text."¹⁸ No distinction is made between sayings now known from gospel texts and so-called *agrapha*, free-floating sayings of Jesus in the oral tradition. Writers such as Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and Polycarp certainly know of the existence of Christian texts, but it is of no interest to them to cite these texts as sources of authority. Papias is the earliest writer to explicitly comment on individual gospel texts, but he does so to critique them as limited, incomplete, and ambiguous compared to the full riches of the oral tradition.

In the face of strong disagreement over the Christian message to be distilled from such fluid oral resources, Marcion can be understood to have sought to codify and secure an authoritative body of knowledge in a written form that would serve as a reliable touchstone of faith. Thus, Marcion could have taken the step to form a distinctively Christian canon, in the words of Helmut Koester, as a "conscious protest against the still undefined and mostly oral traditions to which the churches of his day referred as their dominical and apostolic authority."¹⁹

Marcion lived at a time when the ambiguities of the Christian relationship to an equally emerging "Judaism" were beginning to sort themselves out. Marcion presented himself as safeguarding an original and authentic form of Christian faith against innovations that subordinated its message to the weight of the substantial Jewish tradition, which threatened to claim a kind of "parental rights" over its prodigal religious offspring. Contrary to the image of a Christian movement that headed in a straight line away from its Jewish origins, modern research has increasingly drawn attention to how much Christianity and Judaism "co-evolved" and the degree to which "orthodox" Christianity might even be said to represent a historical "convergence" with Jewish religious views and values, in contrast to other forms of Christianity, such as Marcionite and Manichaean Christianity, where such a convergence never occurred.²⁰ If Marcion came from a gentile Christian community already substantially sepa-

18. Campenhausen, *Formation*, 121.

19. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 37.

20. See Becker and Reed, *Ways that Never Parted*; Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*.

rated from a Jewish religious background (such as the one described by Pliny the Younger in Marcion's time and place), he may have understood himself to be anchoring resistance to such a developing convergence, rather than leading a radical break from an existing religious identity. "Hence Marcion is better viewed as a conservative or traditionalist than as an innovator," suggests Harry Gamble,²¹ summing up an assessment of Marcion offered by John Barton.²² Yet this may be an unnecessary either/or. As with contemporary religious leaders who see themselves as "fundamentalists," anchoring a conservative position typically requires innovation—the creation or reformation of what will count as authoritative tradition.

Marcion's scriptural innovation can be understood as a direct consequence of his stance as a conservative or traditionalist over against ongoing developments in Christian doctrine and ethos. In closing a canon, Marcion suddenly and exponentially elevated the status of particular texts, and launched them into an undeniably superior authority relative to any others in a way no one before him had dared to do.²³ That is, he accentuated their place as scripture precisely by including them within a limited canon. In doing so, he set boundaries on what could be used as touchstones in evaluating various positions put forward as "Christian," narrowing the range of permissible variety with the Christian movement. Marcion's shift to text and canon ran closely parallel to a similar development taking place among non-Christian Jews in his time, as the rabbinic movement established its biblical canon and began to cite and comment on it directly. Marcion, likewise, closed the door to further composition of scripture within his Christian community, and initiated the era of the biblical commentary with his *Antitheses*.

By rooting authority in text, Marcion displaced it from the personal and individual. This shift implied that the personal authority of Christian teachers, even Marcion himself, could no longer be self-sufficient, but should be dependent on and subordinated to an impersonal, objectified repository, on the basis of which any claim on the tradition would have to be made and assessed. Marcion's act of canon-making was simply the first of a whole set of subsequent efforts to define Christianity through rival canons. If larger Christianity showed itself reluctant

21. Gamble, "New Testament Canon," 292.

22. Barton, *Holy Writings*, 35–62.

23. Barton's suggestion that Marcion did not necessarily regard these texts as sacred scripture, but rather "abolished the category of 'Scripture' altogether" (Barton, *Holy Writings*, 40) is poorly grounded on the assumption that Marcion felt free to edit them (which is unproven), and at the same time ignores the many historical examples of a religious leadership simultaneously redacting and sacralizing a text as authoritative. Nevertheless, his suggestion invites further investigation of what status exactly Marcion's canon had for his followers and to which if any of the contemporary Christian views of scripture it approximates. Given the historical and cultural context in which this canon was originally promulgated, they may have viewed it more in terms of the Hellenic "classic" than in those associated with "revelation."

and slow to follow Marcion's example, it suggests that many non-Marcionite Christians (for several centuries) preferred a more open-ended exploration of the possible meaning of Christianity, attentive to a greater plurality of voices that were treated as authoritative, if not as decisively so as those settled on by Marcion.

Marcion's decision to name the first volume of his NT *Evangelion* shows him affirming and making explicit Mark's implicit idea that the Christian message needed to be anchored in the life and deeds of Jesus. Others following Mark had written such narratives, but Marcion may have been the first to use the term as the title of a specific textual account of Jesus' life, as Harnack first suggested,²⁴ and the more systematic investigation of Helmut Koester supports.²⁵ Before Marcion, the term *evangelion* referred generally to the content of Christian teaching, and indeed free-floating words of Jesus with minimal context seem to have been the preferred resource employed in communicating the Christian *evangelion*. But Marcion fixed on a narrative account of Jesus as best claiming this designation, and he may have intended in this way to safeguard the meaning of Jesus' words and limit their possible interpretation through the specific context in which he supposedly uttered them.

As much as Marcion may have valued the relative fixity and stability of text, the sources on his NT show that it exhibited the same fluidity of text typical of all early Christian literature. More than a hundred years ago, Theodor Zahn noted variant readings between the various reporters of Marcion's texts.²⁶ More recently, John Clabeaux and Ulrich Schmid have sifted these variants in the *Apostolikon* against the quotation habits of our sources, as have David Salter Williams and Dieter Roth in the *Evangelion*, and shown that many of them must have been in the Marcionite manuscripts they had before them.²⁷ The most interesting of these textual variants involve the evidence of harmonization to Matthew referred to above; in many cases these harmonizations appear to have occurred in some copies of the *Evangelion* and not others. If Marcion had indeed edited the *Evangelion*, or even just used a single exemplar as the master text from which all Marcionite copies were made, we should not see any variation in harmonization to Matthew among the different copies of the *Evangelion*. Since Marcionite copyists would not be familiar with Matthew, all such harmonizations should have occurred before the incorporation of the *Evangelion* into Marcion's NT canon. Therefore, the existence of such variation in harmonized readings in our witnesses to the *Evangelion* suggests that, at the time Marcion

24. Harnack, *Marcion*, trans. Steely and Bierm, 24 and 149 n. 3.

25. Koester, "From Kerygma to Written Gospels"; Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 37. Cf. Kelber, *Oral and the Written Gospel*, 144–48.

26. Zahn, *Geschichte*, 613.

27. Clabeaux, *Lost Edition*; Schmid, *Marcion und sein Apostolos*; Williams, "Reconsidering Marcion's Gospel"; Roth, "Towards a New Reconstruction."

canonized it, it existed in multiple copies that in their pre-Marcionite transmission had met with varying degrees of influence from Matthew.²⁸

What this means is that even Marcion may not have fully appreciated the implications of the “textual revolution” with its new valuation of the fixed text. He apparently found it sufficient to identify which texts in circulation should be considered authoritative, without carefully monitoring their acquisition and incorporation into canonical sets for use in his communities to be sure that their texts were completely consistent. As a result, multiple copies full of variant readings came into use in Marcionite communities. For all his focus on the merits of stabilizing Christianity in text, Marcion apparently did not fully make the mental shift from the oral to the written gospel and realize the issues regarding the proper fixity of a literary text. It is only when a text has been declared authoritative, and so much rests upon exactly what it says, that the concern arises to establish a fixed form of it.²⁹ As the inventor of a canon, Marcion had not yet been shaped in his own thinking by “canonical” considerations of just how much was at stake in variant readings.³⁰

Canonization brought with it a fundamentally new attitude towards the text, opposed to fluidity and further adaptation. In the generation after Marcion, it was still possible for Tatian to re-edit Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John into a new gospel, the *Diatessaron*, and many less successful gospel reworkings date to roughly this period. But the followers of Marcion had already shut the door on this further literary innovation, and by the end of the second century Irenaeus put forth a similar argument against new gospels on behalf of non-Marcionite Christians. These were arguments about the ultimate resort of authority, carried out among a literate elite of Christian leadership. Most believers remained illiterate, but they could appreciate the symbolism and ceremony of their leaders’ appeal to a sacred text as a reference point of authority that could not change and that transcended any individual’s claim to be the arbiter of Christian truth.

28. Compare Schmid, *Marcion und sein Apostolos*, 15–16, who speaks in general terms of the possibility of textual variants, including even perhaps some of the significant omissions, in the manuscripts on which Marcion based his NT.

29. See Chapman, “How the Biblical Canon Began,” 49.

30. Much the same happened two centuries later when mainstream Christianity followed suit: the many variants in the existing manuscripts were carried over into the NT collections now given the status of canon. By this time, each text could have existed in hundreds of copies, and the infrastructure simply did not exist to exert textual control on this scale.

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Social Fragmentation and Cosmic Rhetoric

Interpretations of Isaiah in the Nag Hammadi Codices

Maia Kotrosits

Historical interpretations and contextualizations of many of the texts discovered at Nag Hammadi¹ tend to rely on several interrelated premises, most of which are effects of the orthodoxy/heresy debates of the second through fourth centuries and the eventual configuration of the biblical canon. The most powerful premise is that there were discrete social phenomena, ones now classified as “Christianity,” “Judaism,” and “Gnosticism,” with theologically distinct contents, by the second century. The texts found at Nag Hammadi, which upon their discovery and translation were immediately classified as “Gnostic,” were seen to testify to the distinctiveness of Gnosticism: its emphasis on salvation through knowledge, its investments in cosmic rather than social language and structures, its tortuous and esoteric mythologies, and disillusionment with the world.

Likewise, the fourth century dating of the codices and their discovery in Egypt has supported the notion that these texts are “late” and outside of the central geographical areas of early Christianity, thus not relevant to understanding the formation of Christianity, except as representative of its heretical “other.”² As these texts were pushed closer to late antiquity, however, they were also assimilated *en masse* to the intellectual trends of that period, predominantly the abstract philosophizing of neo-Platonism and Jewish mysticism, which reinforced the notion that the texts found at Nag Hammadi had little relevance for reconstructing social history at all, except to testify to the presence of a thoroughly anti-social faction.

1. I hesitate to refer to these texts as “Nag Hammadi texts” for several reasons, but primarily because that shorthand formulation allows the context of their discovery to overdetermine interpretations of their contents. Indeed, the story of the discovery of these texts is a thoroughly orientalizing one, and has had a heavy influence on interpretations of these texts. For discussion on this, see Kotrosits “Romance and Danger at Nag Hammadi.”

2. The notion that the texts of the Nag Hammadi codices are later than NT literature persists even while there are no full manuscripts of NT literature before the fourth century, and the fact that so many other important collections (most notably *Codex Sinaiticus*) were discovered in Egypt.

To counter these admittedly traditional scholarly tendencies and assumptions about many of the texts from the Nag Hammadi codices, this paper socially re-situates four of these texts as mournful reckonings with imperial violence, and more specifically, as the colonial wreckage of Israel's annexing and collapse. I will be discussing *Reality of the Rulers*, *Secret Revelation of John*, *On the Origin of the World*, and *Apocalypse of Adam*, some of the texts most doggedly classified as Gnostic and esoteric mythologizing. By illustrating the ways in which these four texts are interpretations of central motifs and gestures of Second Isaiah, I suggest that they belong to (and perhaps even reshape) the landscape of "early Christianity."³ Indeed, many of the plot lines, theological moves, and themes said to be most distinctively "Gnostic" are borrowed from and are elaborations of Second Isaiah.

Redescribing *Reality of the Rulers*, *Secret Revelation of John*, *On the Origin of the World*, and *Apocalypse of Adam*⁴

Figured as esoteric or Platonized readings of Genesis, ones which make recourse to some common "Gnostic" assumptions and theologies,⁵ these texts vary quite a bit in emphasis and plot. What they do share is a close reading and engagement with the two separate accounts of creation in Genesis 1 and 2, thus describing humanity as caught between a lower world—created by a divine but foolish, cruel and furious ruler—and a world "above," in which the true, eternal god reigns. In a rather beautiful rendering of the very different tones and events of the two creation accounts, one figure is associated with truth, light, purity, knowledge, imperishability, and life; and the other with defilement or corruption, violence, darkness, and ignorance. Most of the plots of these texts revolve around humanity's subjection and captivity in the world of the cruel god (a condition associated with deadness, sleep, ignorance, and enslavement), and the defeat of the cruel god through humanity's genealogy in and knowledge received from the realm of the eternal god.

3. I place the phrase early Christianity in quotes not only because the Christianity Seminar has consistently questioned the anachronism of that term, but also because the term suggests a coherent phenomenon with recognizable, even unique, theological content. I suggest some alternatives to the default category of "early Christian" for texts from the NT and the Nag Hammadi codices in Kotrosits, *Rethinking Early Christian Identity*.

4. The translations and versification for the *Reality of the Rulers*, *On the Origin of the World*, and the *Apocalypse of Adam* derive from Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library*. However, the translation and versification for the *Secret Revelation of John* is from Karen King's monograph, *The Secret Revelation of John*.

5. Actually, each of these texts has been further specified as "Sethian Gnostic," a sub-type of Gnosticism, which was originally proposed by Hans-Martin Schenke. Cf. Schenke "Das sethianische System nach Nag-Hammadi-Handschriften" and "The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism." For a summary of the origins and limits of Sethian Gnosticism as a category, see King, *What is Gnosticism?* 149–89.

With these basic similarities in mind, I will delineate the stories of these texts, with the goal of surfacing their textural and impressionistic differences as well as highlighting plot points with colonial and diasporic resonances.

Reality of the Rulers (“Hypostasis of the Archons”)

As its title suggests, *Reality of the Rulers* claims to describe the rulers of the cosmos in unadorned actuality, as corrupt, cruel, and arrogant tyrants. It does so through a loyal elaboration of Genesis 2–4, but one tinged with satire.

These rulers are led by Sammael, also called “god of the blind,” who became blind after speaking in arrogance the blasphemous words, “It is I who am God; there is none apart from me.” The rulers decide to create a man based on an image of “incorruptibility” that they see reflected in the watery abyss (but cannot lay hold of). They make him out of soil, but they cannot make the man rise, and he remains lifeless on the ground. The text renders this comically, depicting the rulers blowing and blowing but to no avail, until the spirit of the Father descends on and lives in Adam. Adam’s side is opened and his spirit is removed, creating Eve. However, upon seeing this *pneuma*/spirit-endowed woman, the rulers become anxious and try to rape her. In a thematic repeat of the rulers’ inability to capture incorruptibility, the spirit-endowed woman eludes them by becoming a tree (it seems that her spirit leaves her), leaving them with only a “shadowy reflection resembling herself,” which they “defile foully.” When Adam and Eve eat of the tree of knowledge, doing so against the command of the chief ruler Sammael and encouraged by the snake, who is temporarily inhabited by the woman’s spirit, they realize that they both now lack spirit, and are expelled from the garden. Eve gives birth to Cain, Abel, and Seth, as well as to Norea, an assistant for many generations of humanity who is “the virgin whom the forces did not defile.” On the brink of the rulers’ destruction of humanity by flood, Norea brazenly confronts the rulers, claims she is not from them, and cries up to the “god of the entirety.” An angel descends, and tells her about her origins. What the angel Eleleth tells her is reported in a dialogue between Eleleth and an “I” who appears abruptly in the text. It is the origin story of Sammael, now suddenly also referred to as Yaldabaoth. That story circles back to the beginning of the text, but fills out the plot line in ways that overlap with the stories of Yaldabaoth in both the *Secret Revelation of John* and *On the Origin of the World* (as I shall describe below). The text concludes with the questioner (“I”) asking, “Am I also from [the rulers’] matter?” The angel responds that “you together with your offspring are from the primeval father from above,” and promises that the true man will come, and will anoint them, freeing them from bondage and blind thought. The references to being anointed and to the true human who saves humanity gesture toward understandings of Jesus, but do not explicitly mention him.

Names and characters change and combine throughout this text, as well as throughout the other texts discussed here. For example, the female spiritual

element that came out of Adam and inhabited the woman, and then inhabited the snake, seems later to have been Norea. The text seems inclined toward preserving this ambiguity, playing up the difference between seeming and reality, and between true nature and outward appearance.

Secret Revelation of John

This lengthy text begins with a scene in which the disciple John encounters a Pharisee on his way to the temple. The Pharisee asks John where his teacher is, and John tells him that his teacher has “returned to the place from which he came.” The Pharisee accuses John of having been deceived by Jesus and turned away from the traditions of their fathers. In sadness, John goes to a desert mountain, where he ponders questions of origins and his own fate.

While several extant manuscripts of *Secret Revelation of John* have important differences among them, of the four texts I am discussing here, *Secret Revelation of John* draws the deepest contrasts between the world above and the world below. Indeed, in keeping with its own stated purpose, *Reality of the Rulers* does not spend much time at all on the world above, while the vision John receives begins with a seemingly endless list of superlatives and a number of conceptual impossibilities to describe the Father and his divine realm. The Father’s realm is among other things a “monarchy with nothing above it,” and it is highly structured (if also hard to track). This higher realm is associated strongly with oneness and unity, even while populated with a dizzying number of divine figures. The Father himself is, however, *not* a god, he is *more than* a god, even further outdoing the treacherous ruler and creator of the world below (here primarily called Yaldabaoth, as well as Saklas and Sammael). Yaldabaoth was brought into existence by the divine figure Sophia when she tried to create a likeness of herself without divine permission. This act and its deviance from the unity and hierarchy of the divine realm is what initiates the creation of the lower world ruled by Yaldabaoth and his underlings. The lower world in *Secret Revelation of John* is repeatedly and emphatically described as steeped in darkness, chaos, and ignorance. While *Reality of the Rulers* describes the world below as full of injustice and impurity, *Secret Revelation of John* ups the ante by describing the lower world as an entirely counterfeit reality full of suffering: human beings, while created by Yaldabaoth, are luminous figures superior to the rulers, and are thus vengefully imprisoned in a shadowy landscape. The fate of humanity is to be trapped in darkness until or unless they know of their true origin and the emissary of this knowledge. The one transmitting that saving knowledge by way of this very revelation to John is the Savior/Christ, identified also with Pronoia, with the Father, or with the Mother-Father.

Secret Revelation of John not only paints a broad, even comprehensive picture of the cosmos, but it also makes specific references to political categories, unlike the generalized “rulers” of *Reality of the Rulers*. References to monarchy, kingship, and Roman political aspirations all suggest that it is a pointed political

narrative. Its tone is alternately sharp and vulnerable: it simply feels more sorrowful than *Reality of the Rulers*.

On the Origin of the World

On the Origin of the World begins as an intervention into the ex nihilo debate—the question of whether anything existed before chaos. Certainly something did exist, the text opines, because chaos is only a shadow, the negative projection of light. While it, too, tells the story of Yaldabaoth's birth out of Pistis Sophia, it does so in a more haunted, impressionistic way than the other two texts. *On the Origin of the World* is a strongly sensory and visceral text, not only because it is evocative, but because it invests much time and language elaborating images of and relationships between substances (darkness, matter, water, bodily fluids), bodily and environmental processes (birth, abortion, the sounds of voices speaking, plants sprouting), gender and sexual difference, and emotion.⁶ Its emphasis on primordial substance and processes of creation (echoed in its interest in bodily substances and birth), gender parity and androgyny, reflects *On the Origin of the World's* particular attachment to Genesis 1, which it follows more closely than does *Secret Revelation of John*. These emphases come together in ways that feel not only somewhat gothic and phantasmagorical, but experientially rich. *On the Origin of the World* also feels concertedly midrashic in its style of argumentation, explicitly referencing other authoritative sources and drawing on etymologies for inspiration and meaning.

On the Origin of the World gives an account of Yaldabaoth as father, progenitor, and king, and of one of his sons, Sabaoth, who hears the voice of Pistis and rejects his father. Pistis pours light on Sabaoth and he receives authority over the forces of chaos. The forces of chaos are jealous of Sabaoth, and Pistis offers him protection and gives him a “place of rest” and a kingdom “so that he might dwell above the twelve gods of chaos.” *On the Origin of the World* is replete with references to kingship and kingdoms/thrones, as well as to people who have no king.

An interesting difference in *On the Origin of the World's* narrative of Yaldabaoth (here also called the “prime parent”) is that Yaldabaoth expresses a poignant grief and shame over his own arrogance. He, too, seems to long for his divine origins, and feels wonder when he sees the sublime light of the higher world shining down. Adding to the drama of the text, there is periodic cosmic warfare between the forces of chaos and the more “perfect” and luminous figures in the text. Indeed, the text ends with the world's implosion and the forces of chaos being consumed in war, their power dissolved. Light destroys darkness

6. Which is not to say that *Secret Revelation of John* and *Reality of the Rulers* don't express such interests, just that *Origin* does so more intensely. For more on gender, sexual difference, and representations of women in these texts, cf. King, ed., *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*; Dunning, *Specters of Paul*, 75–95; King, *The Secret Revelation of John*, 89–156.

and everything returns to its root. But as a surprisingly humdrum button on the grand cosmic vision, the text ends with, "Indeed, by his acts and his acquaintance each person will make his nature known."

Jesus makes a brief, though not insignificant, appearance in the middle of the text, in the description of Sabaoth's throne:

Thereafter he created an assembly of angels, thousands and myriads, numberless, which resembled the congregation in the eighth heaven; and a firstborn called Israel, which is "the man that sees God"; and another being, called Jesus Christ, who resembles the savior above in the eighth heaven and who sits at his right upon a revered throne. (*Origin* 105.21–28)

Though the text includes a savior and the logos, who comes to proclaim the unknown, these are not explicitly identified with Jesus. Both *On the Origin of the World* and *Apocalypse of Adam* show interest in baptism.

Apocalypse of Adam

In *Apocalypse of Adam*, less emphasis is placed on distinguishing between the "god of truth" and the creator god (although this distinction is still made), and more emphasis is placed on what perishes, what does not, and why. Defilement/corruption, purity of origins, and the persistence of light amidst darkness and death are of heaviest concern, and baptism figures as a central site of meaning for these themes.

Framed as a revelation from Adam to his son Seth, *Apocalypse of Adam* begins with Adam describing his and Eve's loss of their "glory" and "eternal knowledge," as their creator god (here only called Sakla) "divides them in wrath," resulting in their enslavement to him in fear. The text dedicates considerable time to condensing and interpreting Genesis 6–10. Though the creator god casts a flood on the earth to destroy humanity, Noah's descendants, notably Ham and Japheth but not Shem (from whom Abraham descends), carry the "imperishable seed" of the eternal realm. The vengeful creator god then tries to destroy the seed of imperishability through "fire and sulphur and asphalt." An illuminator appears, a man who is said to "perform signs and wonders in order to scorn the powers and their ruler." The god of the powers recognizes the superiority of the illuminator, but in the wake of the god's anger, the heavenly glory withdraws so that the "powers will not see it with their eyes, nor will they see the illuminator either." The powers then punish the illuminator's flesh. The powers wonder whence the illuminator comes and thirteen kingdoms offer (wrong) explanations, each of which ends with, "He received power and glory there. And thus he came to the water." But the "generation without a king" understands (correctly) that the illuminator comes out of a "foreign air, from a great age [aeon]," and he makes a generation of chosen ones luminous with him.

Adam finishes the revelation to his son with a vision of repentance by those who have been obedient to the powers, and thus have been mired in death, and

the vindication of those who fight the power and have “stood in his presence in a knowledge of God-like light that has come forth from fire and blood.”

Interpreting Isaiah

Most broadly, these texts share and reflect Second Isaiah’s most prevalent themes: knowledge and understanding of the true God versus idols, blindness as a metaphor for knowledge and faithfulness, the association of God with light and justice, and the oneness and singular height of God. For instance, in Second Isaiah God opens the eyes of the blind or leads the blind, God leads those in darkness into the light,⁷ Israel is described as blind,⁸ and those who make idols are blind.⁹ Blindness is equated with not knowing the truth, with being “bound” or imprisoned, and with worship of idols. This is consonant with the association of Yaldabaoth and blindness. He is called “Sammael”—“god of the blind” in Aramaic—and a function of his deceptive minions is to keep them bound, cast into darkness,¹⁰ and to make “the whole creation blind so that they might not know the God who is above them all.”¹¹

While the contrast between the creator God and the eternal or true God has often been understood as a unique Gnostic feature or indication of a heretical “ditheism” or “theistic dualism,” tracing the very faithful interpretations of Isaiah in these texts suggests other conclusions. In what is perhaps the most recognizable feature of Second Isaiah, one finds heightened assertions of God’s position. These heightened assertions arise defensively: through rhetoric against idols, and usually through creation motifs. God’s magnificent creation of the world is set against the feeble, almost ridiculous efforts of the maker (*tektwn*) or craftsman of idols:

Who has measured the water with his hand
And heaven with a span
And all the earth by handful?
Who has weighed the mountains with a scale
And the forests with a balance?
To whom have you likened the Lord,
or with what likeness have you likened him?
Has an artisan made an image,¹²
Or has a goldsmith, after casting gold,
Gilded it—prepared a likeness of it? (Isa 40:12, 18–19)¹³

7. Isa 42:7, 16.

8. Isa 42:18–19; 43:8–9.

9. Isa 44:18.

10. *SRevJohn* 24.8.

11. *SRevJohn* 24.14. For more examples, cf. *Origin* 103.15–20; *RealRulers* 86.27–87.3; 94.25; *ApocAdam* 77.10–15.

12. In the LXX: *Mē eikona epoïēsen tektōn*.

13. Isaiah passages are taken from the New English Translation of the LXX (NETS), International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies.

Throughout Isaiah the “creation” work of the craftsman is presented as laughable in comparison to God’s more expansive work of creation. In Isa 42:5–8, there is an emphasis on the giving of *pneuma* or spirit to those who walk on the earth:¹⁴

Thus says the Lord God
 Who created heaven and established it,
 Who bolstered the earth and the things that are in it,
 and who gave break to the people upon it,
 and spirit to those who tread on it,
 I, the Lord, God, have called you in righteousness,
 And I will take hold of your hand and strengthen you;
 I have given you as a covenant to a race,
 As a light to nations,
 to open the eyes of the blind,
 to bring out from bonds those who are bound,
 and from the prison house those who sit in darkness.
 I am the Lord God; this is my name;
 My glory I will not give to another,
 nor my excellences to the graven images. (Isa 42:5–8)

This is of course stunningly similar to *Reality of the Rulers, On the Origin of the World*, and *Secret Revelation of John*, in which the chief ruler or rulers can create humanity, but only divine figures from the Eternal Father’s realm can bring Adam to life by endowing him with *pneuma*.¹⁵

14. See also Isa 42:1.

15. See *Origin* 115.1–16: “Afterwards, he appeared before him. He became a soul-endowed man. And he was called Adam, that is, ‘father,’ according to the name of the one that existed before him. And when they finished Adam, he abandoned him as an inanimate vessel, since he had taken form like an abortion, in that no *pneuma* was within him. Regarding this thing, when the chief ruler remembered the saying of Pistis, he was afraid lest the true man enter his modeled form (*plasmata*) and become its lord. For this reason he left his modeled form forty days without soul, and he withdrew and abandoned it. Now on the fortieth day, Sophia Zoe sent her breath into Adam, who had no soul. He began to move upon the ground.” See also *SecRevJohn* 17.64–18.11 (Codex II): “And all the angels and demons labored until they had created the psychic body. And their product was completely inactive and motionless for a long time. But when the Mother wanted to retrieve the power which she had given to the Chief Ruler, she entreated the Mother-Father of the All, the one who possesses great mercy. Following the holy design, he sent the five Lights down to the place of the angels of the Chief Ruler. They advised him with the goal of extracting the power of the Mother. And they said to Yaldabaoth, ‘Breathe into his face by your spirit and his body will arise.’ And into the face he blew his spirit, which is the power of his Mother. He did not understand because he dwells in ignorance. And the power of the Mother left Yaldabaoth and went into the psychic body that they had made according to the likeness of the one who exists from the beginning. The body moved and gained power, and it was luminous. See *RealRulers* 87.25–88.10: “They said, ‘Come let us create a man that will be soil from the earth.’ They modeled their creature as one wholly of the earth ... They said, ‘Come let us lay hold of it by means of the form that we have modeled, so that it may see its male counterpart, and we may seize it with the form that we have modeled’—not understanding the force of God, because of their powerlessness. And he breathed into his face: and the man came to have

Similarly, in Isa 46:3–7, God is associated with birthing and bearing—emphasizing God’s ability to give life while idols remain inanimate:

Hear me, O house of Jakob
 And everyone who is left of Israel,
 You who are being carried from the womb
 And trained from the time you were a child.
 Until your old age, I am,
 And until you grow old, I am;
 I bear with you;
 I have made, and I will set free;
 I will take up and save you.
 To whom have you likened me?
 See, act with cunning,
 You who are going astray!
 Those who contribute gold from a bag
 And silver in a balance
 Will set it on a scale,
 And after hiring a goldsmith, they made handiwork,
 And bowing down they do obeisance to them
 They carry it on their shoulders and go,
 And if they set it up, it stays in its place;
 It will not move. (Isa 46:3–7)

The theme of birthing and bearing, in addition to the emphasis on *pneuma* as endowing matter, or substance with liveliness or vibrancy, seems to inspire so much of the dramatic and literally visceral birthing imagery in *On the Origin of the World*, which is rendered as what would otherwise be a somewhat abstruse image in the text. For example, the jealousy for the light engendered by the shadow/darkness is called “an abortion without spirit/*pneuma*” (*Origin* 99.9–10).

The emphasis on the ineffectual work of the maker of idols, work which is a poor imitation of God’s making and forming work, is highlighted in the LXX with the use of the words *poieō*, *plassō*, and *plasmata* (see Isa 43:7; 44:9–11). These are the terms used in Genesis 1 and 2 to refer to God’s creative work, but both God and the craftsman perform this work here. To underscore that the

a soul (and remained) upon the ground for many days. But they could not make him arise because of their powerlessness. Like storm winds they persisted in blowing, that they might try to capture that image, which had appeared to them in the waters.” *ApocAdam* 76.8–77.2: “Once again, for the third time, the illuminator of knowledge will pass by in a great glory, in order to leave (something) of the seed of Noah and the sons of Ham and Japheth—to leave for himself fruit bearing trees. And he will redeem their souls from the day of death. For the whole creation that came from the dead earth will be under the authority of death. But those who reflect upon the knowledge of the eternal God in their heart(s) will not perish. For they have not received spirit (*pneuma*) from this kingdom alone, but they have received it from an [...] eternal angel. [...] illuminator [...] will] come upon [...] that is] dead [...] of Seth. And he will perform signs and wonders in order to scorn the powers and their ruler.”

craftsman of idols is a poor imitation of God, in Isa 41:7 the craftsman looks at his work and declares: "It is good."

This instance of "it is good" is only one place in which someone other than the true God takes up God's characteristic language, however. Throughout Second Isaiah it is not only the voice of God that continually makes the assertion "I am the Lord" or "I am God and there are no others but me"; perhaps more striking is the way Babylon is depicted as taking up God's language:

Come down, sit on the ground,
virgin daughter of Babylon!
Enter the darkness, daughter of the Chaldeans,
because you shall no longer be called tender and delicate ...
Now hear these things, delicate woman, who sits securely,
Who says in her heart, "I am, and there is no other" ...¹⁶ (Isa 47:1, 8)

This is precisely what the arrogant creator god of *On the Origin of the World*, *Reality of the Rulers*, and *Secret Revelation of John* claims for himself: "Their chief is blind; [because of his] power and his ignorance [and his] arrogance he said, with his [power], 'It is I who am God; there is none [apart from me].'" (*RealRulers* 86.27–32)¹⁷

The link to Babylon in Second Isaiah raises the question of imperial resonances within all of these texts. Indeed while so much traditional scholarship on Gnosticism reads these texts devoid of any kind of social context other than orthodoxy/heresy debates, or even reads these texts as anti-social, thereby debilitating anything other than literary or mythological kinds of analyses. Karen King's recent monograph on *Secret Revelation of John* reads the text for its many political implications, highlighting the text's investment in Roman republican values and virtues amidst a critique of the current age as a bastardization of those values.¹⁸ Before King, Ioan Culianu and Elaine Pagels had separately noticed strong links, in some cases direct literary ones, between the *archons* (regularly left transliterated, obscuring the critique of real-world power) and Roman imperial figures.¹⁹

Some of the virtues of mining the connections between these four texts and Second Isaiah, a text arising out of social fracture and wrought with diasporic hopes and anxieties, include the reminder that cosmic claims and discourses

16. *Ego eimi kai ouk estin 'etera* is actually uttered by Babylon and is repeated three times in this oracle (v. 8, and twice in v. 10).

17. Cf. also *Origin* 107.10–15, and the similar statement in *SecRevJohn*, "And he said to them, 'I am a jealous God; without me there is nothing'—already indicating to the angels who are below him that another God does exist. For if there were no other (god) over him, of whom would he be jealous?" (14.1–4)

18. King, *The Secret Revelation of John*, 157–75.

19. Culianu, "The Angels of the Nations and the Origins of Gnostic Dualism"; Pagels, "Christian Apologists and 'The Fall of the Angels': An Attack on Roman Imperial Power?" and "The Demiurge and His Archons—A Gnostic View of the Bishop and Presbyters?"

of world order and creation are always entangled and attempt to intervene in a web of social relations.²⁰ The suddenly elevated claims about God and new assertions of God's singularity are impossible to separate from the profound losses of the sixth century. Mark Smith, for example, describes the language of Second Isaiah as both profound and defiant, addressing both the loss of land and king in the wake of the Babylonian exile: Yahweh is "exalted" as Israel is "demoted."²¹ Isaiah's monotheistic statements are thus also *colonial statements* that attempt to shore up diasporic identity when it is most in question.²² In fact, so much of the defensiveness about God's assertive and creative power revolves around the rebuilding of Jerusalem. God must actively defend God's plan and ability to rebuild Jerusalem. The following passage is one of the places where one sees the overt theo-political interests of Second Isaiah following the destruction of the temple:

20. King (*Secret Revelation of John*) of course notes that ancient political critique often occurred in more oblique, "disguised" registers, and gives a broad range of examples from Justin to apocalyptic discourses and Stoic philosophy. Generally, there has been a push in scholarship over the last fifteen or so years to place cosmic claims around Jesus, and particularly the cosmic interests in Pauline literature, within the Roman imperial discourse on the "natural order of the cosmos." Empire-critical scholarship specifically has emphasized the investment of the Roman imperium in mythological and cosmological language to naturalize and articulate its rule. Cf. Kahl, *Galatians Re-imagined*; Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*. The relationship of the political to the cosmic has been addressed in more historical-contextual studies such as Michael Peppard's *The Son of God in the Ancient World* as well. However, the more basic suggestion that cosmic language always already has social relations embedded within it had appeared earlier in the work of Dale Martin, Elaine Pagels, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. Cf. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*; Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*; Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Followers of the Lamb: Visionary Rhetoric and Social-Political Situation." But while the interest in socially situating cosmic claims about Christ has intensified, this has hardly been the case with texts included the Nag Hammadi codices. Case in point: the Priene inscription has received a lot of attention for its striking language around Augustus as bringer of peace, savior of mankind, and one through whom the world is created—titles which obviously contextualize and give new political traction to claims made about Jesus—the parallels between the Priene inscription and the texts I am discussing here are no less impressive. Just as in *Secret Revelation of John*, *Pronoia* (Providence), associated with cosmic order, engenders a savior for humanity who is superior to those around him, and he/they defeat the forces of chaos. ["Since Providence [Pronoia], which has ordered all things and is deeply interested in our life, has set in most perfect order by giving us Augustus, whom she filled with virtue that he might benefit humankind, sending him as a savior, both for us and for our descendants, that he might end war and arrange all things, and since he, Caesar, by his appearance (excelled even our anticipations), surpassing all previous benefactors, and not even leaving to posterity any hope of surpassing what he has done, and since the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the good tidings for the world that came by reason of him."]

21. "Yahweh becomes more than the god above all other gods: the existence of other gods is denied and two images central to Second Isaiah's presentation of Yahweh, the warrior king and creator, are melded and scored in the text to counter the perceived reality of other deities and therefore the putative stupidity of cultic devotion to their images ... Yahweh is not just the god of Israel (both as land and people) but of all lands and nations." Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 179.

22. Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism*, 33.

Thus says the Lord God to my anointed Cyrus,
 Whose right hand I have grasped
 So that nations will obey before him
 And I will break through the strength of kings ...
 I have raised him with righteousness,
 And all his paths shall be straight,
 He shall build my city
 And turn back the captivity of my people
 Not with ransom or with gifts
 Said the Lord Sabaoth. (Isa 45:1, 13–14)

(Note also that here the Lord is called “Sabaoth,” a name that appears in *On the Origin of the World and Reality of the Rulers* as the son of Yaldabaoth who condemns and rises above his parent, even defeating the forces of chaos in the former.)

Reading Isaiah as a “diasporic” text, however, means more than simply noticing its cultural and theological defensiveness in the face of colonial crisis. It means attending to the kinds of productive social work diasporic discourses do. While the traditional understanding of diaspora has been that of a discrete group of people who become a fragmented network, recent scholarship theorizing on diaspora has instead focused on it as fragmented networks *that construct or imagine* a wholeness to solidify a shared sense of identity. Diaspora theory might generally be described as a thematic interest in the social and discursive dilemmas and creativities of displaced populations, an interest that has engaged a huge number of fields and disciplines.²³ It includes questions of which politics produce the condition of diaspora and of analyses of the violent effects of geographical and cultural dispersion. It additionally observes the ways diaspora as a condition enables the production of identity and (relatedly) the production of place and shared origins.

Stuart Hall, for example, writing on the “problem” of Caribbean cinema and the articulation of Caribbean identity, has outlined two conceptualizations of cultural identity. The first conceptualization is in terms of “oneness”—one shared culture, one people, common experiences, and one singular meaning beneath or despite surface variations/differences.²⁴ Much effort and creativity has been spent by colonized peoples in trying to “recover” and “research” an identity that has been “distorted” by colonization. However, he notes that cultural identity is actually made in the recovery process itself. Part of the work then entails “imposing an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation.”²⁵ These projects of “finding” (i.e., creating) underlying unity

23. For a summary, see Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur, eds., *Theorizing Diaspora*, 2–3.

24. Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” 234.

25. Hall, “Cultural Identity,” 235.

“restore an imaginary fullness or plenitude to set against the broken rubric of our past. They are resources of resistance and identity, with which to confront the fragmented and pathological ways in which that experience has been reconstructed within the dominant regimes ...”²⁶

The second conceptualization Hall offers for cultural identity revolves around not unity or stability, but rather rupture and contingency. Cultural identity is “not something that transcends place, time, history and culture ...” but is rather “subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power.”²⁷ “Identities are the names we give the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within the narratives of the past.”²⁸ He proposes thinking about Caribbean identity along two axes—continuity and rupture. The first “reminds one of continuity with the past, the other reminds us that what we share is precisely the experience of profound discontinuity ... it was the uprooting of slavery and transportation and the insertion into the plantation economy (as well as the symbolic economy) of the Western world that ‘unified’ these peoples across their difference, in the same moment as it cut them off from direct access to their past.”²⁹ The similarity comes *less from shared past or originating geography than a similar positioning vis-à-vis the West.*

Hall discusses Africa as a constructed place of origin for those in the African diaspora, and does so through the language coined by Benedict Anderson, calling it an “imagined community.” Africa gathers intense affective and figurative value: it is a place that cannot be returned to, in part because the notion of return suggests that the place has not changed and risks reifying the Western image of Africa as primitive and frozen in time. The “origin,” constituted in some but not all diasporic cases as place, is a “reservoir of representation” precisely because there is nothing there.³⁰ Displacement gives rise to “a certain imaginary plenitude, recreating an endless desire to return to ‘lost origins,’ to be one again with the mother, to go back to the beginning.”³¹ He closes by suggesting, again following Benedict Anderson, that communities “are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.”³²

Other scholars analyzing specific instances of the production of diasporic belonging have de-emphasized place as well. Brian Keith Axel, for instance, objects that analytics of place, and in particular place of origin, have been over-emphasized in studies of diasporic identity and belonging, and he suggests that for many diaspora groups, place/place of origin is not the most pressing matter. Instead, following the production of the Sikh diaspora, Axel highlights

26. Hall, “Cultural Identity,” 236.

27. Hall, “Cultural Identity,” 236.

28. Hall, “Cultural Identity,” 236.

29. Hall, “Cultural Identity,” 238.

30. Hall, “Cultural Identity,” 245.

31. Hall, “Cultural Identity,” 245.

32. Hall, “Cultural Identity,” 245.

state violence as a “key means through which the features of a people are constituted.”³³

Along with a critique of original, uninterrupted wholeness claimed by diasporic populations, diaspora theory has illustrated how claims to and about diasporic cultural authenticity and purity—how Irish/Chinese/black/Jewish are you *really*?—play into colonial or imperial discourses of particularizing and monitoring, which also means targeting “others.”³⁴ The question of who is inside and who is outside of any given category of belonging is a game *almost always played by insiders*, one whose rules are inevitably set by the colonial entity producing the diasporic situation in the first place. Claims to purity and authenticity are always rhetorical boundary-marking practices. Particularly, the appeal to the (ever elusive) authenticity of one’s own origins constitutes a negotiation of one’s own complicated, hybrid, diasporic identity, even while it claims to be a defense of the place of origin.³⁵

These considerations deepen our understanding of the work of Second Isaiah. The competing claims of Babylon and Israel’s God are part of a negotiation of social status, a negotiation that means to differentiate entities that were increasingly difficult to differentiate. Indeed, as Revelation observes through its representation of Babylon as a “whore,” Babylon was singularly “enchanting” (cf. 47:9), and how might one decry the power of someone’s enchantments without

33. Axel, “The Diasporic Imaginary,” 412. Axel analyzes the Sikh diaspora in relationship to the Indian national state and government. He discusses the notion of “Khalistan” (meaning “land of the pure”), a wished-for Sikh homeland “to set against constructions of India and Pakistan,” conceived in the 1940s, and revitalized in the 80s and 90s, when as many as 100,000 Sikhs had been killed in conflict with the Indian government. Khalistan in its recent evocation, however, is meant not to describe a geographical location, but rather a “global reality” of identification. Particularly in the 80s and 90s, Sikh men were picked up, unlawfully imprisoned, tortured, and killed. He describes the way this state-inflicted violence and torture of Sikhs was a crucial component of the Sikh diasporic subjectivity. The importance of and common display of graphic images of the tortured or dead bodies of shahids, or Sikh martyrs, worked to produce the Sikh subject “through gruesome spectacle ... the authority of this spectacle, moreover, is elaborated through reference to a monstrous, inhuman Other: the Indian nation state” (415).

34. E.g., Chow, *Writing Diaspora*, who critically examines the Western academic self-interestedness in discussions of third world particularity, “the oppressed,” and descriptions of cultural pluralism. The Western academic tendencies in discussions of non-Western people have been either to regionally universalize, thus describing transcultural phenomenon, or almost fetishistically hyper-particularize. In the latter tendencies, naming cultural particularity has been seen as an ethical redress, but for Chow, almost inevitably becomes a kind of poker-game of Western (self-righteous) cultural sensitivity, as well as Western attachment to an essentialized “authentic” other-cultural identity. Diasporic identity plays into this dynamic. She discusses discourses of Chinese poets and academics who are engaged with the Western academy, noting how such poets and academics often compete for, trade on (or are accused of not) being “authentically” Chinese enough, either in their political alignments, theory or language. Being more “authentically Chinese” then ironically becomes the mode in which one’s status in the Western academy is underwritten. She sees this happening in all sorts of identities that are considered marginal—feminist, Caribbean, queer—in which appeals to that identity are part of an upward mobility within academic circles.

35. Chow, *Writing Diaspora*, 99–118.

firsthand experience of them? The mirroring of Israel's God and the Babylonian figure and the competitive differentiation of their power poignantly express questions of who is really in charge and suggest the mutual entanglement, indeed *dependence*, of diasporic identifications with violent and oppressive political powers. The apparently disclaimed allure of Babylon might also be read as articulating diasporic anxieties about assimilation. Israel's God competes for the title of singular god over all the earth, but the competition betrays the title itself. As *Secret Revelation of John* candidly notices, "And he said to them, 'I am a jealous God; without me there is nothing'—already indicating to the angels who are below him that another god does exist. For if there were no other (god) over him, of whom would he be jealous?" (14:1–4). This passage, like Second Isaiah's incorporation of cosmic themes from Genesis with the particularizing impulses of Exodus, demonstrate how particularizing and universalizing may be in tension with each other, but they are certainly not mutually exclusive.³⁶

In keeping with this diasporic analysis of the texts I have introduced and summarized above, a number of scholars have importantly begun to rethink the landscape of the late first and early second centuries. They too write that the "early Christian" literature produced during this period was imbued with a sense of trauma and confusion after the Jewish-Roman war, the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem, the failed Jewish revolts, and the realization that Jerusalem was perhaps lost forever.³⁷ These massive assaults to and concomitant reconfigurations of Jewish belonging are no small side notes to what we call "early Christian" history. To read any literature in this difficult period that invests itself in Jewish traditions, scripture, themes, or figures without attending to the traumatic and haunting capacity of these large-scale devastations would not only miss some important interpretive possibilities, but lose an important dimension, that is, historical plausibility.³⁸

36. In this discourse of national identity, Chow notices how "universal" and "particular" are treated as separate, mutually exclusive categories but actually "reinforce and supplement each other." She quotes Naoki Sakai: "They are never in real conflict; they need each other and seek to form a symmetrical, mutually supporting relationship by every means in order to avoid a dialogic encounter which would necessarily jeopardize their reputedly secure and harmonized monologic worlds. Universalism and particularism endorse each other's defect in order to conceal their own; they are intimately tied to each other in their accomplice. In this respect, a particularism such as nationalism can never be a serious critique of universalism ..." One of Chow's most salient points is that diaspora identity, despite its interests in specified "particularism," appeals to not only an origin, but a whole (ethnic, geographical, political and/or religious), and these appeals should be interrogated as not only universalizing in their own right, but as performative deployments of identity, rather than referential; so Chow, *Writing Diaspora*, 5.

37. Cf. Moreland, "Jerusalem Destroyed: The Setting of Acts"; Calaway, "Heavenly Sabbath, Heavenly Sanctuary"; Schenck, "The Levitical Cultus and the Partitioning of the Ways in Hebrews."

38. Again, my book *Rethinking Early Christian Identity* argues this at length, re-reading a number of late first- and early second-century "early Christian" texts and proposing that the primary interpretive consideration for these texts should be as responses to diasporic trauma and loss.

It is practically imperative then to think about these texts' claims about divinity as full of diasporic clamoring and questions of belonging in a way that is reflective of (and shaped by) those in Isaiah. In fact, in certain instances in these texts, diasporic belonging is an explicit consideration. *Secret Revelation of John*, for instance, frames its entire vision of the cosmos with a relatively mundane interaction: John is on his way to the temple and finds himself entangled, via an accusation made by a Pharisee, in the question of what constitutes true tradition. In grief over the question, he turns away from the temple and goes to a desert mountain where he ponders matters of origins and authority. Diasporic social conflicts—questions of where one “really” belongs—seem to be the driving force behind the revelation. A central symbol of Jewish belonging—a symbol destroyed by the writing of the text—even haunts the scene. *Secret Revelation of John* carries the intensified focus on oneness and unity from Second Isaiah, imbuing the Father and his realm with strong desires for social restoration, even calling the Father's realm a “monarchy with nothing above it.”

But while *Secret Revelation of John* most readily presents itself as steeped in diasporic fracture, all of these texts feature themes that establish them as reflections on belonging and diasporic crisis. The “double genealogy”³⁹ of humanity in these texts (humanity is composed of elements from both this world and the world above) speaks very much to colonial cultural conflicts and anxieties, as do the recurring themes of the “seed” of imperishability, defilement by the powers, and the repeated desire to preserve spaces of “incorruptibility,” corruption being a term that importantly holds together impurity and abuse of power.

As an extended illustration, *Apocalypse of Adam* reads as much less enigmatic and extraterrestrial with Isaiah and a diasporic crisis foregrounded. Not only does the Christ-like figure of the “illuminator” and the luminousness of those he saves seem to be a clear extension of Second Isaiah's figuration of Israel (or the servant) as a “light to the nations” (cf. Isa 42:6),⁴⁰ but its story of a remnant who survives disaster resonates broadly with post-war existential questions. Those who carry the “seed of imperishability” in *Apocalypse of Adam* are Ham and Japheth, not Shem (from whom Abraham descends), which simultaneously gestures towards the wiping out of a significant “home” population in the Jewish-Roman war and articulates hope for the survival of Israel's people and traditions through other genealogical and textual lines, though ones obviously still embedded in Israelite traditions. It is, in short, a retelling of what it means

39. King writes, “[T]he body's double genealogy represents the dual nature of reality above and below. The body is both at once spiritual and material, divine and fallen, immortal and mortal, perfect and flawed, pure and alloyed”; *The Secret Revelation of John*, 124. But if the world above and the world below represent national and imperial belongings, respectively, one can easily understand this to be an expression of the push and pull of those tensive (and clearly mutually reliant) belongings.

40. A connection also true in the *SecRevJohn's* and *Origin's* appeal to luminous figures and bodies.

to be “true Israel” in the wake of the obliteration of that which would seem to be or has claimed to be the essence of Israel.

I find myself especially struck by *Apocalypse of Adam*'s statement that the chosen have “stood in his presence in a knowledge of God like light that has come forth from fire and blood,” which resonates with Josephus' description of the destruction of the temple:

For one would have thought that the hill itself on which the temple stood, was seething hot from its base, so full of fire was it on every side, and that the blood was larger in quantity than the fire, and that those that were slain were more in number than those that slew them. (*War* 6.5)

For the *Apocalypse of Adam*, those who are “outside” of Israel—meaning those geographically outside of Judea, but perhaps also those who were affiliated with Israel but who were especially sensitive to their multiple cultural heritages or investments—are the surviving hope for Israel.

In general, these texts appeal to the purity of one's own origins, origins one can return to if one recognizes the rulers for what they are and can divest oneself of the trappings of the rulers' world, not only speak to a colonial mournfulness about having lost a sense of who one is and where one belongs, but actually also *produce* that place of belonging, a kind of homeland, when the possibility of a geographical homeland was questionable, if not moot. Like Second Isaiah's tensive and mutually enhancing claims of universality and particularity, so too these texts engender specified belonging through cosmic universalizing visions.

Again, the scholarship on these texts has largely been on how they read Genesis alongside Platonic traditions, primarily Plato's *Timaeus*, and this emphasis has connected these texts meaningfully in a web of larger literature, including Philo's *On Creation* and the Gospel of John, for instance. But the rather faithful recourse to Isaiah in these texts belies some of the exaggeration of theological difference inherent in “Gnostic” assumptions about them (whether or not the term “Gnostic” is actually used). The recourse to Isaiah primarily counters the idea that these texts, however you designate them, contain a set of distinctive mythological notions, ones that are said to lack social and political implications, and these texts are essentially different from ones found in more properly Christian or Jewish literature.

Dropping “Gnostic” assumptions about a particular heretical, or at least non-orthodox, group creates new, less overdetermined, possibilities for reading these texts socially. For example, *Secret Revelation of John*, as well as a number of other texts in the Nag Hammadi codices,⁴¹ make recourse to an “immovable race” or “immovable generation” (cf. *SecRevJohn* 3.16). In his book *The Immovable Race*, Michael Williams sets out the LXX uses of *asaleutos/akinetos*,

41. Though the term does not occur in the other texts I've discussed here, it does occur in the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*, the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the *Three Steles of Seth*, and *Zostrianos*.

the Greek translation of the Coptic word *atkim*, both meaning “immovable.” Yahweh is described as immovable or unshakeable, and described as causing other things to shake, whether in a divine theophany or otherwise.⁴² While Williams suggests that “immovable race” (or “immovable generation” in King’s translation) has the sound of an “oppressed and persecuted group” and has resonances with the “biblical theme of the people protected by Yahweh from being shaken or moved by enemy or catastrophe,”⁴³ he nonetheless pursues mythical and Gnostic-stereotypical interpretations of this theme in *Secret Revelation of John*, understanding the text as only ironically pursuing this theme, since it has what he considers to be a “negative” take on (one of) the God(s) of Genesis. He also separates the Greek and Israelite meanings of “immovability,” whereas it seems to me that in Israelite diasporic culture these resonances might be rather productive and meaningful or even inseparable in the face of a thoroughly Hellenized Jewish population.

Conclusion

A reconsideration of these texts as reckoning with diasporic conundrums and colonial disempowerments puts them precisely in the same space as so much other “early Christian” literature of the late first and early second centuries. All show interest in Jesus/logos/Christ/the Savior, but develop themes of dislocation, intensify imaginations of chosenness (as well as those of being mired in darkness/evil/sin), and cast their longings for homeland upward in the wake of Jerusalem’s destruction. For example, the texts I have discussed here must be placed alongside Revelation’s own vigorous interpretations of Isaiah, its similar insistence on the possibility of purity and chosenness in a world soaked in corruption, not to mention its cosmic recapitulation of geography in the Jerusalem that descends from heaven. Likewise, they resonate with Hebrews’ lament that “we have no lasting city here,” its explicit claims to being a displaced population, and its imagination of a “greater and more perfect tent” outside the realm of creation, and the Gospel of John’s placeless God and its stark colonial tale of a luminous figure who offers universal belonging to those trapped in darkness. While scholars have regularly noticed affiliations between NT literature and texts in the Nag Hammadi codices, such affiliations are typically cast as the “infiltration” of Gnostic ideals into orthodoxy or evidence of a rhetorical engagement with (and rejection of) Gnosticism. That way of conceptualizing relationships between texts is an ideological, systematic theological, or even creedal model, which assumes different texts “stand” for different belief systems. What I am suggesting, on the other hand, is that these texts be read alongside NT texts without investments in categorical differentiations, as highly contingent

42. Williams, *The Immovable Race*, 1–7.

43. Williams, *The Immovable Race*, 12.

and necessary social improvisations at a critical historical moment, as resonant responses to the grief of belonging to that complex imaginary called "Israel" when its saliency as a collective is most in doubt.

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Second-Century Imaginations of Social Unity

A Survey of the *Gospel of Truth*,
the *Letter of Peter to Philip*, the
Post-Pauline Letter to the Ephesians,
and *The Thunder*

Hal Taussig

Prolegomena

This essay has a particular set of objectives to serve the Westar Institute's Christianity Seminar in its initial stages of coming to terms with the range of literature in the mostly second and occasionally third century. These objectives are:

- To counteract major trends in the scholarship of the last 50 years that marginalize, make esoteric, or treat as heretical the 52 documents discovered in 1945 in Nag Hammadi and to provide the Seminar membership with some orientation to some recent scholarship on this literature;
- To read this literature with other "Christian"¹ documents of the first–third centuries in social terms, in other words, to apply some of the social lenses developed in biblical studies over the past 40 years to the study of second-century non-canonical literature—both to the relatively newly discovered texts and to those that have primarily been read with

1. I use the term "Christian" with great caution for any literature of the first and second centuries, and tend to place definitive distinctions between "Jewish" and "Christian" later for three main reasons: 1) according to a number of recent studies what has been called "Judaism" and "Christianity" actually are difficult to untangle until at the earliest the third and fourth centuries; 2) the use of "Christian" terms in the second centuries seem not to designate so much a religious allegiance as a band of kinds of social identities in relationship to violence and a larger set of experiments in belonging in both the first and second centuries; and, 3) the now assumed conceptualizations of "religions" or "great religions" of Judaism and Christianity do not really correspond to the realities and behaviors of the first through third centuries.

doctrinal interest—so as to place a larger set of texts in conversation with each other, especially in the interest of thinking through the emergence of Christianity.

- To begin to introduce Nag Hammadi literature² as a major component of Christ-movement literature in the second century to the Seminar, and as such to urge disciplined and extensive study of Nag Hammadi literature³ as an integral part of the Seminar's work over the next several years.⁴

This essay assumes, but does not address directly, the growing conclusion in various scholarly quarters that the category of “gnosticism” is a failed and dogmatizing analytical category, and that in this respect a great deal of the initial analysis of Nag Hammadi literature must be rethought. In this paper I skirt this issue because of its scope and because the Christianity Seminar takes up this issue in greater detail in our Fall 2014 meeting. I mention here my rejection of “gnosticism” as a legitimate analytical category simply so that my readers can make sense of this lacuna and notice my explicit project to make sense of these documents without recourse to the theory that the second and third century featured a contestation between orthodox and “gnostic” versions of Christianity.

My primary hypothesis about this small bundle of Nag Hammadi and other second century⁵ texts is as follows: In the face of pervasive damage and fragmentation across major Mediterranean populations because of insistent imperial and other kinds of violence, a variety of second-century Christ movements began to imagine and promote alternate visions of social unity within

2. This essay is meant as a companion to Maia Kotrotsits' paper, “Social Fragmentation and Cosmic Rhetoric: Interpretations of Isaiah in the Nag Hammadi Codices,” for the Spring 2014 Westar Meeting. Her paper is included in this issue of *Forum*.

3. I do not mean to suggest any kind of unity in the Nag Hammadi corpus with my urgings. Indeed, I want to plead for the contrary notion that Nag Hammadi represents a very significant spectrum of ideas, practices, and discourses. This means to contrast our potential critical engagement with Nag Hammadi literature as having a significant breadth with the main position of the guild that Nag Hammadi can be characterized as having some kind of esoteric, gnostic, and/or heretical unity.

4. This notion does not at all originate with me. Here I am following much more developed suggestions for the rewriting of the history of early Christianity without canonical or creedal boundaries made over the past 15 years by Karen King.

5. As the reader can note in what follows, I am using the term “second century” more as a vague concept than a defended dating. By this I mean to address a period constituting the following characteristics that seem typical of the second century: 1) a consciousness of larger than local units of social formation in the Jesus/Christ traditions; 2) a move toward a self-consciousness within these larger social formations relative to both the smaller and more local units evoked throughout much of the first century and the larger power dynamics of Roman rule; 3) some predilection for and against retrojected notions of “apostolic” authority as a way of collating governance within these larger social formations; 4) increasing violence; 5) some indications within larger violent imperial strategies that Jesus/Christ traditions are explicit targets of such violence alongside indications that Jesus/Christ traditions experience of imperial violence is happening as a part of larger non-targeted imperial violence; and, 6) increasingly pointed and very diverse articulations of the ways the Jesus/Christ traditions belong to the traditions of Israel.

their movements, but more specifically for the whole (Mediterranean) world. Some of these semi-programmatic proposals of social unity were conceived as dramatic alternatives to the unity of the *pax romana*, while others fashioned dramatic compromises with Roman power for the sake of oneness.

While considering several pieces of literature, I first read each one separately in terms of its respective vision of social unity in the face of social trauma, followed by a small set of general observations about each document.

A final prefatory remark: The dating of the documents in this paper is generally in question. The disciplines needed in the study of the dates of composition of many of these documents are not yet fully developed and the existing scholarship has not paid a great deal of attention to this task. My interest in reading these documents in relationship to second-century imaginations of social unity is problematic for these reasons. In addition I read the post-Pauline letter to the "Ephesians" as a second-century document, although the majority of scholarship understands it to have been written in the latter part of the first century. Obviously then my interest is not primarily in making extended arguments for accuracy in dating this small bundle of texts but to use the second-century frame as a way of thinking about both these documents and the second century.

The Letter of Peter to Philip⁶

*The Letter of Peter to Philip*⁷ is a fairly sustained portrait of the central followers (*apostolos*: Coptic) of Jesus under siege by the "rulers," who have killed Jesus (7:3)⁸ and are threatening to kill these key ambassadors of Jesus (2:3). It begins

6. I follow here the translation of Celene Lillie in *A New New Testament: A Bible for the 21st Century Combining Traditional and Newly Discovered Texts* (Taussig).

7. Karen King has done the most thorough update of the versions of *The Letter of Peter to Philip*. Here is her summary: "Editions of the Nag Hammadi version include: J. É. MENARD (ed.), *La Lettre de Pierre à Philippe*. BCNH section "texts" 1, Québec, Canada 1977; H.-G. BETHGE, *Der Brief des Petrus an Philippus: Ein neutestamentliches Apokryphon aus dem Fund von Nag Hammadi (NHC VIII,2)*, TU 141, Berlin 1997; M. W. MEYER, *The Letter of Peter to Philip: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, SBL Dissertation Series 53, Chico, CA 1981; F. WISSE (text and tr.), "NHC VIII,2: Letter of Peter to Philip," in *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII*, ed. J. H. Sieber, NHS XXXI, Leiden 1991, 234–51. There are currently two published editions of the Tchacos Codex: R. KASSER, G. WURST, M. MEYER, and F. GAUDARD, *The Gospel of Judas together with the Letter of Peter to Philip, James, and a Book of Allogenes from Codex Tchacos: Critical Edition*, Washington, D.C. 2007; J. BRANKAER and H.-G. BETHGE, *Codex Tchacos: Texte und Analysen*, TU 161, Berlin 2007. The fullest comparison of the two versions is that of BRANKAER and BETHGE, 45–80. Citations of the NHC VIII are from the critical edition and translation by FREDERIK WISSE; citations of the Tchacos Codex (CT) are from KASSER et al., *The Gospel of Judas: Critical Edition*, with some modifications." King, "Toward a Discussion of the Category *nosis*/Gnosticism': The Case of the Epistle of Peter to Philip," 445–65. Quotation from *ibid.*, fn 3.

8. I am following the newly assigned chapter and verse organization of this document as published in *A New New Testament: A Bible for the 21st Century Combining Traditional and Newly Discovered Documents*. The chapter and verse designations were assigned by the ANNT Director of Translation, Celene Lillie. This is also the case for *Thunder* and for *The Gospel of Truth*.

with an initiative of Peter to overcome a division among these main followers by inviting the formerly schismatic Philip. Philip enthusiastically accepts Peter's proposal for all the *apostoloi* to come together. They do so on the mountain of Olives, where they immediately pray to Jesus. One of their two prayers is:

Son of life, Son of deathlessness, who dwells in the light; the Son, Christ of deathlessness, our rescuer, give us your power for they seek to kill us. (*EpPetPhil* 2:3)

In direct response to this prayer, Jesus appears to them in "a great light," and responds to their questions, which include: "Why do the powers fight against us?"

The voice (of Jesus) "from the light" (4:1) lays out the reasons for the rulers trying to kill the *apostoloi* in terms of:

1. a set of mistakes on the part of the creators of the universe (4:2–4) but not because the *apostoloi* have themselves made any mistakes;
2. Jesus' own mission (5:1, 20); and,
3. the following encouragement in the middle of the violent threats of the rulers:

Because you all are being restrained, you are mine. When you strip off from yourselves what is corrupt, then you will become light-givers in the midst of mortal humans. This is because you are going to fight against the powers. They do not have your peace since they do not want you to be saved. (5:3)

The *apostoloi* "worship again" and plead "Lord, tell us how shall we fight against the rulers since they are over us." Jesus answers:

You will fight against them in this way: the rulers fight against the inner part of humans, but you will fight against them in this way—come together and teach salvation in the world with a promise. Strengthen yourselves with the power of my father and offer your prayers. The Father will help you as he helped you by sending me. Do not be afraid, I am with you forever—as I said to you before when I was in the body. (6:2, 3)

"What appeared to them was carried off up to the heavens," (6:4) and the *apostoloi* give thanks and return to Jerusalem. As they are on the road together, they ask: "If he, our Lord, suffered, how much then will we suffer?" (6:6a) Peter answers: "He suffered for our sake and it is necessary that we must suffer because of our smallness."⁹ (6:6b) And again a voice comes to them: "It is necessary that you be brought to synagogues and governors so that you will suffer. But those who will not suffer will not save their lives." (6:7b)¹⁰

9. Cf. King, "Toward a Discussion of the Category Gnosis/Gnosticism': The Case of the Epistle of Peter to Philip," 459, for an insightful and broader understanding of the term "smallness" here, in contrast to the standard "gnosticizing" scholarship.

10. The text is broken here for two or three lines. See Mark 8:35 and parallels.

The *apostoloi* reach Jerusalem, go to the Temple, teach salvation “in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ” (7:1), and heal the crowd. During these on-going teachings and healings in the Temple there is no indication of tension between those in charge of the Temple and the *apostoloi*. Peter summarizes their on-going presence and its significance in the following manner:

Our light-giver, Jesus, came down and was crucified. He wore a crown of thorns and put on a purple garment. He was crucified on a cross, buried in a tomb, and rose from the dead. My brothers and sisters, Jesus was a stranger to this suffering, but we are the ones who suffer because of the transgression of the Mother. Because of this, he did everything like us. For the Lord Jesus, the child of the Father’s immeasurable glory, is the author of our lives. My brothers and sisters, therefore let us not listen to these lawless ones and walk in fear before them.” (7:3–5)

When the *apostoloi* finally leave (temporarily?) the Temple (and this document ends), they go “in the power of Jesus, in peace.” (7:9)

I think that this text, which has only recently begun to draw scholarly attention, is very important on a number of fronts. But for the purposes of this essay, I call attention to two significant aspects:

Focus on the Violence of the Rulers

The dramatic arc of this story centers on the rulers’ active threat to the lives of the *apostoloi*. This violence is clearly on the verge of ending the work of the *apostoloi*, although there is no indication that the rulers are intentionally targeting them. It seems quite possible that the fear of the *apostoloi* has to do with a more general violence. The *apostoloi* consciously identify the threat to their lives and work with the fact that Jesus also was crucified. As Karen King has recently demonstrated in an extensive survey of both recent and older scholarship, “(i)t is now generally accepted that EpPetPhil is centrally concerned with suffering and death in a context of real or potential persecution.”¹¹

In contrast to all but the most recent scholarly commentary on a set of similar threats by the “rulers” in this and other Nag Hammadi literature, it seems obvious to me that these rulers are indeed those who rule the Roman empire. The standard scholarship of the so-called “gnostic redeemer myth” in which a cosmic and grossly materializing force prevents humans from being unified with the God above it all does not work for *The Letter of Peter to Philip*. The threat here is from real rulers, who torture real people—in complete consonance with a broad range of literature from both Roman rulers themselves and various victims thereof. (That scholarship of the gnostic redeemer myth depends on leaving the Greco-Coptic word[s] *archon[tes]* untranslated to the obvious English “ruler(s)” in order to impose its meaning on these texts.)

11. King, “Toward a Discussion of the Category Gnosis/Gnosticism’: The Case of the Epistle of Peter to Philip,” 458. Cf. especially note 37.

The desperate search by the *apostoloi* for a solution and strategy is met with a viable strategy from Jesus: "Continue your public work. Be ready to get in trouble. Teach salvation. Heal. Don't be afraid." In some tension with various other more martyrological literature of the second century, Jesus' solution in *The Letter of Peter to Philip* (at least in the Nag Hammadi manuscript) does not include either a mandate to die or even a contemplation of death (indeed as the story goes, the conscious threat seems to subside) or any blaming of the *apostoloi* for having failed to be faithful in their belief or behavior. Rather this strategy of Jesus for the *apostoloi* suggests that his own suffering and theirs is simply part of a viable and creative teaching and healing strategy that counters the rulers' violence. As King notes, "when Peter declares that 'He suffered / died for us,' presumably EpPetPhil means that Jesus was killed for the same reason that the apostles will suffer: because his teaching provoked the envy of the world rulers. Suffering and death are the price paid to teach the truth in a world ruled by deficient—arrogant, envious beings—beings."¹²

Investment in the Larger, On-going World

There are strong indications that this document is interested in the world being rescued from the rulers. There is no indication that this rescue involves removing humanity from the world. Rather, the clear indications of an investment in the on-going world include:

- the persistent and explicit agenda of healing;
- the focus on the work of the *apostoloi* on the Temple, the central representation of God's presence in the world;
- the call to teach, rather than anything like prophetic or "apocalyptic" judgment or condemnation;
- the importance of salvation. (Jesus' instructions are explicitly to "teach salvation in the world with a promise" [6:2b]. Although awaiting a fuller study than this essay can attain, the meaning of salvation here seems to be both dependent on notions of salvation as the rescue of a people from distress in the Hebrew scriptures and innovatively applied to the larger framework of a "whole world" in the consciousness of the many different peoples living in the Roman empire. This, of course, is extremely close to notions of salvation in the Pauline corpus, the Revelation to John, and Lukan birth narrative. As King asserts, "EpPetPhil envisions a universal salvation for all humanity, not just the "gnostic spiritual elite."¹³);

12. King, "Toward a Discussion of the Category Gnosis/Gnosticism': The Case of the Epistle of Peter to Philip," 461.

13. King, "Toward a Discussion of the Category Gnosis/Gnosticism': The Case of the Epistle of Peter to Philip," 461.

- Jesus' multiple assurances of his on-going presence (3:1; 5:3; 6:3; 7:6b, 7:8b, 9b);
- the role of the *apostoloi* as "light-givers in the midst of mortal humans" (5:3); and,
- in discussing the violence of the rulers that threaten them, the *apostoloi* frame their resolve to follow Jesus' instructions and risk injury or death as they heal and teach this way: "He (Jesus) suffered for our sake, and it is necessary that we must also suffer" (6:6b). The Tchacos Codex version emphasizes more clearly the connection between this risk and the fate of all humanity: "We ourselves are to die for humanity."

I see these two aspects of *The Letter of Peter to Philip* coming together in an overarching vision of social unity hidden beneath the cloak of violence. The epistolary preface of *The Letter of Peter to Philip* identifies the purpose of the work of the *apostoloi* as from "the Savior of the whole world that we should come together to teach and proclaim about the salvation which was promised to us ..."(1:3). There is neither vocabulary nor narrative context indicating that such salvation is meant in an otherworldly manner. As noted above, its use seems to correspond to the way salvation is seen as the rescue of a people from destruction or domination in the Hebrew scriptures, but applied not just to a particular people, but the whole world. The visionary goal seems underlined by the persistent light metaphors in *The Letter of Peter to Philip*, culminating in the designation of the *apostoloi* as "light givers" to humanity. The companion task to proclaiming such salvation to humanity is healing, extended specifically in the international symbol of Israel's God, the Temple. The assurances of Jesus' presence "forever" (7:8b) underline the wide and long dimensions of this task to see humanity itself saved. According to Jesus, "fullness" is the purpose of his coming into the world (5:1), and has already resulted in "the generations" being "filled in his salvation" (5:2). As King notes, "salvation in EpPetPhil is not simply a matter of removing a spiritual portion from the cosmos, but is a matter of completing the world itself."¹⁴

Violence, however, now threatens the world, because the "Self-willed one" (i.e., the one who is neither unified himself nor the one who acts for the unity of humanity) has deformed humanity as created through "a misrepresentation" of that which was otherwise unified (4:4). The rulers, who are a product of the Self-willed one, now seem on the verge of killing the *apostoloi* as they have killed many others, including Jesus. Despite their own internal disputes the *apostoloi* successfully reach out to the risen Jesus, who appears to them as light and gives them instructions about how to face the violence of the rulers. They follow his

14. King, "Toward a Discussion of the Category Gnosis/Gnosticism": The Case of the Epistle of Peter to Philip," 462. King examines ways in which this assertion may not hold throughout or in each of the versions of *The Letter of Peter to Philip* in note 47.

instructions to “fight the rulers” with teaching and healing in the Temple. This strategy is successful, and the book ends with them leaving the Temple to teach and heal in the larger world. The story does not indicate that the rulers no longer threaten the *apostoloi*, that is, the result does not seem to be the end of the violence but the inauguration of a social unity expanding throughout humanity through teaching and healing.

Notes

Both the title and the initial frame of *The Letter of Peter to Philip* indicate that it is a letter. But the content quickly shifts to the recounting of one or two appearances of Jesus Christ to the gathered apostles. *The Letter of Peter to Philip* does not have any letter conclusion. Overall then it is difficult to consider it an actual letter. It appears that the text knows an extended passion story of Jesus quite like that of Matthew or Luke, reinforcing the notion that it would be a product of the second century. The manuscript is from the Nag Hammadi collection and is in quite good shape, and is also in the more recently discovered Tchacos Codex. There is little reason to think that the story of *The Letter of Peter to Philip* is historically reliable in a direct sense. However, it contains many valuable historical impressions within its almost certainly fictive structure. Even scholars from gnosticizing perspectives have noticed the strong connections between the text and canonical writings and the many shared theological positions of *The Letter of Peter to Philip* and both canonical and what one might think of as proto-orthodox writings.¹⁵

The Thunder: Perfect Mind

Although there has been extensive public reception (especially in both mainstream and experimental artistic communities) of *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*,¹⁶ I focus here¹⁷ on its relationship to second-century imaginations of social unity, especially in relationship to the experience of violence.

15. Cf. Meyer, “NHC VIII,2: The Letter of Peter to Philip Introduction”, 227–32; King, “Toward a Discussion of the Category ‘Gnosis/Gnosticism’: The Case of the Epistle of Peter to Philip,” 445–65; Koschorke, “Eine gnostische Paraphrase des johanneischen Prologs: zur Interpretation von, Epistula Petri ad Philippum’ (Nag Hammadi Codices VIII, 2) 136, 16–137, 4,” 383–92; Koschorke, “Eine gnostische Pfingstpredigt. Zur Auseinandersetzung zwischen gnostischem und kirchlichem Christentum am Beispiel der ‘Epistula Petri ad Philippum’ (Nag Hammadi Codices VIII, 2),” 323–43; Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi and the Gospel Tradition: Synoptic Tradition in the Nag Hammadi Library*, 75–76, 137–38.

16. The major artistic treatment of *Thunder* include Toni Morrison’s novel *Jazz and Parade*; Umberto Eco’s novel *Foucault’s Pendulum*; filmmakers Ridley and Jordana Scott’s film *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*; and filmmaker Julia Dash’s award-winning feature length film *The Daughters of the Dust*. For a discussion of public reception and twentieth and twenty-first century artistic treatments of *Thunder*, see, Taussig et al., *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*, 93–101.

17. The largest segment of scholarship on *Thunder* has been in terms of its attention to the divine (mostly) feminine primary figure. Cf. Arthur, *The Wisdom Goddess: Feminine Motifs*

It has for some time been clear that *Thunder*¹⁸ is a kind of aretalogy, in many ways not unlike the extensive self-presentations of Isis, Wisdom, or the Johannine Jesus of the Greco-Roman era:¹⁹

I was sent from within power
 I came to those pondering me
 And I was found among those seeking me
 Look at me, all²⁰ you who contemplate me
 Audience, hear me
 Those expecting me, receive me
 Don't chase me from your sight
 Don't let your voice or your hearing hate me
 Don't ignore me in any place, any time
 Be careful. Do not ignore me
 I am the first and the last
 I am she who is honored and she who is mocked
 I am the whore and the holy woman
 I am the wife and the virgin
 I am he the mother and the daughter
 I am the limbs of my mother
 I am a sterile woman and she has many children
 I am she whose wedding is extravagant and I didn't have a husband
 I am the midwife and she who hasn't given birth. (*Thunder* 1:1–8a)

In many ways this series of self-proclaiming assertions by a divine figure is typical of the aretalogical genre. The first-person singular voice is strong, possesses a fullness of time, and is eager to list a range of attributes. Given the extent of Isis aretalogies in the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman eras, the insistent (although not unanimous) feminine voice is not all that surprising. The text's interest in placing various attributes/identities in contrasting pairs and trios has its own style, but has some general similarities with other—especially Isis—parallels. What is atypical is that the divine proclaimer also identifies humiliating, defeated, and slandered characteristics such as “whore,” “slaughtered,” and “barbarian” as “her” own. Some analyses of the degrading aspects the *Thunder* voice attributes to herself have tried to account for them as part of a binary pairing of opposing attributes. And, while this is more or less the case occasionally (“I am compassionate and I am cruel”), it does not hold over the whole piece. Indeed the assertions that the attributes are organized as binary, dualistic, or even pairs have turned out to be overstated.

in *Eight Nag Hammadi Documents*; Buckley, “Thunder, Perfect Mind,” 545–46; McGuire, “Thunder Perfect Mind,” 34–54; Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*.

18. The two book-length studies of *Thunder* are Paul-Hubert Poirier, *Le Tonnerre: Intellect parfait*, and Taussig et al., *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*.

19. Cf. Taussig in Taussig et al., *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*, 15–20.

20. The “you” in *Thunder* is steadily the plural you. Cf. Taussig et al. for a study of the performative dimensions of this “you” and the performative in *Thunder*, 69–82.

Humiliation and Authority

Most of all, such analysis has missed the prominence, perhaps even dominance, of the pejorative and humiliating characteristics of this divine persona. As I have written elsewhere:

*Thunder's "I" is mocked, humiliated, ashamed, disgraced, impoverished, thrown to the ground, in the shit pile, thrown out into the condemned, in the lowest places, thrown down into those slaughtered viciously, in weakness, stripped bare, timid, among those whose mouths are shut, chased, captured, scattered, crushed, in shame, reviled with contempt, falling apart, disintegration, and down in the dirt. Of these 25 characterizations of some kind of humiliation, 13 appear paired...with antithetical characterization of being honored as well. But it is striking that 12 of these 25 characterizations are not paired with something honorable, but simply place *Thunder's "I"* in a despised place.*

This concentration of stripped-chased-crushed-thrown down locations of the "I" forces the attentive listener to think socially about the piece. It becomes clear that *Thunder* is thinking intensely about what it means to be cast down or humiliated. Especially since the typical expression of the more-or-less divine in ancient literature (the aretalogy) is filled with praise for the "I," this focus on the disgraced-slaughtered-captured-impoverished "I" in *Thunder* points to a decisive aspect of its character ...

This voice from within *Thunder* about the one cast down, however, is also quite unique in that it speaks with so much authority ...²¹

Whereas almost all scholarly investigation of *Thunder* has seen its contrasts between the honorable and the despicable as part of a gnosticizing contrast between the world of material decay and the world of bodiless glory, only Anne McGuire's work²² has puzzled over *Thunder's* focus on experiences of humiliation beyond any pairings, suggesting there is reason to ask questions about these aretalogical proclamations in terms of the Mediterranean social world. Elsewhere, I have compared this uneven aretalogical mix of honorable, authority, and humiliation with the christological complexity of the Gospel of John,²³ suggesting that *Thunder* "was probably written with consciousness of social locations in which this humiliation occurred."²⁴

Greek and Barbarian

Thunder treats the relationship between Greeks and barbarians in a similar fashion:

21. Taussig et al., *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*, 56, 57.

22. Anne McGuire, "Thunder, Perfect Mind," 42, 43, 49.

23. Taussig, *A New New Testament: A Bible for the 21st Century Combining Traditional and Newly Discovered Texts*, 179–81, 187, and Taussig et al., *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*, 19, 161.

24. Taussig et al., *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*, 57.

Why then did you hate me, you Greeks?
 Because I am a barbarian among barbarians?
 Since I am the wisdom of the Greeks and the knowledge of the barbarians
 I am the deliberation of both the Greeks and barbarians
 I am he whose image is multiple in Egypt
 And she who is without an image among the barbarians
 I am she who was hated in every place
 And she who was loved in every place
 I am she whom they call life
 And you all called death
 I am she who they call law
 And you all called lawlessness. (3:1–8)

Here too the scholarly caricature of *Thunder* as disembodied flight from earthly realities seems obvious.²⁵ Rather this text seems quite invested in the hostilities between Greek and barbarian²⁶ and drawn to ironic disputation of the Greek put-down. The importance of this assertion is highlighted by the “I am a barbarian among barbarians,” being the only place where the “I” identifies with a single label and without description. The ironic twist of this divine “I’s” singular and proud identification with a label that no one in the ancient world wants to claim seems at the same time to challenge the going Greco-Roman assumption of their own civilizedness. It is, however, probably too hasty to characterize this bold match between the divine “I am” and the barbarian as simply a rejection of Greco-Roman domination and a casting of one’s lot with the barbarian. As I have written elsewhere:

(W)ithin the matrices of “Greek” and “barbarian” there remains the question of Egypt, the only place name mentioned in *Thunder*. In this section the “I” asserts “I am he whose image is multiple in Egypt.” This characterization of the “I” as being in Egypt actually references complex identities. In this regard, “I am he whose image is multiple in Egypt” corresponds hauntingly to the hybrid cultural milieu of Egypt in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. It could be that *Thunder’s* “I” chooses to rest in this uncomfortable mixed set of identities that embraces the complex mix of Greek and barbarian that existed in Egypt at that time. This could also contribute to explaining the “I” whose image is multiple in Egypt. In this way, *Thunder’s* “I” is not just an affirmation of the slandered barbarian, but an assertion of the messy identity of Egyptians from many different walks of life under Hellenistic and then Roman occupation.²⁷

25. Cf. Lillie, “Degnostizing Thunder,” 21–28.

26. Brigitte Kahl has seen a similar irony in Paul’s letter to the Galatians and suggested that the translation of that book may better be the ironic “To the Barbarians”; see *Galatians Reimagined: Reading With the Eyes of the Vanquished*, 33–34.

27. Taussig et al., *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*, 55.

Honor and Shame

Finally, this complex mix of aretalogical glory-filled authority and stark social humiliation can be seen as an address to the ancient Mediterranean codes of "honor and shame." The terms themselves actually occur in the poem itself, especially with a long riff on the term "shame." The performative and literary tension between the authority of the self-revealing divine figure and the elaboration of shaming experiences of the same persona can be seen to evoke a particular social strategy. As I have noted elsewhere:

(T)he tension between social honor and shame is taken on in *Thunder's* "I." The piece as a whole is surprising in its identification with shame, but this identification is transformed and deconstructed by *Thunder's* active combination of the shame and the honor in the same person. In this way, being ashamed, down in the dirt, chased, captured, and enslaved no longer are excluded from being honored. This piece seems to take aim at the dominant societal system of the Mediterranean. It aims to undo it by paying attention to the societal stations considered shameful in deft connection to celebrative combinations of both honor and shame in the same voice at the same time. In this way, the mutually exclusionary quality of honor and shame is undercut.²⁸

Imaginations of Social Unity in Relationship to the Second Century

There are few ways even to approximate when *Thunder* was composed. *Thunder* scholarship is at such an early stage of development that few skills have been developed to deal with the complex issues at hand in setting a time period when it was composed. There is only one manuscript and in Coptic of *Thunder* found in the Nag Hammadi jar.²⁹ If a Greek version of *Thunder* existed, it could have been composed as early as the second century BCE (since there are no explicit "Christian" terms in the document) and as late as the fourth century CE (the approximate date of the manuscript itself).

For the sake of this paper, I play with *Thunder* as a second-century document. As noted above, reasoning for this position rests primarily in the document's interest in ethnic tensions in Egypt, especially relative to Greek identities (3:3–5) and the consistent attention to violence. Hybrid identities related to a Greek presence in Egypt of course extended from the fourth century BCE through the fifth century CE, and the history of violence, even imperial violence as I propose,

28. Taussig et al., *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*, 59.

29. At least according to the state of current scholarship, the 52 documents within the jar found near Nag Hammadi were composed over a period of at least 300 years. For instance, a growing number of scholars now place the Gospel of Thomas in the first century and possibly earlier than the Gospel of Mark. On the other hand, although most scholars hesitate on this, it cannot be ruled out that some of the documents were composed in the fourth century, since the manuscripts themselves date from the fourth century.

stretches over millennia. For the sake of thinking about the second century, my particular imagination places it under long-term Roman rule, perhaps in Egypt.³⁰

Thunder's poetic strategies of coupled, tripled, and even quadrupled identities on at least one level can be seen as an imagination of social unity. Consider the following provocative associations:

- I am she who is honored and she who is mocked (1:5b)
- I am the whore and the holy woman (1:5c)
- I am the wife and the virgin (1:6a)
- I am he the mother and the daughter (1:6b)³¹
- I am a sterile woman and she has many children (1:7a)
- I am she whose wedding is extravagant and I didn't have a husband (1:7b)
- I am the midwife and she who hasn't given birth (1:8a)
- I am humiliation and pride (2:7b)
- I am without shame. I am ashamed (2:8)
- I am she who is disgraced and she who is important (2:10b)
- Do not stare at me in the shit pile, leaving me discarded; You will find me in the kingdoms (2:13)
- In my weakness do not strip me bare; Do not be afraid of my power (2:17)
- I am she who exists in all fears and in trembling boldness (2:18b)
- I am a barbarian among barbarians (3:3b)
- I am the wisdom of the Greeks and the knowledge of the barbarians (3:4a)
- I am the deliberation of the both the Greeks and barbarians (3:4b)
- I am he whose image is multiple in Egypt; and she who is without an image among the barbarians (3:5)
- I am she whom you scattered; and you have gathered me together (3:10)
- I am she who does not celebrate festivals; and I am she whose festivals are spectacular (3:12)
- I am she who is revered and adored; and she who is reviled with contempt (4:13)
- I am a foreigner and a citizen of the city (4:14b)
- I am a mute that does not speak and my words are endless (4:23b)
- I am she who shouts out and I am thrown to the ground (4:24b)

Most scholarship appropriately has called attention to the ways *Thunder* is interested in a range of women's identities. Indeed this scholarship often

30. Egypt is the only place mentioned within the *Thunder* text, but that occurs only once. That the only manuscript existing is in Coptic could undergird such an hypothesis; but most scholarship assumes that most, if not all, Nag Hammadi documents had a prior Greek version. For the case that *Thunder* demonstrates deeply rooted Coptic poetic devices, cf. Calaway, "Style and Poetic Artistry," 69–83.

31. Most previous translations have ignored the Coptic here and translated "I am she the mother and the daughter." But, as in four other places in *Thunder*, the masculine is clear. Cf. Kotrosits' essays "Gendering *Thunder*, Thundering Gender" and "Violence, Subjectivity, and Identity" in Taussig et al., *The Thunder: Perfect Mind* for a discussion of this undertow of masculine reference.

with good reason notes how *Thunder* seems to deconstruct the stereotypes of women's identity in its poetic triplets and couplets.³² But a longer look at these associational phrasings also yields interest in provocative and tensive associations across ethnic boundaries, gender, urban status, religion, honor and shame, privilege and humiliation, *métier*, immigrant and resident, power, race, exile and citizen, prestigious and ordinary, and marital status.

In this divine "I" a very broad range of human status and location is brought together. The various ways people understand themselves tumble over one another as the "I" articulates her/himself. It is, of course, the case that this poetic tension needs to be read in terms of both mythology and theology. But it would be an impoverishment of the text to leave out the clear ways *Thunder* is interested in the bringing together in dramatic tension a wide variety of social, cultural, national, ethnic, gender, *métier*, origin-based human understandings of self and others. The poem needs to be seen also as an insistent and calculat- ingly raw imagination of social unity.

Violence, Imperium, and Subjectivity

I have already cited above the wide range of violence associated with the experience of *Thunder's* "I." S/he is thrown to the ground, slaughtered, mocked, shamed, captured, enslaved, impoverished, condemned, reviled, and stripped.

For those of us on the learning curve of the wide range of state-sanctioned terror in the Roman empire, this list of *Thunder's* experience of violence is striking. Although, as noted above, that Egypt and many other parts of the Mediterranean experienced other versions of imperial violence, the possibility of *Thunder* being written in the context of Roman state violence seems strong. As is noted in the study of *The Letter of Peter to Philip*, the ways in which social unity on a Mediterranean-wide basis come into view in the Roman period is unmistakable in both its success and the irony thereof. The *pax romana* enabled vast commerce, intercultural contact, peaceful and forced immigration, new religious movements, and even the building of many cross-cultural cities. In many ways the consciousness of "neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female" within the first- and second-century Christ movements is directly dependent on the *pax romana*.

But these imaginations of imperial and counter-imperial social unity come at the cost of massive violence. The *pax romana* lives directly from military conquest, military occupation, enslavement of vast populations, rape, tens of thousands of executions, and punishing tax rates. The list of violent subjection of *Thunder's* "I" is hauntingly similar to Rome's violent strategies for bringing the Mediterranean together in "peace." Rome's own imagination of social unity

32. Cf. McGuire, "Thunder Perfect Mind" for a summary of this scholarship.

provides a deep underside to the raw poetry of *Thunder* as it simultaneously inhabits evocative new social relationships and persistent violence.

Thunder's ironic and creative imagination of social unity in the face of violence resembles *The Letter of Peter to Philip* in a number of ways. *The Letter of Peter to Philip* does not portray the violent threat to humanity as either finally successful or disappearing. The commission to teach and heal for the salvation of the world does go forward ambitiously, but only in the face of imperial violence. The unity of humanity comes into imaginal view, but without the disappearance of execution, suffering, and intimidation. The heart of one world under God is imaginally reinforced by the teaching and healing of the *apostoloi* in the Jerusalem Temple, but with the realization that this same Temple has already been destroyed by Rome. *Thunder* accomplishes a similar advance in imagining a grand social unity across the differences of the newly assembled Roman, even while continuously being subjected to suffering and humiliation.

Notes

The Nag Hammadi text—which is in quite good shape as a manuscript except for some gaps in columns 20 and 21—is the only existing text of *Thunder*. It is difficult to assign a time of composition beyond the broadest of eras from the second century BCE to the fourth century CE. Similarly it is difficult to assign *Thunder* to a particular locale. Egypt is the only geographical location mentioned in the entire piece, and the text is written in Coptic, native to Egypt. In addition, the work of Jared Calaway on the poetics of *Thunder* has shown a range of Coptic poetic devices for which a decent Greek *Vorlage* is difficult to reconstruct or even feature.³³ Although Poirier assumes a Greek *Vorlage*, I think Calaway's analysis reopens the possibility of *Thunder* being composed in Egypt.

The Post-Pauline Letter to the Ephesians

This essay's analysis of the fictive portrait of Peter and the *apostoloi* in the *Letter of Peter to Philip* hopes to be helpful in thinking about Ephesians in the same way. The many scholarly analyses of Ephesians that demonstrate theological and lexical differences between Ephesians and the authentic letters of Paul might in the vein of *The Letter of Peter to Philip* also point to Ephesians as a fictive portrait of Paul in prison. Somewhat similarly the way *Thunder's* "I" carries the life situations of a range of populations in its own voice might help in reading Paul's "I" as a fictive unifying voice of significantly post-Pauline populations. The well-known manuscript lacunae that raise doubts about the designation

33. Calaway, "Style and Poetic Artistry," 69–83.

of “Ephesians” as the target of this “letter” also help in re-framing Ephesians outside the rhetoric of the historical Paul.

Although as previously noted I do not aim to make a thorough case for Ephesians belonging to the second century, I provide below a few strands of ways to imagine it in the second century. These aspects of Ephesians can (but need not) connect to the earlier and now more recent proposals for placing the letters of Ignatius of Antioch further into the second century. This scholarly debate³⁴ is germane in that one of the main bases for having kept Ephesians in the latter first century is the relatively solid evidence of Ignatius quoting or at least paraphrasing Eph 4:4–6. If Ignatius’ life and work themselves are pushed back, so then could/would the Ephesians of the NT. My major interest in reading post-Pauline “Ephesians” alongside these other works lies mainly in the ways they share and/or overlap in their interest in imagining social unity within a context of violence.

Envisioning Social Unity in a Larger World

Post-Pauline Ephesians’ imagination of social unity forms on relatively different terms than *The Letter of Peter to Philip* or *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*. Instead of attending primarily to the unity of humanity or the salvation of the world as *The Letter of Peter to Philip* does or to imaginative groupings of strikingly different human identities as in *Thunder*, Ephesians concentrates on what it sees as the spectacular new inclusion through Christ of gentiles in the tradition of Israel. This new social unity is celebrated lushly in the Ephesians text:

For God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world, so that we might be holy and blameless in his sight. From the first God destined us in his goodwill toward us to be adopted as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ. (1:4, 5)

It also accords with the goodwill which God purposed to exhibit in the Anointed One, in view of that divine order which as to mark the completion of the ages, when he should make everything, both in heaven and on earth, center in him. (1:9b–10)

For by our union with him (Christ) we became God’s heritage. (1:11)

The Spirit is a pledge of our future heritage, foreshadowing the full redemption of God’s own people—to enhance his glory. (1:14)

34. Brent says “we can ... if we like, place Ignatius’ work towards the end of Hadrian’s reign (AD 135).” Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Second Sophistic*, 318. Foster, *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, 89, places Ignatius’ writings “sometime during the second quarter of the second century, i.e. 125–150 CE, roughly corresponding to Hadrian’s reign or the earlier part of Antoninus Pius’ period in office.” Timothy Barnes in 2008 concluded that the letters were written “probably in the 140s.” Barnes, “The Dating of Ignatius of Antioch,” 128. Richard Pervo says “A date of c. 130–140 is the preferable date for Ignatius.” Pervo, *The Making of Paul*, 135.

That you may realize the hope given by God's call, the wealth of the glory of his heritage among his people. (1:18b)

He raised the Anointed One from the dead and caused him to sit at his right hand on high, exalting him above every ruling force, authority, or sovereignty. (1:20b)

God placed all things under Christ's feet, and made him, as he is above everything, the head of the church, which is his body, the fullness of him, who is filled all in all. (1:22)

And through our union with Christ Jesus, God raised us with him, and caused us to sit in heavenly places in order that by his grace to us in Christ Jesus, he might display in the generations to come the boundless wealth of his grace. (2:6, 7)

Remember, therefore, that you were once gentiles yourselves, as your bodies showed; you were called the uncircumcised by those who were called the circumcised by reason of physical operation. Remember that you were at that time far from Christ; you were shut out from the citizenship of Israel; you were strangers to the covenants founded on the promise; you were in the world without hope and without God. But now through your union with Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have, by the shedding of the blood of the Anointed One, been brought near. He it is who is our peace. He made the two divisions of humanity one, broke down the barrier that separated them, and in his own flesh put an end to the cause of enmity between them—the law with its injunctions and ordinances—in order to create, through union with himself, one new humanity and so make peace. And when, on the cross, he had destroyed the hostility, he by means of his cross, reconciled them both in God, united in one body. He came with the good news of peace for you who were far off, and of peace for those who were near; for it is through him that we both, united in the one Spirit, are now able to approach the Father. It follows then that you are no longer strangers and aliens, but are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of God's household. (2:11–19)

In the former generations it was not made known to humanity, as fully as it has now been revealed by the spirit to the ambassadors and prophets—that in Christ Jesus and through the good news, the gentiles are co-heirs with us and members of one body, and that they share with us in God's promise. (3:5, 6)

For this reason, then, I kneel before the Father, from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth derives its name. (3:14–15)

All God's holy people have the power to comprehend in all its width and length and height and depth and to understand—though it surpasses all understanding—the love of the Christ and so be filled to the full with God himself. (3:17c–19)

This text overflows with joy, grace, and fullness in relationship to the new social unity of all humanity and the traditions of Israel.

The chosenness of God's people does not occur at the moment of Abrahamic delegation, Jacob's birth or rise to power, Mosaic rebellion, or even exodus from Egypt, but rather at or before the creation of the world (1:4). God's people are those of the creation of the world. The imagined social unity of Israel and the nations in the first and second centuries began at creation. This means that the nations/gentiles are at the writing of Ephesians now adopted in Christ as God's created people (1:5). The divine completion of the ages results in everything in heaven and earth centering on him (1:9, 10). It is in this belonging to Christ (a figuration of Israel) that the gentiles become God's heritage (1:11). The Spirit itself guarantees this gentile heritage in God's people (1:14). It is crucial that the gentiles realize the glory and wealth of this heritage they have received (1:18). The gentiles then join Israel and Christ (the Anointed One) in the skies (1:20; 2:6, 7). Christ's fullness exhibits itself in the unification of Israel and the gentiles, the all in all (1:22). The nations are co-heirs with Israel and share with Israel God's heritage (3:5, 6). Fatherhood in every place expresses itself in its belonging to the one Father (3:14, 15). All God's people are envisioned as being at creation and are full of God (3:17–19).

In 2:11–19 these images are drawn together quite straightforwardly in language of belonging to a common citizenship. The covenants promised this unity, and now Ephesians claims it, giving hope to all who live in the world. Humanity is now fully imagined (and experienced?) as one.

The text's voice often abandons the pretense of a Pauline voice and speaks fully as "we" gentiles who are now "fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of God's household," and then switches to a voice that addresses these same gentiles who are now included in this "heritage" of spiritual Israel. Although occasionally its ecstatic language does claim that a "new humanity" has been formed, it mostly stays tethered to the now re-united, but still messy, contestation between those belonging to Israel and the gentiles.

Roman Violence, Social Unity, and Ephesians

This text's triumphant and joyful proclamation of the good news of a new unity in Christ between the people of Israel and the heterogeneous Mediterranean populations does not fail to face the same gratuitous and proliferating imperial violence that *The Letter of Peter to Philip* and *Thunder* do. It does so in the portrait of fictive Paul in prison for his challenges to the empire. Ephesians allows those generations after the historical Paul to identify with him in prison. The authorial voice makes his imprisonment clear twice (3:1; 4:1) at the beginnings of his appeal for them to follow his strategy vis-à-vis this violence. He similarly connects his "sufferings" to those of his readership (3:13).

Ephesians' authorship's devotion to social unity across broad reaches of the Mediterranean world is so strong that it demands a complex, consistent, and ironic strategy, especially relative to the on-going violence. Not at all unlike Justin Martyr's *Apologies*, Ephesians' strategy for the success of the newly imag-

ined social unity in Christ involves that those in Christ live according to the highest standards of behavior, including organizing their households according to the proper Roman standards. All, according to Ephesians, know better their common unity if they observe women's subservience and thoroughgoing adherence to slavery as it functions in the empire and is formulated in its household codes. Like Justin, Ephesians never actively advocates for Roman authority, but also appeals to the readers to appear harmless, meek, and obedient to the ways of society, so that the violence does not destroy the newly imagined social unity in Christ.

Ephesians and Justin Martyr—among others—develop a belonging both intensely unified in a spiritual Israel and its Anointed One (Christ) and collectively inhibited by the Romanized good behavior. Perhaps only ironically or posthumously, they are also socially united in the complex failure (the executions of Paul and Justin) and success (their survival of the same violence that killed Paul and Justin).

The Gospel of Truth³⁵

"The good news of truth is joy" is the way the *Gospel of Truth*³⁶ begins. In poetry, homily, and allegory this almost certainly second-century document³⁷ continues an almost ecstatic celebration of the oneness of the Father's light and love as "published" by Jesus. *Truth* shares a good deal of vocabulary with Ephesians (fullness; the Father; Jesus' death as unifying all people; knowledge; grace; Spirit; the union of the Father, Son, and humanity; the good news; all-embracing Wisdom), but *Truth* seems uninterested in the tension between Israel and the nations. Indeed, *Truth* assumes unity at all times, and considers division as simply a matter of fogginess (2:8) or forgetfulness (3:1–4), since the unity of the Father with all things and people is never in question.

Imaginations of Complete Unity Include Social Unity

For *Truth* all people and things belong in the Father. Much of its lush and joyful descriptions of this unity focus on unified consciousness of not simply human beings, but all that is:

The name "good news" is the revelation of hope, for this is the discovery of those who seek him (the Father). All things have searched for the one from whom they come. All things were with him—the uncontainable, incomprehensible one who surpasses all thought. (1:3–2:2)

35. For an overview of *Truth* bibliography, textual apparatus, and introduction, cf. Attridge and MacRae, "The Gospel of Truth," 56–81.

36. I follow here the translation of Celene Lillie in *A New New Testament: A Bible for the 21st Century Combining Traditional and Newly Discovered Texts* (Taussig).

37. Irenaeus mentions a *Gospel of Truth* and disapproves of it in the late second century.

The sensuousness of this experience of God's presence in all is nearly unique in early Christ literature:

The Father is sweet and within his desire is goodness ... The Father's children are his fragrance for they are from the beauty of his face. Because of this, the Father loves his fragrance and discloses it everywhere, and when it mixes with matter it give his fragrance to the light. (19:1, 4-5)

Many people forgot the Father, but Jesus' teachings and death on the cross changed this:

This is the good news of the one whom they seek, revealed to those filled through the mercies of the Father. Through the hidden mystery, Jesus Christ shone to the ones in the darkness of forgetfulness. He enlightened them and showed them a way ... He was nailed to a tree and became the fruit of the Father's knowledge. It did not cause destruction when it was eaten, but it caused those who ate it to come into being and find contentment within its discovery. And he discovered them in himself, and they discovered him in themselves All things are in him and all things have need of him ... He became a guide, at rest and at leisure. He came into their midst and spoke a teacher's word in places of learning. Those thinking themselves wise tested him, but he reproached them because they were empty and hated him for they were not truly wise. After all these, the little children came—those to whom the knowledge of the Father belongs. When they had been strengthened, they learned about the Father's face. They knew and were known, they were glorified and they glorified. (4:1-3, 5-7a, 8; 5:8-12)

Jesus' teachings and death bring all people together, from those with whom he fought to the children themselves:

Truth came into their midst and all its bounty knew it. They welcomed the Father in truth and perfect power that joins them with the Father ... This is the manifestation of the Father and the revelation of his generations. (13:1-3)

In the truth of the Father brought through Jesus, all have the power of the Father. As in Ephesians, the presence of power in integrated humanity is linked to Jesus' work, both in his teaching and death, and reflects fully God's own rule over all. It is this unity with one another and with the Father that brings humanity to the glory of oneness:

This is the way of those who hold something of the immeasurable greatness from above. They stretch toward the full one alone, who is a Mother for them ... They are not troubled or twisted around the truth, but they are truth. And the Father is within them and they are in the Father. They are full and undivided from the one who is truly good. They need nothing at all, but they are at rest in spirit, and will listen to their root. (27:1, 2, 5-8)

Here the fullness of humanity participates in the Mother and Father completely and mirrors Jesus' own process of becoming full in his teachings (5:8-12).

Hints of Violence in the Midst of Ecstatic Unity

Strangely, this overwhelming fullness of beauty, power, and grace seems nevertheless slightly nervous about something. This anxiety only appears briefly, but in ways that intimate pain and trauma. In describing how “the light had spoken” (16:7) through Jesus’ mouth, seams of pain slip to the surface of the text:

He did away with torture and torment for they caused those needing compassion ... to stray from his face. He dissolved them with power ... He became a way for those who strayed and ... discovery for those searching and strength for those who were shaken, purity for those who were defiled. (16:8–10)

Similarly Jesus’ own encounter with fear reveals consciousness of it in humans as well:

When he entered empty ways of fear, he passed through those stripped by forgetfulness. (7:1)

Indeed, *Truth’s* lush affirmations and joy themselves slip regularly between the present and the future tense. Although there is no sense of eschatological myth in the text, sometimes that which has just been described as fully present and powerful becomes something to hope for in the future. For instance, just after human need has been banished and “dissolved in union with oneness” (10:13), the text slips into the future tense:

Now their works lie scattered, but in time oneness will make the places full. In oneness all will return to themselves, within knowledge purifying themselves from multiplicity into oneness ... If indeed these things have happened to each one of us, it is necessary for us to think about all things so that this house might be holy and tranquil in oneness. (11:1–3)

Close reading of *Truth’s* “fullness” then seem nevertheless to exhibit pain and fear as well. There is—in contrast to *The Letter of Peter to Philip*, *Thunder*, and *Ephesians*—no hint of the Roman empire as the source of this subliminal torture, need, and fear. I would wonder, however, whether the fullness of ecstasy itself is not a sign of the haunted presence of violence in many places. That is, could *Truth’s* overwhelming energy for light, fullness, and power in the present be an expression of and compensation for the on-going violence its people face? Can the sensuous presence of the Father and Mother with humanity be intimately related to on-going pain and violence, only hinted at textually?

Social Unity in Action

Even if there are seams of imperial or other violence in the lives of the hearers of *Truth*, there is also strong evidence—perhaps one of the strongest in the first two centuries of Christ literature—of courageous action by humans to insure and expand the fullness of power and beauty:

Say then from the heart that you are the perfect day and within you dwells the light that never ends. Speak of the truth with those who seek it and of knowledge with those who have sinned through their transgressions. Strengthen the feet of those who stumble and stretch your hand to those who are weak. Feed those who are hungry and give rest to the weary. Raise those who wish to arise and awaken those who sleep—for you are understanding drawn forth. If strength does these things, strength becomes stronger. (17:11–16)

In this text there is integration of the lush presence of God in humanity with the haunted presence of those who are weak, hungry, and weary. This rare time when the fullness and unity of humanity (“you [all] are the perfect day and within you [all] dwells the light that never ends”) is woven in *Truth* into the awareness of hunger, weakness, and sin; it is the active encounter that is integrative. Humanity catches itself in the act of making itself fuller. The shadow of pain (and torture?) is acknowledged in behavior for the sake of fullness. Not unlike the healing program in *The Letter of Peter to Philip*, the work of Jesus becomes the work of those whom he taught, and the social unity of humanity is caught in the act of expanding. This, of course, is not any reduction of the fullness of humanity and the Father, to that which humanity does. But it is a place where the losses of humanity are recognized in their encounter with the imagination of fullness.

Some Caveats and Intuitions for Further Study of Second-Century Social Unity

In the process of initiating conversation of the Christianity Seminar about Nag Hammadi literature, I have played with the imagining of social unity in Christ literature of the second century. The larger task of exploring such social imaginations of this time is hardly begun in this paper in that the second century has an abundance of Christ literature. So this essay is only a playful probe in that direction.

This small set of texts—whether one takes the pretentiousness of their dating into account or not—does exhibit such fascination with and commitment to imagination of social unity, both within the composing groups and the larger world. But the diversity with which such imagining goes on within each of them is probably as important to study as this common theme in them. This diversity should not, I think, even be seen just as differences of expression of a common theme. Rather their differences in the way they imagine social unity contain profoundly different meanings of such unity and striking variations in strategies. So, for instance, even though there is some linkage between *The Letter of Peter to Philip's* program of healing with *The Gospel of Truth's* clarion instructions to help the hungry and weary, the on-going danger and fear in *The Letter of Peter to Philip* differs hugely from the intense and sensual perfect day of

Truth. And, even though both Ephesians and *Thunder* have common interest in the place of barbarians/gentiles in such imagined and experienced social unity, *Thunder's* connections of various populations with one another is much more raw and less resolved than that of Ephesians.

I have also suggested in each text's test case that the reality and overwhelming presence of violence—mostly, but not exclusively, imperial—has much to do with prompting imaginations of social unity. So, although I do think that the Seminar needs to examine carefully the demographic growth of Christ movements in the second century, here I am suggesting an alternate (or accompanying) line of thinking about second-century social unity than is being prompted by the movement's growth in numbers. Rather, I am interested in exploring how violence may in the second century have prompted complex coping expressions through the visions of social unity. It is also the case, I think, that our Seminar desperately needs to begin an exploration of (mostly imperial) violence in the emergence of Christianity. Many shortcuts and quick solutions to characterize this violence lie before us in this necessary component of our work.

I hasten to add that I do not at all see imaginations of social unity (in the second or any other century) as an unmitigated good. To the contrary, I am suspicious of it in its many iterations, its romantic twenty-first century forms, and in any reduction of the meanings of Christianity to such imaginations. It seems to me that both in the imperial second century and in the twenty-first century, imagined or enforced social unity can reduce the truths and possibilities of difference. So although it is, I think, important to look at emergent, enforced, and imagined social unity in the eventual realities of Christianity, I do so at least as much to assess the undersides and damages of social unity as to appreciate and credit its (obvious) goodness.

Nor do I mean to propose that such Christ literature, its imaginations of social confluence, and its underlying experience of (increasing?) imperial violence is somehow becoming a defining characteristic of Christianity in the second century. The many sides of this possibility need much more exploration. And, as noted earlier in footnotes, I am very cautious that there is any such thing as Christianity in the second century. Here I am simply wondering about how the particular fascination of social unity in the second century did or did not actually bring some Christ movements into relationship with one another and the larger world.

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