THE MULTIVALENCE OF BIBLICAL TEXTS AND THEOLOGICAL MEANINGS

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Edited by

Christine Helmer

with the assistance of
Charlene T. Higbe

Society of Biblical Literature
Atlanta

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Abbreviations

Primary Sources

4QPsJub[a]	*Pseudo-Jubilees*
Abr.	Philo, *De Abrahamo*
Aen.	Vergil, *Aeneid*
Balb.	Cicero, *Pro Balbo*
Bell. Cat.	Sallust, *Bellum catalinae*
Carm.	Horace, *Carmina*
Cher.	Philo, *De cherubim*
De arch.	Vitruvius, *De architectura*
Deus	Philo, *Quod Deus sit immutabilis*
Dom.	Cicero, *De domo suo*
Ep. mort. Ar.	Athanasius, *Epistula ad Serapionem de more Arii*
Fast.	Ovid, *Fasti*
Flam.	Plutarch, *Titus Flamininus*
Fug.	Philo, *De fuga et inventione*
Gen. Rab.	*Genesis Rabbah*
Geogr.	Strabo, *Geographica*
Jub.	*Jubilees*
J.W.	Josephus, *Jewish War*
L.A.B.	*Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* (Pseudo-Philo)
Leg.	Philo, *Legum allegoriae*
Leg. man.	Cicero, *Pro Lege manilia* (*De imperio Cn. Pompeii*)
m. Yad.	Mishnah, *Yadayim*
Migr.	Philo, *De migratione Abrahami*
Mith.	Appianus, *Mithridatica*
Mor.	Plutarch, *Moralia*
Nat.	Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*
Nigr.	Lucian, *Nigrinus*
Or.	Dio Chrysostom, *Orationes*
Or. Bas.	Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio in laudem Basilii*
Peregr.	Lucian, *De morte Peregrini*
Phil.	Plutarch, *Philopoemen*

Pis.	Cicero, *In Pisonem*
Pomp.	Plutarch, *Pompeius*
Res gest.	*Res gestae divi Augusti*
Sest.	Cicero, *Pro Sestio*
Somn.	Philo, *De somniis*
Trin.	Augustine, *De Trinitate*
Vesp.	Suetonius, *Vespasianus*
Vit. soph.	Philostratus, *Vitae sophistarum*

Secondary Sources

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary.* Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doublday, 1992.
ACCS	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung.* Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972–.
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
A R	*Anglican eological Review*
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
B St	Biblisch-theologische Studien
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
ChrÉg	*Chronique d'Égypte*
CWS	Classics of Western Spirituality
Ev	*Evangelische eologie*
EZW	Evangelische Zentralstelle für Weltanschauungsfragen
FCB	Feminist Companion to the Bible
FOTL	Forms of Old Testament Literature
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical eology*
HRWG	*Handbuch religionswissenscha licher Grundbegri e.* Edited by G. Kehrer and H. G. Kippenberg. 5 vols. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1988–2001.
HTR	*Harvard eological Review*
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
IDB	*e Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible.* Edited by G. A. Buttrick. 4 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1962.
Int	*Interpretation*

JAC	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JR	*e Journal of Religion*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JSHRZ	*Jüdische Schri en aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSP	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrepha
JSR	*Journal of Scriptural Reasoning*
KuD	*Kerygma und Dogma*
Mod eol	*Modern eology*
nab	New American Bible
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NIB	*e New Interpreter's Bible*
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
nrsv	New Revised Standard Version
NTL	New Testament Library
Numen	*Numen: International Review for the History of Religions*
NZS R	*Neue Zeitschri für systematische eologie und Religionsphilosophie*
OBT	Overtures to Biblical eology
OTL	Old Testament Library
RGG	*Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Edited by H. D. Betz et al. 4th ed. 8 vols. Tübingen, 1998–2005.
RVV	Religionsgeschichtliches: Versuche und Vorarbeiten
SBLSymS	SBL Symposium Series
SCrHier	Scripta hierosolymitana
Scriptura	*Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and eology in Southern Africa*
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions (supplement to *Numen*)
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
StPB	Studia post-biblica
TRE	*eologische Realenzyklopädie*
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenscha liche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament

WuD	*Wort und Dienst*
WUNT	Wissenscha liche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZKG	*Zeitschri für Kirchengeschichte*
Z K	*Zeitschri für eologie und Kirche*

of receiving blessing from God. The status of victim or loss is therefore less significant to the priestly tradition's understanding of sacrifice than it is to the secularized metaphorical understanding. At the end of the section I show that a metaphorical use of the term *sacrifice* also appears in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. Sacrifice in this sense typically qualifies righteous human behavior and prayer dedicated to God as an element of human worship.

What is the meaning of cultic sacrifice as part of temple worship in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament? Today few are familiar with this fundamental dimension of Israelite worship. The relative ignorance of Israelite cultic practices may be attributed to the fact that actual cultic sacrifices belong to a distant past and are no longer practiced in modern religions or cultures.[8] Hence historical care and respect must be exercised when investigating the topic.[9] Another reason for the ignorance of the topic especially among Christians may be attributed to the fact that the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament laws on sacrificial rituals appear in Leviticus, a book traditionally overlooked by the Christian church and Christian scholarship.[10]

According to the sacrificial laws of Lev 1–7, cultic sacrifices are solemn events that require the assistance of priests. The sacrifices are carried out in the forecourt of the temple and on the "altar of burnt offering." They follow specific regulations pertaining primarily to the correct performance of ritual steps, but what the modern scholar does not find is an explanation of how biblical writers understood the function of various sacrificial rituals or a clear description of the ritual step that might be considered the key element of the rite.[11] For biblical writers, sacrifices were part of everyday life and did not require any explicit explanation. Given this situation, the historical meaning of cultic sacrifices continues to be the topic of much scholarly debate, and consensus has been achieved only with regard to its basic function. During cultic sacrifices something is sanctified; a cultic sacrifice is an act of consecration.[12] The literal

8. In the context of the Eucharist/Last Supper, sacrificial *metaphors* are employed, but an actual sacrifice is not performed.

9. See Rolf Rendtorff, "Das Opfer im Alten Testament," in *Das Opfer: Religionsgeschichtliche, theologische und politische Aspekte* (ed. D. Neuhaus; Arnoldshainer Texte 102; Frankfurt: Haag + Herchen, 1998), 36.

10. See Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Das dritte Buch Mose: Leviticus* (ATD 6; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 1–2, 13–15; Samuel E. Balentine, *The Torah's Vision of Worship* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 148–49.

11. See Alfred Marx, "The Theology of the Sacrifice According to Leviticus 1–7," in *The Book of Leviticus: Composition and Reception* (ed. R. A. Kugler and R. Rendtorff; VTSup 93; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 103–4.

12. This is a definition of sacrifice already proposed by Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur la Nature et la Fonction du Sacrifice," *Année sociologique* 2 (1899): 36–41. Yerkes

meaning is illustrated by the Latin *sacri cium*: "to make holy" and "to dedicate" but also "to perform holy actions."[13] A cultic sacri ce is a consecration ritual of giving to God carried out at a sacred location.

is de nition still invites further clari cation as to which ritual element e ects the consecration. I have dealt with this question in several recent publications[14] and will summarize the relevant ndings here. According to widely shared opinion, the ritual element of animal slaughter consecrates the sacri ce and is therefore considered its moment of culmination.[15] is correlates with the notion that animal sacri ces constitute a distinct and special category in the Israelite cult.[16] I have challenged this scholarly opinion on several grounds.

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makes the important observation that, contrary to the secularized meaning of the term, a cultic sacrifice is always offered *to* God or a deity (Yerkes, *Sacri ce*, 4–5); see also Marx, "The Theology of the Sacrifice," 106.

13. Yerkes, *Sacri ce*, 6–7; Bamberger, "ויקרא Leviticus," 750; Seiwert, "Opfer," 270. For the translation of the Latin *sacro*, see, e.g., *Langenscheidts Grosswörterbuch Lateinisch*, part 1 (20th ed.; Berlin: Langenscheidt, 1978), 670; *Pons Globalwörterbuch Lateinisch-Deutsch* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Klett, 1986), 918.

14. Christian Eberhart, *Studien zur Bedeutung der Opfer im Alten Testament: Die Signi - kanz von Blut- und Verbrennungsriten im kultischen Rahmen* (WMANT 94; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2002), 289–330; idem, "Die Prüfung Abrahams—oder: Wo aber ist das Opfer im Neuen Testament? Exegese von 1. Mose 22 aus christlicher Sicht," in *Wo aber ist das Opferlamm? Opfer und Opferkritik in den drei abrahamitischen Religionen* (ed. U. Dehn; EZW-Texte 168; Berlin: Evangelische Zentralstelle für Weltanschauungsfragen, 2003), 28–49; idem, "A Neglected Feature of Sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible: Remarks on the Burning Rite on the Altar," *HTR* 97 (2004): 485–93. It should be mentioned that my study focuses on common features of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament sacrifices. For a detailed profile of, and individual differences between the five types of sacrifice, see Eberhart, *Studien zur Bedeutung der Opfer*, 16–176.

15. See Girard, *Violence*; Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: Interpretationen Altgriechischer Opferriten und Mythen* (RVV 32; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972); Hartmut Gese, "Die Sühne," in *Zur biblischen eologie: Alttestamentliche Vorträge* (2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 85–106.

16. At the beginning of his study on atonement in Israel's sacrificial cult, Hartmut Gese claims that sacrifices involving the shedding of blood have a special status ("Unter den Opfern haben die blutigen Opfer besonderen Rang" [Gese, "Die Sühne," 93]). In a similar fashion, Marcel Detienne limits his study of Greek sacrifice to those practices associated with blood-shedding ("sacrifice sanglant"; see Marcel Detienne, "Pratiques Culinaires et Esprit de Sacrifice," in *La Cuisine du Sacri ce en Pays Grec* [ed. M. Detienne and J-P. Vernant; Paris: Gallimard, 1979], 7). The assumption that animal sacrifice constitutes a separate category among cultic sacrifices is conveyed by the modern English and French definitions of (cult) offering: "any act of presenting something to a supernatural being." A cult sacrifice, on the other hand, is understood as "an offering accompanied by the ritual killing of the object of the offering" (J. van Baal, "Offering, Sacrifice and Gift," *Numen* 23 [1976]: 161; for a similar definition, see, e.g., T. H. Gaster, "Sacrifices and Offerings, OT," *IDB* 4:147). As a preliminary criticism of such a distinction between sacrifice and offering, Hubert and Mauss reject the idea of animal sacrifice

First, I have suggested that animal slaughter cannot be considered the moment of consecration in sacri cial rituals in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament because slaughter appears as a preliminary action to the rite, not its culmination. Animal slaughter is never performed on the most holy altar but only in areas of lesser sanctity (Lev 1:11; Ezek 40:39–41) or outside the sanctuary (Lev 17:3–4 lxx). It is usually to be carried out by the lay person, not by a priest (Lev 1:5, 11). In Ezek 44:9–16 the task is assigned to Levites as punishment for their lack of obedience toward God.[17] Second, animal slaughter does not occur in all of the sacri cial rituals described in Lev 1–7. e cereal o ering (מנחה, Lev 2 and 6:7–16[18]) consisting of wheat, oil, and frankincense is a fully valid sacri ce (קרבן) that can, according to Lev 5:11–13, be substituted for a sin o ering (חטאת). e Judean sacri cial cult celebrated at the Elephantine temple was performed solely with cereal o erings and frankincense; animals were not o ered. Sacri ce functions in these instances without animal slaughter and without a victim.[19] e absence of animal slaughter suggests that this element cannot constitute the central moment of sacri cial rituals. e question regarding the key aspect of sacri ce must be reassessed.

I have examined this question by turning to the act of burning sacri - cial material on the main altar. I discovered that this ritual element rather than the element of slaughter is common to all ve types of sacri ce listed in Lev 1–7, including the cereal o ering. In most cases, the biblical descriptions of sacri cial burning are accompanied by two interpretative terms. e rst term, " re o ering" (אִשֶּׁה), is used to describe the crucial moment when the material o ering changes its consistency and is transformed into a new, ethereal essence. e second term, "pleasing odor" (ריח ניחוח), alludes to the sacri cial smoke that ascends from the earthly to the heavenly sphere where God perceives it.[20] is suggests that the main purpose of the sacri ce is not primarily the annihilation of human goods. Such interpretative focus on the loss for human beings or on destruction is purely materialistic and fails to

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as a distinct category, calling the restriction of sacrifice to those kinds of sacrifices involving the shedding of blood "arbitrary" (Hubert and Mauss, "Essai sur la Nature," 39).

17. See Eberhart, *Studien zur Bedeutung der Opfer,* 179–83, 203–18; see also Yerkes, *Sacri- ce,* 4–5; Bruno W. Dombrowski, "Killing in Sacrifice: The Most Profound Experience of God?" *Numen* 23 (1976): 136–44.

18. Verse references follow the mt; to be noted is that Lev 6:7–16 mt corresponds to 6:14–23 in English Bible editions.

19. Eberhart, *Studien zur Bedeutung der Opfer,* 77–88, 207–8; idem, "Prüfung Abrahams," 30–31.

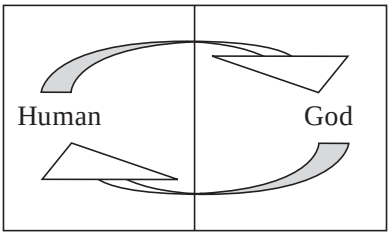
20. Eberhart, *Studien zur Bedeutung der Opfer,* 289–331, 361–81; idem, "Neglected Feature," 489–93. See also Alfred Marx, *Les Systèmes Sacri ciels de l'Ancien Testament: Formes et Fonctions du Culte Sacri ciel à Yhwh* (VTSup 105; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 138–39.

recognize the theological, God-directed dimension of this ritual step. Instead, I have argued that the culmination of a cultic sacri ce is the burning rite. It is the moment of consecration at which the sacri cial material taken from the profane realm is brought into the realm of the holy.[21] e Hebrew term for sacri ce, קרבן ליהוה, meaning "that which is brought near to Yhwh," conveys the ritual's dynamic.

In cultic contexts, the act of giving to God is sometimes motivated by anticipation of divine blessing. e Latin formula *do ut des* ("I give so that you may give") accurately captures the underlying reciprocity of the sacri- cial process in these cases. e individual or community o ering cultic sacri ces expects blessings of various kinds; they may also expect deliverance from distress or oppression. Cultic sacri ces are o ered at other times as signs of gratitude for divine blessing. Such signs presuppose that the blessing has temporally preceded the sacri ce. e formula *do quia dedisti* ("I give because you have given") accurately describes this second motivation for o ering cultic sacri ces.[22] e following table illustrates these two processes:

Sacri ce
(קרבן ליהוה—"that which is brought near to Yhwh")

Action:
Giving to God (*do*—"I give")
by means of burning rite



Motivation:
Anticipation of divine blessing (… *ut des*—"so that you may give")
or
Gratitude for previous divine blessing (… *quia dedisti*—
"because you have given")

21. See Seebaß, "Opfer," 259.
22. Eberhart, *Studien zur Bedeutung der Opfer*, 336–39; idem, "Neglected Feature," 492.

To summarize: I suggest that the central feature of the temple cult is not animal slaughter but the burning rite. is rite represents the sacri cial ritual as a whole. e sacri cial smoke ascending to heaven is a visual manifestation of Israel's devotion and worship.

It is important to note here that the connection between cultic sacri ce and devotion actually facilitates the change that the term sacri ce eventually undergoes from its cultic connotation to the secularized metaphorical meaning. A metaphorical use of the term sacri ce already occurs, for example, in the Psalms and Sirach; righteous human behavior and prayer are labeled "sacri ce" or represent the sacri cial ritual (see, e.g., Pss 50:14; 51:19; 119:108; Sir 35:1–3). Like the actual sacri ces o ered in front of the temple, these expressions of devotion occur in the context of human worship. Acts of righteousness and prayer share aspects of sacri cial rituals in that they are directed toward and dedicated to God and consequently are understood to acquire a special quality. ey have been consecrated, that is, "made sacred."

In concluding I want to re ect again on the di erence between cultic sacri ces and the secularized metaphorical understanding of sacri ce as well as on the fact that today the latter understanding prevails and is commonly used in the process of abstracting meaning from biblical texts. I have shown in section 1 that the modern secularized understanding of the term tends to connote loss and destruction. On the contrary, the Hebrew term קרבן ליהוה means "that which is brought near to Yhwh," and the etymology of the Latin derivate for sacri ce implies consecration. Both the Hebrew and Latin terms convey dynamics toward the holy that are missing from the secularized meaning of the term sacri ce. It should therefore be acknowledged that the secularized understanding is inappropriate if applied to cultic contexts.[23]

3. Is the Story of Abraham's Sacrifice about Cultic Sacrifice?

I now re ect on the story of Gen 22 to consider how sacri ce in this text tends toward a secularized metaphorical interpretation. Clearly the burnt o ering that Abraham is asked to perform is an example of cultic sacri ce. I show that cultic sacri ce is nevertheless only marginally relevant to the narrative account. Instead, the threat to Isaac's life is the crucial feature of the story. is threat constitutes the story's moral challenge. Genesis 22 is not a typical

23. Hans-Josef Klauck has, for example, questioned the understanding of cultic sacrifice as an offering to God precisely because he understands the burning rite to signify the "total destruction" of human goods and their "painful renunciation" (Hans-Josef Klauck, *Stadt- und Hausreligion, Mysterienkulte, Volksglaube* [vol. 1 of *Die Religiöse Umwelt des Urchristentums;* Kohlhammer-Studienbücher Theologie 9; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1995], 46).

example of the biblical understanding of cultic sacri ce; instead, it should be seen as a prototype of the secularized metaphorical understanding.

In Gen 22 God requests that Abraham sacri ce his only son as a burnt o ering (עלה, 22:2), yet this request to perform a cultic sacri ce is not necessarily central to the text. Instead, the story culminates at the moment when God's angel intercedes and delivers the message to Abraham that he need not carry through with God's request. e burnt o ering is still carried out using a ram as a substitute (22:13), implying that God does receive the allotted portion through the cultic burning rite. But the performance of the ritual with the ram is a detail of minor importance. e fact that Isaac is in danger of becoming a victim—and hence of being sacri ced according to the secularized meaning of the term—is the climax of the story. Traditional and modern interpretations contending that Isaac could have been killed (and not sacri- ced) substantiate this claim.[24]

It is frequently noted that Abraham's sacri ce was aborted. is is the main reason why the title "Abraham's Sacri ce" is o en deemed inappropriate for this story.[25] Yet Abraham's cultic sacri ce is not aborted a er the divine intervention; it is only temporarily interrupted and eventually completed (22:13). Hence the title "Abraham's Sacri ce" could be considered appropriate. is debate concerning the title's suitability suggests that something other than cultic sacri ce according to the priestly tradition is at stake in Gen 22. is understanding of sacri ce with its emphasis on what is o ered to God does not serve as the story's culmination but as its context. A shi to a secularized interpretation of the term sacri ce with its emphasis on victim and loss points to the crucial feature of the story. is crucial feature is the threat that God's demand poses to the life of Isaac.

An important di erence can be highlighted between the story in Gen 22 and other narrative texts addressing speci c cultic sacri ces. In the biblical story of the competition between the prophets of Baal and Elijah in 1 Kgs 18:21–40, for example, both parties sacri ce a bull as a burnt o ering (עלה). Its preparation is described in great detail. Yet the slaughter of the bull is never mentioned, even though it must have happened. e neglect in describing

24. See, e.g., the reference to Gen 22 in 4 Macc 13:12, which employs the term σφαγιασθῆναι (to slay); see also Jonathan Magonet, "Die Fesselung Isaaks" (trans. U. Dehn), in Dehn, *Wo aber ist das Opferlamm*, 19.

25. Cf. Magonet, "Fesselung Isaaks," 19. In the rabbinic tradition, the title עקדה (binding) or עקדת יצחק (binding of Isaac) has become the customary title for the story in Gen 22 since the third century c.e. (see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Sacrifice of Isaac in Qumran Literature," *Bib* 83 [2002]: 212). This historical evidence suggests that Gen 22 is not primarily about cultic sacrifice.

this ritual element is characteristic of other narrative texts mentioning cultic sacri ces. e contrary is, however, the case in Gen 22.[26] is story is atypical in its emphasis on the moment of imminent slaughter. It is the only narrative in the entire Bible that mentions the tool used for ritual slaughter: the knife (22:6 and 10)—even the detailed laws on cultic sacri ce in Lev 1–7 avoid this detail. In addition, the succinct style characterizing the beginning of the story is carried through the text. e account becomes increasingly detailed from Gen 22:6 until the moment when Abraham reaches out his hand to slay his son (22:10). e attempted slaughter appears as the climax of the story. In this regard, Gen 22 is the biblical exception to narratives dealing with cultic sacri ce.

In spite of the fact that no human is put to death, the distinctive climax of Gen 22 accounts for the enduring recognition of its moral challenge and cruelty. A father is requested to slay his only son.[27] When Abraham and Isaac nally approach "the place," the son asks his father, "Where is the lamb for a burnt o ering?" (ואיה השה לעלה, Gen 22:7). While the internal emotions

26. See Marx, *Systèmes Sacri ciels*, 92. In contrast, Daly (*Christian Sacri ce*, 41) compares Abraham's sacrifice with that of Elijah on Mount Carmel and assumes that both accounts agree "closely."

27. Some commentators try to show that the moral challenge of Gen 22 is lessened if its linguistic aspects are carefully analyzed. Jonathan Magonet, for example, refers to an observation already made in the Talmud tract *Sanhedrin* 89b that the authoritative character of God's initial request (Gen 22:2) is weakened because the particle נא־, which indicates a plea or petition, is appended to the first imperative קח ("take…!"). Abraham thus shares some of the burden for subsequent events (Magonet, "Fesselung Isaaks," 20–21). Midrashic interpretation, followed by some modern commentators, even adds that God never asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering. The Hebrew Hiphil stem of עלה can have the meaning of "to sacrifice" in cultic contexts, but it can mean "to bring up" in other contexts. If the latter is the case, Gen 22:2 would mean that God asks Abraham to merely guide his son up a hill in order to perform a burnt offering. Abraham misunderstands this request by binding Isaac and placing him on the altar. The initial divine request is, therefore, not cruel at all (cf. W. G. Plaut, "בראשית Genesis," in תורה *e Torah: A Modern Commentary* [ed. W. G. Plaut; New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981], 150); Louis A. Berman, *e Akedah: e Binding of Isaac* (Jerusalem: Jason Aronson, 1997), 14; Frédéric Manns, "Presentation," in *e Sacri ce of Isaac in the ree Monotheistic Religions: Proceedings of a Symposium on the Interpretation of the Scriptures Held in Jerusalem, March 16–17, 1995* (ed. F. Manns; Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Analecta 41; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1995), 6; see also Christa Schäfer-Lichtenberger, "Abraham zwischen Gott und Isaak (Gen 22,1–19)," *WuD* 26 (2001): 50–51. The former interpretation, however, only divides the responsibility of the morally ambiguous events between Abraham and God but does not eliminate it. The second interpretation is questionable in light of the intervention of God's angel, who praises Abraham's fear of God precisely because he did not spare his son (Gen 22:12). It furthermore fails to answer the question concerning the nature of Abraham's test.

of the characters are not explicitly mentioned, Isaac's question implies that he is aware of the imminent doom and fears for his life. A further aspect to the moral challenge of the story is the speci c circumstance that it is God who requests the slaying of Isaac. e fact that this request is eventually revoked does not downplay the seriousness of the story's ethical implications. ere are traces in the earliest redactions of Genesis of how the audience perceived this speci c aspect of the story. e unique title "Fear of Isaac" (פחד יצחק) is attributed in Gen 31:42 and 31:53 to God.[28]

Genesis 22 has been criticized throughout the history of interpretation because it endorses blind obedience instead of respect for life. Two centuries ago philosopher Immanuel Kant commented, "it is certainly true that I am not supposed to kill my dear son; but I am not certain and can never be certain that you, who have appeared to me, *are God*, even if it (the voice) would come down from heaven."[29] Today a similar criticism has been voiced by anthropologist Carol Delaney, who poses the legitimate question as to Abraham's willingness to kill a child at God's request.[30] Why would God not demand the child's protection?

Moral sense might be made of Gen 22 by interpreting it in historical perspective. Even if the threat to Isaac's life is considered central to the story, its Judean audience was aware that this threat would not be actualized in the narrative. Given their self-understanding as descendants of Abraham and Isaac, the Judeans' very existence was proof that the divine promise had not ceased regardless of how seriously their ancestors were tested. It is clear from the outset that Isaac must have survived despite the apparent paradox that God was responsible for the ultimate challenge conveyed in Gen 22.[31] e initial information about the test has a di erent purpose: it places Abraham at the center of attention and provides the matrix for theologically understanding the story as conveying God's ultimate faithfulness to Israel.

Given these parameters, however, Gen 22 is not a typical example of the biblical understanding of cultic sacri ce. Taking place within the more or less coincidental context of a cultic sacri ce, the story deals with the impending loss of a father's only son. It deals with what the secularized metaphorical

28. See Catherina Wenzel, "Abraham—Ibrahim: Ähnlichkeit statt Verwandtschaft," *Ev* 62 (2002): 380–81.

29. Immanuel Kant, *Der Streit der Fakultäten (1798)* (ed. W. Weischedel; Werke 6; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966), 333 (translation mine).

30. Carol Delaney, "Abraham and the Seeds of Patriarchy," in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* (ed. A. Brenner; FCB 2; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 149.

31. I am grateful to Erhard Blum of the University of Tübingen for having shared with me this insightful interpretation.

interpretation of sacri ce usually conveys. To highlight this di erence, let us replace the divine command to sacri ce Isaac as a burnt o ering with a command to stone or drown him. According to the secularized metaphorical interpretation, it would still be appropriate to say that Abraham was willing to sacri ce his only son in order to demonstrate his obedience. us the term sacri ce commonly used in theological abstraction is not at all limited to, or exclusively compatible with, the performance of cultic sacri ces. In the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, sacri ce is not applicable to random methods of killing but is limited to the performance of a cultic rite and can also, because of its emphasis on consecration, metaphorically designate human acts of worship.

4. Abraham's Sacrifice in Traditions of Early Judaism

e reception history of Gen 22 in early Judaism is rich and creative. is should come as no surprise. Many have noted that the meaning of Gen 22 is neither clear nor precise; its open-endedness has fascinated audiences for centuries. In this section I focus on how the early Judean reception history modi es and intensi es dominant aspects of Gen 22 such as "testing of faith," "obedience," and the threat to Isaac's life. All these aspects are crucial to the secularized metaphorical understanding of sacri ce.

One example of the reception of Gen 22 in early Judaism is the book of *Jubilees*, where the testing of Abraham's faith receives particular attention. While Gen 22:1 brie y notes that the test is solely God's initiative (והאלהים נסה את־אברהם), *Jub.* 17:16–18 features a much more elaborate scene. It introduces Mastemah, who challenges God to test Abraham, thus describing a situation analogous to the scene in the book of Job in which Satan initiates the trial of the righteous (1:6–12). e strictly monotheistic background of Gen 22 is thus compromised in favor of a dualistic setting. Finally, the subsequent sacri ce in *Jub.* 19:8 appears as the last of a total of ten trials, while another tradition recognizes Abraham's faith only a er he has passed them all (1 Macc 2:52).[32]

ere is another key di erence between the Genesis text and its reception in early Judaism. While the *Vorlage* in Gen 22:1 limits the actual test to Abraham alone, early Judean tradition gradually attributes responsibility

32. For a discussion of the early Judean tradition of Abraham's ten trials, see Jo Milgrom, *e Binding of Isaac: e Akedah—A Primary Symbol in Jewish ought and Art* (Berkeley, Calif.: Bibal, 1988), 31–62. Milgrom nevertheless recognizes the interpretative development within this tradition when pointing out that a "trial" is explicitly mentioned only in the context of Gen 22 (*Binding of Isaac*, 34).

to Isaac. is tradition elaborates in detail Isaac's awareness of the imminent threat to his life and his readiness to obey the divine command. In the book of *Pseudo-Jubilees* (4QPsJub[a], or 4Q225 2:4), in the Targumim *Pseudo-Jonathan* and *Neo ti I*, and in *Gen. Rab.* 56:8, for example, Isaac explicitly requests that his father bind him before the sacri ce. *Sifra Deuteronomy* 32 goes even further in relating that Isaac binds himself on the altar. e logical consequence for taking on this responsibility is, according to 4QPsJub[a] and Sir 44:22–23 (Greek text), that Isaac also receives God's blessing.[33]

e heavenly scene of the story is transformed in the reception tradition of early Judaism in order to depict more graphically the horror of the impending loss of Isaac's life. In Gen 22, God addresses Abraham directly (22:2) or communicates through an angel (22:11–12, 15–18); the narrative does not yield any details as to how Abraham feels about the imminent tragedy. e book of *Jubilees*, however, makes the emotional response explicit. It describes good angels who weep at the prospect of Isaac's death, while Mastemah and his angels openly rejoice in this event (*Jub.* 17:15–18:16; see also 4QPsJub[a]). Furthermore, heaven is depicted as a law court in which Mastemah has an important function as Israel's adversary and accuser.[34] But Mastemah is bound as a consequence of Isaac's fear of God. ese events become the precondition for Israel's later salvation in which Isaac appears as the savior of his people. e expansion in this interpretative tradition shows Isaac as the central gure of the story.

Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 b.c.e.–45 c.e.) builds on this weighty tradition of Judean re ection on Abraham's sacri ce. In some of his writings he even goes further than this tradition and thereby heightens the tragedy of the story. Alluding to Gen 22:2, Philo writes that Abraham brings to God "the loved, the only trueborn o spring of the soul" (τὸ ἀγαπητὸν καὶ μόνον τῆς ψυχῆς ἔγγονον γνήσιον, *Deus* 1.4). Philo interprets Isaac's miraculous conception as narrated in Gen 21:1–2 allegorically. Isaac is the

33. The tendency to highlight Isaac's participation continues in later midrashic writings. A thirteenth-century midrash, for example, states in a somewhat redundant fashion that "the two of them came to the place, and the two of them brought the stones, and the two of them brought the fire, and the two of them brought the wood." Isaac then instructs his father to proceed quickly and to burn him (*Yalkut Shim'oni* 101; the text is printed in Seth Daniel Kunin, "The Death of Isaac: Structural Analysis of Genesis 22," in Manns, *Sacri ce of Isaac in the ree Monotheistic Religions*, 55). The depiction of how Isaac willingly cooperates contrasts sharply with Gen 31:42, 53, where God is called "Fear of Isaac" (see section 3).

34. See also Joseph Fitzmyer's remarks on the meaning of the name "Mastemah": "The name denotes 'opposition' of a legal or judicial nature, and the verb שטם is used in the juridical sense of lodging a complaint with a higher authority or in a court of law" (Fitzmyer, "Sacrifice," 218).

son of God who is identical with the Logos; he is the epitome of wisdom (e.g., *Cher.* 13.45; *Fug.* 30.167–168). Philo also recounts two di erent endings for the story. According to some of his writings Isaac survives (*Fug.* 24.132; *Somn.* 1.34.194–195; *Abr.* 33.177), while other writings relate that Isaac is sacri ced (*Leg.* 3.209; *Migr.* 140).[35] e biblical support for the latter interpretation is the implicit suggestion in verse 19 that Isaac is sacri ced. In this verse Abraham, a er receiving the divine blessing, returns to the two young men who had accompanied him and Isaac to the land of Moriah. e surprising absence of Isaac in verse 19 has led some interpreters—perhaps including Philo—to conclude that Abraham le the place where his test had culminated by himself. e threatened loss of Isaac's life is interpreted at its extreme tragic consequence.

Such interpretative developments inspired later traditions concerning the "ashes of Isaac" or the "blood of Isaac."[36] Isaac thereby came to be regarded as a prototypical Judean martyr. An example is the story of Eleazar's steadfastness in 4 Maccabees.[37] While being tortured, Eleazar expresses the hope that his blood may be a means of puri cation and his life a ransom for his people (καθάρσιον αὐτῶν ποίησον τὸ ἐμὸν αἷμα καὶ ἀντίψυχον αὐτῶν λαβὲ τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχήν, 4 Macc 6:29). While being martyred, Eleazar remembers Isaac's obedience (13:12). Similarly, Eleazar's mother remembers not only "Abel slain by Cain" but also "Isaac, who was o ered as a burnt o ering" (18:11). By placing the profane murder of Gen 4 next to the cultic sacri ce of Gen 22, this text demonstrates how stories from the tradition about the tragic loss of life serve as examples for martyrs in later times. People who "sacri ced" their lives for their faith could follow in Abel's and Isaac's footsteps.

Early Judean commentators, as I have shown, often expanded upon themes in Gen 22, such as Abraham's serious test and steadfast faith. ey further developed the theme of obedience by including Isaac, sometimes intensifying his imminent death to the extreme of martyrdom. By their reception, the connections were tightened between the story's elements of sacri ce,

35. See also Lukas Kundert, *Gen 22,1–19 im Alten Testament, im Frühjudentum und im Neuen Testament* (vol. 1 of *Die Opferung/Bindung Isaaks;* WMANT 78. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1998), 130–33.

36. E.g., *L.A.B.* 18:5; *Sifra.* For further rabbinical references, see Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism*, 205–6; Michael Brocke, "Isaak III: Judentum," *TRE* 16:300; Kunin, "Death of Isaac," 51–54.

37. It should be noted that 4 Maccabees cannot be dated with certainty. Proposed dates range from 50 b.c.e. to 100 c.e. See Klaus-Dieter Schlunck, "Makkabäer/Makkabäerbücher," *TRE* 21:742; Hans-Josef Klauck, *4. Makkabäerbuch* (*JSHRZ* 3.6; Gütersloh: Mohn, 1989), 668–69. As a result, 4 Maccabees can be considered to represent early Judean or rabbinic traditions.

loss, and a willing victim—connections incongruous with the tradition of cultic sacri ce.

5. Abraham's Sacrifice in the New Testament

I now turn to the New Testament's reception of Abraham's sacri ce. I argue in this section that some New Testament texts (Heb 11:17–19; Jas 2:21–23) appropriate the early Judean theme of the testing of faith rather than use the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament version (Gen 22:1–19) as their basis. Yet the New Testament reception focuses on Abraham as the main character rather than on Isaac. I also show how some brief allusions to Gen 22 in the New Testament are contextualized christologically and argue that these christological references lack the crucial aspect of cultic sacri ce—a religious act of giving to God that is motivated by the anticipation of reciprocal receiving.

A general survey of New Testament reception history suggests that the story of Abraham's sacri ce does not play an important role in the formation of New Testament Christology or soteriology. Neither the Epistle to the Hebrews nor any other New Testament writing refers to Abraham's sacri ce as an example of the (cultic) sacri ce of Jesus. ese observations implicitly corroborate the thesis that cultic sacri ce is not the central aspect of Gen 22 and help to answer the initial question why the Aqedah does not play a greater role in New Testament soteriology.[38]

In early Christianity, the story of Abraham's sacri ce is appropriated on the basis of traditions developed in early Judaism. Compared with early Judean reception history, early Christian reception of the story displays a stronger tendency toward abstraction, thus reducing the original textual potential of its *Vorlage* to concise summaries. A preferred theme is the testing and con rmation of faith. Unlike the Judean commentators, early Christian interpreters disregarded Isaac's responsibility, focusing on Abraham as the principal actor. For example, Heb 11:17 alludes to Gen 22 as an example of Abraham's faith that requires testing through actual events: "By faith Abraham, when put to the test, o ered/brought Isaac. He who had received the promises was ready to o er/bring the rstborn" (Πίστει προσενήνοχεν

38. Parallels between Abraham's sacrifice and Christ's passion occur frequently in paintings. These images generally date from later periods and are based on interpretations by Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen, for example. A survey of the reception in art of Abraham's sacrifice is presented in Milgrom, *Binding of Isaac*, 160–311; Alex Stock, "Abraham und Isaak: Zur Bildgeschichte von Gen 22," in *Mythische Provokationen in Philosophie, eologie, Kunst und Politik* (ed. C. Bussmann and F. A. Uehlein; Pommersfeldener Beiträge 9; Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999), 204–30.

’Αβραὰμ τὸν ’Ισαὰκ πειραζόμενος καὶ τὸν μονογενῆ προσέφερεν). e participle πειραζόμενος refers to a central aspect of the narrative (Gen 22:1) that has received signi cant attention in the early Judean tradition. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the early Judean emphasis of testing Abraham’s faith is taken up and appears as an important feature of Christ’s priestly o ce (see 2:18; 4:15). In the comprehensive list of Heb 11:1, Abraham appears among the Old Testament protagonists whose faith has been con rmed through works.

Another New Testament passage, Jas 2:21, focuses on Abraham’s obedience “when he brought up/o ered his son Isaac on the altar” (ἀνενέγκας ’Ισαὰκ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον). is passage understands Abraham’s obedience in terms of his faith that would be “dead” (2:17) without works. Scholars have debated whether James assumes that Abraham’s sacri ce was executed or not. e Greek term ἀναφέρω in Jas 2:21 is ambiguous; it means “to o er” in cultic contexts but “to bring up” in other contexts. e Greek word is equivalent to the Hebrew Hiphil stem of עלה, which has these same meanings (see section 3). It is nevertheless possible that ἀναφέρω in Jas 2:21 has a cultic term meaning—“to o er”—which would have a di erent nuance than simply “to bring up.” It would re ect the one stream of the Judean tradition that interprets the story according to the secularized metaphorical meaning of sacri ce, which is that Isaac did lose his life.

Given that the meaning of προσφέρω is as ambiguous as that of ἀναφέρω, the question is whether Isaac was sacri ced according to Heb 11:17. e issue is nuanced by verse 19, in which Abraham hopes that his son could be raised from the dead (λογισάμενος ὅτι καὶ ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγείρειν δυνατὸς ὁ θεός, ὅθεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐν παραβολῇ ἐκομίσατο). In this verse προσφέρω refers to more than just the circumstance of “bringing” Isaac.[39] It is used as a cultic term in the sense of “o ering,” emphasizing Isaac’s death as an essential part of the story. Abraham’s hope, however, contradicts the logic of cultic sacri ce according to which the actual object o ered to God is not expected back. Hebrews 11:17 therefore closely follows Gen 22 by interpreting sacrifice according to its secularized metaphorical meaning, that loss and destruction take place in the context of cultic sacri ce.

e only New Testament text that features a christological concept explicitly based on sacri cial metaphors is Heb 7–10. Yet even when these chapters refer to cultic Old Testament traditions, they never mention Gen 22. is omission can be understood to provide (implicit) support for my argument that the story of Abraham’s sacri ce should not be interpreted as the pro-

39. Harold W. Attridge notes that the resurrection from the dead is a concept already found in Judean traditions; see his *e Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 335.

totypical example of cultic sacri ce in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and therefore that it is not the interpretative framework in which Christ's death is understood in the New Testament.

James 2:21 and Heb 11:17–19, on the other hand, explicitly refer to Gen 22, but these references do not occur in christological contexts. In other New Testament passages, however, brief allusions to Gen 22 occur in christological contexts. In the emotionally charged passage of Rom 8:31–39, for example, Paul declares that God is on the side of humans once and for all. He cites Gen 22:12 (see also 22:16), the intervention of God's angel: God "did not spare his own son" (τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ οὐκ ἐφείσατο). e setting of Rom 8:31–34 is an eschatological law court.[40] While missing in Gen 22, a law-court setting links Rom 8 with the story of Abraham and Isaac through its early Judean reception tradition in the book of *Jubilees* and 4QPsJub[a], as I have shown in section 4. Romans 8 alludes to a law court by assuming a judicial authority that brings charges against humans (8:33) and condemns them (8:34). e rhetorical question in the text, "If God is for us, who is against us?" (εἰ ὁ θεὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, τίς καθ' ἡμῶν, 8:31), leaves no doubt that the highest authority in this scene is on the side of humans. is assertion of con dence is underlined twice: God justi es (8:33), and a er the necessary prerequisite of death and ascension to heaven, Christ, who is in charge of the defense, renders any accusation against humans ine ective (8:34). is vision provides humans with the strength to endure any physical hardship (8:35–36).[41] In this way Paul illustrates both God's justi cation and the soteriological signi cance of Christ's death and resurrection as the core of the gospel. Paul makes this central theological claim by drawing on a divine court setting that had been developed by early Judean interpretations of Gen 22.

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40. See Klaus Berger, *eologiegeschichte des Urchristentums: eologie des Neuen Testaments* (2nd ed.; Tübingen; Francke, 1995), 244; Kundert, *Gen 22,1–19 im Alten Testament*, 189; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 529, 532–33.

41. The physical suffering detailed in Rom 8:35–36 hints at a particular situation in Paul's life. Acts 7:54–8:1 relates the stoning of Stephen as an example of "persecution," "hardship," and "distress," as well as—in a metaphorical sense—of "sword." According to Acts 7:55–56, Stephen saw Christ standing at the right hand of God, an image that occurs in Rom 8:34. According to Acts 7:60, Stephen prayed that God would not condemn those who kill him, echoing the very message Paul conveys in this chapter of Romans. Paul is said to have assisted in the stoning of Stephen and to have approved it (Acts 8:1). If any historical credibility can be attributed to this passage in Acts, then the emotionally charged tone of Rom 8 may be explained by the memory of these events for which Paul was at least partially responsible. In this case, Paul himself was among those who experienced the divine forgiveness that Stephen had asked God to grant.

In another parallel between Rom 8:31–34 and Gen 22, Isaac and Christ appear as sons but are not spared by their respective fathers. Both Abraham and God willingly contend with imminent loss and subject the innocent to su ering. In the context of theological abstraction, it is appropriate to say God and Abraham were willing to sacri ce their sons, where sacri ce has a secularized metaphorical meaning. A carefully nuanced reading of Rom 8 must, however, stress that there is no term occurring in this chapter that captures the secularized metaphorical meaning in a single expression. Consonant with the reception history of Gen 22 that I have been tracing, Rom 8 is devoid of any cultic connotation of sacri ce.

Allusions to Gen 22 also occur in the pericopes of Jesus' baptism (Mark 1:9–11 par.) and trans guration (Mark 9:2–8 par.). Both passages feature the father-son relationship in which the son is called "beloved" (ἀγαπητός), a characteristic attribute of Gen 22:2, 12, 16 (lxx), where this term is translated from the Hebrew word יחיד ("only").[42] e heavenly voice in these texts parallels that of the angel in Gen 22:11–12. Another key aspect of Gen 22 is picked up in the pericope of Jesus' temptation (Mark 1:12–13), which immediately follows the story of his baptism. is latter passage alludes to the Gen 22 theme that God's chosen people must undergo testing.

e allusions to Abraham's sacri ce in the Gospel according to Mark remain quite vague when compared to the clarity of such allusions in Philo's writings.[43] Philo describes Isaac as the son of God and the epitome of wisdom. In the New Testament, these attributes are applied exclusively to Jesus. e Judean tradition with its expansion of Isaac's role thus links New Testament christological concepts with Gen 22. e two passages of Jesus' baptism and trans guration, however, lack any explicit references to the key aspects of Gen 22, either the threat imposed on the son's life or his sacri ce. Further references to the Aqedah do not occur in any of the New Testament passion narratives.

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42. See Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis* בראשית: *e Traditional Hebrew Text with New JPS Translation* (ed. N. M. Sarna; JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989–96), 151 ("your favored one"); Kundert, *Gen 22,1–19 im Alten Testament*, 35, 50–63.

43. Mark 1:11 is understood as an allusion to Gen 22 by, e.g., Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism*, 222–23; Robert J. Daly, "The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac," *CBQ* 39 (1977): 45–75; C. S. Mann, *Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 1986), 199. Considerations for other Old Testament references include Ps 2:7 ("You are my son; today I have begotten you") and Isa 42:1 ("Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him").

6. Epilogue: The Sacrifice of Jesus

is essay has examined Gen 22 and its reception history in early Judaism and Christianity as a case study to explore two di erent meanings of the term *sacri ce* and to show why the famous Aqedah plays only a marginal role in New Testament christological and soteriological concepts. At this point one might consider questions concerning the soteriological concept of Jesus' sacri ce. In the limited frame of this essay I can only hint at possible answers. e concept of Jesus' sacri ce is admittedly a well-established christological concept in the realm of theological abstraction. Its exegetical basis is, however, rather modestly attested. Jesus is compared to a cultic sacri ce (as de ned above in section 2) only in Eph 5:2 and in Heb 7–10. In addition, the cultic image that humans can be puri ed and consecrated through contact with blood is found in the eucharistic passages as well as in Heb 12:24 and 1 Pet 1:2. Among these passages, Eph 5:2 is unique in that Jesus is said to have "given himself for us as an o ering and sacri ce to God as a pleasing odor." I have shown elsewhere that the author of Ephesians uses priestly cult terminology to refer to the special quality of Jesus' ministry that is understood to please God like sacri ces o ered to God.[44] e terms are not limited to Jesus' death but connote his entire life, including the moment of his death. Also, the author of Hebrews compares Jesus to a cultic sacri ce but attempts to focus on the signi cance of Jesus' death. In Heb 9:11–22, for example, the blood of Jesus puri es in a way analogous to various Hebrew Bible/Old Testament atonement rituals.[45]

With these exceptions, most New Testament passages used as warrants for atonement theories are not derived from Hebrew Bible/Old Testament cultic images. ey emerge from a range of other (noncultic) backgrounds that, each from its individual perspective, illustrate the salvi c death of Jesus. Hence each can be subsumed under the term *sacri ce*, which, as a secularized metaphorical interpretation, can signify the loss of life.[46]

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44. Eberhart, *Studien zur Bedeutung der Opfer*, 394–98; idem, "Prüfung Abrahams," 42–44.

45. See Christian Eberhart, "Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors in Hebrews," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods—New Insights* (ed. G. Gelardini; BibInt 75; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 37–64.

46. I am grateful to Mark Kleiner for his assistance with the proofreading of this essay.

"Consider the Lilies of the Field...": A Sociorhetorical Analysis of Matthew 6:25–34

Lincoln E. Galloway

In Matt 6:25–34 we find one of Jesus' most famous speeches, where he seems to rebuke those listeners who are overwhelmed with concerns of daily living. Interpreters have generally claimed that this passage portrays faith as a complete reliance on the providential care of God that requires no concern for the necessities of life.[1] Such readings have led to scholarly incredulity that such a perspective could form the basis for Christian living. Some skeptical interpreters of the passage suggest that the speech reflects naïve economics, while others downplay its theological importance by highlighting the gap between the first-century world of the text and that of contemporary communities of faith.[2] In this latter case, the speech is dismissed as pertinent only to the first-century community and interpreted as providing eschatological instructions to live in the context of the imminent end of the age.[3]

This essay demonstrates that for an adequate theological interpretation the teachings of this text can neither be dismissed as historicist nor naïvely appropriated. The speech in Matt 6:25–34 is not a static reference point to be simply decoded but is a complex matrix of textures that can be read in historically responsible and theologically rich ways. I argue that a sociorhetorical

1. For a review of various perspectives and arguments, see Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Continental Commentary* (trans. W. C. Linss; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 402–3, 409–12; Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew* (IBC; Louisville: Knox, 1993), 74.

2. Carlston evaluates the passage: "Nor are things much better if one probes what is really being said about money. One does not have to be an ideologue to consider what is said here about economics naïve: Can we not take money seriously as an economic issue without falling into self-satisfaction?" (Charles E. Carlston, "Matthew 6:24–34," *Int* 41 [1987]: 179).

3. Betz approaches the speech as an address to all humanity. See Hans D. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 462. Jeremias sees the speech as addressed to the disciples exhorting them not to waste their time (cf. Mark 6:8). See Joachim Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount* (trans. N. Perrin; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963).

analysis accesses the multiple layers of meaning and negotiates the tensions arising from the process of theological re ection upon the text.

Sociorhetorical criticism approaches a text as though it were a thickly textured tapestry that must be examined from di erent perspectives. is method allows the interpreter to bring the multiple textures of the text in view.[4] e three sections of this essay explore (1) the inner texture, (2) the intertexture, and (3) the ideological texture of the text.[5] I show that the layers converge around a radical theological challenge to a lifestyle characterized by acquisitiveness.

1. Inner Texture

Matthew 6:25–34 presents a distinct rhetorical unit within the context of Jesus' teachings in Matt 5–7. But its appeal to proper orientation toward God is already evident in the negative imperative of verse 19: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth."[6] e text also shares the broader theme of Matthew's Gospel with its emphasis on creating a community that produces the fruit of the kingdom, in this case, righteousness.[7] In this section, I explore the inner texture of the passage. Vernon Robbins de nes "inner texture" as follows: "Inner texture concerns relationships among word-phrase and narrational patterns that produce argumentative and aesthetic patterns in texts. ese intermingling patterns are the context for the 'networks of signi cation' in a text."[8] I describe the rhetorical unit in terms of (1) its repetitive and progressive patterns and (2) its aesthetic devices. e analysis in this section explores the language of the text, the speech's inner texture, by examining the patterns that provide the text with its unique capacity to communicate.

4. See Vernon K. Robbins, *e Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 18–20.

5. Sociorhetorical criticism looks at the text in terms of its inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture. The approach to sociorhetorical interpretation and the categories that are used in this essay are drawn from the work of Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996).

6. This reference and subsequent references to the Bible are taken from the nrsv.

7. Donald A. Hagner, "The *Sitz-im-Leben* of the Gospel of Matthew," in *Treasures New and Old: Contributions to Matthean Studies* (ed. D. R. Bauer and M. A. Powell; SBLSymS 1; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 31.

8. Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 46.

1.1. Repetitive and Progressive Patterns

e speech's inner texture can be analyzed in terms of its repetitive and progressive patterns. In the columns below, I display words that occur several times in the passage. ese multiple occurrences produce repetitive texture that in turn provides glimpses into the overall rhetorical movement and emphases of the passage.

Repetitive Patterns in Matthew 6:25–34

25	μεριμνᾶτε	μή	καὶ	τί
		μηδέ,		[τί]
		οὐχί		τί
26		οὔ	καὶ	
		οὐδέ		
		οὐδέ		
		οὐχ		
27	μεριμνῶν			
28	μεριμνᾶτε	οὔ	καὶ	τί
		οὐδέ		
29		οὐδέ		
30		οὔ	καὶ	
31	μεριμνήσητε	μή		τί
				τί
				τί
33			καὶ	
			καὶ	
34	μεριμνήσητε		μή	
	μεριμνήσει			

e table above highlights only four major groups of repeated terms. However, that is su cient to reveal repetition as one of the most striking linguistic features of Matt 6:25–34. A distinct repetition is found with the term μέριμνα ("worry") that delineates the outer boundaries of the unit (Matt 6:25, 34). A repetitive pattern makes the concept of worrying the recurring theme of the passage. e passage underlines this theme with a relentless and overwhelming use of negatives (μή, μηδέ, οὔ, οὐδέ, οὐχ, οὐχί). Moreover, the negatives are combined with imperatives ("Do not worry…" Matt 6:25, 31, 34) that produce the e ect of insisting on the futility of worrying.

Particles such as καὶ combine elements and move the speech forward. The presence of τί ("what/why") indicates the presence of questions, a rhetorical feature that I will examine in the next section. Apart from those mentioned above, the speech progresses through a repetition of a combination of expressions, topics, and conjunctions. For example, the expression λέγω ὑμῖν is combined with an imperative (6:25) and with a declarative (6:29), and the effect is a movement in the speech from things of minimum concern to those of ultimate value.[9] In the same way, negative conjunctions (μηδέ, οὐδέ) are used in lists that create contrasts to denounce particular strivings. For example, the phrases "they neither sow *nor* reap *nor* gather into barns" (6:26) and "they neither toil *nor* spin" (6:28) highlight current preoccupations within the Matthean community that are contrasted with God's activity. The use of "but" (δὲ) functions to guide these contrasts to a new awareness of God's providential care as the speech moves toward a conclusion: "*But* if God so clothes the grass of the field…" (6:30) and then finally to a radical alternative, "*But* strive first for the kingdom of God…" (6:33).

These contrasts move the hearer to a theological injunction. The speech moves from a mention of Solomon's clothing (6:29) to God's activity of clothing (6:30). In each case, through the use of πλεῖόν, μᾶλλον, and πολλῷ μᾶλλον, the speech suggests a hierarchy of values: "Is *not* life *more* than food…?" (6:25); in terms of the birds of the air: "Are you *not* of *more* value than they?" (6:26); and, finally, God's care is emphasized: "Will [God] *not much more* clothe you…?" (6:30). In each contrast, God's activity is highlighted by the text as the ultimate activity.

These contrasting images are deepened when the speech moves the hearer to understand that there are areas of human experience over which one has no control. No one can "add" to one's stature or lifespan; God is the only one who "adds" to the wonder of human life. The terms προσθεῖναι (6:27) and προστεθήσεται (6:33) nicely capture this theological insight. The speech's progression moves from the rhetorical question, "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" to the response that all these things will be added to one as well. The question implicit in verse 27, "Who is able to add or who can add?" is answered by the strong declarative statement of verse 33: God is able, and God will add.

In addition to repetition and contrasts, the concluding part of the speech contains what may loosely be termed an exhortation. This concluding exhortation has its own boundaries marked by opening and closing imperatives:

9. Matthew uses the expression λέγω ὑμῖν to contrast a rejected practice with an alternative attitude. See Warren Carter, "'Solomon in All His Glory': Intertextuality and Matthew 6:29," *JSNT* 65 (1997): 8.

μὴ οὖν μεριμνήσητε (6:31, 34). e exhortation is built on three assertions. e rst claims that it is "the nations" (τὰ ἔθνη) who strive for these things; the second declares that "your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things"; and the third posits that "tomorrow will worry about itself." is nal exhortation, with its three assertions, moves the hearer of the speech to contrast human dispositions and actions with those dispositions and actions aligned to God and righteousness. e speech's inner texture shows how the language moves toward this didactic goal and begins to gesture toward possibilities for theological meaning.

Not only in this nal exhortation but also throughout the speech there are larger sequencing patterns that are made visible by inner textual analysis. For example, the broader narrational patterns are arranged with imperative, interrogative, and declarative statements. Although the speech is driven by imperatives, it moves rhythmically and revolves around a series of questions. is very strong emphasis and progression through the use of questions re ects George Kennedy's observation that questions function in ancient rhetoric to maintain audience contact.[10] In the case of Matt 6:25–34, the questions connect speaker to audience as they reveal the common sets of values assumed by the world of the text. e rhetorical questions in verses 26 and 30 are negatively formulated, suggesting that a positive answer is expected. "Are you not of more value than they?" (6:26). "Will [God] not much more clothe you…?" (6:30). ese questions appeal to the collective wisdom and values of the hearers, a rming what they know and believe to be true and reliable. Life is understood to be of greater value than all other categories including food and clothing. One is invited to accept that God alone gives life, adds to life, or sustains life. e values associated with God's activity are therefore of much greater importance than food or clothing. Since changes to *the greater*, the more valuable (life or body), are not achieved by human e ort (worrying), why should one entrust oneself to the values associated with *the lesser* enterprise or economic activity of procuring food or clothing?

Closely aligned with these questions that highlight commonly accepted values are three negatively formulated imperatives in verses 25, 31, and 34. Each imperative presents worrying as an undesirable state, something to be discouraged, e ectively stating in each instance, "Do not worry." While the questions a rm and bring to light what is already accepted in the community, the imperatives emphasize this point further by drawing attention to

10. George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 29, 57.

the right rearrangement of priorities: "Look at the birds of the air…" (6:26); "Consider the lilies of the eld…" (6:28); and "strive rst for the kingdom of God…" (6:33). e interplay between the speech's interrogatives, imperatives, and declaratives allows the audience to recall its collective wisdom, to be reminded of its proper dispositions and behaviors, and nally to adopt values and practices consistent with striving for the kingdom of God.

We have seen how the speech as a unit progresses toward its didactic purpose through repetitions and the placement of imperatives, questions, and declaratives and how this structure moves the hearer to re ect critically on the theme of worrying and material acquisitiveness. e speech progresses through both linguistic elements and a number of themes, examples, and aphorisms. e theme of worrying frames the entire speech, rst as a negative imperative in the introduction in verse 25, "Do not worry about your life, what you shall eat, what you shall drink, nor for your body," and in the conclusion in verse 34: erefore do not worry; God knows what you need. is framing of the speech brings into sharp focus the central issue of the community's strivings. e authoritative voice that says, " erefore, I tell you," is the voice that points the community to an alternative vision, in this case, the conviction that God is able to sustain the created order. e community is challenged to recognize that God who orders and sustains creation can add in nitely more to its life. e transition from birds to lilies is achieved by asking the critical question about the human capacity to add (προσθεῖναι), and this theological inquiry nds ultimate expression in the nal exhortation: "Do not worry" (καὶ ταῦτα πάντα προστεθήσεται υμῖν).

Matthew o ers a concise example in the middle of the speech that serves to contrast the clothing that God provides with the end product of human toiling and spinning. e example draws from the paradigm that represents for the hearers the best of human achieving, namely, the wisdom of Solomon. Solomon asked God for wisdom and understanding and as a consequence had glory and wealth "added" to him. Verse 33 contains the allusion: "all these things will be added [προστεθήσεται] to you." e reference to Solomon evokes positive images of wealth and notions of wisdom. Wealth or economic resources underlie the capacity to sustain life or to provide food and clothing, and wisdom is referenced by one's capacity to assign proper valuation to the place of human and divine activity in the realm of the created order.

 e paradox, however, is that Solomon is used in this speech as a negative example.[11] Solomon is portrayed as the prototype because his glory (δόξα) is the *telos* that shapes the striving of those who worry about wealth

11. For a similar argument, see Carter, "Solomon in All His Glory," 3–25.

and achievement. is speech in Matthew's Gospel portrays such striving as a confusion of priorities. A corrective is necessary and is provided in the exhortation: "But strive rst for the kingdom of God, and its righteousness, and all these things will be added [προστεθήσεται] to you" (6:33). Even Solomon's glory is ephemeral when compared to the one who gives glory to the lilies of the eld. Once again, the theological challenge is highlighted by the text. Solomon is linked to ideals of human striving, namely, wealth and glory, to demonstrate the futility of anxiety and the striving for goods that have no permanence.

e allusions to collective wisdom as the speech moves from birds and lilies to the glory of Solomon are also evident in the use of the terms "today" and "tomorrow." ese two terms are juxtaposed in verse 34 to capture the span of a single day. e phrase that the grass is "alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven" establishes an argument *a minori ad maius* with its own structuring and valuation of the created order that seeks a rmation in the response to the question: "Will [God] not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" e declaration in verse 34, "tomorrow will worry about itself," is the nal word of wisdom that again captures the theme of worrying and snatches it out of the realm of human striving.

1.2. Aesthetic Patterns

e yield of a sociorhetorical analysis of Matthew is the way in which the language's inner texture moves the speech along and highlights speci c theological themes. I now turn to the aesthetic patterns in the text and argue that the speech derives a certain aesthetic quality from the rhythm and balance that is achieved by the careful juxtaposition of certain questions, imperatives, and declaratives. A look at verse 25 reveals a particular organizational structure. e questions in the text are posed to complement each other. For example, "What you will eat…" is complemented by "what you will drink.…" Similarly, "Is not life more than food…?" is balanced by "and the body more than clothing?"[12] So also the imperatives, "Look at the birds of the heaven," from the perspective of sowing, reaping, and gathering, and, "Consider the lilies of the eld," from the perspective of growing, toiling, and spinning, provide an aurally pleasing rhythmic balance.

Aesthetic features of the speech evoke particular sensory responses or appeal to speci c parts of the body. Bruce Malina's work integrating cultural

12. For a similar explanation of the organizational patterns of biblical text, see Bernard Brandon Scott and Margaret E. Dean, "A Sound Map of the Sermon on the Mount," in Bauer and Powell, *Treasures New and Old*, 345.

anthropology with New Testament studies is a provocative way to consider the text's a ective capacity. In *e New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* Malina proposes three zones of interaction: emotion-fused thought, self-expressive speech, and purposeful action.[13] An application of Malina's theory to Matt 6:25–34 can show that the appeals to the mouth by the questions, "What shall we eat, drink, or wear?" can be interpreted in terms of the zone of expressive speech. e speech also goads purposeful action through its use of terms such as "strive" (6:33). However, the overwhelming appeal is to the zone of emotion-fused thought. e hearer is directed to look at the birds, to consider the lilies, and told repeatedly not to worry. e appeal embodied in the speech is to the intellect, to right judgment, to wisdom, and to a right disposition. e aesthetic dimension of the speech thereby links bodily zones of interaction to ways of being-in-the-world: disposition, thinking, and action. e aesthetic dimension also reinforces the theological themes underlined by the speech's inner texture. Once again, the speech guides the hearers through its appeal to the will, mind, and heart to accept the collective wisdom and then to engage in purposeful action derived from a proper disposition toward righteousness.

2. Intertexture

e above exploration of the passage's inner texture focused on rhetorical-linguistic and aesthetics aspects in order to show how they function to enable the speech to challenge the disposition toward material acquisitiveness. I showed how an analysis of the inner texture tracks the movement of the speech to its theological focal point, in this case, a disposition toward God who sustains, adds, and orients all things to wisdom and practice of righteousness. I now introduce the category of "intertexture" as a way of exploring this passage's relationship to broader textual, cultural, and social contexts. is exploration of intertexture deepens the possibilities for highlighting and exhibiting the speech's theological meanings.

An analysis of the oral-scribal intertexture reveals how other texts are used in the passage through recitation, recontextualization, recon guration,

13. The zone of emotion-fused thought is concerned with words such as *eyes* or *heart* and related activities of these organs: to see, know, understand, love, and all the areas associated with intellect, mind, and wisdom. The zone of self-expressive speech deals with mouth and ears, the activities of speaking, instructing, questioning, or listening, and the areas of speech and communication. The zone of purposeful action deals with the feet, hands, or fingers, the actions of doing, acting or touching, and general areas of human behavior. See Bruce J. Malina, *e New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (rev. ed.; Atlanta: Knox, 1993), 60–64.

ampli cation, or elaboration.[14] In Matt 6:25–34 there are at rst glance no explicit citations of other biblical texts. A reconstruction, however, indicates that a signi cant portion of the speech (with seemingly close recitation in 6:27, 29–30) originates in the Q material. A parallel teaching of wisdom and exhortation is found in Luke 12:22–32.[15] A comparative analysis between Matthew and Luke's use of the Q material highlights Matthew's literary artistry. Matthew's text, in my opinion, has greater aesthetic beauty and rhythm than Luke's text, and this is accomplished primarily through the use of poetic parallelism and other literary features. For example, only Matthew writes "or what you will drink" (ἢ τί πίητε) in the opening line (6:25).[16] is line anticipates and balances the triple expression, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" (6:31). Luke mentions a speci c bird, the raven, and refers to God as "your father," whereas Matthew re ects an intentional juxtaposition of more elaborated expressions: "the birds of the heavens" with "your heavenly father" (Matt 6:32) or a harmonizing of phrases "the lilies of the eld" (cf. Luke 12:27: "the lilies") with "the grass of the eld" (Matt 6:30).

While Matthew may be the more rhetorically elaborate text, the material in both Matthew and Luke reinforce the claim that this speech is meant as a direct challenge to a lifestyle marked by strivings. Both writers set this speech in the context of warnings against a particular orientation to wealth. Luke's passage follows the parable of the rich fool that ends with the indictment of those who "store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). Matthew's speech follows the injunction not to store up treasures on earth for oneself (Matt 6:19). ere is no doubt that the challenge to the striving (Luke 12:29–30) that is endemic to the community is a key dimension of this speech in both contexts. Matthew elaborates on this theme by holding up an alternative striving that is marked by righteousness. He thereby gives the speech theological signi cance not only in worldly condemnations but in the demonstration of a viable theological alternative.

In terms of the speech's relation to biblical passages outside the New Testament canon, it is notable that the speech in Matthew shares certain a nities to wisdom literature. e most compelling a nity is found in the speech's conclusion. e concluding maxim echoes Prov 27:1: "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth." e concluding imperative in Matthew's speech is articulated in similar terms: "Do not worry

14. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 40.

15. John S. Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels: Synopsis, Critical Notes and Concordance* (Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge, 1988).

16. ἢ τί πίητε is omitted from some of the ancient manuscripts.

about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matt 6:34). Both maxims are formulated as negative injunctions against a certain preoccupation with tomorrow, and both embody a certain resolve to deal with tomorrow on its own terms.

Perhaps more subtly, an analysis of the speech's intertexture allows us to recognize the connections to the broader cultural background. Cultural intertexture appears in a text either through reference or allusion and echo.[17] For example, in verse 29 the speech gestures toward certain traditions about Solomon. Intertextuality cross-references Solomonic wisdom with Matthew's speech by the way in which Matthew associates Solomon with "all his glory." As indicated above, the traditions concerning Solomon generally assume the primacy of Solomon's wisdom followed by his wealth and glory.[18]

Matthew also appeals to wisdom tradition expressed in Ps 104. e reference to the "birds of the air" alludes to this psalm in order to underline the speech's portrayal of God as creator who cares for the created order. In the psalm, it is God who clothes the earth, provides for the birds of the air (104:12), and causes the grass to grow (104:14). All this lavished attention culminates in the ultimate declaration: " ese all look to you, to give them their food in due season. When you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are lled with good things" (104:27). Read against the backdrop of Ps 104, Matthew's references to birds of the air, lilies, and grass of the eld proclaim the conviction that God has created and will sustain all living creatures.

Implicit images from the Hebrew Bible emerge elsewhere in Matthew's speech. For example, the phrase "grass of the eld" draws on a broader cultural understanding that evokes images of transience and ephemerality. Persons who embody the temporal values of the culture "will soon fade like the grass," the psalmist writes (Ps 37:2). All of human life is "like grass … in the morning it ourishes … in the evening it fades and withers" (Ps 90:5). e same imagery is evoked in the speech of the prophet Isaiah: "All people are grass; their constancy is like the ower of the eld. e grass withers, the ower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. e grass withers, the ower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever" (Isa 40:6–8).

The speech also seems to echo a particular cultural tradition that is marked by a negative perception of any preoccupation with a life of eating

17. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 58.

18. For textual traditions concerning Solomon's wisdom, see 1 Kgs 4:29–30, 34. Solomon's wealth is mentioned to a lesser extent (1 Kgs 10:23), and his wealth is linked to glory. His request to God for wisdom is met with this response: "I give you also what you have not asked, both wealth and glory" (1 Kgs 3:13).

and drinking, characterized by the slogan: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (Isa 22:13). is opposition to inappropriate and negative behavior is re ected in the call to righteousness rather than by the preoccupation with such concerns as "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink" or "What shall we wear?"(Matt 6:31). e cultural values that are reinforced re ect a high valuation of both the uniqueness of human life in the created order and the permanence of divine activity and righteousness as compared to the ephemeral nature of human striving, glory, and achievement.

So far in this section I have analyzed the oral-scribal and cultural intertexture of this speech and demonstrated the role of sociorhetorical analysis in unfolding di erent layers of a text that reveal how the text gestures toward theological meaning. A further step in my analysis is to look at the cultural world and social realities that are re ected in the text. e cultural world of Matt 6:25–34 represents an agriculturally based economic enterprise that is marked by activities such as sowing, reaping, and gathering into barns (6:26). Even the indoor tasks are suggestive of an agrarian society, and the reference to those who spin (6:28) indicates the production of fabric and the manufacturing of clothing. e "storing in barns" also suggests an enterprise on a large scale, one that moves beyond household requirements to activity within the wider market of goods and services.

e social intertexture can provide insights into the social roles, institutions, codes, and relationships that characterize the community. e roles of both father and king in view of the human household are re ected in the speech, and they would have resonated with the hearers. e primary role that emerges in this text for God is that of (heavenly) father whose household is the created order. e social role of king is evoked by the reference to Solomon, who is also a sage (man of wisdom) and a man of wealth and glory. e image of a king, in this case the reign of God, provides the background for understanding "the kingdom of God," which unlike any human institution is characterized by righteousness and is God's to give.

Matthew's text does not re ect a social world organized around patron-client relationships in which bene ts accrue from one party to the other. Instead, we observe familial language ("your heavenly father") blended with notions of creator and king to call forth trust and loyalty. Jerome Neyrey introduces another social dimension by exploring how the text re ects speci c aspects of the honor-shame world of antiquity.[19] Neyrey approaches Matt 6:25–34 from the perspective of an exhortation that thematizes the

19. Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 176–77.

loss of wealth among peasants. He assumes that the peasants in Matthew are dealing with a loss of honor. I see in Matthew, however, a community striving for economic wealth and glory whose members struggle with the fear of loss of honor if their economic enterprise does not ourish and bring them glory. I argue that this speech is to be interpreted in light of the social, economic, and cultural dimensions re ected in the world of the text. A view of the social world of the text restrains us from resignation to theological interpretations that are expressed in terms of generalized anxiety over the human condition.

3. Ideological Texture

My nal category of sociorhetorical analysis addresses the ideological texture of the speech and pays attention to the commonly held values and interests of particular groups in the text as well as those who interpret the text. In terms of the ideal community described in Matt 6:25–34, we see that the vision for the community is a universal one; all ideals are expressed in light of the fatherhood of God, who exercises governance, care, and oversight over all creation. Even the nations (τὰ ἔθνη) who do not strive for the kingdom and who do not attain its righteousness are not excluded from the fatherhood of God. is theological claim is consistent with other passages in Matthew in which universalism is maintained: "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous" (Matt 5:44–45). Such a span of care can only bring into view the fatherhood of God over an inclusive and universal community.

Sjef van Tilborg has observed that some scholars have too readily assumed that the mention of basic needs of food, drink, and clothing in this community indicate a concern with survival. While he accepts that the Sermon on the Mount may have given a voice to persons who would have otherwise remained unheard, he points out that this Matthean community is not economically marginalized.[20] Instead, as I argued earlier, the community is marked by agrarian economic activity that includes trade and ownership of elds. Here I agree with van Tilborg that a community is evoked in this text that generates surplus and gathers into barns, strives for the glory of Solomon,

20. Sjef van Tilborg, *e Sermon on the Mount as an Ideological Intervention* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1986), 5.

and embodies the ruling ideology that places value on striving for wealth and glory rather than on righteousness or justice.

e ideological objective in this speech is to shi the allegiance of the community away from the folly and futility of human striving to values of the kingdom of God and its righteousness. rough its didactic features and its appeal to collective wisdom, and social and cultural norms, the speech points to what is of ultimate value. e community's preoccupation with "adding" to their lives ignores the traditions that recall Solomon as one who *rst* sought wisdom and understanding from God and subsequently had wealth and glory "added." Matthew's community needs to be reminded that the kind of glory for which it strives is transient and cannot be compared with the glory that God gives. Rather than striving for eeting glory, the community is instructed to strive *rst* for God's kingdom; then all these things will be "added." e message is to give glory to God, who alone can "add" to human life in every aspect or dimension. is is the axis on which the ideological shi is to take place.

In terms of contemporary communities of interpretation, an examination of ideology recognizes that each interpreter is located within an intellectual discourse that is shaped by one's own symbolic universe, social location, and worldview. In this case, interpreters who have particular audiences in view may seek to respond to audience concerns or discomforts about the teaching of this passage. Are interpreters and their audiences challenged by the theological claims they ascribe to this text? Do readers in a capitalist society need to be assured that the text does not demean or dismiss hard work, energy, and inventiveness? Should the text be bypassed as having no relevance for contemporary readers because it has an eschatological emphasis that calls people to live as if the end were pending?[21] Such interpretative moves may demonstrate discomfort on the part of the reader with the message of this text, leading to a domestication of its theological power. Tensions raised in questions such as these highlight the need for theological interpretation that is informed by the multiple layers of a text and derived from an exploration of the rich textures of a biblical text.

Duncan M. Derrett, for example, reviews di erent approaches to this passage. Two broad negative concerns are evident.[22] In the rst instance, there are those who interpret the injunctions in this speech from an eschatological perspective that enjoins the community to leave behind all material or economic enterprises and to rely exclusively on God's providential care. A second line

21. Cf. 1 Cor 7:25–35, esp. v. 32a: "I want you to be free from worry."

22. Duncan M. Derrett, "Birds of the Air and Lilies of the Field," in *e Sea-Change of the Old Testament in the New* (vol. 5 of idem, *Studies in the New Testament*; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 24–35.

of interpretation is developed along economic lines to suggest how impractical or naïve it would be to interpret the passage as a call away from economic activity. e assumption underlying both approaches is that there is a utopian response embedded in the text that cannot be translated into real life. Such an interpretation seeks to subvert the text and produce a new understanding that has some chance of being accepted as closer to reality, more measurable in its pragmatism, and therefore more achievable as a response. ese concerns regarding pragmatism or human survival nd expression in the work of Andreij Kodjak:

> Thus, humanity appears to be meant to live in what would normally be called poverty with only the basic sustenance as "the birds of the air" and "the lilies of the field" have. On the other hand, one can assume that the Speaker regards affluence as an abnormality or disease, and therefore, as frightening as poverty is usually perceived to be. Thus, in the Speaker's *Weltanschauung* we can discern a total reversal of commonly accepted economics.[23]

Kodjak's work is preoccupied with the challenge to economic survival and misses the call to justice. He misunderstands the striving that the text warns against and consequently lends his theological voice to provide solace to the ideology of the contemporary status quo that wants a uence to be a rmed. is approach heightens the gap between the *Weltanschauung* of the text and that of contemporary theological interpretation in a way that diminishes the ethical and theological power of the text.

ese interpretative postures seem to be derived from ideological standpoints that posit a con ict between the text and contemporary realities. Both those who posit an eschatological framework that is no longer pervasive and those who see a naïve economic mandate that has to be countered with good sense and pragmatism nd the text to be somewhat unsettling and lacking in application to modern times. eir response to the speech in their respective interpretations represents ideological subversion. Such responses are possible because interpreters avoid the multiple engagements that are necessary to appreciate cultural and social aspects of the community behind the text and the theological warrants that become evident in attending to the linguistic patterns.

In the sociorhetorical approach to this text its countercultural or utopian aspects cannot be stripped away and its challenge cannot be historicized. e

23. Andreij Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount* (Religion and Reason 34; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986), 134.

speech (with its authoritative voice: "therefore, I say to you") challenges all communities both historical and contemporary whose values are not primarily driven by a striving for righteousness. It speaks to all communities that are marked by acquisitiveness and all who strive for glory and achievement in the human realm. In exploring the inner texture and the embedded cultural and social dimensions, it becomes evident that the text through its multiple layers resists theological interpretation that is derived from surface readings that lead to its marginalization and subversion.

4. Conclusion

I have shown in this essay that theological approaches to biblical texts must resist dismissive historicism, on the one hand, and naïve translation into the contemporary theological worlds, on the other. To do theology from biblical texts is to immerse oneself in complex debates at the linguistic, cultural, and historical levels. An engagement with biblical texts requires one to pay attention to their complexity and to resist any attempt theologically to smooth the difficulties away. In the case of Matt 6:25–34, a sociorhetorical approach can move beyond a description of multiplicity and gesture toward responsible theological prescription.

Multiple engagements with the layers of a text and its world can give rise to theological theory. I have attempted to illustrate this point by showing how the speech according to an analysis of its inner texture presents the theme of human striving and preoccupation juxtaposed with a disposition rightly ordered toward God and righteousness. I also explored the intertextual level, hearing echoes of other biblical texts in the passage in order to attend to the images or themes that are used. In this regard, the echoes of the wisdom traditions of the Hebrew Bible serve to highlight common understandings of the ephemeral nature of human striving and witness to God's universal providence over the created order. Furthermore, I drew attention to other textual layers for a cultural and social reading. The speech does not diminish concerns for daily living but urges hearers to realign their priorities from a human-centered disposition characterized by acquisitiveness and glory to a God-centered disposition that bears fruits in actions of righteousness.

Finally, I argued that a biblical analysis must also engage the reader at the ideological level. In terms of the world of the text, the speech directs the hearers to affirm particular values and to recognize certain cherished aspirations in order to challenge the community to shift its allegiances to the values of their heavenly father and the righteousness associated with the kingdom of God. The text should not be domesticated by contemporary theological interpretation but should be read as a challenge to change loyalty and

behavior and to strive for God's righteousness. By using many rhetorical and didactic strategies, Matthew's speech directs its hearers, past and present, to focus on the God who alone sustains the universe and adds meaningfully to human life.

Luke-Acts and Negotiation of Authority and Identity in the Roman World

Gary Gilbert

1. Introduction

In the lm *e Life of Brian*, Reg, leader of the People's Front of Judea, gathers together a small band of commandos to plot the kidnapping of Pilate's wife, whom they will hold as ransom against their demands, namely, "to dismantle the entire apparatus of the Roman imperialist state" and to "rid this country of the Romans once and for all." He inspires his fellow revolutionaries by recounting the oppression they have su ered at the hands of the Romans, " ey've bled us white, the bastards. ey've taken everything we had, not just from us, from our fathers and from our fathers' fathers." Rome's venality is compounded by its failure to contribute anything of value to the well-being of Judea. "And what," he asks, "have they ever given us in return?" To the question, which Reg assuredly believes has no a rmative answer, one member of the group meekly responds, "the aqueduct." Reg begrudgingly acknowledges this singular example. Instead of the exception, however, mention of the technological advance prompts other commandos to unleash a litany of Roman benefaction: sanitation, roads, irrigation, medicine, education, health, wine, baths, public order, and peace.[1]

Monty Python developed this comedic bit as a piece of social commentary. John Cleese, who was responsible for most of the dialogue, described the scene as a commentary on self-aggrandizing political parties, which were quite prominent in Britain during the 1970s, the misguided idealism and dogmatic bureaucracy, and the incessant and paralyzing bickering that goes on at group meetings. For the peoples living in the time, however, Roman domination was no joke. e creation of the *imperium Romanum*, exhibited through

1. Graham Chapman et al., *Monty Python's e Life of Brian (of Nazareth)* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1979), 20–21.

its political and judicial authority and military power, could not be ignored. Like the ctional commandos of Monty Python, the actual residents of the new Roman provinces and client kingdoms expressed their own opinions of Rome and its claims to rule them, their lands, and the whole world. Some developed a genuine appreciation for Rome and its leaders. Others, however, despaired of Rome's presence and in extreme instances sought to restore their liberty through armed revolt. Whatever the attitude, Rome's claim to be ruler of the inhabited world could not be ignored, and invited and in some instances demanded a response.

2. Multivalence and Christian Views on Roman Authority and Christian Identity

Like other subordinate groups of the time, early Christians confronted both the rhetoric and reality of Rome and, like their contemporaries, responded in di erent ways. e diversity of Christian reactions to Rome became inscribed into the New Testament itself. Here one nds not only di ering but competing voices. In his Letter to the Romans, Paul instructs his readers that every person should be subject to the governing authorities (Rom 13:1). While the Greek word *exousia*, here translated as "governing authorities," has sometimes been understood as a reference to angelic powers, Paul almost certainly has in mind human authorities in the form of imperial and civic o cials.[2] Paul enjoins his readers to accept the existence of Roman authority because Rome's authority has been given to it by God. " erefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment" (Rom 13:2).[3] Paul shares a generally recognized political philosophy of the day based on divine right; earthly rulers derive their power and authority from divine beings. A very di erent appreciation of Rome comes from the book of Revelation. In these visions, Rome, represented through a dense network of mythological images, holds authority over the entire world and makes war on the saints (Rev 13:6–7), whose blood the Whore of Babylon drinks with great abandon (17:6). e call from the author is for endurance against evil rather than acceptance (13:10; 14:12). Resistance, even unto death as a martyr, is only appropriate since the source of Rome's power is not God, but the devil.

Nowhere in the New Testament does Rome gure more prominently than in the Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles. Luke-Acts presents not

2. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 662–64.

3. Translations of biblical texts are taken from the nrsv; translations of Josephus, Philo, and classical Greek and Latin texts are from the respective Loeb editions.

only the New Testament's most extended presentation of Rome but even within itself a multifaceted re ection on Roman power and its implications for Christian identity. Read within the context of the New Testament, Luke-Acts presents a story about God and God's actions in history through the characters of Jesus and the apostles. From one perspective, the text's view of Rome can be epitomized by the Roman citizenship enjoyed by Paul. As the exemplar apostle and Christian, Paul neither seeks to disturb the *pax Romana* nor sees his identity as a Roman in con ict with his mission as an apostle and life within the community of other Christians. When placed within the larger literary and political context, however, we hear a very di erent voice. At the same time, Luke-Acts o ers the careful reader another view of Rome and Christian identity. When the text is read alongside and over against the contemporary competing discourses of power, one can hear a more critical, even subversive tone in the narratorial voice. It is this second voice that I wish to explore in this essay.

References to Rome and its agents are woven throughout the narrative, from the mentions of the emperors Augustus and Tiberius in the early chapters of the Gospel (Luke 2:1; 3:1), Cornelius, the Roman centurion converted by Peter (Acts 10), the proconsuls Sergius Paulus (Acts 13) and Gallio (Acts 18), procurators of Judea Felix and Festus (Acts 24–26), to the conclusion of the work set in the city of Rome itself (Acts 28). Critical scholarship has long tried to account for the frequent appearances of Roman gures. An early perspective held that Luke-Acts was written to cement a positive relation between Christians and the Roman Empire. Luke's particular rendering of Jesus' life and his account of the activities of the early apostles served as an *apologia pro ecclesia*, a defense of Christianity against charges brought by Roman o cials and an attempt to present Christians and Christianity as harmless and supportive of or at least neutral toward imperial rule.[4] Luke-Acts, in this view, was addressed to a Roman audience, portraying Christians as law-abiding and loyal in contrast to the rabble-rousing Jews, and attempted to "achieve a permanent settlement" between the church and the state.[5] Recent scholarship has largely rejected this position.[6] C. K. Barrett o ered perhaps the most

4. One version of this position understands Luke-Acts as advocating that Christianity be considered a *religio licita*, a legally sanctioned religious community. For the literature on both sides of the argument, see Robert Maddox, *e Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Studies in the New Testament World; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 91–93; Philip F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts* (SNTSMS 57; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 205–7, 211–14.

5. Hans Conzelmann, *e eology of St. Luke* (trans. G. Buswell; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1961), 138–49; the quotation appears on 138.

6. Richard J. Cassidy, *Jesus, Politics, and Society* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978), 128–30.

powerful and succinct rejoinder in noting that "no Roman o cial would ever have ltered out so much of what to him would be theological and ecclesiastical rubbish in order to reach so tiny a grain of relevant apology."[7]

Unable to refute Barrett's trenchant observation, scholars have largely abandoned any understanding that posits Luke-Acts speaking to Romans out of a desire to secure their favor. Nonetheless, most new approaches have retained the basic understanding that Luke-Acts presents Christians and Christianity in a way that is essentially compatible with Roman rule. Robert Maddox, for instance, concludes that Luke possesses "an optimistic view of the imperial government.… e proper business of Christians is to live at peace with the sovereign power, so far as possible, and not to play the hero."[8] Paul Walaskay reverses the apologetic gaze in suggesting that Luke-Acts was written as an *apologia pro imperio*, addressed to Christians in order to defend the Roman government and its attitudes and actions toward Christianity.[9] Luke-Acts emphasizes "the positive aspects of Roman involvement in the history of the church."[10] In so doing Luke hoped that his work would help "the Christian community live e ectively with the social, political, and religious realities of the present situation until the advent of God's reign."[11] Philip Esler, while preferring the terminology of legitimation to apology, also proposes that Luke-Acts presents Christianity as being "no threat to Rome nor to the order and stability so prized by the Romans."[12]

e revised position has much to recommend it. Luke-Acts, in contrast to Revelation, does not envision the destruction of Rome, nor does it present Christianity as a threat to Roman society. It does not necessarily follow, however, that a generally harmonious depiction of relations between Christians and Romans implies approval of Rome's imperial claims. Recent analysis of the relations between dominant and subordinate cultures has shown that the absence of active resistance, physical or verbal, on the part of a subordinate group does not thereby convey acceptance or acquiescence to a dominant power. Rather, subordinate groups o en develop arts of resistance that are

7. C. K. Barrett, *Luke the Historian in Recent Research* (London: Epworth, 1961), 63. For a more detailed refutation of the theory, see Paul Walaskay, *"And So We Came to Rome": e Political Perspectives of St. Luke* (SNTSMS 49; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 15–37.

8. Maddox, *Purpose of Luke-Acts*, 97.

9. Walaskay, *"And So We Came to Rome,"* 64–67.

10. Ibid., 64.

11. Ibid., 67.

12. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, 218.

more subtle and nuanced but no less real.[13] is modern understanding of power and resistance can help us to recognize the highly critical attitude toward Rome articulated through Luke-Acts. Luke's experience of Roman imperial power was refracted through the prism of his understanding of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. From Luke's perspective, these events gave evidence for the existence of a new reality that calls into question the legitimacy of Rome and its claims to imperial authority. By contesting Rome's claims, transposing Roman expressions of authority to Jesus and the early church, and o ering alternative models of world rule, Luke-Acts creates a counter-discourse that responds to and resists Roman imperial authority and, in so doing, seeks to constitute an understanding of being a Christian in the Roman world. In the next section I turn to contemporary Greek literature to show how Luke-Acts engages in the process of political contestation and identity formation by rewriting and restructuring a prior ideological subtext, the *imperium Romanum*.

3. The Voice of Roman Power

Whether by design or fortuitous circumstance, Rome's power spread quickly through the eastern Mediterranean basin.[14] Military victories against Macedonian and Seleucid rulers in the first half of the second century b.c.e. elevated Rome in the eyes of many to the position of undisputed master of the world. The recognition became mutual among ruler and ruled alike. During the second and rst centuries b.c.e. the concept of *imperium* grew from the limited authority vested in an individual magistrate to the general authority of the state. By the late Republic, the Roman historian Sallust could speak of the *imperium Romanum* (*Bell. Cat*. 10.1). Not only had the nature of Roman power changed, but also its geographic scope. Roman *imperium* came to be understood as universal, encompassing all peoples and stretching as far as the ends of the earth. e rst-century b.c.e. rhetorical treatise *Rhetorica ad Herennium* speaks of Rome and its "rule of the world, the rule to which all nations kings and peoples have consented, partly compelled by force and partly of their own will, having been overcome by the arms of the Roman people or by its liberality" (4.13). Cicero, once thought to have been the author of the preceding text, speaks of the *imperium* of the Roman people

13. James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

14. William Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome: 327–70 BC* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Erich Gruen, *e Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).

extending throughout the entire *orbis terrarum* (*Sest.* 67, 129; *Balb.* 9, 16; *Dom.* 110; *Pis.* 16).[15] Pompey's military victories in Syria and elsewhere made real this perspective (Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 37.13; Plutarch, *Pomp.* 45; Appianus, *Mith.* 116–117). He extended the frontiers of Roman authority to the end of the earth and validated Rome's status as the true masters of all the peoples and all the nations on earth and sea (Cicero, *Leg. man.* 56; cf. Diodorus Siculus 40.4; Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 7.97).

Affirmations and displays of Rome's supremacy intensified with the inception of the empire. Augustan literature, particularly its poetry, played a large role in shaping and articulating the claim of universal domination as Rome's inherent destiny. Vergil's *Aeneid*, the "national epic of Augustan Rome,"[16] represents a *locus classicus* for this perspective. Near the opening Jupiter utters his famous prophecy that Rome will possess an empire without end (*imperium sine ne*).[17] Later in the poem Aeneas travels to the underworld, where his guide, his recently deceased father Anchises, describes the numerous territories that Augustus will acquire. So vast is the space that Hercules himself had never crossed it (*Aen.* 6.791–803). Universal *imperium* was not only a political or military achievement but a cultural one as well, akin to the artistic grandeur of Greece (*Aen.* 6.851–852). Horace, another favorite of Augustus, frequently celebrates the achievements of the *princeps* and lauds him as "father of the human race" (*Carm.* 1.12.49–52; 4.15). Even Ovid, whose own attitude toward the emperor is at best elusive and quite possibly critical of many Augustan policies, could speak of Rome as having placed the entire world under its foot (*Fast.* 4.857–858; also 1.85–86) and could extol Augustus as "father of the world" (*Fast.* 2.130).[18] Writers of prose also celebrated Rome as universal ruler. Livy claims it was Rome's destiny to be head of the world (1.16.7). Vitruvius begins his architectural study by praising Augustus's vic-

15. On the term *imperium* itself, see J. S. Richardson, "*Imperium Romanum*: Empire and the Language of Power," *JRS* 81 (1991): 1–9.

16. Francis Cairns, *Virgil's Augustan Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 105. Cairns goes on to describe the poem as "embodying the aspirations, the pride and the self-image of the rulers of the world."

17. Vergil, *Aen.* 1.278–279. Jupiter is responding to Venus's reminder that he had promised that Aeneas's descendants would come to rule the sea and all the land (*Aen.* 1.234–237). The prophecy is repeated in 4.229–231 and again by Anchises when Aeneas journeys to the underworld (*Aen.* 6.782, 792–797, 851), both to and by Latinus (*Aen.* 7.99–101; 7.258), and through *ekphrasis* in the description of Aeneas's shield (*Aen.* 8.626–728).

18. For more on Ovid's political leanings, see S. G. Nugent, "*Tristia* 2: Ovid and Augustus," in *Between Republic and Empire* (ed. K. Raaflaub and M. Toher; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 239–57.

tory at Actium and by declaring that he has acquired control over the *orbis terrarum* (*De arch.* 1, preface 1).

The people who became subordinated to Roman rule often echoed Rome's claims and, at least in the late Republic and early empire, expressed favor and support for the newest and most powerful imperial claimant. e earliest sustained treatment of Rome by a Greek comes in Polybius's histories. Polybius was born in Megalopolis in Arcadia (Greece) and served as leader of the Achaean League. e League became embroiled in Roman con icts with Macedonia, and, in 167 b.c.e., following Rome's victory over the Macedonian king Perseus at the battle of Pydna, Polybius was taken o to Rome, where he lived for almost two decades under the patronage of leading Romans. In light of Rome's subsequent dismantling of the League and the end of Achaean independence in 146 b.c.e., Polybius acknowledged Rome's unrivaled power and its status as ruler of the world, *oikoumene* (1.1.5; 3.1.4–5; 3.4.2; 6.2.3).[19] Over a century later, toward the end of the reign of Augustus, Strabo, historian and geographer from Pontus in Asia Minor, expressed great admiration for Rome and for the peace, security, and prosperity that Roman rule had accomplished (1.1.16; 6.4.2). He gives an "account of the whole world known to the Romans," that both reflected and contributed toward the voice of Roman imperialism.[20]

Around the same time a third Greek author, Dionysius of Harlicarnassus, a Greek city also in western Asia Minor, o ered unequivocal recognition of Rome as destined for uncontested rule (1.2.1; 1.3.3–5). In contrast to empires of earlier eras, Assyria, Athens, Macedonia among them, Rome far surpasses them all (1.3.2–3). In focusing his writing on the early history of Rome, Dionysius wishes to correct a common "misunderstanding" among Greeks and to show that Rome was founded as a Greek colony and therefore is essentially a Greek and not a barbarian city. Dionysius's unique treatment of Rome can be understood in di erent ways. He may be attempting to demonstrate the solidarity of Greek and Roman society and to o er his fellow Greeks a perspective of Rome that will allow them to accept Roman supremacy not as a foreign power but as an essentially Greek one. Alternatively, he may be attempting to lessen any anxiety among his Greek readers despondent over their loss of autonomy by suggesting that, despite appearances, Greeks remain in power, albeit in the form of Rome, the best of the Greeks (20.6). In either case, Dionysius shows how Greek writers confronted

19. J. S. Richardson, "Polybius' View of the Roman Empire," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 47 (1979): 1–2; P. S. Derow, "Polybius, Rome, and the East," *JRS* 69 (1979): 1–15.

20. Katherine Clarke, *Between Geography and History: Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 344.

the reality of Roman *imperium* and devoted their literary work to an exploration of the relation between Roman authority and the Greek world. Not all Greeks shared Dionysius's generally favorable assessment of Rome. In the next section I focus on a well-known cadre of Greeks who negotiated their relation with Rome largely through the heritage of the Greek past. is strategy allowed Greek writers, and here I will include the author of Luke-Acts, to expose and in some instances to contest Rome's hegemonic discourse and, although conscious of being in a position of political subordination, to project for themselves an authentic identity independent of Rome and its networks of domination.

4. Luke-Acts and the Second Sophistic

By the time of the writing of Luke-Acts, a new intellectual and literary movement had emerged among Greek elites who shared similarities in language, cultural outlook, and, most important for this study, an interest in Rome. ese Greek-speaking intellectuals, mostly from the eastern Mediterranean regions, o en used their literary e orts to re ect on Roman power and its signi cance for understanding Greek identity. Many of these gures, such as Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom, and Pausanias, developed similar linguistic, rhetorical, and cultural patterns commonly referred to in modern scholarship as the Second Sophistic, which emerged toward the end of the rst century and continued well into the third.[21] ose who traveled in these circles were generally elite, well-educated men who wrote in Greek, hailed from Greece, western Asia Minor, and other regions of the eastern Mediterranean, traveled widely, and experienced Roman power rsthand. eir professional lives were marked by a variety of civic and professional functions, including priest, civic magistrate, imperial o cial, orator, philosopher, and physician. Luke, the author of Luke-Acts, shares some of these same characteristics with those of

21. Glen Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); E. L. Bowie, *Greeks and eir Past in Second Sophistic: Studies in Ancient Society* (ed. M. I. Finley; Past and Present Series; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 166–209; Graham Anderson, *The Second Sophistic: A Cultural Phenomenon in the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 1993); Maud Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Perception in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50–250* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: e Politics of Imitation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Simon Goldhill, ed., *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

the Second Sophistic.[22] Like them, Luke was a well-educated Greek speaker, most likely from a city in the eastern Mediterranean, who wrote at the end of the first or beginning of the second centuries, a time by which the Second Sophistic has become well developed. The writings of the Second Sophistic as well as Luke-Acts frequently speak of Rome and address the relation between Roman *imperium*, here understood as the power exercised by or on behalf of the Roman emperor, and the subordinate cultures of Greece or Christianity, respectively. I wish to argue that the similarities between Luke-Acts and the Second Sophistic, however, go much deeper. Like much of the literature of the Second Sophistic, Luke-Acts contains within it a voice that is critical of the presence of Rome and contests its claim to be ruler of the world. This voice is embedded in the language used to characterize Jesus and the church and exists alongside another voice that speaks in more conciliatory tones. Only by listening to both voices can we gain a full appreciation for what Luke-Acts wishes to say about the relations between dominant Rome and the subordinate community of those now called Christians (cf. Acts 11:26).

Before I turn to the relevant literature, I want to be clear what it is I am not claiming in making this argument. First, I am not claiming Luke-Acts should be thought of as representative of Second Sophistic literature. The differences in language alone foreclose this identification.[23] Second, this analysis is not dependent upon and makes no claim upon the complex and unsettled question over the genre of the Gospel and Acts. Rather than trying to squeeze Luke-Acts into a particular literary box, I am more interested in placing it within the broader intellectual milieu of the time. One final methodological issue requires mention. Because my interest rests with reflections and repre-

22. On comparisons between the Second Sophistic and other early Christian writings, see Timothy D. Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); Timothy Horner, *Listening to Trypho: Justin Martyr's Dialogue Reconsidered* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 28; Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 73–84; Laura Nasrallah, "Mapping the World: Justin, Tatian, Lucian, and the Second Sophistic," *HTR* 98 (2005): 293–98. Recent studies have made productive comparisons between Luke-Acts and Plutarch, although not specifically within the context of the Second Sophistic; see Vernon K. Robbins, "Writing as a Rhetorical Act in Plutarch and the Gospels," in *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy* (ed. D. F. Watson; JSNTSup 50; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 142–68; David L. Balch, "ΜΕΤΑΒΟΛΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΩΝ: Jesus as Founder of the Church in Luke-Acts: Form and Function," in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse* (ed. T. Penner and C. Vander Stichele; SBLSymS 20; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 139–88.

23. The Second Sophistic often retained Greek names for regions now converted into Roman provinces and used old Greek rather than contemporary Latin names of cities. Luke's reference to the Italian city of Puteoli (Acts 28:13), rather than Dicaercheia, the preferred designation, shows Luke's distance from the Second Sophistic.

sentations of empire in a literary text, namely, Luke-Acts, I have restricted my analysis to other literary texts. In so doing, I have excluded two other important types of response to Roman power, visual and martial. Greeks in the imperial period employed a variety of material media, in addition to literature, in articulating their relations with Rome and constructing their civic and ethnic identities in the presence of Roman domination. A complete treatment of Greek responses to Roman power would have to include imperial temples, statuary, Greek imperial coinage, and the like. Similarly, subordinate peoples could and sometimes did respond to Rome with armed violence. e two Jewish revolts stand out as prime examples, although rebellions arose in numerous parts of the empire, including Britain, Spain, Gaul, Germany, Pannonia, Greece, and North Africa.[24] I am, however, interested in how these ideas are constructed within the framework of a literary text, and it is to these sources that I restrict myself.

e term Second Sophistic was coined by Philostratus in his biographical sketches of Sophists beginning with Nicetas of Smyrna, who lived in second half of the rst century c.e., down to his own day in the third century. According to Philostratus, the Second Sophistic traced its origins to the Sophists of classical Athens, particularly Aeschines. Whereas the First Sophistic movement concerned itself with philosophical themes, those in the Second Sophistic were known for their rhetorical skills and ability to speak on a variety of subjects (Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 479; 486). Representatives of the Second Sophistic came from throughout the Roman world and wrote in a variety of genres. Of particular signi cance are the biographer and moralist Plutarch, the orator Dio Chrysostom, historians Arrian and Appian, rhetorician Aelius Aristides, satirist Lucian, novelist Longus, geographer Pausanias, and physician Galen. Most of these men were connected, through birth or domicile, to the important cities of the eastern regions of the Roman Empire; many also spent considerable time living and teaching in Rome.[25] It should hardly be surprising that, given the great diversity of voices, the term Second Sophistic is not without its problems.[26] e exact criteria for being a Sophist and its distinction from related activities such as philosophy and rhetoric are inexact. Moreover, the beginning of the Second Sophistic, while commonly

24. Martin Goodman, "Opponents of Rome: Jews and Others," in *Images of Empire* (ed. L. Alexander; JSOTSup 122; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 222–38.

25. Plutarch was born in Chaeronea (Greece), Dio in Prusa (Asia Minor), Arrian in Nicomedia (Asia Minor), Appian in Alexandria (Egypt), Aristides in Hadrdianotherae (Asia Minor), Lucian in Samosata (Syria), Pausanias in Magnesia (Asia Minor), and Galen in Pergamum (Asia Minor). Those who taught in Rome include Plutarch, Dio, Appian, and Galen.

26. Simon Goldhill, "Introduction," in Goldhill, *Being Greek under Rome*, 14.

set in the middle of the first century c.e., cannot be dated with any certainty. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, for instance, already in the late first century b.c.e. shows some of the same tendencies toward Atticism that become commonplace a century later.[27] In addition, some of the individuals commonly associated with the Second Sophistic rejected the title Sophist or had no explicit conception of participation in a larger intellectual circle. The second-century physician Galen, for instance, usually understood as a central figure in this cultural world, dismisses the attribution of Sophist for himself. Despite the problems with the term, it has become accepted that the orators and writers named by Philostratus along with several others who share similar linguistic and cultural proclivities were part of a "vast and complex cultural fabric" of the Greek-speaking world in the Roman period.[28]

As authors, and apart from their public roles as teachers, orators, and civic leaders, those connected to the Second Sophistic shared a passion for the vocabulary, syntax, and grammar of Attic Greek and disdain for the Koine (common dialect) Greek that developed in the Hellenistic period and had become standard in their own day.[29] The linguistic archaizing was part of a larger cultural agenda in which an idealized language of Plato, Thucydides, and Demosthenes was coupled with an idealization of the glories of classical Greece. The past glory of Greece, however, stood out in stark contrast to the present glory of Rome. It is within this contrast that the literary enterprise broadly construed as the Second Sophistic functioned as a response to the reality of Roman *imperium* and the rhetoric of Rome's position as ruler of the world. These authors not only dwelled on the past but often expressed a longing for the Greece that, whether they admitted it or not, no longer existed. In breathing life into the language, personalities, historical events, and religious monuments of the past, the writers were not simply expressing nostalgia for the good old days but were forming a cultural identity as a subordinate group, Greeks, in a world dominated by Rome. In his study of the Second Sophistic Tim Whitmarsh notes that "cultural activity—and in particular writing literature—was a fundamental means of constructing a Greek identity discrete from Rome."[30] I have selected two examples, Plutarch and Dio Chrysostom, whose work demonstrates the connections between literary artistry, resis-

27. Graham Anderson, "Sophists and Their Outlook in the Early Empire," *ANRW* 2.33.1:85–87.

28. Glen W. Bowersock, "Philosophy in the Second Sophistic," in *Philosophy and Power in the Graeco-Roman World* (ed. G. Clark and T. Rajak; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 160.

29. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 21.

30. Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature*, 20.

tance to Roman authority, and identity formation. I have chosen these two representatives of the Second Sophistic in part because they exhibit many of the basic personal experiences and literary qualities that come to characterize the culture among Roman Greek writers, but also because they wrote at a time that saw the composition of Luke-Acts.

Plutarch was born in the Boeotian city of Chaeroneia sometime in the 40s of the rst century. He died during the reign of Hadrian, sometime a er 120. He was active in civic politics and served as a priest of Apollo at the oracular shrine in Delphi, one of the most important sacred precincts in the Greek world. Plutarch is best known for two extensive corpora: the parallel lives of Greek and Roman leaders and numerous works of moral philosophy, religious questions and topics, literary criticism, political essays, and conversations collected under the title of *Moralia*. Plutarch's own attitude toward Rome is complex. He wrote as a Roman citizen, although nothing in his writings betrays this information, taught in Rome for a period, and held imperial o ces, including procurator of Achaea. His experiences le him with a rather sympathetic disposition toward Rome. He valued Rome's achievement in putting an end to civil wars and piracy and for its e ectiveness in silencing the incessant disputes among Greek cities (*Mor*. 784–785). Like Josephus, Plutarch engaged the proposition that Roman power spread in the Greek world with the aid of divine support (*Phil*. 17.2; *Flam*. 12.10).

Despite his overall approval, Plutarch could be critical of Rome and Romans. He was o ended by their fascination with ostentatious luxury and their all-too-frequent boorish behavior.[31] More to the point of our examination, his writings re ect discomfort with Greece's decline.[32] e last Greek to receive biographical coverage in the parallel lives is Philopoemen, statesman and general of the Achaean confederacy in the early second century b.c.e. and known as the "the last of the Greeks." is period marks for Plutarch and others in the Second Sophistic the turning point in political dominance of the Mediterranean from Greece to Rome. Plutarch comes to accept and even approves of Rome's *imperium*, but only if understood for what it is (e.g., bringer of peace) and what it is not (e.g., competent administrator in local matters). His discomfort with Roman hegemony a ords him the opportunity to re ect on what it means to be Greek. Plutarch presents the opinion, shared by many of the Second Sophistic, that Greeks enjoy a unique position in the Roman world. While Greece may be subjugated politically, it remains Rome's cultural and intellectual superior. Rome might have the power, but

31. C. P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 122.
32. Ibid., 126.

Greece has the wisdom and has much to teach Rome.[33] Lurking within the writings of Plutarch lies the suspicion that "Romans lacked proper, Greek culture, which was the only path to philosophical happiness."[34] rough his writings Plutarch o ers his Greek readers a sense of who they are, or at least could be. For Plutarch, "to be Greek means to think, and (crucially) to act, in an ethical way."[35]

Dio Chrysostom, a contemporary of Plutarch, came from the city of Prusa in northwest Asia Minor. He spent much of his early career as a rhetorician in Rome, where he became acquainted with and a proponent of Stoic philosophy. Some reason—Dio is not clear—caused the emperor Domitian to banish Dio from Rome and his native Bithynia.[36] He spent the next several years wandering around Greece, the Balkans, and Asia Minor in the guise of an itinerant philosopher. His fortunes changed dramatically when Nerva recalled him from exile and then again when, according to his own account, he became a valued advisor to Trajan.[37] Like Plutarch, Dio is critical of Roman indulgence in luxury and immorality and in the malfeasance of its provincial administrators. He, too, has a strong distaste for Roman involvement in civic matters.[38] Dio, however, develops his response to Roman *imperium* in a more critical direction. In contrast to Plutarch, "he does not really eulogize Rome or enthuse about the bene ts of Roman world rule. In some cases he is clearly hostile and irritated by the impuissance of the Greek cities and the Greek world in the face of Rome and … is severely critical of some of her provincial governors."[39] Rome might be considered great and powerful, but its greatness is insecure and arouses distrust (*Or*. 13.34). e absence of Greek wisdom acquired through education, *paideia*, according to Dio, calls into question the value of Roman *imperium*'s authenticity. Dio's orations o en "explore the role of the Greek *pepaideumenos* [properly educated male] in relation to Roman power, seeking to establish the critical role of [Greek] *paideia* in the positive or negative evaluation of the [Roman] monarch in question."[40]

e literature of the Second Sophistic o ers diverse assessments of Rome and employs various methods to respond to the dominant imperial ideology. Plutarch and Dio cannot represent the entirety of the Second Sophistic, but

33. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 140.
34. Ibid., 186.
35. Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature*, 117.
36. The cause and extent of Dio's exile is unclear; see ibid., 157.
37. On the trustworthiness of this account, see ibid., 156–67.
38. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 239.
39. Ibid., 191.
40. Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature*, 245.

they do express some of its important features and themes. rough its self-conscious decision to speak and write in Attic Greek and the fascination with the personalities and events of Greece at its political, military, and cultural zenith, the Second Sophistic engaged in an ongoing e ort to make sense of the political decline in the Greek world and loss of local autonomy and to understand its place in a world now dominated by Rome. e Greek elites used their writings to explore the complex relations between past and present and between themselves, as Greeks, and Romans.[41] Plutarch is not alone in developing a largely positive appraisal of Roman society. Later in the second century the rhetorician Aelius Aristides expresses almost unquali ed support of Rome and its position in the world.[42] Even Rome's mastery over Greek cities fails to concern him. His famous Roman oration functions as a highly polished mirror, re ecting and in some instances magnifying Roman ideology back onto his Roman audience. He speaks of Rome having established a peaceful, prosperous, and harmonious rule over the whole world (30; 92–106). e gods con rm the empire (105), and all persons should be grateful to the gods and thankful to the emperor to be living in a world governed by Rome (287). By contrast, Dio's more critical comments are shared by Lucian and Pausanias a er him. In the dialogue *Nigrinus*, Lucian contrasts Rome unfavorably with an idealized Athens.[43] Elsewhere he even denies Rome's claim to superiority in armed combat, a position widely conceded in light of Rome's overwhelming military power.[44] For his part, Pausanias engages Rome largely through silence. His catalogue of the Greek religious sanctuaries, monuments, statues, and the like includes almost no item later than the third century b.c.e. By avoiding the recent past Pausanias can depict a pristine Greece, absent of any Roman presence. e narrative strategy "re ects a restructuring of memory, leading to a more profound, nuanced resistance to Rome by dwelling on other times when the boundaries of Greece, and Greek, identity had been preserved."[45]

e value of the Second Sophistic for understanding Luke-Acts can be summarized in three observations. First, Greek writers in the Roman period

41. Rebecca Preston, "Roman Questions, Greek Answers: Plutarch and the Construction of Identity," in Goldhill, *Being Greek under Rome*, 91.

42. The genuineness of Aristides' declarations has been questioned; see Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 260–80.

43. Ibid., 314.

44. *Hippias, or the Bath* 1.

45. Susan E. Alcock, "Landscapes of Memory and the Authority of Pausanias," in *Pausanias Historien: Huit Exposés Suivis de Discussions: Vandœeuvres–Genève, 15–19 août 1994* (ed. J. Bingen; Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique 41; Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1994), 241–67; John Elsner, "Pausanias: A Greek Pilgrim in the Roman World," *Past and Present* 135 (1992): 3–29.

experienced forms of Roman domination, particularly through its propaganda and provincial administrators, and were fully conversant with Rome's claims to universal authority throughout the world. Second, Greek literature of this period o en serves to a rm, modify, or reject these claims. Finally, Greek writers turned to the Greek past, its language, personalities, and monuments, as a way to fashion a cultural identity that was distinct from and in some instances superior to Rome. Ramsay MacMullen once commented that "the so-called Second Sophistic [was] perfectly harmless on the surface but anti-Roman in its implications, since its intent was the reassertion of Hellenism."[46] MacMullen's conclusion may have been stated more broadly and boldly than the evidence warrants. Not many of the Second Sophistic, for instance, would have approved of the Cynic Peregrinus's call upon Greece to rise up against Rome (Lucian, *Peregr*. 19). He nonetheless points to a signi cant feature of the writings of the Second Sophistic, namely, the desire on the part of Greek elites to fashion a response to the presence of Roman *imperium* and through their writings to construct an understanding of what it means to be Greek in a world dominated by Rome. Literature, in other words, o en functioned as a tool in contesting Roman hegemony. Reading the literature of the Second Sophistic reveals a world in which Greek-speaking intellectuals were keen to evaluate Rome's claims of *imperium* and to use the relation between the dominant power of Rome and the subordinate status of Greece as a way to understand their identity in a world largely not of their own making.[47]

Luke also could converse in the language of this time. To cite but one example, Luke shows familiarity with texts that are important to Greek writers of the time. In Paul's most "Sophistic" moment, his speech delivered on the Areopagus, he cites without attribution the writings of the seventh-century b.c.e. holy man Epimenides and the third-century b.c.e. Stoic philosopher Aratus (Acts 17:28). Both authors were well known and o en quoted by Greek writers of Luke's time, including those of the Second Sophistic such as Plutarch (see *Mor*. 157d on Epimenides) and Lucian (see *Nigr*. 16 on Aratus).[48] Although Luke-Acts does not qualify as an example of Second Sophistic literature, sharing neither the linguistic pretensions to Atticism nor the cultural attachment to classical Greece, the Second Sophistic and Luke-Acts share at

46. Ramsay MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 244.

47. The precise location for the writing of Luke-Acts does not affect this argument. While most of the Second Sophistic came from the traditionally Greek-speaking regions (e.g., Greece and Asia Minor), Favorinus came from Arles and Lucian from Syria.

48. Aratus, *Phaenomena* (ed. and trans. D. Kidd; Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 165.

least two common interests: rhetoric and Rome. Acts concludes with a report of Paul's time in Rome while "proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance" (Acts 28:30). This last detail has particular resonance with the Second Sophistic. It not only brings Paul, like Dio, Favorinus, Aristides, and other Sophists, to the heart of the Roman world, but also connects Luke-Acts with the Second Sophistic through a shared passion for rhetoric. The Greek word *parresia*, here translated "boldness," was often used by orators of the Second Sophistic, particularly Dio, who championed his ability to speak openly in the face of power even when, like Paul, the circumstances threatened him with death.[49] Not only at the end but throughout Acts Paul's activity as an apostle follows a pattern familiar among rhetoricians of the Second Sophistic. Sophists would typically deliver their declamations in a public arena, such as a theater. The audience would frequently interrupt and pose questions to the speaker. The literary reports often recount how the audience would be divided in their response to the remarks with some voicing approval and others not. The Sophist would then move to a more private venue for teaching to a smaller group.[50] One finds a similar pattern repeated several times in Acts. Each time Paul arrives in a new town he often preaches in the synagogue, the public space of the Jewish community. The response is almost invariably mixed with some approving what he says and others unsure or expressing outrage. Paul then engages in more private instruction, sometimes in a private home, such as that of Titius Justus in Corinth, where he taught Crispus, the head of the synagogue, his household, and many Corinthians (Acts 18:7–8).

Luke-Acts and the Second Sophistic come together once again in a shared perspective that Greeks, in the case of the Second Sophistic, or Christians, as presented in Luke-Acts, possess certain knowledge that gives them superiority over Romans and that Roman leaders would be well advised to learn. Central to the understanding of many of the Second Sophistic is the role of *paideia* (education). As Dio has already shown us, the Second Sophistic constructed a discourse world in which true wisdom is the patrimony of Greece and only through the process of becoming educated, a *pepaideumenos*, can one, especially Romans, be considered cultured and possess the knowledge needed to govern properly. The superiority of Greek wisdom gained through *paideia* becomes a medium for contesting Roman superiority.[51] Rome may have its military and magistrates, but Greece has the wisdom requisite for a

49. Loveday Alexander, "Foolishness to the Greeks: Jews and Christians in the Public Life of the Empire," in Clark and Rajak, *Philosophy and Power in the Graeco-Roman World*, 229–49.

50. Anderson, "Sophists and Their Outlook," 89–104.

51. Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature*, 5.

good life and e ective rule. Dio particularly represents himself as a "paideutic specialist, an educator of Trajan, and thus as a paradigm of Greek culture as de ned against the unlearned but empowered Roman."[52] In Luke-Acts *paideia* gives way to the knowledge and acceptance of the gospel. It is the gospel that distinguishes Christians from Romans and becomes the standard by which Roman magistrates are to be judged. e best Romans, such as Sergius Paulus (Act 13:4–12), are those who recognize and accept what the gospel teaches. e apostle, the one who preaches the gospel and therefore stands in for the *pepaideumenos*, functions as the critic of Rome and hero in Luke-Acts.

e second major theme, the fascination with Rome, permeates both Luke-Acts and the Second Sophistic. Greek writers of the period addressed the reality of Roman power in various ways and in various genres. We have already seen ambivalence in the biographies of Plutarch, direct condemnation in the speeches of Dio, the satirical presentations in the dialogues of Lucian, and resistance expressed through the silences in the geographic catalogue of Pausanias. While message and media di ered, Greeks, and the subordinate peoples of the empire in general, invested their writings with images of Rome and responses to Rome's hegemonic discourse. As has already been noted, embedded in the account of the life of Jesus and the apostles are the symbols and structures of Roman power, its emperors, magistrates, and military. Luke's Gospel begins with reference to the rst two emperors, Augustus (Luke 2:1) and Tiberius (Luke 3:1). Jesus debates over the question of paying taxes to Rome (Luke 20:25). e rst convert to Christianity is a Roman solider. Roman gures, particularly magistrates such as Sergius Paulus, Gallio, Felix, and Festus, occupy important roles in the narrative.

Scholars have long argued whether one can discern in these passages a positive or negative portrayal of Rome, with the majority opting for the former. An advance in understanding this topic begins with the recognition that within the narrative of Luke-Acts Christian gures occupy a clearly subordinate position in relation to the dominant power Rome wields through its economic and administrative structures. Joseph and Mary must travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be enrolled in the census. Paul's well-being o en rests at the mercy of Roman magistrates. Even Paul's claim to be a Roman citizen a ords him limited protection. Recent studies on the relations between dominant and subordinate groups have demonstrated the complex ways they interact. Most important for our purposes, this research has shown that the absence of public acts of resistance, verbal or physical, does not thereby suggest that the "groups endorse the terms of their subordination and are willing,

52. Ibid., 201.

even enthusiastic, partners in that subordination."[53] Rather, subordinate groups adopt various, sometimes less obvious forms of resistance. James Scott has argued that prudential concerns lead subordinate groups away from open forms of resistance and toward a discourse of resistance that is subtle, disguised, and safe. The more hidden discourse may assume protean forms, such as anonymity, trickery, gossip, and rumor. He notes that "the least radical step is to criticize some of the dominant stratum for having violated the norms by which they claim to rule; the next most radical step is to accuse the entire stratum of failing to observe the principles of its rule; and the most radical step is to repudiate the very principles by which the dominant stratum justifies its dominance."[54] I wish to suggest that Luke-Acts, like several of its contemporaries in the Second Sophistic, while not creating a hidden transcript in the way Scott describes, nonetheless comes close to taking this final step in its hidden critique of Rome. In Luke-Acts resistance to Roman hegemony comes in the form of transposing various elements of imperial propaganda and applying these terms and images to Jesus and the church. The language of negation appears in several narrative elements, including the identification of Jesus with the title *savior* and as the bringer of peace, the description of Jesus' ascent into heaven, and catalogues of geographic authority.[55]

Luke is unique among the Synoptic Gospels to refer to Jesus as savior (Luke 2:11; Acts 5:31; 13:23) and to associate him with the bringing of peace (Luke 1:79; 2:14; Acts 10:36).[56] By the end of the first century the title of savior and benefaction of peace were almost inextricably bound together with Rome and the emperor. A variety of media, including literary texts, religious altars and shrines, inscriptions, and coins, saturated the Roman world with evocations of and tributes to the emperor as savior as well as testimonies of Rome's ability to establish peace. Augustus himself advertised his role as bringer of

53. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 4.

54. Ibid., 92.

55. For further support of this argument, see Gary Gilbert, "Roman Propaganda and Christian Identity in the Worldview of Luke-Acts," in Penner and Vander Stichele, *Contextualizing Acts*, 233–56. Other passages from Luke-Acts can be adduced in support of this claim. Jesus' birth, reported to have taken place during the universal census in the time of Augustus, "presents an implicit challenge," notes Raymond Brown, "to this imperial propaganda, not by denying the imperial ideals, but by claiming that the real peace of the world was brought about by Jesus" (*The Birth of the Messiah* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977], 415). Both Rome and Luke envisioned the coming of Augustus and Jesus, respectively, as marking the dawn of a new age. Vergil, for instance, speaks of the age of the time of Augustus as a *magnus … saeculorum nascitur ordo* (*Ecl.* 4.5). On the Augustan age as a new beginning, see Wolfgang Kirsch, "Die Augusteische Zeit," *Klio* 67 (1985): 43–46.

56. Only John (4:22) uses the term *savior* in reference to Jesus.

peace by recognizing this act in the *Res gestae divi Augusti* and boasting that on three occasions he shut the doors of the temple of Janus in Rome, symbolizing that peace had been achieved throughout the Roman world, a feat accomplished only twice in the entire preceding history of Rome (*Res gest.* 13; cf. Vergil, *Aen.* 1.291–296). e emphasis on peace as a salient bene t of the *imperium Romanum* continued through the rst and second centuries. e doors to the temple of Janus were once again shut during the reigns of Nero and Vespasian (Suetonius, *Nero* 13.2; Lucan 1.60), the latter also having erected a temple of peace (Suetonius, *Vesp.* 9.1; Josephus, *J.W.* 7.158; Dio 66.15). As we have already seen, the Greek writers of the Second Sophistic, even those who were critical of Rome, recognized Rome's achievements in this regard. Aristides glori es Rome for having established peace throughout the entire inhabited world (*Or.* 13.97). Luke knew the ideology that claimed an inseparable bond between peace and imperial rule very well. When Tertullus addresses the Roman procurator Felix at Paul's trial in Jerusalem, he begins with customary words of praise: "Because of you we have long enjoyed peace" (Acts 24:2). Luke-Acts invokes the language used to legitimize imperial authority, but by identifying Jesus as savior and stressing that peace has been established through him (and therefore not Rome), the narrative negates Rome's hegemonic claim.

Another example of Luke's contestation of imperial propaganda comes in Acts 2 and the story of the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost.[57] In the midst of the narration the reader encounters a list of een peoples or places: Parthia, Media, Elam, Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, Rome, Crete, and Arabia (Acts 2:9–11). Scholars have long pondered the list's source or inspiration. While the geographic inventory in Acts 2 resembles several similar lists, such as in Gen 10, it closely mimics contemporary lists that celebrated Rome's position as ruler over the inhabited world. Roman emperors, general, poets, and historians compiled numerous lists of nations as a way to give geographic speci city to the claim to be rulers to the end of the earth. e most famous Augustan list of nations to illustrate geography's political weight comes to us in the *Res gestae*. e autobiographical record begins with the words: "the accomplishments of the dei ed Augustus by which he subjected the inhabited world under the empire of the Roman people." Much of what follows in this document records "the direct or indirect completion of the conquest of

57. For further support of this argument, see Gary Gilbert, "The List of Nations in Acts 2: Roman Ideology and the Lucan Response," *JBL* 121 (2002): 497–529.

the world."[58] In chapters 25–33, Augustus tallies y- ve geographical places conquered, paci ed, added, and otherwise dominated by Rome. Claude Nicolet describes the immense political value of this text. " e *Res Gestae* asserts from the very rst line that there was Roman control of the inhabited world. And it proves this methodically, without symbolism, by using a series of topographic lists that correspond to precise geographical knowledge."[59] Within the Roman world the listing of nations had far more signi cance than supplying basic cartographic information. National lists were part of the discourse of Roman power. ey promoted the claim of Rome's authority throughout the world. Luke-Acts as well has an understanding of the gospel's authority among all peoples (see Luke 2:10, 30–31; 3:6; 4:25–27; 24:47; Acts 2:17).

e giving of the Spirit that takes place in Jerusalem marks the beginning of the gospel's spread among all the nations, even to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).[60] In the context of Luke-Acts, the list of nations, the well-known trope of imperial propaganda, comes to subvert Rome's claims to universal rule and claims this authority for Jesus and the church. One particular detail in the list seems not only to con rm this analysis but to suggest just how deeply the list means to contest Rome's claim to universal rule. Luke-Acts has not merely aped Roman national lists but has gone Rome one better. By placing Parthia at the head of his list, Luke may be o ering a subtle challenge to Rome.

roughout the rst century Parthia presented Rome with the most di cult military challenges and stubbornly remained outside of Roman control.[61] e name itself evoked the most signi cant example of discon rmation to Rome's claim of universal rule. In the Christian world of Luke-Acts, however, Parthia, the land that Rome could not conquer, is not only a constitutive member but stands at the very head of the list.

e establishment and maintenance of the Roman Empire brought about considerable political and cultural change, particularly for newly subordinate cities and peoples. Rome justi ed its *imperium* through various mechanisms, among them the claim to be the divinely appointed ruler of the world that had brought peace and other benefactions to its peoples. Many Greeks accepted, if not embraced, Rome's hegemonic discourse and sought ways to advance

58. Claude Nicolet, *Space, Geography, and Politics in the Early Roman Empire* (trans. H. Leclerc; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 29.

59. Ibid., 23.

60. The expression "to the end of the earth," is generally understood as a generalizing reference to the entire world. See W. C. van Unnik, "Der Ausdruck ὡς εσχάτου της γης (Apostelgeschichte 1:8) und sein alttestamentlicher Hintergrund," in *Sparsa Collecta e Collected Essays of W. C. van Unnik* (3 vols.; NovTSup 29–31; Leiden: Brill, 1973–83), 1:386–401.

61. On Parthia's independence from Rome, see Strabo, *Geogr*. 6.4.2; 11.1.2.1; 11.6.4; 11.9.2–3; 11.13.2; 16.1.28; 17.3.2.

themselves and their cities. Others, however, responded to Rome with resignation, resentment, and resistance. Beginning in the late first century, Greek authors, through the archaizing of language and admiration for the past glories of Greece, developed a dialogue with Rome and Roman power. The Second Sophistic did not speak in a unified voice regarding Rome. Nonetheless, those who wrote within this cultural milieu often sought to redress the imbalance of power. By reasserting their cultural and intellectual superiority, often with a highly critical gaze toward Rome, Greek elites found a way of fashioning their identity as Greeks rather than subordinates of Rome. Simon Swain offers a helpful understanding of the relation between cultural contestation and identity:

> Most Greek intellectuals viewed that there was only one culture worth pursuing in the ancient world—not the modern notion of a unitary Graeco-Roman culture, but the Greek idea of Hellenic culture that Greeks were more likely to possess than Romans. The Greeks were more than happy if Romans adopted their culture. Indeed … educated Greeks frequently judged Romans by their attitudes towards it and toward its exponents.[62]

5. Conclusion

A relatively small number of Greeks advocated, like Monty Python's Reg, the dismantling of the Roman state. A willingness to coexist with Roman authority, however, did not foreclose criticism and other less visible forms of resistance, particularly resistance to Roman hegemonic claims of universal authority. The Second Sophistic demonstrates how Greek literature of the time functioned as a means both of negotiating imperial language and thought and of constructing an identity that claimed both integrity and value.[63] In most instances, the Second Sophistic saw Rome as unequal to Greece in terms of intellectual and cultural promise and ability. Greece, understood usually as a cultural rather than geographic or local entity, remains superior to Rome. Thinking about Rome among the Second Sophistic had less to do with promoting or rejecting Roman rule; Roman *imperium* was a given. What mattered was promoting the continuing importance and value of Greek culture and in the process coming to define what constitutes being Greek under Roman rule.

Christians faced some of the same concerns that presented themselves to the wider Greek world. They too experienced Roman power and the dis-

62. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, 143.
63. Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature*, 34.

course that legitimated that power. Christians responded to both the reality and the rhetoric in di erent ways. In the case of Luke-Acts, the response itself is complex and variegated. Luke-Acts presents Roman power through the depiction of various Roman o cials and instances in which the relation between those o cials and Jesus, Paul, and other early Christians garners tacit if not explicit approval. is perspective, however, must be placed alongside another, perhaps more subtle but no less real critique of Rome and its purported imperial claims. As a member of a subordinate group living in the Roman Empire, Luke does not express ideas that directly contradict Roman authority. His work neither condemns Rome nor praises it or its rulers (except when they acknowledge the truth of the gospel). Rather, Luke-Acts appropriates the language of imperial hegemony—savior, peace, ascent, geographic catalogue—and claims it for Jesus and the church. It is precisely through the internalization and negation of the dominant political ideology that Luke-Acts subverts Roman claims of *imperium* and constructs an identity for being Christian under Roman rule. Applying John Barclay's analysis of Josephus, Luke-Acts seeks to "negotiate complex paths of self-expression through the adapted medium of the dominant discourse."[64] Luke-Acts invites its Christian audience to understand itself not only as distinct from but superior to Rome. Knowledge of the gospel allows Christians to reject Rome's imperial claims, which a er all are illusory, but not imagine its overthrow. Instead, they should seek to use structures of Roman power, its magistrates, and its emperor to serve the goals of spreading the gospel and preaching it to the nations. Even the longest list of Roman benefactions does not alter the essential understanding of how the gospel speaks truth to Roman power.

64. John M. G. Barclay, "The Empire Writes Back: Josephan Rhetoric in Flavian Rome," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (ed. J. Edmondson et al.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 318.

The Fall and Human Depravity

John Barton

In 1521 Luther was attacked by the Louvain (Leuven) theologian Jacob Masson, known by his Latin name Latomus, for having put forward the article "Every Good Work is Sin" ("Omne opus bonum est peccatum").[1] Luther's argument was that, because sin remains in the human person even a er baptism, everything a person does, even when it is fully righteous, remains tainted with sinfulness and the e ects of the fall. Hence every human work, not just those that are overtly evil, falls under God's judgment. e saving good news of the gospel is that God nevertheless has mercy. Although even the good we do is evil in his eyes, yet he loves us and pardons us and makes us righteous in Jesus Christ. A believer is therefore *simul iustus et peccator*, at the same time just and a sinner.

Luther justi es this position by reference to a particular Old Testament text, Isa 64:5–12:

> You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; {in our sins we have been a long time, and we shall be saved [This follows the Vulgate]}. We have all become like one who is unclean, *and all our righteous deeds are like a lthy cloth*. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people. Your holy cities have become a wilderness, Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and beautiful house, where our

1. See Martin Luther, "Rationis Latomianae confutatio (1521)," in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (ed. J. K. F. Knaake et al.; 67 vols.; Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–2000), 8:43–128 (I am following Luther's text on pp. 59–72.) Hereafter referenced with volume, page, and line numbers.

> {fathers} praised you, has been burned by fire, and all our pleasant places have become ruins. After all this, will you restrain yourself, O Lord? Will you keep silent, and punish us so severely?[2]

A er a preliminary skirmish about the historical reference of this passage, in which Luther shows that it must refer to the Babylonian attack on Jerusalem and not, as Latomus had suggested, to Assyrian or Roman attacks, he moves on to the substance of the argument. Because the passage implies eventual salvation for the speakers—at least it does if we follow the Vulgate in rendering "and we shall be saved" in verse 5—it cannot, according to Luther's understanding, be spoken in the name of the Jews, who are not on the path to salvation, but must have an application to believers: it is in their name that the poet speaks. In his historical context, he was referring not to open sinners but to those whose hearts were right with God and asserting that even they are sinners. And if that is so, then the passage must imply that even the good deeds of the believer are "like a lthy cloth." Luther backs this up with another text, Eccl 7:20, " ere is no one on earth so righteous as to do good without ever sinning," which he construes to mean, "no one on earth who does not sin even in doing good," thus making the same point about human depravity. Even the righteous sin in their good works—and so, of course, are thrown on to the mercy of God, who pardons and gives life to undeserving sinners.

Luther's general summary of his argument is worth quoting at length:

> our good works are not good, unless his forgiving mercy reigns over us. Our good works are evil, if the judgment of him who renders to every man threatens us.…
>
> This teaching I have confirmed with this text of Isaiah's—and rightly so, as far as I can now see; indeed it is now more firmly established for me than before the wanton mockery of Latomus. Isaiah means to say that God, being angry and having thrust the people into captivity and destruction, does not deal with them in mercy, but in judgment—no, rather in wrath. Even if under this judgment there are just and godly men whose righteousness—apart from judgment and under mercy's rule—could be pure, still nothing of this is now of any use to them, so that they are like the most polluted of those who are even now sinners. God in this wrath does not recognize them, but abandons the godly and ungodly alike. He does not restrain himself. What else, then, does he do but so deal with those that are just that he makes it appear they are not just? Nevertheless, because

2. This and all subsequent biblical references are taken from the nrsv. The brackets indicate where Luther's citation of the Vulgate text differs from the nrsv; the italics are mine. Luther cites the Vulgate in "Rationis Latomianae confutatio (1521)," 8:59,25–60,2.

> he judges truly and righteously, it must be that those who are under this judgment are at the same time righteous, and yet unclean. In this way he shows that no one ought to rely on his own righteousness, but solely on His mercy. This is also the meaning of Job 9[:22]: "It is all one; therefore I say, he destroys both the blameless and the wicked." This is not said of him whose innocence is counterfeit, and yet he destroys him not unjustly. So also here, Isaiah means the genuinely just and pure, for the Spirit does not speak in the spirit of the godly about the pseudorighteous, nor in the person of the pseudorighteous. Their righteousness is completely genuine and yet it is as if it were unclean, for they suffer everything which the wicked suffer, yet not innocently before a righteous God even if they are guiltless before men and our own conscience. …
>
> Therefore, if he judges, we all sin before him, and perish if he is angry; and yet if mercy covers us, we are innocent and godly before him and all creatures. This is what Isaiah says here.[3]

I would observe three aspects of Luther's exegesis that are important in understanding how he achieves this degree of scriptural support for his conclusions.

First, following the humanist tradition, Luther places great emphasis on a literal and exact understanding of the biblical text. Latomus had responded to Luther by saying that "all our righteous deeds" should be taken to mean "some of our righteous deeds." In other words, he had appealed to synecdoche, arguing that scripture said "all" when it meant only part of the whole. Luther takes this argument seriously, carefully examining places where synecdoche does indeed occur in the Bible. He points out that the present passage cannot adequately be understood in this way because the assertion that "all our righteous deeds are like a lthy cloth" is linked with the explicit statement that "there is no one who calls on your name." e juxtaposition of "all X" with "no not-X" rules out the possibility of synecdoche and makes it clear that literal universality is implied. is is thus part of Luther's characteristic appeal to the "plain sense" of the scriptural text. For him, Latomus begins with the general doctrinal conviction that there are such things as good works, and he therefore refuses to take at face value a passage that clearly rules such a possibility out; whereas he, Luther, is constrained by the plain sense of the text and forced to the conclusion that even good deeds have the nature of sin in the absence of the forgiving grace of God. We might look slightly askance at that, noting that the alleged "plain sense" of Isa 64 seems quite convenient for Luther and that

3. Martin Luther, "Against Latomus (1521)" (trans. G. Lindbeck), in *Luther's Works: American Edition* (ed. J. Pelikan and H. T. Lehmann; 55 vols.; St. Louis: Concordia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958–86), 32:172–73.

it is far from obvious that "what Isaiah says here" really is that "if he judges, we all sin before him, and perish if he is angry; yet if his mercy covers us, we are innocent and godly before him and all creatures." A biblical exegete today is likely to see both Luther and Latomus as importing "modern," that is, sixteenth-century, ideas into texts in which they were not actually at home. Nevertheless, the matter is presented in terms of Luther's being constrained by the meaning of the text even against what he might want to believe, while Latomus reads contemporary Roman Catholic doctrine into it.

Second, there is a general hermeneutical problem where a text is in the form of a psalm or hymn, because the speaker is not obviously God but a human person or persons. Luther gets around this by arguing that, where the contents of the psalm are not overtly contradicted elsewhere (as, e.g., in the case of the speeches of Job's friends), then the speaker is to be understood as the Holy Spirit, who speaks in the person of the righteous speaker of the text. us the speaker in Isa 64 is the community in exile (their words foreseen, of course, by the prophet Isaiah), and inasmuch as what they say is not contradicted, we must assume that God himself speaks through their words, accommodating himself to their speech. is means that what they say is to be taken as true, and they themselves as righteous—hence the pathos of the fact that they confess the wickedness even of their own righteous deeds, for in doing so they must be understood to be speaking the truth.

ird—and with this we come to our main concern with this whole controversy—it is taken for granted that what is said in the text has a general relevance to human beings as such. To use the terminology of this volume, the text is " xed" at the level of systematic theology by being taken as a statement about all human beings at all times in relation to the gospel, rather than, as many modern exegetes might assume, as a remark about a particular set of historical circumstances that cannot be generalized beyond them. If I were writing a commentary on Isa 64, for example, I should probably construe the statement "all our righteous deeds are like a polluted rag" as hyperbole, an expression of the extreme despair of the community living in the ruins of Jerusalem (which is where I think the lament in Isa 63–64 comes from), rather than as a claim that can be used in any time and place as an exact theological proposition. But for Luther, part of taking the text seriously and literally, that is, in its plain sense, is to see it as applicable on a universal level. Good people who witness to the fact that in the sight of God even their good deeds are no better than lth show us the true relation of creature to creator *sub specie aeternitatis*. In Luther's hermeneutic, what is said with solemnity in scripture in a particular set of circumstances can legitimately be taken out of those circumstances and applied in a general way. is is in a way the ultimate justi cation for *dicta probantia*, even though Luther himself is far more

nuanced in his use of the Bible than the later practice would become. Anyone who can claim to have "good deeds" comes under the condemnation of the particular people in the captivity in Isa 64.

All that being said, it is not clear that Luther is doing anything very di erent from what one might do nowadays in writing a biblical theology. Actual exegesis, as practiced in biblical commentaries, concentrates on the particular and time-bound in biblical statements and tries to put them in a speci c historical context. But biblical theology looks for the generalizable, for insights arrived at in particular sets of circumstances that are nonetheless more widely applicable. If one were writing an Old Testament theology, one would quite likely want to say something about human moral capacity and the relation between human goodness and divine grace. is would surely include some treatment of the way that God operates sometimes independently of human deserving, both in blessing and in punishment. ere are certainly sayings in Proverbs, for example, to which Latomus could have appealed as evidence for the freedom of the human will and the principle that God blesses the righteous and punishes the wicked, apportioning reward appropriately to what human beings merit. At the same time, it would be important not to overlook passages where there is no such equivalence. On the one hand, there are inscrutable divine punishments: the book of Job is lled with re ection on that problem. On the other hand, there are many places where God's blessing falls on those who do not deserve it—that this will happen constitutes a large part of the message of Deutero-Isaiah. e Old Testament is quite generally imbued with the sense that however well people act, they can never act so well that they deserve the riches God lavishes on his people: grace always exceeds deserts.

On the other hand, it is di cult to nd places in the Old Testament where Luther's proposition that every good work is sin can really be found. e text from Ecclesiastes makes the point well, for when it says that there is no one on earth who does well and does not sin, it is pretty clearly not saying, as Luther thinks, that one sins even in one's good deeds but rather that everyone, however good, does at times fall into sin. at is, it is denying total human *perfection* or perfectibility, not asserting that good deeds have the nature of sin and thus implying total human *depravity*. e Old Testament is highly realistic about human weakness and moral impotence but not ultimately pessimistic about it to the extent of denying that human beings can ever please God. e endless exhortations to act well in Deuteronomy, for example, make sense only if, as Jesus ben Sira was later to put it, "it was he who created humankind in the beginning, and he le them in the power of their own free choice. If you choose, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice. He has placed before you re

and water; stretch out your hand for whichever you choose" (Sir 15:14–16). e idea that humans are unable to act well, or even that when they do, sin is mixed inextricably with their good deeds, does not seem to be an idea at home in the Old Testament, to me at least. To nd it there involves reading in doctrinal notions from elsewhere, partly no doubt from Paul and partly from Augustine, and this is what Luther did. e text from Isa 64 only apparently supports his position: it is a cry of despair rather than a dogmatic de nition.

is type of distinction, which is related to a distinction of genres within the Bible, does not seem to fall within Luther's horizons but is largely the fruit of a biblical criticism later than his time, although arguably present *in nuce* in his demand for attention to the exact meaning of the text rather than to a dogmatic framework within which it should be read. What has happened, in e ect, is that biblical critics have taken to a logical conclusion ideas already developed in outline by him. If we now nd it hard to regard Isa 64 as teaching that *omne opus bonum est peccatum*, that is not because we are not heirs of Luther but because we have gone further along a road on which he was already setting out. We have taken further his insight that the biblical text should be interrogated on its terms rather than on ours and, like him, have been willing to believe that it may tell us things we would not have thought of ourselves, rather than merely serving as a useful repository of sayings that can illustrate preexisting dogmatic propositions.

If we wanted to describe in modern terms what Luther was doing, we might put it like this. Luther got his doctrine of the depravity of human conduct without grace from the Bible in the rst place, in the sense that it developed out of a particular reading of Paul. It was not a "nonbiblical" doctrine. However, it is a doctrine represented in Paul but almost nowhere else in the Bible. When he came to study other portions of scripture, in particular the Old Testament, he tended to read the Pauline doctrine into those texts in very much the same way that Latomus, and Catholic theologians generally, read into them the doctrinal formulations of their communion. What Luther did was to x as normative the general thrust of an important argument in Paul, represented of course primarily in Galatians and Romans, and then to take that as the hermeneutical key to other biblical texts. In cases where those texts clearly seemed opposed to the Pauline doctrine of justi cation, he was prepared to declare himself against their canonicity, as we see in the case of James. But with most texts he was content to read them in the light of his leading doctrine and not to see that the t was only partial.

If we are to use the Bible for systematic theology, we need a principled theory of what type of hermeneutic is acceptable. Luther's, with hindsight, is a bit ramshackle, working well enough in general but unable to cope with a real lack of correspondence between dogmatic theology and biblical theology. A

theology genuinely founded on scripture would look di erent from Luther's system, just as surely as it would from that of Latomus.

“Who Can Forgive Sins but God Alone?”: Jesus, Forgiveness, and Divinity

Stephen T. Davis

1

e present essay is a piece of theological and philosophical exegesis. It concerns the concept of forgiveness of sins, especially Jesus’ apparent willingness in the New Testament to o er forgiveness. I will deal primarily with Mark 2:1–12.

Section 2 lays some philosophical groundwork with a brief discussion of the phenomenon of forgiveness of one person by another. Section 3 deals with divine forgiveness and, more speci cally, with a recent argument by philosopher Anne C. Minas to the e ect that God, a perfect being, *cannot* forgive sins. en in section 4 we will turn to the Mark text, where Jesus seems to dispense forgiveness to a paralytic. My concerns will be both exegetical and theological; that is, I will try to deal both with the text itself and with its place in the church’s theology. In section 5 I will discuss two large ways of interpreting the text christologically, the rst of which I will call the traditional reading. e second, which comes in di erent varieties, I will call a christologically minimalist way of interpreting the text. I will argue that those interpretations are unconvincing. Finally, in section 6 I will argue that Jesus’ o er of forgiveness to people is one of the materials from which a coherent Christology should be constructed.

2

In order to forgive, one must have a certain moral standing. If you were to ask me to forgive some o ense that you once committed against, say, your brother, I would have to reply that I am unable to do so. I do not have the necessary moral standing. In general, the person who has the moral standing and thus the logical opportunity to forgive is the person against whom the

o ense was committed. In this case, your brother is the person to whom you should apply for forgiveness.

Forgiveness presupposes that something morally wrong has been done and that the perpetrator is responsible. Forgiveness is inappropriate in cases where the alleged wrongdoer did not really do the deed or cause it to occur or where she did the deed but under the cover, so to speak, of a legitimate excuse or justi cation. Only those who are truly guilty can be forgiven. So forgiveness is not the same thing as *justi cation* (which argues for no wrongdoing), *excuse* (which argues for no moral responsibility), *mercy* (which may or may not be involved in forgiveness and which may be granted by those who do not have the moral standing to forgive), or *reconciliation* (which can occur without forgiveness and is o en a result of forgiveness).

Forgiveness usually involves the forgiver voluntarily: (1) having a change of heart toward the evildoer, such as giving up anger and resentment toward her; (2) giving up the desire for punishment of the wrongdoer (although forgiveness can be consistent with punishment still being administered); and (3) reconciliation, that is, restoration of the old relationship between the two parties (assuming that there was one). Forgiveness is rarely morally *required*. Since it presupposes the guilt of the wrongdoer, forgiveness also assumes the legitimacy of both the resentment felt by the o ended person and the punishment of the wrongdoer. Accordingly, forgiveness is normally morally allowed but not normally required.

Taken to extremes, forgiveness can have an unsavory aspect. Lest forgiveness slide over into servility, condoning of evildoing, or lack of self-respect on the part of the o ended person,[1] certain acts are its normal prerequisite. ey include contrition (or apology), repentance, and some degree of reparation (where possible) on the part of the wrongdoer.[2] is is not to deny that there can be cases where forgiveness is possible and even desirable quite apart from the satisfaction of some of these prerequisites.

As Jean Hampton argues, forgiving is not the same thing as condoning. Condoning a given act entails accepting it, taking it as morally allowable. Forgiveness, on the other hand, entails that the forgiver continues to hold that the forgiven deed was morally wrong.[3]

In some traditions, for example, the Christian tradition, forgiveness is a virtue. Christians are encouraged to forgive those who commit o enses

1. This is a point that is emphasized by Jeffrie Murphy in Jeffrie G. Murphy and Jean Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 17.

2. See Richard Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 73–92.

3. Murphy and Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, 40–42, 83.

against them. Harboring grudges instead of forgiving can be damaging to the soul. Indeed, according to scripture (Luke 17:4; Matt 18:22), Christians are to forgive people unlimited amounts of time, since that is how God forgives them. In places in scripture the point is made so strongly as to constitute a virtual prerequisite for receiving forgiveness. "Forgive us our debts," Jesus teaches the disciples to pray, "*as we forgive our debtors*" (Matt 6:12; see also 6:14–15).[4] In other words, those who do not forgive will not be forgiven.

3

Suppose that God exists, and suppose, as Christians hold, that all sins are offenses against God. Then it would seem that, in the case of any sin or o ense whatsoever, God has the moral standing to forgive it (of course, so do the people who are harmed by it). If wrongdoing amounts to breaking moral laws, and if God is the author of the moral laws that have been transgressed, then God (unlike most human judges) has the right simply to forgive the guilty sinner.

Christian teaching is that all human beings are guilty before God (Rom 3:23; Jas 2:10). We are called to be obedient to God's command and are accountable to God for our failures to do so. Guilt is simply the moral state of someone who has done something morally wrong. Feeling guilty and being guilty are to a certain extent correlated in normal human beings, but they are not the same thing. It is possible to be guilty without feeling guilty, as we see with people who are unaware of being responsible for an evil deed or unaware of its moral wrongness. It is also possible to feel guilty without being guilty, as we see with people who are overscrupulous, who blame themselves inordinately.

Christianity also teaches that God not only can but does forgive sins: "God for Christ's sake has forgiven you" (Eph 4:32); " eir sins and iniquities I will remember no more" (Heb 10:17). Virtually all human beings are troubled by guilt. ere are secular ways of dealing with guilt, but Christianity teaches that in forgiving our sins God makes our guilt disappear, no longer exist. "As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us" (Ps 103:12). Accordingly, divine forgiveness is not the same thing as *clemency* (where one is punished more mildly than one deserves) or even *pardon* (where one is not punished at all): in both cases, the person's

4. This reference (italics added) and all subsequent references to the Christian Bible are from the nrsv.

guilt remains. In divine forgiveness, on the other hand, sinners are not just pardoned but cleansed (Col 2:13; 1 John 1:9; 2:12).

Let me try to be more precise as to the meaning of "divine forgiveness." Let us say that the statement "God forgives act X committed by Smith" entails the following ve statements:

(1) Smith is morally responsible for the occurrence of X.
(2) X is morally wrong.
(3) Accordingly, Smith is guilty and deserves punishment.
(4) Smith sincerely repents and asks God for forgiveness.
(5) God cleanses Smith from the guilt of committing X and does not punish Smith for doing X.

So in forgiveness God sets the sin and guilt aside and restores the old fellowship and friendship between God and the sinner. ere is no more enmity between them.

However, philosopher Anne C. Minas has recently argued that God's perfection is logically inconsistent with God's granting forgiveness. God's perfection, she points out, entails that God has "a perfect moral sense, a perfect moral will, perfect knowledge, and perfect benevolence."[5] Minas discusses various possible senses of the word "forgive" and argues in each case that a perfect being cannot o er that sort of forgiveness. Minas is surely correct in several such cases.

(1) She points out that forgiveness sometimes amounts to revising or retracting an adverse moral judgment about an act. She correctly argues that a reversal of moral judgment of that sort is never in order for a perfect being. None of the judgments of a perfect being is subject to reversal. (2) She points out that forgiveness at other times amounts to deciding that a certain moral rule is defective in the special circumstances of a given case (stealing is wrong, to be sure, but perhaps not to feed one's starving children; killing a person is wrong, but maybe not in self-defense). Again, it is hard to see how a perfect being could forgive in this sense; no perfect being will entertain faulty moral rules. (3) She notes that forgiveness sometimes amounts to a decision simply to overlook or condone someone's moral wrong, especially if the o ense was minor. But it is hard to see how a morally perfect being can condone anything that is genuinely morally wrong. (5) Minas also argues that forgiveness usually involves giving up a feeling of resentment held against the evildoer

5. Anna C. Minas, "God and Forgiveness," in *Philosophy and Faith: A Philosophy of Religion Reader* (ed. D. Shatz; New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 25–34.

because of the harm his evil deeds have done; sometimes this involves an attitude of "forgive and forget" or "no longer taking the o ense personally" on the part of the injured person. But, she argues, it is hard to see how a perfect being could be harmed or injured, let alone how a perfect being could forget anything.

So far Minas appears to be on rm ground, but she then argues that forgiveness might amount to something akin to (5) clemency exercised by a judge or pardon by a high o cial. But, she asks, how could a perfect being simply remit justi ed punishment? Will that not make God something like a practical joker, she asks, assigning punishments that God knows (with perfect foreknowledge) he is going to remit? If the punishment was morally justi ed, and if a perfect being is perfectly just, she says, no perfect being can forgive in this last sense.[6]

Let me stray from Minas's argument for a moment and ask: Is divine forgiveness *unjust*? In one sense, it is. Christian teaching is that all human beings are guilty of sin and that the just penalty is eternal separation from God. Because of God's grace, however, we can be forgiven. What sinners must hope for, then, is something di erent from justice. If we were to be treated only according to the canons of justice, we would be condemned. Grace is, so to speak, di erent from and better than justice. But in another sense God's mercy is not unjust. Since God has certain rights over his creatures, rather than duties to them imposed from the outside, God may compassionately forgive sinners, if God wants to do so, without being accusable of injustice.

To return to Minas, she is correct that a perfect being will never forget a fact that it once knew. It is also true that a perfect being, understood in the broadly omistic way that her argument presupposes, cannot be harmed or injured. But the valid point that our sins do not damage or injure God does not entail that they do not do wrong to God. Indeed, that is just what they do. Just as you do me a moral wrong if you tell me a lie (without, let us suppose, the lie harming me in any way), so we do God a wrong whenever we disobey any of his commands, even though God, a perfect being, has not been damaged or lessened in any way.

I conclude that the type of divine forgiveness de ned above in the fourth paragraph of this section (section 3) of the paper is not refuted by Minas's

6. Minas also raises the question of the apparent injustice of God forgiving some sinners but not others. Her discussion of this point (see ibid., 29) turns into an implicit argument for universalism, the theory that all sins will be forgiven and all people will enjoy eternal bliss. But since this point, while important in itself, is quite separate from Minas's main argument that a perfect being cannot forgive at all, I will ignore it.

argument.[7] Divine forgiveness need not involve changing a judgment about a moral issue, need not have anything to do with defective moral rules, need not entail condoning evil deeds, and need not have anything to do with feelings of resentment.

4

Mark 2:1–12, the story of the paralytic who was let down through the roof and was forgiven and then healed by Jesus, is a fascinating text for many reasons. (1) Form critics have discussed the history of this pericope in great detail.[8] (2) With parallels in both the other Synoptic Gospels (Luke 5:17–26; Matt 9:1–8), redaction critics have also mulled it over.[9] (I will not discuss the possibly related but quite di erent story of the healing in John 5:1–18.) (3) e story plays a crucial narrative role in Mark's Gospel, as the rst serious indication in Jesus' ministry of controversy with the religious leaders. (4) e story is dramatic and arresting as a piece of literature. (5) Finally, the story appears to have dogmatic rami cations, or at least so Christians have usually thought.

I will not discuss the interesting question of whether this story really occurred as told by Mark or even largely as told by Mark. at is, I will not o er any arguments on the general historicity of the text or the more speci c question of whether the words attributed to Jesus in this pericope constitute the *ipsissima verba* or even capture the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus. I want to ask, rather, what theological implications the story has *as it stands* in Mark (which, of course, Christians have always taken as part of sacred scripture).[10]

e most obvious implication has to do with Jesus' o er of forgiveness to the paralytic. is o er has traditionally been taken as an implicit claim

7. Minas burlesques the idea of divine forgiveness by saying, "He did the actions all right, but after God's forgiveness, they are no longer wrong" (ibid., 33). No, the evil deeds of evildoers remain evil; they are just no longer counted against them.

8. Following Bultmann (*e History of the Synoptic Tradition* [2nd ed.; trans. J. Marsh; Oxford: Blackwell, 1966], 12–14, 227), Vincent Taylor reviews the various arguments of the critics and concludes that Mark 2:1–12 is a compilation of various sources. See his *e Gospel according to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1963), 191–201.

9. See, inter alia, Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and eological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 161–65.

10. There are several fascinating and controversial points in relation to this text that I will not discuss: the relationship between sin and sickness in first-century Judaism and in Jesus' teachings, the healing of one person because of the faith of other people, the clairvoyance and healing power exhibited by Jesus, and the meaning of "Son of Man." I am interested only in Jesus' apparent ability to forgive sins.

to divinity or at least to divine prerogative on Jesus' part.[11] As we have seen, we all have the right to forgive sins that have been committed against us, but only God has the right to forgive sins *simpliciter*. This point is made clear in the Hebrew Bible (Exod 34:6–7; 2 Sam 12:13; Pss 32:1–5; 51:3–4, 9–11; 103:3; 130:4; Isa 43:25; 44:22; Dan 9:9; Zech 3:4).

Accordingly, the church fathers saw Mark 2:1–12 as proof of Jesus' deity; they pointed to: (1) Jesus' clairvoyant ability to read the thoughts of the scribes (that only God can know the minds and intentions of human beings is attested to in 1 Sam 16:7; 1 Kgs 8:39; 1 Chr 28:9; Ps 139:1–2, 6, 23; Jer 11:20; 17:9–10); (2) his ability to heal the paralytic; and, most important, (3) his forgiveness of the paralytic's sins. On this third point, Irenaeus asks: "How can sins be rightly remitted unless the very One against whom one has sinned grants the pardon?"[12] Novatian declared: "If Christ forgives sins, Christ must be truly God because no one can forgive sins but God alone."[13]

There appears to be no evidence that the Messiah, as most first-century Jews understood that figure, would have had the ability to forgive sins.[14] This is also true of such figures as the Suffering Servant and the eschatological high priest. Carefully surveying the evidence, Robert A. Guelich concludes: "No evidence has emerged to indicate that the Jews expected even the Messiah, regardless of how one defined this expectation, or any other eschatological figure, to have the right to forgive sins."[15] The point, then, is that Jesus was accused of blasphemy because in this text and others he assumed the right to forgive sins that were committed against God rather than personally against him.

5

As noted, there seem to be two possible ways of interpreting Jesus' willingness to offer forgiveness. The traditional interpretation is that Jesus, the incarnation of God in our midst, had as God the full divine authority to forgive sins. Jesus himself was the agent who was dispensing forgiveness of sins.

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11. See Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 112–15.

12. Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, eds., *Mark* (ACCS 2; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 28 (*Haer.* 5.17).

13. Ibid., 28 (*Trin.* 13).

14. C. S. Mann, *Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 27; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1986), 224.

15. Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26* (WBC 34A; Dallas: Word, 1989), 87.

But some argue for what I call a christologically minimalist interpretation of the text. ere are several ways in which this is done. Some say that in Mark 2:1–12 and similar texts Jesus was not forgiving people (so to speak) on his own initiative but was rather speaking on behalf of God, relaying (as it were) God's own decision to forgive the person. On this reading, Jesus was not explicitly claiming to be divine but to have, so we might say, God's power of attorney. On this theory, Jesus certainly had special status but not necessarily divine status. He was more like God's spokesperson or representative.

Others argue that Jesus was simply conveying the news that God had forgiven the guilty person. Like Nathan in his confrontation with King David (2 Sam 12:1–15), Jesus was simply assuring the guilty party of God's forgiveness. John Hick (following E. P. Sanders) opts for this interpretation. In his *e Metaphor of God Incarnate*, Hick argues that Jesus was not usurping God's prerogative to forgive sins but was only pronouncing forgiveness, "which is not the prerogative of God, but the priesthood."[16] On this interpretation, Jesus had little special status other than that of a passer-on of assurance or good news from God. He certainly did not have divine status. But it seems to me that this second way of interpreting the text cannot be sustained. Let me now make a case for that claim.

It must initially be admitted that there are some texts that can possibly be read in a christologically minimalist way. One would be Luke 7:36–50, where the woman's tears can perhaps be read as contrition for her sins and even repentance; maybe, in this case, Jesus saying, "Your sins are forgiven," amounted to no more than Jesus performing a priestly role, that is, declaring that a sinner who had truly repented would be forgiven by God. But there are problems with this reading: What quali ed Jesus to function as a Levitical priest? e central point on this issue is that in Mark 2:1–12 the paralytic is reported as having done *none* of the acts that were normally requisite for receiving divine forgiveness. ere is no evidence of sorrow for his sins, confession of them, repentance from them, nor of any sacri cial act at the temple or anywhere else.

It must also be admitted that Mark 2:1–12 may appear to be somewhat anomalous because there is only one other occasion in the Synoptic Gospels where Jesus explicitly pronounced forgiveness: Luke 7:36–50, the text just mentioned. But there are other narratives in the Gospels where forgiveness of a sinner is implicit (Luke 19:1–10; John 8:1–11). Moreover, Jesus had frequent table fellowship with sinners (e.g., Mark 2:15–17; Luke 15:1–2). Finally, Jesus

16. John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 32. See also E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 240.

o ered many gurative expressions of forgiveness (e.g., Matt 18:27; Luke 7:42; 15:9, 11–32; 18:14). ese texts certainly seem to reinforce the idea that Jesus explicitly o ered forgiveness.

One theologically minimalist reading of Mark 2:1–12 is provided by the Jesus Seminar. In *e Five Gospels*, the Seminar argues that either Jesus said the words attributed to him assuming the power to forgive or he did not. If he did (which the Seminar raises as a possibility but ultimately rejects), then "v. 10 may represent a bold new claim on Jesus' part that gives authority to forgive sins to all human beings."[17] But if he did not say them, then "the early church was in the process of claiming for itself the right to forgive sins and so would have been inclined to claim that its authorization came directly from Jesus."[18] In either case, so the Seminar seems to be saying, Jesus was claiming no divine prerogative here. Now, as noted, in the present essay I am not interested in debating whether the historical Jesus actually said the words attributed to him in our text. But I think it ought to be rather obvious that the "bold new claim" that the Seminar attributes to Jesus on its rst reading of the text is implausible in the extreme.[19]

e crucial point is this: the violent reaction of the scribes in Mark 2:7 ("Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?") seems to belie minimalist readings. It would hardly amount to blasphemy simply to assure repentant sinners that God had forgiven them. It seems that any priest or any believer in the God of Israel could do that. But suppose the point is pressed that, since the paralytic did *not* repent or o er temple sacri ce for his sins, the charge against Jesus must have been something like falsely assuring a man who did not deserve it of divine forgiveness. But would that charge have amounted to blasphemy? It seems that, if the scribes thought that Jesus was guilty of that o ense, what was called for was correction of his error, not execution (the sanction for blasphemy).

Moreover, in 2 Samuel Nathan explicitly names God and attributes the forgiveness of David to God. Jesus did neither. He appears to dispense forgiveness on his own initiative. He did not just assure people that forgiveness

17. Robert W. Funk et al., *e Five Gospels: e Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 44.

18. Ibid.

19. Had the Seminar argued that Jesus was passing on the authority to forgive sins not to all human beings but to a specific group of people, it would have been on firmer ground. Unfortunately, I do not have the space on this occasion to discuss the "keys to the kingdom" and the "binding" and "loosing" authority that Jesus passed on to Peter and the church (Matt 16:19) or the power to forgive or retain sins that Jesus gave to the disciples in John 20:23 and (apparently) Matt 9:8.

had occurred; he seemed to act as the agent of forgiveness. He seemed to the scribes to be blaspheming because he was claiming to be able to do what only God could do. at this is a serious charge indeed (Lev 24:15–16 calls for the death penalty for blasphemy) is revealed by the fact that it was invoked at Jesus' trial (see Mark 14:64).

One point that might be taken in favor of minimalist readings is the claim of Jeremias and others that the words "Your sins are forgiven" (ἀφίενταί σου αἱ ἁμαρτίαι) (Mark 2:5) constitute a "theological passive," which would indicate that the act of forgiving was done by God, not Jesus.[20] If this is true, then perhaps Jesus' declaration was similar to that of a Levitical priest, who makes atonement for the sins of a person, and then "he shall be forgiven" (Lev 4:26; cf. 4:31). e issue, then, is this: Was Jesus in Mark 2:1–12 forgiving sins or declaring on behalf of God that God had forgiven sins?

A point from John Chrysostom seems telling here: "Whenever Christ had to do any of these much greater things [such as forgive sins or make laws], you will not characteristically nd him praying or calling on his Father for assistance. All these things, as you discover in the text, he did on his own authority."[21] In short, Jesus seems to be doing more here than simply o ering encouragement or assurance to people on the grounds that God has forgiven them or even declaring that God had forgiven them. He certainly seems to be *doing* something, acting as an agent.

at Jesus had authority to forgive sins is consistent with another New Testament notion, that Jesus, the Son of Man, will be the eschatological judge (Matt 25:31–46; Mark 8:38; John 5:22). As Gary Shogren argues, this means that even in advance of the nal judgment Jesus is able to pronounce acquittal and judgment (Matt 11:20–24//Luke 10:13–15).[22]

Whether or not Mark 2:5 is a theological passive (and the active voice in 2:7 and 2:10 casts doubt on the idea that Jesus was not acting on his own initiative), it surely seemed to the scribes in the story that Jesus was doing more than simply announcing what God had already done. As Guelich insists:

> Whereas the scribes might have questioned Jesus' right in 2:5b to pronounce forgiveness in God's name apart from the cult and without demanding repentance, or even to pronounce God's forgiveness of sins now rather than in the eschaton, their implicit charge does not arise from the divine pas-

20. Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (trans. J. Bowden; NTL; London: SCM, 1971), 1:114.

21. Odem and Hall, *Mark*, 28–29 (*On the Incomprehensible Nature of God*, homily 10.19).

22. Gary S. Shogren, "Forgiveness (NT)," *ABD* 2:835.

sive in 2:5b. Rather it focuses on the issue expressed in 2:10, Jesus' usurping God's authority to forgive sins. The answer to the scribes' question, "Who except God…?" is clearly, "the Son of Man" (2:10).[23]

6

It seems, then, that the first and more traditional reading of Mark 2:1–12 is the most sensible. Indeed, the others are hard to reconcile with the climactic statement of our text, "The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:10). Of course, Jesus was not going about declaring, "I am God." But he does seem to be claiming to be able to do something that only God has the right to do. Accordingly, the church fathers were right in holding that our text has christological rami cations.

There is nothing in this text that expresses the language of later creedal orthodoxy. There is nothing here about persons or natures or essences or hypostatic unions. Not everything that Christians want to say about Jesus is implicit in this text. Still, it is clear that Mark 2:1–12 is and ought to be one of the texts that Christians take into consideration in doing Christology. In this text, Jesus seems to be giving himself such authority as to be setting himself on a par with God. His willingness to offer forgiveness was surely one of the things about Jesus that made such an impression on early believers that they reached the conclusion that he was divine.[24]

23. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, 87.

24. I relegate to a footnote a final point: the present essay in effect argues against the idea that any attempt to fix the meaning of a biblical text is no more than an act of politics, an exercise of power. I am claiming that it can be cogently argued that the traditional christological interpretation of Mark 2:1–12 is correct.

Worship in Spirit and Truth: Louis-Marie Chauvet's Sacramental Reading of John 4:21–24

Kevin Mongrain

1. Introduction

e purpose of this essay is to argue that the contemporary Roman Catholic liturgist Louis-Marie Chauvet's sacramental theology can be read as an extended interpretation of a conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in John 4:21–24.[1] e Samaritan woman says to Jesus, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain; but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem" (John 4:19–20).[2] Jesus replies in verses 21–24:

> "Believe me woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

1. Chauvet's sacramental theology is primarily presented in *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (trans. P. Madigan and M. E. Beaumont; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995). This book was first published in 1987 in French with the title *Symbole et Sacrement: Une relecture sacramentelle de l'existence chrétienne* (Paris: Cerf, 1987). Chauvet condensed and simplified *Symbol and Sacrament* into a shorter English work, *e Sacraments: e Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2001).

2. All citations from scripture in this chapter are from the nab. This English translation is the basis of the English Catholic Lectionary and is the translation that is most similar to the French Bible and lectionary used by Chauvet.

My argument is that Chauvet's theological reading of this passage, particularly the phrase "worship in spirit and truth," seeks to preserve the passage's multivalence, and in so doing resists alternative theological readings ignoring its multivalence, and reducing its complexity. In other words, this chapter contends that, rather than extracting one layer of meaning from a biblical text for theological purposes, as is o en common with theological commentaries on scripture, Chauvet formulates a multivalent pneumatic-liturgical theology capable of safeguarding the full multivalence of John 4:21–24 and, by extension, the multivalence of the Fourth Gospel as a whole. is chapter presents an analytical discussion of Chauvet's pneumatic-liturgical theology and its application to John 4:21–24, contending that Chauvet's pneumatic-liturgical interpretation of John identi es and integrates three binary pairs in Johannine theology that other theological commentators either ignore altogether or treat as virulently antithetical. e binary pairs are (1) spiritual and institutional religion; (2) liturgical and ethical religiosity; and (3) Jewish and Christian religious identity. Chauvet's pneumatic-liturgical interpretation allows us to see that in John 4:21–24 each pole in each binary pair exists in a unity-in-tension with its opposite pole. is means that each pole in each pair retains its own distinct character as di erent from its binary partner, but neither pole seeks to erase the other pole or reduce it to itself; each binary pair exists in a stressful union characterized by mutual correction *and* mutual a rmation.

is essay further contends that Chauvet's purpose in bringing his multivalent pneumatic-liturgical theology to bear on his reading of John 4:21–24 is not simply to preserve the multivalence of this text but also to *reinstate* it in opposition to three simplistic theological misinterpretations of John's Gospel, all of which are rooted in reductive misreadings of these verses, particularly the phrase "worship in spirit and truth." e rst misinterpretation Chauvet opposes does not see the unity-in-tension of spiritual and institutional religion in John 4:21–24. Instead it sees only hostility between the two poles and hence reductively reads "worship in spirit and truth" as Christian spirituality's declaration of independence from organized religion, particularly ritual-liturgical religion; this declaration is in almost all cases hostile to Judaism and its supposedly "crude" and "worldly" political-legalistic character. e second misinterpretation opposed by Chauvet's pneumatic-liturgical theology fails to see the unity-in-tension between cultic religiosity and ethical-prophetic religiosity in the text. Instead, it reads the text as setting cultic religiosity and ethical-prophetic religiosity in an absolute dichotomy. e third misinterpretation opposed by Chauvet fails to see the unity-in-tension of Jewish religious identity and Christian religious identity. Instead, it reads John as teaching a crude form of Christian supersessionism in which Christian and

Jewish religious identities are utterly irreconcilable and hence the latter must be destroyed and replaced without remainder by the former. As this essay shows, Chauvet's sophisticated trilevel pneumatic-liturgical theological reading of John 4:21–24 rejects all three misinterpretations and injects some very necessary awareness of complexity into discussions of this extraordinarily multivalent biblical text.

2. Worship in *Spirit* and Truth: Cult as Learning That God Is Not a Thing to Be Understood, Experienced, or Used

is section presents Chauvet's understanding of the binary pair of spiritual and institutional religion and analyzes his use of this rst aspect of pneumatic-liturgical theology. Commenting on the meaning of Jesus' saying to the Samaritan woman in verse 24 that "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth," Chauvet raises this question:

> Then why not ask: In order to worship the Father what need do we have of all these rites which unfold in a more or less obligatory fashion and make use of antiquated gestures and movements, of pre-programmed formulas, of materials imposed in the name of "tradition," without speaking of the ostentatious and solemn ceremonies with which the church surrounds them? Does not all this run counter to the spirit Jesus speaks of or at least hamper it? And thus we are led to dream of a "truer," therefore necessarily more spare religion in which contact with the pure word of God would at last be possible.[3]

Chauvet's initial response to this kind of thinking seems unequivocally negative: " is is pure imagining!" he rails.[4] For Chauvet the desire to escape sacramental rituals in the hope of thereby having a "direct line" to God and/or Christ is tantamount to Gnosticism.[5] e central problem with Gnosticism is that it "denies the experience of the real" and persists in a perverse desire for the impossible; any hope for a "direct line" to the divine is worse than an illusion and worse than a fantasy; it is "idolatry" because it is "nothing more than the imaginary projection of ourselves into God."[6] However, this critique does not tell the whole story. Chauvet also evidences respect for the intuition behind the antisacramental desire for a pure contact with God:

3. Chauvet, *Sacraments*, xi.

4. Ibid.

5. Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 172–73; see also 186, 188, 219, 222, 391, 449–50, 488, 493, 539–41.

6. Ibid., 301.

> Nevertheless, the question underlying this dream expresses an intuition that deserves to be considered: that the church can never be in serene possession of its liturgical rites, that it must constantly resist the temptation to imprison itself—as well as God—within them. For these rites, which have Christian meaning only if they are filled with the word and in-dwelt by the Spirit, contest the word of God in the very moment they attest it. In this sense, the temptation to do away with them can be salutary.[7]

What does Chauvet mean with his Johannine-sounding claim that liturgical rites should be "in-dwelt by the Spirit"? As we can already surmise, being indwelt by the Spirit cannot mean being detached from organized religion and its liturgical rites. At a more fundamental level, Chauvet's perspective is thoroughly incarnational. He argues for the fundamental corporeality of Christian faith, or in his words, the "arch-sacramentality" of Christian existence.[8] Chauvet asserts:

> the fact that Christian identity cannot be separated from the sacraments (in particular those of initiation) means that faith cannot be lived in any other way, including what is most spiritual in it, than *in the mediation of the body*, the body of a society, of a desire, of a tradition, of a history, of an institution and so on. What is most spiritual always takes place in the most corporeal.[9]

is claim has a vast array of implications, and one of the most important for Chauvet is that it requires a new kind of theology: "Any theology that integrates fully, and *in principle*, the sacramentality of the faith requires a consent to corporality, a consent so complete that it tries to *think about God according to corporality*."[10] is means for him that Christian theology must always have as its point of departure a spirituality of the body in which God "inscribes" (in Jacques Derrida's sense of "arch-writing") Christ's Spirit on the "body" of scripture, the "body" of human "desire," and the "body" of the church's culture, tradition, and institution.[11] For Chauvet, sacramental rituals are God's primary method of inscribing the spirit of Trinitarian love on the body. Chauvet relies on psychoanalytical theory to make this point: ritual practice ("lit-*urgy*" as the work of prayer/worship) is better able to e ect conversion from self-righteous egoism to the other-centered attitudes of the Trinitarian

7. Chauvet, *e Sacraments*, xi.

8. Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 154–55.

9. Chauvet, *e Sacraments*, xii. See also Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 146.

10. Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 155.

11. See ibid., 141–55, 213–27, 355–76. Chauvet's critical use of "arch-writing" is derived from Derrida's *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), especially chs. 1 and 2.

God than conceptual explanation ("theo-*logy*") because rituals are more successful than concepts in reaching and transforming unconscious desires.[12]

We can begin to see, then, that Chauvet's reading of the Johannine phrase "worship in spirit and truth" is quite interested in holding spiritual and institutional religion together. Yet Chauvet is also equally interested in maintaining the healthy tension between them. If the Spirit works in the "hidden order of desire," Chauvet contends in an argument with strong a nities to Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings, then the triune God's life of reconciled love will inscribe itself in human bodiliness beneath the mind's defense mechanisms. Sacramental rituals inscribe the Trinitarian relationships of self-giving/self-receiving in the "hidden order of desire" without the idolatry-prone mind's conscious permission.[13] e nature of these relationships was rst inscribed in the body of scripture, which narrates the story of Jesus' completely nondefensive and nonmanipulative worship of the Father. Jesus' life and death is for Chauvet an "antisacri ce," or a pure "spiritual sacri ce" that refuses to set up idolatrous rival alternatives to God's rule (ritual sacri ces, rigid codes of morality, or any other religious ideology that claims for itself the power to take away the sins of the world). e noncoercive love of the Trinity narrated in the body of scripture is then inscribed on the body of the church through sacramental rituals.

Sacramental worship must, however, be "worship in spirit." Chauvet maintains that any discussion of the grace of the sacraments requires a sophisticated pneumatology; "worship in spirit and truth" turns out to be quite di erent than quasi-gnostic readers of John 4:21–24 assume. e difference is that for Chauvet "worship in spirit and truth" requires a strong institutional locus, namely, formal liturgical rites with a strong christocentric focus and speci c attention to the spiritual "lesson" (or better, "antilesson") of the cruci xion.

For Chauvet, the cross makes possible "worship in spirit and truth" in the purest sense. On the cross Jesus reveals God's true identity and hence Christians (unlike the Samaritans of John 4) now "understand" what they worship (John 4:22). However, this means Christians understand that they do not understand. e cross teaches that God is a reality that always exceeds all attempts to understand and grasp God; the cross undermines all tidy and pat theological lessons and reveals the fullness of truth (as divine love) by "crossing out" the supposed "truth" of God as ideology and conceptual mastery.[14] Chauvet's main point here is that "we stop projecting onto Jesus, on

12. Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 95–98.
13. Ibid., 47–62, 531–37.
14. Ibid., 499.

the basis of his 'divine nature,' our *a priori* notions of what God is; these are precisely the ones that need to be converted."[15] God the Father allows Jesus to be killed in a senseless and meaningless act of violence. Jesus does not use his divinity to save himself. Jesus was emptied of himself by God the Father so that he could be lled by God the Spirit.[16] Here God de nes God as the one who gives away fullness, lives in emptiness, and thereby receives fullness from another. But the cross also de nes the root meaning of sin: humanity's idolatrous theological tendency to use God to a rm as absolute human-designed religious systems and a priori theological theories.[17] If theology remains focused on the cross, it will learn that God refuses to be a kept idol. Jesus expresses in his dying cry on the cross (Ps 22:1) his true desire to live in perfect obedience to the rst commandment. Jesus thereby showed his true relation to the Father as one who manifests his identity as God by withdrawing from our grasp.[18] In his experience of "letting-God-be-God" and of "radical di erence" Jesus learns his "likeness" to the Father. On the cross Jesus lets God be God by refusing to "use" God or to "play at being God."[19] is is for Chauvet how we ought to interpret the Johannine phrase "worship the Father in spirit and truth."[20]

From this understanding of "worship in spirit and truth" Chauvet constructs a properly theological (i.e., not philosophical) antide nition of God: God is the one who crosses out God. So here then is how Chauvet reads the Johannine phrase "God is Spirit" in verse 24. God comes to us as pure gi of Spirit and not some "thing" to be managed and controlled. Without a theology of the Spirit, the institutional church's liturgical memorial of Jesus cruci ed becomes only ne-sounding religious propaganda incapable of identifying and rooting out the idols in human hearts. A theology of the Spirit at work in institutionally created and practiced rituals makes it clear that sacramental rituals are rituals of God's radical di erence.[21] Indeed, the Spirit's *essence* is to be the one who shows humanity that God is radically Other. Chauvet writes, " e Spirit is God as *ungraspable*, always-surprising, always-elusive; it is the God who cannot be managed, continually spilling over every religious institution."[22] Put di erently, the Johannine phrase "God is Spirit, and those

15. Ibid., 493.
16. Ibid., 498–99.
17. Ibid., 501.
18. Ibid., 506.
19. Ibid., 506–7.
20. Ibid., 507.
21. Ibid., 511.
22. Ibid., 513.

who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" means for Chauvet a form of learned ignorance that makes possible a nonidolatrous relationship with God. e Spirit's task is to help all sacramental-liturgical rituals remain facilitators of nonidolatrous prayer. is is most especially true in the sacramental rituals of forgiveness and reconciliation, with the Eucharist being the clearest example of this.

Yet if the Eucharist is for Chauvet the clearest example of "worship in spirit and truth," it is so because it brings spiritual and institutional religion into a unity-in-tension. e Eucharist is therefore the most anti-idolatrous sacrament and the sacrament most threatened by idolatry. Christ's eucharistic bodily presence is objective in the sense of arch-writing, so it ought to be the best resistance to the idolatry of the imaginary. e Eucharist ought to be iconic, but it is precisely its radical objectivity that gives rise to idolatrous and fetishistic perversions. e abyss between icon and idol is deep but narrow—one can all too easily step across it. To stay on the icon side of the abyss we need a strong sense of Christ's *absence*, Christ's *absolute di erence*.[23] is absence does not negate presence—there is no zero-sum game here. Both presence and absence belong together as "one ambivalent reality."[24] It is the Spirit who makes this holy ambivalence possible. "Worship in spirit and truth," then, means understanding Christ's presence in the eucharistic liturgy not as the presence of a thing but rather as a "coming-into-presence," that is, as a personal Other addressing the hearts of the worshipers. e presence is an elusive presence immune to intellectual manipulation. Hence the Eucharist is for Chauvet the "presence-of-the-absence" of God.[25] Eucharistic worship, therefore, instantiates the true meaning of worshiping the Father "in spirit and truth."

Chauvet's multivalent reading of "worship in spirit and truth" in John 4:21–24 is quite fascinating in itself. However, it is also possible to aver that Chauvet believes the pneumatology of John 4:21–24 is only part of a larger pneumatic-liturgical dimension of Johannine theology as a whole. Indeed, it is quite suggestive that John 6:22–71 (Jesus' discourse on the bread of life) also receives extended attention from Chauvet.[26] Chauvet obviously recognizes that John's presentation of Jesus' teachings in the discourse on the bread of life is christological-eucharistic and not explicitly pneumatological. However, Chauvet is also aware that, unlike the Synoptic Gospel writers, John takes Jesus' teachings on eating his " esh" and drinking his "blood"

23. Ibid., 403–4.
24. Ibid., 404.
25. Ibid., 405.
26. Ibid., 222–26.

(John 6:51, 55–56) out of their Last Supper context and inserts them into the middle of his precruci xion ministry. In other words, John re ects on the Eucharist outside of what was already at the end of the rst century an o cially institutionalized ritual. Chauvet reads this displacement as a Johannine statement of the unity-in-tension between spirit and institution in Jesus' imagery of eating and drinking his esh and blood. e central theological point in the discourse on the bread of life, Chauvet contends, is the cruci xion of the Messiah and its hard-to-swallow implications. e Word of God came down from heaven as a new manna (the eternal word made esh), only to be killed by the legitimate religious authorities. is was a major scandal. How could God become human, receive the death penalty for blasphemy, and still be God? is scandal was indigestible for many of Jesus' Jewish contemporaries. e issue behind the quarrel in verse 52—"How can this man give us his esh to eat?"—is the struggle between belief in staid, predictable, institutionally sanctioned religion and belief in something that overturns what counts as religious commonsense. Chauvet believes John thought the eucharistic ritual was an apt metaphorical vehicle for this message. Chauvet reads John as teaching that to have faith in *this cruci ed Messiah* means "chewing, slowly ruminating over the scandal of the Messiah cruci ed for the life of the world.… e thoughtful chewing of the Eucharist is precisely the *central symbolic experience* where we encounter this bitter scandal of the faith until it passes through our bodies and becomes assimilated into our everyday actions."[27] Christians need this metaphor of chewing because their necessarily institutionalized faith always tempts them to think they already know exactly what God is and what redemption means independent of the Holy Spirit's work to erase idolatry from their hearts. is chewing gradually liberates them from preconceived idols and enables their institution's liturgies to be truly "worship in *spirit*."

3. Worship in Spirit and *Truth:* Salvation Is from the Jews

is section of the essay presents Chauvet's understanding of the binary pair of liturgical and ethical religiosity and analyzes how he uses this second aspect of his pneumatic-liturgical theology to preserve theologically the multivalence of John 4:21–24. Recall that the second misinterpretation of this passage that Chauvet opposes fails to see the unity-in-tension between worship and ethics in the text. is misinterpretation takes two forms. e rst reads "worship in spirit and truth" as mandating that ethical-prophetic religi-

27. Ibid., 225.

osity eclipse cultic religiosity. e assumption behind this mandate is that the only kind of worship that could possibly count as true would be action in the world on behalf of the poor, outcast, and marginalized. e actual ritual activities of the institutional church have minimal, if any, importance because they "are burdened with all the sins of the world—co-optation, alienation, suspect archaisms."[28] e second form of this misinterpretation is the reverse of the rst. It reads "worship in spirit and truth" as mandating that cultic religiosity eclipse ethical-prophetic religiosity. e assumption behind this mandate is that the only kind of worship that could possibly count as true would be ritual activity serene in its own sphere of sacred symbolism and untainted by the cares of the profane world.

In arguing for his pneumatic-liturgical theology Chauvet clearly considers the war between these two misinterpretations of John 4:21–24 the source of much contemporary theological and pastoral mischief. He writes,

> it is not self-evident that a religion which proclaims "worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23–24) should develop ritual forms of worship.… It is easy to simply let oneself forget the evangelical *tension* between ritual practice and ethical practice and, overly confident in the ritual (as well as hierarchical and dogmatic) system of the institution, act as if the rites were natural to Christianity. Was the Church really that healthy when in all serenity it overdid sacramentalization? And is it really that unhealthy, as one sometimes hears today, simply because it conducts its ritual practice in a manner that some find less comfortable? Is it not this uncomfortable tension between the sacramental pole of the institution and the ethical pole of verification that holds the Church evangelically upright and in good health under "the law of the Spirit"?[29]

It is more than plausible to assume that Chauvet believes overlooking the phrase "salvation is from the Jews" in verse 22 is the root problem with misinterpretations of verses 23–24 that disconnect worship and ethics. However, it must be admitted that, when Chauvet himself comments on Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman in John's Gospel, he omits explicit reference to this phrase from verse 22. Nevertheless, verse 22 is never far from his mind when thinking about maintaining the necessary tension between worship and ethics.[30] Let us, then, examine his re ections on the unity-in-tension of

28. Ibid., 228.

29. Ibid., 228–29. See also Chauvet, *e Sacraments*, 54–66.

30. For example, there is a lengthy section in *Symbol and Sacrament* entitled "The Historic-Prophetic Status of the Jewish Cult" that immediately follows his reflections on misreadings of John 4:23–24 (ibid., 229–39).

worship and ethics in Israelite religion and Judaism as a prelude to his understanding of the phrase "salvation is from the Jews."

Chauvet argues that, in contrast to the timeless myths of pagan religions, history is central for Judaism. Contrary to the nonbiblical notion of time as a "spiral" and an "open cycle," the general Israelite notion of time was linear, with punctuating events and "moments of unexpected newness."[31] Chauvet further explains that for biblical Judaism God reveals God's own identity in history, not simply in creation. is is clear from the fact that the biblical Hebrews interpreted the creation of the world in terms of the creation of Israel (Isa 54:5), and not vice versa.[32] e covenant with the Jews is central to the unfolding of God's plan, central to the whole creation of time and free human creatures. ere is in biblical Judaism no sense of a xed ahistorical fate that dictates its will irrespective of free human e orts. From here Chauvet explains that, because God intervenes and interrupts history in surprising ways, Judaism knows that history matters and cannot be dismissed as a eeting nothing in relation to the eternal. Instead, history has absolute relevance as the arena of God's saving work. is is the basis of cultic *memorial* in Judaism. Liturgy shapes Israel's identity precisely because it is centered on the act of collectively remembering God's interruption of the people's lives to assign them a role in God's plan. As one might expect, Chauvet holds that the Passover is *the* paradigm of Jewish liturgical memorial. e Israelites are commanded in Exod 13:8 always to remember what Yhwh did for them in Egypt. All future generations will have a Jewish identity only insofar as they insert themselves through memory into their Israelite past. e liturgical memorial is not paralyzing nostalgia or self-pity but a *commemoration* that regenerates, re-enlivens, and mobilizes for new action in the present. In this sense, people have a future only insofar as they have a tradition of memory.[33]

is is clearly illustrated, Chauvet argues, in the future perfect tense of the theological-literary style of Deut 26:1–11.[34] When read aloud in the

31. Ibid., 229.

32. Ibid., 230.

33. Ibid., 232–34.

34. This passage reads, "When you have come into the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you as a heritage, and have occupied it and settled in it, you shall take some first fruits of the various products of the soil which you harvest from the land which the Lord, your God, gives you, and putting them in a basket, you shall go to the place which the Lord, your God, chooses for the dwelling place of his name. There you shall go to the priest in office at that time and say to him, 'Today I acknowledge to the Lord, my God, that I have indeed come into the land which he swore to our fathers he would give us.' The priest shall then receive the basket from you and shall set it in front of the altar of the Lord, your God. Then you shall declare before the Lord, your God, 'My father was a wandering Aramean who went down to Egypt

community, Deuteronomy's ctional memory of Moses speaking to Israel yesterday becomes a performance of Moses speaking to it today. In both cases Moses invokes the memory of the exodus and the journey into Canaan to teach the people that land must be "always received" as a gi and never taken for granted.[35] e context, Chauvet explains, is an increasingly "sedentary" Israel on the verge of a reactionary agrarian-paganism because of its historical amnesia.[36] is is why, he contends, the Deuteronomist is unequivocally reminding Jews that their God is a God of history, not a nature-god. e text attempts to repristinate Israel as a religious nation by reminding it of God's interruption of time in the past through liturgically enacting a divine interruption in the present.[37] e ethical injunction of verse 11 demands that Jews verify their past dispossession by acknowledging and ethically dealing with the dispossessed living among them in the present. e text names two classes of dispossessed: aliens and Levites. In the rst case of the dispossessed, Jews are reminded of their original status as slaves. In the second case they are reminded that a er they possess the land they owe everything every day to Yhwh and must continually receive the land with a deep and perpetual sense of gratitude. Once in the land that God gave them, the Israelites were tempted to forget the lesson of the manna: they must live from the grace of God. Hence to remind them of this lesson, and thereby avoid a swerve into paganism, the Deuteronomist speaks in the present tense of the land as a gi given "today," like the manna. Returning the rstfruits is required as a ritual gesture of gratitude that dispossesses Israel of any sense of achievement and "brings home to Israel *its responsibility within history*" to all those in its midst who are also, in some sense, dispossessed.[38] Hence, in its actual ethical practice of justice for the poor, Jews accomplish their liturgy by accomplishing their identity as God's people in the plan of history. Citing Emmanuel Levi-

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with a small household and lived there as an alien. But there he became a nation great, strong and numerous. When the Egyptians maltreated and oppressed us, imposing hard labor upon us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and he heard our cry and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression. He brought us out of Egypt with his strong hand and outstretched arm, with terrifying power, with signs and wonders; and bringing us into this country, he gave us this land flowing with milk and honey. Therefore, I have now brought you the first fruits of the products of the soil which you, O Lord, have given me.' And having set them before the Lord, your God, you shall bow down in his presence. Then you and your family, together with the Levite and the aliens who live among you, shall make merry over all these good things that the Lord, your God, has given you."

35. Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 234.

36. Ibid., 235.

37. Ibid., 236.

38. Ibid., 238.

nas, Chauvet concludes that love of God and love of neighbor are "the very principle of the whole Law."[39]

Yet it is precisely this "liturgy of neighbor" that provokes a "crisis in ritual" in Israel's religion. The temptation to fuse nature worship, such as Baalism of various types, with worship of the God of Moses was strong, and resisting it proved to be a wrenching process. As the great prophets so clearly taught, cult can never be just lip service, never be memory for its own sake.[40] Cult must have ethical consequences in the world, or else it is not true cult; worship is not an end in itself but only the beginning of duty to God. The issue here for Chauvet is not simply an ethical imperative in Judaism but more comprehensively the crisis provoked in Israelite religion as it came to terms with what it meant to be a historical religion as opposed to a nature religion. To explain this crisis and how Israel dealt with it, Chauvet borrows some categories from Paul Ricoeur. Working with Ricoeur's notion of first naïveté,[41] Chauvet argues that in Israel the first naïveté of precritical worship centered on the sacred symbols derived from nature and its cyclical processes. In Chauvet's version of Ricoeur's notion of second naïveté, Jewish worship demythologizes its symbols and critically distances itself from "profane" nature as it integrates prophetic-ethical concerns into its cultic focus on the Lord of history. In place of the first naïveté a second naïveté emerges that resists the iconoclastic trajectory of demythologization and generates a "postcritical" symbolic-metaphorical worldview capable of integrating cultic symbolic rituals and ethics.

When read alongside his commentaries on John 4:21–24 and 6:22–71, Chauvet's commentary on the foot-washing episode in John 13:3–17 demonstrates this point as well as his keen eye for multivalent meaning in John.[42] Indeed, like his reading of John 6:22–71, Chauvet's interpretation of John 13:3–17 also uses the Johannine displacement of the Eucharist from the Last Supper for a theological purpose. Chauvet notes that, just at the moment in the Last Supper when the institution of the Eucharist is expected, John inserts the foot-washing episode. This makes a significant theological point about the meaning of worship, and eucharistic worship in particular. After Jesus completes the washing he tells his disciples, "I have set you an example, that you also should do *as* [καθὼς] I have done to you" (John 13:15). Chauvet writes,

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid. To make this point about the priority of justice over pure cultic ritual, Chauvet cites on this page Amos 5:21–24; Hos 6:6; Isa 1:10–17; Jer 7:1–28; Mic 6:6–8; Pss 50:12–15; 51:18–19; Sir 34:24–35:4.

41. See Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (trans. E. Buchanan; Boston: Beacon, 1969), 351–52.

42. See Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 260–61.

" is *kathos*, we would say, has the value of a *sacramentum*—that is to say, of a gi on the part of Christ—and not simply of an *exemplum*."[43] Eucharistic worship is only "worship in spirit *and* truth" insofar as it facilitates a passage to ethical living outside the liturgical assembly. "To wash one another's feet is to live existentially the memory of Christ that the Eucharist makes us live ritually."[44] e spiritual truth of worshiping Christ in the symbolism of the liturgical foot-washing ritual is proved in the lives of those who verify the truth of their worship through ethical living.[45]

is outlines the meaning Chauvet nds in Jesus' comment to the Samaritan woman in John 4:22, "You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews." What Jesus and his followers understand, Chauvet maintains, is that, because the God of Israel is the Lord of history who commands ethical good works, to be pleasing to God worship must always be "in a constant state of crisis."[46] Far from being eliminated or reduced in Christianity, this state of cultic crisis is exacerbated a er Easter and Pentecost.[47] Understanding both the crisis and its exacerbation, Chauvet assumes, is essential for understanding Jesus' assertion in verse 23 that "the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him."

4. Worship in Spirit *and* Truth: Christian Life in a Third Naïveté

is section of the essay presents Chauvet's understanding of the binary pair of Jewish and Christian religious identity and analyzes how he uses this third aspect of his pneumatic-liturgical theology to reinstate the multivalence of John 4:21–24. We have already seen this third aspect emerge in Chauvet's handling of the cultic-ethical question. Now we examine Chauvet's pneumatic-liturgical theological reading of Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman that "the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem" (John 4:21) as his framework for dealing with the question of Jewish and Christian religious identity in 4:21–24.[48]

Granting that it is di cult to know precisely what Jesus believed about the place of ritual in the new covenant, Chauvet makes the following case.

43. Ibid., 261.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Chauvet, *e Sacraments*, 59.
47. Ibid., 65.
48. Ibid., x.

First of all, following John the Baptist, Jesus was a critic of "cultic formalism."[49] With John, Jesus stands in a long prophetic tradition. Additionally, neither John nor Jesus was innovative in the Jewish context in summing up the law as love of God and love of neighbor. e best guess we can make, Chauvet speculates, is that Jesus intensi ed the prophetic criticism of worship detached from ethics and announced a coming new form of worship.[50] Chauvet likely reads "the hour is coming" in verses 21 and 23 as a Johannine announcement of a new post-Easter cultic dispensation, that is, worship in spirit and truth in the senses already described.

e question now is, How does Chauvet read the conjunction "and" in Jesus' announcement of a new cultic order of worship in spirit *and* truth? In other words, what is the connection between the anti-idolatrous institutionally learned ignorance of "worship in *spirit*" and the unity-in-tension of cult and ethics in "worship in *truth*"? e answer is this: it is the same (non)thing that connects the letter of the scriptures to the living body of the church, namely, the Spirit (the "antiname" of God) as the presence-in-absence of the risen Christ.

To begin making sense of this answer, let us return to Chauvet's claim that the tension between cult and ethics in Judaism is "doubled" in Christianity. e di erence between biblical Judaism and Christianity is not that the former is less ethically focused than the latter. Rather the di erence, Chauvet repeatedly insists, is theological, and speci cally pneumatological and eschatological.[51] Christianity still has a cultic dimension, but its cult "is simply *of another order* than the Jewish cult … [because] it is founded entirely upon the rereading of the whole religious system, a rereading imposed by the confession that Jesus is the Christ. us, all rests on Easter and Pentecost."[52] Later Chauvet restates this conviction by ingeniously extending Ricoeur's argument about second naïveté into an argument for a third naïveté.

> If for Judaism the cult can be practiced only through a second critical naiveté, in Christianity it may be practiced only with what we can call a

49. Like John the Baptist, Jesus was part of the movement against bloody sacrifices at the temple. Yet he also probably attended temple (attested eleven times in the Gospels) and prayed there with his fellow Jews. But he did not participate in the sacrifices of animals. Jesus' attitude, Chauvet believes, is "unclear" to us. Perhaps it was unclear to the earliest Christians who still attended temple but fought among themselves about the prescriptions of the law. The whole subject of Jesus' attitude toward the temple vexed even the Gospel authors. Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 244–46.

50. Ibid., 247.

51. Chauvet, *e Sacraments*, 62; idem, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 239, 250–52.

52. Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 250.

> "*third*" naiveté. It is still a naiveté, for every symbolic action "embraces" the whole of a subject, rather than directing itself solely to its brain. But it is a naiveté modified by a critical coefficient which, because of Easter and Pentecost, comes to reinforce the prophetic criticism of cult or, according to Christian hermeneutics, to proclaim the fulfillment of this criticism through the gift of the Spirit. Thanks to the gift of the Spirit through the Risen One, the transition from the letter to the body is from now on eschatologically possible.[53]

What is this "critical coe cient"? Perhaps Chauvet's meaning here would be clearer if he had modi ed "critical" with "self." e (self-)critical coe cient is that which allows Christian worship in spirit to become worship in truth. In a cultic third naïveté Christianity assimilates the critical component of Judaism's second naïveté and stringently applies it to the demythologization of organized religion and the religious self. e third naïveté emerges as a form of cultic religiosity puri ed by a radical critique of the self-idolatrous delusions of closed religious systems (e.g., the hyper-pious self, the self-obsessed religious authorities, the self-referential legal and cultic structures, the centripetal forces of the tradition). Life in the third naïveté is therefore a "new modality" of faith in the Lord of history, a modality that Chauvet also designates as the "new Christo-pneumatic principle" of faith.[54] Let us examine both ways of describing the third naïveté to clarify how Chauvet interprets the conjunction "and" in Jesus' announcement of a new cultic order of worship in spirit *and* truth.

Life in the third naïveté is a "new modality" because it shares the basic structure of Jewish identity as a religion of faith in the Lord of history. Returning to his analysis of the rstfruits passage in Deut 26:1–11, Chauvet contends that this story epitomizes in a crystal-clear manner the structure of Jewish identity. e structure is tripartite: (1) God initiates contact with Israel by bestowing utterly gratuitous gi s (freedom from slavery and the land of Canaan); (2) Israel recognizes the gi s as gi s—not the reward of their own e orts—and receives them as such; (3) Israel makes a return gi to God in thanksgiving (the fruit of the soil and justice for and joyfulness with the aliens and Levites in their midst).[55] is structure of gi –reception–return gi is, according to Chauvet, foundational for Judaism. He argues that the gi corresponds to God's saving works in history as they are preserved in the scriptures. e reception, Chauvet further argues, corresponds to the ritual-

53. Ibid., 265.
54. Ibid., 252.
55. Ibid., 283–84.

cultic performance of memory in the present where worshipers acknowledge their ongoing status as receivers of a gi that cannot possibly be paid back. Cult is an exercise in spiritual education in which worshipers are schooled in the graciousness and gratuitousness of faith in the Lord of history. In the liturgical pedagogy of grace, the worshipers learn to abandon any notions of religious achievement and become pure receivers who simply open themselves to a gi beyond measure. However, Chauvet maintains, pure receptivity is only the middle step in the process. A liturgy of reception also prepares the worshipers to make a return gi in which they undertake the active work of paying forward God's gi into creation; ethical service to the neighbor is the true rstfruits o ered to God. In paying forward the gi (liberation and land) as the return gi (ethical service to the marginalized, poor, and least ones), Jewish worshipers express their cultic schooling in graciousness and gratuitousness. By making cultic rituals of receptivity the "point of passage" from gi to return gi , the worshipers become a people of "symbolic exchange" whose very identity is to live as receivers in a gi -giving network free from any "business exchange" calculations of what is given and what is owed.[56]

Chauvet then applies the category of gi –reception–return gi he derives from his reading of the Hebrew scriptures to Christianity, arguing that Christianity is a "new modality" of Judaism's "symbolic exchange" religiosity. It shares the same tripartite pattern of gi –reception–return gi . Indeed, he argues that the eucharistic ritual is at its core a symbolic exchange rite that follows Judaism's gi –reception–return gi pattern. However, he also sees a substantive di erence. Christianity's mode of ritualizing and living this pattern is characterized by "newness" in the sense that the gi originating the process is not liberation from slavery or land or even the law but rather Jesus Christ and his Spirit.[57] To interpret the Johannine phrase "the hour is coming and is now here" (verse 23), Chauvet turns to Paul's theology in the Letter to the Romans. Chauvet argues that Paul's understanding of "newness" ought to be read as teaching that the "Christo-pneumatic principle" is a "new modality of justi cation" in which the focus is now on "faith in Jesus as Christ" and on the gi of grace, not one's own righteously rigid adherence to "the works of the Law."[58] Chauvet is at pains to make clear that his Pauline distinction between the "oldness" of the law and the "newness" of Christ and Spirit is not a crude form of supersessionism in the sense that Christian religious

56. For Chauvet's discussion of the difference between "symbolic exchange" and "market exchange," see ibid., 99–109. For his discussion of worship as the point of passage from gift to return gift, see 281–82.

57. Ibid., 253–54 and 287.

58. Ibid., 252.

identity has totally invalidated and replaced without remainder Jewish religious identity. Rather, the Pauline distinction of "oldness" and "newness" is an assertion about Christian religious identity and its perpetual state of unity-in-tension with the ongoing reality of Jewish religious identity. In a Pauline argument with clear Johannine resonance, Chauvet maintains that "our term *'oldness' does not designate the Old Testament as such, but what led this Testament to become 'old' by condemning the newness in Jesus Christ*. e term refers to whatever led to the smothering of the newness, which ran across it and worked through it."[59] e "oldness" therefore is not the law as the "letter"—Chauvet insists that there can be no Spirit without letter—but rather the law as "imprisoned in the letter" and disconnected from the ethical religiosity advocated by the prophets.[60] e "newness" therefore was even present in Israelite and Jewish religion prior to the coming of Christ. is claim certainly renders discussions of Jewish and Christian identity more rather than less di cult.

To make discussions of Jewish and Christian identity even more complex, Chauvet also makes clear that "newness" is not the New Testament or the church but only Christ and the Spirit. It is perilous to forget this, he warns. " e Church is always in danger of reducing the gospel to the oldness of a document in which the Spirit would be extinguished, of a ritual that would again become a 'good deed' and a 'means of salvation,' of a corps of ministers who would be priestly intermediaries between humans and God."[61] In other words, the great and perennial temptation for Christianity is self-righteous self-idolatry. e herald who only proclaims the love of God but does not receive it as gi and then return the gi in ethical living soon becomes the herald who only proclaims his own righteousness. e once-banished demon of legalism always threatens to return to the house with seven other demons more evil than itself. When properly received, Chauvet believes, the Christo-pneumatic principle both drives Christians into the world to sanctify it with good works and prevents them from becoming either complacent in the knowledge of their own salvation or deluded in undertaking good works with messianic pretensions. ose who worship truly in the Spirit do not become self-idolaters falsifying the Christian cult from within.[62] He insists the Spirit enjoins on the church the labor of an unceasing "pass-over" from the oldness that threatens it to the newness it proclaims accomplished in Christ. is

59. Ibid., 287.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., 277, 279–80, 311–15, 530.

conversion is a death to oldness and "the violence that it imposes on others and that nds its fundamental alibi in 'God.' "[63]

For Chauvet, therefore, the "newness" of the Christo-pneumatic principle predisposes Christians to worship in spirit *and* truth, which means in part that they must live their Christian identity in both unity and tension with Jewish identity. e new mode of "symbolic exchange" in a self-critical third naïveté is entirely dependent on Jewish religious traditions of the unity-in-tension of both spirit and institution and worship and ethics, and yet it exists in a nonviolent critical tension with the way these traditions are o en lived in practice. It is both in unity and in tension with Jewish identity because it shares with and critically applies to it the religious imperative to subvert the idolatrous confusion of liturgical rites and magical manipulation of God and/or ideological manipulation of people. Indeed, Chauvet believes Christianity must be receptive to Jewish critique when its ritual life falls into idolatry. Rituals governed by the new Christo-pneumatic mode of symbolic exchange thinking ought to facilitate demastery and openness to the "scandal" of God's powerlessness on the cross. ey ought to challenge the unconscious legalistic desire to buy grace with scrupulously performed rites and good works or, more insidiously, the desire to buy grace by taking on the role of an angel of wrath who performs dirty deeds of violence in God's name. Practiced in the (self-)critical coe cient of the Cruci ed One's Spirit, Christianity's sacramental rituals ought to undermine the unconscious desire to live "according to a pattern of force and competition" that always excuses its own crucifying violence by pu ng itself up with the "megalomaniacal" belief that its ways are God's ways, its truth is God's truth, and its goals are God's goals.[64] Issues of peace, justice, and mercy therefore are at the very core of what it means to "worship in spirit *and* truth."[65] e real test of the spiritual e cacy of the eucharistic *epiclesis* comes in the ethical life of Christians outside the assembly: "go in peace to love and serve the Lord." For Chauvet, it ought to be clear for Christians living in the third naïveté that they must live in the world in a posture of dialogue without rivalry, competition, or enmity of any kind.[66]

5. Conclusion

I conclude this chapter with this question: Is it possible to extend Chauvet's pneumatic-liturgical reading of John 4:21–24 to the Fourth Gospel in its

63. Ibid., 289.
64. Ibid., 299, 531–37.
65. See ibid., 552–54.
66. Ibid., 522–23.

entirety? Another form of this same question asks: Is the Fourth Gospel in its entirety multivalent in the ways that Chauvet's reading suggests is the case with John 4:21–24? As we have seen already, it does seem plausible to read John 6:22–71 and 13:3–17 as sharing generally the same multivalence as John 4:21–24. It is not unrealistic to think that a close reading of the Fourth Gospel would show that it is at its core a profoundly multivalent text centrally concerned with the unity-in-tension of spiritual and institutional religion, liturgical and ethical religiosity, and Jewish and Christian religious identity.

ere would be many merits to demonstrating that one could plausibly read John's Gospel in its entirety in this way. It would be particularly important if Chauvet's understanding of the unity-in-tension of Jewish and Christian religious identity in John 4:21–24 could be shown to be pervasive in Johannine theology. For example, if John's Gospel is multivalent on the Jewish-Christian identity question in the way Chauvet's reading suggests, then we would be compelled to seriously rethink many of the indictments against it for being the root cause of the Christian tradition's long and ugly history of violence against Jews. is is the case because the delicate theological negotiations underlying the unity-in-tension of Jewish and Christian religious identity provide the guiding pattern for negotiating the unity-in-tension of liturgical and ethical religiosity, which in turn provides the guiding pattern for negotiating the unity-in-tension of spiritual and institutional religion. A genuinely spiritual and institutional religion practicing an authentic liturgy of the neighbor (i.e., a religion that worships in spirit and truth) would simply not encourage or condone violence of any kind against anyone, nor would it facilitate the types of ecclesiastical-institutional self-idolatry that are sine qua non for religiously motivated hatred and violence.

is does not mean that Chauvet's reading of John clears away all the thorny theological problems inherent to the issue of Jewish and Christian identity. On the contrary, his multivalent reading makes things more complex, not less. For instance, we must grant that, even on Chauvet's reading, John's Gospel remains a supersessionist text; the categories of "oldness" and "newness" necessarily belong to a supersessionist theological paradigm. However, it also must be noted that not all forms of supersessionism are equal. ere is a spectrum of possible Christian versions of supersessionism ranging from the crude and demonological (i.e., Christian theologies that are hostile toward Jewish religious identity and treat it as toxic to Christian religious identity) to the quali ed and benign. Chauvet's supersessionism obviously falls very much nearer the latter pole: Chauvet's insistence that John is teaching a complex unity-in-tension of spiritual and institutional religion and liturgical and ethical religiosity shows the strong a nities of his theology with Jewish theology both before and a er the creation of the biblical canon; this insistence

means also that he reads John as teaching a complex multivalent understanding of the relationship between Jewish and Christian religious identities that stands in direct contrast to both simplistic dichotomous understandings and simplistic homogenizing understandings of this relationship. If Chauvet's reading of John 4:21–24, particularly verse 22, can be plausibly extended to the entirety of John's Gospel, we would have to conclude that John's supersessionism is also by far more sophisticated than crude, by far more benign than demonological. Chauvet's reading of John simply will not allow Christians to demonize the Jewish Other or assert a perverse theological notion of their Christian identity as a religion that replaces Judaism. On the contrary, Chauvet shows that John teaches Christian identity as a complex project that must discover itself in a di cult relationship of unity-in-tension with the ongoing reality of postbiblical Judaism. is conclusion would signi cantly challenge increasingly popular and simplistic readings of John's Gospel that insist it presents Christian and Jewish religious identities as mutually toxic and therefore that it is a demonological supersessionist text.[67] It would also lend theological support to those more careful scholarly readings that seek to do justice to the multivalent set of theological themes at work in the Fourth Gospel, particularly its presentation of Christian religious identity's complex negotiations with the spiritual and institutional as well as cultic and ethical dimensions of Judaism and the Hebrew scriptures.[68]

67. See, e.g., Elaine Pagels, *e Origin of Satan* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 89–111; see also James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword: e Church and the Jews* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 92–93.

68. For one particularly admirable example, see Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* (ed. F. J. Moloney; New York: Doubleday, 2003), 132–42, 157–83.

"... Who Proceeds from the Father"—and the Son? The Use of the Bible in the *Filioque* Debate: A Historical and Ecumenical Case Study and Hermeneutical Reflections

Bernd Oberdorfer

It has o en been noted that the Christian Bible does not contain an explicit doctrine of the Trinity.[1] ere are, of course, numerous references to Jesus Christ's unique relation to God (e.g., Mark 1:11 par.; Luke 10:21–22 par.) and some remarks concerning the Holy Spirit's signi cant role in preserving the church community (e.g., John 13–16). e New Testament also contains the well-known proto-Trinitarian formulas, such as the Great Commission statement in Matt 28:19 and the closing blessing in 2 Cor 13:13.[2] ese allusions to the Trinity are, however, ambiguous. ey can be interpreted either in a subordinationist direction, subordinating both Christ and the Spirit to the Father, or in line with the traditional Trinitarian concept of co-equality among the three persons.[3] is ambiguity was not problematized in the early

1. For my other treatments of the topic of the Trinity and the *lioque* debate, see Bernd Oberdorfer, *Filioque: Geschichte und eologie eines ökumenischen Problems* (Forschungen zur systematischen und ökumenischen Theologie 96; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001); idem, "Brauchen wir das Filioque? Aspekte des Filioque-Problems in der heutigen Diskussion," *KuD* 49 (2003): 278–92; idem, "Filioque," *RGG* 2:119–21 (part 2, column 120 by Karl Christian Felmy); idem, "The *Filioque* Problem—History and Contemporary Relevance," *Scriptura* 79 (2002): 81–92.

2. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19); "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you" (2 Cor 13:13). These and all subsequent references to the Bible are taken from the nrsv. For details regarding these proto-Trinitarian formulas, see my *Filioque*, 37–58, as well as Michael Theobald, "Trinität II: Neues Testament," *RGG* 8:602.

3. For the history of the doctrine of the Trinity in the early church, see my article, "Trinität III: Dogmengeschichtlich: 1. Alte Kirche," *RGG* 8:602–8.

centuries of Christianity until Arius explicitly denied divine status to Christ, claiming that Christ was a creature created *ex nihilo*. Arius's claim led to the ensuing Trinitarian debates. In the fourth century both the Arians and the Nicene theologians worked out their respective Trinitarian concepts on the basis of the Bible.[4] Both groups attempted to interpret in a coherent way the diverse biblical witnesses to God. ese interpretations were inevitably shaped by the intellectual and cultural milieus of late antiquity. Di erences in respective Trinitarian concepts resulted from the di erent ways in which a biblical hermeneutic was reciprocally related to its conceptual-interpretative structure. In the case of the early church's Trinitarian controversies, the di erences in Trinitarian conceptions was due to the di erent conceptual shapings of common biblical witnesses.

e entire history of the Trinitarian doctrine can be read in light of the reciprocal relation between conceptual framework and biblical hermeneutic. More important, this relation is also relevant in systematic-theological claims about the Trinity. Biblical-hermeneutical issues are at the root of Trinitarian explication. e Trinity is not the result of speculative theory; rather, it represents a coherent reading of the biblical witnesses. e biblical root of Trinitarian thinking has o en been disregarded in the history of Christianity; yet without an explicit thematization of its relation to the Bible, the doctrine of the Trinity is in danger of becoming irrelevant as a practical expression of Christian faith. It comes as no surprise that in the West the frequent criticism launched against the Trinity is that it has nothing to do either with the Bible or with practical life; it is either merely an example of abstract metaphysics or a paradoxical logic with no practical use.[5]

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4. Adolf von Harnack (*Die Entwicklung des kirchlichen Dogmas I* [vol. 2 of *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*; 4th ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1909], 203, 204 n. 1, and 205 n. 2) lists the biblical references that the Arians and their opponents Alexander and Athanasius used. The Arians explicitly mentioned Deut 6:4; 32:39; Prov 8:22; Ps 45:8; Matt 12:28; 26:39–41; 27:46; 28:18; Mark 13:32; Luke 2:52; 18:19; John 11:34; 12:27; 13:21; 14:28; 17:3; Acts 2:36; 1 Cor 1:24; 15:28; Col 1:15; Phil 2:6; Heb 1:4; 3:2. Alexander and Athanasius alluded to: Pss 2:7; 35:10; 45:2; 110:3; Prov 8:30; Isa 53:8; Mal 3:6; Matt 3:17; 11:27; John 1:1–3; 1:13, 18; 10:15, 30; 14:8–10:28; Rom 1:20; 8:32; 9:5; Col 1:15; Heb 1:2–3; 2:10; 13:8; 1 John 5:1, 20; Rev 1:4. Karlmann Beyschlag correctly points out in his *Grundriss der Dogmengeschichte* ([2nd ed.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988], 1:277 and n. 147 for a list of biblical references) that Athanasius developed his theology out of a "network" (*Gitternetz*) of biblical arguments.

5. A famous example from Kant: "the doctrine of the Trinity, taken literally, is without any use for practical life" ("Aus der Dreieinigkeitslehre, nach den Buchstaben genommen, läßt sich schlechterdings *nichts fürs Praktische machen*"). See Immanuel Kant, "Der Streit der Fakultäten," in *Werke in Zehn Bänden* (ed. W. Weischedel; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), 9:303 (translation mine). This philosophical criticism should not obscure the fact that

If the criticism of irrelevance is applied to the doctrine of the Trinity in general, then it must presumably apply even more to the details and subtleties of this doctrine. One of the most intricate subtleties is the *lioque* issue. is topic concerns the relation of the Spirit to the Father and the Son in the eternal life of God. e question is whether the Holy Spirit "proceeds"—according to Greek formulation—"from the Father," "from the Father alone," "from the Father through the Son" or—as the Latin formulation goes—"from the Father *and* the Son (*lioque*)." e one-word *lioque* clause became one of the central church-dividing issues between East and West. e di erence is poignantly represented in the two di erent forms of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed and continues to remain a divisive issue in the global church today. ere are contemporary Christians and Christian theologians who would argue that the *lioque* question is not important for understanding the experiences of faith. e technical Trinitarian questions concerning the eternal processions within the Godhead should be le to the historians of the Christian church and to the annals of church dogma. Yet as a church-dividing issue, the *lioque* problem remains a theological responsibility to resolve. It is my aim in this essay to challenge contemporary complacency and to o er a new way of conceiving the Trinity in view of biblical sources.

One way to begin this challenge is to relate the *lioque* question historically to the division between Eastern (Greek) and Western (Latin) Christian churches. is bifurcated history began in the middle of the ninth century when the *lioque* issue emerged as a controversial theme. e history ends up in two very di erent and even contradictory places of culture, liturgy, and theology while the *lioque* problem continues to dominate discussions and negotiations between the Eastern and Western Christian churches. Some Orthodox theologians argue that the *lioque* clause is the sole reason for the bifurcation between the two traditions, yet this is overstated. ere are ecclesiastical and political factors at play as well. Furthermore, the recent climate of ecumenical openness has motivated an intense pursuit of the *lioque* question.[6] All three large confessional families (Orthodox, Protestant, Roman Catholic) accept and use the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed as an authentic expression of Christian faith. Hence the ecumenical discussions between the di erent churches tend to focus on the question of whether agreement can be reached regarding a common text of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed that can function as a shared symbol. e speci c debate focuses on the original Greek

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there is serious *religious* criticism directed against the doctrine of the Trinity in the name of faith in, for example, Pietism or modern liberalism.

6. See Lukas Vischer, ed., *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ: Ecumenical Re ections on the Filioque Controversy* (Faith and Order Paper 103; Geneva: WCC Publications, 1981).

version of the creed stemming from the Council of Constantinople in 381 c.e. is version does not mention the *lioque*. Hence the question is posed to the Western churches as to their willingness to appropriate this original form of the creed. It is at this point that a whole host of problems arises. e question is not merely the question of interpreting the meaning of the creed. It is more complex, addressing the complicated problem of how the Bible is used to inform the articulation of Trinitarian terms and concepts. e *lioque* problem is neither a matter of keeping or eliminating a term in the creed nor about a mere detail of Trinitarian speculation but strikes at the heart of Christian theology.

My concern in this essay is to identify the complex hermeneutical questions at the bottom of the *lioque* controversy. I show that the key di erence between East and West is not simply a matter of proo exting the Bible; Trinitarian conceptions from both sides of the ecclesial divide appeal to similar biblical texts (e.g., John 15:26; 20:22). e di erences in conceptions are related to characteristically di erent types of neo-Nicene Trinitarian thinking that seem to shape the biblical witnesses in di erent ways.

I outline in the rst part the hermeneutical implications of the Eastern conception of the Trinity as it was developed by Athanasius, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa. I contrast in the second part the Eastern conception with the Augustinian conception that is foundational for Trinitarian thinking in the West. I argue that the key di erence is a biblical-hermeneutical one. Eastern theologians tend to nd the eternal relations between the Father and the Son and (the Father and) the Holy Spirit in the simple words of the savior. ese words as they are recorded in the New Testament are, for Eastern theologians, the only authentic source of "information" about the incomprehensible being of God. Western theologians tend to see the eternal relations between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as they are represented in the temporal relations in the history of God's creative, saving, and redeeming self-revelation to and in the world. is Western conception argues on the basis of the Bible but also identi es traces of the Trinity (*vestigia trinitatis*) in the structures of the world. Particularly the human mind is regarded as the analogy of the Trinity in creation par excellence. I argue that this kind of "inductive" understanding of the Bible informs the Western a r-mation of the *lioque* clause. Western theology tends to infer Christ's eternal breathing of the Spirit from his temporal sending of the Spirit to or breathing of the Spirit on the disciples (e.g., John 15:26; 20:22; Acts 2:33). Although it has its basis in the Bible, this inference is without explicit biblical warrant.

I turn in the third and nal part to twentieth-century Trinitarian theology. I show that contemporary Western theologians such as Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg reject this inference by arguing that the Bible reveals a much more complex structure of relations between the Son and the

Spirit in the history of revelation than the *filioque* represents. In conclusion, it is the particularly Western approach to the doctrine of the Trinity—inferring the immanent Trinity from the economic Trinity—that gives new impetus to the ecumenical dialogue with the Orthodox churches.

1. Revealing Words and the *Apophasis:* The Eastern Conception

Athanasius and the Cappadocians articulated the key conceptual framework for conceiving the doctrine of the Trinity in the East and made key terminological distinctions. Their development of the Trinitarian doctrine was instrumental in overcoming the Arian crisis that had been accelerated rather than resolved by the Council of Nicea in 325 C.E. The council, as I have mentioned above, precipitated the Arian crisis by specifying the term *homoousios* to denote the inner-Trinitarian co-equality between Son and Father: the Son is of the same essence (*ousia*) as the Father. The Arian criticism against the formulation precipitated the theological task of explicating the Christian claim of monotheism under the same conditions as maintaining the claim that Christ is God in a full sense. In defending the Nicene consensus, Athanasius turned to the Bible, basing his defense of the threefold differentiation in the one divine essence as a differentiation revealed by Christ's literal commandment in Matt 28:19 to baptize all people "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."[7] Athanasius did not explore in greater speculative detail the parameters of this differentiation; he rejected as illegitimately inquisitive any attempts to delve more deeply into the inner-Trinitarian mystery.[8] The connection between a strictly biblical basis and an (as it was later called) *apophatic* cautiousness respecting the incomprehensibility of God's very being became the determining characteristic of the Orthodox tradition as a whole. God is known only by what God reveals through Christ in the explicit words of scripture. Every positive *kataphatic* statement about God that is derived from the Bible must be anchored in a negative *apophatic* context. Humans are creatures with very limited cognitive capacity and can only appreciate the most limited of doctrinal determinations.

The Cappadocians followed Athanasius's cautiousness, yet they further developed the Trinitarian doctrine by making specific conceptual distinctions.[9] Basil of Caesarea distinguished between *mia ousia* and *treis*

7. See my *Filioque*, 69–75.

8. Athanasius, *Ep. mort. Ar.* 1.18.

9. See my *Filioque*, 75–96. Karl Holl's brilliant study is still important for this question today: *Amphilochius von Ikonium in seinem Verhältnis zu den großen Kappadoziern* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1904; repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969).

hypostaseis.[10] These terms are, as the history of Trinitarian explication acknowledges, philosophical terms not found in the Bible. Basil, however, understands the content of these terms as the content of the Bible's witness.[11] Basil used the distinction between one essence and three hypostases as a conceptual tool to express the full divinity of each of the three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—without dividing the divine unity. e "three" are three "modes of being" (hypostases) of the one divine essence. According to Basil, it was not possible to articulate the divine unity of the three hypostases without appealing to the term *ousia*. Basil countered by his conviction the so-called "Homoiists" who proposed in strict biblicist manner that Christ was "like God according to the scriptures" in order to avoid any mixture of theological and philosophical language. Basil represents the Cappadocian conviction that the use of *philosophical* terms is necessary to maintain basic insights of the *biblical* witness.

The Eastern tradition of Trinitarian theology owes to Basil's friend Gregory of Nazianzus a more re ned terminology.[12] Gregory of Nazianzus distinguished between the three modes of being in God as *agennesia* (ungeneratedness), *gennesis* (generation), and *ekporeusis* (procession). He adopted biblical terms to articulate the distinctions. is allusion to the Bible is no coincidence. e term *ekporeusis* is taken from John 15:26 and serves to denote the Spirit, who is identi ed by his origin from the Father (*gennesis* is taken from Ps 2:7, which is quoted with reference to Christ in Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5). ese two relations of origin from the Father identify the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the Father is de ned negatively by his lack of being generated. e Eastern theologians restrict the term relation to the two concrete relations of "generation" and "procession," which constitute the persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit. is use di ers from the later Latin tradition that clari es relation as a general term for the real di erentiations in the Godhead; Son and Spirit are not distinguished from each other without the former

10. See my *Filioque*, 76–83.

11. The Creed of Nicea (325 c.e.) prescribed the terms *ousia* and *hypostasis* synonymously to denote the unity of God. The rejection of a plurality of *hypostaseis* in God implied a rejection of a plurality of *ousiai* that would destroy the monotheist claim of one divine nature. Origen, however, had already used the term *hypostaseis* (in the plural) to specify the distinct modes of being in God, although he did not restrict these terms to the triad of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Latins suspected that *hypostaseis* was an exact equivalent to *substantia* and only accepted it as an adequate expression for the status of being, attributed respectively to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, when it became clear that this did not imply tritheism. They preferred instead the term "person."

12. See my *Filioque*, 83–88.

being the origin of the latter.[13] e Orthodox tradition, however, never saw the necessity of de ning a di erence in the eternal relations of origin between Son and Spirit. Orthodoxy since Photius, the ninth-century Patriarch of Constantinople, explicitly denied the possibility of such a di erence because this di erence seemed to contradict the fundamental truth of the Father being the only *origin* within God. is emphasis resulted in the strict di erentiation between the immanent and the economic Trinity. e Orthodox tradition restricted the explicit term in the Bible that the Spirit is *sent* by the Son (e.g., John 15:26) to the economy of salvation and shied away from applying this relation to the immanent, eternal relation between Son and Spirit.

e task was le to Basil's brother, Gregory of Nyssa, to state with more precision the distinction between Son and Spirit.[14] On the one hand, Gregory of Nyssa concisely identi ed the Son as the "only one who is being generated" (*monogenes*).[15] On the other hand, he claimed that the Holy Spirit proceeds "from the Father *through the Son*" (*dia tou hyiou*). e rst term, *monogenes*, is taken from the Bible, speci cally from John, who calls Jesus the *monogenes hyios* (3:16; 3:18) and once even the *monogenes theos* (1:18). e second term, "through the Son," is explicitly taken from the liturgical formula "from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit," which, according to Athanasius, summarizes the Trinity's "cooperation" in the creation, salvation, and consummation of the world.[16] e liturgical formula "through the Son," like *monogenes*, is explicitly taken from the Bible (e.g., John 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6). Both Trinitarian speci cations of the relations between Son and Spirit demonstrate the characteristic Orthodox use of scripture in theological decision-making.

In short, Gregory's attempt to re ne the concept of God's Trinitarian being continues to respect the Eastern hermeneutical rules limiting the knowledge of God's triune being to explicit biblical terms. In a certain sense, the Eastern formula "through the Son" approximates the Western *lioque* ("and the Son"), yet Gregory of Nyssa does not explicitly claim Christ to be the origin of the Spirit. He insists that the only *aition* (origin, cause) in God is the Father. Both the Son and the Spirit are *aitiata* (originated, caused), while the Spirit's origin can be understood to be mediated (*mesiteia*) through the Son.[17]

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13. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or. Bas.* 31.9; 9.16.

14. See my *Filioque*, 88–94; see also Werner Jaeger, *Gregor von Nyssas Lehre vom Heiligen Geist: Aus dem Nachlass* (ed. H. Dörries; Leiden: Brill, 1966).

15. Holl, *Amphilocius von Ikonium*, 212.

16. See my *Filioque*, 71.

17. Gregory of Nyssa, *Quod non sint tres dei*, in F. Müller, ed., *Opera dogmatica minora* (4 vols.; Gregorii Nysseni Opera 3; Leiden: Brill, 1958–), 1:56; see also Holl, *Amphilocius von Ikonium*, 214.

2. The History of Revelation and the Analogy: The Western Conception

Augustine is acknowledged to be the father of Western Trinitarian theology.[18] He proposed a specifically Western neo-Nicene conception of the Trinity without explicitly directing a polemic against the Greeks.[19] Augustine's conception differed in some key aspects from the Cappadocian neo-Nicene conception. I will show in this section that these differences have to do with a specific biblical hermeneutic and a particular method of articulating dogmatic-theological claims in view of the Bible. I will frame the hermeneutical and conceptual issues by focusing on three aspects of the Holy Spirit's status in the Trinity.

First, Augustine bases his Trinitarian pneumatology on the formula that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son.[20] This formulation is a combination of the biblical words in Matt 10:20 ("the Spirit of your Father") and Gal 4:6 ("the Spirit of his Son"). The Greek theologians did not use or accept this combination because it seemed to erase the difference between the Father and the Son with regard to their respective relations to the Spirit. Augustine also refers his pneumatology to the passages in John's Gospel that mention the Paraclete: in John 15:26 Jesus announces to the disciples that *he himself* will send the Spirit to them after his return to the Father; in 14:26 Jesus claims that *the Father* will send the Spirit. Augustine differs from the characteristic Greek conception by referring the economic relations between Father, Son, and Spirit to their immanent relations in the eternal essence. The Greeks disputed this inference in later controversies by focusing on the verb tense in John 15:26. According to the Greek theologians, Christ deliberately chose the present tense when he spoke about the Spirit's (eternal) *procession* from the Father ("the Spirit of truth who *comes* from the Father") and used the future tense when anticipating the (temporal) *mission* of the Spirit: "whom I *will send* to you from the Father."

Second, Augustine modifies Aristotle's theory of categories when discussing the term *relation*, as is well known in the history of Trinitarian theology. Augustine formalizes the concept of relation as a category between substance and accident. This modification of classical metaphysics results in the claim that there are real (meaning nonaccidental) distinctions in God without threat to the unity of the divine essence. Medieval Western theologians remained

18. See my *Filioque*, 107–28.

19. Peter Gemeinhardt, "Lateinischer Neunizänismus bei Augustinus," *ZKG* 110 (1999): 149–69.

20. Augustine, *Trin.* 1.4.7; 1.5.8; 4.20.29; 5.11.12; 15.26.45.

committed to Augustine's terminological and metaphysical development. The only distinguishing mark between Son and Spirit is the respective relation of origin; without this distinction, Son and Spirit are indistinguishable from each other. The following formulation from Anselm of Canterbury became the hermeneutical rule for interpreting biblical statements about the divine persons according to the doctrine of the Trinity: "in divinity, all is the same or one, where the opposition of relation does not stand in the way."[21]

Third, Augustine understands the Holy Spirit as the mutual community of the Father with the Son. The Spirit is the tie of their mutual love and the unity between them (*vinculum caritatis, vinculum unitatis*). Augustine arrives at his understanding of the Spirit by interpreting biblical words and concepts in a Trinitarian-theological way. The inference he draws from the Trinitarian economy to the immanent Trinity is representative of the Western conception. Augustine begins with the Spirit's economic function as the *gift of communion* (e.g., 2 Cor 13:13); the Spirit in her economic Trinitarian function gives herself to Christians and thereby creates their communion of love. Augustine then transfers the Spirit's economic identity in her gift-giving function to the immanent Trinity. In the immanent Trinity, the Spirit is the love constituting the communion between the Father and the Son. The Spirit cannot proceed from the Father alone because the love between Father and Son is mutual.

Augustine's Trinitarian thought paved the way in Western theology for the *filioque*. When all three points mentioned above are taken together, the result is that the Spirit "proceeds from the Father and the Son" (Augustine, *Trin*. 15.26.45), yet this procession is specified to be *principaliter a Patre* (15.26.47). Western theology follows Augustine's path by maintaining the strict correspondence between the economic (temporal) and the immanent (eternal) mutual relations among the divine persons. Furthermore, Western Trinitarian theology defines the divine persons by distinctive eternal *relations of origin* that are revealed in distinctive *causative relations* (*missions*) in the history of revelation. The commitment to the economic Trinitarian revelation that is read back into the immanent Trinity tends toward the *filioque* because it explains how the Spirit's mission follows the Son's mission: the Son sends the Spirit to deepen and complete his mission to the world.

One further addition must be mentioned at this juncture. Augustine invokes an understanding of the "Trinitarian traces," the *vestigia trinitatis*, as traces of the Trinitarian Creator in creation. Particularly the human being

21. Anselm of Canterbury, *De processione Spiritus Sancti*, in F. Schmitt, ed., *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi opera omnia* (6 vols. in 2; Stuttgart: Frommann, 1968), 1.2:181: "in Deo omnia sunt unum ubi non obviat aliqua relationis oppositio."

is the trace of the Trinity par excellence because the human is created in the image of God (*imago dei*); especially it is the human mind as the unity of memory, intellect, and will that depicts the image of the Trinity in the created realm. Augustine does not intend by his understanding of the Trinitarian traces to prove the Trinity in creation. He stresses in his *De Trinitate* that the idea of the *vestigia trinitatis* functions as a second-order argument based on the normative doctrine of the church. Yet Augustine's view proved to be formative for the Western theological imagination. In uential lines of Western thinking about the Trinity privilege a psychological theory of the Trinity. God is the *summus spiritus;* the three persons are God's three modes of consciousness.[22] Such speculative psychological thinking indicates a more constructivist style of interpreting the biblical witnesses against the backdrop of defending biblical monotheism and in the light of a tendency to infer the immanent Trinity from God's economy of salvation. is tendency is already evident in medieval Trinitarian thought and is a central theological reason for the alienation between Western and Eastern churches.

3. Clear Positions—and New Insights

Two di erent theological conceptions of the Trinity developed from the two di erent approaches to the mystery of the Trinity. e Western tradition claimed that the eternal causative relation between the Son and the Holy Spirit was a necessary relation, while the Eastern tradition claimed this relation to be impossibile. As a result of this di erence, the East judged the Western doctrine of the *lioque* to be heretical. Yet the anathema seems to hide important biblical, hermeneutical, and theological issues that might even be deemed, when viewed in a di erent light, to be complementary. Both conceptions are the result of integrating biblical phrases and concepts into di erent systematic frameworks. Both conceptions presuppose a di erent method of articulating doctrinal claims about God's essence in relation to the Bible.

e history of the late Middle Ages and then of the Reformation does not see any substantive changes to the bifurcated trajectory. Attempts to arrive at a mutual understanding of similarities and di erences failed.[23] e well-known attempts at reunion at the Councils of Ferrara and Flor-

22. The text regarded as being most influential on medieval thinking about the Trinity is Anselm's *Monologion*.

23. According to the West, the Spirit's procession from the Father and the Son is a single act that is executed by the indistinct unity of them both (as Aquinas put it: one *spiratio* with two *spirantes*, but not two *spiratores*). This idea was affirmed at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215:

ence (1438–39) were never accepted by the Orthodox churches. e Western church insisted upon the Son as *causa* or *aitia* of the Holy Spirit, even though the Greek patristic fathers had never used the term *aitia* with reference to the Son.[24]

e sixteenth-century Reformers a rmed the doctrine of the Trinity, yet changed its hermeneutical context. For them, the doctrine was true because it adequately interpreted the Bible, not because it was ensconced as church dogma. e Reformers accepted the *lioque* without reservation, although they did not polemically insist on a deliberately Western form of Trinitarian theology. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Lutherans took up the dialogue with the Orthodox. e main record is the correspondence between Lutherans from the University of Tübingen and the Patriarch of Constantinople, Jeremy II.[25] During this debate the Lutherans saw it necessary to defend the *lioque*. ey feared that without it the doctrine of the Trinity would lose its epistemological justi cation in the history of revelation. ey argued in distinctive Western manner: the biblical witnesses to Christ's temporal sending of the Spirit could be used to ground the inference to the Spirit's eternal procession from the Son. In the ensuing centuries, Protestant theologians taught the *lioque* as a key part of the doctrine of the Trinity, although it was never historically emphasized as a pillar of Protestant theology.[26] is attitude did not change until the second half of the twentieth century, when, in an atmosphere of new ecumenical openness, new discussions about the *lioque* arose. For this new re ection on the *lioque* doctrine, biblical insights were of greatest relevance.

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see Heinrich Denzinger, *e Sources of Catholic Dogma* (trans. R. J. Deferrari of the 30th ed. of Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum;* Fitzwilliam, N.H.: Loreto, 2004), 168–69 (§428).

24. Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 219 (§691). At the Council of Florence and after long and intense discussions, all the participating Greek theologians with a few notable exceptions, such as Markos Eugenikos, accepted the declaration "Laetentur caeli" (ibid., 219–20 [§§691–94]). The declaration explicitly points to the Latin doctrine of the *lioque* as being equivalent to and a better expression for the Greek *dia tou hyiou*. The Greeks approved of the document, which seemed to correct some misconceptions. The Greeks had been convinced that, on the one hand, the *lioque* was more strongly rooted in the tradition of the Latin fathers than they had previously been aware. Their own patristic tradition, on the other hand, did not entail a strict rejection of the Son's participation in the Spirit's procession, as Photius had led them to believe.

25. See Dorothea Wendebourg, *Reformation und Orthodoxie: Der ökumenische Briefwechsel zwischen der Leitung der Württembergischen Kirche und Patriarch Jeremias II. von Konstantinopel in den Jahren 1573–1581* (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 37; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1986); and my *Filioque*, 282–95.

26. For an overview of Protestant theology in the seventeenth century, see Bruce D. Marshall, "The Defense of the *Filioque* in Classical Lutheran Theology," *NZS R* 44 (2002): 154–73.

In order to facilitate an understanding of this discussion, I will summarize the characteristics of the current renaissance of Trinitarian thinking in Western theology. Karl Barth is usually invoked as the key theologian motivating this revival. One basic conviction of Trinitarian thought since Barth is that all human knowledge of God's triune being derives from the biblical witnesses to God acting toward and in the world. is conviction is clearly at the root of Barth's interest in Trinitarian theology. e epistemological question is one that Barth inherited from the neo-Kantianism of late nineteenth-century German philosophy and stands as the centerpiece of his prolegomena in *e Church Dogmatics*. Barth introduces the doctrine of the Trinity in volume 1.1 of this work as a theory of God's self-revelation. Barth views the biblical narrative of the history of salvation as the sole epistemological source of any knowledge about God. For Barth, the fact that God is internally triune, and the way that this is so, is not primarily information revealed by a voice from heaven; rather, this fact is mirrored by the ways in which the divine persons relate to each other in the history of salvation. Karl Rahner sums up what has become a common opinion in twentieth-century Western theology: the epistemological foundation for any Trinitarian thinking is that "the economic Trinity *is* the immanent Trinity and vice versa."[27]

e implications of Rahner's axiom for the *lioque* are, however, far from clear. e Bible can be read, on the one hand, to support the *lioque*. is reading according to a Western conception requires that the inference from economic to immanent Trinity be rooted in the Spirit's mission beginning at Pentecost. e Father and the Son are at the origins of the Spirit's mission and, by following the Western inferential logic, are at the origin of the Spirit's immanent Trinitarian procession. Karl Barth defended the *lioque* according to this line of thinking in his *Church Dogmatics*.[28] At second glance, the connection between the biblical witnesses and the inference of their claims to the immanent Trinity seems to be much more complicated. I will in the following focus on what I consider to be the two crucial aspects challenging the Western methodological principle of beginning with the economy of salvation.

First, the Bible displays many more options than the *lioque* for conceiving the mutual relations between the Son and the Spirit. e relations between Son and Spirit are not as one-sided from the biblical perspective as the *l-*

27. Karl Rahner, "Bemerkungen zum dogmatischen Traktat 'de trinitate,'" in *Schri en zur eologie* (16 vols.; Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1954–), 4:115 (emphasis added); see also Eberhard Jüngel, "Das Verhältnis von 'ökonomischer' und 'immanenter' Theologie," *Z K* 72 (1975): 353–64; see also my *Filioque*, 371–88.

28. Karl Barth, *Die Lehre vom Wort Gottes* (vol. 1.1 of *Die kirchliche Dogmatik;* Zurich: Evangelische Buchhandlung, 1932), 496–511; see my *Filioque*, 354–71.

ioque suggests. e Spirit is not only sent by the Son but is also instrumental in the incarnation of the Son (Luke 1:35). e Spirit descends onto the Son a er his baptism, guides him, and empowers him to ful ll his earthly mission (Mark 1:10 par.; Matt 12:28). Given these additional biblical witnesses, mutuality must be considered an essential element in the eternal relations between Son and Spirit. e Western tradition unfortunately excluded mutuality by declaring that the three persons of the Trinity are distinguished solely by their relations of origin. ese relations of origin cannot, on logical grounds, be mutual. But is this restriction to relations of origin still convincing if it does not su ciently mirror the complexity of relations between Father, Son, and Spirit depicted in the Bible?

is question can also apply to the Orthodox tradition that grounds the identities of Son and Spirit in their respective origins from the Father. Orthodox theologians since Gregory Kyprios in the thirteenth century and Gregory Palamas in the fourteenth century have answered this question by considering di erent kinds of eternal relations between the Son and the Spirit. Particular formulations, such as, " e Spirit proceeds from the Father and stays upon the Son" and " e Spirit proceeds from the Father and achieves its eternal manifestation [*ekphansis*] through and by the Son," articulate the mutuality between Son and Spirit. ese and other similar expressions are, however, formulated in such a way as to avoid claiming any active participation for the Son in the Spirit's procession and thereby no active role for the Son in constituting the Spirit's identity. But the following question should be asked: How can the claims concerning the distinct types of relations be constitutive for respective personality?

German theologians, Jürgen Moltmann and Wol art Pannenberg in particular, have taken up these questions in developing their conceptions of the Trinity. Moltmann distinguishes "giving being" to a person from "giving shape" to the person. Moltmann writes that the Spirit receives her eternal "hypostatic being" (*hypostatisches Dasein*) from the Father alone but receives her concrete shape "from the Father and the Son and their mutual relations."[29] Pannenberg criticizes Moltmann's idea of a "shapeless" hypostatic being and claims that each of the three persons achieves its respective hypostatic identity by a complex set of di erent mutual relations to each other, of which the

29. Jürgen Moltmann, *Der Geist des Lebens: Eine ganzheitliche Pneumatologie* (Munich: Kaiser, 1991), 321. In his *Trinität und Reich Gottes: Zur Gotteslehre* ([Munich: Kaiser, 1980], 199), Moltmann distinguishes between "hypostatic existence (*hypostasis, hyparxis,* Latin *persona*)" and "immanent trinitarian shape (*eidos, prosopon,* Latin *facies*)"; see my *Filioque,* 389–403.

relation of origin is only one.[30] According to Pannenberg, the *lioque* is not a mistaken or even a heretical formulation; rather, it is an incomplete articulation of the immanent relations between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[31]

Second, since Augustine the Western tradition has emphasized that the di erent divine actions toward and in the world cannot be attributed exclusively to a single divine person: *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* ("the works of the Trinity toward and in the world are indivisible"). is axiom undergirds the unity of God in every economic Trinitarian operation: creation is not an exclusive work of the Father, incarnation not an exclusive work of the Son, redemption not an exclusive work of the Holy Spirit. Every work *ad extra* is a common work by which the three persons cannot be distinguished. In a strict sense, the history of salvation does not reveal the characteristics of the divine persons and their internal relations; it reveals their concrete community only as the indistinguishable unity of the divine essence. Western theologians since the Middle Ages have recognized that the characteristic Western emphasis on unity instead of community threatens the biblical roots of Trinitarian theology. Hence they sought to show that the Bible displays a *network of concrete cooperation* constituting any acts of the triune God. e theory of appropriations was developed and became a key piece of Western Trinitarian theology. is theory claims that the biblical witnesses suggest a natural relation between creation and the Father, incarnation and the Son, redemption and the Holy Spirit. is natural relation is called an "appropriation," which means that a speci c similarity of creation to the eternal characteristics of the Father can be ascertained, although the particular work of creation cannot be taken to be more strongly linked to this person than to the other two. e theory of appropriation is not without its critics, for example, Karl Rahner. In his ingenious treatise on the Trinity, Rahner pushes the strict application of this theory to its unintended and absurd limits, showing it to be an accident as to which of the divine persons has been made man.[32]

If the history of salvation, however, does not disclose the characteristics of the divine persons, then what is the source revealing these characteristics? It turns out that the Western tradition appeals to a very select choice of biblical passages for its picture of the triune God. e Western conception, when viewed as standing on this thin ice of biblical material, veers close to

30. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematische eologie* (3 vols.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988–93), 1:283–364; see my *Filioque,* 404–18.

31. Pannenberg, *Systematische eologie*, 1:344–47.

32. Karl Rahner, "Der dreifaltige Gott als transzendenter Urgrund der Heilsgeschichte," in *Die Heilsgeschichte vor Christus* (vol. 2 of *Mysterium Salutis;* ed. J. Feiner and M. Löhrer; Einsiedeln: Benziger,1967), 317–401, esp. 320.

the Orthodox conception: knowledge of God's triune being is gleaned from information that reveals only the names of the divine persons and their relations of origin.

e real biblical picture displays interpretative options and possibilities that are a far cry from the usual Western "bottom-up" approach starting with the history of revelation. If Western Trinitarian theologians are to take into consideration a broader range of biblical witnesses, then they must take a serious look at the axiom of the *opera ad extra indivisa*. is axiom seems to be most sti ing to an expansive biblical hermeneutic. e axiom, on the one hand, rightly claims that the three persons do all their works toward and in the world in common. ey do not, on the other hand, do so indistinguishably; rather, each work betrays a concrete order of community that may di er when another work is considered. Creation, for example, is a work of the Trinity in a di erent way than the incarnation is the Trinity's work. Such a consideration of the diverse ways in which the Trinitarian order is revealed in its works can help to conceive of diverse mutual relations in God's eternal triune being.

4. Conclusion

e contemporary ecumenical dialogue between Eastern and Western Christian churches can serve to inspire theologians to imagine new ways to appeal to biblical witnesses in their conceptions of the Trinity. Trinitarian theology can neither be simply based on its own "speculative" traditions nor have as its only aim the "proo exting" of that tradition with biblical quotes. Instead, it must take into account a new awareness of the rich and complex possibilities already contained in the Bible. By opening up its exegetical basis to the multiplicity of biblical voices, the doctrine of the Trinity might be seen to be relevant to the practices of Western Christians and might address the many concerns that Christians have in understanding their experiences of faith. Biblical diversity leads to theological relevance. e doctrine of the Trinity might just be exemplary in expanding its dialogical possibilities by expanding its biblical vision.

Recovering the Real: A Case Study of Schleiermacher's Theology

Christine Helmer

Recent and frequent appearances of the adjectival use of "real" connote more than a philosophically naïve tautology, and recent nonphilosophical appearances of the noun "Real" (with a capital R) express a longing in an age that seems to have turned its back at last on an in nite representational regress.[1] Even a recent visitor to the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art can detect a sudden shi from conceptual-subjective art to art that depicts recognizable subjects in identi able contexts.[2] e interest in reality, in its recovery in text and image, is a sign of the present times. e longing for the real in current intellectual, political, and artistic circles marks a turning point away from postmodern obsession with representation and sociocultural construction. Postmodernism appears to have crashed on the shores of reality, and a new sobering wave of consciousness is surfacing.

is turn to the real is the reappearance of an aspect of the West's own history. e emphasis on evidence as the Enlightenment intended it was to locate truth-telling in the public forum. Empirical study was to be governed by rules concerning reality that were to be displayed for all to see. Not just the sciences but the humanities as well were to be informed by evidence. It was to history, anthropology, and psychology, rather than to metaphysics, that modern theology turned in order to anchor its claims in reality.[3] Even the "linguistic turn" in the early twentieth century could not divorce language from reality, teaching that reality was interpreted through linguistically determined concepts. e empirically real was experienced through conceptual

1. See Slavoj Žižek's new book, *Interrogating the Real* (ed. R. Butler and S. Stephens; London: Continuum, 2005).

2. See www.moca.org for an introduction.

3. The representative example of this turn is Friedrich Schleiermacher, the "parent of modern theology."

interpretation. It was perceived through the biases, ideologies, and multiple epistemologies informing the modern subject of knowing.

It is the intention of this essay to recover the real in the distinct discipline of Christian theology and to attempt this recovery in view of the claims expressed in the Christian religion about the saving bene ts of the person of Christ. Such claims are more than a cognitive assent to an epistemologically interpreted event. ey are the expressions of the many transformative experiences of the encounter with a living reality.

I ask in this essay the question concerning how theology can recover the real in order to anchor its terms in historically and metaphysically determined reality. I will use the example of Friedrich Schleiermacher's theology to show that the real can be grasped both in relation to the text of the New Testament and in the theological categorization of contemporary experience. e real can be recovered in view of the New Testament's expressions concerning Jesus of Nazareth; when the texts are seen as literary records of unique encounters with the person of Jesus, their reality can be extrapolated, compared, and contrasted with the reality expressed in other similar accounts. e real as recounted in the New Testament is multivalent, yet even in this text the beginnings of categorizing multivalent reality can be detected. New Testament topography is the starting point for theological concept formation. In the second section of the essay I argue that theology's process of relating descriptions of reality to theological concepts does not inevitably result in a loss of reality for those concepts. Rather, the method of concept formation that Schleiermacher proposes determines the concepts with predicates gleaned from reality. e application of Schleiermacher's method to theology gives theology the resources to recover the reality of transformative encounters with Jesus for the formation of theological concepts.

1. Recovery of the Real in the New Testament

e linguistic turn characterizing a major philosophical development in the twentieth century gave rise to a fascination with the text. Language exists in texts, it was maintained, and religion also is preoccupied with linguistic-literary studies of the text. e past is presented for contemporary description and analysis by the text, yet is not completely identi ed with it. e text, produced by a subject or group of subjects, captures in literary form a reality that is available through the text, yet the text neither historically exhausts the reality to which it refers nor can it be metaphysically identi ed with that reality. Nineteenth-century philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher keenly approaches the text as a transcript of the reality of its author and the respective author's encounter with a distinct reality. Schleiermacher recovers

the real described in the New Testament by explaining his understanding of how this text expresses the diverse experiences of aspects of a personal reality that its authors have experienced.

The rhetoric of Christian liturgy, preaching, and theology gives the impression of an ongoing rehearsal of the past. Christianity's present-tense existence is permeated with scripture. Maybe not all contemporary preachers and scholars are as well-versed in the living memory of biblical passages and books as were Augustine or Luther, yet even in an age in which the canon has become a "cultural memorial" (*ein kulturelles Gedächtnis*),[4] writings from the Christian religion can hardly be interpreted without appealing to the Bible as a reference work. My question concerning the reason for the sustained representation of ancient texts in contemporary liturgical practices and scholarly works is posed by this actual evidence of use. Why regard the biblical text as the eternal well from which one can continuously draw? Answers to this question range from historical-pragmatic considerations[5] to philosophical-theological[6] explanations, from recognitions of the multivalence of its constitutive texts to longings for a unity as the text spans world history from creation to apocalypse.

But a bit of disentangling is in order here. e "linguistic turn" in some philosophical-theological cases con ates text with reality. When reality is understood in terms of the self-referentiality of language, the text becomes reality.[7] is identi cation in Christian theology is, as I have argued elsewhere,[8] a development of the neo-Kantian distinction between spirit and

4. This is the title of Jan Assmann's book on canon and memory in ancient and modern contexts from a cultural-historical perspective: *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schri , Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (C.H. Beck Kulturwissenschaft; Munich: Beck, 1999).

5. Schleiermacher distinguishes between the Christian Bible as the book used by the church throughout its history and the Christian canon as the product of literary-critical, historical, and canon-critical reconstruction. See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of eology as a Field of Study* (trans. T. N. Tice; Schleiermacher Studies and Translations 1; Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1990), §103 (58), §115 (63–64) (page numbers in parentheses).

6. For example, Nicholas Wolterstorff discusses the unity of the Christian canon by using the aesthetic category of a work's completion in "The Unity behind the Canon," in *One Scripture or Many? Canon from Biblical, eological, and Philosophical Perspectives* (ed. C. Helmer and C. Landmesser; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 222–32.

7. Frei identifies D. Z. Phillips with the "fifth" type of theology in "Five Types of Theology," in *Types of Christian eology* (ed. G. Hunsinger and W. C. Placher; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 46–55. This type, Frei argues, asks the question of God's reality as the question concerning the criteria by which talk about God's reality in a specific religious context is meaningful (Frei, "Five Types of Theology," 47).

8. Christine Helmer, "Mysticism and Metaphysics: Schleiermacher and a Historical-Theological Trajectory," *JR* 83 (2003): 517–38.

nature. If the "Word"—in its identi cation with the risen Christ or in its meaning as the words of the Christian church's proclamation or doctrine—is identi ed with spirit in opposition to nature, then its reality in language must be its only reality. e Word's spiritual reality in language is contrasted with the reality of the world of nature. e text "absorbs the world."[9]

On metaphysically realist grounds, however, the spiritual reality of the text cannot be said to absorb the world. e text cannot be said to stand as the reality of language's self-referentiality; rather, the text stands *for* a distinct perspective of reality. e text refers to reality by linguistically conceptualizing an aspect of reality that has entered into the work of concept formation. A perspectival categorization of reality both exhibits and occludes dimensions of reality, discloses and hides, grasps and misses aspects of reality that other categorizations may or may not be in a position to see. Multivalence characterizes the perspectival relations of text to reality. is relationship also requires for its plausibility an explanation for the unity of its referent across descriptive difference. Without an account of unity, perspectival di erence would lapse into incoherence; there would be no common constraints in reality controlling differences among conceptualizations and therefore no possibility of conversation among di erent individuals about a common subject.

A starting point for discussing the text's relation to the reality of the real is the historical origin of the text in relation to experience. One site for recovering the real is the site most proximate to an original experience. Some memories fade with time, but the vividness characterizing the early impression of the real cannot be erased. It is to this immediacy of the event in its present tense power that we must turn.

The history of Christianity witnesses to the power of initial impressions. Reformation movements have been born from new experiences with the biblical text. Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Barth attest to the ongoing fascination with Paul's Letter to the Romans. Christianity can almost be written as a history of rediscovering the power of the Cruci ed One described in this signi cant epistle. e documents attesting to the early histories of the Christian tradition—the Old and New Testaments, and in some cases the

9. This is my paraphrase of the citation, "A scriptural world is thus able to absorb the universe," by George A. Lindbeck, *e Nature of Doctrine: Religion and eology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 117. The sentences preceding these words suggest an equivocation between text and world: "These same considerations apply even more forcefully to the preeminently authoritative texts that are the canonical writings of religious communities. For those who are steeped in them, no world is more real than the ones they create" (Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine,* 117).

deuterocanonical writings—continue to be engaged as these texts are cycled through lectionaries, liturgies, private devotions, and small-group study. e same texts continue to be read for the purpose of recovering the vividness of realities experienced by persons and authors, since those experiences are determinative of Christian traditions. e life in Christian traditions is sustained precisely by the ongoing return to those documents categorizing the early impressions of a distinct aspect of reality.

e text's literary level provides clues identifying the ways in which rst impressions took shape. An insight into the literary coherence of a text as the criterion of original liveliness is o ered by Schleiermacher's interpretation of John's Gospel. Schleiermacher's special love for John's text consists precisely in his literary appreciation for its coherence. According to Schleiermacher, the liveliness of John's impressions of Jesus of Nazareth is evident in the way in which the Gospel presents Jesus' biography according to the coherence criterion of a single tendency (*Tendenz*) or principle. " e Gospel of John has always given me the impression that in a decisive way it bears the character of a coherent, comprehensive presentation," Schleiermacher writes in *e Life of Jesus*.[10] John has one principle that he uses to describe each di erent episode in Jesus' life. Schleiermacher continues: "the Gospel of John reveals one and the same tendency from beginning to end. It evidently comes from one who narrates what he himself had experienced."[11] Although Schleiermacher admits that there are gaps in John's chronology and account of Jesus' geographical movement,[12] he evaluates the Gospel's coherence as a literary key unlocking John's proximity to the reality of Jesus.

e literary criterion, however, gets Schleiermacher into some historical trouble. By identifying coherence as the criterion for John's status as an eyewitness, Schleiermacher erroneously proposes an early dating for the Gospel. New Testament consensus regarding John's Gospel, at least since 1820, disagrees with Schleiermacher.[13] Nevertheless, Schleiermacher's interpretation concerning the relation between coherence and rst impressions does not require the additional claim of historical accuracy in order to be true. By virtue of Schleiermacher's own claims concerning the identity of

10. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *e Life of Jesus* (ed. J. C. Verheyden; trans. S. M. Gilmour; Lives of Jesus Series; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975; repr., Mifflintown, Penn.: Sigler, 1997), 43.

11. Ibid., 159. John's tendency, according to Schleiermacher, is that he "wishes to make understandable the disaster in Christ's destiny together with the authentic nature of his activity, while—regarding the matter from John's own standpoint—the two conflicted with one another" (ibid.).

12. Ibid., 43.

13. Verheyden refers to Karl Bretschneider's late dating for John's Gospel in 1820 (Verheyden, "Introduction," in ibid., xxxi).

in uence emanating from Christ's postmortem and antemortem presence,[14] literary coherence can be applied as a criterion to any expression of experiences of Jesus. e systematic coherence of a doctrinal system, in fact, re ects precisely the relation of systematic coherence to contemporary personal conviction regarding the transformative e ect of Jesus.[15] What Schleiermacher means by historical proximity to Jesus is the immediacy of Jesus' presence to every age.

If the text is regarded as the expression of its author's experience with reality, then the interpretation of the text must include, if not presuppose, a psychological mechanism explaining the author's production of the literary work in relation to reality. Authorial intention is a mainstay of Schleiermacher's hermeneutical program.[16] e correct interpretation of a text relies in part on the accurate identi cation of a subjective authorial unity structuring the work as a whole. is unity is the author's tendency, the theme that is extended throughout the work in order to permit identifying parts of the work to the whole and to order these parts in speci c relations to each other. Most important, the tendency expresses the author's psychological grasp of reality. Authorial intention is not just a subjective psychological condition that is presupposed by the text's unity. Rather, it is the psychological site at which the author experiences a reality in terms of a proportion between passive in uence from the environment and active contribution to the categorizing of that experience. is hermeneutical insight recalls Schleiermacher's psychological claim in *e Christian Faith:* each of life's moments is constituted by a feeling of dependence and a feeling of freedom that register together mutual reciprocity with the environment.[17] Authorial intention as the psychological unity grasping the reality of an experience is, according to Schleiermacher, the unity between the subjective reality of an author's psychological conditions and the objective reality that is experienced. is unity is a psychological unity of passivity and activity that is evident at the only place at which experiences are expressed: the text, its grammar, choice of terms, syntax, positioning of main to relative clauses, and all other literary evidence. e text is the hermeneutical key for recovering the real of experienced reality from the perspective of its author.

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14. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *e Christian Faith* (ed. H. R. McKintosh and J. S. Stewart; trans. D. M. Baillie et al.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1999), §14.1 (69).

15. See my argument regarding this relation in "Systematic Theology: Beautifully True," in *Truth: Interdisciplinary Dialogues in a Pluralistic Age* (ed. C. Helmer and K. De Troyer, with K. Goetz; Studies in Philosophical Theology 22; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 34–40.

16. See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings* (ed. and trans. A. Bowie; Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

17. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith,* §4.2 (13–14).

Multiple authorship writes experiential multivalence into the New Testament. e New Testament Gospels, in addition to other Gospels that are not included in the canonical New Testament, are characterized by plurality. ere are four canonical Gospels, each superscribed by four di erent names purporting to be the Gospels' respective authors.[18] e superscription privileges individual authorship at the level of the New Testament's nal form, even though the historical origin of the superscripts might not coincide with the individual Gospel's composition history. At the level of the canonical whole, these superscriptions point to four di erent authors, each presiding over four di erent accounts of Jesus' life and passion. Modern literary criticism has been more insistent than Schleiermacher on the literary integrity of these four Gospels. Rather than perceiving them as the compiled aggregates of undistinguished writers, modern literary critics concede the literary value of the Gospels, viewing the authors as literary creators in their own right.[19] Such a literary appreciation can provide even more helpful evidence than Schleiermacher ascertains for his text theory regarding the recovery of the real through authorial intention. If the texts are understood in Schleiermacher's terms as accounts of reality, then their literary quality and features can be related with hermeneutical precision to the distinct perspectives of experienced reality that Schleiermacher was unable to claim for Matthew and Luke.[20]

It is an assumption of the New Testament that Jesus is the same referent in each particular Gospel and epistle. Jesus is designated by di erent names that overlap in di erent texts: Son of Man, Son of God, shepherd, Christ, the Cruci ed One, the one raised by the power of the Spirit. e nuances in the meanings of these names di er according to the semantic elds of individual author's vocabularies. For Paul, the Cruci ed One is the designation associated with the unequivocal triumph of grace, whereas for Matthew the Cruci ed One is associated with a "secondary conditioning of salvation."[21] In

18. David Trobisch uses these superscriptions to argue for an early redaction of a New Testament codex in *e First Edition of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 46–7.

19. See, e.g., David M. Rhoads, *e Challenge of Diversity: e Witness of Paul and the Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 62, 99.

20. Schleiermacher judged Matthew and Luke to be redactions of a third or fourth hand on the grounds of literary inelegance. See Friedrich Schleiermacher, "Über die Schriften des Lukas: Ein kritischer Versuch (1817)," in *Exegetische Schri en* (vol. 1.8 of *Kritische Gesamtausgabe;* ed. H. Patsch and D. Schmid; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), 19–20.

21. This is Christof Landmesser's terminology (*die sekundäre Konditionierung des Heils*) in *Jüngerberufung und Zuwendung zu Gott: Ein exegetischer Beitrag zum Konzept der matthäischen Soteriologie im Anschluß an Mt 9,9–13* (WUNT 133; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 141–49.

all these cases manifesting di erences in authorial intentions, the designations identify the same referent. Such an assumption boldly holds together the differences in descriptions, Jesus' life and death, his preexistence and ascension, his postmortem and antemortem existence. ere are four Gospels yet one gospel, as Luther summarizes the relation between di erence and unity in terms of one common referent.[22]

One reality serves to orient perspectival multivalence in the New Testament. It is this preoccupation that represents the objective side of authorial intention. Authorial intention requires an intentionality that expresses the individual author's perspectival grasp of reality. Without this intentionality, the New Testament authors would have nothing to say. e sameness of the referent in spite of di erences in titles and descriptions must be assumed if there is to be complementarity or even disagreement between di ering accounts. Each New Testament passage can be investigated as to its contribution to understanding the aspects of personal presence responsible for what is experienced as decisively transformative. From the perspective of its referent, the New Testament already contains its own guides for interpreting its form and content. Without this assumption, there could neither be agreement concerning the genre of the gospel as the "good news of Jesus Christ" (Mark 1:1) nor consensus concerning the intention of the epistles to comfort and exhort communities living under the existing sign of Christ's reign.[23] e assumption furthermore communicates directions regarding how best to interpret a person as the text's referent. e New Testament's personal referent stands under the same anthropological and narrative conditions of interpretation as any human being. e gospel's content is informed by the narrative details of Jesus' life. e four Gospels' common focus on Jesus' ministry and extended accounts of the passion also suggest the signi cance of these details for an understanding of his person.

e category of person as appropriate for understanding the New Testament's referent is problematized at those sites of description that veer into the realm of theological interpretation. New Testament multivalence poses the problems of historical and chronological gaps, of grammatical and syntactical variation, and of harmonizing di erent accounts. eology can help readers engage discrepancies by o ering other levels of meaning by which to understand the text. e narrative tracking of Jesus' life and passion in the Gospels, for example, seems to problematize the historical claim that the Gospels were

22. Martin Luther, "Preface to the New Testament (1546)" (trans. C. M. Jacobs; rev. E. T. Bachmann), in *Luther's Works: American Edition* (ed. J. Pelikan and H. T. Lehmann; 55 vols.; St. Louis: Concordia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958–86), 35:357–58.

23. This and all subsequent references to the Christian Bible are from the nrsv.

written later than Paul's epistles, even though they occur canonically at the beginning of the New Testament. A theological re ection on this historical di culty interprets the meaning of Jesus' person in terms of his work. e person, whether antemortem or postmortem, is the cause of his saving e ect. Salvation is inscribed into the origins of Jesus' life, which are themselves shrouded in mystery. e historical problems of reconstructing Jesus' origins can also be the subject of theological engagement. At the origin of Jesus' life is a signal of his eternal relation to God (John 1:1). is relation of essence explains the power of his work and the divine authority from which he receives this power.

e theological categories of person and work together constitute the conceptual relationship that brings together in a single focus the New Testament's perspectival multivalence. e categories abstract from multivalent accounts of reality, yet as abstractions can be applied as the structural parameter for interpreting the di erent texts. Di erent accounts are viewed through this common structural lens so that they can be categorized according to a particular aspect of reality. is aspect of reality remaining the same throughout di erence is the attribution of transformative e ects to Jesus in each and every case. Schleiermacher captures the attribution of diverse de nitive life-transforming e ects to their same cause in a sermon:

> But in these conversations there was also something of that other effect—an impression, independent of the subject at hand, that was always the same, although it was manifested in the most various forms and widely divergent conditions throughout his entire association with them. And it was this impression that Christ's whole personality, his distinctive nature however it might express itself, never failed to create.[24]

From new possibilities for living in community to the radical transition from death to life, the varieties of transformative experiences are all predicated of Jesus. From the earliest exorcisms to his resurrection appearances, Jesus is the one from whom all blessings ow. A common reality joins multivalent description to theology.

2. Recovery of the Real in Theology

If theological concepts do not have any corresponding intuitions, this emptiness will result in prescriptive vacuity. is is the danger that haunts

24. Friedrich Schleiermacher, "The Effects of Scripture and of the Redeemer," in *Servant of the Word: Selected Sermons of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (trans. D. De Vries; Fortress Texts in Modern Theology; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 103–4.

contemporary Christian theology. is discipline, more than others, seems to be currently preoccupied with canonical questions of geographically limited focus primarily because it has been historically concerned with the historical method as integral to the formation of its concepts. But this does not need to be so. e real can be recovered for theology in a way analogous to what I have described above in section 1 for the New Testament. Here I turn to the possibilities of drawing on the New Testament, on Schleiermacher's epistemology, and on contemporary non-European contextual-theological movements in order to recover the reality of intuitions for theology's concepts.

e multivalence characterizing the New Testament already has a distinct pro le; its topography suggests interpretative possibilities. e canonical shape of the Christian Bible, for example, orders the nal prophetic books of the Old Testament in proximity to the Gospels and ends with John's eschatological vision in the book of Revelation. is topography leans toward a salvation-historical interpretation. A reception-historical topography privileges Paul's Letter to the Romans, to use another example, and thereby establishes the law-gospel relation as foundational for Western Christian belief. Specific topographical contours function as hermeneutical guides for theological interpretation anchored in the reality shaping the text's presentation.

eology carries the burden of its own inevitable character. Its nature is to abstract from particulars in order to reach the grand universal; its task is to relate discrete parts in relation to a coherent whole. A coherent comprehension of the whole in view of its parts requires a su cient degree of abstraction from the particular. Not every particular detail enters into the more abstract concept; rather, bits are integrated into larger wholes through a process of abstracting common elements and determining their interrelations. e comprehension of the whole occurs by grasping common elements through every stage of abstraction. If abstraction proceeds by relegating particulars to an ontologically lesser status than the concepts that allegedly grasp them, the resulting concept will be devoid of determined content. Being devoid of any particular way of being is precisely that, an empty concept alone at the top of Aristotle's chain of being. If abstraction occurs by conveying the particular in the conceptualization of the universal, then the concept grabs hold of reality and more adequately represents it. How the real can be recovered for the theological concept is the serious question in view of theology's burden and challenge.

Theology's burden can also be its joy. Abstraction as a work can be understood for this discipline as seeking precisely to articulate the concepts of religious realities as they are lived, practiced, and thought. In its process of abstraction, theology conceptualizes exactly the radically particular realities of face-to-face encounters, individual stories of personal pain and redemption, and the sacramental centers of real personal presences. If theology is to

be about life rather than about the worshipful awe of empty or exhausted concepts, then it must explore ways to retain the determination of its concepts by the real.

e task of topographical design is for the theologian the process of forming concepts. Already in the New Testament, the writers are at work o ering topographies for future doctrinal conceptualization; the texts bear the structural imprints of persons who have experienced and schematized reality. Luke's conviction concerning the world-historical signi cance of the babe in the manger carries his Gospel (Luke 2:1–2). Paul's passion about the universal reconciliation accomplished by the cruci ed Christ informs his preaching and exhortation (2 Cor 5:18–19). John's Jesus, in the world but not of this world (John 16:16), structures the misunderstood conversations and the death sentence for the one who did not commit a crime. e concepts appear in narrative, expressing tendencies structuring the texts: healing, forgiveness, resurrection. e theological task of interpreting these texts is to determine hermeneutically how the tendencies surface as concepts schematizing reality. Paul's dramatic conversion, the recovery of sight a er the blindness with which he was struck on the way to Damascus, is the experience riveting his soul to a new reality (Acts 9), which Paul expresses as he treats di erent topics in distinct historical circumstances. e Corinthians get a glimpse of this new reality when they are exhorted to temper their spiritual exuberance by obeying the gospel of love (1 Cor 13). e Galatians are exhorted to relinquish their enthusiasm for legalism by entering into the freedom for which Christ has set "us" free (Gal 5:1). By hermeneutically recovering the contours of experience, theology gets to the particular aspect of reality that is schematized by the text.

e theological recovery of the real in the New Testament is the hermeneutical task of describing and analyzing the ways in which concepts focus at the textual surface. e concepts, however, are themselves the products of psychological states and historical events, registering relations between subject and object. ey can be described in view of an individual writer's production of her text. Yet the same mechanism of conceptual focus at the surface can also be applied to the New Testament as a whole, albeit without the individuation of the concept to authorial di erences. When the New Testament is considered as a theological whole, its conceptual *Tendenz* can be described in view of a distinctive experience. Even though distinctive authorship cannot be applied to the text as a whole,[25] the composite can be read as

25. This question (mentioned by Wolterstorff in "Unity behind the Canon," 232) concerns the possibility of God as author of the entire work.

structural agreement concerning the person-work relation. e New Testament is constituted as a whole by a conceptual structure that comes together in its parts. e person-work relation does not imply abstraction from the real by denying its determination by reality. Rather, the abstraction of structural agreement as the person-work relation conveys a key material-theological claim. e unique reality of Christ's person is conveyed by necessarily relating transformative e ect to its personal cause. As such, the New Testament topography presents a relation between person and work that the subsequent Christian theological tradition has categorized by the doctrines of Christology and soteriology. e process of abstracting the conceptual relation from the text as a whole presupposes a determination by the unique reality that is conceptualized.

e question regarding the analogy between New Testament theology and contemporary systematic theology can now be formulated. How can the real be recovered for contemporary theology in light of the formation of concepts that are signi cant to its problem-solving? It is the di erence in perspective that Schleiermacher sought to minimize vis-à-vis concept formation at the origins of Christianity and at its present-tense location. For Schleiermacher, there is no qualitative di erence in experiencing the person of Christ as a bodily person or as a spiritual presence embodied in the Christian community.[26] e early Christians were at no experiential advantage and, as a result, at no conceptual advantage, by being able to put their hands inside Christ's wounds (John 20:27). The difference in mode of perception, as personal bodily presence or as personal presence communicated by the community, does not presuppose a di erence in perceptual apparatus; in both circumstances, the senses are a ected. is perceptual di erence does not result in a di erent e ect; the same redemptive e ect is also guaranteed by the sameness of the person: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8). By underlining the sameness of person and e ect, Schleiermacher stabilizes the identity of concept formation for both the New Testament and for any subsequent theology that bases its claims on expressions regarding the reality of Christ's person. e same concepts continue to be formed because they are evoked by the experiences of the same reality.

e challenge to forming the concept in full view of reality becomes a problem when access to reality is hypersaturated with determination. e weight of tradition, its historical span, its experiential comprehensiveness, and its issues of power and authority are factors already playing into concept formation before an individual or community deploys and shapes those

26. See n. 14.

concepts to describe reality. eology in its Western Christian form is particularly burdened by inheritance. Since the incorporation of an explicit history of concept formation as an integral piece of systematic theology, theology itself has been stagnating in its European mold. e history of dogma is a theological tool that is supposed to contextualize contemporary theological questions in the historical light of their intellectual development. It involves, like all other historical descriptions, an abstraction from history, yet its highly rei ed interpretation of history functions to dislocate intellectual history from the many histories playing into the formation of ideas. Furthermore, the reconstruction of this history itself presupposes an authoritative instance for those doing the reconstruction. Voices are lost, voices are marginalized, and voices are destroyed in the process of abstracting an authoritative canonical connection between past and present. When such a method is coupled with a metaphysic of history, the heavy burden of truth serving power becomes too much even for reality to bear. e real is confused with the rational, and an intellectualized history replaces those living realities that have shaped the concepts in the rst place.

Intellectual history as constitutive of theology's concept formation is in contemporary crisis. eology continues to deploy concepts used by the tradition to schematize reality. Yet it is precisely the assumption concerning the capacity of these concepts to capture contemporary experience that must be reexamined. If these concepts are made to stand as ciphers for a history that is alien, if their truth is presupposed without adequate dialogue, if their empirical determination does not match one's own experience, then the concepts no longer serve the living (Luke 9:60). is di culty is particularly insistent, given the primarily European history of the concepts' formation. eological concepts risk becoming the artifacts of a European white male intellectual elite if this historically assumed course is not critically appropriated. A theology that is dead will be preoccupied with the past, canonizing its canon over and over again in every present generation. eology can live as a conceptual discipline only if its predicates are determined from the contemporary perspective; the past only lives as past in present reality. If intellectual history is to continue to have a formative role to play in assigning concept formation to set up the present, then it must be open to di erent histories meeting it with regions of experience that cannot be pressed into traditional theological molds. is is the case for the new multibraided accounts of the European reformations and of contextual theologies, both of which are coming up with new empirical determinations for theological concepts.

Schleiermacher o ers a useful model to explain how the real can be recovered for a theology that aims to represent ideas living in present Christian experience. e dialectical method can be applied to theology in order

to determine theology's concepts by real particulars. According to Schleiermacher, concepts are formed in history, through both individual biography and the transhistory of concepts in a particular historical series. e concept is presupposed as the subject term in a judgment, standing for the unity in reality of a particular comprehending its empirical appearances.[27] As such, it exists in reality, yet the empirical grasp of its existence is assigned to its predicates, and the grasp of its reality is assigned to a conceptual act of reason. Concept formation proceeds by assigning predicates gleaned from reality to the subject term; concept formation proceeds by way of judgment formation. Schleiermacher borrows from a Leibnizian account of intensional logic in order to explain the mechanism of the history of concept formation. A singular concept (*conceptus singularis*) is permitted on the grounds that it has one predicate. In the language of intensional logic, the concept presupposes the existence of the subject term. As predicates are assigned to the subject term, the concept is formed. Subsequent judgments presuppose earlier predications, whether true or false, so that the historical series of predication can include false predications that need to be revised.

e conceptual grasp of the subject's unity is an achievement of speculative reason working in tandem with empirical reason. While empirical reason investigates the subject's appearances, speculative reason unites those appearances in such a way as to o er a preliminary comprehension of the subject as a whole. By proceeding in this way, the empirical is brought together as a unity by conceptual act. e reality of the conceptual unity of the subject term is informed by the empirical predicates assigned to it. Reality is grasped by the unity of empirical predicates. Schleiermacher's achievement in his understanding of concept formation is both to rid the concept of any psychologically occult unity posited behind appearances and to recover the real by grasping its unity through judgment formation. As a concept, it is fundamentally revisable; as a reality, the appearances of the unity must be available to experience.

A compelling and controversial example of Schleiermacher's method of concept formation is his account of the concept of the Redeemer. Many scholars have noted the similarity of referent between Schleiermacher's reconstruction of the life of Jesus and his conceptual analysis of the Redeemer in *e Christian Faith*.[28] is structural agreement between exegetical results and theological claims is not the result of a conceptual overriding of his-

27. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über Dialektik* (vol. 2.10 of *Kritische Gesamtausgabe;* ed. Andreas Arndt; 2 vols.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 2:504–7.

28. See Schleiermacher, *Life of Jesus;* idem, *Christian Faith* §§93–100 (377–431).

torical data, as David Friedrich Strauss criticized.[29] Rather, the aim of the reconstructive exegetical work, as Schleiermacher understands it, is to give a "calculus" of Jesus as person.[30] The conceptualization of the person of Jesus is a grasp of his individuality, not as a psychologically occult reality but as his personality becomes available in personal development for viewing. The calculus constituting Jesus is itself the explanation for all his thinking and doing. By the same token, the conceptual delineation of Christ as Redeemer follows from the effects; by virtue of the effects of his person, the predicates can be assigned to their cause. On Schleiermacher's own grounds, the soteriological claims concerning Jesus' effects are attributed to the conceptual grasp of the unity of his person. The determinations of effect and cause are mutually reciprocal, dependent on the recovery of the real through both the empirical and the conceptual.

The multivalent accounts of the reality of Jesus can continue to provide theology with the empirical moorings that it needs. As theology continues to categorize experienced reality, it must work to open up various discourses that point to new areas of religious experience and then strengthen its resources to describe and explain these phenomena. In light of the increased appreciation that the Christian religion is lived out in communities well beyond the bounds of European or European-oriented confines, theologians are drawing increasingly on experiential-contextual resources to determine their concepts. Feminist theologians, for example, privilege experiences particular to women to expose ways in which systems, thought patterns, and behaviors have treated women as less than men. This imperative must change an academic theological environment that seems to place race, class, and gender restrictions on the "universal" reality that it purports to conceptualize.

Yet openness to new discursive regions must not come at the expense of forgetting. Concepts are formed transhistorically, especially those in view of a transhistorical religion such as Christianity. If the concept is to ring true for contemporary use and formation, its historical predicates must also sound as possibilities in the present. There must be agreement that the concept as it has been formed historically is capable of further development precisely because its predicates are possible predicates that might be actualized now. The task of rehearsing the possibility of predicates demands criticism and correction that simultaneously involves making claims to knowledge about the past from the present perspective. The predicates as possibilities undergo transformations

29. David Friedrich Strauss, *The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History: A Critique of Schleiermacher's* Life of Jesus (ed. and trans. L. E. Keck; Lives of Jesus Series; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 36.

30. The term is Schleiermacher's; see Schleiermacher, *Life of Jesus*, 8.

and then, in confrontation with novelty, might even determine the concepts in new ways. True multivalence means recognizing possible predicates together with actual predicates in the concept. is recognition is what makes true liberalism in view of the truth of reality possible.

3. Conclusion

If postmodernism has crashed against a resistant real, then it is the responsibility of theology to restore reality to its proper place for thinking and doing. inking about reality is a claim already established in the New Testament; its *raison d'êtr*e is the joyful response to a reality encountered as transformative. Doing also requires the real as the place for moral reasoning and judgment. Without such a temporally and spatially constituted realm, doing would not exist as the concrete actualizations of personal and communal commitment.

e test case of Schleiermacher used in this essay argues for a recovery of the real through the dual application of empirical and conceptual reason. An account of New Testament multivalence showed that a primarily empirical method could glean the diversity of authorial expressions of experiences of Christ, thereby o ering possibilities of experience together with an account of the structural parameters of those possibilities. Primarily conceptual reason comprehends the unities of appearances as those unities of authorial intentions are available for interpretation and subsequently for the formation of theological concepts. e conceptual grasp of unity, according to Schleiermacher, is accounted for in such a way that the unity does not remain an abstraction from empirical reality but rather is a speci c way of relating the empirical to the conceptual. By this procedure, the empirical can be celebrated rather than repressed as it determines the concepts. e New Testament's multivalence can be an analogy for the reasons why theology should pursue new areas of experiential discourses. By attending deeply and openly to many accounts of experience, theology might become an ethically stronger and materially richer discipline, all the better to convey the reality for which Christian theology is known and for which it exists.

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